

How to increase citizen participation and promote co-creation to improve living environment and quality of life?

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BACKGROUND / CONTEXT of the Challenge

After WWII, Europe experienced a massive housing shortage. Both the Western capitalist and Eastern socialist countries introduced large-scale real estate programs to house their citizens. Large housing estates consisting of low- and high-rise buildings with large green public spaces between them were constructed following the ideas of modernist architects (Musterd and van Kempen 2007, 313-314). At least on vision papers, the idea to have self-contained small districts with all the necessary social infrastructure (schools, shops, kindergartens, leisure facilities) and good connection with city center and locations of jobs prevailed among the architects and planners (Leetmaa *et al.* 2016, 13). At first, these real estate developments had a very positive image as they offered a possibility for families to have their own apartment. In the West however, this positive image soon disappeared. The houses were not functional and because of the economic recovery, a growing number of people moved to suburbs or to the inner city that offer human-scale surroundings with less anonymity and more privacy (*Ibid.*, 6). Because the districts consisting of large post-WWII apartment buildings are now cheap, we can see that in some of these estates over 80% of the population belong to minority groups (Musterd and van Kempen 2007, 313).

Large apartment estates were also built in Tallinn. The aim was to ease the housing shortage and to cope with massive immigration from the east (Mägi *et al.* 2016, 1167). The city was a target location for factories and military bases and most of the immigrants were factory workers in the military industries or military families. As they needed housing immediately after their arrival and they worked for priority sectors, they were the priority group who received the new apartments (Kulu and Tammaru 2003, 137; Mägi *et al.* 2016, 1169). The general idea was to build large housing estates based on *mikrorayon* principle where most of the necessary social infrastructure is located nearby, making the sub-districts self-contained but in reality, the development of social and transportation infrastructure was delayed and planners' architectural vision was often ignored as most of the resources were channelled to build new apartment buildings (Leetmaa *et al.* 2016, 14).

As a result, large dormitory districts were built which now house significant part of city residents. As of 01.06.2018, 188 347 people out of 450 305 lived in two largest dormitory districts¹ which host 45% of total living space in Tallinn (Terk and Kesksaik 2015, 3). There are also clear signs of ethnic segregation as Russians were the majority of the priority group that received new apartments (Mägi *et al.* 2016, 1169). The ethnic segregation is also related to socioeconomic segregation. Because of the restructuring of the economy during the 1990s, Estonians have been more advantaged, enjoy better socioeconomic conditions and have more possibilities to move (*Ibid.*, 1185).

Currently these districts are both morally and physically degrading. Since 2009 Estonian government has supported the renovation of apartment buildings built before 1993. The government offers renovation grants to apartment associations that cover up to 40% of the total renovation costs.² So far, approximately 140€ million has been invested and 1000 apartment buildings renovated all over the country. The government has also promised to invest an additional 100€ million in 2019-2022. However, this has not been enough to change the overall living environment in these districts as the grants are meant for renovating the buildings, not for reshaping the public space. In addition, compared to the Nordic countries, Germany and the Netherlands, most of the apartments in Estonia are owned by private households, not by municipalities. This makes it even more difficult to initiate large-scale renovation programs that could also improve the public space as was done in East-Berlin. Demolishing the old buildings and building new ones with improved public space is not an alternative for the same reasons already mentioned and is more expensive. (Terk and Kesksaik 2015)

If large-scale renovation plans are too expensive and hard to implement, what else can cities do to improve the dormitory districts? **How could cities motivate the local residents to organize and take part in self-creation activities that could improve public space? How can cities and the residents in dormitory districts co-create and co-develop public services?**

MAIN QUESTIONS

- How to activate citizens from residential "dormitory" districts?
- How to nudge people towards organizing and taking part of self-creation activities in dormitory districts that can improve the public space?
- How the city and citizens who live in dormitory districts could co-create and co-develop public services?
- What are the tools and processes for citizen participation?
- How can digitalization contribute to improved citizen participation experiences?

MAIN CHALLENGE OBJECTIVES

Proposals for Tallinn City Development Strategy in the following areas:

- 1) List of ideas on how to motivate dwellers in dormitory districts (e.g Lasnamäe, Mustamäe) to organize and take part in self-creation activities;
- 2) List of ideas how the city and the citizens living in Mustamäe and Lasnamäe can co-create and co-develop public services.

¹ Tallinn City homepage - <https://www.tallinn.ee/est/Tallinna-elanike-arv>

² KredEx homepage - <http://www.kredex.ee/korterihistu/korterihistu-toetus/rekonstrueerimise-toetus/>

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