

Tallinn's green area – privilege or punishment

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The building of Tallinn's current outlook began in 1219, when Danes conquered Estonian settlements and established a stronghold on a limestone hill called Toompea.



In the course of town's development, suburbs evolved around Toompea and adjacent downtown; many private, guild or cloister gardens were established, and ornamental, as well as fruit trees started to be planted. Medieval Toompea and downtown were surrounded by limestone wall and watch-towers.



The second half of the 17th century saw the construction of earthworks and bastions around the city walls, which destroyed the gardens in those areas.

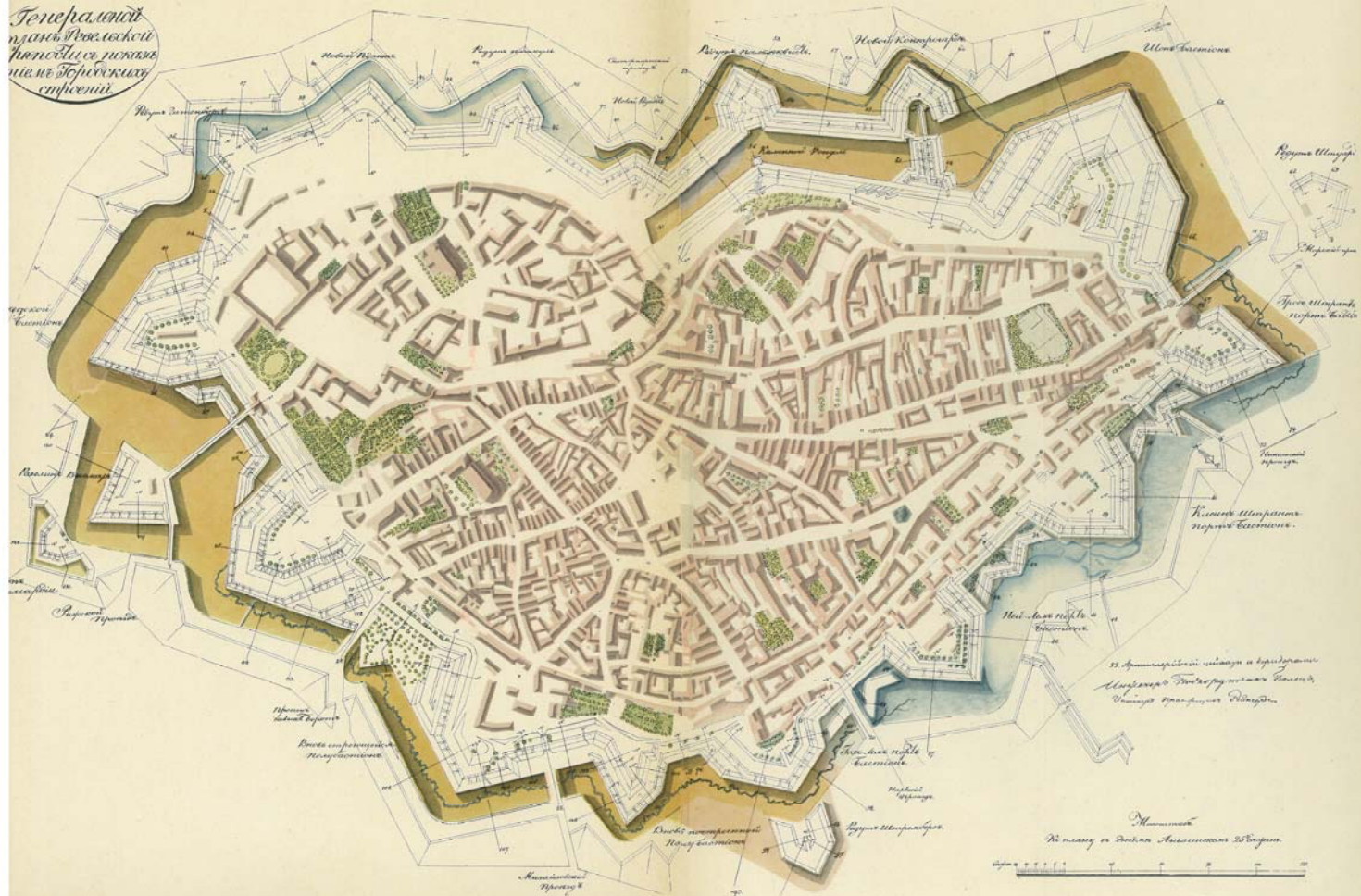


After the Great Northern War in the 18th century, when Estonia belonged to the Russian tsarist state, the earthworks and bastions were renewed.



