



LAHDEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
Lahti University of Applied Sciences

ASPECTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF FINNISH RURAL COMMERCIAL AND COMMUNAL CENTERS; CASE STUDY

A General Development Plan of the New Vääksy
Commercial Center in Asikkala, Finland

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Minna-Liisa Keränen

Lahti University of Applied Sciences
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KERÄNEN, MINNA-LIISA:

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the basic elements and aspects of landscape design and environmental planning programs of rural commercial and communal centers in Finland. Aspects significant to the design process are listed and defined in this thesis.

In the case study, a general development plan of the new Vääksy commercial center and a detailed landscape plan within the project area are presented. The general layout introduces plantings, traffic arrangements, minor structures and other elementary means of enhancing the functionality, usability and aesthetic value of the project area.

This Bachelor's thesis was commissioned by the technical office of Asikkala municipality. The need for the development of the project area rose from residential feedback.

Key words: development, landscape, planning, rural area, center

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä opinnäytetyö keskittyy maaseudun liike- ja kuntakeskusten maisema- ja miljöösuunnittelun peruslähtökohtiin ja suunnittelunäkökulmiin Suomessa. Opinnäytetyössä on listattu ja määritelty näkökulmia, jotka tulisi huomioida maaseutu-
taajamien miljöösuunnittelussa.

Kohde-esimerkkinä on Vääksyn uuden liikekeskuksen yleiskehittämissuunnitelma ja yksityiskohtaisempi vihersuunnitelma kohdealueen sisältä. Yleissuunnitelmassa esitellään istutuksia, liikennejärjestelyjä, pienrakenteita ja muita yleisiä keinoja, joiden avulla kohdealueen toiminnallisuutta, käytettävyyttä ja kauneusarvoa voidaan lisätä.

Tämän opinnäytetyön tilaajana oli Asikkalan kunnan tekninen virasto. Kohde-
alueen kehittämistarve syntyi asukaspalautteen pohjalta

Avainsanat: kehittäminen, maisema, suunnittelu, maaseutu, keskus

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1 INTRODUCTION

Comprehensive education forms a good basis for environmental planning. However, especially freshmen may need guidance in their work. One can always ask a senior colleague or read one of the many manuals at hand but the extent of knowledge, the variety of facts and the variance in municipal operation policies may puzzle the mind of the designer. Guide books, leaflets and instruction files often affiliate with complex land use policies or focus on sporadic subjects. The intention of this thesis is to serve the further development of Asikkala municipality, to help students who are struggling amongst the myriad of information in diverse planning projects, to contribute to the gathering of background information and to act as a simple paradigm of a rural environmental planning project in Finland.

This thesis has a somewhat similar approach as the bachelor's thesis '*Development and attractivity of rural population centers as living environment*' by Hanne Huovinen of Lahti University of Applied Sciences (Huovinen 2008). Huovinen goes deep into the development and division of Finnish villages and village types and deals with the fostering and protection of Finnish rural centers and landscapes. She also presents several detailed development plans for a rural village in eastern Finland. In this thesis, I try to open a slightly different angle on the planning procedure: I summon up and subsume some general aspects on planning rural and communal centers, look at the political, economical, legislative, functional and aesthetic aspects of planning and present a general development plan for a single but large rural commercial center in southern Finland.

In the case study, a general development plan and a partial detailed plan of the new Vääksy commercial center are presented. Vääksy is a small town in the Päijät-Häme province in southern Finland. It acts as the commercial and communal center of Asikkala municipality. Before starting the planning procedure, I photographed the area, interviewed local authorities and residents and explored historical publications, maps, earlier studies and plans of the project area.

2 ASPECTS ON PLANNING RURAL CENTERS

When planning a rural commercial or communal center, several aspects have to be taken into account. These aspects include economic, political and location-related aspects as well as legislative matters and population-affiliated views. Residential feedback cannot be ignored. In Finland, various aspects of planning are subordinates to the land use planning system. Land use policies precede and cross other aspects of planning but form a complex and distinct whole. For this reason, these policies are covered only in a perfunctory manner within elaborational aspects in this thesis. Further information about the Finnish land use planning system can be found at administrative offices and web sites (State Treasury 2011).

In the following section, a group of aspects of rural planning is introduced. The aim is to present a general view of the most important aspects, to help to observe and summarize them and to find a balance between different values in varied planning procedures.

2.1 Economical, political and legislative aspects

Assets and potential subsidies lay the ground for all planning projects of rural commercial and communal centers. In the beginning of a planning project, a certain limit is usually set for planning, material acquisition and equipment costs as well as construction and maintenance costs of the project area. Bar none, the designer or an external consultant is asked to calculate a total or partial cost estimate at the final stages of the planning procedure. Even project-oriented legislative aspects cannot be assessed without financial investments in research and analysis. Centralization and the attractiveness of urban shopping centers aggravate the management of rural businesses and shopping centers. In 2007-2008, 27 village shops were closed in Finland due to unprofitability or lack of entrepreneurs to run the businesses after the retirement of former shopkeepers. By the end of 2008, 507 village shops remained in operation (Kivi & Kokki 2010).



FIGURE 1. Village shop in Utö, Åland.
(Maaseutupolitiikan yhteisöryhmä 2007.)

In July 2011, 336 municipalities and 184 intermunicipal cooperation units existed in Finland; in the beginning of the same year, twelve Finnish municipalities were merged to form six new ones (State Treasury 2011). Reductions in population, public services and municipal buildings, entrepreneurs, manufacturers and wholesale company investments form a notable challenge to the functionality and planning of municipal centers.

All aspects of planning relate to economical values through public costs of transport, infrastructure, municipal staff, analysis, legislation, research and protection of natural resources. Nonetheless, even single sporadic matters such as location near a big city or a major highway, a growing manufacture unit, attractive scenery, an intriguing historical site or mere civic enthusiasm may elevate the economic prospects of a rural municipality and thus connive its level of development and planning projects in the future. As an example, the new merger town of Sastamala in southwestern Finland, with approximately 25 000 inhabitants, is expecting some 50 000 tourists to visit the newly renovated medieval church of Saint Olaf in Tyrvää, Sastamala, during 2011 (Heino 2011). This must have a positive financial effect on this rural municipality.

Every public planning project in Finland has to be examined and approved by municipal administrative organs. Municipal elections are held every fourth year. Over 50 % of members of municipal councils in Finland belong to the Centre Party of Finland (Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 2011) which traditionally has represented rural and agrarian values (Alajoutsijärvi 2011). In the parliamentary elections of 2011, the Centre Party suffered a major defeat which may reflect the results of the upcoming municipal elections in 2012. The rise of other parties in municipal decision-making may promote the ongoing 'Paras'-project which the Finnish Government has started in order to decrease public costs through centralization (Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 2011). By means of this project, municipality mergers are connived and centralization of services furthered. Project plans – even finished ones - may be adjourned because of alterations in municipal structures and changes amongst decision-makers. Lobbying skills may be necessary to convince local councils of the importance of distinct planning projects.

Several laws apply to rural planning in Finland. The Land Use and Building Act and the Act and Decree on Environmental Impact Assessment Procedure – based on respective EU directives – guide the land use planning system and set the ground for further planning. Local plans are subordinates to superior land use plans and national land use guidelines. All land use planning programs are forwarded in public and residential feedback is assessed. Litigant residents and land owners are hearkened and the inviolability of private properties is generally honoured. A distinct impact assesment program precedes the planning procedure in land use planning projects and residential or environmental programs lead by public authorities. Distinct laws, decrees and governmental commendations are ordained to regulate earth works, safety measures and construction works, to guard municipal decision-making and to protect national parks, rapids, important groundwater areas, natural resources, buildings and landscapes (Ministry of the Environment 2011). Municipal land use guidelines, planning and construction regulations apply; they may vary slightly depending on the municipality.



FIGURE 2. The protected Danielsson-Kalmari Villa in Asikkala, Växsky (Juhani Enckell 2009.)

2.2 Geographical and environmental aspects



FIGURE 3. Old map of the Päijät-Häme region (Count von Rosen 1747.)

A location is a combination of precise measurements and versatile experiences in varying conditions. It is affiliated with other locations – both physical and mental – through different means of transport and perception. Altrop (2005) states that in the course of history, the placement of commercial sites has always demanded functional specialization and easy accessibility. Worldwide, the aspect of accessibility can be seen in the coastal positioning of major cities and capitals –

mainly founded in the era of maritime trade dominance. In a lesser scale the principle of good accessibility applies to rural centers. Physical and environmental aspects are studied and catered in the land use planning procedures which precede and govern separate planning projects. Further studies are prominent even if the exact location, height and coloring of single elements are ordained in the local detailed plan. The quantity of determinative details depends on municipal land use policies and regulations and on the location of the project area. It is advisable to check out all aspects to ensure that the project plan fits the site and its surroundings. Local land use plans can later be reassessed and altered in municipal organs with public participation, if necessary. All and all, most European village landscapes have formed through the work of local residents who have tried to advance their subsistence; to earn a better living (Altrop 2005).



FIGURE 4. The square in Hall, Austria; a modern square next to historic elements (Martina Posch 2008.)

There are four distinct seasons and periodical alterations in temperature, rainfall, humidity and ground frost in Finland. Local weather conditions depend on the longitude, proximity and size of surrounding hills, fields, water basins and structural elements. Vegetation also has an effect on the microclimate. Surveying regional statistics may help in the planning process and give an overview of the expected annual rainfall, temperature and wind speed. Still, sudden changes may occur. Global warming may increase extreme weather conditions in Finland (Berghäll & Pesu 2008, 10-11). Concise planning of drainage systems, walls, canopies, structural attachments, snow removal routes and snow storage areas may prevent flooding and structural damage and enhance the safety and usability of rural centers.

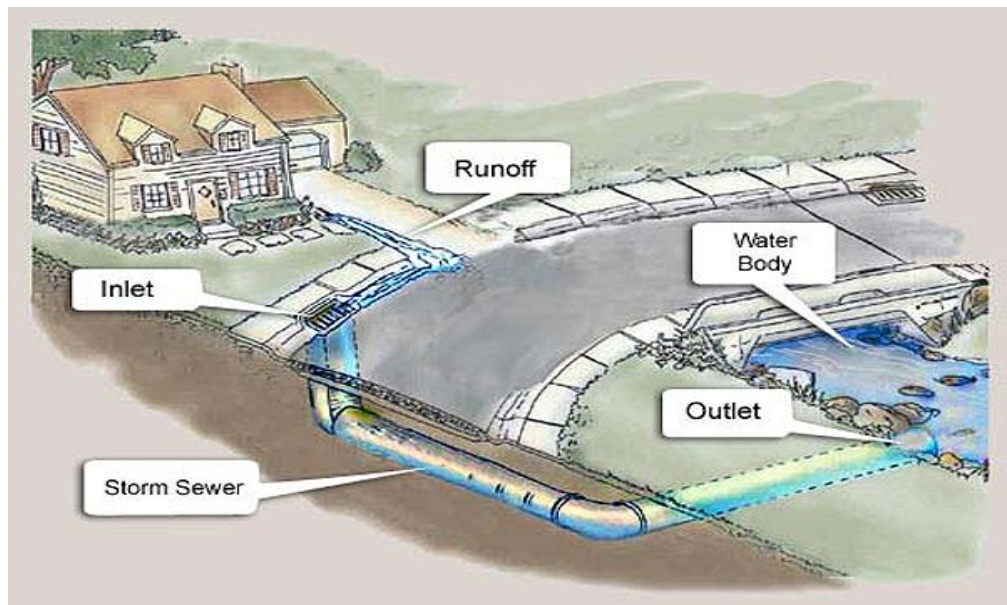


FIGURE 5. Storm water drainage system (State of Delaware, USA 2011.)

