

The reconstruction of the Pärnu road in Tallinn.
The new residential blocks from the series 1 – 317 behind
the 19th century housing soon to be demolished.

Rekonštrukcia cesty Pärnu v Talline.
Nový obytný blok sérií 1 – 317 za obytnými domami
z 19. storočia čoskoro na to zbúranými



Photo Foto: Eesti Filmiarhiiv, 1962

“AN APARTMENT WITH ALL CONVENIENCES” WAS NO PANACEA Mass housing and the Alternatives in the Soviet Period in Tallinn

„BYT S PLNÝM VYBAVENÍM“ NEBOL VŠELIEKOM

Hromadná bytová výstavba v Tallinne počas sovietskej éry a jej alternatívy

Napriek univerzálnosti hromadnej bytovej výstavby ako nástroja v procese modernizácie a napriek neflexibilnému politickému systému a štátom riadenej ekonomike vo východnom bloku sa môžeme stretnúť s rôznymi praktikami. Hoci budovy s panelmi rozmeru izieb, postavené s využitím technológií Francúza Camusa, sú si veľmi podobné, tieto technológie boli uplatňované v rôznych ekonomických podmienkach a v rozmanitých kultúrnych kontextoch. Preto vnímanie hromadnej bytovej výstavby, jej význam, kritika a hľadanie alternatív sa v jednotlivých krajinách líšia.

Hromadná bytová výstavba ako nástroj kolonizácie

Možno predpokladať, že vo východnom bloku sa hromadná bytová výstavba vďaka totalitnej spoločnosti vnímala ako niečo neutrálné – symbol pokroku, ktorý zlepšil životné podmienky všetkých členov spoločnosti. Je len prirodzené, že sa dnes na budovy postavené v tom čase pozerá s pohrdaním a sú vnímané ako zle vybudované noclahárne pochádzajúce z chudobných čias. V niektorých regiónoch, takých ako Estónsko a Lotyšsko, majú však tieto budovy ešte aj iný význam, keďže masová bytová výstavba fungovala aj ako nástroj migrácie a ako taká podporovala rusifikáciu.

Počas druhej svetovej vojny Sovietsky zväz okupoval Estónsko. Po vojne sem bola poslaná nomenklatúra s cieľom sovietyzácie Estónska; tá prišla do krajiny s blaženým kolonizátorským presvedčením, že sovietska moc oslobodila Estóncov od jarma kapitalizmu, že prostredníctvom ruštiny sa Estónci civilizujú a že slnko svieti len z Moskvy. Okupantov nezaujímal skutočnosť, že lokálni obyvatelia, väčšinou Estónci luteránskeho vierovyznania, vnímali tento proces v odlišnom svetle ani to, že krajina bola ovládaná nekompetentnými emigrantmi a že ruština bola obyvateľom nanucovaná. Vyše 90 % zo 140 000 obyvateľov predvojnového Tallinnu boli Estónci, ale počas rozpadu Sovietskeho zväzu na konci osemdesiatych rokov 20. storočia tvorili menej než polovicu populácie (spolu 470 000). Zdalo by sa, že otázka národnosti je záležitosťou politických dejín a neovplyvňuje bytovú výstavbu, ale ak vezmeme do úvahy politiku distribúcie bytov v Sovietskom

zväze, národnosť obyvateľov sa pre bytovú výstavbu stáva relevantnou.

Nové prefabrikované domy boli postavené štátom, takisto ako podniky, ale distribúcia bytov väčšinou prebiehala cez zamestnanie. Fabrika X postavila obytnú budovu a odbory vo fabrike distribuovali byty: najskôr nadriadeným, ktorí chceli dostať lepšie ubytovanie než doteraz, potom príkladným robotníkom ako odmenu, potom mladým manželským párom, ktoré zakladali svoje prvé domovy, a potom ľuďom zo všeobecného zoznamu čakateľov. Byty boli dôležitým lákadlom pri nájme robotníkov. Šesťdesiate a sedemdesiate roky 20. storočia boli obdobím intenzívnej industrializácie, ale lokálna ponuka práce nestačila, a preto sa byty používali, aby privábili robotníkov z celého Sovietskeho zväzu, aby sa v Estónsku usadili a pracovali. Stavebné podniky sa stali špecifickými pumpami migrácie. Podniky súhlasili postaviť domy pre fabriku alebo mesto za podmienky, že približne 10 % bytov bude patriť im a môžu ich distribuovať. Napriek tomu, že platy stavebných robotníkov boli relatívne dobré, nebola to populárna práca (práca vonku v zime atď.). Stavebné podniky zvyčajne nenajímali robotníkov v Estónsku, ale inde; tí pracovali rok alebo dva, kým dostali byt, a potom odišli do inej lokálnej fabriky, kde získali pohodlnejšiu prácu. Z tohto dôvodu stavebné podniky zažívali obrovskú fluktuáciu zamestnancov, trpeli stálym nedostatkom vyškolených robotníkov a kvalita postavených budov pri bližšom skúmaní nebola dobrá.

