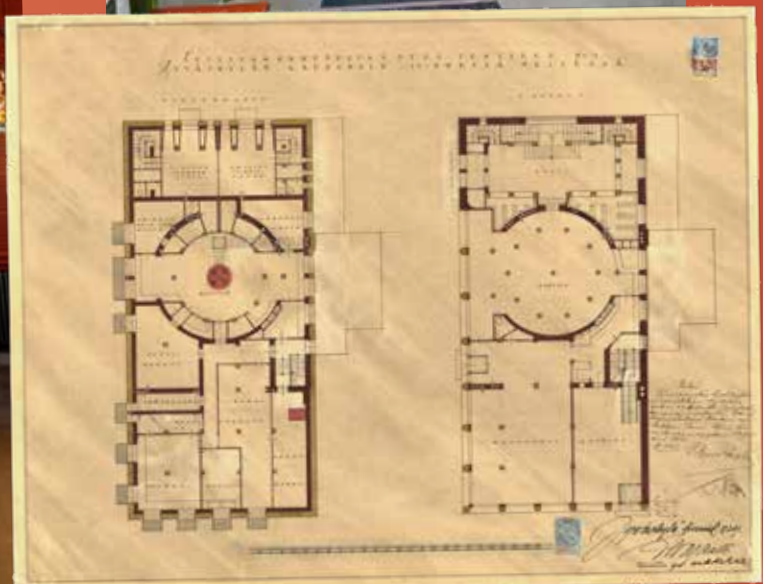




LABOUR HALLS IN FINLAND

History, Architecture and Labour Heritage
Evaluation for UNESCO World Heritage Listing

Marja Lähteenmäki, Kalle Kallio



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Preface

Background - International project of Workers' Assembly Halls' listing for World Heritage

The Arbejdermuseet Danish Workers' Museum started researching labour halls in 2009 to find the buildings that still exist around the world. The study showed the diversity of the labour movement around the globe, which is why a serial nomination was considered the best way to show how the fight for workers' rights and the buildings in which these communities formed constitutes part of world heritage. The project was relaunched in 2020 with a collection campaign to locate the labour halls of the entire world. By May 2022, the campaign had reached over 70 workers' assembly halls and examination of the buildings continued. The importance of and need for the serial nomination are outlined in the international project:

The socialist labour movement is one of the major forces that has shaped international relations, national societies, and the lives of individual people during the past 150 years. With the central values of liberty, equality, and solidarity, the labour movement provided an ideological gathering point for a new sense of identity and belonging.

Through the establishment of formal organisations, the labour movement based the struggle for workers' rights on the power of unity and communities. The result was a highly diverse and devolved labour movement which provided an organizational framework for many aspects of the daily life of the working-class. Much of this organisation developed in the workers' assembly halls.

The labour movement holds outstanding universal value as a social and cultural phenomenon. The intangible values of the labour movement are manifested in the physical workers' assembly halls and a transnational serial nomination will show that the heritage of the labour movement belongs to the everyone.

The UNESCO World Heritage list includes industrial sites witnessing the industrial revolution, but this nomination will represent the organizational framework of cultural, social, political and educational aspects of the working class. The workers' assembly halls played a vital role in the development of the labour movement. And although the labour movement is a global phenomenon it has developed differently in various parts of the world throughout a long period of time.

The series of assembly halls will give an overview of the variations in workers' history and how it developed locally around the world yet remained a global phenomenon. By assembling a list of buildings testifying both to the common goals of community, welfare and democracy, as well as to the regional characteristics of the socialist labour movement, we hope to help preserve this unique heritage and provide a source of reflection for future generations in shaping their world.

The international steering group has prepared a proposed statement of OUV (Outstanding Universal Value) where the criteria for serial nomination are defined. The statement was still under revision in November 2022. This research and evaluation of 12 potential Finnish labour halls has been done using the proposed statement of April 2022 as a guideline. In addition, UNESCO's Operational Guidelines for World Heritage and the national Built Heritage Protection Act (4.6.2010/498) have been helpful in writing the report and evaluating the potential labour halls.



Study of Finnish Labour Halls


The project led by the Finnish Labour Museum started in March 2022. The aim was to study the current situation of Finland's labour halls and to discover potential candidates to propose for the World Heritage Listing. This report is exceptional, since it is at present the only fundamental research done at the national level in serial nomination participant countries to discover the eligible candidates in the country.

It was seen as important to publish the history of the Finnish labour halls on Wikipedia during the research, since information of the still existing and already disappeared halls is scattered and only available with difficulty. In this way, a large number of Finland's halls can be brought to common awareness, and the value and meanings of the labour halls as well as those of the labour heritage can be evaluated.

Just under 500 labour halls still exist and are in public use in Finland. The preliminary listing was done in a steering group that included labour hall specialists Archive Director Marita Jalkanen (the People's Archives), Museum Director Kalle Kallio (the Finnish Labour Museum), Special Researcher Mikko Kosunen (the Labour Archives), Board Member Visa Tammi (the Labour Halls Union (Työväentalojen Liitto)) and Executive Director Kati Tyystjärvi (the People's Houses Union (Kansantalojen Liitto)). They all contributed essential information concerning the history and current situation of the workers' assembly halls. PhD Marja Lähteenmäki and MA Noora-Liina Ora were part of the group as project researchers. The local authorities' Cultural Environment Services were asked about the labour halls' protection status and heritage values. Important information was received from the active members of the workers' associations contacted and met during the project. There was close collaboration with the Arbejdermuseet Danish Workers' Museum. Archival material, workers' association's histories and earlier reports of Finnish labour halls were reviewed to gather a general view of the history, architecture and labour heritage of labour halls.

Diversity of location, construction period, labour movement and building type were taken into consideration when selecting 12 candidates. Instead of discovering the best candidates, the aim was to identify the diversity of Finnish labour halls and to present the current situation of the upkeep and protection of the halls. It was clear that few of the selected buildings do not fulfil UNESCO's criteria for protection status, but it was seen as important to adduce the protection situation that concerns the majority of the halls. The protection of the halls is partly arbitrary, as discussed in chapter three.

Moreover the aim of the study goes beyond the transnational World Heritage project. This project aims at augmenting knowledge of the values and meanings of labour halls as representative of the labour movement and as tangible places of labour heritage among the general public on a national level, while appreciating the work done in the labour halls by the active members and generating awareness of the importance of the halls' authenticity, architecture and historical values in restoration. This was done by publishing collected information in Wikipedia, by contacting workers' associations and activating them to collect data about their association and their hall while emphasising the hall's heritage values. In addition, wide media attention was sought. The project was funded by the Tradeka Foundation, Riihi Foundation and Kansan Sivistysrahasto Fund. PhD Marja Lähteenmäki is responsible for the research and is the author of the report except chapter two, which is written by Museum Director PhD Kalle Kallio.



As a result of the study there are two potential candidates to represent Finland's labour movement on the World Heritage List. Helsinki Labour Hall Paasitorni is the best representative of city labour halls. Paasitorni depicts how the labour movement came to Finland, and is tightly connected to nationally important historical events such as the beginning of the Civil War. The impacts of industrialisation and urbanisation are intertwined with the hall and Paasitorni demonstrates the large-scale mass organisation of the labour movement. The most typical labour hall in Finland is a wooden countryside hall, of which Mäenpää Labour Hall, Punkalaidun, is an outstanding example. It illustrates the labour movement's rapid expansion in rural areas at the beginning of the 20th century. The expansion was closely connected to the forest industry, as socialism spread among lumberjacks and other agricultural workers in Scandinavia and halls were built outside big cities. At the same time, it is also connected to the nationally important events of the Civil War and the division of the labour movement. Both halls were inaugurated in 1908, when the labour movement had its upswing and the Social Democrats were by far the biggest party in Finland. The final statement of OUV by the international steering group will likely affect the final decision. In the coming years, more profound research is needed before Finnish candidate(s) are officially recognised as world heritage.

In this report I will use *labour hall*, *worker's assembly hall* and simply *hall* as synonyms when I refer to the halls built by the Labour Movement if I do not define them otherwise. I am aware that there are several concepts in Finnish with slightly different meanings. For example, the concept *people's house* (*kansantalo*, in Sweden *Folkets hus*) refers in Finland in most cases to halls that are owned by the Left Alliance (earlier the Finnish People's Democratic League) or Communist Party. I will use meeting hall when referring commonly to the same type of building but one not necessarily built by the labour movement.



150 years of the Finnish Labour Movement

Early Roots

The origins of the Finnish Labour Movement can be traced back to the 1860s and 1870s. The Grand Duchy of Finland was part of the Russian Empire and Alexander II started a strong reform policy to develop his empire. Finland was an agrarian and poor country governed with old-fashioned legislation dating from 18th century Sweden. The majority of the people spoke Finnish, but the administration was run by the Swedish-speaking elite.

Alexander II's reform promoted Finnish language, popular education and better ways of communication. Industrialisation was supported with liberalist policies which encouraged entrepreneurs to start new businesses and poor people to migrate from the countryside to places with better work opportunities. The old society was changing thanks to the economic growth, education, eased censorship and minor political reforms. People and ideas started to move, and increasing numbers of newspapers discussed foreign ideologies more openly.

The first popular movements to organise Finns focused on questions of Finnish language, culture and education, temperance, philanthropy, religious revivalism, protection of the youth and economic prosperity. Volunteer fire brigades, early co-ops, sports clubs and different societies were founded mainly in Finnish cities. All of these movements were somehow interested in the growing number of Finnish workers and their wellbeing in the developing industrial society. Workers were welcomed especially to amusement and fundraising events which included enlightening programmes, Finnish songs, lotteries and dancing.

Workers' subsistence and rights became a major social issue in European industrial societies during the 19th century. Finland industrialised later than other Western countries and therefore the discussion around the labour question began later. The first writings to understand such matters began in Finnish newspapers in the 1870s. Socialism was detected as a dangerous and immoral ideology which should be barred outside Finland. Problems of the industrial society were already visible, but the ruling gentlemen discussed solving them patiently with conservative social reforms.

Socialist thoughts were much more common in Germany and Sweden, already visited by many Finns. The German workers' party was founded in 1863, Denmark had one in 1878 and Sweden in 1889. In European cities, workers created their own clubs, trade unions and newspapers. The First International (1864-1876) brought different socialist groups together on an international level and made Karl Marx famous. Strikes, the Paris Commune in 1871, revolutionary actions and everything else was noticed in Finland. Some Finnish immigrants in the United States and St. Petersburg participated in local labour movements.

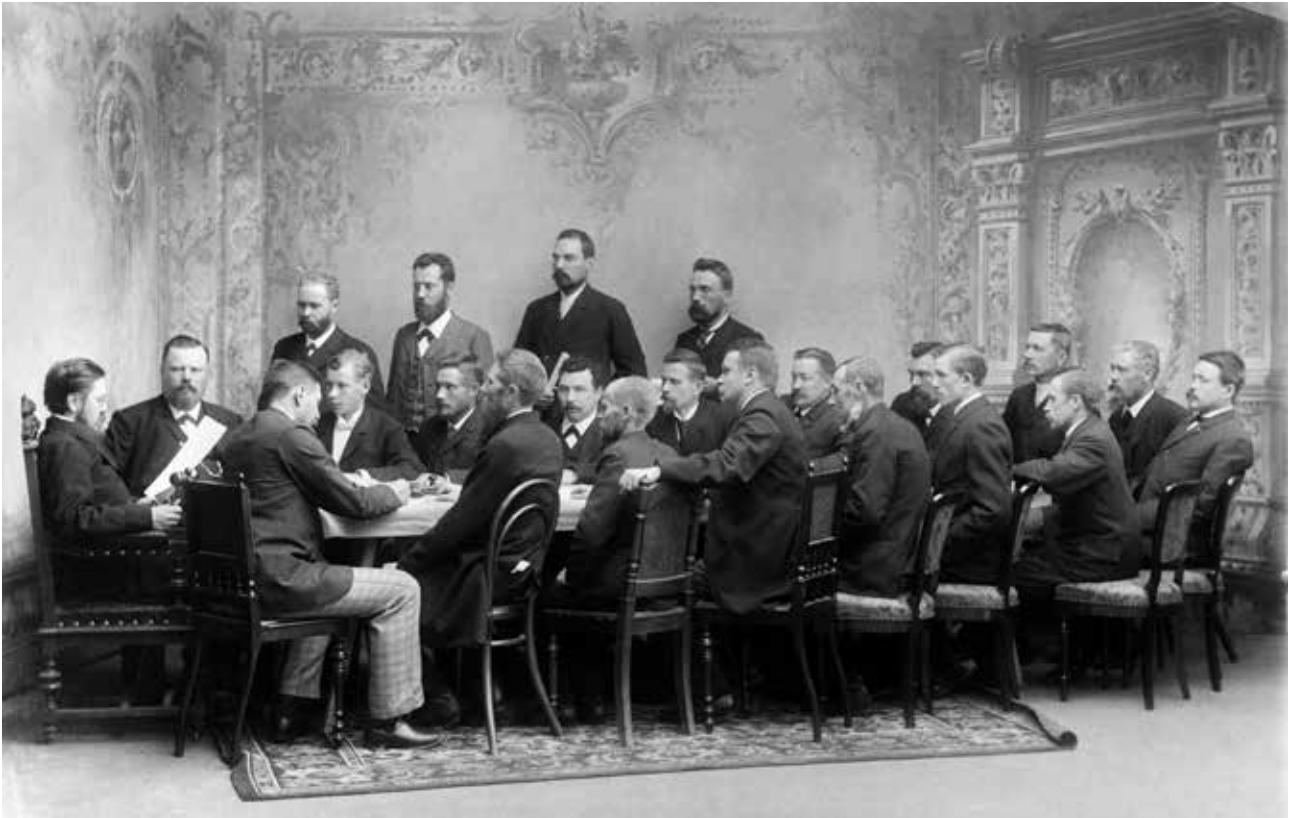
The Wrightist Labour Movement

Viktor Julius von Wright (1856-1934) was a nobleman and carpenter who founded a furniture manufacturer in Helsinki. As a young apprentice, he had studied in Nürnberg and Copenhagen and become acquainted with problems of an industrial society. He was in touch with socialists, too, but developed his own ideology with anti-socialist thinking. The Danish association, Arbejderforeningen af 1860 became a model for his idea of a Finnish labour movement.

After returning to Finland, Wright founded the first workers' association in 1883. He was the chair of the Helsinki Association until 1896, and therefore historians have labelled this period the Wrightist labour movement. The ideological basis of the movement was a mixture of social liberalism, social conservatism and humanism. The idea was to fix social problems and prevent revolutionary tendencies. However, the early movement supported right to vote, right to use Finnish language and different legislative reforms.

This movement was strongly patriarchal. The basic idea was to bring employers and employees under the same organisation. That was clearly against the principles of the old society, where each class had their own social sphere. The first labour associations were therefore established by radical and liberal gentlemen who wanted the best for the worker population. Finnish cities founded their own workers' associations in the late 1880s, smaller towns and industrial communities in the 1890s. In the countryside, there were small labour clubs as well, but their difference from youth association remained obscure.

These associations attracted a growing number of workers. By 1892, they had almost 5,000 formal members. However, many associations were inactive and most of the followers lived in larger industrial cities like Tampere, Helsinki and Turku. In 1893, the labour associations organised their first nationwide meeting and the movement became more formal. Most active associations had already rented assembly halls and published newspapers, which were still pretty short-lived.



The first national meeting of the labour movement in 1893. Viktor Julius von Wright at the end of the table is chairing the meeting of twenty associations inside Helsinki's old meeting hall.

The Labour Archives.

Early Socialists

The Wrightist labour movement was clearly countering socialism but nevertheless it turned out to be the platform for socialist movement. First labour associations created the organisation, raised awareness of the labour question and universal suffrage, encouraged workers to participate in political discussions and offered a radical approach to current society. Socialist thinking had something to add, but it was not fundamentally different from what was included in the agenda of Wrightist labour associations.

The first Finnish trade association was founded as early as in 1869 by printing workers. When the first workers' associations were founded and became popular, soon they had to organise subgroups for different professions. These groups turned out to be the seeds of trade unions. In these units, workers had a chance to discuss their own issues by themselves. The gentlemen leading the movement did not participate in these subgroups, and they did not attract employers either. The subgroups selected workers as their chairs and the workers learned to organise themselves.

Solidarity of workers and formal organisation was necessary for successful collective action. Trade units planned strikes and confrontation with employers became evident. In 1890s, local units contacted with units in other cities and soon trade unions were founded. They published their own magazines, built connections to neighbouring countries and required a more radical ideology than the Wrightist movement could offer.

In the beginning, Finnish socialists were mainly radical university students who were inspired by the labour movement abroad. In Finland, they worked as journalists on liberal newspapers. These men explained foreign discussions and ideas of socialism to the readers. All this spread socialist thinking in Finland. Soon workers' associations had opposition groups to criticise Wright and his fellows. They wanted firmer attitudes on social issues and debates about socialist theory.

A crucial step for the opposition was the founding of the newspaper *Työmies* (Workman) in 1895. It was viewed by the public as a socialist newspaper, but it was very careful on domestic politics. Circulation grew steadily, and soon similar labour papers started in other major cities as well. Newspapers and strikes and the growth of associations gave the power to the opposition. Wright had to step down in 1896, and he resigned altogether from the movement in 1898. The reason was the decision to found a Finnish Labour Party, which finally happened in 1899.

Away with the power of alcohol!
In 1898, the temperance movement mobilised workers to stop drinking.
The Finnish Labour Museum.



The Great Strike

The labour movement changed rapidly after the Wrightist era. When the party was founded, associations became political organisations. As the founding gentlemen left the movement, more and more workers got involved. Mass mobilisation of workers began in the late 1890s by the temperance movement. Just like the labour movement, the temperance movement was first run by the upper level of society but in spring 1898, a drinking strike spread rapidly among the worker population. It was like an explosion, with mass meetings, demonstrations and petitions that mobilised workers for radical anti-alcohol action. At the time, the temperance movement was far more popular among workers than the labour movement.

As a political organisation, the Finnish Labour Party was an underdog. The Finnish Grand Duchy was far from a democracy and had one of the most old-fashioned political structures in Europe. There was no parliament, but irregular assemblies of the estates. Only the nobility, the clergy, the burghers and the peasantry could select their own representatives. Four classes were led by the nobles and four estates badly represented the Finnish population. On the city level, the situation was not much better. Voting rights were tied to taxation and cities were governed by the rich. All this was challenged by the labour movement, which adopted a social democratic name and programme at the 1903 party congress.

At the turn of the century, the long-lasting struggle between the Finnish and Swedish-speaking parties lost some of its significance. Nicholas II started to unify his empire. Finland had autonomous status with its own legislation, government, currency and even army. Political groups had different attitudes to this russification. Some were compliant, others adopted passive resistance based on constitutional arguments, but some chose active resistance. In the labour movement, all of these strategies had support for various reasons. General Governor Bobrikov was appointed as a dictator in 1903, and the year after, he was murdered by a Finnish nationalist. Terrorist acts became a tool of Finnish politics.



Demonstration during the Great Strike in Helsinki.

The Helsinki City Museum.

Russia's unsuccessful war with Japan sparked mass demonstrations in Russia which were spread to Finland by Finnish railway workers in October 1905. At the same time, the Finnish General Strike was the Social Democratic Party's campaign for universal suffrage and nationalist action to defend Finland's constitutional rights and autonomy. The strike practically stopped the country and the emperor had to give way in the face of the pressure. Thanks to the strike, workers finally got the right to vote after parliamentary reform. Finland became the first country in Europe where women could cast a ballot in national elections.

For the labour movement, the Great Strike was a turning point. With mass mobilisation, workers successfully drove through their demands against the ruling classes and the emperor. New self-confidence made it easier to start industrial action and organise. The movement became well-known and attractive to the people. New workers' associations were founded around the country and especially in the countryside. Membership of trade unions multiplied and new workers' assembly halls were built everywhere.

Parliament without Power

The first parliamentary elections in March 1907 surprised everyone. The Social Democratic Party had hardly any political power before the reform, but after the elections it turned out to be the largest party. It won 80 seats out of 200 and 37 percent of the votes. Thanks to universal suffrage, it had a larger share of votes than any other socialist party at the time. Women were elected as well, and nine of them were Social Democrats.

However, the parliament had very limited opportunities to change society. Finland was still a Grand Duchy with Nicholas II as head of state. All legislation had to be approved in St. Petersburg and the Finnish Senate was still nominated by the emperor. Senators formed the government, which had no responsibility to the parliament. And if Nicholas was not pleased with the parliament, he had the right to dissolve it, as well.

In the beginning, there was much hope for parliamentary politics in the labour movement. However, it was hard to find alliances with other parties and the emperor prevented reformative legislation. It was a parliament without true power. Parliament was dissolved repeatedly and sometimes just after the opening ceremony. Elections were held almost every year, and support for the Social Democrats increased. In 1913 they won 90 seats and in 1916 they had a simple majority with 103 seats.