In the most beautiful spots around the town, summer cottages were built and in the north-eastern area a baroque-park named Kadriorg, together with encircling landscape park, was established (by Peter the Great).

Топографическая карта города Таллина и его окрестностей в 1825 году.



At the same time, Tallinn persisted as a stronghold and first military ports were built. At the end of the 18th century, avenues were constructed and in the beginning of the 19th century, the first city park was created in the earthworks zone (so called children's park). The Old-town map from 1825 shows a lot of greenery.



It must be taken into consideration that during the Great Northern War, Tallinn suffered many damages – suburbs were burnt down together with the gardens so that Russian troops could not take over the town. The same thing happened during the Crimean War, when they were afraid of the landing English troops and burnt down some of the suburbs.



It is important to note that in 1860, Tallinn was taken off from the list of strongholds, and construction in available areas picked up the pace. Since it was complicated to erect buildings on bastions and moats, most of these were utilised as parks.



In the second half of the 19th century, city forestry developed – forest area was estimated, some land was drained and more trees were planted, increasing the variety of foreign species. A great challenge was the forestation of Ülemiste Lake area with its sandy soil. A green belt around the town was concluded.



In the years 1940-1991, while Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union, Tallinn was working on reconstructing the parts of town destroyed in the war – some of the places in ruins were turned into green areas and avenues.



A completely new situation arrived with the regained independence in 1991, when Estonian economy started to grow. Major investments were made, especially in Tallinn. In retrospective, that period can be described as follows:

Several tall buildings: hotels, offices, apartment buildings were built in the centre; new stores were built in all areas and previous houses reconstructed or built over.



One of the most prominent new dynamics is the spreading urbanisation. Many new private and apartment houses have widely been built, which puts pressure on the forests in and around the town area. Because some of the town's land was returned to the rightful pre-war owners or their descendants, many of the areas that were green before have now taken on construction.



Private houses have also been constructed in the adjacent parishes around Tallinn. Since the traffic needs are growing exponentially, many streets have expanded leaving less room for trees.



The former earthworks zone around Tallinn's Old Town was developed into a continuous landscape belt already in between the two World Wars. Now it is time to bring this green circle up to date and connect it with the beach promenade and seaside parks extending along the coast from the Old Town.