Byty dostávali aj miestni Estónci, ktorí väčšinou bývali v domoch postavených pred vojnou. Keď sa v šesťdesiatych rokoch 20. storočia začala masová výstavba, väčšina obyvateľov Tallinnu žila v preplnených komunálnych bytoch. Tallinnské obytné štvrte v roku 1944 boli ťažko poškodené bombardovaním sovietskych lietadiel. Hromadná bytová výstavba v šesťdesiatych a sedemdesiatych rokoch 20. storočia výrazne zredukovala počet komunálnych bytov v Tallinne, no zatiaľ čo lokálni obyvatelia čakali celé roky, kým dostali samostatný byt, imigranti, prilákaní sľubmi bytov, ich dostávali veľmi rýchlo. Obyvatelia starých obytných štvrtí boli prevažne estónsky hovoriaci, ale v nových obytných štvrtiach bývali skôr rusky hovoriaci ľudia. Tendencia pridelať byty

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cudzozajčným imigrantom spôsobovala etnické napätie a zvyšovala stres, spôsobený u Estóncov okupáciou.

Hľadanie alternatív k prefabrikovaným predmestiam s nočlahárňami

Počnúc Chruščovovými reformami prebiehala výstavba v ZSSR podľa štandardizovaných projektov. Viedlo to k presvedčeniu, že štandardizované projekty ako extrémne úspornú formu bývania vytvoril systém, aby zámerne urobil život ľudí nepohodlným a ničil prostredie. Štandardizované projekty boli automaticky vnímané ako nepekne a neefektívne; verilo sa, že len na zákazku navrhnuté stavby môžu byť krásne. Kvôli obrovskej produkcii sovietskych stavebných podnikov ostali všetky pokusy o nachádzanie alternatív relatívne marginálnymi.

Od roku 1963 sa podporovalo zakladanie stavebných družstiev ako náhrady za výstavbu rodinných domov s využitím vlastných úspor. Kým nájomné za štátom poskytované byty bolo symbolické, takže bývanie bolo prakticky zadarmo, budovanie družstevných bytov bolo drahé. K členom družstiev patrili ľudia, ktorí nedostali byt cez všeobecný zoznam čakateľov, aj takí, ktorí hľadali lepší byt a boli zaň ochotní zaplatiť. Keďže družstevné byty boli pre obyvateľov cenným majetkom, všetky tieto domy sa veľmi dobre udržiavali.

Z architektonického hľadiska možno družstevné domy zaradiť do dvoch kategórií. Väčšinu z nich predstavovali prefabrikované domy v nových mestských štvrtiach. To znamená, že výhody získané za peniaze boli skôr obmedzené; tieto domy možno vnímať skôr ako taktiku zo strany štátu na získanie peňazí od občanov, aby sa zamaskovalo zlyhanie jeho politiky.

Ďalším typom družstevných domov boli budovy, postavené podľa projektov vytvorených na objednávku, ktoré väčšinou umiestňovali do nedostavaných štvrtí v centre mesta, kde sa nemohli stavať prefabrikované budovy. Zvyčajne zahŕňali priestrannejšie byty; niektoré až päťizbové s veľkosťou do 100 metrov štvorcových. V Tallinne bolo postavených približne dvadsať takýchto domov a väčšinou boli obývané technickou inteligenciou.

Na projektovaní experimentálnych obytných domov na začiatku šesťdesiatych rokov 20. storočia sa zúčastnil Štátny ústav architektonického

dizajnu – Eesti Projekt, ako aj Štátny vedeckovýskumný ústav stavebníctva v Tallinne. Cieľom tohto výskumu bolo nájsť alternatívu k vznikajúcemu systému stavebných podnikov. Jeden z obytných domov navrhnutý vedcami z Ústavu stavebníctva bol dokonca postavený v centre Tallinna. Výsledný bytový blok s priečnymi nosnými stenami a teplovzdušným vykurovaním mal zdokonaľiť pôdorys prevládajúceho štandardizovaného projektu 1-317, takže každý člen rodiny mohol mať oddelenú spálňu. Žiaľ, pôvodný pôdorys bol údajne skopírovaný z domu navrhnutého architektom Esko Korhonen v okrese Hertoniemi v Helsinkách (1955 – 1956).

Flexibilná experimentálna séria prefabrikovaných domov, vyvinutá ústavom Eesti Projekt, bola zameraná na predĺženie životného cyklu domov, takže po dvadsiatich rokoch, v bohatých podmienkach komunizmu, keď sa mali priestorové normy pre každú osobu značne zvýšiť, byty sa mohli reorganizovať, aby sa vytvorili väčšie obytné priestory. Táto predstava odrážala naivnú vieru vo vedecko-technickú revolúciu, príznačnú pre začiatok šesťdesiatych rokov 20. storočia. V skutočnosti sa nikto nechcel spoliehať na takéto experimenty, lebo bytová výstavba pokračovala pomaly, ale isto, a plnila päťročné plány.

