



How Suburban Landscape Remembers

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One of the most visible remembrances of the real estate boom of 2004-2007 in Estonia is the sprawl of its capital city Tallinn across its former boundaries to the surrounding agricultural areas, thereby causing an emergence of a new suburban landscape. In some cases, the speed of the change was such that the population of a former rural community doubled within 7 years. This rapid change might cause all sorts of problems from local politics to local identity, where landscape and planning are part of both. Despite the physical changes, one can still track the remnants of previous structures underneath this new urban fabric – the landscape is able to maintain parts of its previous pattern. Differently from the Soviet planning system when suburbs were erected without any regards to the past – land belonged to the state anyway – this sprawl spread plot-by-plot and the former farm boundaries are still recognizable in the fabric. In the presentation/paper we will study how are these earlier structures incorporated into the changed practices. The paper/presentation will benefit from the following on-going sub-projects.

First, with the help of policy document analysis and interviews we will study the development of these new residential areas. What were the motivations and considerations of the developers when they launched the boom? How much of the initial plans was fulfilled? Does the result meet the expectations of the developers, new residents and local politicians? This part of the study has a clear link to planning methods and the “inner mechanisms” of the current planning practices.

Second, are the people inhabiting these new landscapes able to see/read/recognize the old structures and value them? In former studies (Palang, Peil 2010 Futures) we have distinguished between those new residents who opt for ready-made solutions and those who try to create their home themselves based on their own values and understandings. In this case again the lack of knowledge, or alienation, plays a role. We presume that the patterns created by these two groups differ both qualitatively and quantitatively and that these differences become apparent for example in lot sizes, building density, displacement and density of green areas, geometry of borderlines, considering natural features and ownership patterns. This will be studied with the help of interviews with the residents and also by map analysis.

Finally, planning history comes to place when we try to compare the patterns created by this boom with the patterns created in 1960s-70s, both in terms of the visible outcome and the process that leads to the outcome.

KEY WORDS: Suburban, landscape, history.