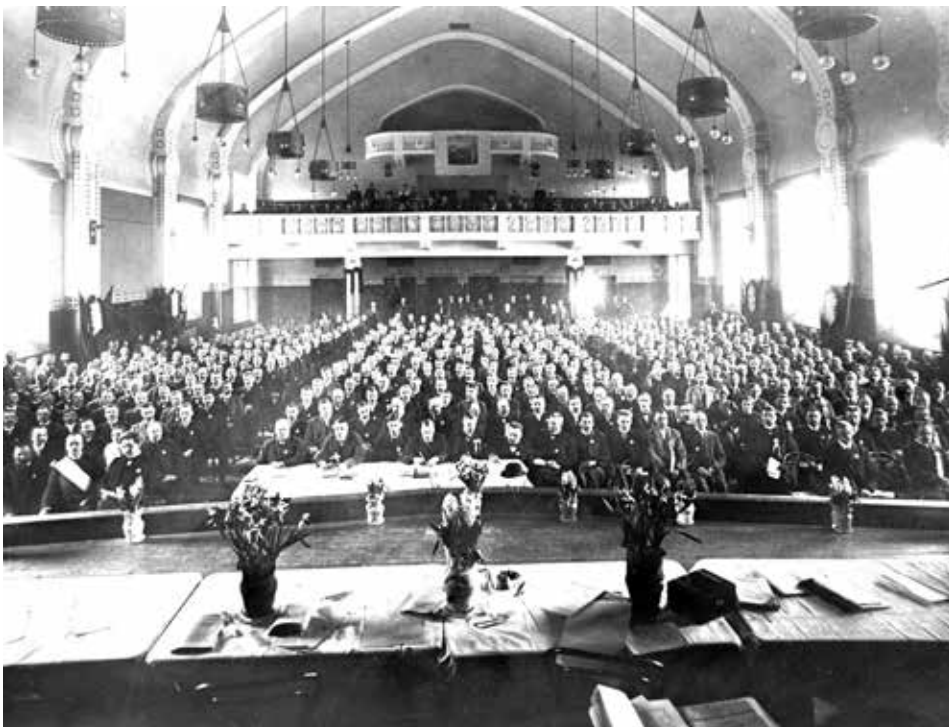
The labour movement was highly successful in combining different interests under the same political party. It was the first modern party with a proper programme and nationwide organisation with newspapers, associations, labour halls and a huge number of followers. The majority of the members and supporters lived in the countryside, which made it primarily an agrarian party. The party programme was based on German socialism, especially on the thinking of Karl Kautsky (1854-1938), but they managed to implement it for the Finnish environment. Of course, socialists were criticised for their anti-religious attitudes, ideas of public ownership of agricultural land and revolutionary speech. However, they promised much more to the poor population of Finland than any other party.

The Russian Revolution

The beginning of the First World War brought war legislation. Finland was far from the battle fronts and after the first shock, life seemed to continue as before. However, parliament was not able to meet and there were heavy restrictions on associations. The war economy created good possibilities for Finnish industry, but inflation increased faster than wages, and food shortages worsened every year. Finnish conscription was cancelled but Russian troops fortified the Finnish coast and prepared for German assault.

During the war, Finnish nationalists saw the possibility of getting rid of Russian rule. In 1915-1918 almost 2000 Finnish volunteers escaped to military training in Germany and fought in their ranks. The labour movement did not promote this recruitment, but there were still quite a few Jäger volunteers with a labour background.

In spring 1917, the Russian Revolution changed the Finnish political situation completely. Wartime restrictions were lifted, civil rights restored and parliament recalled. This time, it had a socialist majority and the labour movement was able to grasp real power. The Russian senators were dismissed, and Finland got the first government that represented the political powers of the parliament. The prime minister was Oskari Tokoi (1873-1963), trade union leader and moderate socialist.



The SDP Party Congress in late November 1917 was organised in an extremely nervous situation. Joseph Stalin addressed the congress but failed to encourage the Finnish comrades to rebellion. The Finnish Labour Museum.

The tasks of the new government were excessive. Social reforms like an eight-hour working day were implemented through strikes and industrial unrest was constant. Trade unions gained more members than ever, and even agricultural workers laid down their tools for better pay and shorter days. Unemployment, food riots and a lack of local democracy intensified the crisis. At the same time, Finns wanted stronger self-government, but the country had several Russian garrisons with restless troops.

In July 1917, the Bolsheviks tried coup d'état in St. Petersburg and Tokoi's government passed its own legislation to ensure the self-government of Finland. The Bolsheviks lost their attempt, Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) escaped to Helsinki and the Russian Provisional Government managed to stay in power. When the coup failed, the Russian Government dissolved the Finnish parliament, which was against the new legislation. However, the bourgeois parties accepted the situation and won the elections in early October.

Everything changed again in November, when the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government in Russia. This time, the Finnish Federation of Trade Unions declared a General Strike to ensure ratification of certain laws by the new right-wing government. The strike was violent, and clashes between paramilitaries brought Finland to the brink of civil war. Since the summer, nationalists and the labour movement had been organising and arming their own paramilitary groups: the (White) Civil Guards and the Red Guards.

The Finnish parliament declared Finland independent on 6 December. The bourgeois senate did not want to negotiate with the Bolsheviks as they earlier did with the Russian Provisional Government. The Social Democrats supported independence just as much, but they had better communication with the new rulers in St. Petersburg. In the end, the Finnish Senate had to ask approval from the Soviets. Lenin acknowledged the declaration of independence, since that was one of the German Empire's conditions in the peace talks.

Civil War

On the eve of the Civil War, the Finnish labour movement was strongly divided. A long tradition in the movement supported parliamentary work and moderate policies, just like in the social democratic parties of Western Europe. On the other hand, revolutionary tactics gained more and more support when the Bolsheviks succeeded in Russia. The Party Congress in November 1917 voted between parliamentary and revolutionary tactics. The radicals lost 59-43 to moderate and peaceful methods.

However, the Red Guards were already manned with hard-liners. The labour movement gained a huge number of new members in 1917, and the young supporters were not used to the slowness of political engagement. The contradiction between the paramilitaries tensed when the government declared the Civil Guards the government's army. The Red Guards started the revolution in January 1918 with weapon supplies from Soviet Russia. The Civil Guards received support from the Jäger volunteers, Sweden and Germany.

The Reds took over Southern Finland, but the amateur uprising was over in three months. German troops landed on the south coast and broke the rest of the resistance. Some of the revolutionary leaders managed to escape Russia but most of the Reds ended up in horrible prison camps or were killed. During the war, both Whites and Reds committed war crimes and used terror on the civilian population. After the war, workers' assembly halls were closed and the labour movement was ideologically broken.

Historians have recognised several reasons for the Finnish Civil War. The economic situation became much worse during 1917, connected to the collapse of the Russian state. The government was unable to stabilise the situation and provide safety, which encouraged people to arm themselves and form paramilitary groups. The Russian Revolution created a huge power vacuum in Finland and the competing parties tried to overthrow each other, first with propaganda and then with violence. People were on the streets for several local and national issues and the constant confrontation finally divided the nation in two. The state and politicians simply failed.



Typical Red Soldiers were young and had no military experience.

The Uusikaupunki Museum.

However, the Finnish Civil War was not an exception. Similar wars were fought all around Eastern Europe between White and Red forces. They were the outcome of the revolution and the collapse of the Russian, Austrian and German empires. In Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Caucasus, the Reds won the war, but the Whites won in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Hungary. There was unrest in other countries, as well. After the Civil War, Finland was set to become a servant monarchy of Germany, but the German defeat in the First World War paved the way for a democratic republic. Perhaps that was one of the reasons why the Finnish labour movement was able to recover at all.

A Labour Movement Divided

Exiled Reds in Soviet Russia decided to continue their fight against Finland's White government. In August 1918, the Communist Party of Finland was founded in Moscow. It was a revolutionary and underground party which adopted a dogmatic Soviet-style policy. The party headquarters stayed in Soviet Russia and the party followed instructions from Soviet officials. It created an underground network in Finland, but was not able to establish a strong organisation.

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) was destroyed in the Civil War and only one socialist member was able to participate in parliament meetings after the Civil War. The Finnish state was eager to be recognised by Western powers, but foreign nations criticised the prison camps and oppression of the labour movement. Finland recovered from the Civil War surprisingly fast, and democratic procedures were built on a local and national level. The first municipal elections were as early as in November 1918 and parliamentary elections in March 1919. The SDP participated in both elections and managed to get good results despite the bloody rebellion. It had 80 seats in parliament, but all the other parties were reluctant to share power with socialists.

After the First World War, European labour movements were divided between moderate social democrats and different left-wing socialists and communists. In Finland, this division was also based on the aftermath of the lost uprising. After the Civil War, the Social Democratic Party was run by politicians who isolated themselves from the Red Guards and did not participate in the Red administration. From their perspective, the rebellion was the biggest mistake of the Finnish labour movement. The communist understanding was slightly different. From their perspective, it was a necessary class war that should only have been won.

In December 1919, the SDP Party Congress argued about the lessons of the rebellion and the political future of the labour movement. The majority of the congress supported moderate social democracy, but a minority of the participants became annoyed. They felt that the party had betrayed the workers and was going to cooperate with White forces. In May 1920, this minority founded the Socialist Workers' Party of Finland.

Reformists and Revolutionaries

The new Socialist Party and the SDP fought for the souls of workers, the loyalty of associations and the control of the trade unions. The Socialist Party gained more support in Northern Finland, which did not suffer the battles of the Civil War, and the Social Democrats were stronger in southern areas. Seasonal workers mainly supported the socialists, but crofters and skilled workers usually stayed with the old party. The new party was especially attractive to the youth, but older generations were not persuaded so easily.

The struggle between the two parties was fought in almost all labour movement organisations. Basically, some workers' associations decided to resign from the party and joined the Socialist Party. In others, the decision was to stay in the old party. In both cases, unsatisfied members felt obliged to resign from the local association to find a new one closer to their ideology. In these struggles, ownership of the labour hall was at stake. New halls also had to be built because both parties could not meet in the same building. The so-called camp mentality was strong in both parties. The labour movement tried to create its own sphere with its own sports clubs, co-ops, theatres, halls and events to prevent free-time interaction with White citizens.

This copy machine was used to print prohibited newsletters of the Communist Party in Northern Finland.

The Finnish Labour Museum.



The Socialist Workers' Party of Finland was not communist, but it was clearly to the left of the SDP. It had some connections to Soviet Russia and exiled communists tried to manipulate it. Nevertheless, Finnish workers were already used to democratic practices and did not really follow indefinite and often unrealistic suggestions from Moscow. Nevertheless, the new party was soon in trouble with the authorities. All their members of parliament were imprisoned and the whole party was declared illegal in 1924. The communist remarks in the party programme and Soviet connections were just too much in White Finland.



Palosaari workers' meeting hall in Vaasa was vandalised by the Lapua Movement in 1930. It was impossible to use the house, because the floorboards had been torn up.

The Finnish Labour Museum.

Now the Social Democrats tried to get associations and especially their houses back under SDP ownership. After the Socialist Party was forbidden, it was considered impossible to form a new public left-wing party. Therefore, socialist groups had to organise in decentralised ways and stand for elections in temporary alliances without official party organisation. These socialist alliances still managed to get around 20 seats in the parliament during the 1920s. Although the SDP was the biggest party of the parliament with around 60 seats, because the revolutionaries now had their separate group, the Social Democrats were even able to form a short-lived minority government in 1926-1927, led by Väinö Tanner (1881-1966).

The Fight against Fascism

The Communist Party was illegal and the Socialist Party was forbidden as well. Newspapers with communist content were regularly fined and the authorities followed labour movement activities closely. Relations inside the labour movement were extremely tense when Social Democrats tried to hold their positions inside trade unions. Unions had lost members since 1917 and those remaining often supported leftist versions of socialist ideology. The Communist Party also played a role in some unions and the Social Democrats faced fierce criticism for being traitors of the class struggle.

The political majority in Finland was in the hands of bourgeois parties that represented the heritage of White Finland. From their perspective, it was extremely annoying that communists could still operate publicly disguised as independent politicians and publish newspapers. The Social Democrats had a safer position, which also toughened the struggle inside the labour movement. In the late 1920s, the Social Democrats started to create their own trade union organisations because they could not control the existing unions. Soon those unions were in the hands of hard-line communists.

The economic situation worsened in 1929, which encouraged Finnish fascism. The Lapua Movement was an influential far-right, anti-communist movement that tried to accomplish a final victory for the Whites. They wanted to drive out communists from society with direct action. The fascists arranged marches and popu-

lar meetings but also destroyed labour movement property, kidnapped politicians and assassinated people. Support for the movement vanished when they threatened moderate politicians and failed in a coup d'état attempt in 1932.

However, the Lapua Movement was able to drive through its anti-communist legislation in 1930. The model for these acts came from Hitler's Germany. The new legislation restricted rights to vote and banned 1,200 different labour movement organisations. The authorities abolished most trade unions and their units, socialist organisations and even sports clubs. The state seized all the property of these organisations, including workers' halls. Social democratic organisations suffered from fascist direction action as well, but the legislation focused on Soviet and communist connections.

The Social Democrats in Government

Deep economic depression and fascist attacks made the early 1930s a difficult period for the Social Democrats as well. Banned trade unions had to be replaced with new ones and new leaders. Membership was very low because of the bad economic situation. In addition, underground communists boycotted new unions. There was no collective bargaining with the employers. When the economy recovered and democracy survived the pressure of fascism, the future of the labour movement grew a little more promising.

In the 1936 elections, SDP was able to win 85 seats and the extreme right clearly lost popular support. Nordic countries had already had Social Democratic governments and the time was ready for cooperation with the Agrarian League and the Progressive Party. These two had previously opposed the fascists and in the 1937 government the White parties were finally ready to cooperate with the SDP. The programme of the government was not socialist, but it took first steps in welfare policies.

At the end of the 1930s, Finnish workers were enjoying better living conditions than ever before. The Communist Party adopted popular front tactics and encouraged workers to join unions again. The communists were no longer able to gain major positions in the trade unions, but membership figures rose considerably. Labour halls were crowded and the future looked promising for the labour movement.

The Second World War

In Finland, the Second World War began at the end of November 1939. The Soviet Union attacked neutral Finland after Stalin and Hitler had shared Eastern Europe in their spheres of influence. Stalin expected a revival of the Civil War and therefore established a puppet government of exiled communists. That did not work out, as Finnish workers joined the army and there was no partisan movement. In the Winter War, Finland was able to hold the Red Army for 105 days. Peace was made, and Finland lost 8% of its land, especially in Karelia.

During the war, the trade unions and employers made a joint declaration to support future mutual negotiation. In addition, the SDP encouraged workers to join the Civil Guards. This national consensus did not please the communists. Soon after the Winter War, they founded a friendship society to promote better relations between Finland and the Soviet Union. The friendship society was short-lived, but it showed that there was still support for communist policies. Nevertheless, the society was banned as Finland moved politically closer to Nazi Germany.

Hitler surprised the Soviet Union with the Barbarossa operation in June 1941. German troops operating in Lapland and Finland joined the attack. During this Continuation War, the Finnish labour movement became more divided. The Social Democrats stayed in the government through the war, but a peace opposition formed inside the party. The police arrested known communists, many went underground, and some formed resistance groups. In summer 1944, the Soviet Union started a massive counterattack that forced Finland to detach from the Axis alliance. The Germans retreated from Lapland in winter 1944-1945. At the end of the Second World War, Finland was the only Nazi ally that was not occupied.



The military used many workers' meeting halls during the war. A propaganda evening included military music and humorous speeches in Kemi 1942.

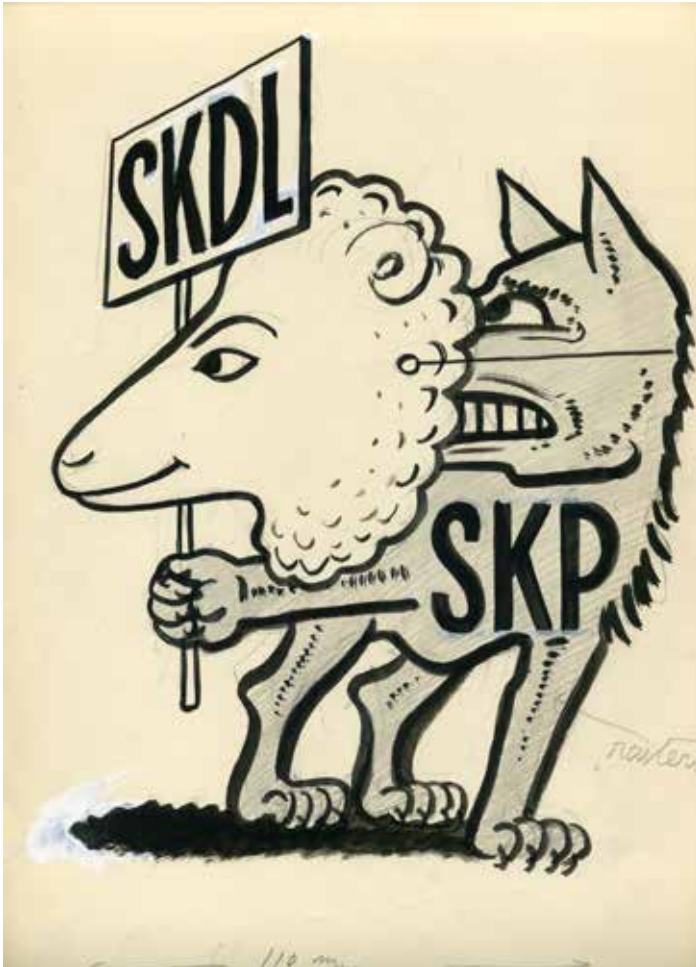
U. Laukka, The Military Museum.

The Communist Party Legalized

The lost war changed Finland's position in international politics completely. The Allied Control Commission arrived to monitor Finnish compliance with the Armistice. It was run by Soviet officers. The commission demanded demobilisation, judicial proceedings on war crimes and a ban on fascist organisations like the Civil Guards. Anti-communist legislation was overthrown, and political prisoners freed. People wanted a new direction in politics and former Nazi sympathies became a burden.

The Communist Party (SKP) returned to Finland with a legal status and new strength. The Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL) was a new party that planned to unite progressive forces under communist leadership. It had other organisational members but also plenty of local branches. The Social Democrats did not join the league, but many party members and local associations did. There was a similar fight about the control of associations and labour halls as in the 1920s. In the 1945 elections, the SDP won 50 seats, the SKDL 49, and they shared power with the Agrarian League.

Finland had to pay heavy war reparations to the Soviet Union and the political situation was fragile in the 1940s. However, Finland was not occupied, and the threat of a communist coup was clearly smaller than in many countries of Eastern Europe. The SKDL continued the parliamentary tradition of the labour movement by building workers' halls, organising events and winning elections. Also the SKP integrated into democratic society as a Soviet-friendly force that participated in elections on SKDL lists.



Social Democratic cartoon from 1950 showing the communist SKP as a wolf behind the SKDL. The Finnish Labour Museum.

Roubles and Dollars

The Cold War was fought on several fronts, and Finland was one of the nations between the Western and Eastern blocs. British, American and Swedish interests defended Finnish democracy right after the Second World War. Finland did not turn out to be one of the people's republics. The Soviet Union was not able or even willing to gain full control of Finland, maybe because that would push neutral Sweden into NATO. But Finnish politics included a constant fight between pro-Soviet and pro-Western forces.

The Social Democrats and Communists fought on the control of trade unions, sports clubs and other labour movement organisations. In those fights, social democratic war veterans in particular were fierce opponents of the communists. They directed the SDP with anti-Soviet doctrine when the SKDL was the leftist option for voters. This fight for the souls of Finnish workers was bolstered by foreign support. The CIA supported the Social Democrats with dollars and the Communists could rely on rouble income. Foreign currency was visible in election campaigns, but it was also spent on workers' assembly halls, events and cultural activities.

In the Finnish economy, the war crisis was over in the mid-1950s. The economy prospered thanks to trade relations with both Eastern and Western markets. The democratic system became stable and had strong support across the political spectrum. In 1957, the Communist Party deleted violent rebellion from their party rules and toolbox. The whole labour movement was back on parliamentary track.

The Era of Political Splits

In the decades after the war, the labour movement was politically stronger than ever before. Most of the governments included one of the big socialist parties. Popular support for the labour movement was strong, and almost every second vote was cast for the SDP or SKDL. The Soviet threat also supported an atmosphere that was beneficial for the labour movement. Trade unions grew and the welfare state was built.

However, power produced internal disputes and internal fractions. The Agrarian League managed to get Urho Kekkonen (1900-1986) as president in 1956. He was a suitable candidate for the Soviets and mastered Finnish foreign policy until 1981. From his strong position, Kekkonen was finally able to control other political parties and force them to follow his will inside the democratic system. Times were difficult for those who opposed both the Soviet Union and Kekkonen.

The Agrarian League and SKDL were natural allies with good relations to the east. But that was not the case with the SDP. Right-wing social democrats were eager to make anti-Soviet propaganda and that triggered criticism in Moscow. They were opposed by the left-wing social democrats who dominated many trade unions. These fractions clashed severely at the 1957 Party Congress where the right wing raised 76-year-old Väinö Tanner to party chair with a narrow victory. Tanner had already been chair in 1918-1926 and had sat in prison because the Soviets saw him as one of the worst culprits after the war.

The left-wing opposition could not stand Tanner, and his leadership was a red flag for the Soviet Union as well. In 1959, the Social Democratic Union of Workers and Smallholders (TPSL) was established as a new political party. This fraction divided the parliamentary group and several associations left the SDP, with their property and workers' halls. Because the TPSL was strong in the trade unions and the sports movement, the clash spread. Both parties founded new trade unions and sports clubs.



Väinö Tanner was still chair of the Social Democratic Party in his eighties.
Helge Heinonen, The Finnish Heritage Agency.



The singing group "Spacebird" performs in Tampere in 1974. The event was organised by Marxist university students.
Ari Johansson, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Radical Youth

The reunification of the trade union movement and the Social Democratic Party was completed in 1960s. The party elected Rafael Paasio (1903-1980) as new chairman in 1963. He represented a third-way politics which included a small ideological shift to the left. At the same time, Paasio was ready to improve relations with Moscow and accept the leadership of President Kekkonen. This ideological change was necessary to end the story of the TPSL fraction and solve the problems in the trade union and sports movements.

In the 1966 elections, the socialists won a landslide victory. The labour movement had a majority in the parliament, which helped its ambitious welfare policies. The baby-boom generation was crowding universities and the new youth culture changed political life. Parties got plenty of young members who organised fashionable singing groups, created political debates and brought global issues to the political agenda. Those were the last golden days before television and urbanisation emptied the countryside labour halls.

