

Tenement Houses and Cottages in Finland.

By Birger Brunila, Town-Planning Architect to the City of Helsinki.

The question of the best apportionment of housing accommodation between tenement-blocks and detached cottages and of the respective merits and disadvantages of these two types has begun, in connection with the problems faced by growing towns and the increasing production of housing accommodation after the recent crisis, to attract attention also in Finland.

It may be mentioned that up to the present the tenement-block has not on the whole gained any wider foothold in this country. This is easily comprehensible if we take into account how comparatively insignificant has been the part played by towns in proportion to the rural population, particularly if viewed against the rapid development discernible in Western and Central Europe.

Thus, at the beginning of the nineteenth century only 5.6 per cent., and in the year 1900 about 12.5 per cent. of the population were town-dwellers, and even today the towns do not account for more than about 15 per cent. of the whole population of Finland. The majority of the towns are small indeed, for only eight can boast of populations ranging between 10,000 and 60,000, and only the capital, Helsinki (Helsingfors), in any way approaches, with its 200,000 inhabitants, our conception of a large city. Usually they are sparsely-built, on plots big enough to permit of gardens, with wooden buildings mostly of one or two stories—a precaution learned from the destructive fires that occurred so often in the past. The Finnish towns—with the exception of the largest—can practically be said to display to some extent the characteristics of cottage areas, though they fall short of the ideal of a garden city.

Light is cast on the situation by the following statistics from a census of dwellings undertaken in 1920.

For the combined towns of Finland the distribution of dwellings per building was as follows :

Buildings containing only 1 dwelling	33.2 per cent
Buildings containing from 2 to 5 dwellings	43.8 " "
Buildings containing 6 dwellings and over.....	23.0 " "

Helsinki with suburbs gave the following distribution :

Buildings containing 1 dwelling	30.9 per cent
Buildings containing from 2 to 5 dwellings	25.3 " "
Buildings containing 6 dwellings and over	43.8 " "

An idea of the average size of the buildings in certain of the larger towns is provided by the following figures giving the average number of separate dwellings in all heatable buildings and the average number of persons dwelling in them.

	Average number of dwellings per habitable building	Average persons
Helsinki and suburbs	5.3	20.0
Turku (Åbo)	3.3	11.9
Viipuri (Viborg)	2.2	9.1
Tampere (Tammerfors)	3.5	13.6
Vaasa (Wasa)	3.4	12.3
Oulu (Uleåborg)	2.0	7.9
Pori (Björneborg)	2.1	6.6
Lahti (Lantis)	1.4	5.4

The separate house system can thus be said to have its traditions in Finland and, chiefly on the following grounds, to be still capable of carrying off the day. Timber is still the cheapest and most common building material and the danger of fire compels builders to keep wooden houses within certain narrow limits as regards area and height and to keep them relatively far apart; the population has moreover become accustomed to the sparse distribution of dwellings in rural districts, and even among town-dwellers interest in gardening is widespread.

The ideal dwelling-place is probably the detached one-family house, the owner of which can feel himself master of his own territory, undisturbed by neighbours, and with the opportunity of forming his dwelling both within and without to conform to his own taste, subject only to such restrictions as building regulations can impose on him. Up to quite recent times this type has predominated, almost to the exclusion of other types, in the smaller communities, suburbs and garden cities of Finland. The detached single-family villa is, however, naturally somewhat more expensive than the house built for two or more families, for which reason the latter type has recently begun to appear in increasing numbers, first in industrial communities, and subsequently in the suburbs of larger towns, as being, with the saving of street-frontage and all installations, such as drainage, waterpipes, etc., incidental to it, more economical in a town-plan than the single-family type.

The two-family houses and row-houses can, as a matter of fact, be built so practical and comfortable that the individual dwellings provide almost the same degree of privacy and peace as the detached building. It is to be noted that rows of wooden houses are compulsorily limited as regards area owing to the danger of fire, and can thus hardly comprise more than from four to six separate dwellings. Even the two-storey house intended for four families, with two dwellings on each storey, a type fairly familiar now owing to its cheapness, can by intelligent planning be constructed in a manner permitting its inhabitants to enjoy a relative privacy—if the entrances are placed apart from each other and the site itself is divided by fences into separate plots.

As regards building costs, present calculations are as follows:—Wooden houses of two storeys divided into small tenements 200 to 210 Finnish marks per cubic metre, or 24,000 to 25,000 Finnish marks per room. Brick buildings of several storeys similarly divided into tenements, for which building loans at low rates of interest are available, 275 to 300 Finnish marks per cubic metre or 32,000 to 35,000 Finnish marks per room. A two-storey brick house of the row-type can be calculated to cost slightly less in proportion than the house of several storeys, or roughly about 30,000 Finnish marks per room.

To be sure, the cost of the foundation and the roof is divided over a larger living-area in the case of a building of several storeys, in addition to which it has been argued that both labour and transport can be organised to cost less in a building of this type, but against this it must be remembered that the foundations of a two-storey house can be made simpler, walls can be made thinner and the whole construction lighter, and further the transport of material to the upper storeys is entirely excluded. To this may be added that it is often easier to make the most of the area built in the case of a smaller house; the proportion between what might be termed useful and unproductive space is more advantageous than it is in the building of several storeys, which has to provide a pierced entrance to the yard, entrance halls to the staircases, etc.