Najostrejšia kritika sovietskej hromadnej bytovej výstavby prišla od skupiny mladých rozhnevajúcich architektov, ktorí v sedemdesiatych rokoch založili avantgardnú skupinu Tallinn 10. Pokladali sovietskych architektov za otrokov inžinierov a idealizovali estónskych funkcionalistov tridsiatych rokov 20. storočia, ich práce, ako aj umelecké aspekty architektúry. Odvolávali sa na kritiku modernizmu, ktorá prebiehala na Západe po roku 1968 a na konci sedemdesiatych rokov dospela k postmodernizmu.

Nezávisle od kritiky hromadnej bytovej výstavby, prefabrikované obydliá postavené v tom čase stále zostávajú jednou z najnápadnejších súčastí sovietskeho dedičstva v Estónsku. V zriedkavých prípadoch počas posledných dekád boli búrané, ale väčšina sovietskych obytných štvrtí stále preživa. Domy sú postupne renovované, aby poskytili ubytovanie pre menej majetné sociálne skupiny, ako sú dôchodcovia, študenti, rusky hovoriace komunity, a v prípade Tallinna aj nedávni prisťahovalci z ostatných oblastí Estónska.

The story of Soviet mass housing is generally well known – including Khrushchev's enthusiasm for the establishment of industrial building practices in the second half of the 1950s, the striking contrast between the prefabricated housing developments and earlier academic Stalinist buildings, and the uniformity of the built environment in the entire Eastern bloc from the 1970s onward due to the mass construction of identical prefab residential districts. The idea of building a large number of identical apartments according to standardised designs had already been the aim during the Stalinist period, but due to a lower level of mechanised building practices they never managed to achieve this, and it was during the years that followed that a vast number of apartments were built using industrial methods. Four-fifths of Estonia's current housing was built in the period 1961 – 1990^[1]. As elsewhere in the Eastern bloc, the prefab dormitory suburbs in Estonia have an incomplete infrastructure and are disproportionately large for the cities to which they are attached^[2].

Despite the universality of mass housing as an instrument in the process of modernisation and the inflexibility of the political system in the Eastern bloc and the state-run command economies, a range of different practices are nonetheless encountered. Even though the buildings with their room-sized panels constructed using the Camus technology, purchased from France at the end of the 1950s, are all very similar – from the buildings next to the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin to those in Vladivostok on the Korean border – they were applied in quite different economic circumstances and differing cultural contexts. Hence, the reception given to mass housing, its meaning, as well as the subsequent critique and search for alternatives varies from one country to the next.

Mass housing construction as a colonisation tool

Adrian Forty wrote that in Britain the construction of mass housing in the post-war period always had the connotation of being left-wing and subsidised^[3], and one would assume that in the Eastern bloc mass housing, because of its totality, was viewed as something neutral – a symbol of progress that improved living conditions for every member of society. It is natural that today

the buildings from that time are held in derision, seen as badly built stop-gaps from poorer times, but in certain regions, like Estonia and Latvia, these buildings carry an additional significance because mass housing construction also worked as an immigration pump and as such supported Russification. During WW II, the Soviet Union occupied Estonia. After the war the nomenklatura was sent to sovietise Estonia, and they arrived with the coloniser's blissful knowledge that it was the Soviet power that had liberated Estonians from the yoke of capitalism, that through the Russian language Estonians would become civilised and that now the sun shone only from Moscow. The fact that the locals, mostly Lutheran Estonians, saw this process in a different light, namely that the country was now overrun with incompetent but privileged immigrants and that the Russian language was being forced upon them, did not interest the occupiers. During the Stalinist period, many simple country folk came from Russia to the Baltic States to escape hunger. But during the Khrushchev era, when the creation of new factories was gathering speed, workers came to Estonia en-mass in the full knowledge that they were seeking a better life. Over 90 % of the 140 000 inhabitants in pre-war Tallinn were Estonian, but during the disintegration of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s, they formed less than half of the population (total 470 000). One might assume that the question of nationality is an issue for political history and does not affect housing construction, but when one considers the politics surrounding the distribution of apartments in the Soviet Union, then housing construction becomes a relevant issue.

New prefabricated homes were built by the state, as well as state-owned enterprises, but the distribution of apartments mostly took place via the work place. Factory X would build a residential building according to a standardised design and the trade union at the factory would distribute the apartments, firstly to the bosses who wanted a better apartment than the one they already had, then to exemplary workers as a reward, then young couples establishing their first home and then people on the general waiting list. Apartments were an important 'carrot' for recruiting workers. The 1960s and 70s were a period of intense



Photo Foto: Eesti Filmiarhiiv, 1963

Tallinn Mustamäe, the end walls decorated by artists Margareta Fuks and Valli Lember-Bogatkina

Tallinn Mustamäe, štitové steny ozdobilí umelkyne Margareta Fuks a Valli Lember-Bogatkina

industrialisation, but local labour was insufficient, so apartments were used to lure workers from across the Soviet Union to come to live and work in Estonia. A free housing market did not exist in the Soviet Union, but if you were given an apartment you could freely swap it for another anywhere in the Soviet Union. For example, someone from a village somewhere in Russia could come to work in Tallinn or Riga to get an apartment. Once it was theirs, they could swap it for an apartment, albeit a smaller one, in either Moscow or Leningrad. For a small portion of the more ambitious Russian speakers, this mobility would have been preferable to living in the occupied Baltic States.

