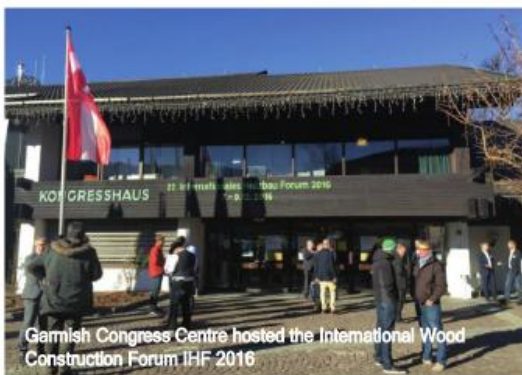


by Paola Govoni

IHF HOLZBAU FORUM GARMISCH 2016. GUEST COUNTRY FINLAND

The 22nd edition of the International Wood Construction Forum (IHF Holzbau Forum 2016) took place in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, from 7 to 9 December 2016 with the participation of 1550 professional visitors from 25 countries and over 120 exhibitors. The whole Congress Center was quite crowded over the three-day-event and the



Garmisch Congress Centre hosted the International Wood Construction Forum IHF 2016

Auditorium hosted a comprehensive programme of Conferences involving international speakers.

This year's Guest Country 2016 was Finland, a land that boasts a five-century-tradition in the choice of wood as main material for buildings. Mr. Kimmo Kuisma, Project Manager, Helsinki City Executive Office, Urban Development, gave a speech focusing on the 'City of Helsinki as a Platform for Wood Construction Development'.

LOOKING BACK AT THE EARLY DAYS

Since its founding in 1550 and until the late 19th century, Helsinki has always been a city, where wooden buildings have been largely predominant. Only the State and the Church could afford construction in brick or stone, thus the structure of the city consisted of blocks with one-two storey wooden buildings, where people of the working class lived. Big fires in Helsinki, once in a century on average between 1550 and 1900, have partially or totally destroyed the city.

In the early 1900s Helsinki recorded a relevant housing shortage. The

city expanded rapidly at that time, and many wooden house districts were built, especially destined for the enlarged working class. As Kimmo Kuisma reports: "Puu-Vallila was the first wooden house district to be developed specifically for the working class. It was built between the industrial areas of Vallila and Sörnäinen in two phases, in the 1910s and 1920s. The ideals of the 1910s can be seen in the small plots lining the narrow roads that follow the natural terrain. Behind the wooden houses with their mansard roofs there are small gardens and outbuildings.

The Puu-Käpylä wooden house district was developed along the railway lines to the north of the city centre in the early 1920s.

Designed by Martti Vällikangas and built out of log elements, the houses reflected the British ideals of a garden suburb".

The big wave of urbanization of the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the demolitions of many of these neighbourhoods, whereas the remaining wooden house districts were protected and transformed into middle-class neighbourhoods, also com-

pleted with cafés, small shops and lively markets. Nowadays, Puu-Vallila (meaning Wood-Vallila), Puu-Käpylä, Kumpula and Toukola are among the most valued residential districts in Helsinki, due to their lively and unique atmosphere.

THE NEW HARBOUR IS A DRIVER FOR DEVELOPMENT

Today, Helsinki is one of Europe's fast growing metropolitan areas. The strongest driver of this relevant urban development was the construction of a new harbour in

Vuosaari, 15 km East from the city centre. The harbour was completed in 2008 and determined a change in the city structure, creating new opportunities to plan and implement huge harbour-related brownfield areas of almost 10 sqkm near the city centre. Major project areas are under construction today and several projects are in the pipeline in suburban areas of Helsinki.

HELSINKY CITY PLAN 2050

Forward-looking on the medium-term period, Kimmo Kuisma explains: "In the forthcoming

Part of the exhibition area at IHF





Kimmo Kuisma's speech focusing on wood construction projects in Helsinki

decades, Helsinki will expand faster than ever before. The new Helsinki city plan 2050 (Helsinki City Council, 26 October 2016) will steer the development of the city far into

the future. The plan secures the prerequisites for the city to grow, to build new housing and to prosper economically. The reservations made in the city plan will enable the growth of the city to 860,000 residents and 560,000 jobs by 2050.

The population of Helsinki is today 620,000".

Already in the City Strategy Programme 2013-2016, the Functional Helsinki development issue set the promotion of wood construction in housing projects as one of the strategical targets.

RECENT WOODEN BUILDING PROJECTS

In the town planning wood has been set as an obligatory building material in some urban development project areas like:

Myllyporo, where a densely built, village-resembling city district of wooden buildings is under construction with expected completion date by 2017. Houses are energy efficient, ecological and offer the possibility of building extensions; Honkasuo, the largest new wood construction area in Helsinki. A former forest and meadow area, it will be turned by 2025 into a city village of ecosustainable wooden houses for 2,000 inhabitants. Wood construction is meant as a contribution to the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions; Kuninkaantammi, a new

urban development project area of modern housing. Formerly an industrial and commercial area, it will become a residential district for 5,500 inhabitants. Half of the project includes city blocks with new one-storey and multi-storey wooden houses. Construction of the wooden blocks is scheduled to start in 2018-2019.

The Vikki area is home to one of Finland's first building development projects for wooden apartments. Eko-Vikki timber housing is a well known example of a 1990's housing district focusing on ecological sustainability. The Honkasuo area will host the first projects of a wooden multi-storey passive house in Helsinki. Construction of Wood City, Finland's largest wooden quarter, has started and it will be completed by 2017.

Helsinki Housing Production Department (ATT) has been promoting wood construction in city-owned wooden building and social housing projects since over ten years.

THE CENTRAL LIBRARY
Helsinki's Central Library is under construction in the heart of the city and it will be opened in 2018. According to Kimmo Kuisma, it will be a masterpiece of timber construction, an eco-efficient almost zero-energy building.

THE CENTRAL LIBRARY

Among noticeable private wooden building projects, there are: the Kamppi Chapel of Silence, the Löyly public sauna with restaurant and outdoor terrace facing the sea and the Allas Sea Pool, with saunas, swimming pools and a café. Finnish spruce wood is the material of choice for the main building.