

NORTHERN TALLINN: BETWEEN 'POTENTIAL' AND THE EVERYDAY

KARLIS RATNIEKS, REBECCA KONTUS, KATHARINA ELME,
EKA Urban Studies

In recent years, Northern Tallinn has become something of a 'patchwork' landscape, with changing urban policies and renewal plans, realized and failed projects, forgotten visions and recent tactical interventions in public space. While described as having a 'big development potential' by the city officials and real estate resellers, the district itself is a lived space (as defined by Henri Lefebvre) of the everyday for the inhabitants.

During the autumn semester, in studio 2012 of Urban Studies program at the Estonian Academy of Arts, we studied the processes of urban transformation shaping Northern Tallinn over the last two decades. Beginning from the scale of the district we tried to pin down the most interesting social and spatial changes and tensions within the time period. We proceeded by selecting four areas for more detailed case studies. We analysed the formation of every site, observed the present states of development, interviewed residents, assessed their participation in planning processes (e.g. how inclusive these processes are and whose interests prevail) and highlighted future threats and opportunities. This provided us with a base for sketching future scenarios, and exploring the future urbanisation of Northern Tallinn under a changing economic climate.

We started analysing recent changes in the district by following three main currents that have become increasingly influential: the dynamics of gentrification, the effects of the real estate crisis on urban development, and the relations between development and conservation practice. We found that the four chosen sites manifest different forms of transformations.

KOPLI LINES

is a publicly administrated residential development without a developer. Instead of integrating this neighbourhood with the rest of the city and enhancing the living conditions of the residents, the city's strategy is to replace the population profile (low-income replaced with high-income) and sell off the area as a new exclusive waterfront housing estate. Is it a beginning of a gated community?

GARAAŽILINNAK

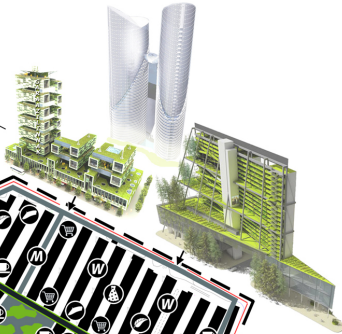
is a place with no development plan, just vague future visions. 'Nobody dares to deal with this area', responded an official from city planning department to our inquiry. Up until now the garage users have not been involved in any decision-making about the site's future prospects. Could the site be recognized as a socially and culturally significant place to preserve?

SCHEMES AND PICTURES ILLUSTRATING DIFFERENT FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR GARAAŽILINNAK

Karlis Ratnieks, Rebecca Kontus, Katharina Elme

Garaažilinnak in boom

The nearby development site is characterized by the words "ecological", "energy efficient" and "luxurious". Many fancy highrise buildings and glass-towers emerge to the site, inhabiting mostly wealthy foreign residents and international offices.



The area remains closed due to the nearby social center and "un-wanted" visitors in the area. The prestige does not tolerate the oucasts. New accesses do emerge to other sides of the area, connecting it to the roadnetwork of surrounding developments.

As the area is a different economy zone, a lot of new users and uses emerge to the area. Mostly the site accommodates artist studios, small shops of organic products, workshops and cafes. It is one of top 5 tourist attractions in Tallinn.

Due to the extension of Cultural Mile towards Garaažilinnak, the site starts growing outside its borders, attracting new boutiques, services and uses to the area.

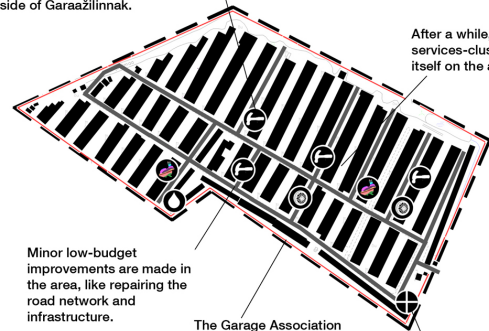
- Garage-boxes
- Green areas
- Fences
- ☺ Cafe / restaurant
- ☺ Organic food shop / restaurant
- ☺ Shop / boutique
- ☺ Second hand / vintage shop
- ☺ Studio / art exhibition
- ☺ Workshops
- ☺ Market place
- ☺ Bike hire
- ☺ Car hire / sharing



Garaažilinnak in boom

Garaažilinnak - business as usual

Many small car-related services emerge to the area. As the general situation on the job market is tight and as similar services are usually very expensive these kind of thankworthy undertakings become popular among garage users and as well for people outside of Garaažilinnak.



