FIELD NOTES

SMARTER PARKING IN EUROPE

KAUR SARV, *linnalaborant (linnalabor.ee)*

Could such a thing as parking be innovative and smart? The common perception is that we don't need more than an empty lot or a sidewalk to organise parking. Add some signs, start collecting money from car owners, and you're there. By now it seems that Estonia has achieved the highest level of technologically advanced parking with its **mobile phone payment systems.** Yet there is the everlasting question of sufficient parking places for all cars in the city. But should there really be a secured parking place for every car?

Let's take a look at some solutions used to manage parking in European cities, discussed in an event[1] organised by the **European Parking Association** in Helsinki on 20th September this year. First, it was interesting to find out that there are so many parking experts from a wide range of organisations. Both public and private public parking managers were present, together with researchers from universities who described their ideas on parking efficiency. The most interesting examples actually came from the academy and parking practitioners - starting from GIS-maps and aerial photos used helping to fill unused parking spaces in the city[2], to designing the best soft enforcement methods for on-street parking violations[3].

Several parking organisers in local governments have understood that parking is not only about **collecting money from car owners**, but it is a **tool for managing mobility** and creating a shared space for cars and people. A good example comes from **Gent** in Belgium, where the local government wanted to preserve their street cafés and lively atmosphere. They merged its transport, traffic and parking management organisations to create acommon approach to mobility management in the city. Besides the obvious management of cars, public transport and cycling, the people of Gent focused on communication of mobility plans and advice on land use. By creating a common mobility company for all transport related activities, the city of Gent has now gained around €1.6 million yearly revenue towards the city budget[4].

For Estonians, the examples of the parking policy in **Helsinki** were probably most interesting, as they have experienced similar parking problems in the past. **Juha Hietanen** from the Helsinki City Planning Department explained that their aim is to create "enough parking spaces for inhabitants, but not too many". There is a maximum limit for workplace parking, so people are encouraged to use public transport for getting to the city centre. Helsinkians have understood that good public transport service decreases the need for building new parking spaces and this keeps the price of apartments cheaper as well. In addition, the city government of Helsinki is planning to develop an innovative system, which informs inhabitants about free parking spaces in town. How and when this will be implemented remains to be seen.

A representative of **Tallinn City Government, Liivar Luts**, introduced the current parking situation. He proposed two solutions to resolve the overcrowding of our city centre. First, he offered a better regulation of parking places (currently many spaces are on the plots of demolished houses and do not meet environmental safety requirements). Second, he expressed the hope that the free public transport in Tallinn (starting from January 2013) will encourage people to leave their

1. PRESENTATIONS OF THE SEMINAR CAN BE FOUND HERE: *www.polisnetwork.eu/public-events/115/61/Second-Joint-EPA-Polis-Parking-Workshop*

2. SEE MORE: *Itzhak Benenson, Tel Aviv, Israel: www.geosimlab.tau.ac.il*

3. SEE MORE: *Joao Caetano Dias, Lisbon, Portugal: www.polisnetwork.eu/uploads/ModuleXtender/PublicEvents/115/EPA_Polis_Helsinki2012_Dias_EMPARK.pdf*

4. SEE MORE: *www.polisnetwork.eu/uploads/ModuleXtender/PublicEvents/115/EPA_Polis_Helsinki2012_Gheldof_Gent.pdf*

cars home which consequently decreases congestion in the city centre. Parking can be a significant income for cities and parking organisations, hence questions from the audience about decreasing parking spaces in cities were treated carefully by the representatives of European Parking Association. This revealed maybe the most important factor in current urban parking policies – **sufficient alternative income should replace parking income** and then we can have lesser cars in the city centre.

Still looking for the point:
THE VISION CONFERENCE OF TALLINN

REGINA VILJASAAR, *linnalaborant (linnalabor.ee)*

About the Conference: The simultaneous lack of vision and megalomania of one of the first vision conferences, Synergic Tallinn, inspired a critical article entitled "Where is the point?"[1]. This year, the 10th conference in a row, was dedicated to Mustamäe and began with Toomas Vitsut's dashing statement that the interest of the local government is a radical change. What happened after that was – without irony – almost just as good.

About Mustamäe: The population of Mustamäe is the oldest in Tallinn and it is expected to decrease more than 10%[2], which is more than in any other part of the city. The amount of elderly residents and the age of the 103 block houses, the oldest in Estonia, points to the fear Mustamäe will become a ghetto[3]. At the same time, 45% of the inhabitants are patriots of the neighbourhood and do not wish for major changes to take place[4]. Unfortunately, most of them won't be living in Mustamäe in 50 years time.

About the Vision: Broadly, the following solutions were considered – to renew the neighbourhood as a complex or through housing; demolish it completely and rebuild in a new manner; or renovate the existing properties. The strongest argument was that the cheapest solution is renovating the whole district, for which the financial and juridical help of from the state is needed. But what happens if the object in need has more that 7000[5] owners, out of whom half do not wish the disturbance? How will people want to live in 50 years? Or to be more accurate, how do they have to live when the future European regulations expect that a house has to produce its own energy as well as food? And where will they work? What kind of opportunities are hidden in the proximity of the Technical University? The last point was touched upon by Hardo Aasmäe in his introductory speech, where he mentioned that it could be possible to extend the campus to the residential part of the district. However, this could be one of the main forces in livening the neighbourhood.

The conference made a noteworthy effort in mapping different solutions, but when it comes to Mustamäe and other similar districts, it is only a 'good start'. Considering the fact that more that half (meaning up to 400 000) of dwellings in Estonia originate from the period from 1960 to 1990[6], we can be sure that radical changes are ahead. What part we will have in this, remains unclear.

1. *Uibopuu, Laura; Viljasaar, Regina; Lilia del Rio, Miks nii vähe uba? Tallinna Visioonikonverentsist, Eesti Ekspress 21.12.2006.*

2. *Geomedia, Population Prognosis of Tallinn 2011-2030 (2011). Notes: pdf in U web*

3. *Jõesaar, Tuuli, Magalarajoone ootab ees must tulevik, Eesti Päevaleht 28.11.2011*

4. *Heidmets, Mati, Valmisolek muutusteks. Mustamäe korteriomanike uuring 2012, page 39 in the conference materials.*

5. *There are more than 7300 apartments in Mustamäe, most of them belong to private owners. The fact that many apartments have several owners have not been considered here.*

6. *Toompark, Tõnu, Elamispindade kvaliteet käib alla, Delfi 25.06.2012*