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Central places versus networks: the future of collective farms built community infrastructure in Estonia

Dr Garri Raagmaa^{*}, Kadri Kroon[#], Tarmo Pikner[§], Tavo Kikas[□]

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss a possible shift from a central-place theory to a network paradigm in local and regional planning practices. This discussion paper was written mainly to describe issues and to set up a more sophisticated research programme. Since this text is based mainly on written sources, observations and a case study, the use of statistical data is limited.

According to the first hypothesis, planning and development of community infrastructure (CI) (schools, sports halls, etc.) has remained rather mechanical or central place theory oriented in Estonia. Drastic changes in administrative structure and community financial system of past decade have resulted in the construction of new CI facilities in larger centres without considering existing CI in smaller centres. On the other hand, because of overcapacity and high running costs, CI built by the collective farms in small rural centres during previous decades often remain unused. In many cases, the lack of collaboration between communities and lack of state control, have caused waste of public resources on the regional scale.

Second hypothesis, therefore, argues, that the application of the network paradigm and increased cooperation between local communities may considerably save public resources, create new local jobs, and reduce negative consequences of ongoing centre-periphery differentiation processes.

This paper consists of three chapters. First one describes the heritage of Walter Christaller, his Central Place Theory, and the turn in Western planning theory: shift from a normative top down planning to a horizontal and more balanced networking practices. Second chapter attempts to analyse critically Soviet and post-Soviet planning theory and practices with a particular stress on community infrastructure planning and development. Finally we present a case study of planning procedure from the Suure-Jaani locality - highlighting issues of post-socialist planning on the community level.

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1. Introduction and background: defining a research question

Modern Community Infrastructures (CI) (also called social sphere and social infrastructure by Soviet authors) located in Estonian small rural centres, were built in large capacities by the collective and state farms and industrial enterprises during the 1970s and 1980s. These premises and facilities are rather old fashioned today and would need high investments to be upgraded.

Highly problematic fact is, that this CI, also living estates and production facilities were built to the smaller local (2nd rank) centres outside of historical local centres (3rd rank), which were growing in Estonia during the second half of 19th and first half of 20th centuries up to 1960s. The old (3rd rank) centres did not receive virtually any CI investments during the 1970s and 1980s because of their location outside collective/state farm territories.

The return to the Western World and capitalist development in the early 1990s created better opportunities for old and larger centres and political pressure to recover after