The Communist Party faced its next split when the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968. The majority of the party did not accept the occupation and only a minority stayed loyal to the USSR. This split in the SKP was basically a fight between Eurocommunism and Soviet-style ideology. It is exceptional that the young radical left in 1960s Finland found its political home in hard-line Soviet ideology. For example, Maoism and Trotskyism ended up as marginal.

The Welfare State

The strength of the labour movement and constant economic growth made it possible to establish a Nordic welfare state. The key parties behind these decisions were the SDP, SKDL and Agrarian League. Finland had very beneficial trade deals with the Soviet Union which imported Finnish machinery and consumer goods in particular. On the other hand, Finnish sawmills and paper industry made money in Western markets. Finland was able to agree free trade arrangements to the west as well.

The labour movement managed to achieve income policies which made it possible to divide the fruits of economic growth with the workers. Unified trade unions had a huge number of members in the 1970s. Central organisations of employers, farmers and trade unions repeatedly agreed on wages, prices, benefits, pensions and various other issues with the state. These agreements created a political culture with corporatist features. Extreme poverty was beaten with welfare policies. Soon Finland was one of the most equitable countries in the world. At the same time, strikes were common and emigration to Sweden created a shortage in the workforce.

However, the labour movement started to change in the 1970s. In the new welfare state, the role of workers' associations diminished. Many people were still members of political parties and loyal voters, but the movement played a much smaller part in people's lives. Welfare policy replaced a class-based society and prosperous wage-earners did not identify themselves with the old ideology of class struggle. When all parties embraced ideas of the welfare society, diminishing support for labour parties did not even change the course of the country.

The President's Party

President Kekkonen had health problems and resigned in 1981. The next year, the Social Democrat prime minister Mauno Koivisto (1923-2017) was able to win the presidency. As a war veteran, former docker, economist and scientist, he was a very popular figure. Koivisto strengthened the role of parliament and put an end to unhealthy practices of the Kekkonen era.

Koivisto was re-elected in 1988 and in 1994 the SDP chose Martti Ahtisaari (1937-) as their candidate. Diplomat and peace negotiator Ahtisaari won the race, but his relation to the party was tense. In 2000, the SDP once again had a winning candidate. Minister of foreign affairs Tarja Halonen (1943-) served full two terms. Finally, in 2012, the SDP lost the election and the 30-year era of social democratic presidents was over. Pictures of Koivisto, Ahtisaari and Halonen are regular sights in SDP labour halls.

In the 1980s, the Social Democratic Party was still the largest party in parliament, but the SKDL declined considerably. The Green Party was a new player that engaged radicals of the 1980s. Besides that, urbanisation and growing prosperity strengthened right-wing parties.

Mauno Koivisto was President of Finland 1982-1994. Koivisto was an exceptionally charismatic man who performed very well on television.

Veikko Seppänen, The Finnish Labour Museum.



The End of the Cold War

Fall of the Soviet Union affected the SKP and SKDL in particular. Internal disputes continued through the 1980s and the radical communist minority repelled voters. The Communist Party had collected quite a fortune with Soviet support and invested the money in the stock markets. However, their risky operations failed and the party went bankrupt.

The Left Alliance was founded in 1990. Ideologically, the new party started from an empty table, but members of both the SKDL and SKP joined the ranks. The remaining labour halls continued under the use of the new party. The Left Alliance managed to secure around 20 seats and was one of the medium-sized parties

participating in coalition governments with the SDP. However, the communists did not totally disappear from the Finnish political sphere. They founded tiny parties with radical agendas, which did not win any seats in parliament.

The end of the Soviet Union freed Finland from its neutralised status between east and west. Finland joined the EU in 1995 and its own currency was replaced with euros in 2002. European integration divided the labour movement, but the majority followed party and trade union leaders. The SDP was a committed supporter of integration.

A New Political Map

In many European countries, political map has changed in 21st Century. Labour parties have been in trouble with new movements and lost their traditional positions. In Finland, biggest change was the birth of True Finns, right-wing populist party. It had roots in small rural party and managed to gain ground from labour parties with anti-immigration campaigning. It became a major party in 2011 elections with nearly 40 seats.



The Tampere Workers' Organisations' Hall was built in 1950 by local communists and later it served as a youth centre and a theatre. The building was demolished in 2015.

Minna Kalli, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Populist party was successful in identity politics and managed to challenge all major parties in several elections. In 2015, two labour parties got only 46 seats together. It was embarrassing result for movement once so strong. The political agenda has changed in 21st Century and labour parties have lost their advantage as organisations representing traditional working class. They are generally like other political parties, with the exception of owning still hundreds of workers' assembly halls.

Left Alliance have managed to attract support from highly educated radicals and modern precariat. Correspondingly, traditional industrial workers very seldom vote the party anymore. Supporters of SDP are aging, and it attracts support especially from women. Profile of both parties is essentially different than before.

Workers' Assembly Halls in Finland

Early models in Finland and Europe

In the last decades of the 19th century, more and more people started to participate in societal activities which had earlier been in a few hands. With the rise of the mass movements, gathering places were needed. In a class-based society, every class needed their own place. The first meeting hall was built by the temperance movement in Laitila in 1886. This was soon accompanied by the Volunteer Fire Brigade in Vaasa and Jyväskylä in 1887 and the workers' associations, the first hall being built in Turku in 1889. During the first decades of the 20th century, thousands of meeting halls were raised all over Finland by different ideological movements. The architecture was alike in most of the halls, and in some cases even the architect was the same. For example, construction foreman Heikki Siikonen planned several meeting halls, among them Forssa Labour Hall, the (White) Civil Guard's hall in Enonkoski and the Youth Association Movement's hall in Huuvari-Särkijärvi. The ballrooms of the 19th century were used as models for grand city meeting halls from which architectural elements and layouts of the halls were transferred to meeting halls.



The ballrooms built for high society in the first part of the 19th century influenced the architecture of the Volunteer Fire Brigade's meeting halls. Ballrooms were built mainly in towns for the upper class but in the latter part of the 19th century they also welcomed visitors from other social classes. The main hall was primarily used for dances and only some of the main halls included a stage. A balcony for the orchestra was more common. Even though Central Europe's labour halls were presented and known among Finland's labour movement, the ballrooms and other association meeting halls in Finland probably had an influence on labour hall design as they were seen and experienced in reality, not only through drawings. The Helsinki Ballroom was inaugurated in 1833 and is used as a city hall. The main hall in 1913.

Signe Brander. The Helsinki City Museum.



Helsinki Volunteer Fire Brigade's hall was completed in 1889. The main hall was photographed in 1907 by Signe Brander, when the new unicameral parliament assembled in the hall.
The Helsinki City Museum.

The first Central European halls, such as the people's houses built in Gand in 1884 (built by the Vooruit cooperative) and Brussels in 1899 (built by the Cooperative Workers' Bakery) were built by cooperatives, so the function diverged from the domestic halls. The layout of the main hall resembles more the Volunteer Fire Brigade's hall, with balconies going round three sides of the hall, whereas in Finnish labour halls, the balcony is only located opposite to the stage. The stone halls built in Central Europe were enormous compared to the halls built in Finland, especially in the countryside. These are mainly comparable to the halls built in cities such as Helsinki or Tampere.



The first Nordic workers' hall was inaugurated in Copenhagen in 1879. Today the hall is used as a workers' museum. The main hall in November 2022.
Marja Lähtenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Scandinavia makes an exception to the European halls. Here most of the halls were built in rural areas and of wood and there are multiple halls compared to the rest of Europe. Even today there are over 900 workers' assembly halls in Sweden and over 200 in Norway. The very first Folkets hus or people's house that was specifically designed and built as a people's house in Sweden was opened in Malmö in 1893.



The meeting hall built by industrialist Wilhelm von Nottbeck / Finlayson company in 1883 had all the architectural elements of the workers' assembly hall: there was a big main hall with large windows; the gambrel roof gave extra space for the hall. The fireplaces were located in the corners of the main hall's entrance. There was even half-panelling running around the lower part of the walls. The house consisted of a main hall, library/reading room, two rooms for snooker and a one-room dwelling for the janitor. The stage of the main hall was impermanent due to the hall's diverse use, for example for charity fairs, the mill's exhibitions and parties organised by the mill's management.

Tampere Historical Museums.

Over 1,000 Workers' Assembly Halls

The first labour halls were rented or bought as early as in the 1880s, when employers smoothed the workers' associations' way. Turku Workers' Association built a hall in 1889. This is most likely the first hall that was built for the purpose of workers' assembly. The first stone building was built in Tampere in 1900. The first halls were built in cities, but after the General Strike in 1905 most halls were built in the countryside. Finland's rapid industrialisation is closely connected to the forest industry. A large part of this industrialisation happened in rural areas where the logs were cut, worked and sent to the mills by rivers and lakes. This required labour forces in all phases. Socialism spread among these lumberjacks and caught the agricultural workers as well. These wage workers needed a place to gather.



Turku Labour Hall, completed in 1889. Photograph from the beginning of the 20th century.
The Labour Archives.

The heyday in building was in the aftermath of the General Strike in 1905. There were 47 houses in 1905 and a year later the number of the workers' assembly halls was 129. The amount of the halls received its peak in 1916 when there were 940 workers' halls in Finland. That was more than there were churches at the time, a remark made as early as in 1932. The comparison with churches illustrates the speed at which the labour movement penetrated through Finnish society and geography in only a few decades. During the Civil War, many halls were burned and the interiors of many others were destroyed. The Finnish labour movement divided after the war and some of the halls were then owned by organisations with communist sympathies. The fascist Lapua Movement arose in 1929 and affected Finnish society strongly for a few years until its operation was forbidden in 1932. The members of the movement closed down around 200 workers' assembly halls and donated or sold half of these to third-party actors. Again, many of the halls were intentionally burned. Halls owned by the Social Democrats mainly survived through the 1930s. Only after the Continuation War were the confiscated halls given back to their owners, the workers' associations. After the Second World War, the Communist Party was legalised.

As a result, new labour halls were built at the end of the 1940s and in the 1950s. In the 1960s and 1970s, new labour halls were still being built, usually in towns to replace old halls. These halls normally functioned on a commercial basis and they lacked the essential part of the earlier labour halls, the stage in the main hall. The increase in plots' value led to the demolition of many old halls. Halls that were located in central places in town centres were demolished and an apartment or office building was built instead.

The migration to cities in the 1960s and 1970s left many countryside labour halls without users and active members. The statistics for one region can be generalised to reflect the bigger picture. According to research done in 1979 by Päivi Andersson, there were 108 halls in Central Finland. Almost half of the halls had been demolished or burned by the end of the 1970s. Around a fifth were sold for private use. By the end of the 1970s, there were 41 labour halls left, out of which 28 were used as meeting halls. Today there are 37 workers' halls left in Central Finland (given that the region boundaries have changed a little since the 1970s and at least one new hall has been built). Demolition and selling out has slowed since the 1970s, but these still occur on a regular basis for the same reasons: there are no more active members to take care of the halls or no more use for the halls. Today there are around 2,500 meeting halls in Finland that were built and owned by different associations. A little less than 500 of these are workers' assembly halls.

A place to gather

Most of the halls were built in several phases. Typically the association first bought an old croft or a house that was modified to satisfy the association's needs. The house was rebuilt or enlarged with a main hall and a stage. The next expansion included a coffee/restaurant room, if that was not built right away. Other important architectural elements were a ticket sale wicket (lipunmyyntiluukku), dressing room(s) for theatre, meeting rooms, a reading room/library, a wrestling hall and a janitor's apartment. In the second part of the 20th century, the outhouses were replaced with toilets inside the building. The interiors of the halls in particular have usually gone through several changes during the decades. The plain log walls have gained panels, hard boards and wallpapers, the ceilings have been painted and the floors have a new coating.

A typical example is the Eura Workers' Assembly Hall. The workers' association bought an old house in 1905 and refurbished it to answer the association's needs. However, a new hall was required and in 1911 the association demolished the old hall and built a new one, probably using the old logs in the new building. The new hall had a big main hall and a tower in the corner. The hall was expanded in the late 1920s and again in the 1930s, when new meeting rooms and a dwelling for the janitor were built and the tower demolished. The restaurant was also enlarged. A new stage was built as an annex in 1952 and toilets were built in the basement two years later. New windows and a minerit board façade cladding were added in the 1960s. In the 1990s, the assembly hall was restored under the guidance of the Finnish Heritage Agency and an authentic appearance given back to the building.

Finnish characteristics

The huge number of the countryside workers' halls is seen as Finland's (as well as Sweden's and Norway's) labour movement's special characteristic. Due to the long distances, the rough weather conditions, the poor shape of the roads and the absence of public gathering places such as pubs, workers were forced to build their own halls. Moreover, in many municipalities, public places such as schools



Most of the ceilings are nowadays painted white, which makes it harder to see the decorations. Originally most of the ceilings were darker and the decorations were emphasised with colour. Photo from Lauritsala Labour Hall.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



In many halls the ticket sale wicket is preserved, but since it is not needed for its original purpose, it is often used as a storage room. Photo from Uusikaupunki Labour Hall.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



Eura Labour Hall.

Wikimedia Commons.

were not rented to workers' associations, although they were rented to other ideological organisations. For the same reasons, the number of associations was high while the number of members was low. For example, in Hattula there were seven associations which had 165 members and six halls in 1928. Even the smallest associations often built their own hall because the events attracted plenty of visitors and therefore extra room was needed. In 1916, there were 1,625 workers' associations, of which 1,557 were located in rural areas and only 68 in cities. Likewise, 894 of the labour halls were situated in the countryside and 46 in towns. Of course many of the countryside locations later became towns after rapid population growth followed industrialisation. Many of the regions influenced heavily by industrialisation were given the status of boroughs (kauppala) only during the 1920s and 1930s. For example, very early industrialised places such as Forssa and Karkkila became boroughs in 1923 and 1932 respectively. Equally, urbanisation did not reach all the Finnish cities, so several city labour halls are rather comparable to the countryside than to the city halls.

Moreover, the halls were used for workers' cultural activities at such an extensive scale that it is regarded as a Finnish characteristic. Compared to European cities with a high density of workers, the use of the workers' hall differed, as the halls had a restaurant and very often a hotel and the main emphasis was on making politics, whereas in Finland (Sweden and Norway), the hall was built primarily as a gathering place. In Finland, the larger cities' workers' halls usually included a restaurant which operated on a regular basis and was an important financial source while the coffeehouses or restaurant rooms in the countryside halls served only during soirees and other events.

Still another Finnish characteristic can be seen in the fact that in Finland the labour movement had a second heyday after the wars. The legalisation of the Communist Party and vast industrialisation of Northern Finland with the development of the paper industry led to the building of several dozen labour halls in the north by the People's Democratic League.

Materials and style

In Finland, workers' assembly halls divide quite clearly into two distinct categories of city labour halls and countryside labour halls, concerning particularly the halls built in the first part of the 20th century. For clarity these are treated here separately. The wooden labour halls in small towns are handled with the countryside halls, whereas the city labour halls are comprised of the multi-storey stone buildings that are comparable with European cities' labour halls.

Countryside halls

As wood was easy to get, most Finnish labour halls were made of wood. Before the Second World War, the halls were made of logs and later on of boards. Wood was a familiar material both for the construction foremen and for the builders - volunteers and hired workforce - and therefore easy to use. At the beginning of the 20th century, building a wooden house was a skill that almost everybody had. Long and straight pine logs were especially perfect for building massive halls. Part of the labour halls' architectural value is in that they represent the traditional handicraft building techniques of their time and their region. For instance, the hall's dimensions and details reflected the local building tradition. In small towns and rapidly growing districts the wooden halls were bigger and included multiple rooms, but the layout was comparable to the countryside halls.

Usually it was the members of the association who planned the hall, or the task was given to a known self-taught foreman who was a member of the association. In some cases, the plans were ordered from a foreman outside the association. In small towns where wooden labour halls were erected, the use of a professional construction foreman or an architect was more common.

In the countryside municipalities, the meeting halls were among the few public buildings at the time of their inauguration. The difference from other buildings was marked by the large windows showing the place of the main hall and the dimensions of the halls: they were usually wider, longer and higher than the residential buildings next to them. The model for the architecture and layout was taken from the wooden meeting halls of the cities and of other associations as well as from the primary school buildings that were built in the countryside at the turn of the century.

The first standard designs for labour halls were made quite late, in 1927, by construction foreman Heikki Siikonen. He was influenced by Swedish people's houses' standard designs made in 1916 by Sigfrid Ericson. Because of the late publishing, only a handful of halls were built using the standard designs. The standard labour hall included a main hall with a stage, dressing rooms for theatre, a kitchen, a restaurant and a lobby with a cloakroom.

Since labour halls were built of necessity to have a gathering place, in many cases practicality led the construction over aesthetic points of view. Functionality, practicality, the association's wealth and the availability of construction materials determined the hall's appearance. However, where and when possible, aesthetic viewpoints were also taken into consideration.



Mäntyharju Labour Hall was completed in 1928 to Heikki Siikonen's standard plans.

The Labour Archives.

Modest decoration was done with modest materials. Since wood was a familiar material, small details were made with it, for example in the flooring and ceiling in the main hall. Paint was also relatively cheap, so it was used for decoration. Template patterns were used over the half-panels and in the stage frames. Party slogans or symbols were painted above the stage. The decorations have been removed in later modifications in many halls. The flags of the association or labour unions were used as decoration, particularly at big events. Compared to Central European labour halls, most Finnish halls have modest decorations or none.



The stage frame of Karhunkylä Labour Hall included a decorative painting with the slogan "Truth leads to victory" and the symbols of the Social Democratic Party. Photographed by Olli Lehtonen in 1981. The Labour Archives.

Most of the halls built in the countryside had one or two storeys. Meeting rooms were less important because meetings could be held in the restaurant, dressing or reading room besides the main hall. This was partly due to economics, too. The main hall had large windows and a gambrel roof for extra space; in larger halls there was a balcony for the orchestra or extra audience. Half-panelling covers the walls in most halls.

City labour halls

At the beginning of the 20th century, most Finnish towns consisted of wooden one- or two-storey buildings even in the town centre. There were only a few exceptions where rapid population growth and industrialisation had started to change the cityscape and wooden buildings were replaced with multi-storey stone buildings. The new labour halls built in the first decade of the 20th century in these towns adhered to the new townscape. Tampere Labour Hall was the first multi-storey stone building, inaugurated in 1900. Oulu Labour Hall was completed in 1904, Vaasa in 1906, Kotka in 1907 and Helsinki in 1908.

The city workers' halls were made of stone and multi-storeyed. The construction required special skills in civil engineering and they were planned by an architect. In addition, the city labour halls were designed in the architectural style of the period also used in bourgeois buildings. This was partly because the same architects designed the labour halls and the city's public buildings. Influences were also taken from labour halls abroad, particularly in the layout. It has been shown that Helsinki Labour Hall was influenced by Stockholm's Folkets hus, which was built a few years earlier.

In cities, where the number of members rose to several hundreds or even thousands, the requirements for the halls were different compared to the countryside. This meant offices, smaller meeting halls besides the main hall, diverse spaces for spending leisure time, e.g. a billiard room, several coffeehouses/bars/restaurants, commercial premises and dwellings for the hall's workers. As labour newspapers were established, these were housed inside or next to the city labour halls.



Tampere Workers' Association's first labour hall was an old school which was refurbished as a labour hall in 1890. It was soon too small and a new three-storey stone building and a new three-storey stone building was erected in the neo-renaissance style in 1900. It was designed by architect Heikki Tiitola. On the first floor were commercial spaces and secondary rooms. On the second floor were meeting rooms, a restaurant with a kitchen, a reading room and a library among other rooms. The third floor was reserved for meeting rooms. The first annex was built as early as in 1905 when the main hall was built. The next expansion was finished in 1912 after a design competition. The old part of the hall was adapted to the new annex's art nouveau style. The last expansion, designed by architect Bertel Strömmer, was done in 1930. The labour hall was protected by a town plan in 1991.

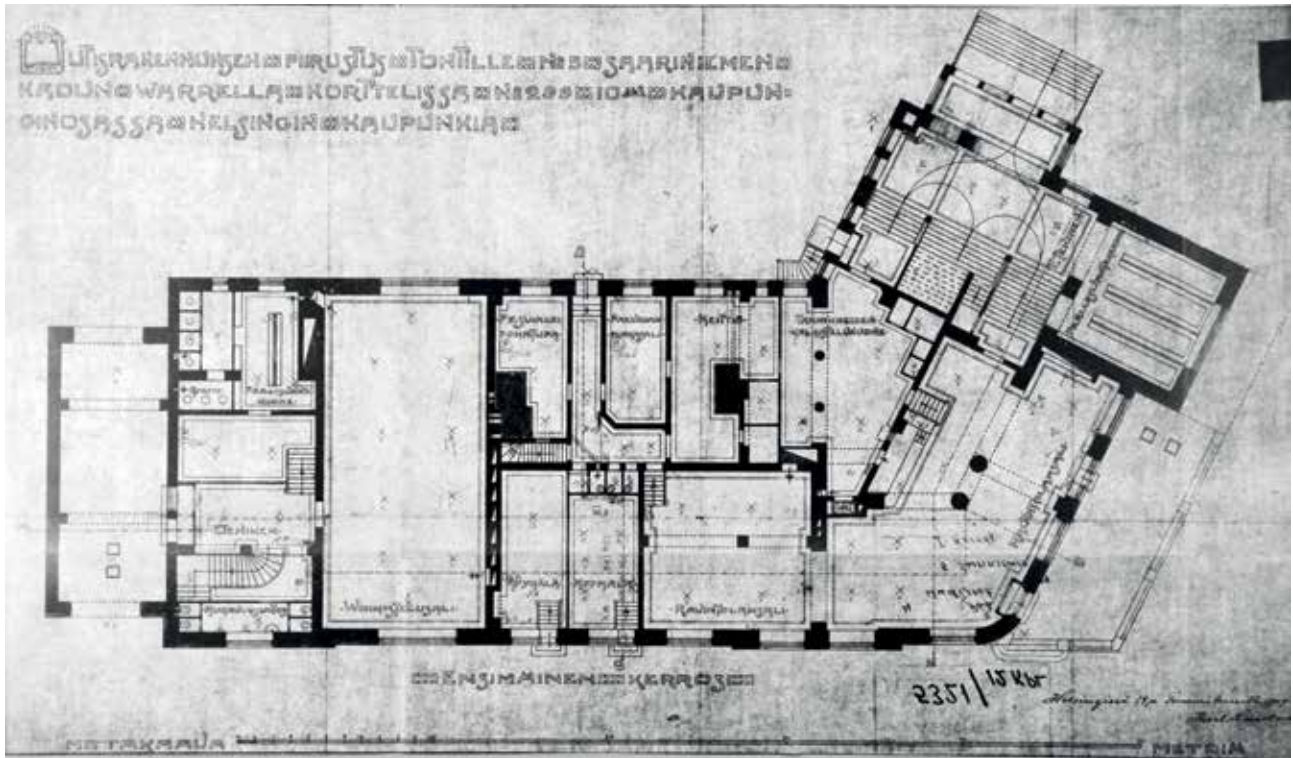
Tampere Labour hall at the beginning of the 1900s.