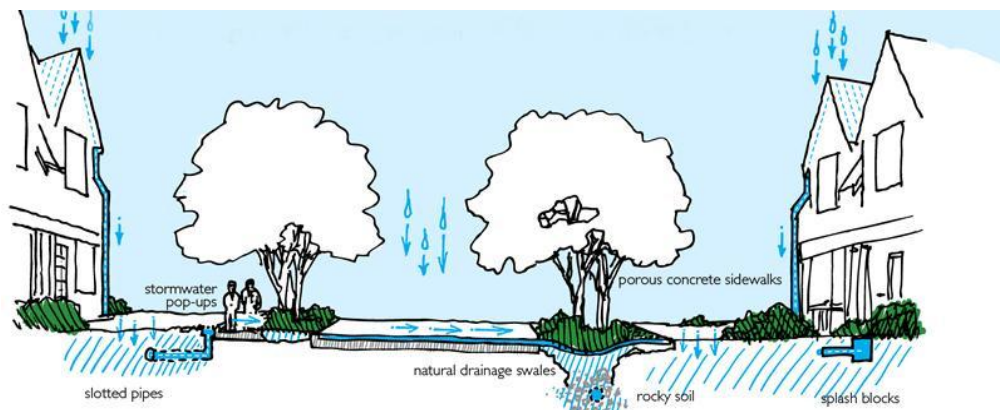


FIGURE 6. Rainwater drainage system at High Point residential area (The City of Seattle, USA 2011.)

Finland stands on one of the steadiest geological foundations on Earth. The northern and eastern parts of Finland lie on an archaic bedrock which dates back some 2,5 – 3,1 billion years. The southern and central bedrock is approximately 1,0 – 1,5 billion years younger. (Lehtinen & al. 1998, 9.)

The latest ice age has sculpted the Finnish landscape significantly. Site-specific geomorphological and hydrological qualities; soil type– and ground water –related qualities, may vary dramatically within a small region and need to be examined prior to any land use program or planning project. The depth and quality of ground frost depends on the temperature, ground water level, humidity and soil type and should be checked and noticed when planning foundations, pavings and plant beds on rural sites. Important ground water areas are protected by law. Building on such sites is regulated; special requirements are set for foundation works and for the handling of potentially harmful substances and chemicals.

In terms of climate change, heavy rainfall and long-term drought may have massive effects on the geomorphological and hydrological qualities of a site. Excess water causes flooding, erodes foundations and structures, accumulates humidity, connives fungal growth and suffocates the roots of plants. In the long run, excess humidity also elevates the ground water level and increases ground frost if the sheltering snow cover remains thin at occasional low temperatures. (Berghäll & Pesu 2008, 12-17.)

Dry conditions, on the other hand, may cause erosion and affect the bearing capacity, compressive strength and freezing properties of the soil; irrigation is often indispensable on lawns and plant beds. Careful analysis on soil type, precise foundation works and good anticipation with adequate safety measures help to prevent future havoc.

Statistics are an essential part of the ground work that precedes land use planning programs. Quantitative measurements are used to calculate layers of foundation, to assess material costs and to consider safety measures and clearances. Surveys also

give an insight to the needed level of service, transport lanes, pedestrian and bicycle routes and shelters. Qualitative social surveys and polls are an obligatory part of the environmental impact assessment procedure (Ministry of the Environment 2011). Subjective opinions, when abundant and analyzed, help to evaluate the objective functional, commercial, aesthetical, and mental expectations of a rural center and its planning. The views of local inhabitants and by-passers help to understand the 'genus loci' or the spirit of a certain location, the way it is linked to the minds of people and the direction into which the area should and could be directed (Luostarinen & Yli-Viikari 1997, 46-54).

2.3 Landscape, history and culture

Finland is a country full of forest ridges, peatlands, broad cultivated fields and expansive blue lakes.



FIGURE 7. Regatta at lake Päijänne (Juhani Enckell 2009.)

The topography of the country is rather flat but sharpens towards the north. In Lapland, the highest hilltops form unforested fells. (Heikkilä 2000, 60.) The first medieval cities were founded on the shores of the Baltic Sea. Now, a few larger cities also exist in the hinterland. The country is rather sparsely populated. Villages concentrate on southern and central regions; on the seacoast, on river- and lakesides, hilltops and esker valleys. The lushest forests grow in southwestern Finland but the furthest southwestern archipelago is scattered with bare rocky islands.

The Finnish national culture derives both from endogenous regional habits and versatile external influences. Ancient hunting and conveyance tracks, medieval parish roads and major land routes from Turku, the former capital, and Tavastia to Savonia and Vyborg in present Russia form the base of the contemporary road network which now covers the whole country. (Vahtola 2003, 52-56.) In Finland, the natural landscape merges with the cultural landscape (Heikkilä 2000, 15). Several divisions and distributions have been made throughout history regarding the Finnish landscape. One distribution made in 1993 by the Ministry of Environment separates the country into ten landscape provinces with rather convergent endogenous landscape features.

In rural planning, legislation and land use planning programs usually protect the most important features of natural and cultural landscapes. The land use planning procedure of a rural commercial center includes going deep into the history of the project area and its surroundings. The customs, activities, values and possibilities of the past and present inhabitants are examined. Routes and waterways, old and new, are studied and the future development is forecast. Certain old buildings, sceneries and structures, ancient relics and settlements, valuable natural areas and resources, endangered species, rapids and water supplies are protected by law. Around the world, apparent environmental changes have gone hand in hand with the policies and rules to manage and protect the environment and its beautiful features but only the industrial revolution with its devastating consequences evoked the ecological approach (Antrop 2005).

The value and the proportions of aesthetics and functionality fluctuate in the flow of history. The key element in the design of rural centers is operational fluency; function. The appreciation of form may be a matter of bandwagon and depend on artistic and aesthetic matters. Still, the appearance of a rural communal or commercial center is a prominent factor: it binds the area to its surroundings; it has an effect on the overall architectural and environmental congruence. The exterior and interior design of a site also affects the levels of satisfaction and coziness and reflects the historic, aesthetic and cultural appreciations of the community. Many Finnish municipalities, including Rautjärvi municipality in southern Carelia, are currently developing their central communal areas (Rautjärvi municipality 2011).



FIGURE 8. Development plan, perspective of the Änkilänmäki area (Rautjärvi municipality 2011.)

When planning a rural center, history and tradition should be merged with functionality, modern technology and up-to-date design. Important and distinctive landscape features of a rural community should be revealed and brought forth. The finished plan should be pleasant and include temporal depth and local distinctiveness; the future ecological diversity of natural rural environments and richness of the cultural landscape should be ensured. In the forming of significant subconscious mental landscapes small elements and experiences have a much greater

influence than large ones. This should be kept in mind when designing large parking lots and vast marketplaces. (Luostarinen & Yliviikari 1997, 52-70.)



FIGURE 9. A busy rural commercial site on the banks of the Kukkolankoski rapid – a boundary between Sweden and Finland (Hannu Vallas.)

The means to enhance distinctive local features can be subtle: thinning out of the forest cover to expose open field landscapes or beautiful lake views, enhancing the visibility of historic buildings or ancient rock formations or adapting the coloring and design of the new structures with the old. The means can be quite imperceptible and positive planning results may be perceived only in the overall harmony of the finished area.



FIGURE 10. The Vääksey canal – a beautiful scene; detail (Juhani Enckell 2009.)

In a rural center, temporal changes in weather conditions, maintenance policies, design trends, visitor rates and other factors affect the balance between form and function and revise the public view; the way in which people see the area. Good service and smooth flow of all types of traffic is essential – especially if the location is not particularly favourable and there is no beautiful scenery at the site. In general, the easy mobility of pedestrians, disabled customers and vehicles should be reckoned with and flawless operation of law enforcement and rescue traffic and delivery service should be enabled. National parking space standards are usually followed but municipal and county-specific parking design policies do exist. (Reihe & Kallio 2004, 15). Waste management and maintenance routes, such as snow removal and lawnmower routes, should be clear and easily steerable. The aim is to create a collective public commodity accessible to all and enjoyed also by by-passers and seasonal inhabitants. If a sufficient level of smoothly operated services is provided in a rural center, it attracts local people and by-passers and – if carried out at reasonable cost – may strengthen the economy.



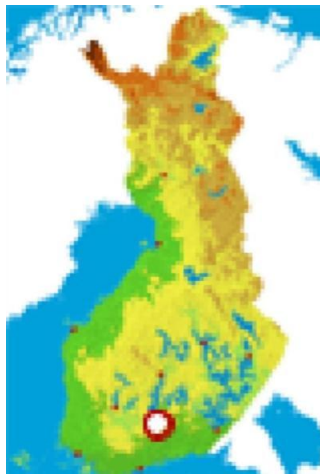
FIGURE 11. A commercial sign in Vääksy (Juhani Enckell 2009.)

3 THE NEW VÄÄKSY COMMERCIAL CENTER; CASE STUDY

Several aspects of those introduced in the previous section are taken into account in the development planning process of the new Vääksey commercial center.

When planning a site or area, the existing data and variable factors influence the quantity, the variety and the quality of aspects that will be assessed. The limitations in time and characteristics of the assessor have an impact on the planning process but as much objectivity as possible has been brought into the design.

3.1 Description and statistics of the case study area



Vääksey, a rural village of circa 5.500 inhabitants, acts as the municipal center of Asikkala municipality in the Päijät-Häme province in southern Finland. Vääksey has a beautiful, slightly hilly landscape with coniferous forests and lush dell groves (Aarrevaara, Uronen & Vuorinen 2007). The village is situated in a scenic intersection; on a narrow isthmus between two lakes, lake Vesijärvi and lake Päijänne.

FIGURE 12. The location of Vääksey.

The total surface area of Asikkala municipality is 755,54 square kilometers and the population around 8.550. Signs of the latest glacial period - which ended about 10.000 years ago - are clearly visible in Asikkala. The Salpausselkä II ice-marginal formation spanning from northwest to southeast and the traverse Pulkkilanharju esker cross each other in northern Asikkala.