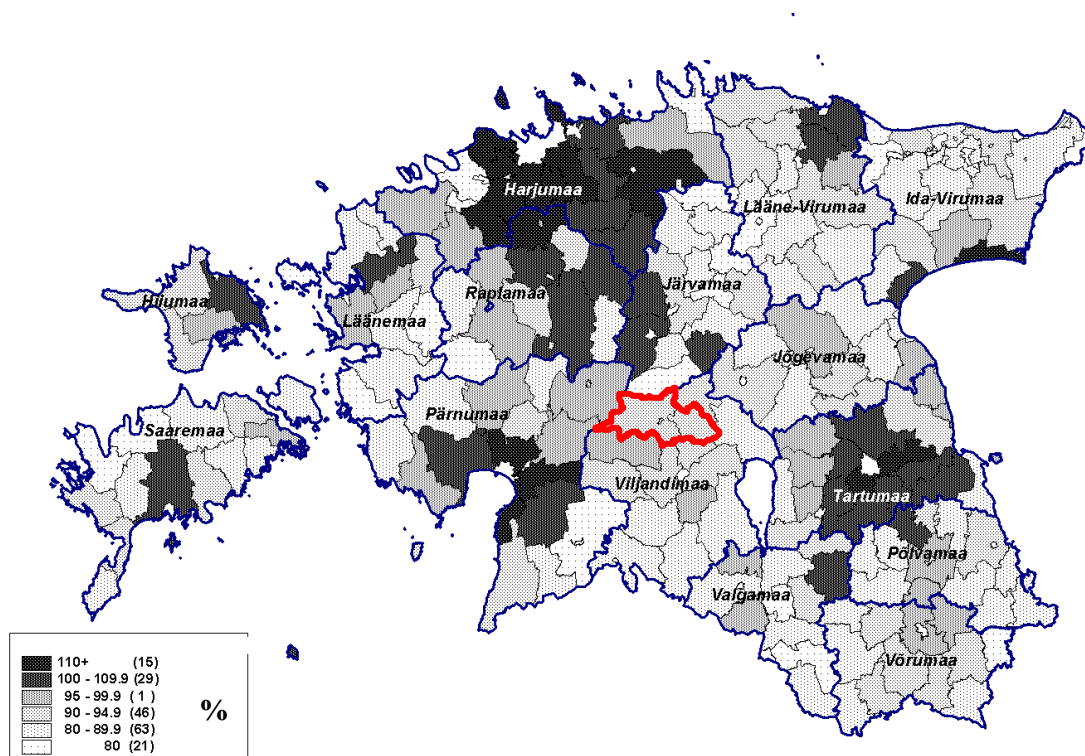


Figure 1. Population change in Estonian rural communities (%) 1989-2000 according to census data (ESA 2001). Case study (chapter 4) area is indicated with a red (bold) line.

30 years of depression and “injustice”. However, in most cases, the need for a new CI decreased simultaneously with a population decrease in rural areas (Tammaru 2001). According to observations, ambitious local politicians create overcapacity when developing new CI, increasing operation costs per inhabitant and wasting in that way public resources. Besides, because the conflicting interests between small towns and surrounding rural communities in that respect, there is a lack of cooperation in using existing CI.

Two main hypothetical solutions can be given. First, central place oriented approach recommends to close down or to put into different use existing CI located in small centres and to build new relevant CI facilities in larger centres. This is a rather expensive way to behave and may rise up protests from localities where CI is currently in operation and where people will lose their close by opportunities.

The second solution, applying the network paradigm, is to renovate existing infrastructure located more dispersedly and to use it more intensively guaranteeing access through improved public transport. This approach, however, would need very good co-operation of local communities and organisations as well as the application of new simultaneously better organisational structures like joint community owned enterprises. Both approaches are hardly put into the practice, because of the high requirement for social capital and trust.

Considering the increased physical mobility of the population and improved civic structures in the future, we may assume that central place theory and normative/positivist planning of the CI can and will be gradually replaced with a network oriented model since it fits better with concurrent CI location and consumption of particular services and facilities.

However, this assumption is somehow quite contradictory with current CI planning practices in Estonia, a peculiar combination of traditional mechanical top-down Soviet planning regime and ultra-liberal *laissez faire* capitalism.

Assuming, that collective farm practices are unique in post-soviet countries, we try to elucidate this phenomenon more deeply and figure out special features of command economy and its CI planning practices by comparing it with Western planning theory.

2. From hierarchies to networks: the heritage of Walter Christaller and new networking based approaches in planning

Central place theory – a theoretical account of the size and distribution of settlements within an urban system in which marketing is predominant urban function (Johnston et al 1994, 57) – has been a very basic source for Western regional planning for decades. For Estonian geographers and planners of 1960's and 1970s, an important source has been Edgar Kant's (1935) work on elaboration and application of Christaller's central place theory in designing administrative system of Estonia.

Walter Christaller (1933) developed his theory using Southern Germany as a source area. He defined the centrality of an urban centre as the ratio between all services provided there and the services needed for its own residents. Every central place has its market area according to services (central goods) provided there. Central places with lower order functions have denser network and central places with higher order offer also services of the lower centres.

Very well known and visually attractive is Christaller's hexagonal spatial structure. True, such a regular structure does not exist in reality. Also several specialising centres like mining towns may deviate very much from the general model.

Christaller (*ibid.*) defined seven levels for its model according to the market-optimising principle:

- 1) *Markort*, population approx. 1000 inh., distance from other towns 7 km;
- 2) *Amtsort*, 2000 inh., 13 km;
- 3) *Kreisstadt*, 4000 inh., 21 km;
- 4) *Bezirkstadt*, 10000 inh., 36 km;
- 5) *Gaustadt*, 30000 inh., 63 km;
- 6) *Provinzstadt*, 100000 inh. 109 km;
- 7) *Landstadt*, 500000 inh., 187 km.