Construction enterprises became special immigration pumps. The enterprise agreed to build homes for a factory or city on the condition that approximately 10 % of the apartments became theirs to distribute. Despite the fact that the wages of a construction worker were relatively good, it was not popular work (working outdoors in winter etc). It was common for construction enterprises to recruit workers from outside Estonia; they would work for a year or two until they got their apartment and then would move on to another local factory, where the work was more comfortable. For this reason, construction enterprises experienced a huge turnover of employees, suffered

from a continuous shortage of skilled workers, and the quality of the buildings they built did not bear close scrutiny.

Apartments were also given to local Estonians, who mostly lived in homes built before the war. Those which were built before WWI were mostly without modern comforts – they had a communal dry toilet and cold water in the corridor, and in the case of the oldest buildings, only a well in the yard. When mass housing construction began in the 1960s, most of Tallinn's inhabitants lived in crowded communal apartments. Tallinn's residential areas had been seriously bombed by the Soviet air force in March 1944, resulting in a drastically reduced number of apartments. In addition, the slow housing construction during the Stalinist period had not managed to compensate for the damage. During the 1940s, the population of Tallinn received many setbacks – in September 1944 thousands escaped to Sweden in fear of Soviet occupation and in the following years, the Soviet forces deported vast numbers of people to Siberia, but the housing crisis did not abate. Within Estonia, many country people escaped to the cities in the face of forced collectivisation, and the inflow of immigrants from the rest of the Soviet Union was considerable. The mass housing construction during the 1960s and 70s significantly reduced the number of communal apartments in Tallinn, but while locals waited years to be given a separate apartment with modern facilities, the immigrants, enticed here with the promise of an apartment, were given them quite quickly. While the old residential areas were predominantly Estonian-speaking, the new residential areas resonated much more audibly with Russian. It is no surprise that the preference for allocating housing to immigrants speaking a foreign language caused ethnic tension, and for Estonians heightened the stress caused by occupation.

Optimism abates in the 1970s

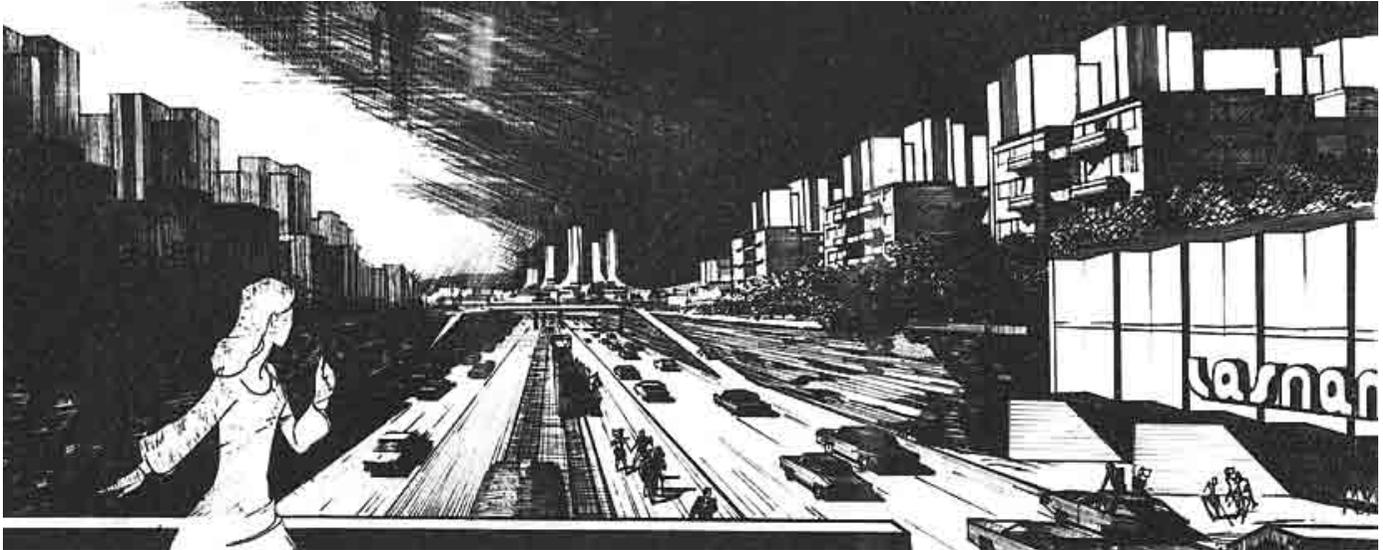
In the 1960s, when trucks carrying room-sized panels with a centrally placed window were seen on the streets of Tallinn, this futurist scene produced a sense of enchantment. This was visible proof that the science and technology revolution, heralded by the propaganda, was true. While the abundantly decorated post-war Stalinist archi-

The bird's-eye-view of the circular city of Väike-Õismäe (designed in 1968 by Mart Port and Malle Meelak) made such a convincing statement of the prosperous "advanced stage of Socialism" that it was chosen to adorn the cover of the book on Tallinn architecture, 1987

Pohľad zhora na okružné mesto Väike-Õismäe (navrhli ho v roku 1968 Mart Port a Malle Meelak) tak presvedčivo ilustroval prosperujúci „rozvinutý socializmus“, že bol vybraný, aby ozdobil obálku knihy o architektúre Tallinna, 1987



Source Zdroj: BRUNS, Dimitri – KANGROPOOL, Rasmus – KALLION Valmi: Tallinna arhitektuur. Eesti Raamat Tallinn, 1987, 239. p.