The Finnish Labour Museum.



Tampere Labour Hall in 2011. The old part of the building on the left. The red-brick Tampere Workers' Theatre was completed in 1985.

Wikimedia Commons.



Layout of the first floor of Helsinki Labour Hall Paasitorni. There are entrances with lobbies and cloakrooms at both ends of the building, two commercial spaces, two restaurants, a kitchen with a scullery, bakery and laundry room, a servants' canteen and a gym hall with showers.

The Labour Archives.



In Tampere Workers' Hall, the façade of the annex from 1930 has seven reliefs that depict professions such as carpenter, mason and painter. Labour-themed decorations were common in city workers' halls.

Kati Lehtinen, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Labour Heritage

A place for labour traditions

Labour halls are monuments and symbols of the labour movement. The halls provided workers with a place to exercise the mass democratisation of education, culture and political influence. Although the results of the labour movement were outside the buildings, the physical surroundings and their location are important sites of memory for labour history and their existence still plays a role in the minds of people today. What is important in the labour halls is that the tangible heritage that they represent is composed of intangible: events, traditions, commemorations, common and shared values and ways of life. The labour movement has built Finnish society over a hundred years, while the way of life, the habits and the activities of labourers have changed. Labour heritage has lived through all the changes, keeping some traditions alive whilst changing others. The labour hall is the tangible labour heritage where the intangible is remembered, processed, represented, worked through and interpreted.

Most of the activities that required regular gatherings, such as association meetings and club rehearsals, were meant only for the members and as such they strengthened the class identity, solidarity and unity of the members. On the other hand, there were public events such as soirees and general assemblies that were open to everybody and introduced the labour movement's ideology to new audiences. At general assemblies, new members could join the association.

The names given to the halls, such as Koti (Home), Torppa (Cottage), Onnela (Place of happiness), Ahjola (Place of hearth/consciousness) and Rientola (Place for activities) depict the meaning that the hall had in the community and amongst the members. The hall was seen as a second home, a place of happiness or a birthplace of consciousness and ideology.

In light of the national history, the same events connect most of the halls: during the Civil War the halls were confiscated, several halls were also arsoned; in 1929-1932, due to the actions and influence of the fascist Lapua Movement, the state confiscated around 200 halls, half of which were sold to bourgeois actors. Again several halls were arsoned; during the Second World War, most of the halls were taken for military use. After every "loan", most of the interiors were destroyed and windows broken, and the members of the workers' associations rebuilt them, restored them and refurbished them. This made them stronger and gave faith to the cause. This is part of the intangible labour heritage that the halls represent. The other part consists of the traditions and the life lived inside the halls that is chosen voluntarily, not by force.

One of the first collective events that new associations organised were walks that headed to nature or to a neighbour association's hall. May Day was approved as an international labour day in the Second Labour Internal in Paris in 1889, in which Finnish labourers also took part. The first walk was executed in 1890 by the Helsinki Workers' Association and the next year it was carried out in several localities. Walks were also organised at the end of May or beginning of June at the end of the 19th century, but after the General Strike in 1905 1 May stabilised as the celebration of Labour Day and the walks and demonstrations were shifted to that day. For example, Lauritsala Workers' Association, founded in 1902, decided at its very first meetings to organise a walk to a nearby hill for the sake of an eight-hour working day and equal votes for everybody. The walk took place on 1 June and the outdoors event consisted of speeches, choral presentations and poem readings. Due to uncertain weather conditions at the beginning of May, walks were also taken during summertime, since they were easy to organise and the gathering could be held outdoors.

Living conditions were modest at the beginning of the 20th century and there was no room for gathering. In summer, the workers met outdoors but during winter, it was impossible. So they gathered eagerly in the workers' halls or took part in building the hall. The self-built workers' assembly hall symbolised power and unity for the workers. Building a hall showed the workers the power of cooperation.

The workers' halls were not just political centres, but also cultural centres that had a tremendous influence on workers' civilisation. This meant totally new opportunities, particularly for those living in the countryside, where meeting halls with growing leisure time meant new possibilities to gather, study and have hobbies.

These cultural habits, adopted in most part from the bourgeois and already familiar in the cities, were totally new in the countryside. Moreover, labour halls offered a place for workers to organise private occasions such as weddings and birthdays.

Many leading city theatres have their roots in workers' theatre from the beginning of the 20th century. By 1906, there were 129 labour halls in Finland, of which 126 had a drama club. Ten years later, the number of clubs was 232. Even those associations that did not have a drama club prepared dramas for soirees. In 1906, there were also 62 associations that had a choir, 30 associations had their own orchestra and 48 had a gymnastics or sports club.

Theatre, soirees and movies

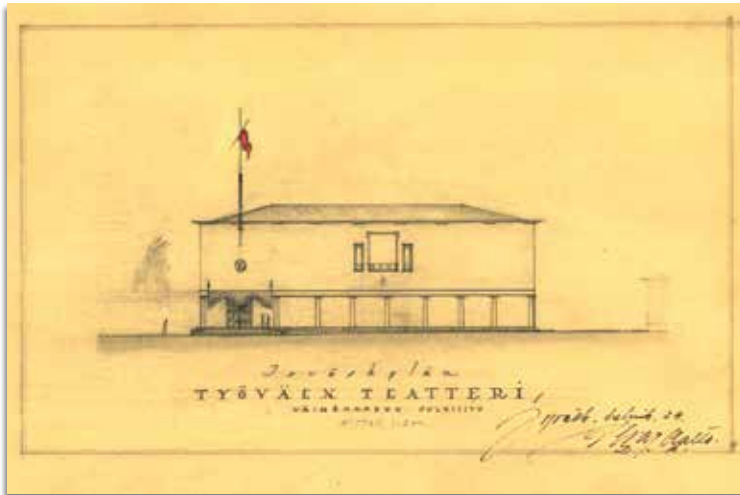
Workers' halls were places for education and making workers' culture. Soirees were the most common events at the beginning of the 20th century. A typical soiree included a speech, a play and one hour of dancing at the end. Depending on the association's clubs that produced the programme, there might have also been a gymnastics show, choral presentation or poem reading. In 1906, there were 4,453 soirees in Finland organised by workers' associations. Usually open to all, the soirees were an easy way to get familiar with the labour movement's activities. Soirees were important events for financing the upkeep of the hall. In 1920, the taxation of recreational events changed and while dances were taxed 50 percent of the ticket's cost, soirees with a programme and at the most one hour of dancing were not taxed at all.



The most common scenery used in theatre plays consisted of a traditional Finnish landscape with birches and a lake. Theatre play in Haapamäki Labour Hall in 1963.

The Labour Archives.

Theatre as a workers' hobby had its roots in the 19th century. For example, in Tampere the workers of the Finlayson Cotton Mill founded a drama club that performed their first play in 1879 on the mill's premises. As labour halls were erected, drama clubs were the first activities to find their home inside the halls as shown in the statistics above. The heyday of workers' theatre was the first part of the 20th century. The importance of the theatre was seen even in the planning of the labour halls. For example, Jyväskylä Labour Hall (completed in 1925) was designed primarily as a theatre hall. The professionalisation of theatres began in the middle of the 20th century.



Architect Alvar Aalto's design for the Jyväskylä Workers' Theatre Hall, i.e. Labour Hall, in 1924.

Alvar Aalto Foundation.



In some cases the labour hall continued as a city theatre while the workers' association moved to other premises, as in the case of Vaasa. The Vaasa City Theatre has its origins in the workers' theatre and the Vaasa Labour Hall. The labour hall was completed in 1906. An annex with a larger theatre hall was built in 1987-1992.

The Finnish Heritage Agency.



There were strict fire safety building regulations for machine rooms since the films caught fire easily. The room had to be made of stone and there was a setup in case of a fire alarm. The machine room of the Mäenpää Workers' Hall still has the authentic film projector from 1941 in use and the authentic fire alarm system has been preserved.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

and voluntary work with their parents, so there might have been three generations participating in labour culture activities. Many labour hall activists met during the project had had a connection to the hall since their childhood.

Workers' sports associations had their origin in the workers' halls. The peak in sports clubs was in 1915, when there were 218 sports clubs under workers' associations. During the Second World War the number collapsed, since all the young members were at war. Wrestling became very popular amongst workers, and wrestling gyms with sauna facilities were built in many workers' halls. Sports fields were built next to halls and competitions were part of the practice. It was common for a sports or gym competition to be part of a soiree programme. As new sports centres were built next to schools and in the city centres in the second half of the 20th century, exercising in the labour halls diminished. Some of the workers' halls are nowadays owned by the workers' sports associations.

From soirees to dances

After the Continuation War, dances were immensely popular and their popularity extended into the 1960s and in some cases to the 1970s. In their heyday, dances were organised several evenings a week. In the 1960s, a television became a common object in households and a severe competitor to dances as well as to other activities organised in the labour halls. After the wars, even workers' homes produced a threat to labour heritage: houses were getting more and more comfortable and the need/will to gather outdoors decreased. Furthermore, the options for spending leisure time multiplied. The whole situation had changed: earlier the labour hall had been the only place to spend time and the ideological cohesiveness connected the workers. The collective past with its difficult times and the particular meaning of the labour hall as "a second home" and self-built effort connected the members of the association. In the second part of the 20th century, new

Movies won popularity amongst people during the 1930s, and machine rooms for showing movies were built in many labour halls in the next decade. Soirees and theatre plays were replaced by motion picture shows. The Finland-Soviet Union Association provided Soviet Union-positive films that were shown especially in halls owned by the Finnish People's Democratic League or Communist Party, although Western films won on the visitor count. As the number of movie theatres, especially in towns, rose, the number of visitors to the labour halls' movies decreased.

Education & sports

There was usually a small library where members could borrow books and/or a reading room for (workers') newspapers which were subscribed to by the association. It was important to offer workers reading that supported the labour movement's ideology. Workers' associations also offered studies in basic skills such as reading, writing and mathematics, as well as lectures on proletarian themes. The regular meetings augmented the workers' argumentation skills and raised their self-belief, as did the success of building their own hall.

Labour halls made it possible for a worker to have several new roles, as a performer, as a customer of the library, as a secretary of the association, as an athlete, as an organiser of events, to mention just a few. The halls gave workers the opportunity to express themselves and their thoughts.

An important part of the associations' activity was activities organised for children and youths. These included sports clubs and events, camps and gatherings with different themes and choirs, to mention just a few. Children also participated in events

generations had various options to spend their leisure time and the collective past was experienced only second-hand and was not given as much value as the earlier generation had done. Labour halls were just one place to go. The old concept of activities was no longer enough.

In the 1970s, bingo filled the labour halls but in the next decade the trend had passed. By the 1980s, the halls were most often used to house meetings and youth activities. Almost as popular were dances and parties whereas theatre and sports activities had in many cases moved to new locations, theatre halls and sports centres. The concern of labour heritage vanishing because ideological activities did not attract people as they used to do was under discussion during the 1970s and 1980s.

New uses for heritage

"[H]eritage is ... not simply ... a thing or place, or even intangible event, but rather is a cultural process involved in the performance and negotiation of cultural values, narratives, memories and meanings. Heritage is one of the cultural tools used in the processes of individual and collective remembering and commemoration, while it is also a performance involved in 'working out' and asserting identity and sense of place and the various cultural, social and political values that underpin these."

Old traditions are taken into reuse as associations innovate new events and try to keep up the communality. Many associations actively use labour heritage as a resource in reassessing the present and planning the future. For example, Ykspihlaja Labour Hall organised a traditional soiree renamed Dishwasher Soiree to collect money for a new dishwasher.



The Tarmo Gym and Sport Club had a gymnastics hall in the Helsinki Labour Hall until 2009. Since the hall had a long history as a gym and particularly as a wrestling and boxing hall, the Helsinki Workers' Association repaired the room, respecting its past. There is an old punch bag and boxing gloves hanging on the wall and old photos tell of the glorious past of boxing matches organised in the hall. The room is named Tarmo, after the sports club.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Dances are still an important source of income in many halls, and bingo is popular especially in Lapland, Northern Ostrobothnia and Swedish-speaking localities. Lotteries are still organised particularly by pensioners.

Heritage is an active process that reworks existing memories so that they are made relevant and meaningful for the present day, thus enabling community renewal and growth. The significance of today is constructed of the openness of the halls: everybody is welcome to join the events and activities. At the same time, the hall functions as a place of remembrance of labour heritage, both in subjective and collective memories.

The state of being political has decreased in the halls and the workers' associations have had to find new ways to attract visitors. An important part of the financing comes from renting out the halls. Particularly the city labour halls operate on a commercial basis and the halls are professionally led. In some halls, there are no events or activities organised by the workers' association at all. On the other hand, many workers' associations organise open-access activities that support the ideology of the labour movement and are a continuation and carrier of the meanings and values of labour heritage from the past to the future.



The House of Culture in Helsinki was built in 1952-1958 and designed by architect Alvar Aalto. It was built by the Finnish People's Democratic League and the construction was for the most part done by voluntary work. The hall is best known as a concert hall for famous international artists and it has been a commercial venue for almost half of its existence with no connection to the labour movement. Although the hall has exceptional architectural and aesthetic values, as a representative of the labour movement it does not fulfil the criteria.

[Wikimedia Commons/TTKK](#).

Criteria for the World Heritage Listing

Architecture

It is expected that the proposed labour halls are in good condition and have a high degree of integrity and authenticity. The hall should represent an architectural style of the time it was built and structural elements needed for organising workers should still be present. Basically this means the main hall and the stage. Part of the authenticity lies in the lived history: the building has developed with the changing needs of the activities and natural development of the labour movement. Especially in towns, additional space has been called for several times over the decades. As needs have changed, the old reading room might have changed to a meeting room or something else. Machine rooms were built as the popularity of movies increased. In the 21st century, for example, accessibility has been taken into account in many halls, meaning new accessible entrances and facilities. In the national protection scheme authenticity emphasises a building's original materials, form and design. While value has been given to the halls' authenticity, newer modifications, particularly from the 1970s onwards, are demolished and the original look is restored.

In the proposed statement (April 2022) it is emphasised that the selected building should represent the heyday of the labour movement when the most dramatic transformations took place in society. In Finland, this can be dated to the time starting from the last years of the 19th century when the workers took the lead in workers' associations, continuing to the times after the General Strike in 1905 when the mass movement was organised and spread all over the country until the end of the 1910s and the Civil War.

Historical value

The hall should have been in use by the workers' association for most of its existence and it should reflect the values and meanings attached to the labour movement even today. The selected hall must have played a role in the organisational work of the labour movement nationally or it should reflect a particular development of the labour movement in a particular part of the world. The proposed statement of OUV emphasises the meaning of urbanisation and industrialisation in the serial nomination, while in Finland and seemingly

in Scandinavia, the labour movement spread in the countryside, in Finland especially among agricultural workers. The forest industry offered wage work especially in rural areas in Finland as well as in Sweden and Norway. Even though the scale was smaller, the goals were equal and so were the activities. A strong socialist class identity emerged among the workers and in general among the members of the workers' associations, irrespective of their worker status. This was a typical Scandinavian characteristic which is not considered in the international proposed statement, while it is noticed that significant political, educational, social and cultural transformations included the proletarianisation of the rural population. The amount of labour halls is also significant: there are hundreds of halls left and still in active use in Scandinavia, while in the rest of Europe the number is counted in dozens. If regional (here consisting Scandinavia) characteristics are to be taken into consideration, this should be included in the definition.

Furthermore, the hall must have meaning and value for the community where it is located and the hall's active use must support the historical idea of a place that welcomes everyone. It is to be decided whether to choose a typical Finnish countryside labour hall or a city labour hall. The countryside hall is representative of a particular Scandinavian labour movement and tells the story of Scandinavia where there were many halls and associations due to long distances, rough weather conditions and a lack of gathering places. The traditional wooden architecture is a typical characteristic of the majority of Finnish labour halls and there are several very well-preserved authentic examples that are still actively used. The countryside hall depicts the special characteristic of Scandinavia where the labour movement spread among lumberjacks and other agricultural wage workers in rural areas. The city labour hall is representative of the national historical narrative of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation and shows the connection to the global labour movement more clearly.

Protection and preservation

In Finland there are three labour halls that are protected under the Act on the Protection of the Built Heritage. Two of these - Kannus Labour Hall and Jyväskylä Labour Hall - were protected in the 1980s. At the time, building preservation by protective town plans was uncommon and the use of the protective act was even more exceptional. In the case of Jyväskylä, it was seen that the protection by the town plan did not give sufficient protection from the modifications that were coming. Jyväskylä Labour Hall is presented in detail in chapter four.

Kannus Labour Hall

The local council of Kannus were planning an open-air museum in the district where the labour hall also stood in poor shape at the beginning of the 1980s. Despite the historical values of the hall, it was decided to demolish it because it was too large and it represented the "wrong" century in the planned museum area. The local association, Oskari Tokoi-seura, bought the building and applied for its protection. It was protected in December 1984 and the restoration work was finished in 1989.



Kannus Labour Hall represents the local handicraft architecture of the Pohjanmaa region, where houses were usually of two storeys.

[Wikimedia Commons](#).

Kaleva Labour Hall

Kaleva Labour Hall in Paimio was protected under the Act on the Protection of the Built Heritage in 2018. The application was made by the local heritage society, Paimio-seura. The protection focused especially on the interior, which is very well-preserved. The Act was used because the hall is situated outside the planned area. But protection under the Act does not guarantee the preservation of the hall after all. Kaleva Labour Hall is located in the countryside in the Paimio municipality. The Kaleva Workers' Association was disbanded in the 21st century after the number of members decreased to one. Currently the hall is without use and in need of vast restoration work. Even though it is protected, without the willingness of the owner, without users and those who would give value to the place, it is difficult to preserve built heritage.



The active use of the hall ended in the 1960s.

Viri Teppo-Pärnä, The Finnish Labour Museum.



Kaleva Labour Hall was famous for its drama club's plays. Old scenery and other theatre props are preserved. Main hall and stage photographed in 2015.

Viri Teppo-Pärnä, The Finnish Labour Museum.

These above-mentioned cases form an exception. Protection by town plan is the most common way to protect buildings like meeting halls in Finland. During recent decades, preservation by protective town plans has increased constantly, whereas the 1960s and 1970s in particular are remembered as decades of demolition and protection by town plan was an unknown concept. In most towns and communes, the town planning is not up to date and the town plans date back to the last millennium. This is why many labour halls with historical and architectural value are still waiting to be protected. Another issue confronting the protection of labour halls is that many of them are located in the countryside outside planned areas and are therefore left without protection. Since the criteria for listing as UNESCO World Heritage requires that the objects are covered by national heritage or building protection schemes to secure their integrity and conservation, many potential labour halls are left out because of the lack of protection status.

Restoration and funding

Many small associations had trouble taking care of the halls from the 1960s onwards as the visitor count lowered and so did interest in participating in voluntary work. The halls got in poor shape and many were demolished or sold for private use. The situation improved in the 1970s when the state started funding the restoration of workers' halls. Today, funding for restoration is organised through the Finnish Local Heritage Federation and the emphasis is on restoring the building's authenticity, historical and architectural values. However, a great deal of voluntary work is still needed, since the funding covers only part of the costs. Many of the countryside halls are run by a few active members, most of whose age is closer to 80 than 40 years, so volunteers are decreasing in number. The biggest commercially operating city labour halls are mainly professionally led and have good resources to plan, develop and market the hall and its activities.



Twelve Potential Labour Halls

In this chapter the potential labour halls are presented in alphabetical order. The texts are summaries of wider research. These summaries emphasise the halls' meaning as part of Finland's labour movement and their value as potential world heritage, while the history of the association and labour heritage are given minor notice even though the halls are selected partly on these grounds.

The international steering group has defined attributes that bind the buildings together in a series. These are:

- Multi-functional
- Multi-generational effort
- Self-organised entity independent from the state
- Democratisation of education and recreation
- Mass mobilisation
- Cultural, educational, political, social activities
- Migration/transmission of ideas
- Everyday lives of the working class, a life-world for workers
- Used by men, women and children
- Instruments of organisation
- Established/acquired out of necessity
- Sociability
- Easy access
- Long-lasting structures
- Awareness with locals today

All of these apply to the labour halls discussed in this chapter. All the potential labour halls were built with voluntary work and have played an active part in local society. The halls are important gathering places even today and their meaning is appreciated in the wider local society. The labour halls as places of mass mobilisation must be interpreted against the local circumstances. In the not-so-densely populated countryside, "the mass" consisted of fewer persons but the same attributes were visible in the countryside as in the cities.