The above serves to show that the small building, of wood in particular, is economically more advantageous than the tenement-block, but it must not be forgotten that in this case the cost of the site is assumed to be the same. In the central districts of a town, where land-values are high and intensive building is essential to profit, the building of several storeys is naturally the type best adapted to the circumstances. Moreover, wooden buildings are not, as a rule, permitted in the central districts of the larger towns, owing to the danger of fire, and are therefore obliged to keep to the periphery.

In comparing the hygienic and social properties of the cottage and the tenement-block one must be careful not to ascribe to either type deficiencies which depend less on their character than on mere accident of form. The drawbacks that have been shown to exist in the tenement-type need not always be inevitable consequences of this method of building, particularly if the most modern principles of construction are applied. The building in which all the possibilities of the type are exploited, with open, spacious yards, is not as regards provision of light and air much behind the cottage, and even the danger of infection, which was advanced at one time as an argument against the tenement-block, can be eliminated. The great advantage of the cottage lies in the constant opportunities it offers its inhabitants of recreation and healthy work in their own garden, the effect of which is to increase the sensation of homeliness, to foster a feeling of independence and to counteract the attractions of loafing and worthless pleasures. On the other hand it is to be observed that the care of a cottage plot, with all it denotes in the way of cleaning and the removal of snow, can become a comparatively heavy task and proportionately dearer than the upkeep of a tenement-block, the last-named type being preferred, on the ground of less labour, by certain classes of the population.

It will be seen from the brief review given above that both the cottage and the tenement-house have their advantages and disadvantages, and consequently the choice between the two should be preceded by a careful weighing of all the factors that could possibly influence the result. One might perhaps draw up a general rule and say that the tenement-house, and among the one-family types the row-building, will prove, together with the four-family house, the most economical types where a larger population is concerned. The first-named should be reserved for the central districts of a town, the business centres of suburbs and garden cities, and sites bordering the main arteries of cottage areas, where they help to make a town-plan economical and more of a paying proposition. Cottages are naturally best placed aside from main arteries, in districts

where streets can be restricted to the smallest possible area, with the various types arranged to conform with the natural lie of the ground and the demands of architecture, and with due consideration for the building material used.

Summary.

The question of whether to build tenement blocks or detached cottages began to attract attention in Finland in connection with the recent housing crisis. Up to the present the tenement has not gained a wider foothold.

The Finnish population is mostly rural. At the beginning of the 19th century there were only 5.6 per cent and in 1900 about 12.5 per cent. who were town dwellers and even today there are not more than 15 per cent. The majority of the towns are small and only Helsinki is a really large town.

Statistics are given in the paper showing the number of dwellings per building in the whole of Finland and in various towns.

The fact that timber is still the cheapest and most common building material plays an important part, quite apart from preferences on other grounds, in determining the type of dwelling house and the danger of fire restricts the height and density per acre.

Up to now the detached cottage with a garden, probably the ideal type, has predominated in the smaller towns, although somewhat more expensive than the multi-family building. The latter has recently begun to appear in increasing numbers.

The author holds that the 4-family dwelling, two flats upstairs and two down, can be built very cheaply and can give a fair amount of privacy and that the double-flatted house and the row type of house can provide almost the same amount of privacy as the cottage.

Approximate prices of building at the present time are quoted for the various types.

The opinion is held that the small building, of wood in particular, is economically more advantageous than the tenement block provided that the cost of site is the same. Where land is dear and in central districts where wood houses are not permitted dwelling houses of several storeys are the best type.

In comparing hygienic and social properties of the cottage and the tenement one should not ascribe to either deficiencies which depend less on their character than on mere accident of form. The drawbacks that have existed in tenements are not inevitable. The great advantage of the cottage lies in the constant opportunities it offers its inhabitants of recreation and healthy work in a garden but where there is much work in the way of clearing away of snow it will have its disadvantages.

Both types have their advantages and the choice between them should be preceded by the careful weighing of all factors and the whole position of each in the town.

Sommaire.

La question de savoir s'il faut construire des blocs de maisons à appartements ou des cottages séparés, commença à attirer l'attention en Finlande par suite de la récente crise du logement. Jusqu'à présent, la maison à appartements n'a pas gagné de terrain.

La population finlandaise est surtout rurale. Au commencement du XIXe siècle il y avait seulement 5.6 pct de citadins et 12.5 pct en 1900 ;

même maintenant, il n'y en a pas plus de 15 pct. La plupart des villes sont petites et seule Helsinki est vraiment une grande ville.

Des statistiques données dans le rapport montrent le nombre de logements par bâtiment dans toute la Finlande et dans les diverses villes.

Le fait que le bois est toujours le matériel le moins cher et le plus répandu joue un grand rôle, à côté des préférences, dans le choix du type de l'habitation, et le risque d'incendie en restreint la hauteur et la densité.