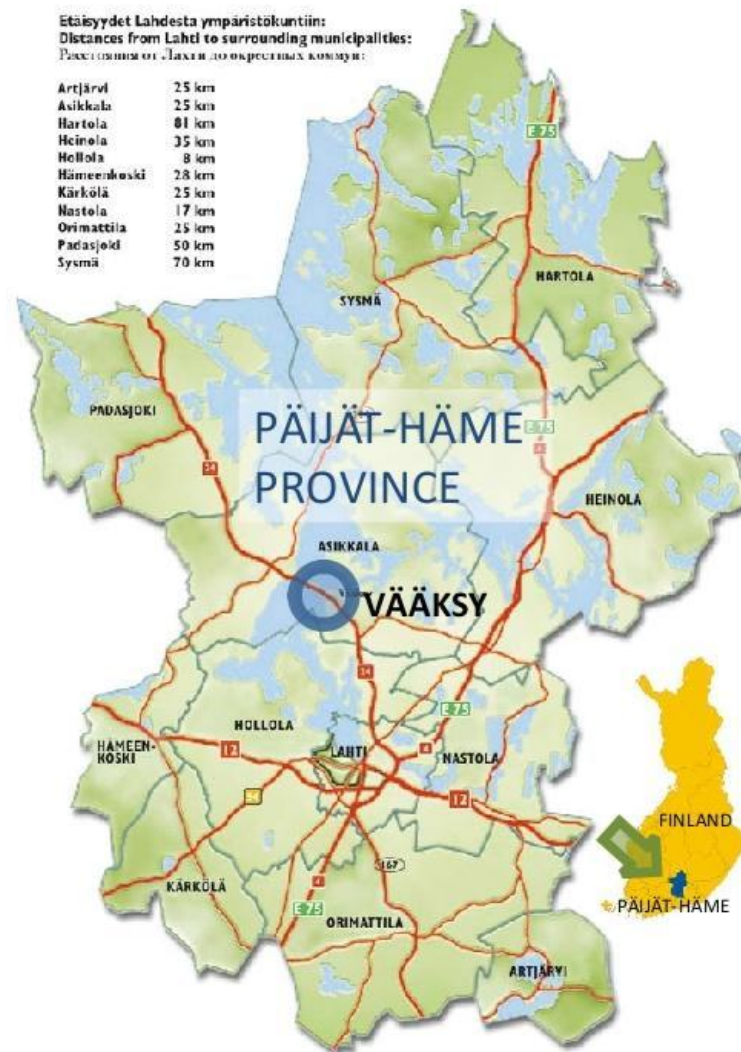


FIGURE 13. Päijät-Häme province and road distances from Lahti to surrounding municipalities (The City of Lahti.)

In the Päijät-Häme province, commercial centers concentrate on the Lahti area and attract rural customers for the loss of smaller municipalities and business keepers. A big commercial center selling local goods, daily supplies and hardware also operates in Heinola, beside route E4 which was transferred to the eastern side of lake Päijänne in the late 1990's; formerly the route passed through Vääksy. The case study area can be reached from road 24, the former route E4, through two junctions and an intersection. The fact that the project area stands beside a smaller internal route, route 313, instead of a bigger road, calls for special actions to attract by-passers and people who live near road 24; the main access road to Lahti - a city with well equipped hypermarkets - only a twenty minute drive away.

Waterways and three major roads connect the municipality to a few cities, smaller towns and several villages. The road distance from Vääksy to Lahti, Heinola and Sysmä is 25-30 kilometers, to the capital Helsinki 130 km and to Jyväskylä 150 km.

In the summer, the Vääksy canal acts as one of the busiest inland waterways in Finland; a daily cruise line operates between Lahti and Heinola.

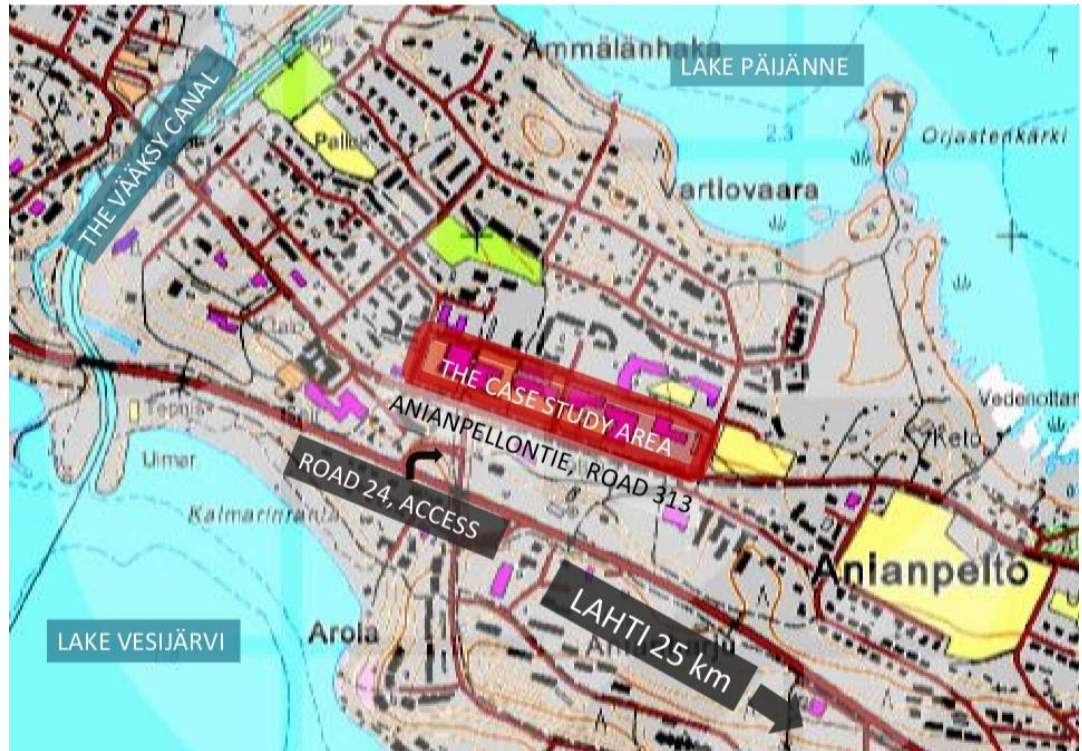


FIGURE 14. The location of Vääksy and the case study area on road 313 and near – but not beside - road 24; the former route E4 (BirdLife Finland.)

The surrounding lakes and the Vääksy canal cannot be seen straight from the case study area. Anianpellontie; road 313 from Vääksy to Vierumäki, passes the area and leads to the old Vääksy center across the Vääksy canal. Public transport is operational: there is a covered bus stop in front of the area. The new commercial center is accessible by foot and bicycle. A pedestrian route leads through the case area but lacks major usage. Invalid access is decent on most premises.

The rectangular case study area covers approximately 55 hectares and comprises various office and business buildings from the 1980's, a few newer buildings and parking areas, pavings, plantings, outdoor furniture and light fittings from the 80's to the 21st century.

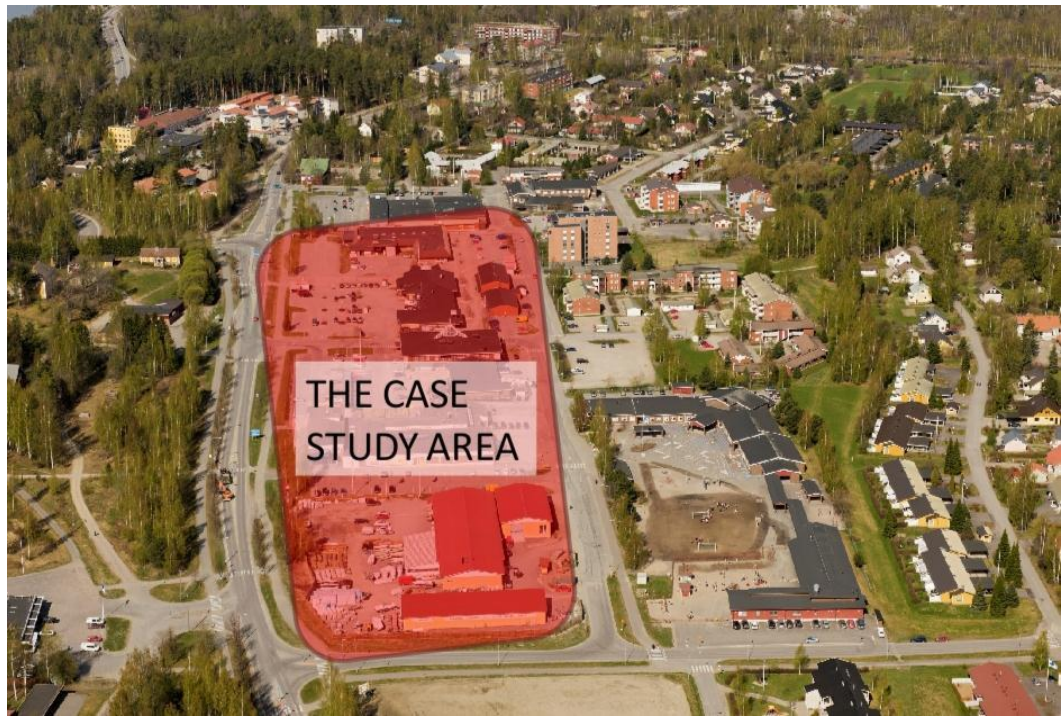
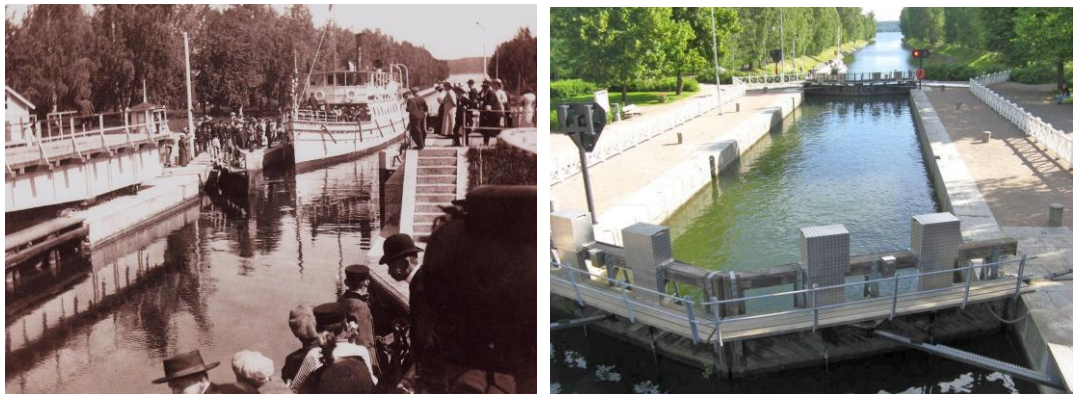


FIGURE 15. The case study area (Lentokuva Vallas 2010.)

There is one partly residential building on the site; the principal façade material is red brick. The landscape is rather flat and without greenery except for the surrounding woodland hills; the site is constructed on a former field. The main focus point is a higher apartment building on the backside of the case study area. There are also large commercial billboards and neon signs on the site.

The area stands on an important ground water basin, which causes auxiliary measures for construction works and storage. Bordering hedges and a few 19th century buildings of the Mikkola estate, a historic milieu of local significance, and a protected old farmhand croft are located next to the project area. The National



FIGURES 16 & 17. The Vääkysy canal in the 1910's and at present.
(Figure 16. The National Board of Antiquities. Figure 17. Juhani Enckell 2009.)

Board of Antiquities has assessed the nearby Vääksy canal area as a significant national built heritage environment. The protected stone-age settlement of Myötämäki is situated near the project area, on the northwestern side. (Lampinen 2008.)

The Ministry of Environment has distributed Finland into ten landscape provinces. In this division, southern Asikkala belongs to the Päijänne district in the cultivation and lake region of Häme. This landscape division has been defined in 2007. In the latter distribution, the Vääksy area belongs to the 8th region, Salpausselkä II, of a total of 13 landscape regions within the Päijät-Häme province. The bedrock of the case study area consists of granite and the main soil type is clay. (Aarrevaara, Uronen & Vuorinen 2007.) Clay is an impermeable soil type apt to freeze unevenly: it may cause structural damage in foundations and walls. In humid conditions clay may lose its load-bearing capacity. (Soini 1997, 37-41.)