The collaboration between workers and employers was seen at the turn of the century in building the labour halls, for example, funding the construction, giving construction materials or using the company's construction foreman as a planner of the labour hall. The radicalisation of the workers' association wrecked these relations.

Over half of the selected halls are surrounded by buildings of the same time period and fulfil the World Heritage criteria of the buffer zone. Several halls are part of the nationally important landscapes inventoried by the Finnish Heritage Agency. However, this does not mean that these halls are protected. Seven of the halls are protected by town plans and two more are protected in the general plan and will be protected as the town plan is renewed. Three of the halls are not protected at any level.

The living labour tradition is an important aspect in the study. This means that the hall is valued in society and has meaning for the people using the building.



Wikimedia Commons/Marja Lähtenmäki.

Forssa Labour Hall

Built: 1930

Address: Kauppakatu 17, 30100 Forssa

Swedish industrialist Axel Wahren founded a cotton mill by the Kuhlankoski rapids in the Tammela commune in 1847. Due to the mill's success there were around 7,500 inhabitants living in the mill's area of 4 km² in 1909. The population density was higher than in most Finnish towns. The municipality, which in 1923 was separated from Tammela as Forssa Borough, grew around the mill, while most of the citizens were workers.

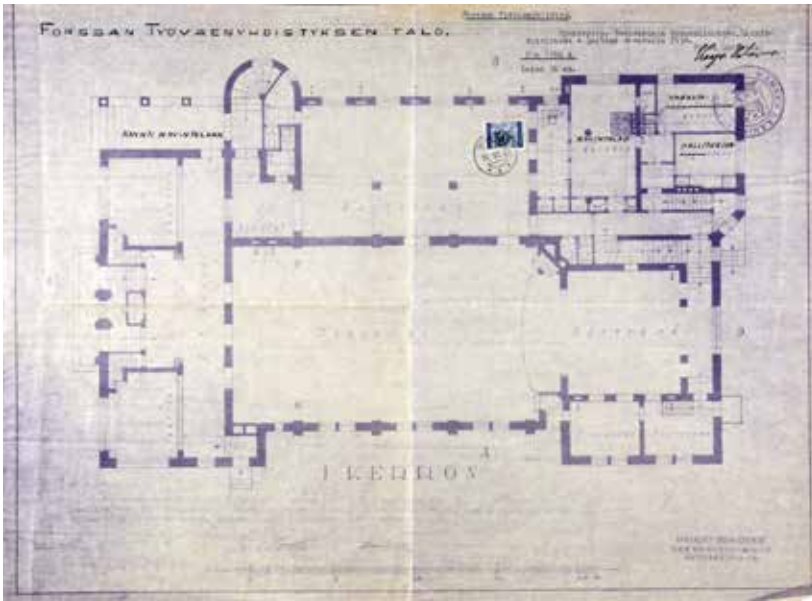
The Forssa Workers' Association *työväenyhdistys Kuha* was founded in 1889 as the first countryside association. The start was slow and most of the active members were other than mill workers. Maybe the long working days affected the enthusiasm to participate in activities. By the end of the century, the socialist ideology had made a breakthrough in the association. The first hall was inaugurated in 1896. It was in this hall that the new socialist programme was accepted for Finland's Labour Party at a party congress held in 1903. At the same meeting, the party was renamed the Social Democrat Party of Finland.

Part of the previous hall built in 1912. The first floor, which was made of stone, was saved from fire and the new hall was built on top of it. For example, the arches of the main hall's ceiling seen in the photo date back to 1912. Photo of the old Labour Hall after the fire in 1929.

The Forssa Museum.



The Forssa Workers' Association's Hall was burned twice before the hall that still exists was built in only six months during the winter of 1929-1930. The new hall had three storeys and resembled town labour halls more than countryside ones.



The design plan of the first floor.
The Labour Archives.



The new hall in winter 1930 before the facades were plastered.
The Forssa Museum.



The first-class restaurant was refurbished in 1947.

The Forssa Museum.



The walls' plywood cladding was preserved in the restoration project in the 1980s. Restaurant photographed in summer 2022.

Wikimedia Commons/Marja Lähteenmäki.

In the symmetrical lobby there were two cloakrooms on both sides of the main entrance. There was a main hall with a stage and two dressing rooms, a restaurant with a kitchen and a meeting room on the first floor. The main hall was two storeys high. On the second floor were situated a first-class restaurant with a lobby and a cloakroom, a wrestling gym with a shower, a meeting room and a janitor's apartment. In the basement were storage, toilets and a boiler room for the hall's central heating. The restaurant operated on a regular basis and was an important financial source during the first decades.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the association pondered the labour hall's future. The options were to restore the old impractical building or to demolish it and build a new one. Thanks to the funding provided by the Ministry of Education, a plan for the hall's restoration was made. The emphasis was on restoring the authentic look of the main spaces. The town of Forssa rented most of the hall for the music school after the restoration was complete. The hall returned to the Workers' Association in 2014, after which the association has been responsible for renting the spaces and organising restoration and funding. The town funded the upkeep for several years but has now ended this. The hall was protected by a town plan in 1989. The protection was elaborated in the town plan of 2001. Both the interior and the facades are protected.



An art exhibition in the main hall in 2022. Above the stage is the logo of the Social Democrat Party. The stage, the ceiling and the walls have authentic colouring.

Wikimedia Commons/Marja Lähteenmäki.

The hall is situated in the industrial community that is inventoried as a Built Cultural Heritage Site of National Importance by the Finnish Heritage Agency. The wooden workers' residential area surrounds the hall on two sides while the city centre's buildings connect the hall to the centre. Most of the buildings are from the same time period, even though on the plot next to the hall there is an office and commercial building dating from after the Second World War.



The main entrance and a ticket sale wicket.
Wikimedia Commons/Marja Lähteenmäki.

Old ceramic tiles on the entrance lobby's floor.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.





Balcony in the main hall. New lights give extra light side by side with the old lamps.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



Detail of the ceiling in front of the restaurant.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

All the decorations are modest and follow the clear line of classicism. The history of the association is present in several paintings and photos on the walls. There are signs for the FTY (Forssa Workers' Association), Elokuvat (Movies) and Ravintola (Restaurant) on the roof of the building that are under protection and that tell the history of the hall.

The level of authenticity is high. Old ceramic tiles are preserved and the authentic colouring in the walls has been restored. Old windows and doors are preserved where possible.

The hall is in active use by different organisations, and due to the hall's excellent acoustics it is a popular place for concerts. The music school still rents space from the hall. Several youth bands have their rehearsals in the hall thanks to the floating floors that were installed in 1988. The Workers' Association has its board's meeting room in the hall and organises some events like the traditional Christmas party and election-related events. The low rents do not correlate with the upkeep costs and there is pressure to raise the rents. Hitherto the association has wanted to offer affordable space for cultural actors. The Workers' Association covers the hall's renting, marketing, funding applications and upkeep jobs. The few active members who volunteer in organising the hall's tasks are not enough for such a big hall. The upkeep of the protected hall is expensive and the association is trying to find a way to cooperate with the town so that the multi-functional hall can be kept public and open to all.

The hall resembles more the town labour halls even though it was built in the countryside in the rapidly expanding industrial community. The historical and architectural value of the hall is high and it is an important gathering place in the locality, exceeding the political boundaries. The authenticity of the hall makes it exceptional and the strong protection will hopefully preserve it for future generations. Forssa has an important role in the history of the Finnish labour movement. However the historical events are connected to the previous halls while the existing one connects only the association and the place. As a latecomer, Forssa Labour Hall does not fulfil the nomination criteria.



The Helsinki Workers' Association.

Helsinki Labour Hall / Paasitorni

Built: 1908

Address: Paasivuorenkatu 5 A, 00530 Helsinki

Helsinki was named the Capital of the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1812. The industrialisation of the city sped up in the second part of the 19th century. The metal industry, machine workshops and electrical engineering were concentrated in the districts of Siltasaari, Hakaniemi and Sörnäinen. Next to these, the district of Kallio was inhabited by the workers. The northern side of Pitkäsilta Bridge became known as the workers' district. When the Helsinki Workers' Association requested a plot from the City Council, it was logically given from Siltasaari district, which was back then on the outskirts of the city.

The Helsinki Workers' Association Helsingin työväenyhdistys was founded in 1884 and was the first one in Finland together with the Vaasa Workers' Association, founded at the same time. It was founded by industrialist Viktor Julius von Wright, after whom the first period of the Finnish labour movement was later named.

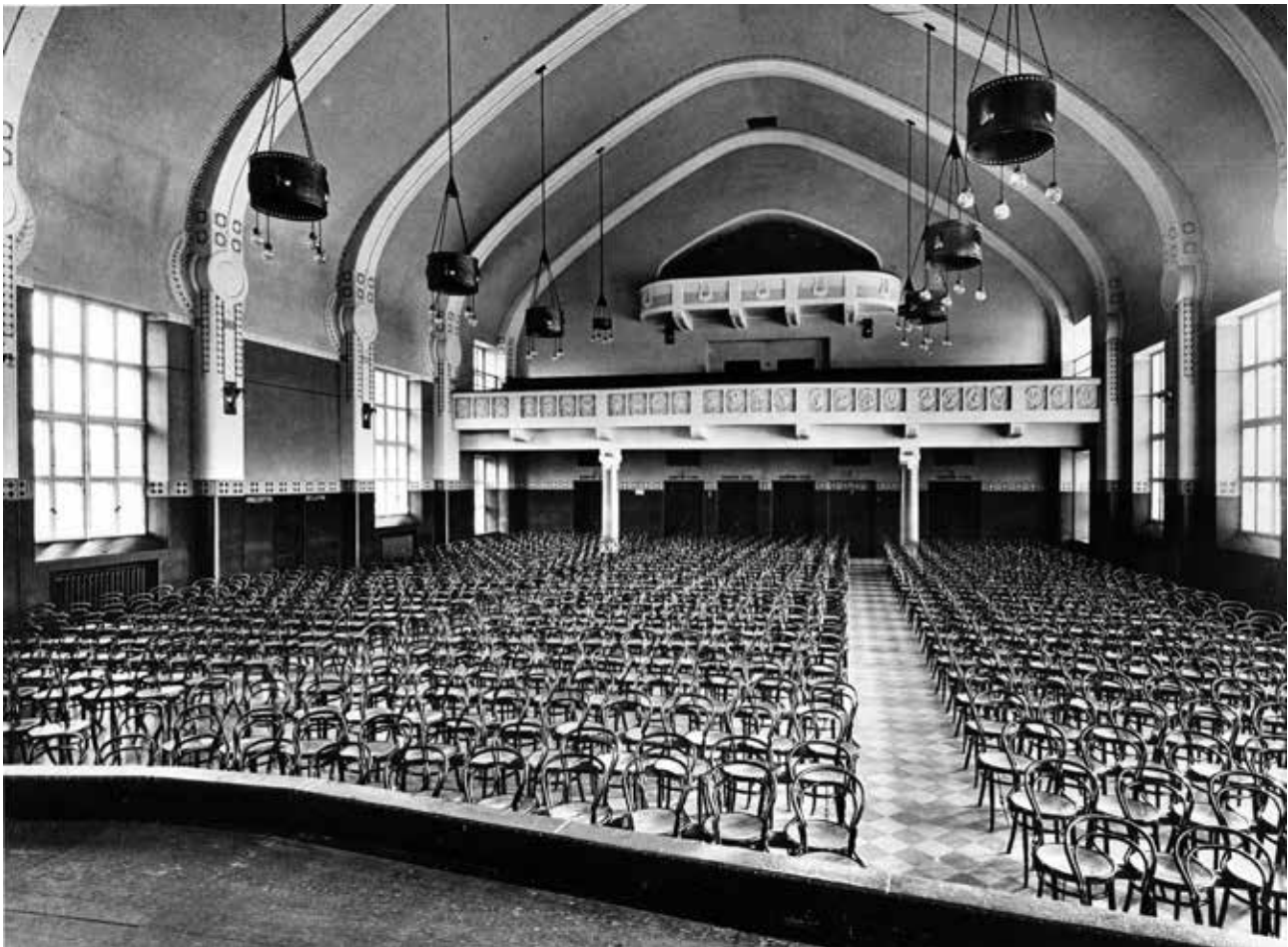
The number of members had risen to over 4,400 in 1905, which guided the size of the new hall. Plans for the building were sought through an architect competition, which was not very common among workers' associations. Architect Karl Lindahl won the competition and the plans were finished in January 1907.

The costs of the building rose from the estimated 400,000 marks at the beginning of the construction work up to 800,000 marks when the building was ready. On the Workers' Association's suggestion, the Labour Savings Bank was founded in 1909 to ease the funding troubles of workers' associations in building workers' halls. The bank was located next to the new workers' hall. The labour newspaper, *Työmies* (Workman) was founded in 1895 and the print and editing office got its own house next to the workers' hall built at the same time.

The rocky plot was turned to an advantage as the granite was used to clad the building. At the same time, it gave work for stonecutters who were threatened with unemployment the following winter.

The use of Finnish granite as a façade material was highly fashionable at the turn of the century. This meant that the workers' hall was in line with the other stone buildings of the city: grand, public and highly visible with the landmark tower at the corner of the building. The hall was inaugurated in 1908.

The main hall was situated on the third floor and it was three storeys high, reaching the top of the building. At the time of its completion, it was the biggest venue hall in Helsinki. The biggest hall was put on the uppermost floor because it was used less frequently, whereas the smaller halls were situated on the second floor. The model for this was other European people's houses.



The main hall in 1908-1909. There were 25 medallions on the balcony and by the time of the hall's inauguration there were 67 member trade union units whose logos were to be located on the medallions. The artist connected two to three logos together to fit them all.

The Helsinki Workers' Association.

The new workers' hall included all the modern facilities of the time: electricity, running water, central heating and toilets. Next to the gymnastics hall were showers, although there were no showers and WCs in the apartments that were reserved for the workers' hall's staff.

After the Russian Revolution in spring 1917, the number of members peaked at 24,000 and the labour hall was getting crowded. An annex was planned in autumn 1917 and the designs were ordered from the same architect, Lindahl. The Civil War interrupted the plans.

The Social Democrats organised an additional Party Congress on 27 November 1917 in Helsinki Labour Hall where Joseph Stalin encouraged his Finnish associates to revolt. The time was ready only a few months later. A red lantern was lit in the labour hall's tower on the Saturday evening, 26 January 1918, to signify the beginning of the revolution. The labour hall was the Red Guards' base where they were armed. In April, German troops bombed the hall, demanding surrender. As a consequence, the ceiling of the main hall collapsed and the

wooden parts and tower caught fire. Later first the German troops and then the White Guard took over the hall. The hall was restored after the war was over and the Workers' Association got the hall back. The planned annex was completed in 1925. A main entrance hall with a big cloakroom, a movie theatre, a restaurant, a kitchen, three office floors and an attic with personnel apartments were built in the new annex. The annex's facades were clad with granite that was left over in 1908.

Restaurant called "Juttutupa" on the ground floor in 1908. The Helsinki Workers' Association.



The new main entrance was located in the annex building. Photographed by Kalle Havas in 1925. The Helsinki City Museum.



The new annex was completed in 1925. Photographed by Kalle Havas in 1927.
The Helsinki City Museum.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Helsinki Labour Hall was the central meeting place for the Social Democrat Party as well as for the trade unions. The labour movement's organisations were concentrated in the Hakaniemi district close to the labour hall. The party built an office building next to the labour hall and so did the trade unions. Due to the hall's active use, rooms were refurbished on a more or less regular basis to answer the period's style, and spaces were adapted to new uses when needed. A seven-storey office annex was completed in 1955. The last annex on the same lot was made in 2012 when a hotel was built in the courtyard.



The office annex was completed in 1955 next to the 1925 annex.
The Helsinki City Museum.

In the 1980s, the hall was mostly used by the member organisations and only the main hall, auditorium and one meeting room were rented out. It was decided to head to commercial use and this meant vast restoration works and new marketing strategy. The needs of the congress hall varied from the needs of the labour hall that had only provided space for its members, while a congress hall had to offer full facilities for its clients. Refurbishment and restoration plans were made in 1987 by Studio Antti Nurmesniemi. The protective authorities became worried about the plans and a statement for a new town plan was made where the labour hall was to be protected. State funding ceased in 1991 and so did the expensive restoration plans. The protective town plan was no longer needed.



The main hall. There are plans to rebuild the stage with a more authentic look.
Helsinki Workers' Association.

When the restoration plans continued in 1996, the hall's historical value was understood and the emphasis was on restoring the authentic look. Over the next ten years, the hall was totally restored according to the original plans by architect Karl Lindahl. Old ornaments were uncovered under the paint layers and newer constructions were removed to restore the authentic look.



A detail of the decorations that continue on the stairs and in the floors' lobbies. Helsinki Labour Hall is probably the only one to preserve extensive labour-connected decorations.

Wikimedia Commons/Marja Lähteenmäki.



On the first floor there is an old clock over the ticket sale wicket. New colourful furniture is sprinkled across the lobby.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Today Helsinki Labour Hall consists of several attached buildings on the same lot, starting from the oldest part from 1908 continuing to the 2012 when the last annex was completed. The labour hall is protected by a town plan except for the newest annex. The hall's location in the workers' borough has historical importance and labour movement organisations are still influential in the area. During the last decades, Paasitorni has been restored to its authentic look and labour history is presented in the restored decorations and paintings. The hall is used by its member organisations and labour traditions are actively performed and represented. The history of the labour hall, of Finland's labour movement and of Finland are tightly intertwined, and Paasitorni is without doubt the best example of the town labour halls.



The lobby of the office floor. New lamps beside the old ones bring extra light to the lobby.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Jyväskylä Labour Hall / Aalto Hall

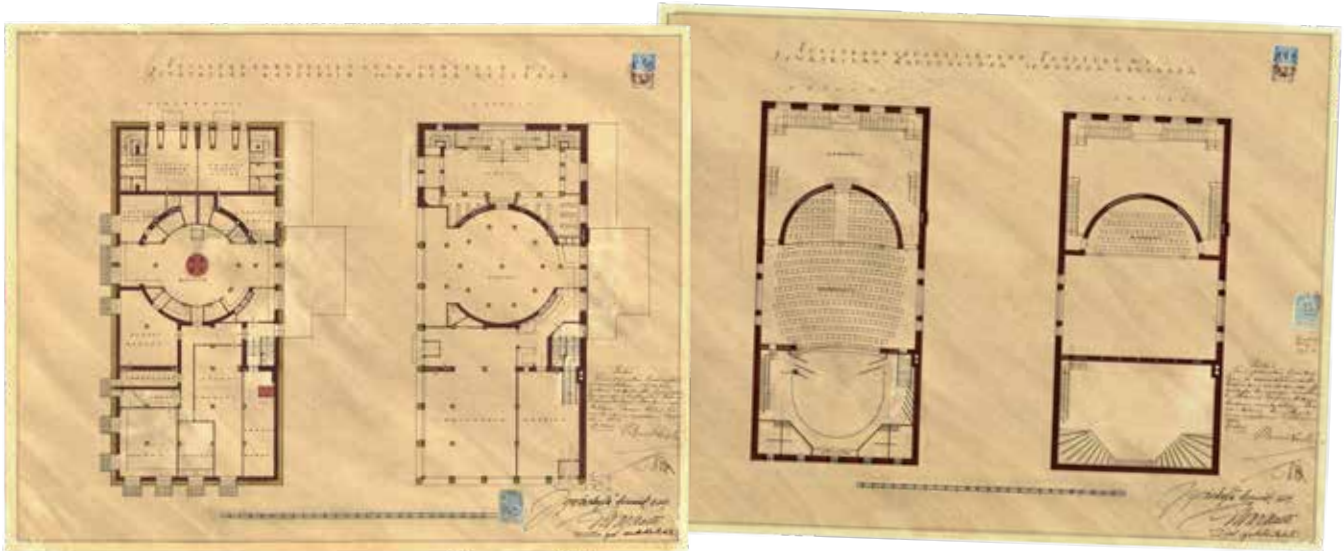
Built: 1925

Address: Väinönkatu 7, 40100 Jyväskylä

At the end of the 19th century, Jyväskylä was a small town known for its Finnish lyceum and academy for primary school teachers. It was the town's intelligentsia that decided to found a workers' association called Jyväskylän työväenyhdistys in 1888. The members consisted of teachers and their servants in the main part. When a railway connection reached the town in 1897, economic life and industrialisation gradually increased. The number of members started to grow in the last years of the 19th century, thanks to the temperance movement, which had shown the power of organisation.

Jyväskylä was a right-wing town and the number of workers was still low at the beginning of the 20th century. The Workers' Association turned to a socialist ideology at the beginning of the new century, and the number of members started to grow after the General Strike in 1905. In 1906 there were already 144 members. Its own hall was needed and in 1906 the association bought a plot with a wooden house on it. Due to the scarce economic situation, the old house was enlarged with a main hall and meeting rooms. Two more enlargements were done before the association decided to build a new hall at the 35th anniversary meeting in 1923. The new hall's funding relied on the prospering restaurant business.

The plans were ordered from a young architect, Alvar Aalto, whose architect office was situated close by. The hall was not planned to be a labour hall. Instead it was a public building housing restaurants and a theatre hall. Its operations provided funds for the association. It is not clear where the association's meetings were held before an annex was completed in 1955.



There were two coffeehouses, a restaurant and a lobby with a cloakroom on the ground floor, a main hall with a stage, a foyer and dressing rooms on the first floor. In the basement there were toilets, a kitchen and storage rooms.
The Alvar Aalto Foundation.



The Labour Hall's restaurant after the hall's inauguration. Architect Alvar Aalto designed the restaurant's interior with his wife, Aino Aalto.
The Labour Archives.