Edgar Kant (1935) carried out extensive empirical studies analysing trade activities of centres and transport flows between them and their hinterland. He was probably one of the first authors outside Germany, who noticed W.Christaller's theory of central places and linked it with his own studies. Kant (*ibid.*) defined 6 (5) levels of central places for Estonia and distinguished simultaneously two main settlement systems "headed" by so-called full-

city within the country at the beginning of 1930s (Kant 1935, 186-187). He proposed the following levels of central places:

- 1) *Alevik* (*Kleinflecken*), population less than 500 inh.,
 - 2) *Alev* (*Grossflecken*), 500-2000 inh.;
 - 3) *Maalinn* (*Landstadt*), 2000-5000 inh.;
 - 4) *Väikelinn* (*Kleinstadt*), 5000-20 000 inh.;
 - 5) *Kesklinn* (*Mittelstadt*), 20 000-50 000 inh.;
 - 6) *Täislinn* (*Vollstadt*), 50 000-200 000 inh.;
-
- 7) *Suurlinn* (*Grossstadt*), 200 000-500 000 inh.;
 - 8) *Hiidlinn* (*Riesenstadt*), 500 000-2 000 000 inh.;
 - 9) *Ülilinn* (*Überstadt*), 2 000 000-5 000 000 inh.;
 - 10) *Maaialinn* (*Weltstadt*), more than 5 million inh.

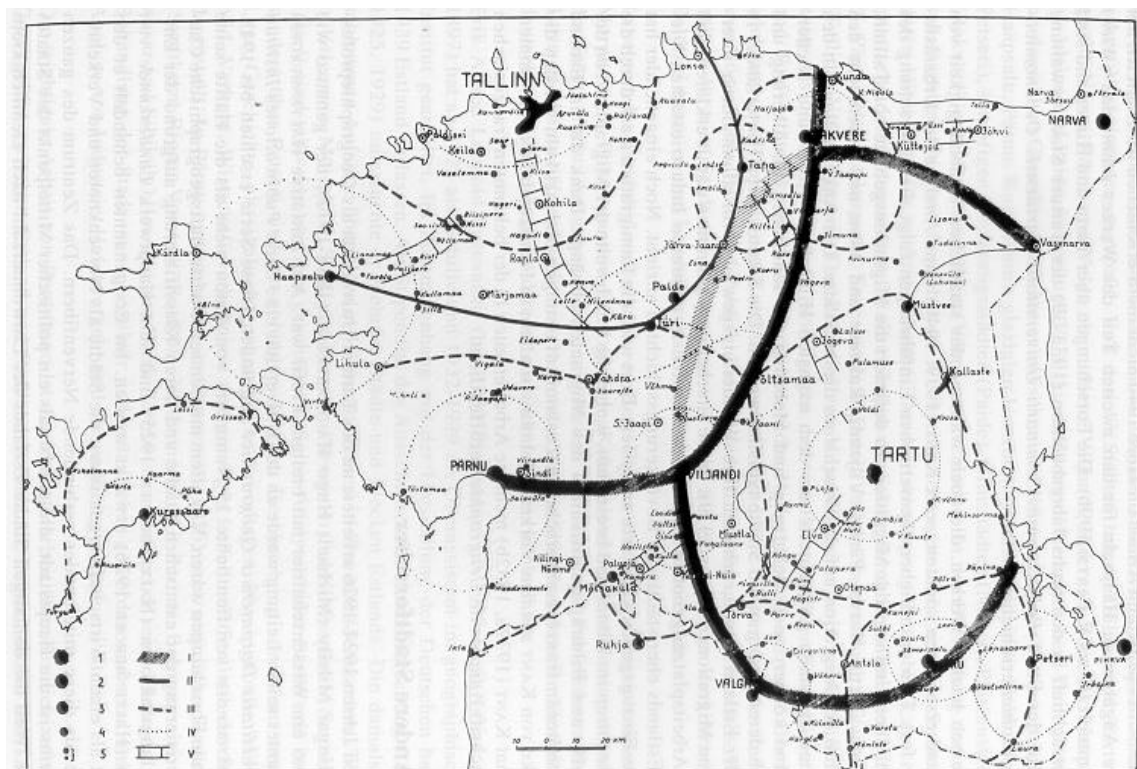


Abb. 3: Die Systeme der zentralen Siedlungen Estlands. Entwurf: KANT 1935. Anmerkungen vgl. S. 222.