Source Zdroj: Eesti Arhitektuurimuseum

This image of a girl walking briskly on an overpass became an icon of Lasnamäe, and the one most exploited in official propaganda. However, this utopia of a metropolis was never put into practice

Kresba dievčaťa rýchlo kráčajúceho po nadchode sa stal ikonou Lasnamäe, ktorú veľmi často využívala oficiálna propaganda. Táto utopia metropoly však nikdy nebola realizovaná

ecture seemed very old-fashioned to Estonians compared with the modest modernism of 1930s Estonia, the new prefab industrial housing created a strikingly fresh contrast. The joy of escaping from a communal apartment that lacked modern conveniences to an individual apartment with running hot water, a bath, a toilet and balcony was immense, even though there weren't enough fridges or washing machines in the shops to go around. In Soviet parlance these were referred to as "apartments with all conveniences" suggesting that one could not or should not want more. Of course Estonians knew that there should be more, because pre-war bourgeois apartments had many more conveniences that were not even available in the new prefabs.

Tallinn's first new industrially built residential district, Mustamäe (Mart Port, Voldemar Toppel, Toivo Kallas, Linda Pettai et al. 1957 – 1973) ^{14/}, (was given its own popular song in 1971 and in the following years this became a popular hit ^{15/}. While the first verse speaks of the joy of not having to share an apartment with the mother-in-law, then the second verse already contains some criticism. The song tells of sharing joys with ones neighbours, seeming to allude to the ideologically

correct friendship between all people, but the line "I can't feel boredom until three in the morning" is clearly irony aimed at the poor sound insulation in the new buildings.

Architects have retrospectively commented that the mechanical adoption in Tallinn of the USSR-wide model of the 'mikro-rayon' (micro-regions) simply did not work. The Soviet concept of the micro-region was based on Clarence Perry's neighbourhood theory, where the size of a region was based on the catchment area of one school. According to this idea, a Soviet micro-region was to house 6,000 – 10,000 inhabitants with a kindergarten, school and other necessities centrally placed. It was considered a great plus if children did not need to cross a road to get to school. But in Tallinn's Mustamäe in the 1960s, half the schools had to be Estonian-speaking and the other half Russian-speaking, which meant that half the children still had to cross a major road every morning. Still, there are no statistics that would suggest that this increased the number of road accidents. In the new estates, the streets were wide and spacious and during the Soviet period there were not many cars anyway. Later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union when the number of cars had in-

creased markedly in the 1990s, the demographics of Mustamäe changed and because of a shortage of children schools were even closed.

Tallinn's next large housing development, Väike-Õismäe (Mart Port and Malle Meelak) built in the 1970s, was not divided into micro-regions, but designed as a circular city around a lake and park, including all four schools intended for the 40 000 inhabitants. The schools and kindergartens were far from the traffic, but half the children who lived at the edges still had to cross the ring road, the main traffic thoroughfare, to get to school. Despite the fact that the ring road is lined with neatly pruned linden trees – unusual in Soviet Estonia – the space is dull and monotonous, architecturally unresolved and does not provide many landmarks for orientation.

Less than half of what had been planned for Tallinn's third housing development, Lasnamäe

(Mart Port, Malle Meelak, Irina Raud, Oleg Zemtšugov and Voldemar Herkel), the building of which began in late 1970s, was completed by the time the Soviet Union collapsed – in other words it provided housing only for 100 000 people. Here, the micro-regions were joined together to include Estonian and Russian-speaking schools forming large micro-regions. Lasnamäe was also a motopia, as the new development was planned to be connected to the rest of Tallinn by two fast, wide roads cut into the landscape. Of these, only one was actually built, and consequently, Lasnamäe until today lacks adequate a connection with the city centre. There was supposed to be a fast tram line along the middle of the deep-cut main road, but it has yet to be built and today all the buses that connect Lasnamäe with the rest of the city must negotiate the narrow access roads between the tower blocks. Lasnamäe was planned accord-



Photo Foto: Mart Kalm, 2012

In Lasnamäe, the rails for the express tram were never laid between the two carriageways on the deep-cut main road

Kolajnice pre rýchlu električku medzi dvoma jazdnými pruhmi na výrazne tvarovanej hlavnej ceste v Lasnamäe nikdy nepoložili



Photo Foto: Mart Kalm, 2012

Architect Udo Ivask. Apartment building 4a Kreutzwaldi St., Tallinn, 1963 – 1966. Housing cooperative of the workers of the State Architectural Design Institute Kommunaalprojekt

Arhitekt Udo Ivask. Obytná budova č. 4a na ulici Kreutzwaldi, Tallinn, 1963 – 1966. Bytové družstvo pracovníkov Štátneho ústavu architektonického dizajnu Kommunaalprojekt

ing to the idea that people arrive from work by the fast tram, ascend to the bridge across the highway, enter the shopping centre at the end of the bridge, and then fully equipped with everything they need from the shop, walk home. Current shopping practice requires a car to for full convenience, so this model is out-dated and consequently these small shopping centres are in decline.