The appearance of the new labour hall was not copied from the surrounding townscape, which at the time consisted mostly of one-storey wooden buildings. Instead, the architect Aalto was influenced by Italian Renaissance architecture and the hall resembled a Venetian palazzo. The interior decorations were not connected to the labour movement.

The rapid growth of the city started only after the Second World War. Industrialisation brought labour to the town and the Workers' Association's need for meeting rooms exploded. In 1949, there were 1,096 events in total organised in the labour hall, out of which 274 were theatre plays, parties and dances and the remaining 822 were meetings, study courses and club meetings. The old wooden one-storey labour hall was demolished and a new annex was completed in 1955. Even in this building, the first two floors were mostly reserved for restaurant facilities. In the 1960s, there were 110 workers working in the association's restaurants.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the main hall was rented to the Jyväskylä City Theatre, which was the successor of the workers' theatre. The interiors were refurbished and a raked auditorium was built in the main hall.



Jyväskylä Labour Hall after its inauguration.

The Labour Archives.

The new annex from 1955 covered the main hall's Palladian window that opened onto the courtyard. The entrance from the coffeehouse to the lobby was closed in later modifications as the restaurant business was outsourced.

Jyväskylä Labour Hall is situated in the city centre, on the main business street. A new apartment building was completed in 1999 next to the old hall and they are connected visually with a colonnade that continues from the old hall to the apartment building and even to the hotel building in the corner of the plot. While the annex from 1955 was attached to the old hall, there is a small courtyard separating the new apartment building and the old hall.



Stairs leading from the lobby to the main floor.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

The hall was totally restored according to architect Aalto's plans after the city theatre moved out in 1982. The exteriors were restored in 1997 and during summer 2022, the balcony was under restoration supervised by the Finnish Heritage Agency. The interiors were restored in 2008. The stage has been rebuilt and moved further back to give extra space in the hall. All the restaurant facilities, the commercial spaces and most of the office building's spaces are rented out. The fourth floor is used by the Workers' Association and Social Democrat Party units. The member organisations organise their events in the main hall free of charge. Furthermore, the hall is rented out and, for example, the city hosts diverse events in the hall.



The foyer retrieved its former colouring and the decorations on the wall leading to the main hall.

Wikimedia commons/Marja Lähteenmäki.

The hall is best known as a masterpiece of Alvar Aalto's architecture and only few know that it is a labour hall. In the building there are no references to the labour movement. The name of the labour hall has been changed to Aalto-sali. On the roof of the annex from 1955 there is a JTY sign that signifies the Jyväskylä Workers' Association.

The Workers' Association's finances are in good shape thanks to the rented premises in all three buildings. This has enabled the restorations to the old hall during recent decades. Even though funding has been received from diverse sources, most of the costs have been paid by the Workers' Association. The pride in the labour hall is visible. For a small fee, the hall is showcased for tourists that come from all over the world but in some cases a tour is done spontaneously on the fly and for free.

Jyväskylä Labour Hall has exceptional architectural value that exceeds the national level. From the point of view of the labour movement, the hall has only minor value, since Jyväskylä was for long best known as a school town and the number of workers was low. The urbanisation and industrialisation took off only after the Second World War. As a representative of Finland's labour movement this will not suffice.



The authentic appearing parquet in the main hall was rebuilt after the City Theatre left the facilities. The hanging lights were designed by Alvar Aalto.

Wikimedia commons/Marja Lähteenmäki.



Wikimedia commons/Marja Lähtenmäki.

Kaskinen Labour Hall

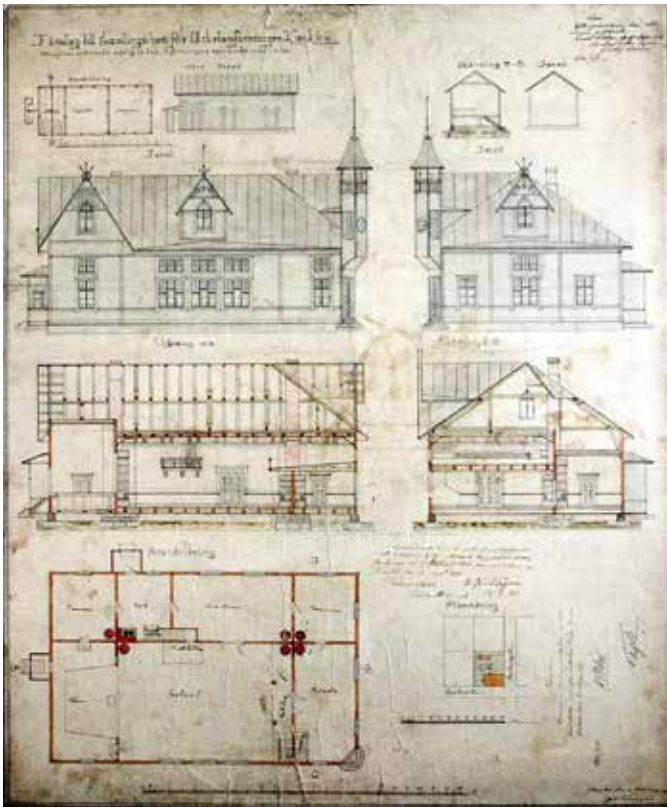
Built: 1911

Address: Kirkkokatu 33, 64260 Kaskinen

Kaskinen is a traditional trading town established by the King of Sweden Gustaf III in 1785. Wood and tar were imported through the port of Kaskinen. In 1906 it was decided to build a railway connection to Kaskinen and the town prepared for the increase of trade by expanding the port facilities and reserving lots for industry and warehouses. At the beginning of the 20th century there were a few sawmills, a machine shop, a carpenter shop and traditional craftsmen. Many citizens worked in the fishery. In this expectant atmosphere, the Workers' Association Kaskisten työväenyhdistys was founded in 1909. The railway to Kaskinen was finished in 1912/1913, and a growth in port facilities and the forest industry. Since most of the citizens were Swedish-speaking, the Workers' Association started as bilingual, although most of the members were Finnish-speaking.

The construction work of the labour hall started in the winter of 1910. The railway was constructed simultaneously. The spark for building a labour hall most likely came from the railway builders. The railway station was only a few blocks away from the labour hall's plot. The same workers who built the railways during the day worked on the construction site of the labour hall during the evenings and even nights.

The new hall consisted of six rooms: a main hall with a stage, a kitchen, a restaurant, a dressing room for theatre/meeting room, a lobby and a one-room dwelling for a janitor. In the main hall there was a small balcony for the orchestra and a bigger balcony for the audience opposite the stage. The hall was immense for the small association and the upkeep of the hall caused extra trouble from the very beginning. As the roof needed to be renovated in 1926, only 15 years after the hall's inauguration, the tower in the entrance corner was removed because of its poor condition.



Kaskinen Labour Hall after its inauguration in the 1910s.
The Labour Archives.

The original plans by J. A. Palmroos 1911.
Tauno Sarja, The Kaskinen Workers' Association.

Kaskinen was the furthest north port to stay open during the winter. This brought dockworkers from the north to the town in wintertime and enlivened the association's events. The hall was kept in good condition and smaller renovations were done during the decades until the 1960s when participation in activities faded. The hall was rented to a local business from 1969 onwards.

A new pulp mill was founded in Kaskinen in 1976 which meant a resurgence for the hall and the association. The new mill brought new workers to town and the number of members of the workers' association increased rapidly. The floor of the restaurant had collapsed and the hall was in poor condition in every respect. The hall was totally renovated. The stage was removed and a new smaller stage was built instead to give more space for sports activities. The janitor's apartment was replaced with toilets.



The main hall in summer 2022.
The scenery was painted by
a member of the association in
the 1980s. The small balcony for
the orchestra on the right was
rebuilt in the 21st century. There
is a nice pattern in the flooring.
Wikimedia commons/Marja Lähteenmäki.



The lobby.
Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish
Labour Museum.

Nowadays the hall is mainly used by pensioners. A local sports association organises activities for children. The hall is also rented out, for instance to furniture sellers. The upkeep of the hall is funded with trustee fees and with the savings that are left from the good old days of the 1970s. During the last decade, the hall has been restored with grants donated by the Finnish Local Heritage Federation and under the guidance of the protection authorities. The Workers' Association does not really organise events. During election time, the hall is used for election events. The number of members is decreasing and most of the current members are retired. Even though there are still industry and port facilities in town, the workers are not so interested in politics that they would commit to the association. The town rents out two banquet halls, so there are not enough users for all the spaces in a town of only 1,200 inhabitants.



View from the restaurant to the kitchen. Old doors are preserved inside the hall.
Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Kaskinen Labour Hall is situated within the town's grid plan area, which is inventoried as a Built Cultural Heritage Site of National Importance by the Finnish Heritage Agency. The grid plan is from the 18th century and the spacious plots constitute the urban structure. Next to the labour hall are wooden houses representing different decades. The hall is not protected since the valid town plan is from the 1980s. In the Master Plan from 2012 there is guidance for the protection of the town's central area.

The interior of the hall represents the time of the hall's resurgence in the 1970s. The walls and the ceilings are covered with boards, the half-panelling covering the lower part of the walls. The floor of the main hall was restored after the Second World War. Other rooms have vinyl flooring. The balcony for the orchestra that had been demolished before the second part of the 20th century was rebuilt according to the original plans in the 21st century. Likewise, the tower and the decorations in front of the second-floor windows have been rebuilt along the original plans. The exterior of the hall resembles the original art nouveau style with carpenter-style decorations, whereas the interior is from another decade.



View from the tower to the town. The big plots and wide streets make the view very green.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Kaskinen is a Northern Finland maritime and trading town which industrialised gradually after the railway connection reached the town. An explosion in industrialisation was seen only in the 1970s, when the new pulp mill was opened. The historical layers of the labour hall represent the association's important turning points and the town's history, and as such has local historical value. As part of the inventoried grid plan area and with very well-restored facades, the hall also has architectural and aesthetic value. On an international or even national level these will not suffice because of the town's late industrialisation and the small scale of that industrialisation. Furthermore, the activity of the association is scarce and the competing halls of the small town make the situation even more difficult. The upkeep of the hall is partly done using savings, which is not very sustainable in the long term. There are plans to found a new mill in the town, and hopefully this will give the association new life, which is certainly needed.



Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Veitsiluoto Labour Hall, Kemi

Built: 1948

Address: Rytikatu 27, 94830 Kemi

The city of Kemi was founded in 1869, six years after the first sawmill had started in the area. With its city rights, Kemi also got the rights to foreign trade and a port was founded. The Kemi region grew quickly as one of the most important centres for the wood processing industry in Finland. Logs from Northern Finland were transported to the city by the Kemi River. The first sawmill on Veitsiluoto Island was founded by the state in 1921. A pulp mill was founded in 1930 and a paper mill in 1955. It was the northernmost paper mill in the world and the fourth biggest in Europe. The residential area of the mills' workers grew on the island of Rytikari, which connected Veitsiluoto and the mainland.

Veitsiluoto Labour Hall represents the rapid change in the lumber industry after the Second World War when the wood processing industry took a step further from sawn timber to the paper industry. The industrialisation of Northern Finland took a big step after the Second World War with the development of the paper industry.

The idea of having their own place to gather evolved among the organised sawmill workers in the 1920s. The mill's management allowed the workers to organise events in the mill's canteen, but political meetings were forbidden. A plot was bought in 1924 and a dancehall was completed in 1925. The Veitsiluoto Workers' Association Veitsiluodon työväenyhdistys was founded in 1928 as a cooperation organisation for the local trade union units. Lack of money postponed the building until 1930, when the Veitsiluoto Workers' Association and the sawmill workers' trade union unit were disbanded because of the new act that forbade communist associations and the like. A new attempt was made by the workers' sports club Veitsiluodon Kisaveikot in 1938, and fundraising had just started when the Winter War interrupted the project. Eventually the construction work was launched in 1947 and in October 1948 dances for the volunteers were organised in the new hall. Jalmari Mäkinen, who worked as the head of the construction foremen at the Veitsiluoto Mill made the plans for the labour hall.

The labour hall was owned by a limited company. The biggest owners were the trade union's paper, construction and wood units. They organised the labour hall's operation, funded the hall and offered their professional know-how voluntarily for the hall's upkeep and restorations. The temporary workforce needed in the mill brought enthusiastic users for the hall once in a while, whereas the locals guaranteed the hall's operation on a more secure basis. The Saturday night movies at the beginning of the 1960s were very popular among the workers.



Plans for the labour hall, the façade and the layout of the first floor.
The People's Archives.

There was a main hall with a stage, a lobby, a restaurant with a kitchen and a dressing room. Upstairs was a meeting room and in the basement a gymnastics hall. A room for the film projector was completed in 1950. The labour hall was partly burned in a fire in 1954 and during repairs, the hall was enlarged with a janitor's apartment and toilets on the backyard side of the hall. The hall has framed walls with board cladding except for the annex from 1954, which is made of bricks and plastered. The big windows show the location of the main hall on the façade.



The coat racks in the cloakroom are original. Part of the lobby was used to build a new accessible toilet a few years ago.
Wikimedia commons/Marja Lähtenmäki.



The original finger panels with a lacquer finish and the flush-panel doors are preserved in the lobby.
Olli Anttila, The People's Archives.

The Finnish Local Heritage Federation, among others, has funded the restorations done in the hall in the 21st century, but funds have been collected from locals as well, and most of the work has been and is still done voluntarily. There are a handful of active actors who are responsible for the cleaning and renting of the hall, funding applications and restoration works. Besides this, they organise public events and offer catering for other organisations' events. The hall is in active use year-round. The labour hall is located at the other end of Rytikari Island by the sea. The hall has particular architectural and historical value based on the authenticity of its material, layout and use. The building has retained its authenticity well. The old wooden houses of the workers' residential area have been demolished and apartment buildings built instead. Due to the totally changed surroundings and lack of protection Veitsiluoto Labour Hall cannot be considered as a candidate for World Heritage Listing. Hopefully the hall will be protected in the near future to secure the preservation of its architectural values.



Simple decorations done with the boards on the main hall's walls.
Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



The restaurant in early days and in summer 2022. The flooring has been renewed and likely the colouring of the walls has changed, but otherwise the interior is well-preserved.

The People's Archives. Marja Lähtenmäki, Wikimedia Commons.



The layout of the hall has retained its authenticity as well as its interiors in most parts. The main hall was used as a lecture hall and movie theatre during past decades.

The People's Archives.



The main hall and the stage. Wrestling was a popular hobby and for competitions, the big gym mats were lifted onto the stage through an opening in the floor. Today the opening works as an emergency exit for the gym.

Marja Lähtenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



Wikimedia Commons/Jukka Kolppanen.

Ykspihlaja Labour Hall, Kokkola

Built: 1908

Address: Satamakatu 40, 67900 Kokkola

Kokkola was a small Finnish town which had grown up around tar and shipbuilding. The heyday of tar and ship imports lasted to the first part of the 19th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, industrialisation took another leap, this time in the metal and leather industry. A sawmill and an engineering industry were established in the Ykspihlaja area where the port facilities were concentrated. With the industry came the labour that turned the Swedish-speaking town into a Finnish-speaking majority. By 1900 the number of inhabitants was still low, a little over 2,600.

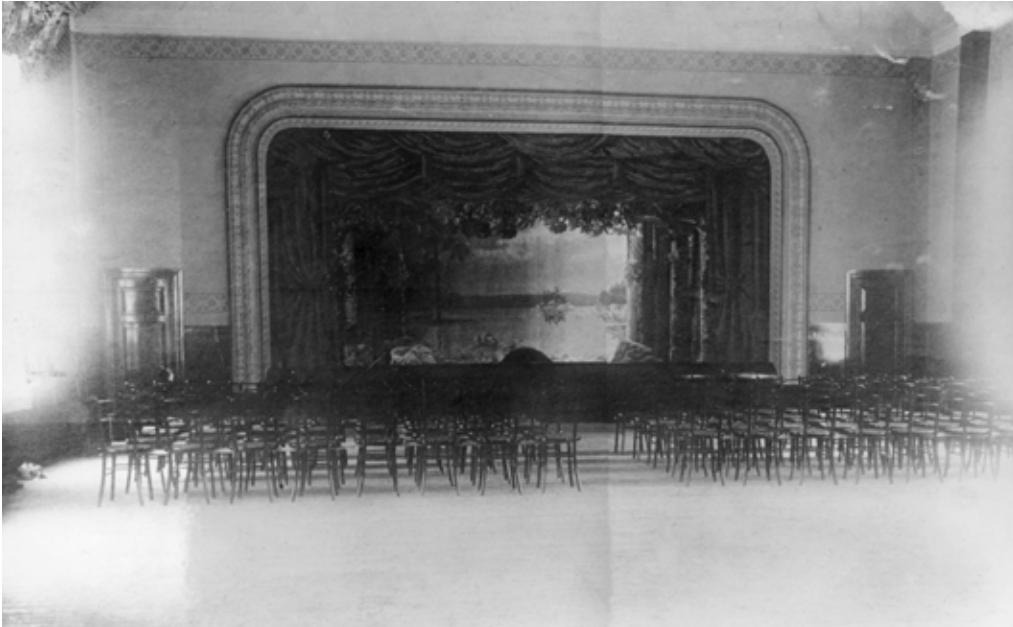


The hall after its inauguration in 1909. The three dormer windows, the flagpole and the chimneys on the roof were removed in later restorations.

The Labour Archives.

A workers' residential area grew next to the port and other industries in Ykspihlaja. It was the workers of the port, the sawmill and the machine shop who founded the Ykspihlaja Workers' Association Ykspihlajan työväenyhdistys in 1906. The Ykspihlaja Labour Hall was completed in 1908. This was the second labour hall in Kokkola: the first workers' association was founded in the city centre in 1905 and a house was acquired the same year.

The original plans of the hall are not to be found, but there was a main hall with a stage, a lobby and a restaurant. The room next to the stage was used as the theatre's dressing room.



The main hall after the labour hall's inauguration. The right-side door was probably removed when the stage was extended.

The Ykspihlajan toimitalo Association.

While the stage was used by the actors and the main hall's floor was divided between wrestlers and gymnasts, the orchestra practised in the dressing room during the evenings. More room was clearly needed. In 1946, an outhouse was built where a new wrestling gym and a room for the orchestra were located. An annex to the hall was completed in 1957. In the basement were storage and space for the central heating, on the first floor was a kitchen, an annex for the restaurant and toilets, and on the second floor a janitor's apartment, a library and a spacious meeting room. At the same time, the stage was enlarged. In 1961, a new dressing room was created on the second floor over the stage and a dressing room, sauna and showers were built next to the wrestling gym in the courtyard.



The dressing room from 1961 has retained its authentic look and is still in its original use.

Taija Hovatov, The Ykspihlajan toimitalo Association.



All the restorations have been done according to the needs of the users, with the historical or architectural values secondary. A black stage is most practical for theatre plays. The stage was extended in the 1950s.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



The main hall's ceiling is most likely authentic. Apparently, the painted backing board is attached to the ceiling with wooden bars that form the pattern.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

The main hall's windows on the courtyard side were removed in 1957 and all the windows of the older part were later changed to new ones. The walls were covered with hardboard in the 1970s and the flooring has been renewed in most rooms, including the main hall. The old doors leading to the main hall have been preserved, although they have a new colouring that continues from the main hall to the restaurant.

Ykspihlaja borough is situated next to the sea, five kilometres from the town centre. Ykspihlaja Labour Hall is situated by Satamakatu Street, which is the main street of the residential area and of the borough and which leads to the port area. A few residential houses are from the beginning of the 20th century though many of them have been heavily altered. The hall was protected by a town plan in 2021. It was the first town plan in the area and it was needed to define the needs (and limits) of the port industrial area's expansion and to preserve the old residential area and specify its values.



The vast lobby was probably a restaurant before the annex was built.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



The wrestling gym and the room for the orchestra were on the left, in the middle were the dressing room, shower and sauna and on the right was storage. The outhouse is no longer in use and is in poor shape.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



The hall is owned by several cultural and political associations, a typical characteristic of the halls of the People's Democratic Movement. Several owners guarantee the active use of the hall and constant negotiations are needed to ensure that all have their turn in the main hall. The hall's upkeep is done together and old traditions are taken into new use when necessary. The hall has been in active use since its inauguration and it is an example of an active living tradition. Ykspihlaja is a place where labour heritage has flourished through the owner organisations that represent different cultural fields, from sports to theatre. Historically the Ykspihlaja workers' residential area was strongly political, which was seen in the upkeep of the hall. Socialist views dictated the hall's activity. Nowadays political views are left behind and the hall is first and foremost a culture hall that brings together the residents of the borough and the whole town.

The restaurant was enlarged into the annex in 1957. The interior is likely from a later period.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



The hall has particular historical value as a place of labour heritage that has lived through the decades. The needs of the users have dictated the changes and modifications made to the labour hall. A continuous lack of money has prevented dramatic changes and authenticity is still present, even though partly hidden under newer constructions. Nevertheless the architectural value has been only secondary in restorations and therefore Ykspihlaja Labour Hall does not fulfil the high degree of authenticity and integrity that is required of World Heritage candidates.

The original doors of the 1950s annex lead from the restaurant to the courtyard. The white-red chess-patterned flooring under the mat gives a hint of the original flooring.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Kotka Labour Hall / Kotka Concert Hall

Built: 1907

Address: Keskuskatu 33, 48100 Kotka

The Kotka region by the Kymi River was heavily industrialised after the rapid growth of the forest industry in the 1870s. Logs were driven from the two largest lakes in Finland - Saimaa and Päijänne - to the mouth of the Kymi, where they were worked into timber. From the port of Kotka, the timber was dispatched to Europe. There were nine steam sawmills by 1876. Paper, cardboard and pulp mills followed the sawmills, and the port facilities expanded with the industry. The city of Kotka was founded in 1879 on the two islands of Kotkansaari and Hovinsaari. The rapid growth in mill and port workers led to the foundation of the Kotka Workers' Association *Kotkan työväenyhdistys* in 1888. One of the sawmills was founded by the Norwegian industrialist Hans Gutzeit, who brought mill workers from his homeland to Kotka.