Figure 2. The system of central places in Estonia by Edgar Kant (1935).

Different from Christaller's Southern Germany, the Estonian model included also very small centres (*alev* and *alevik*), some of which were parish centres with a church, a school, a tavern, a market, a shop and some other services. Most of them, however, were even smaller having just few service enterprises. The number of small centres was accordingly 26 (*alev*, 500-2000 inh.) and 130 (*alevik*, with less than 500 inh., actually, smallest local centres had just more than 20 inhabitants) (Kant 1935, 182-4).

Edgar Kant's approach was, indeed, less abstract. He did not use hexagonal modelling. On the other hand, it was instantly applied in practice. Estonia introduced the first scientifically designed central place theory based reformation of the first tier administrative units (communities) on in the World 1938-1939 (Krepp 1938).

The ideas of Christaller and his follower's, like Edgar Kant (1935) and August Lösch (1940/1955), were rediscovered at the end of 1950s and applied for the interest of post-war quantitative geography (Johnston et al 1984), regional science as a new discipline (Isard, 19??). Central Place Theory, an ideal hexagonal economic and service landscape of Christaller's model, became a creed of extensively spreading regional planning doctrine (see e.g. Perroux 1955, Friedmann and Alonso 1964) and aimed to resolve rising urban and regional problems (Hall 1974) resulting from high growth and rapid urbanisation.

However, according to Cooke (1983, 17), this period appeared to be a sort of confused mixture of rationalism and positivism. He (*ibid.*) continues:

The worst ... has developed by inducing the assumption that planning solutions should give primacy to the achievement of certain ideal principles rather than being based on thorough knowledge of the mechanisms giving rise to the surface problems, which can be empirically identified.

Behavioural and system analyses, coming into the planning discussion later, demonstrate well the weaknesses of positivist epistemology (Cooke 1984, 31-32).

The energy crisis and rising environmental consciousness of the 1970s, ongoing globalisation and following de-industrialisation of the 1980s demolished piece-by-piece the planning doctrine built on the basement of Keynesian economics and theoretical-geometrical geography. Planning theorists like Friedmann, Alonso and others, who applied central place and growth pole theories, were heavily criticised.

This was simultaneously the start of a new era in planning based on humanist (Tuan 1976, Buttimer 1979), structuralist (Giddens 1984) and so-called bottom up approaches (Stöhr and Taylor 1981). The economic landscape was no longer described as a flat and

homogenous plain of Christaller's hexagons. Cooke (1979) inspired by Savage et al. (1987, cf. Cooke 1979, 10) defined locality as a product of supralocal structures, which may give rise to local specificity. Locality is a base from which subjects can exercise their capacity for pro-activity by making effective individual and collective interventions (Cooke 1979, 12).

Locality concept represents a clear shift towards a network paradigm and pro-active planning approach of the 1990s based on encouragement of different groups in the society and public participation. It is now widely understood, that planning is an interactive process, undertaken in social context, rather than a purely technical process of design, analysis and management (Healey 1997, 65).

Spatial planning should maintain or transform public discourses about the qualities of places (Healey 1997, 61). This means that normative are created during the planning process and should meet local needs. Planning could create new relational links between networks and build new systems of meaning, new cultural references. Planning becomes a part of the process, which both reflects and potentially shapes the relations and discourses, the social and intellectual capital through which links are made between networks to address matters of shared concern at the level of neighbourhoods, towns and urban regions (*ibid.*).

John Friedmann (1992) himself has changed the paradigm and stresses importance of building networks between social entrepreneurs, leaders, and politicians representing different fields of life. The same applies to networking between communities: well developed institutional coherence through which shared problems can be collectively addressed (Healey 1997, 33).