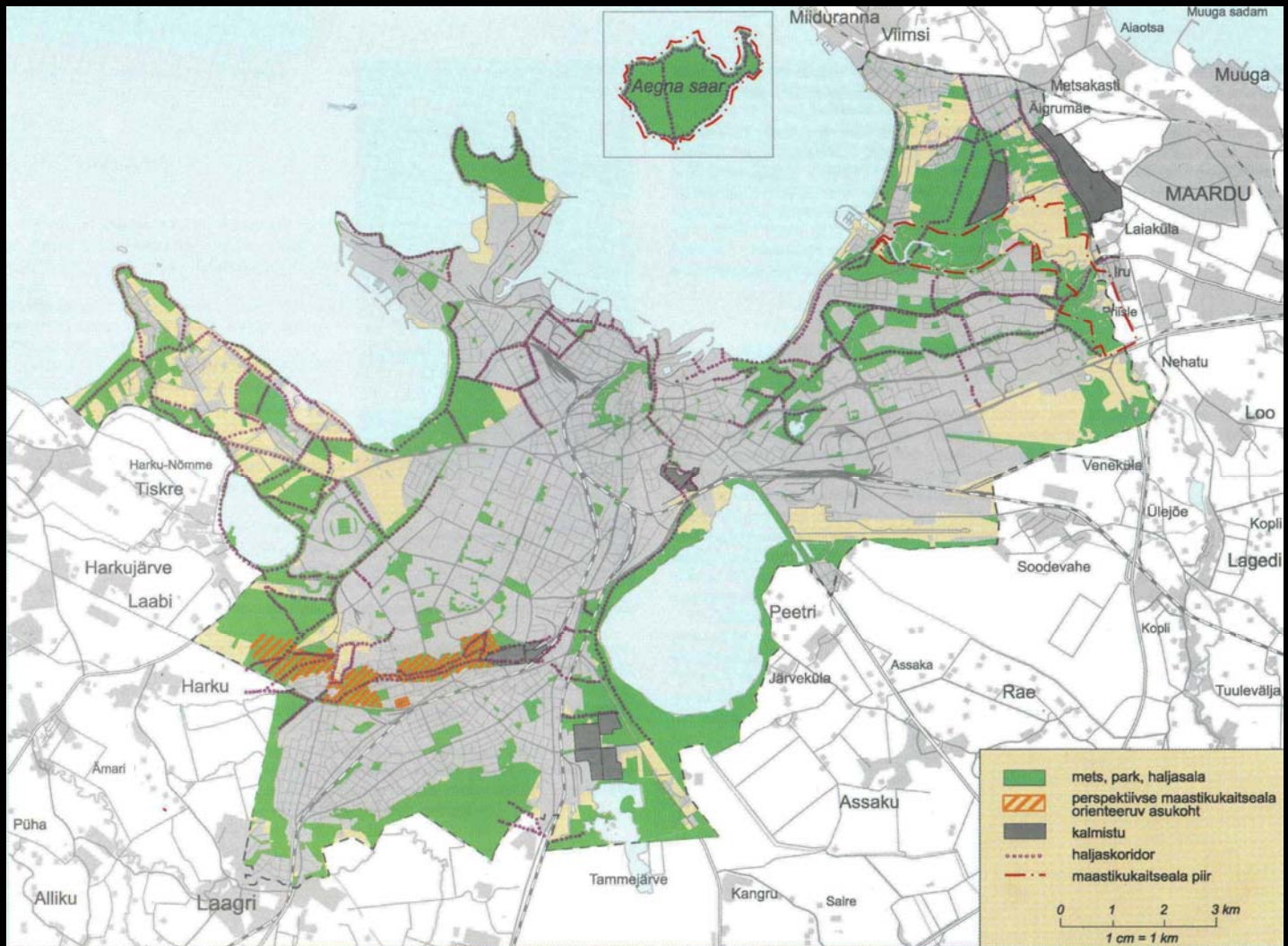
Beach promenade development is planned, but the process is greatly hindered by the fact that many of the Soviet time industrial and military buildings along the coast have been privatised and ownership issues pose an obstacle to furthering the plan.



People move away from Tallinn, because the city development is not moving in a human friendly direction. People with more resources, families with children, people of culture were abandoning the city and moving into the villages of private houses that were popping up on the fields and forest areas in the period of economical growth.