The particular importance of Kotka is attached to the early stage of the movement. The workers' beverage strike of 1898 was initiated by two workers from Kotka and it spread quickly as a nationwide mass movement, reaching 70,000 strikers by the end of the year. This was far more than there were members in the labour movement at the time. This was the starting point of the mass organisation of workers.

At the turn of the century, the wooden town of Kotka gave way to the stone buildings erected in art nouveau style. The surroundings dictated the guidelines for the appearance of the new workers hall. The Workers' Association approached architectural agencies for a plan for a new labour hall after they had asked for plans from Oulu, where a new hall had been finished in 1904, and from Helsinki, where the Workers' Association had ordered from architects Gesellius, Lindgren and Saarinen a plan for a new workers' hall in 1903. These plans were never used but neither were they passed to Kotka. The architects Gesellius and Saarinen responded to the association's request. With its resemblance to the bourgeois buildings, the Workers' Association emphasised their equal right to be visible in the townscape.



A postcard from the beginning of the 20th century after the completion of the Kotka Labour Hall in 1907.
The Finnish Heritage Agency.

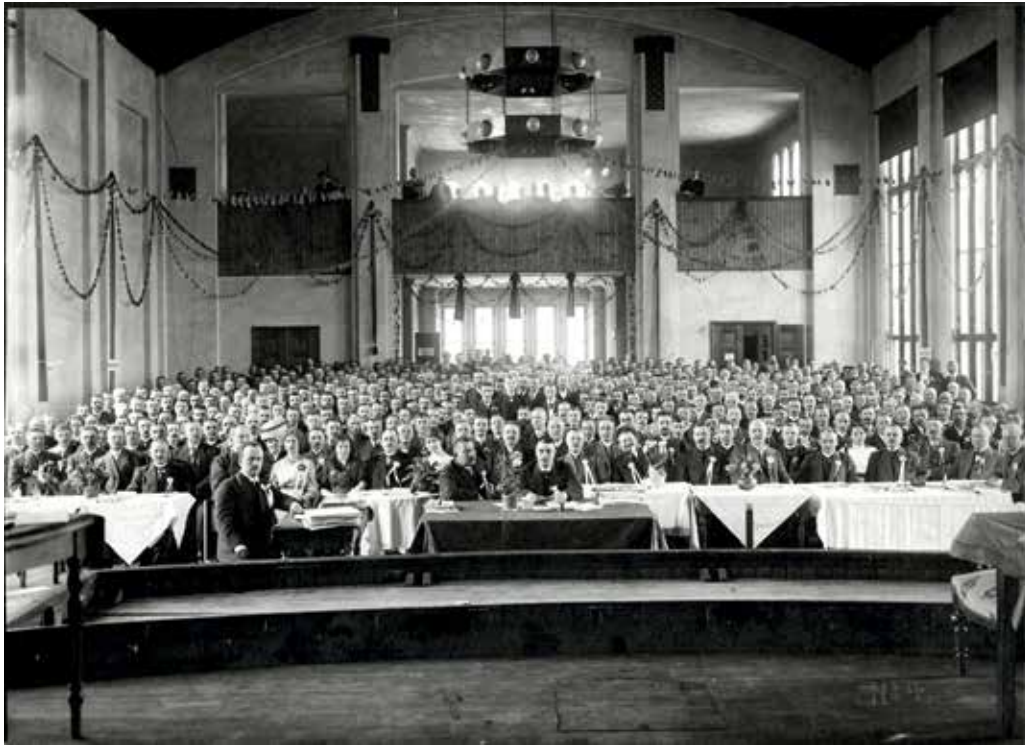
Although the association wanted their hall to resemble upper-class monuments in the town centre, in reality the scarce funding forced the association to change the architects' plans in minor details for a more economical solution. The paid labourers' skills also limited the use of the original plans and simpler solutions were sought. Part of the building, the wing on Keskuskatu (Aleksanterinkatu) Street, was left unbuilt due to lack of money. This part of the plot was built in 1961 when a new two-storey apartment and office building was erected.

Most of the work was done with paid labour, but members of the association were favoured. However, the funds for building were collected with voluntary work. Voluntary work was used in several minor construction phases and in the food supply. Building a three-storey stone building required skills that most of the mill and dockworkers did not have.



The restaurant in 1930.
The Labour Archives.

Besides a main hall, the new building contained a smaller hall, several meeting rooms, a restaurant, a shop, a library and a room for the workers' theatre. In addition to political activities, the new hall became a centre for workers' activities such as drama, an orchestra and a choir. Dance evenings in the main hall were popular for several decades and the restaurant was economically profitable.



Cooperative delegation meeting in the main hall in 1913. Photograph taken from the stage.
The Finnish Labour Museum.

Almost finished, in August 1907, the new workers' assembly hall housed the third conference of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in which Vladimir Iljitš Lenin also took part.

During the Continuation War, the Soviet Union bombed Kotka heavily and the workers' hall was hit in July 1941. As a result, the north end of the building collapsed. The banquet hall was totally ruined. Plans to build a new six-storey workers' hall were made in 1946. The war damage was repaired temporarily in the southern part of the building in 1949. Because of financial difficulties, the plans for a new building were postponed several times until 1953 when the Workers' Association decided to restore the old building according to the original plans by architect Eliel Saarinen. Even this time the funding was insufficient and the roof of the main hall could not be executed according to the plans. Old bricks were cleaned and reused where possible and new bricks were ordered using the old ones as models. The rooftop was lowered and was made of cement tiles instead of the sheet metal roof of the original plans. In the restoration of the 1980s, the authentic form and material of the roof were restored.



Kotka Labour Hall after bombing 1 July 1941.
The Military Museum.

By 1905 there were over 600 members of the Kotka Workers' Association. Although funds were scarce, the workers wanted to build a stone building as grand as the bourgeois ones next to it. The hall is a monument to the rapid industrialisation of a former fortress town. The fast industrialisation of the area brought workers from all over the country and even from abroad. Work in the sawmills was most often seasonal, but as the industry diversified, employment became stable. The forest industry connected Eastern and Central Finland to the global economy in the city of Kotka where the logs were worked as Europe's highly wanted timber. When the Social Democrat Party was founded in Finland in 1899, the Kotka Workers' Association was among the first to join the party. Even today, Kotka is an important industrial city with large port facilities.

The Kotka Workers' Assembly Hall is located at the crossroads of Keskuskatu and Kotkankatu Streets in the grid plan area of Kotka city centre. The old speaker balcony in the inner court is nowadays used for restaurant facilities, serving as the restaurant's terrace. The rest of the inner court is used as a car park. The annex built in 1961 lines Keskuskatu Street. The surrounding blocks consist of commercial houses and office buildings from different decades.

The Kotka Workers' Assembly Hall represents the national romantic style that emphasises Finnishness in its decoration. In the building, the decorations are modest due to the association's economic situation during the hall's building and during the reconstruction era when most of it was rebuilt. As mentioned in the town plan report, it has architectural and aesthetic value and its meaning as part of the national and international labour movement is significant.

The banquet hall was totally rebuilt in 1954 following Saarinen's plans in most parts. The stage was later rebuilt and lowered. The lights in the ceiling are copies of the original model. Once completed in 1907, there were windows opening to Aleksanterinkatu (Keskuskatu) Street on the entrance side of the hall, but these disappeared in later modifications. The large windows open onto Kotkankatu Street and the inner courtyard.

The two-storey annex from 1961 on Keskuskatu Street has retained its original façade in most parts. The use of red brick connects the annex to the workers' house aesthetically. The historic layer that the annex brings to the whole tells of the need for commercial and other rentable premises to strengthen the association's economy in the second part of the 20th century when the visitor count at the association's events decreased.

In the 1970s, activities in the assembly hall declined and the income was used for operating costs. No funds were left to restore the building and the hall got into poor shape. The city of Kotka bought half of the house with the intention to restore the main hall as a concert hall at the beginning of the 1980s. By 2010, the rest of the hall was sold to the town. The Kotka Social Democrats rent an office room in the annex building and saunas situated in the labour hall's basement. Most of the former offices are used by the town's organisations. Two restaurants operate on the ground floor. In the annex building there are offices on the ground floor and dwellings on the second floor.



The main hall and the rebuilt stage.
Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



The lobby of the office floor. There are simple ornaments on the wall.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

The entrance hall in summer 2022. The cloak-room was formerly situated on the other side of the lobby. Nowadays it is situated in the former horse alley.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Kotka Labour Hall was built during the rapid expansion of the labour movement in Finland after the General Strike that stemmed from the Russian Revolution of 1905, and as such it is representative of this important era. However, Kotka Concert Hall does not fulfil the high architectural requirements of UNESCO's World Heritage criteria. The architectural value lies above all in the authentic appearance of the facades and in small details in the main hall and the lobby, whereas the whole is a collection of old and new looks with new materials. The appearance of the main hall, the lobbies on every floor and the staircase are from the 1980s restoration.

Lenin's visit to the hall and the bombardment by the Soviet Union give the hall particular historical value. Since the hall is nowadays owned by the city and has been used mainly as the concert hall of the Kymi Sinfonietta Orchestra for over 30 years, the connection between the hall and the labour movement is weak. For the city of Kotka, the history of the labour movement is not so significant that they would emphasise it. Even though there is a small exhibition of the building's history, including the association's history, in the lobby and outside the hall there is a small plaque that tells of Lenin's visit, the hall is nowadays first and foremost a cultural centre. Due to the hall's current use, the building has been renamed the Kotka Concert Hall. However, the hall continues to be a cultural centre as it has been since its inauguration, although without the political aspect. The Social Democrats of Kotka rarely rent out the main hall, because of the high rent and lack of mass events. If it is not full of people, there is a disturbing echo in the hall. Furthermore, the city of Kotka is building a new community hall, and the future use of the labour hall is insecure.

The hall is recommended to be protected in a part-zoning plan (osayleiskaava) from 2018. The need for protection is also noted in the region plan from 2010. The valid town plan is from 1968 and is being revised. Right now the protection level is not sufficient. This was seen a few years ago, when the city decided to install solar panels on the labour hall's roof. Since the hall does not have legal protection status, it was not necessary to bring the issue to the City Council or preservation officials. After the discussion started by the Kotka Social Democrats, the plans were abandoned. The hall will be protected as the town plan is completed; this is the objective of the city as well as of the protection authorities.



Wikimedia Commons/Marja Lähteenmäki.

Lauritsala Labour Hall, Lappeenranta

Built: 1910

Address: Hakalinkatu 1, 53300 Lappeenranta

Lauritsala Labour Hall is located in Eastern Finland close to Finland's biggest lake, Saimaa. The Saimaa Canal was opened in 1856 and connected Saimaa to the Gulf of Finland. The shore of Saimaa close to the canal was used in forestry even before the canal was completed. After the completion of a railway line in 1887, industrialisation boomed in the area. A sawmill was founded in the grounds of Lauritsala Manor in 1891. A workers' residential area grew up next to the mill without planning. A story is told that the workers were allowed to take as many boards as they could carry from the sawmill to build a home and the home was built in the place where the pile of boards was dropped. It was the sawmill workers who founded the Lauritsala Workers' Association Lauritsalan työväenyhdistys in 1902. The tenant farmers had their own trade union unit under the Workers' Association until 1916, when it was disbanded. This depicts the situation in the region: The commune of Lappee where the Lauritsala sawmill was situated was in the middle of the farming countryside but the rapid industrialisation overtook the agriculture in the area. Lauritsala became a borough in 1932 and was joined to the town of Lappeenranta in 1967, as both centres had grown together.

Lauritsala Labour Hall represents a countryside labour hall of Eastern Finland where industrialisation changed the agricultural society at the beginning of the 20th century. The forest industry played an important part in Finland's industrialisation, especially in Eastern and Northern Finland. Even though most of the commune's citizens were workers, the level of urbanisation stayed low.

The first meetings were organised in members' homes until the manager of the sawmill allowed them to gather in the sawmill's reading room. This use was forbidden in 1908 and planning of the labour hall started. The designs were made by the sawmill's construction foreman free of charge. Several parties and a lottery were organised during summer 1909 and the labour hall was inaugurated in October 1910.



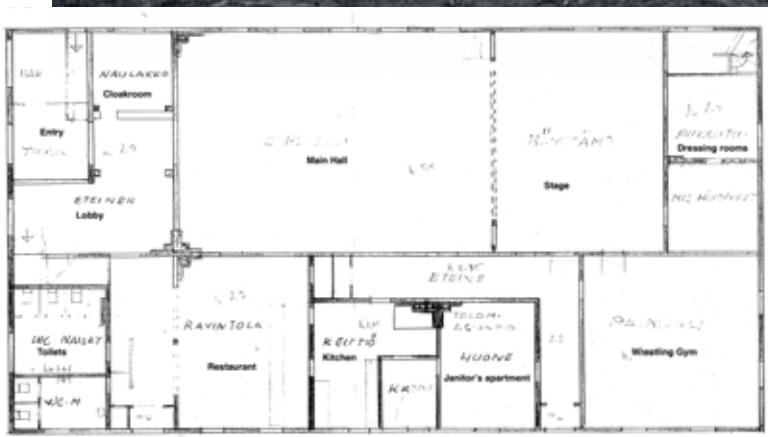
Lauritsala Labour Hall after its inauguration in the 1910s.
The Labour Archives.

The hall turned out to be too small soon after its completion and plans for an extension were made in 1917. The owner of the sawmill supported the building financially. The original plans are missing but the written documents of the extension tell that up to ten new rooms were planned. The hall was extended into the courtyard and upwards. The annex was completed at the beginning of the 1920s and then the hall consisted of two meeting rooms, a dressing room and a balcony for the main hall on the second floor and a main hall with a stage, a lobby, a kitchen, a restaurant room, a janitor's apartment, a dressing room and a wrestling gym on the first floor.

In 1936, the restaurant and the lobby were restored. This probably meant an expansion when the music hall was built upstairs over the restaurant and lobby. A new roof that connected all the earlier annexes was built the next year. The Workers' Association started to show movies in 1938 and so some changes were made in the labour hall. Toilets were built in 1969.



A photo from 1931 shows the old part of the labour hall with a shingle roof on the back and the annexes built in the 1920s in the front. A sheet metal roof for the whole building was made in 1937.
The Labour Archives.



Layout of the first floor following the current situation. The wrestling gym is used as the board's meeting room and the dressing rooms are combined and used by the women's section.
Lauritsala Workers' Association.



The entrance to the main hall. Electric lights were installed in the hall in 1925 and the lights in the main hall might be original. The design of the lights is familiar from other labour halls. The stoves are used in electrical heating.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

A restoration plan was made at the beginning of the 1980s and the main spaces were refurbished according to the plans. The combination of white, red and grey colouring followed the plans but did not necessarily have a historical basis. It is likely the floors date back to the same restoration.

Lauritsala Labour Hall is protected by the General Plan from 2019. The valid town plan dates back to 1981 and when it is updated, the hall will very likely be protected in it. The hall is very well-preserved and has fine authentic details.



The cloakroom with coat racks in the lobby.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

The lobby and stairs leading to the second floor. The furniture matches the interior.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



The appearance of the main hall is quite clean due to the light colouring. If there were any decorations, these have been hidden under layers of paint. Above the stage is the new logo of the Social Democrat Party, a red rose and the year 1902, when the Workers' Association was founded. Originally the floor was made of planks.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



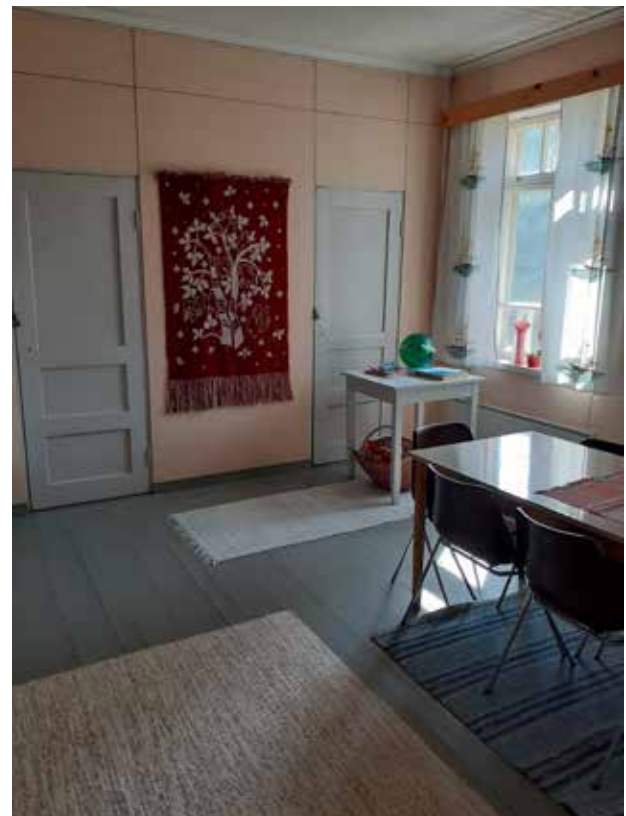
Photos of the Social Democrat presidents hang on the restaurant wall. The labour hall has served as the area's polling station for decades.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Lauritsala borough is today part of Lappeenranta's central area. Lauritsala Labour Hall is located in the corner of the workers' residential area which was built at the turn of the century. The connection between the labour hall and the residential area has been retained. The hall is in active use and is an important gathering place for the community. The active development of the hall's use for labour traditions is minute, since there are only a handful of active members who spend their time on the upkeep of the hall. Even though the association is politically active, the upkeep and development of the hall's use is secondary. While the authenticity of the hall is high, the restoration of the 1980s did not respect the building's historical appearance and the flooring materials and white walls are in contradiction with the original parts. As a result, Lauritsala Labour Hall is not the best candidate for World Heritage Listing.

The music hall on the second floor was probably built in the 1930s when the hall was expanded. It was used by the workers' orchestra until 1946, when the orchestra joined the newly founded music organisation. The room is nowadays rented to the local Martta organisation. The interior probably dates back to the 1930s when the room was built.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.





Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Walo Labour Hall, Oulu

Built: 1910

Address: Ketjutie 3, 90560 Oulu

The sawmill industry grew rapidly in the north at the end of the 19th century. Wood reserves were huge in the northern forests and the logs were easy to transport along the wide rivers. Toppila harbour next to Koskelankylä district was already being used for foreign trade in the 18th century. Tar was the main product in the 19th century, and Oulu was the capital of tar's foreign trade. By the end of the century, tar production in the north had lessened and workers moved to the coast to work in the mills. Koskelankylä grew rapidly as a sawmill and dock workers' residential area.



Walo Labour Hall after the expansion was completed in 1920.

The People's Archives.



The labour hall's restaurant in the first decades.
The Walo ry.

The Koskelankylä Sawmill Lodge (ammattiosasto) was founded in 1900 and a workers' association called Koskelankylän työväenyhdistys Walo in 1908. They decided to build a hall right away. With a lot of voluntary work and active fundraising, the hall was completed in 1910. The hall was expanded in 1920 with a new lobby and a dressing room. The next year it was decided to expand the main hall and the stage. After the wars, the hall was in poor shape and with the restoration works a new expansion was started in 1946. A lack of construction materials meant that the work started with straightening used nails among other things. A new main hall was built.

In the 1950s, the association started movie shows and built a machine room for the film projector. The entrance to the room was made in the middle of the main façade. Movies were shown until the 1970s. The machine room was left intact. There were two Soviet film projectors, of which one with all the fire safety systems was donated to the Museum for Motion Pictures. The other one is still in its original place.

A new wrestling hall and toilets were built in the basement in the 1950s. The old wrestling hall was turned into a library. An expansion was made behind the stage, where new offices were built. The collection of over 1,000 books was until then located in the lobby.



The layout of the hall in the 21st century.
The Walo ry.



A new main hall was built in the annex in the 1940s. A Left Youth district meeting in the new main hall in 1949.

The People's Archives.

At the end of the 1960s, the association was pondering demolishing the labour hall and building a new one instead since the hall needed restoration. At the time, restoration was out of fashion and modern buildings favoured. The old hall was restored after all and its use continued until the turn of the century, when the same question was raised again. As a result, it was decided to restore the hall once again under the supervision of the Finnish Heritage Agency. Funds for the project were raised by dividing the plot and building an apartment building next to the hall. At this point, the hall was protected by the town plan in which the association committed to preserve the hall while having a permitted building volume for the divided plot.

The hall is located at the beginning of Ketjutie Road, which leads to the old workers' residential area. The location is visually important in the townscape. The houses by the road are from different decades: most of the oldest have been heavily refurbished but the form of the road has been preserved.



The main hall was restored to the 1940s look.

Wikimedia Commons/
Marja Lähteenmäki.



In the lobby is a painting that was received from another labour hall.

Wikimedia Commons/Marja Lähteenmäki.

The Koskelankylän Walo Labour Hall was restored at the beginning of the 21st century. The hall was restored to the 1940s look: the period when the last big annex was built. Old windows were changed to new ones; only a few original windows were preserved on the second floor, in the kitchen and in the storage room. New furniture in the lobby and in the restaurant room support the 1940s look. The ticket sale wicket has been left in the lobby.

The hall has been in active use through most of its history, excluding the periods when the hall was confiscated. Even though the association that nowadays owns the hall is not ideologically committed, the activists of the hall have a strong ideological background. Most of them have had a connection to the hall since their childhood. Dances were an important part of the hall's activities in the past and as a continuation, the hall's regular tenant is a dance studio. Furthermore, the hall is rented out for associations' meetings and events as well as for private parties. The owner no longer organises activities. The last existing labour hall in the city of Oulu is best known as a culture hall.