According to the Finnish Meteorological Institute (2011), the climate on the area is semi-continental with generally mild southwestern winds and an average annual rainfall of 640 millimeters. The average temperature in the summer - June to August - is +15°C and in the winter - December to February - about -6,5°C. Rapid changes in the weather are possible, especially in the winter.

The majority of the 35 members of the municipal council of Asikkala belong to the right wing: 13 to the Centre Party and 9 to the National Coalition Party (Asikkala municipality 2011).

Kuntaliitto, a national union of municipalities (2011), states that in 2010 over 60 % of the population of Asikkala were 15-65 years of age and had passed a vocational examination or held a professional degree. About 70 % of the employees worked in the service industry within the municipality. In 2008, less than 10 % were unemployed. The total population and the median age are prone to rise slightly in the near future. A new residential area of about 600 inhabitants is being built in the Häkälä area east of central Vääksy (Asikkala 2011).

The latest official detailed plan of the new Vääksy commercial center dates back to 2002 when small alterations were made. The current local detailed plan was preceded by zoning alterations in the 80's and 90's. The updated detailed compilation plan from 2011 shows the new three storey apartment building (183 AKR) which is being built southeast of the case study area.

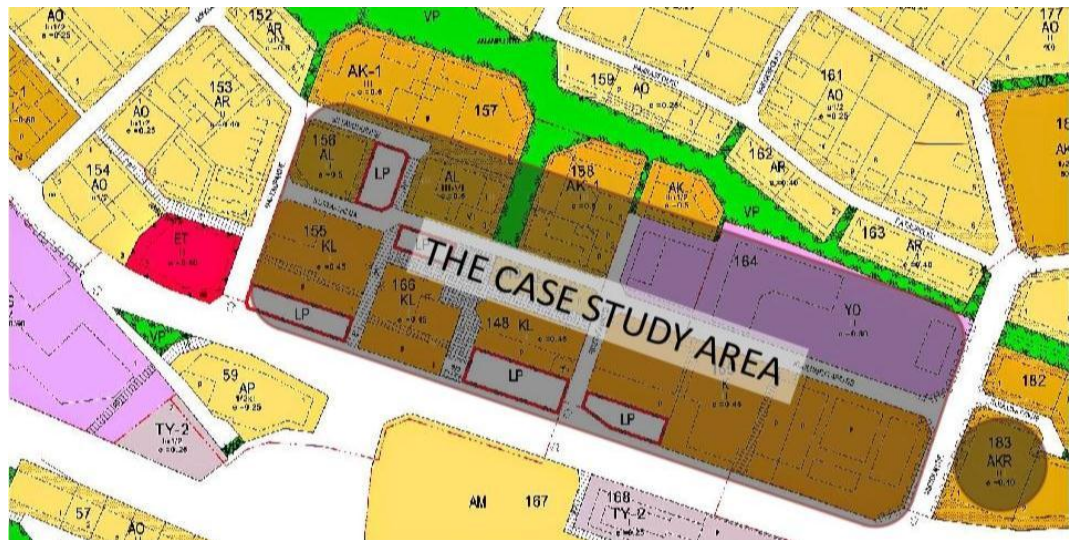


FIGURE 18. The case study area in the latest presentation of local detailed plans (Asikkala municipality 2011.)

A partial local master plan for the Vääksy area was completed in 2008 and put into legal force in 2010.

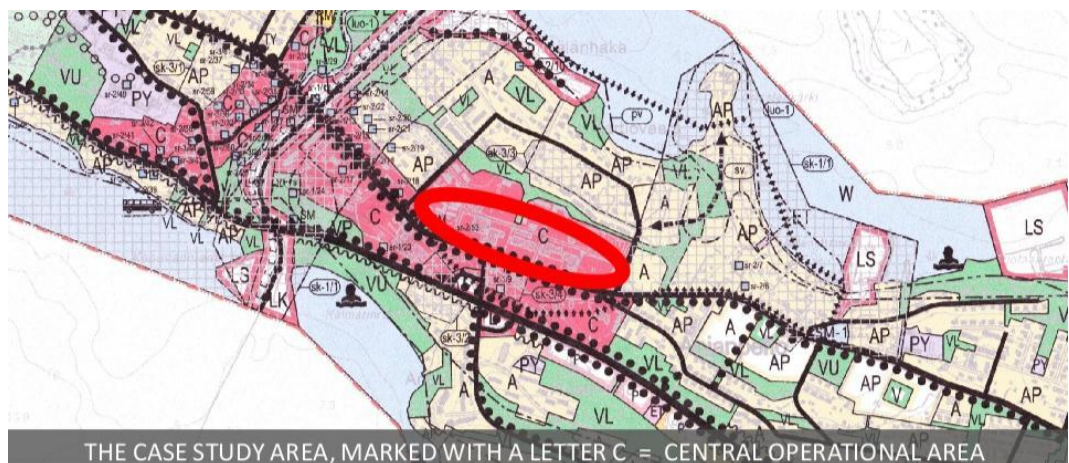


FIGURE 19. An excerpt of the partial local master plan (Asikkala municipality & Ramboll Finland 2008.)

Through statutory land use planning preparations, preliminary actions and inquiries, the local detailed plan encloses most of the legislative and environmental aspects to be taken into account in the planning process.

A small survey (*appendix I*). was made by the author on the 20th of August, 2011 in front of a supermarket in the new commercial center of Vääksy. I asked five local residents to describe the best and the worst feature of the case study area and make suggestions for the development of this site.

All interviewees were quite happy with the area in general. Two liked best the easy accessibility - especially to the supermarkets, one appreciated the availability of local goods, one thought it was easy to meet friends at the site and one praised the general proximity and quantity of services. The least liked feature was the overall appearance which was described as dull, flat or outdated (three responses). Two interviewees suggested that something should be done to the area near the taxi stand beside the main road, one could not come up with any development ideas, one suggested that the market place, the pedestrian route and the lamp posts should be updated and one asked for better traffic arrangements.

3.2 Economics and politics: exception proves a rule

In this project, no budget or preliminary cost limit was set due to the introductory and educational nature of this development plan. The order for a tentative development plan for the case study area was placed by the technical office of Asikkala municipality and negotiations of the intended planning program were held in May, 2011. A design competition regarding a new residential and commercial area, the construction of a new middle school and high school complex and - on the edge of the case study area - construction works of a new apartment building and the planning of the new Mikkolantie crossing, are going on in Vääksy in 2011. Discussions on students of Lahti University of Applied Sciences to cooperate in specific environmental planning projects in the Vääksy central area with Asikkala municipality are also underway.

In August 2011, a regional newspaper stated that Asikkala is going to hold a strict economical line for the rest of the year and allow only legislatively indispensable additional costs (Etelä-Suomen Sanomat 2011, 5). The development of the new commercial center will probably take place at a later point of time.

3.3 Vääksey: past and present

Vääksey is situated on a historic and commercially significant region. In the past, an annual or biannual Anianpelto fair was held in the current Vääksey area for over 150 years starting from the early 18th century.

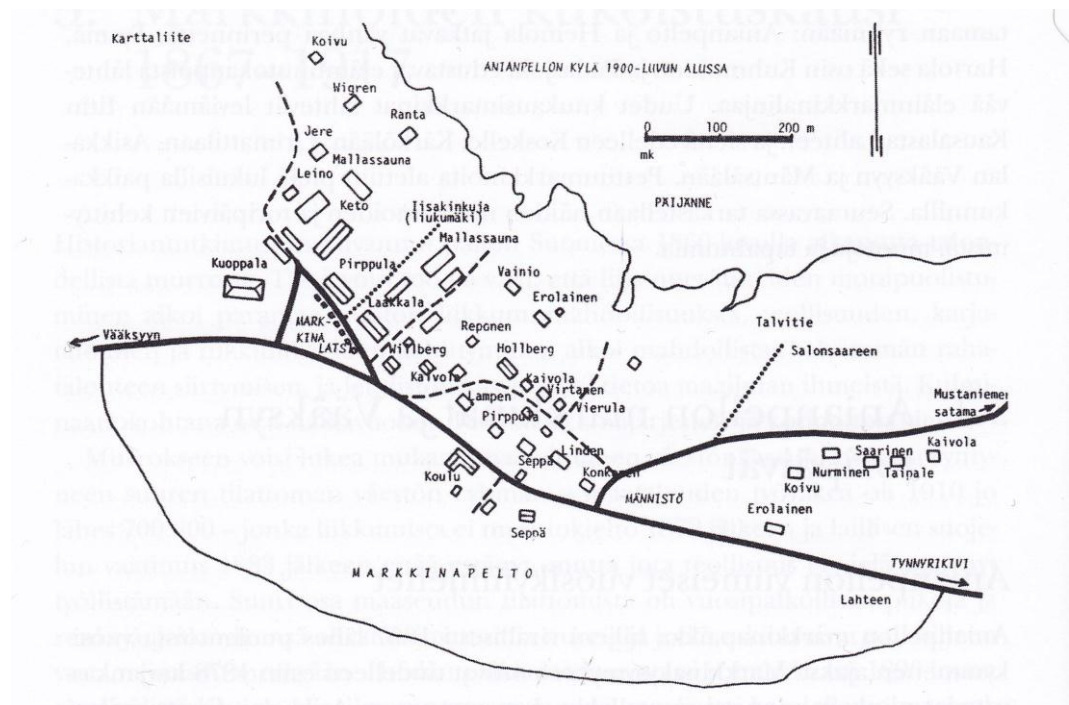


FIGURE 20. Map of Anianpelto village in the early 20th century (Honka-Keto 1982.)

The economical importance of the region slowly declined in the late 19th century as major trade routes moved south but the Anianpelto fair has been revived and the vitality of the tract has increased in recent years. The population of Vääksey is slowly growing. The new commercial center was constructed in the 1980's and

several regional development projects are under construction, planning or contemplation.

The first inhabitants of the region came after the latest glacial period thousands of years ago. Aarrevaara, Uronen & Vuorinen (2007) state that waterways were the first itineraries of the region. The name Asikkala was first mentioned in historic records in the Middle Ages. The municipality of Asikkala was founded in 1848,



when a unitary ecclesiastic jurisdiction was formed from a dozen of villages. Vääksy, focused on the former Anianpelto village area, acts as the municipal center. A canal was built in 1871 to connect lake Vesijärvi to lake Päijänne and onwards to the Kymi water system which flows to the Gulf of Finland. A beautiful brick church was elevated to Asikkala parish, a few kilometers east of Vääksy, in 1880. (Blomstedt 1982, 10 & 35.)

FIGURE 21. The Asikkala church (Juhani Enckell 2009.)

A significant market place and the financial center of the Päijät-Häme region was situated in the Anianpelto village from the 1720's to the early 1900's. A major road led through the narrow isthmus from the densely populated Tavastia region towards eastern and southeastern Finland. The fine waterways of Asikkala advanced the trade and timber market.



FIGURE 22. Trade at lake Vesijärvi in the early 1900's
(Photo archive of Lahti City Museum.)