Jusqu'à maintenant, le cottage isolé avec jardin — type idéal probablement — a prédominé dans les plus petites villes, bien qu'un peu plus coûteux que l'habitation collective. Cette dernière a commencé dernièrement à apparaître en nombres croissants.

L'auteur soutient que l'habitation à quatre familles avec deux logement au rez-de-chaussée et deux à l'étage peut être construite à très bon marché et peut assurer l'intimité du logement et que les maisons à deux étages construites en rangées peuvent assurer presque le même degré d'intimité que le cottage séparé.

Des prix de revient approximatifs de la construction actuellement sont donnés pour les divers types.

On est d'avis que la petite construction de bois en particulier est économiquement plus avantageuse que les blocs à appartements du moment que le prix du terrain est le même. Lorsque le terrain est cher et dans les districts du centre où les maisons de bois ne sont pas autorisées, les maisons d'habitation à plusieurs étages constituent le meilleur type.

En comparant les qualités hygiéniques et sociales du cottage et de la maison à appartements, il ne faut pas attribuer à l'un ou l'autre de ces types, les inconvénients qui dépendent moins de leur caractère que d'un simple hasard. Les inconvénients qui ont existé dans les maisons collectives ne sont pas inévitables. Le grand avantage du cottage réside dans les facilités qu'il offre constamment à ses habitants pour la récréation et un travail salubre dans un jardin, mais là où il exige un grand travail pour l'enlèvement de la neige, il aura ses inconvénients.

Les deux types ont leurs avantages et le choix entre eux devrait être précédé d'une considération approfondie de tous les facteurs et de la situation de chacun d'eux dans la ville.

Auszug.

Die Frage, ob große Miethauskomplexe oder einzelstehende Einfamilienhäuser gebaut werden sollen, begann in Finnland im Zusammenhang mit der letzten Wohnungskrise allgemeine Aufmerksamkeit zu erregen. Bis jetzt hat das Zinshaus keinen weiteren Spielraum gefunden.

Die Bevölkerung in Finnland ist größtenteils ländlich. Zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts gab es nur 5,6 Prozent, 1900 etwa 12,5 Stadtbewohner, und selbst heute gibt es nicht mehr als 15 Prozent. Die Mehrzahl der Städte ist klein, und nur Helsingfors ist eine wirkliche Großstadt.

Dem Vorbericht sind Statistiken beigelegt, aus denen ersichtlich ist, wie viel Wohnungen durchschnittlich auf ein Haus in ganz Finnland entfallen und wie viele in den verschiedenen Städten.

Die Tatsache, daß Holz noch immer das billigste und meist verwendete Baumaterial ist, hat bei der Wahl der Wohnungstypen eine bedeutende Rolle gespielt, ganz abgesehen davon, daß das Kleinhaus auch aus anderen Gründen bevorzugt wird. So beschränkt auch die Feuergefahr die Höhe der Gebäude und die Zahl, die auf den Morgen entfallen.

Bis jetzt hat das einzelstehende Einfamilienhaus mit Garten, das wohl die ideale Wohnungsform ist, in den kleineren Städten vorgeherrscht, obwohl es etwas teurer ist, als das Mehrfamilienhaus. Letzteres erscheint neuerdings in zunehmender Anzahl.

Der Autor vertritt die Ansicht, daß das Vierfamilienhaus mit zwei Wohnungen im Obergeschoß und zwei zu ebener Erde sehr billig gebaut werden kann und eine ausreichende Abgeschlossenheit und Ungestörtheit bietet und daß das Zweifamilienhaus und das Reihenhaus fast die gleiche Ungestörtheit sichern wie das freistehende Einfamilienhaus.

Im Bericht wird angegeben, was die verschiedenen Wohnungstypen heute ungefähr kosten. Es wird die Ansicht vertreten, daß das Kleinhaus, besonders das in Holz, wirtschaftlicher ist als das hohe Stockwerkshaus, vorausgesetzt, daß die Grundstückskosten dieselben sind. Wo der Boden teuer ist und in inneren Bezirken, wo Holzbauten nicht gestattet sind, verdienen die mehrstöckigen Häuser den Vorzug.

Beim Vergleichen der hygienischen und sozialen Eigenschaften des Einfamilienhauses und des hohen Stockwerkshauses sollte man keinem davon Mängel zuschreiben, die weniger von ihrem Charakter abhängen als vom puren Zufall ihrer formalen Lösung. Die Nachteile, die bei Zinshäusern zutage treten, sind nicht unvermeidlich. Der große Vorteil des Einfamilienhauses liegt darin, daß seinen Bewohnern stets Gelegenheit geboten wird, sich in einem Garten zu erholen und so auf gesunde Weise zu beschäftigen. Wo es aber viel Arbeit durch das Fortschaffen des Schnees gibt, wird das Einfamilienhaus auch seine Nachteile haben.

Beide Typen haben ihre Vorteile und bevor man sich für eine von ihnen entscheidet, sollte man alle Gesichtspunkte und ihre Bedeutung für die Stadtentwicklung sorgfältig abwägen.