The Koskelankylän Walo Labour Hall is representative of the urbanisation and industrialisation of Northern Finland. The hall has particular local importance and the location at the beginning of the road leading to the residential area is visually important. Architecturally there is dissonance between the hall's interior and exterior. The restored interior connects the hall to the rapid growth after the Second World War while the exterior connects the hall to the time of its inauguration. The active development of the hall's use for labour traditions is scarce. Replacing the old windows against the will of the protection authorities decreased the hall's authenticity and architectural value. Hence, the labour hall does not fulfil the high architectural requirements of UNESCO's World Heritage criteria.



The large lobby was formerly the main hall before the 1940s expansion.

Wikimedia Commons/Marja Lähteenmäki.



The wooden furniture creates an authentic atmosphere in the restaurant.
Wikimedia Commons/Marja Lähtenmäki.



Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Mäenpää Labour Hall, Punkalaidun

Built: 1908

Address: Lauttakyläntie 58, 31900 Punkalaidun

Punkalaidun was a traditional countryside municipality located in Western Finland where agriculture was the principal industry. Most of the area's villages were located by the Punkalaitumenjoki River that runs through the commune. The land was owned by big landowners who had dozens of crofters (tenant farmers) cultivating their lands. Close to 60% of the families' breadwinners were crofters or seasonal workers in agriculture, whereas around 10% were landowners in 1910. Almost 95% of the inhabitants worked in agriculture and the forest industry. There were 325 crofters in Punkalaidun in 1912. The growing forest industry raised the value of the forests while the number of crofters rose and the renting terms worsened. The crofters' weak situation became a nationwide societal issue at the beginning of the 20th century. It was in this restless situation that the Punkalaidun Workers' Association Punkalaitumen kirkonkylän työväenyhdistys was founded in Punkalaidun after the General Strike in 1905 by the landowners and workers, most of them crofters, alike. The first chair was a landowner. By the end of 1906 there were four workers' associations in Punkalaidun and ten years later there were six, of which five had their own hall.



The construction of the labour hall.
The Punkalaidun Workers' Association.

Building a labour hall first came up in 1906, and the next year the association collected a "donation" list where people could specify what they were to donate, from voluntary work to logs or moss. The association decided to organise an architectural competition for the hall's plans. The winner was a landowner and member of the association. The building committee had defined that the hall should have a main hall (10 x 12 m) with a stage and the possibility to build a balcony, at least one serving room/restaurant, a kitchen and a cloakroom. In addi-



The main hall and the stage. The folding sheets are from 1941 and are still used. The main hall is heated with the original church stove. The walls were last painted and wallpapered in 1954. The ceiling was painted in the 1980s. The original Workers' Association's flag from 1908 hangs in the left corner. The conference equipment has been updated to respond to today's needs.

Marja Lähteenmäki, Wikimedia Commons.



The first members of the association's board each donated a chair for the meeting room. The chairs are named after the donors.

Jouko Mäkelä, The Punkalaidun Workers' Association.

The hall has retained its authenticity exceptionally well. In the main hall the half-panelling was lowered 30 cm in the 1950s, the upper part of the walls was wallpapered, the ceiling was painted and the floor renewed. The coffee room's tables and chairs were painted in 1959 and the walls were covered with cardboard and painted in the 1960s. The coffee room's appearance is from this period. Toilets were installed in the lobby in the 1980s.

The hall has been restored during recent decades under the guidance of the protection authorities and with grants provided by the Finnish Local Heritage Federation. The hall was protected by a town plan in 2003.

The Mäenpää Workers' Assembly Hall represents a typical countryside hall. The architectural competition and the hall's exceptional architectural value make the hall particular amongst the countryside halls. It was built using traditional materials and techniques. The labour hall has played an important part in the municipality's history, which reflects the main lines of Finland's labour movement. Characteristic of small municipalities, cooperation exceeding the ideological lines is seen in Punkalaidun. Participation in the tenant farmers' issues at the beginning of the 20th century connects Mäenpää Labour Hall to the nationally important



The instruments of the Workers' Association's orchestra remind users of the Thursday Dances that were organised from the 1950s to the 1970s. Most of the wooden coat racks and shoe lockers from 1935 were moved to the attic last year.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

historical events of the labour movement. The proletarianisation of the rural population is seen in Punkalaidun through the forest industry and agricultural workers.

Even though the association reaches for the future, history is present and represented through the original objects that all have their story to tell.

Movies were an important activity that brought the whole village to the labour hall for several decades. The authentic movie projector from 1941 was renovated a few years ago and movies have returned to the activities organised in the hall. Old films are also shown as part of an international film festival organised biennially. The innovative reuse of an old tradition brings totally new visitors to the hall. Besides its own events, including for example theatre, music events, dances and reminiscence events, the association cooperates with the local municipality in arranging cultural activities for the inhabitants. Mäenpää Labour Hall has exceptional social value as an (re)interpreter and (re)producer of labour heritage.

Most of the association's active members have been spending time in the labour hall since their childhood and they have a special connection to it. This can be seen in the enthusiasm with which they volunteer at the hall. They work actively to emphasise the hall's and the association's past and engage new people to use the hall. The hall's high authenticity, architectural and aesthetic values together with the meanings and values given to the hall by the community makes Mäenpää Labour Hall an outstanding example of the typical Scandinavian countryside labour hall.



At the beginning of the 2010s the old outhouse was in poor shape but with the positive feedback that the association got on the hall's renovation, they decided to renovate the outhouse, too. The several doors lead to old latrines and a jail, which was common equipment in the countryside halls, required by the police. The restoration was completed in 2020.

Wikimedia Commons/Marja Lähteenmäki.



Wikimedia Commons/Marja Lähteenmäki.

Uusikaupunki Labour Hall

Built: 1907

Address: Ylinenkatu 12, 23500 Uusikaupunki

Uusikaupunki was founded in 1617 by King Gustav II Adolf. Seafaring flourished in the city in the 19th century after trade was liberated in the 1830s. There were five shipyards in the city and the city's merchant fleet was among the biggest in Finland. The influence of the labour movement might have come from abroad, as the Uusikaupunki Workers' Association Uudenkaupungin työväenyhdistys was founded by sailors as early as 1892. The heyday of sailing ended by the end of the 19th century with industrialisation, but the industrialisation did not reach Uusikaupunki and the urbanisation decelerated.

Even though the association did not have its own hall, it worked actively from the very beginning. An orchestra, choir, speakers' club, reading room, employment agency and sickness and burial fund operated under the association. In 1901, the association bought a house to use as a labour hall. A few years later it was expanded but a fire burned down the just completed hall in 1906.

The construction of the new hall started soon after the fire. The stone foundation was laid by volunteer workers, professional masons. The funding was organised by loans from the association's members. The hall was inaugurated in November 1907. There was a main hall with a stage, two dressing rooms, a kitchen, a restaurant, a smoking room, room for the orchestra, a reading room, a lobby and an apartment for the janitor. The main hall also included a balcony opposite the stage.

Uusikaupunki only industrialised in the second part of the 20th century when new industries started up in the city. Perhaps it was because of the minor industrialisation and low number of workers in the city that the labour hall's events collected visitors from all social classes, or maybe the citizens had learned tolerance from the constant flow of foreign sailors to the city and the long history of Russian troops living in the city.



The electronics company Salcomp Oy rented the labour hall in the 1970s before constructing a new factory. Workers in the main hall in 1975.

The Uusikaupunki Museum.

The step to enter the labour hall was not too high, even for the bourgeois. The pastries served during events were known in the whole of the town.

In 1920, the labour hall was clad with boards and painted yellow instead of the labour halls' more common red. The funding for the labour hall's restoration and upkeep caused constant concern. The hall was rented out to private enterprises for longer periods in the 1970s and again in the 1990s.

The dormer window in the middle of the façade was removed from the roof in the 1960s when the roof was restored. The association organised fundraising that was extended wider than the members. In the 1970s, the janitor's apartment was moved to the second floor and a meeting room and a sauna with shower were built in its place. The second-floor apartment is nowadays rented for habitation. Toilets were installed in the basement in the 1950s.



The main hall and the stage. The ceiling has retained its original colours.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

Most of the town was rebuilt after a fire in 1855 following a town plan from 1856. The wooden houses were built in Empire style and the use of the style continued partly up to the beginning of the 20th century. Uusikaupunki Labour Hall is situated in the midst of the blocks of wooden houses that are inventoried as Built Cultural Heritage Sites of National Importance by the Finnish Heritage Agency. The labour hall fits nicely in its surroundings. The rich decorations and architectural details especially inside the hall are due to the hall's surroundings: the bourgeois Empire-style houses guided the planning of the labour hall. It might have been the same workers who built the houses and wanted to make the labour hall as richly decorated as them, since they were familiar with the patterns and style.



View from the main hall to the lobby. The balcony's hole has been sealed even though there is a hidden door leading to the balcony.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

In the main hall there is an authentic cassette ceiling and original wood carvings frame the stage and the balcony on the opposite side. The colouring of the wood decorations and the half-panelling was chosen to support the details of the ceiling when the main hall was restored in the 1980s. The upper part of the walls is covered with card boards from the 1960s but there are plans to replace them with wallpaper to bring a more authentic look to the main hall. Two tile stoves are not in use anymore but have been left in the main hall. The flooring in the main hall is authentic. Only the strip lightning breaks the harmony.



The original cash desk in the restaurant room. The flooring is from the 1990s.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.

In other rooms, the floor coverings have been changed. The authentic half-panelling covers the walls in most of the rooms. The old ticket sale wicket and notice board have been left in the lobby. New furniture and lightning are set into the old premises.

The labour hall was protected by the town plan as early as 1986. Although only the exterior was protected, the restorations have respected the original materials. The labour hall has been totally restored during the 21st century. Funding for new chairs was collected in the community by donations. The Finnish Local Heritage Agency has granted funding for major restoration works. Old lamps were found in the attic a few years ago. The lights were designed by the famous designer Paavo Tynell and the association sold the lamps to get money for restoration as the grants did not suffice for the costs. There are plans to do the same with the old chairs that are stored in the basement.

Uusikaupunki Labour Hall has exceptional architectural and aesthetic value. The authenticity of the materials, techniques, surroundings and form are all present even if minor details such as lighting disturb the entirety. The exceptionally rich decorations make the labour hall one of a kind even though the decoration is connected to local architecture and traditions instead of the labour movement. The labour heritage has been vital through the decades and the hall has welcomed everyone. The labour hall has value for the town-dwellers. This can be seen, for example, in several successful fundraising efforts that have been targeted at citizens. The labour hall is a model example in many respects, but since the hall is not connected to wide scale industrialisation or any other historical phenomenon of the labour movement, it cannot be considered as representative of the Finnish labour movement.



The porches in the courtyard entrance were connected when the toilets were installed in the basement.

Marja Lähteenmäki, The Finnish Labour Museum.



Wikimedia Commons/Marja Lähteenmäki.

Puistokulma Labour Hall, Vantaa

Built: 1964

Address: Talkootie 4, 01350 Vantaa

After the Second World War, Vantaa was still a countryside commune where most of the population worked in agriculture. New urban areas were inhabited in the 1940s by battlefront soldiers and migrants from Karelia. In 1946, one-third of the commune was merged into Helsinki and it lost two-thirds of its inhabitants. The number of workers in industry started to increase in the 1950s, and in 1955 Vantaa was the biggest industrial town after Helsinki in Uusimaa County in terms of the number of industrial workers.

Communist parties were legalised in 1945 and in the beginning the Finnish People's Democratic League Suomen Kansan Demokraattinen Liitto (SKDL) and Communists rented the Social Democrats' labour hall in Tikkurila district for their events. The cooperation did not work out for long and plans to build a hall evolved. It was only in 1953 that a plot was bought for the hall, and it took still another decade until the hall was finished. Even though building using prefabricated units increased rapidly at the beginning of the 1960s, the labour hall was built on the spot with traditional techniques. This was due to the use of voluntary work. The volunteers were collected from across Uusimaa County and the delay in construction work was due to the fact that there were several labour halls under construction at the same time and construction loans were only given out one at a time. The hall was built in the countryside, which in a few decades was part of the fast-growing capital area of Greater Helsinki. It was designed by a construction foreman, Olavi Nurmi, who designed several Communist Party labour halls in Lapland.

Puistokulma represented a typical 1960s building with its plain lines, designed details and low building sections representing different functions.

The People's Archives.



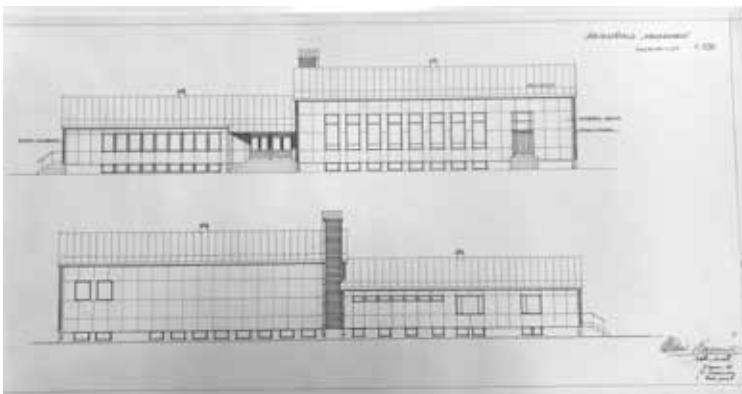
The hall had a concrete structure and the facades were cladded with minerite boards and bricks. The inner walls had plaster or hardboard cladding and the ceiling was cladded with fibreboard. Bricks were also used in the entrance wall in the main hall, so that the red brick end wall continues from the outside in. White boards contrast with red brick both inside and out.

There was a main hall with a stage, two clubrooms, a gymnastics hall with showers, a restaurant, a bar, two dressing rooms, a janitor's apartment and toilets. Cultural and sports activities were taken into consideration well in the plans and had up-to-date facilities from the very beginning.

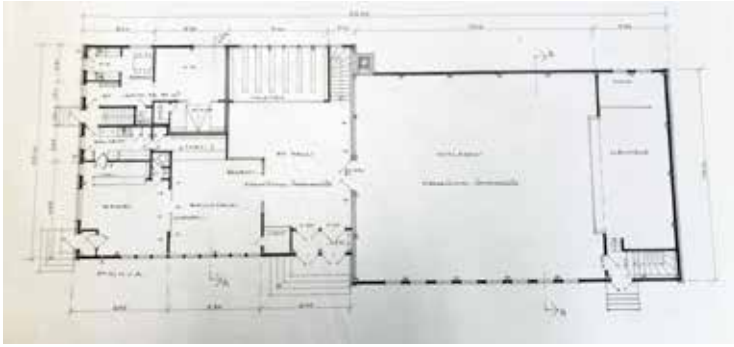


The stage and the main hall have preserved their authenticity in many respects. The original flooring needs regular upkeep.

Riku Ahola, The People's Houses Union.



Design of the facades.
The People's Archives.



Layout of the first floor. The main hall with a stage was situated in the higher part of the building while the lobby, the restaurant, the bar and the janitor's apartment were in the lower part.

The People's Archives.

Vantaa represents the rapid urbanisation after the Second World War, when people moved from the countryside to the city. While Vantaa was still a rural commune, the rapid growth led quickly to the birth of workers' suburbs next to the railways. Puistokulma offered for newcomers a place to meet new people and share thoughts with those who were in the same situation. Puistokulma represents the building of a welfare state, the vast urbanisation of the latter part of the 20th century and the rapid organisation and reawakening of the communist parties after the wars.

The surroundings were built after the hall in most parts and consist of blocks of flats and detached houses. The name of the road, Talkootie (Voluntary Work Road) tells the story of the labour hall and connects the hall's historical meaning to the place. The labour hall has been in active use since its inauguration. The emphasis has been on recreational activities such as dances, which are still organised twice a week. The restaurant offers affordable lunch and is an important meeting place in the community. Moreover, the KSL Civic Association for Adult Learning organises courses and other events in the hall on a regular basis. The hall is used to house meetings by the Left Alliance and other left-wing organisations.



The restaurant next to the lobby after the hall's inauguration.

The People's Archives.



The streamlined chairs continue the architecture of the main hall. Photo taken after the hall's inauguration.

The People's Archives.

The red-brick annex was completed in 1981 behind the old hall. The red brick ends of the hall connect the new part to the whole. The annex was initially built to offer offices for the fast-growing town which did not have the resources to answer the needs of the welfare society.



The red brick wall is preserved while the other walls have lighter colouring.

Riku Ahola, The People's Houses Union.



The ticket sale wicket in the lobby.

Riku Ahola, The People's Houses Union.



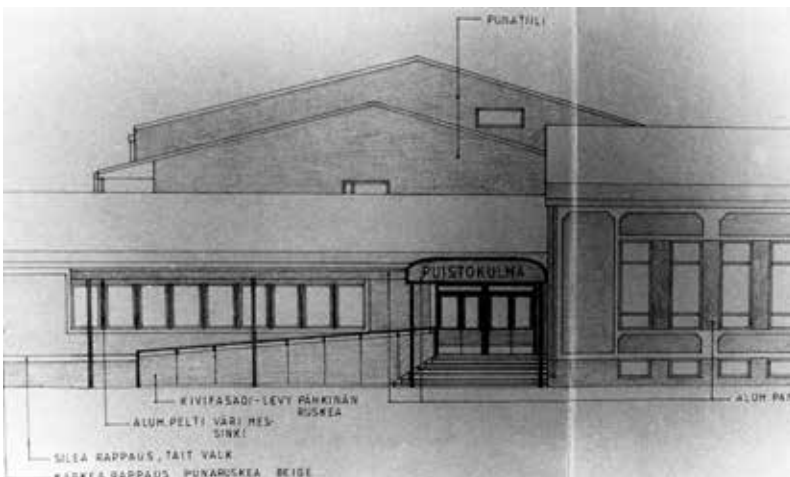
The restaurant facilities were enlarged in 1980 when a new restaurant serving lunch on week-days opened in the facilities.

Riku Ahola, The People's Houses Union.



The dark walls of the main hall were later painted a lighter colour, lessening the strong contrast between the dark and white. The hall's inauguration celebration for the volunteers 22 November 1964.

The People's Archives.



Plans for the new plastering were made in 1993.

The People's Archives.

The plain facades of white boards and clear windowlines disappeared in the refurbishment of 1996 when rich plaster decoration changed the appearance totally. Inside, the play of white and dark have also suffered from later modifications. The authenticity is best preserved in the main hall.

Even though the hall operates on a commercial basis, it fulfils the task of providing a place to gather, recreate and study exceptionally well. The hall is actively used in the local community and it has particular local meaning. The hall is located at the beginning of Talkootie Road and as such it has milieu value as a starting point for the area's historical development. The hall is not protected by the town plan, but that should be considered locally. Because of the later modifications which have heavily changed the hall's original appearance, the building has only minor architectural value. Since the most dramatic societal changes brought about by the labour movement occurred in Finland in the first decades of the 20th century, Puistokulma is a latecomer and does not fulfil the requirements of the serial nomination. Nevertheless the hall has historical value as representative of the nationally important era of urbanisation and legalisation of the Communist Party.



Conclusion

The story of the Finnish labour halls is unique. With the enthusiasm of thousands of workers, almost a thousand halls had been built by 1916. Only a few years later, the halls were confiscated in the Civil War's aftermath. When the halls were given back to their owners, the struggles continued, this time inside the labour movement. The labour halls stood in the middle of the fight. Depending on society's power relations, some of the halls changed owners, even if in the big picture they did not: the halls were still owned by the labour movement's associations. This was not the case at the beginning of the 1930s, when due to the actions and influence of the Lapua Movement, over one hundred halls were lost for good. Difficult times continued through the 1930s and until after the Second World War, when the inner fights started again.

When the need for the hall was greatest, the struggle to keep it was constant and exhausting. Still the call for a place to gather, to organise and to dream of a better future won each time. With the welfare society, the traditional working class and worker identity vanished, while indifference towards workers' halls increased, especially among the new generations. On the other hand the disappearance of the class struggle eased the entrance for halls' new users. The halls' finances have suffered from the impact of Covid-19, which closed the halls for long periods. Heating in the middle of the energy crisis is causing extra trouble. Old halls require constant upkeep, which is still done mostly by volunteers. However most of the halls are optimistic regarding the future. Although the use of many labour halls has changed, they are still needed. Old traditions are reused or changed to new ones while new audiences are engaged with labour heritage.

All the labour halls presented in this study are important and valuable in so many ways, as are all the halls that were left out of the study. During the visits to the halls, there was such enthusiasm and devotion from the volunteers who take care of the halls that the hall's meaning and value for them was obvious. In the international comparison, most Finnish workers' assembly halls would succeed excellently. This means that at the national level the competition is very tight. As shown in this study, Helsinki Labour Hall has had an immense impact in the Finnish labour movement and still has an active role in the movement. Punkalaidun Labour Hall is an exceptional example of the most typical workers' halls in Finland and depicts nationally important labour themes through its history.

As a result of this research, two labour halls rise over the others. This study gives a good overview of Finnish labour halls' history and the current situation. To point out the particularity of Finnish halls, their architecture and labour heritage, transnational comparison is needed. A study of labour halls as an international phenomenon is still missing.

Labour history and labour monuments have been absent from the UNESCO World Heritage list. It was only a few decades ago that industrial heritage was included in the list. As the Outstanding Universal Value criteria have stepped out from the white European upper-class view, in which castles, religious monuments and classical ruins are valued, it has been easier to see, for example, the effects of industrialisation on the global scale. At least as important has been the labour movement. Starting from Europe and spreading all over the world, the labour movement has demanded and worked for a better society. At the centre have been the labour halls. Labour halls are globally important monuments that remind us of the power of solidarity, equality and participation - values that exceed ideological boundaries.

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