According to Heinonen (2003, 116-117), there was a huge variety of merchandise at the Anianpelto fair in the late 1880's: fabrics, artifacts, coffee, spirits, various delicacies, medical herbs, horses and live stock. The Anianpelto fair wilted gradually and turned more into a carnival - possibly because of incremental rivalry, insufficient security measures and alterations in regional trade routes and customs (Heinonen 2003, 89 - 96.) Aleksis Kivi (*Alexis Stenvall*), the national poet of Finland, visited the fair at least once. In his novel 'Seitsemän veljestä' (*Seven Brothers*), first published as a compilation of short stories by the Finnish Literature Society in 1870, one of the brothers, Eero, in the midst of a drunken Christmas celebration, sings a pithy description of the Anianpelto fair:

*'Anianpellon markkinoilla
oltta ja wiinaa juotiin
mustan härän hinnalla
ne kihlakalut tuotiin.'*
(Heinonen 2003, 115)

*'In Anianpelto, hail,
we drank spirits and ale
sell a black bullock, fling,
take home an engagement ring.'*
(translation: Minna Keränen)

Currently the fair has been revived in the form of an annual fair. The original site of the historic Anianpelto fair is located in the fields and woods of the Päijänne lakefront in Vääksy, a bit southeast of the present commercial center and of the

case study area, and is protected by law. The present annual fair is held on the banks of lake Vesijärvi and the Vääksy canal.

Until 1980's, the main shopping district of Vääksy was situated in the old commercial center near the Vääksy canal and route 24, the former route E4, about



FIGURE 23. The Jokiranta villa in the old center of Vääksy. (Mika Viitanen.)

a kilometer northwest from the new center and the case study area. This old neighbourhood – especially Vääksyntie; the former main shopping street - still holds some of its historic appearance and is numbered by private local entrepreneurs and an operational historic mill. Main public learning and library premises, sports facilities and municipal technical services are located in the old center.

Most of the buildings in the old center, except for a few run-down houses, are either new, newly renovated or under reconstruction. Sadly, the former bus station on Asikkalantie is partly abandoned and the renovation of a visible 1960's property in the midst of the old center was just aborted due to bankruptcy. At different times, the daily market place has been situated in two places in that area.



The market place was relocated in the mid 1980's to the new Anianpelto central area, also known as the new Vääksy commercial center.

FIGURE 24. The municipal hall of Asikkala (Juhani Enckell 2009.)

Several domestic and multinational wholesale companies, private entrepreneurs and municipal administrative offices now occupy the new center and its surroundings.

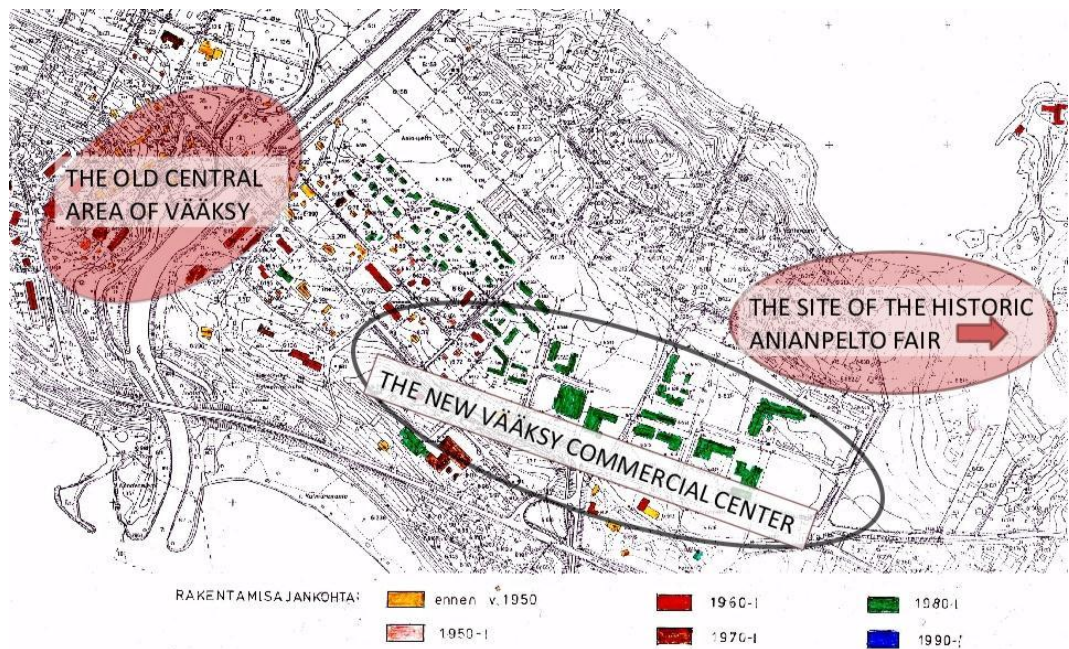


FIGURE 25. The construction era of buildings in central Vääksy. Buildings in the case study area are coloured green which means that they were – mainly - built in the 1980's (Asikkala municipality.)

The number of customers at local grocery stores grows significantly during the summer months and weekends as Asikkala serves as a popular summer holiday and cottage district. This forms another challenge: how to provide sufficient parking space in the summer without creating void wintry plains? There is no comprehensive answer but the grievance can be attenuated by careful planning. The local detailed plan was altered and a new market place was constructed in the mid 1990's. The general appearance of the market place, the parking areas and the central pedestrian route is designed by Arkkitehtityö Oy (Ltd) - architects Boman, Lindström and Vesanen, in 1992.

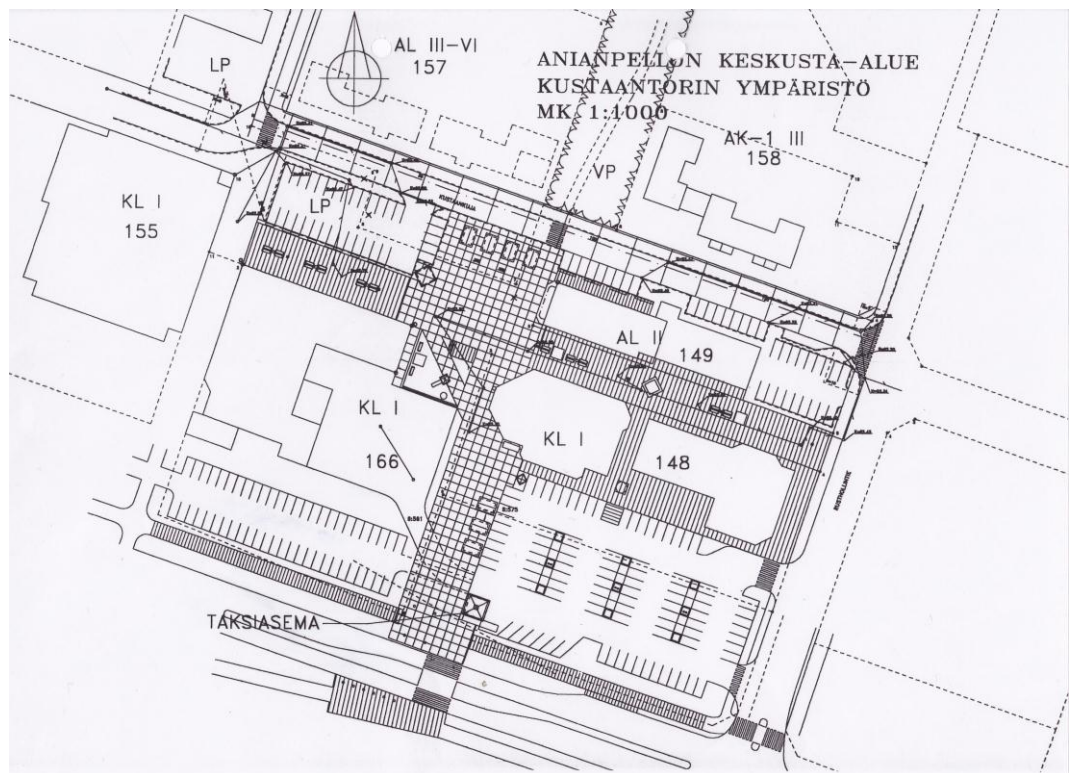


FIGURE 26. Layout of the new Anianpelto central area and the Kustaantori market place in the early 1990's (Asikkala municipality.)

The local detailed plan was finished in 1994; it was partly revised by the technical office of Asikkala in 2002. The Väaksy market place, Kustaantori, now operates between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. during weekdays without vendor charges. Produce of local farmers is mainly sold; occasional weekend and summer fairs are held.

One unfulfilled development plan by Arkkitehtityö Oy (Ltd) is presented in the appendix section (*appendix 6*). In this layout, the market place is placed on the long narrow area left of the taxi center and closer to Anianpellontie than in the realized version. This archived layout was one source of inspiration for my development plan.

3.4 Development suggestions

The introductory development plan (*appendix 2*) calls for alterations in the current local detailed plan. The main alteration target is the market place which now stands a bit aloof on the intended facade side of the case area. The small market place has gradually seceded from the main parking area or former ‘backyard’ which faces the main southern bypass and, in practice, acts as the main gateway to the business premises. In the development plan, the market place is moved to the southeastern side of the municipal hall, to the parking area next to the main road. The parking area is large, it lacks major usage – especially in the winter - and serves mainly as a taxi center and a market place add-on.



FIGURE 27. Aerial description of the case study area (Lentokuva Vallas 2010.)

In the development plan, the bare transit field next to the taxi center is transformed into a new parking area by traffic arrangements: the former parking area exit next to Anianpellontie is turned into a two way passage. The access to the municipal hall stays unchanged but this entrance is also turned into a two way passage.



FIGURE 28. The motor traffic routes before...



FIGURE 29. ... and after.

Low speed limits, speed bumps and traffic signs ensure the safety of crossings. A pedestrian bridge could also be elevated; it is shown in the general layout.

The abrogated market place can be turned into an auxiliary parking area and a childrens' playground can be built in the corner.



FIGURE 30. A childrens' playground in the corner of the former market place.



FIGURE 31. Perspective of a possible pedestrian bridge.

The execution of this development plan would require alterations in the local detailed plan and thus call for a land use alteration program with legislative planning policies and public participation. Negotiations with private property owners would also be necessary.

3.4.1 The development plan

The development plan consists of a general layout of the whole area with descriptive texts. A detailed plan within the project area is also presented (*appendix 3*). The detailed plan shows the small lawn area in front of the S-Market grocery store transformed into a paved slope with plantings. The idea of this transformation is to

invigorate the area in front of the main access road and give an example of a way to reduce lawn mowing on small and sloped areas.



FIGURE 32. Perspective of the paved area in front of the S-Market grocery store.