After a while, a car-services-cluster shapes itself on the area.

Minor low-budget improvements are made in the area, like repairing the road network and infrastructure.

The Garage Association keeps the area closed, surrounded with a fence for maintaining control over the area and the users.

The Garage Association provides a tool-renting service on the area that all car owners can use.

- Garage-boxes
- Fence
- Roads of asphalt
- ☺ Repairshop
- ☺ Tire-shop
- ☺ Car coloring workshop
- ☺ Carwash
- ☺ Administrative service / toolent

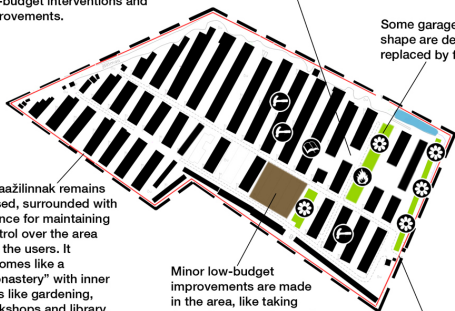
Garaažilinnak - business as usual

Garaažilinnak in recession

The new users turn a part of Garaažilinnak into a vibrant environment based on low-budget interventions and improvements.

By demolishing some of the garage boxes, the grid changes and becomes more opened and better accessible.

Some garage boxes in bad shape are demolished and replaced by flowerbeds.



Garaažilinnak remains closed, surrounded with a fence for maintaining control over the area and the users. It becomes like a "monastery" with inner uses like gardening, workshops and library, staying closed from the surrounding wilderness.

Minor low-budget improvements are made in the area, like taking down the garage boxes in the worst shape and creating a green central square. But the area loses at some point its appeal and the green space remains a muddy gap between rusty garage

There is no guard anymore to keep an eye on the visitors. Soon, the turnpike will be replaced with a locked gate in terms of safety.

As time goes by, it is realized that the area remains too far for everyday use and community activity due to a lack of infrastructure and good accessibility, and the promising site is left empty.

- Garage-boxes
- Fence
- Empty space
- Green area
- Water
- ☺ Flowerbed
- ☺ Fire-place
- ☺ Workshops
- ☺ Library



IN ACADEMY

SITSI FACTORY

is a postponed upmarket residential development that aims to include the highest tower in the city. Any development on the factory's ground, including the approved Sitsi tower project, depends on the private initiative of the owner. With the current socio-economic circumstances of the neighbourhood, the developer has little interest in activation of the approved detailed plan. Will this radical plan be ever fully realized or is it just an instrument to raise the land value?

STANDARD FACTORY

is an example of how factories are reused by 'creative industries'. An area that seems to be supporting a bottom-up process, by generating loose mixed-use functions, is legally in hands of a single owner. Currently there is no detailed plan for the site, thus there is a possibility for anything to happen. Could it be that these are only temporary functions and the more permanent solid functions have not yet appeared on the ground?

Following three abstract economic shifts, departing from the current state of affairs, we derived three scenarios for each of our study sites, as well as drew them together via spatial relations in the future landscape of Northern Tallinn. We called them boom, business-as-usual and recession. Our scenarios attempt to portray Northern Tallinn under the condition of the extrapolation of today's development lines into the future. Through this, we suggest alternative ways of thinking about how the district may look in 20 years time. Last, but not least, these scenarios are a statement of a critical observation of the processes already in place.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Northern Tallinn has been developing into an increasingly heterogeneous area. In our examples we framed some of the multi-scalar processes reshaping the district. Increased cross-disciplinary research between urbanists, architects and social scientists is necessary for new insights into social possibilities and the long-run implications of these developments.

*THE PROJECT IS PUBLISHED AS A 140-PAGE BOOK
AVAILABLE FOR READING IN THE LIBRARY OF THE FACULTY
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By Katharina Elme, Rebecca
Kontus, Isabel Neumann,
Karlis Ratnieks
Supervision: Maros Krivy

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