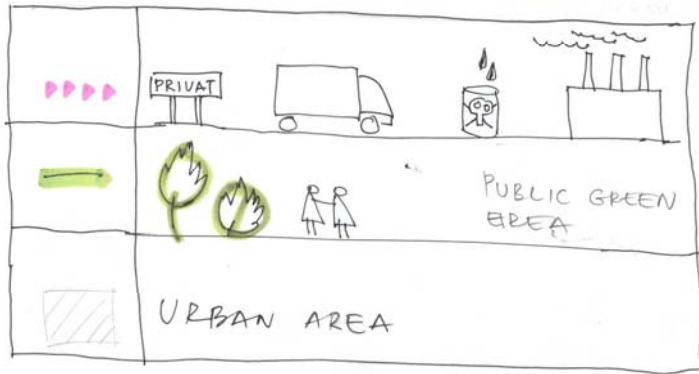
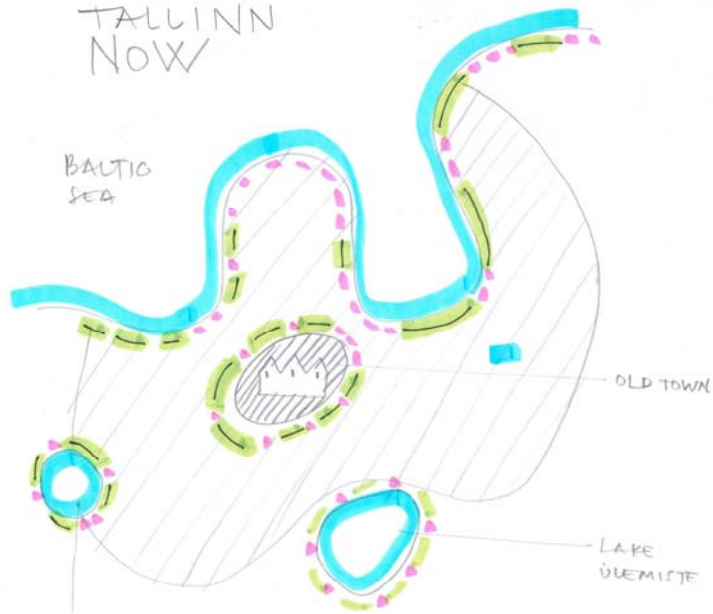


In order to reverse this process and bring people back to town, it is necessary to make the environment more attractive, to develop human-centred infrastructure and open access to the coastal and green areas.

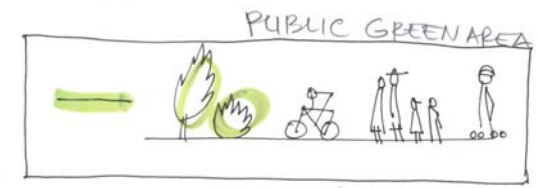
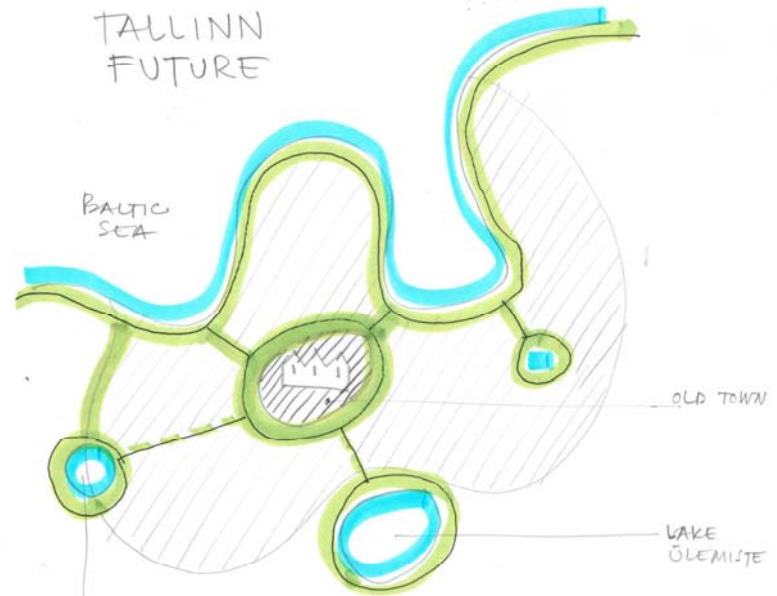


One of Tallinn's extraordinary potentials – to connect the aligned historical green areas into one continuous green landscape, is unfortunately quite difficult to realise, but at the same time – not impossible. Tallinn's greatest problem is the passing of transit routes through the central town (the city plan being like a butterfly: between Ülemiste Lake and the sea). In the situation of increasing car use, the next years will have to see the development of a better public transport system, as well as the creation of green corridors.


TALLINN NOW



TALLINN FUTURE



Creating the scenarios for developing this green network is the theme of our further work.

An aerial photograph of a coastal city and harbor. The city is densely packed with buildings and greenery, situated along a large body of water. In the foreground, there's a smaller body of water with a sandy beach and some industrial or agricultural structures. The text "Thank You!" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Thank
You!