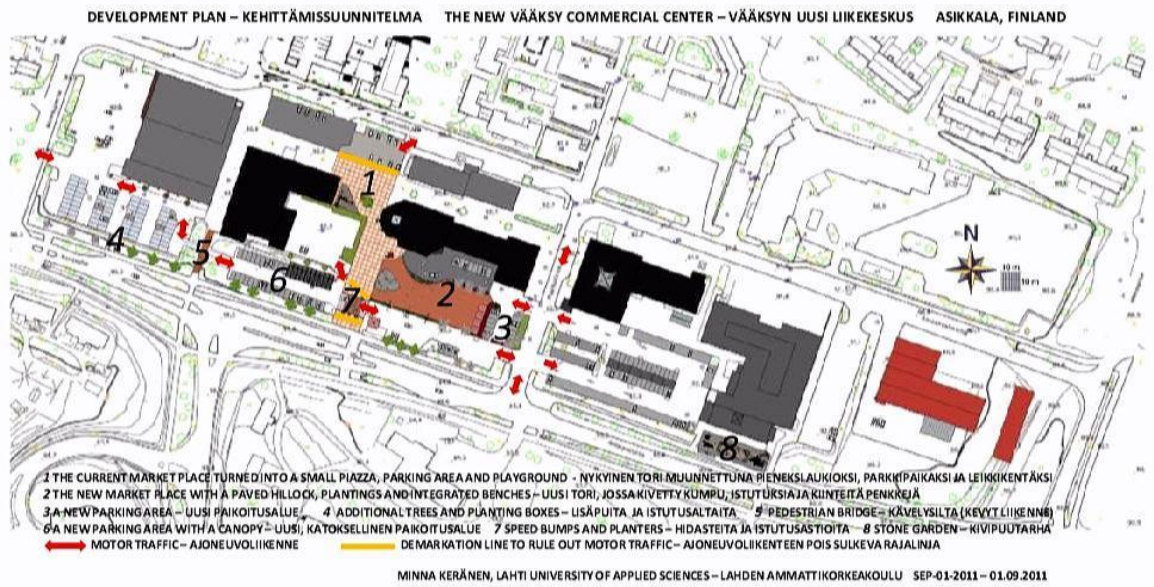


FIGURE 33. The development plan.

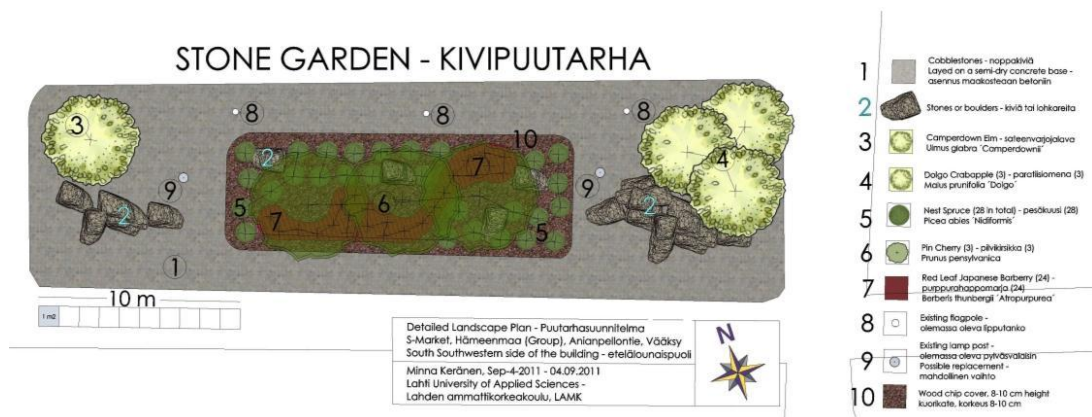


FIGURE 34. The detailed plan, focused view.



FIGURE 35. The detailed plan, general view.

In the general layout, the market place is moved to the southeastern side of the municipal hall, a new parking area is built on the empty asphalt field next to the taxi center and the one-way traffic lanes in front of the municipal hall are turned into two-way passages. In this way, the visibility, functionality and general appearance of the project area can be enhanced. The increase in motor traffic may hamper the pedestrian flow. This problem can be solved with speed bumps, traffic signs, concrete planters and a pedestrian bridge. The artificial, paved hillock with pine plantings adds height and detail to the area and connects the new market place mentally with the cluster of old pines at the historic site of Anianpelto fair.



FIGURE 36. Perspective of the new market place and the artificial hillock.



FIGURE 37. A view from the artificial hillock.

The existing pedestrian route near the old market place can be updated with minor changes and a part of the old market place can be transformed into a parking area.

Simple structures such as fixed canopies can be placed above parking lots, small lawn areas can be paved or covered with wood chips to ease maintenance and additional vegetation like hedges with colourful foliage or groups of columnar aspens, pin cherries or lime trees can be planted to add some greenery and height to the area. Raised planting beds are advised to be constructed on a permeable layer of gravel; additional water faucets and hose connectors can be installed if a built-in irrigation system is considered too expensive. In case of extreme weather conditions and tree falls, only columnar-shaped trees are advised to be planted closer than their full-grown height from the buildings.



FIGURE 38. Added greenery in front of the K-Supermarket.

A modern cooperative waste sorting unit with recyclable material collectors can be designed next to the taxi center or in lieu of the small hedgerow that separates the small new parking area from the two-way transit lane parallel to Anianpellontie. It is advisable to keep the overall appearance of all premises tidy, to repair broken and crooked fences and to improve the accessibility of disabled customers. Because of the diversity of the buildings, a mutual agreement on uniform planting boxes and homogeneous alternating year-round plantings could be made to increase the landscape uniformity of the case study area.



FIGURE 39. General perspective of the area.

4 SUMMARY

Finland is a vast but sparsely populated country. The Finnish population of 5.4 million inhabitants is gradually concentrating on municipal regions and the capital area (Statistics Finland 2011). Approximately one fifth of Finns now live within the capital region. This forms a challenge for small rural municipalities which try to hold on to their inhabitants and retain the current level of communal and commercial services on non-densely populated areas.

As dense population embodies the social reform and natural movement of centralizing, it adheres to vital sustainable development. At the same time, the centralizing movement empties rural small towns and villages, reduces rural manufacture and service levels, affects the landscape and impoverishes cultural diversity. A balance between different values and aspects like modernism and tradition, cost-consciousness and aesthetic values, sustainable development and agrarian self-sufficiency should be worked out to keep rural municipalities alive. Marc Antrop (2005) parallels the landscape with a human being: the identity and character of a physical place can be examined and cared for like a person's - it is recognizable in spite of temporal changes and similarly to a person, the landscape can die if it loses its coherence.

This thesis is divided into two parts: the first part presents several aspects of rural planning and the second part deals with a case study planning project. In the first part, money and politics, legislation and physical variables, history, environment, landscape and human interpretations are dealt with in a general manner and a few descriptive images are presented. The aim is to gather all relevant aspects together and form a clear assembly. During the writing process, I noticed that most aspects have an impact; a 'butterfly effect', on each other: in many cases, one aspect can be examined through several crossing viewpoints. The subject of ancient settlements, for instance, can be observed either through protectional legislation, through human experience, through aesthetics and impacts on the landscape,

through historic records and statistics or through physical variables like changes in the humidity and in the preservation of certain substances. It was not easy to compile the aspects under distinct headlines. Due to the goal of simple presentation and generality, some topics may lack scientific precision and profound analysis and act as a plain walk-through. I tried my best to compensate this by presenting various standpoints; through giving the reader several keys to start a deeper study of the topics in question. In this way I hope I fulfilled the goals that were set in the beginning: to serve further development and help students in their planning tasks.

The second part acts as a prologue for the development plan of the case study area. The location, the history and distinctive features of the case study area are displayed through maps, images and descriptive texts. The Vääksy commercial center is situated near a bigger city, Lahti, but stands on historic ground and on a beautiful region between two lakes and major waterways. The challenges of the project area are the shopping malls and commercial centers of the Lahti area, the question of a possible municipal merger, the division of the central Vääksy area into two distinct locations; the old and the new center, the location of the new Vääksy commercial center partly hidden on a low field beside a small rural road and the difficulty of major alterations in the functional layout of the area: the area is tightly built except for large parking lots - and most parking spaces are needed in the summer when numerous seasonal inhabitants populate the area.

The development plan consists of a general layout and a detailed garden plan. In the development plan, the current market place is moved to a large parking area in front of the municipal hall. The lost parking spaces are replaced with two smaller parking areas on municipal premises. An update of a private parking lot next to the new market place and small alterations in motor traffic routes are also suggested. The use of a transit route parallel to the adjacent Anianpellontie may increase if the market place is moved to a new location. For this reason, some safety measures regarding pedestrian flow are also presented. Some plantings and lightings are added to invigorate the slightly dull general appearance of the area which – according to residential feedback – has bothered the public.

The detailed plan shows a small stone garden in front of one of the supermarkets; the area acts now as a small rectangular lawn area and passage despite pedestrian routes on both sides. The area is regenerated by adding stone pavings, rocks and plantings of various height. Lighting alterations are also suggested. Both the general development plan and the detailed plan are shown in flat layouts and perspective drawings which give an overview of the transformed area. Images of the current appearance of the area are also presented as baselines.

In this bachelor's thesis information about different aspects of environmental planning of rural communal or commercial centers in Finland was gathered and taken into account in the planning of the new Vääksy commercial center.

Johanna Forsius-Nummela (1997) has written a beautiful definition of the rural landscape: *'The rural landscape resembles a patchwork quilt that is continuously being assembled. It is comprised of natural and cultural phenomena, large and small, old and new, beautiful and ugly. The rural cultural landscape presents a complex challenge to man whose response is based on economic, social and cultural needs. The cultural landscape is a living history book from which we may read the story of the customs, activities, values and possibilities of the past and present inhabitants of a particular region'*
(translation: Ragni Kumpulainen)

In the planning of rural communal or commercial centers, a merger between economic, physical and mental values should be achieved. The challenge is great; a perfect plan can never be achieved, but the effort can produce better rural centers which respond to the needs of people, the environment and sustainable development.

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Figures

Photos, images and illustrations: author if not indicated otherwise.

The plans and perspectives were drafted with Google Sketchup 8 freeware.

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1. Aerial view of the site (Lentokuva Vallas) and the survey report – residential feedback of the case study area.

Appendix 2. Map of the case study area (Asikkala municipality) and the development plan.

Appendix 3. The detailed plan, focused and general view.

Appendix 4. A geomorphological map of Finland (The University of Helsinki; Department of Geosciences and Geography)

Appendix 5. Vääksy and surrounding areas at the end of the latest glacial period about 11.000 years ago (Geological Survey of Finland) and a geological map of Asikkala (Asikkala municipality.)

Appendix 6. A former development plan of the case study area (Asikkala municipality/Arkkitehtityö Oy.)

Appendix 7. Images of the Vääksy area (Juhani Enckell 2009.)