As the housing in all three major residential districts looked relatively uniform (i.e. the Tallinn House-Building Plant applied the same technology since its establishment in 1961 until it ultimately closed in 1992), architects were not given much leeway in positioning the houses. High-rise residential buildings from red bricks were a permitted uneconomical exception with the intention of preventing accusations of the uniform monotony of grey concrete.

As residential buildings were a set product, architects tried to diversify the residential districts by means of planning experiments. The oldest prefab dormitory district, Mustamäe, follows the principle of the micro-regions, a USSR-wide norm in urban planning. What lends some individuality to the area is its following the landscaping example of the Tapiola district in Helsinki, where houses were built among existing trees^{6/}. This approach had a very novel effect after the subordination of nature by Stalinist academism, and it served as the Nordic version of Le Corbusier's ideal of towers in the park, which itself was an example too remote for Estonians to relate to. The Ägenskalna priedes district in Riga (Nikolajs Rendelis, 1958 – 1962)^{7/} as well as Lazdynai (Vytautas Čekanauskas, Vytautas Brėdikis et al., 1963 – 1974)^{8/} in Vilnius were also based on the idea of situating new Northern European urban areas in existing pine woods.

The circular city of Öismäe certainly stood out among the others, and it offers a striking view from above. However, it is impossible to identify one's location on the monotonous-looking circular street, which turns the entire district into a dystopia.

There is definitely an element of grandeur to the cutting of the main roads through Lasnamäe, which reveals fascinating textured limestone walls on both sides. Nevertheless, the space between the houses remained typical of Soviet-style micro-regions.

In Õismäe and Lasnamäe the planners tried to learn from the mistakes of Mustamäe, with its wind corridors between scattered houses, by constructing closed courtyards surrounded by blocks of flats. Indeed, they serve as children's playgrounds and people walk their dogs there, but these spaces did not constitute a pleasant environment, because the walls of the prefabricated concrete buildings on each side stressed the barrack-like appearance of the houses even more.

As all the new residential districts were deliberately established in areas not particularly suitable for agriculture (Mustamäe on sandy fields, Õismäe on marshy grounds and Lasnamäe on a stony limestone plateau), the limited greenery that was planted there did not thrive.

Seeking alternatives to prefab dormitory suburbs

After the reforms introduced by Khrushchev in the latter half of the 1950s, construction in the Soviet Union was required to follow standardised designs. Even buildings that were no longer industrially produced needed to meet the requirements. Thus, not only were blocks of flats built according to standardised designs, but also summer cottages; not only schools and kindergartens, but also cinemas and cultural centres; not only office buildings, but also factories. This led to the conviction that standardised designs, as a form of extreme economising, was created by the system to deliberately make people's lives more inconvenient and impoverish the environment. Standardised designs were automatically considered ugly and inefficient, and it was believed that only custom-designed buildings could be beautiful. After the collapse of the USSR, when architectural historians started talking about standardised designs as a phenomenon of the Age of Enlightenment, intended to share the best experience and help those with a lower level of education, the Estonian architectural community were shocked. It was admitted only very reluctantly that Soviet standardised designs were in certain respects more professional than the solutions by contemporary speculative residential developers.

Due to the voluminous output of the Soviet housing construction plants, all attempts to find alternatives remained relatively marginal, and buildings constructed from these designs still

Architect Ants Mellik. Apartment building for the Party nomenklatura 23 Ilmarise St., Tallinn-Nõmme, 1969 – 1971. On some floors, a 6-room apartment was built on the area of 2 normal 3-room apartments

Architekt Ants Mellik. Obytná budova pre nomenklatúru č. 23 na ulici Ilmarise, Tallinn-Nõmme, 1969 – 1971. Na niektorých poschodiach boli šesťizbové byty na ploche dvojizbových a trojizbových bytov normalnej veľkosti



Photo Foto: Mart Kalm, 2007



Photo Foto: Eesti Arhitektuurimuuseum

Residential house by the researchers of the State Scientific Institute of Building Research in 18 Gonsiori St., Tallinn, 1961 – 1963, post-construction
 Obytná budova navrhnutá výskumníkmi Štátneho vedeckovýskumného ústavu stavebníctva na ulíci Gonsiori č. 18, Tallinn, 1961 – 1963, po výstavbe

constitute only a tiny part of the overall building stock of the time.

