



## 5- COLOURS OF TYPICAL HOUSES - WHY ARE HOUSES COLOURED?

Anyone who has visited the northern countries at least once cannot fail to notice that the houses take on particular colours, giving the landscape a singular and idyllic appearance. Among these shades, red and white are often the most used, followed by other colours. During my trip to the Faer Øer islands, I couldn't help but be enraptured by the sight of these beautiful multicoloured villages, and I wondered what motivated the citizens to choose that particular shade. I remember my last day before leaving for Switzerland. We were returning to Tórshavn after our wonderful sailing and arriving in the harbour allowed us to see the whole city in front of us from a privileged perspective. I was very melancholic that day, I knew that my adventure was coming to an end, and I wanted to delay my return in any way I could. However, before my eyes, the city presented itself in all its beauty: it was so colourful that it conveyed joy, at that moment I could only smile and fill my eyes with wonder at the beautiful multicoloured colours that created a small idyllic picture and think that I could never forget those small colourful villages that made up a painter's palette.

### Scientific explanation

In those areas, houses were mostly built of wood, and to protect this material from the weather, it was necessary to use paint, which acted as a protective layer. A particularly effective varnish was obtained by mixing linseed or fish oil with a red iron ore, which was available cheaply and in large quantities because it was the by-product of copper mining, of which the Nordic countries were a major producer in the Middle Ages. The different colouring of the houses thus indirectly indicated a certain social class: while the less well-off chose red, the rich often painted their houses yellow or white, as a means of expressing their higher social status which allowed them to buy more expensive ingredients.

We can therefore conclude that behind the typical colouring of Scandinavian homes lies an abundance of minerals typical of the area, which allowed these products to be cheaper and therefore more accessible. Furthermore, as winters are characterised by few hours of daylight, the soft pastel colours allow the home to be more brightly lit, making it stand out in the darkness.