Appendix 8. Perspectives of the development plan: General view and the new market place from two directions

Appendix 9. Perspectives of the development plan: Cross section and market place views

AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE AND RESIDENTIAL FEEDBACK

APPENDIX 1

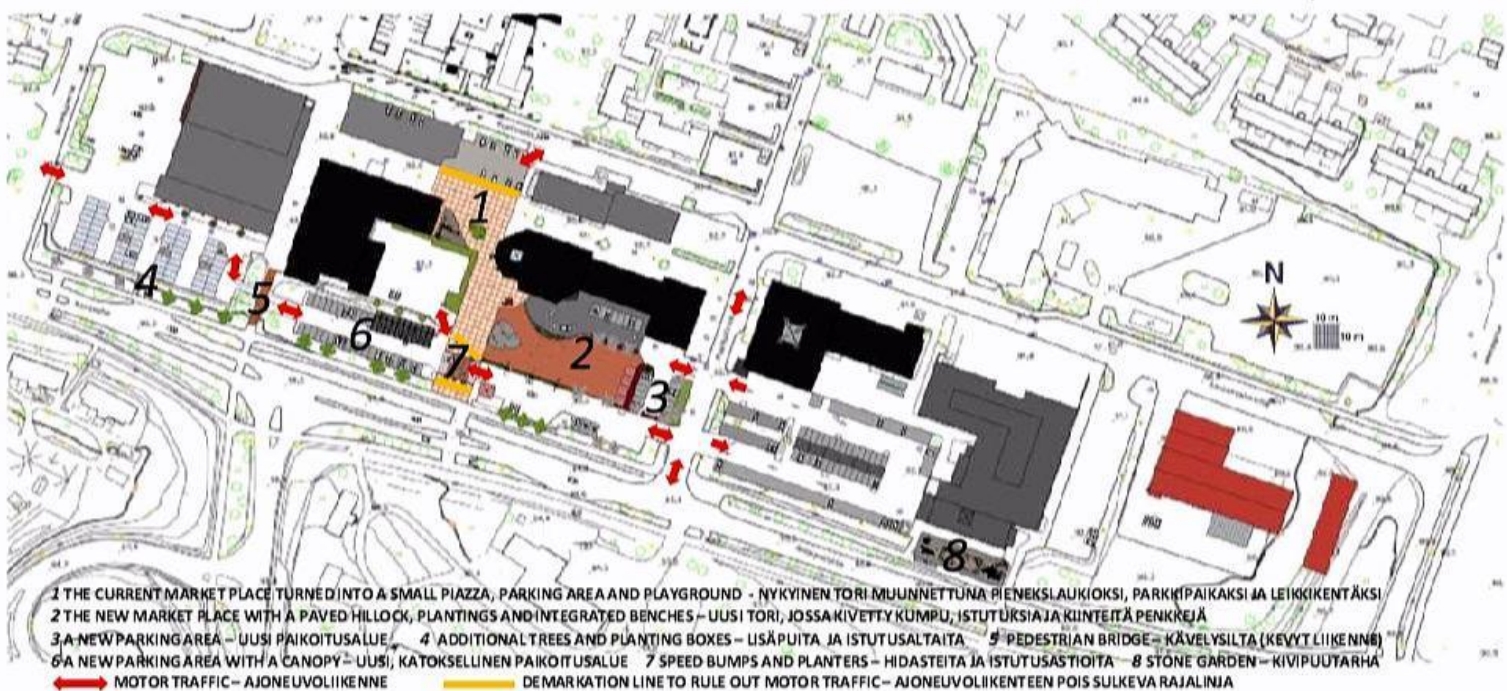


COMPILED SURVEY REPORT, VÄÄKSY, THE 20TH OF AUGUST, 2011

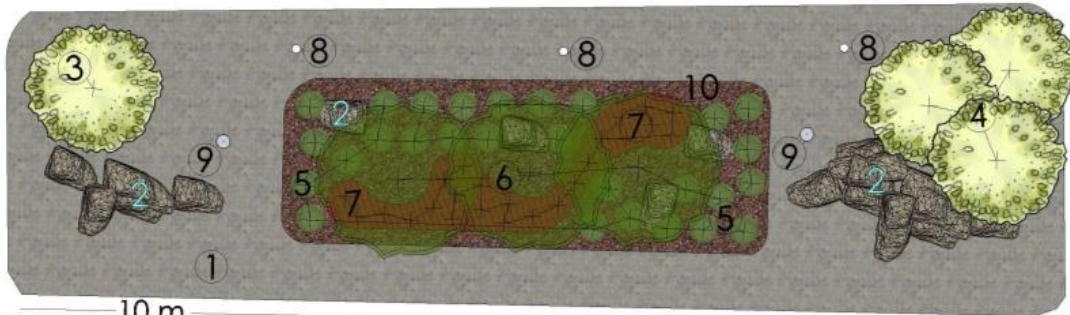
LOCAL RESIDENT AGE AND SEX	# 1 52, FEMALE	# 2 16, MALE	# 3 31, FEMALE	# 4 73, MALE	# 5 71, FEMALE
BEST FEATURE	The abundance of services.	Meeting friends at the site.	Local vegetables, berries etc. available.	Good accessibility.	Easy access.
WORST FEATURE	The large, flat parking areas.	Dullness.	Outdated appearance.	The parking areas.	Reckless driving.
SUGGESTIONS	Landscaping of the taxi center area.	No comment.	General update.	Greenery around the taxi stand.	Better traffic arrangements.



DEVELOPMENT PLAN – KEHITTÄMISSUUNNITELMA THE NEW VÄÄKSY COMMERCIAL CENTER – VÄÄKSYN UUSI LIIKEKESKUS ASIKKALA, FINLAND



STONE GARDEN - KIVIPUUTARHA



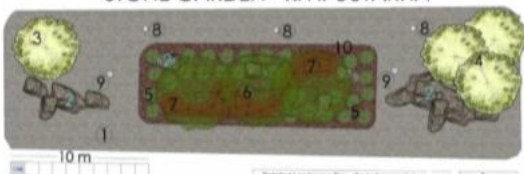
Detailed Landscape Plan - Puutarhasuunnitelma
 S-Market, Hämeenmaa (Group), Anianpellontie, Vääksy
 South Southwestern side of the building - etelälounaispuoli
 Minna Keränen, Sep-4-2011 - 04.09.2011
 Lahti University of Applied Sciences -
 Lahden ammattikorkeakoulu, LAMK

- 1 Cobblestones - noppakiviä
Layed on a semi-dry concrete base -
asennus maastoteorian betonin
- 2 Stones or boulders - kiviä tai lohkeilla
- 3 Camperdown Elm - saaleinvajajalava
Ulmus glabra 'Camperdownii'
- 4 Dolgo Crabapple (3) - paratiisilomena (3)
Malus prunifolia 'Dolgo'
- 5 Nest Spruce (28 in total) - pesäkuusi (28)
Picea abies 'Nidiformis'
- 6 Pin Cherry (3) - pilvikirsikka (3)
Prunus pensylvanica
- 7 Red Leaf Japanese Barberry (24) -
purppurahaapomaja (24)
Berberis thunbergii 'Atropurpurea'
- 8 Existing flagpole -
olemassa oleva lipputanko
- 9 Existing lamp post -
olemassa oleva pylväsalaisin
Possible replacement -
mahdollinen vaihto
- 10 Wood chip cover, 8-10 cm height
kuorikate, korkeus 8-10 cm

DETAILED LANDSCAPE PLAN - PUUTARHASUUNNITELMA



STONE GARDEN - KIVIPUUTARHA




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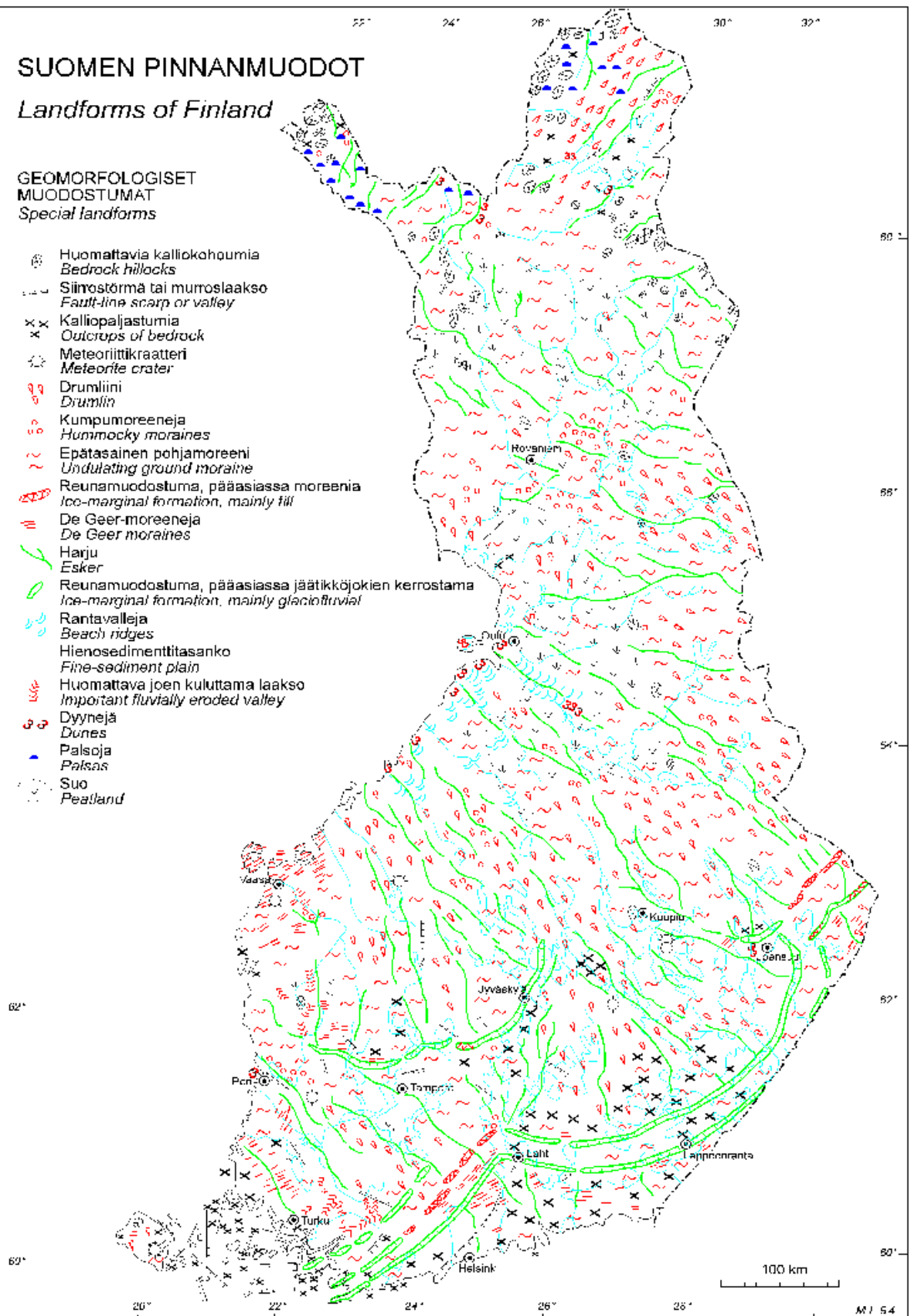