This new approach has been especially important in the Nordic countries and Northern Europe in general, where governance has been historically decentralised (Holt-Jensen, 1996) and local self-governments are in most countries rather small by their population. This has pushed communities into close co-operation, so that many CI projects have been carried out as joint projects, driven by the needs of the local population or enterprises.

3. Infrastructure planning in Soviet Union and Eastern Europe 1950-1990

In Soviet literature, community infrastructure was called a services sphere or sector. This term was actually very wide and covered all types of personal services like retailing, catering, housing and communal services, education, health care, science and arts, etc. (Nõmmik 1979). An alternative, less used term was social infrastructure.

The discipline dealing with comprehensive economic and infrastructure planning was called accordingly “*raiyonnaya planirovka*” and “*territoriynaya planirovka*” (Percik 1971) in Russian and “*rajooniplaneerimine*” and “*territoriaalplaneerimine*” in Estonian (Pragi 1974, 5-12).

3.1. Soviet planning theory: basic principles and particularities

The essence of Soviet planning was quite similar to the regional and land use planning principles known in the West. The Soviet regional planning was based on the basic concept of territorial social-economic complexes (TSEC) (Nõmmik and Mereste 1984, 200-211, 219-226). The concept of TSEC was very similar with the growth pole theory (Perroux, 1955; Nõmmik and Mereste 1984, 204). Very well known was also the Central place theory of Walter Christaller and Edgar Kant (Nõmmik and Mereste 1984, 207).

Theoretically speaking, Soviet planning regime had an even more complex character, aiming to change of entire settlement system. Since the industrial production and majority service related economic activities belonged 100% to the state or strictly controlled cooperative sector, extensive comprehensive planning was possible and highly required.

Because of strict administrative and planning control, the socialist economy could coordinate the social-economic processes, including settlement system development, which was the true element of socialist ideology from its very beginning. Classical socialist model included all elements of Western urban planning and was based on collective (state) ownership and strong central government control over land and infrastructure development. Central government decided location of new developments; local administration just implemented the order.

Optimisation goes much further in Soviet planning theory and practice: e.g. new living estates were planned according to jobs: new living blocks were built close to farms

and factories – to eliminate time losses for travel. According to their functions, settlements were divided into three categories:

- 1) Perspective settlements, where all new construction activities were concentrated;
- 2) Non-perspective, but temporarily saved settlements, where only repairing and very limited new construction may take place;
- 3) Liquidated settlements, where no construction and only very limited repairing may take place (Pragi 1974, 93).

The basic idea of socialist planning was to guarantee equal access of (public) services to the whole population. This ideal based on normative: number of seats, beds, personnel, and floor space per 1000 inhabitants in different kinds of CI facilities (Smith 1996) defined by the planning, architecture and design authorities.

Territorial planning dealing with the location issues of the service sector was intended to respond to the consumers needs in the best way and minimize construction and operation costs simultaneously (Volkov 1969). The hierarchy of the settlement system was taken as a basic framework for the service sector development (Nõmmik 1979). Here, the Soviet territorial planning regime used extensively modified ideas of Walter Christaller's (1933) central place theory as well as works of Edgar Kant (1935).

3.2. Critics of the Soviet planning system

However, until the 1970s, there were no particular policies and programmes defined (!) at which time the Central Urban Planning Institute in Moscow somehow formulated principles of comprehensive planning of the settlement system (Kotchetkov and Listengurt 1977). This action plan was not only late, but even worse: the detailed analysis of the settlement system was incorrect (Bater 1980).

In Estonia, the first attempts of comprehensive planning were made in 1967, when an extensive comprehensive territorial planning programme was started. The aim of the programme was to give a complex overview of the natural and human resources in order to optimise the utilisation of resources, as well as to conduct a comprehensive plan of industry and settlement structure (Eesti NSV... 1970, 15-19).

It was a good try. But somehow, the process of planning appeared to be much more difficult than it was assumed at the beginning. After the first volumes were published, the

comprehensive planning process vanished in Estonia. And top down sector planning continued its dominance.