After the war, people were allowed to build small family houses, the bulk of which were also constructed according to standardised designs. Because the state was not particularly successful in organising the official construction of residential buildings, it seemed reasonable to include people's own finances and labour in the creation of residential space. The fact that the reproduction of individualism by means of private houses was in ideological opposition to the building of communism proved to be less important than the benefit brought by the creation of new dwellings. The construction of private houses flourished until 1963, when it was banned in larger cities as an insufficiently effective and uneconomic way of creating residential space.

Establishing housing cooperatives was encouraged as a replacement for the construction of private houses using people's own savings. While rental payments for state-provided flats were symbolic, so that living there was basically free

of charge, building a cooperative flat was a rather expensive undertaking. Members of the cooperatives included those who had not received a flat via the general waiting list, as well as those who sought a better flat and were willing to pay for it. As cooperative flats were highly valued property for their residents, all such houses were rather well maintained, with front doors always locked and sometimes even flower beds next to the block. The residents of these houses were referred to as 'decent people'. However, in architectural terms, cooperative houses were divided into two categories. Most of them were ordinary prefabricated houses in new city districts, meaning that the benefits received for the money spent were rather limited, and these houses could be seen instead as tactics on the part of the state for eliciting money from its citizens to make up for its own failures.

The other type of cooperative house was constructed according to a custom-design and mostly fitted into unfinished quarters in the city centres where prefabricated housing could not be built^{19/}. Although these cooperative houses were not designed by top architects, they generally contained more spacious dwellings, some of which were five-room flats of up to 100 square meters. They often included a dining area next to the kitchen, separated from the living area only by a sliding screen. Bathrooms and toilets were fully tiled; there were stone tiles in the hallway and wooden parquet in the rooms, as well as the potential to build a fireplace. Kitchen equipment included an electric stove, which was considered cleaner than gas. Sometimes there was a garage in the basement and a Finnish sauna for communal use. Nowadays, these differences seem almost insignificant, but during the Soviet era they constituted a source of infinite envy. There were approximately twenty such houses constructed in Tallinn, and they were mostly inhabited by the technical intelligentsia. Many of those housing cooperatives were established within the institutions of the Construction Committee system, especially in architectural design institutes that had all the know-how for constructing such exceptional buildings. The residents in these houses were predominantly Estonian. These days it may seem nationalistic to place such emphasis on this fact, but we should not forget that in the stressful atmosphere caused

by Soviet occupation it was considered an enormous asset when all the residents living in a single stairwell were Estonian.

The party nomenklatura did not wish to reside in elitist cooperative houses, because the conveniences there came at a high price. They preferred to obtain similar conditions without paying for them. The strategy used by the party leadership to differentiate themselves mostly meant dwelling in bourgeois flats from the 1930s, which constituted the best of the housing stock in terms of quality. Villas as places of residence were avoided because such a display of luxury would have made

them too vulnerable to attacks from their rivals. However, the Property Management of the Council of Ministers also built some state-provided houses for the nomenclature. The rental sums were symbolic, but the location and the architecture as well as the level of conveniences in those houses were equivalent to the standards in custom-designed cooperative houses¹⁰.

While these were the tactics adopted for adjusting to the situation, both the State Architectural Design Institute, Eesti Projekt, and the State Scientific Institute of Building Research in Tallinn were engaged in designing experimental

Mart Port – Allan Murdmaa: the flexible experimental series of prefabricated houses developed by the State Architectural Design Institute Eesti Projekt, 1960

Mart Port – Allan Murdmaa: flexibilná experimentálna séria prefabrikovaných domov navrhnutá Státnym ústavom architektonického dizajnu Eesti Projekt, 1960



Source Zdroj: repro from Elamuehituse küsimusi Eesti NSV-s, Tallinn, 1960



Source Zdroj: Eesti Arhitektuurimuuseum

at lengthening the life-cycle of houses, so that in twenty years' time, when the space norms for each person would be considerably greater in the wealthy conditions of fully realised communism, flats could be rearranged to create larger residential spaces. This aim reflects the naive belief in the revolution of science and technology characteristic of the early 1960s. In reality, no one was planning to rely on such experiments, because the housing construction plant continued its slow yet steady fulfilling of five-year plans.

The sharpest critique of Soviet mass residential construction was delivered by a circle of young and rebellious architects in the 1970s that established the avant-garde group The Tallinn 10^{/13/}. Regarding Soviet architects as the slaves of engineers, they idealised the 1930s Estonian functionalists and their work, as well as the artistic facet of architecture. Thus, they related to the post-1968 critique of Modernism in the Western world (Superstudio and others) and arrived at Post-Modernism by the late 1970s. Their critique prepared the ground for one of the most powerful people's movements of perestroika, and the Estonian Singing Revolution as its local equivalent, which called for a halt to the development of the Lasnamäe district that provided accommodation to Russian-speaking immigrants. The song Peatage Lasnamäe (Stop Lasnamäe) written by Alo Mattisen and performed by Ivo Linna became one of the biggest Estonian hit songs of the late 1980s^{/14/}.