SUOMEN PINNANMUODOT

Landforms of Finland

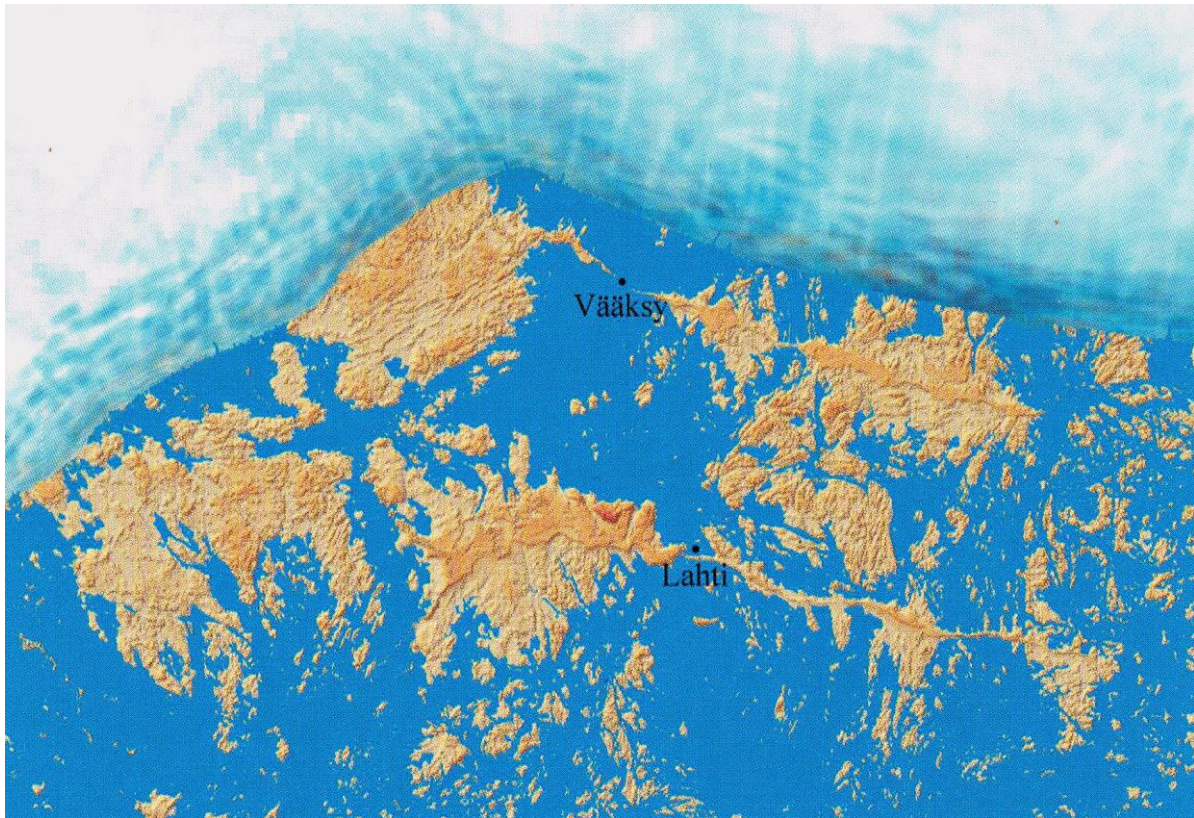
GEOMORFOLOGISET MUODOSTUMAT
Special landforms

-  Huomattavia kalliokohoumia
Bedrock hillocks
-  Siirrostörmi tai muroslaakso
Fault-line scarp or valley
-  Kalliopaljastumia
Outcrops of bedrock
-  Meteorittikraatteri
Meteorite crater
-  Drumliini
Drumlin
-  Kumpumoreeneja
Hummocky moraines
-  Epätasainen pohjamoreeni
Undulating ground moraine
-  Reunamuodostuma, pääasiassa moreenia
Ice-marginal formation, mainly till
-  De Geer-moreeneja
De Geer moraines
-  Harju
Esker
-  Reunamuodostuma, pääasiassa jäätikköjokien kerrostama
Ice-marginal formation, mainly glaciofluvial
-  Rantavalleja
Beach ridges
-  Hienosedimenttitasanko
Fine-sediment plain
-  Huomattava joen kuluttama laakso
Important fluvially eroded valley
-  Dyynejä
Dunes
-  Palsoja
Palsas
-  Suo
Peatland

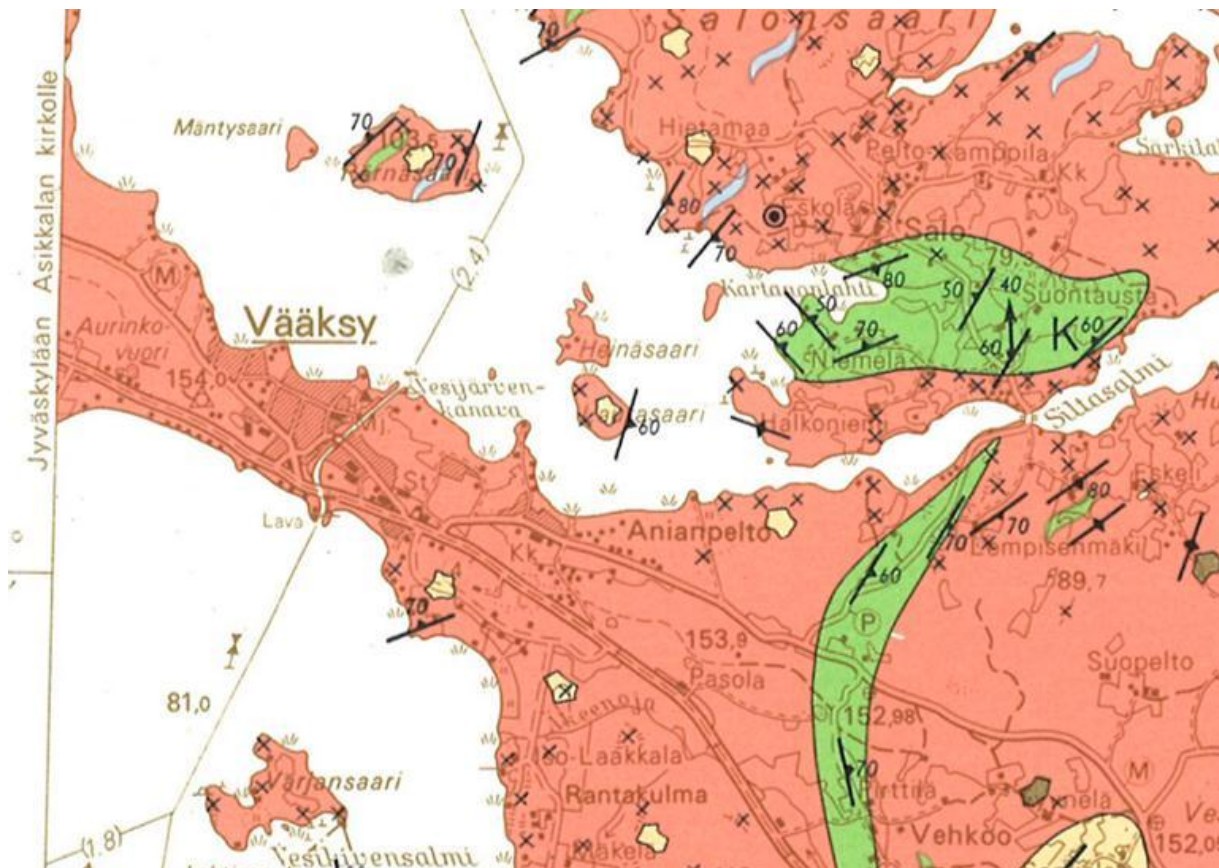


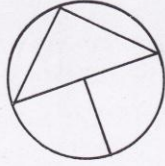
VÄÄKSY AND SURROUNDING AREAS AT THE
END OF THE LATEST GLACIAL PERIOD

APPENDIX 5

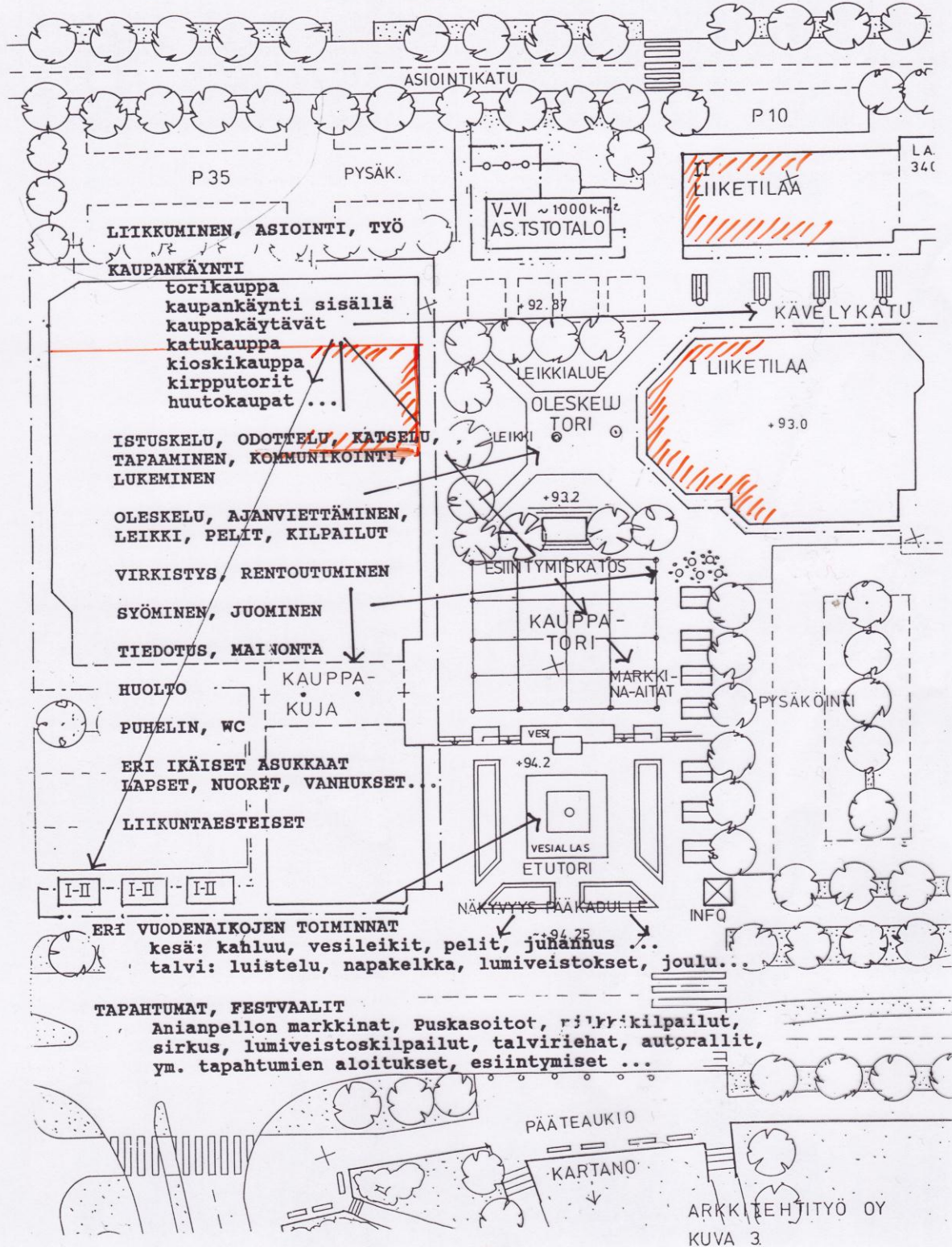


A GEOLOGICAL MAP OF ASIKKALA; GRANITE IN RED





Torialue on tuotu kaupunkikuvallisesti merkittävälle paikalle pääkadun ja kävelykadun väliin vastapäätä kartanoa.



A GUIDEPOST IN VÄÄKSY



THE PULKKILANHARJU ESKER



A MEMORIAL FOR RESIDENTS IN DIFFICULT TIMES IN THE PAST



THE PÄIJÄNNE HOUSE IN THE OLD CENTRAL AREA OF VÄÄKSY



A GOLDEN RAPESEED FIELD IN ASIKKALA



A GENERAL VIEW OF THE AREA



THE NEW MARKET PLACE FROM THE NORTHWEST



THE NEW MARKET PLACE FROM THE NORTHEAST



A SOUTH-SOUTHWESTERN CROSS SECTION



A WEST-NORTHWESTERN VIEW



A PEDESTRIAN PERSPECTIVE OF THE NEW MARKET PLACE