Regardless of the critique against mass residential construction and the attempts to circumvent its bulldozers, prefabricated housing constructed during that time still remains one of the most striking aspects of the legacy of the Soviet era in Estonia. In rare cases in recent decades, they have been demolished, but most of the Soviet residential districts still survive. The houses are gradually being refurbished to provide accommodation for less wealthy social groups, such as pensioners, students, Russian-speaking communities and in the case of Tallinn recent immigrants from the rest of Estonia.

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Architect-artist Leonhard Lapin. City for the living – city for the dead. Stand for an exhibition at the Academy of Sciences library, Tallinn, 1978

Arhitekt a umelec Leonhard Lapin. Mesto pre živých – mesto pre mŕtvých. Stojan na výstave v knižnici Akadémii vied, Tallinn, 1978

apartment houses in the beginning of the 1960s. The aim of this research was to find an alternative to the emerging system of housing construction plants. One of the residential houses designed by the scientists of the Building Institute was even finished in the Tallinn city centre^{/11/}. The resulting block of flats, with transverse load-bearing walls and warm-air heating, sought to elaborate the floor plan of the prevalent standardised project 1-317, so that each family member could have a separate bedroom. Unfortunately, the allegedly original floor plan was copied from a house designed by Esko Korhonen in Hertoniemi district, Helsinki (1955 – 1956)^{/12/}.

The flexible experimental series of prefabricated houses developed by Eesti Projekt aimed

NOTES POZNÁMKY

¹ Eesti eluasemefondi suurpaneelilamute ehitustehnikaline seisukord ning prognoositav eluiga. Uuringu lõppraport. Ed. Targo Kalamees. Tallinn University of Technology, Faculty of Civil Engineering 2009, pp. 7. http://www.mkm.ee/public/Suurpaneelilamute_uuringu_loppraport_trukk.pdf

² For a short overview of Soviet-period dormitory suburbs in Estonia see chapter 3.12. In: KALM, Mart: Eesti 20. sajandi arhitektuur. Estonian 20th Century Architecture Tallinn, Prisma Prindi Kirjastus, pp. 344 – 352. For the memoirs of Tallinn city architect of the period see: BRUNS, Dmitri: Tallinna peaarhitekti mälestusi ja artikleid. Tallinn, Eesti Arhitektuurimuseum 2007, pp. 32 – 42.

³ FORTY, Adrian: Cold War Concrete. KALM, Mart – RUUDI, Ingrid (ed.). Constructed Happiness. Domestic Environment in the Cold War Era. Estonian Academy of Arts Proceedings 16. Tallinn, 2005, pp. 28 – 45.

⁴ OJARI, Triin: Elamispind. Modernistlik elamuehitusideoloogia ja Mustamäe. Kunstiteaduslikke uurimusi, 2004/2 [13], pp. 42 – 70.

⁵ The song was written by Heldur Karmo and Avo Tamme. http://www.laulud.ee/laul/mustamae_valss-189.aspx. Accessed 30 August 2012.

⁶ Tapiola Life and Architecture. TUOMI, Timo (ed.). Helsinki, Rakennustieto 2003. 144 p.

⁷ KRASTIŅŠ, Jānis: Āgenskalna Priedes a late 1950s Housing Project in Riga. In: Survival of Modern. Nordic-

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⁸ DRĒMAITĒ, Marija: Modern Housing in Lithuania in the 1960s. Survival of Modern. Nordic-Baltic Experiences. Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts School of Architecture in cooperation with Chalmers University of Technology, 2012, pp. 71 – 82.

⁹ LANKOTS, Epp: Klassideta ühiskond kõverpeeglis. Nomenklatuuri kortermajad Tallinnas 1945 – 1985. Eesti Kunstiakadeemia magistritöö. Tallinn 2005, pp. 44 – 65.

¹⁰ LANKOTS, Epp: Klassid klassideta ühiskonnas. Elitaarne ruumimudel Eesti NSV-s ja nomenklatuursed korterelamud Tallinnas 1945 – 1955. Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi, 2004, 2 [13], pp. 11 – 41.

¹¹ VOLKOV, Leonid: Elamute eksperimentaalprojekteerimisest Eesti NSV TA Ehituse ja Ehitusmaterjalide Instituudis. In: Elamuehituse küsimusi Eesti NSV-s. Artiklite kogumik. Tallinn 1960, pp. 91 – 110.

¹² BECKER, Hans Joseph – SCHLOTE, Wolfram: Neuer Wohnbau in Finnland. New Housing in Finland. Stuttgart, Karl Krämer Verlag 1964, p. 124.

¹³ Keskkonnad, projektid, kontseptsioonid. Tallinna kooli arhitektid 1972 – 1985. Environment, Projects, Concepts. Architects of the Tallinn School 1972 – 1985. KURG, Andres – LAANEMETS, Mari, (ed.). Tallinn, Eesti Arhitektuurimuseum 2008. 336 p.

¹⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kofam1MpX9U> Accessed 9 September 2011. On YouTube, the song irritates the current Russian community in Estonia and still provokes heated discussions in the comments section.