Despite very detailed (up to 30 years) long term *general plans* it included many special features and spontaneous elements. Central planning was actually sector planning. Separate ministries and their subsidiaries planned separate elements like health care, education, transport and communications. City/*rajoon* administration could only co-ordinate this development, but had no decisive power. As a result of weak co-ordination, infrastructure development caused serious bottlenecks in infrastructure development (Enyedi, 1996).

Soviet urban planning was clearly dictated from above as far as central government (ministries) used most important development funds. Investments to CI were actually concentrated to the republican capitals (like Estonian capital Tallinn) and in lesser extent to other larger centres and so-called perspective developing smaller centres. There was actually no good concept and a real solution how to combine modern urban lifestyle and required CI with traditional rural life.

“Planned urbanisation” from above concentrated later on integration of towns and rural settlements in order to provide non-agricultural (service) jobs in larger villages. Second goal was making CI more accessible in rural areas. As there was great lack of existing CI, solution was found in concentration of housing. Instead of traditional Estonian sparse dispersed settlement structure of separately located farmhouses was launched campaign of so-called perspective and non-perspective villages, which resulted abandoning of small and remote villages. Such modernisation policy was applied in several former socialist countries, where many villages were defined as non-perspective, often according to subjective opinion of planners without consulting with local people (Enyedi 1996).

3.3. Defining hierarchies and planning of the CI in Estonia during the 1970's and 1980s

Territorial planning dealing with the location of service sector should respond to the consumers needs in the best way and minimize construction and operation costs simultaneously (Volkov 1969). The hierarchy of settlement system was taken as a basic framework for the service sector development. When defining hierarchies, Soviet planning

tried to include also industrial development besides the services (Nõmmik 1979), based on Lösch (1955) model.

According to size of the centre and its hinterland, six levels were defined in hierarchy of Estonia's settlement system (Nõmmik 1979):

- 1) 3441 villages with population below 250 inhabitants. As Estonian villages are very small and disperse, service units like elementary school (4 class), small shop and post office were planned for a group of villages.
- 2) Small centre (300-700 inh.), normally new fast growing collective farm centre with total population approximately 1000-1200 in the hinterland, had number of service functions like kindergarten, basic school (8 class), cultural house with public library, apothecary, more specialised shops, bank office, etc., and production units active within the territory of this particular collective farm.
- 3) Local centre, normally historical rural towns (parish centres) with more diverse services and sometimes also some industries, served by idea wider territory: several collective farms and/or village soviets with population ca 5000 in its hinterland. Local centre was supposed to be accessed within 20-25 minutes. The number of such centres was defined about 60-70 in Estonia. Industrial towns without significant hinterland, whose population was over the critical level, were ranked also as local centres.
- 4) *Rajoon* (county) centre, in most cases old historical regional capital (bishops centre, stronghold, trade city), had already wide range of specialised services including e.g. theatres, vocational schools, etc., rather big industrial enterprises and important administrative functions, approachable within 30-45 minutes. Centres itself had average size of 15-20 thousand inhabitants and together with hinterland in most cases 40-100 thousand.
- 5) Larger cities with more than 50'000 inhabitants were considered as regional centres serving group of *rajoons* with total population more than 150'000 and were supposed to accessed within one hour of driving. Characteristic services on that level were higher educational institutions.
- 6) Capital of Estonia.

Service units in different sectors had own normative standards: minimum required number of people to be served and capacity. The goal of Soviet service sector planning was

to improve the quality and selection of services in larger centres and to homogenate service quality on the lower level of hierarchy. According to recommendation of planners, special emphasis was given to the local centres serving group of settlements and rajoon centres. This means actually third rank or old local centres.

3.3. The reality of soviet comprehensive planning - non-integrated sector planning in branch plant and collective farm settlements

The reality was something different, however. Despite planning economy doctrine, which had very central role in the Soviet economy, comprehensive territorial planning and especially CI planning was much weaker than in Western European, and particularly in Nordic Countries. This is because of extreme centralisation and missing self-governance.

Soviet regime was applying extensive investment policy in order to utilize natural or labour resources in rural areas. There was built a number of plants in small centres, which were often subordinated to headquarters located in Tallinn or even in Moscow. In one hand, this policy was rather positive in achieving regionally balanced growth. On the other hand, administrations at the regional (*rajoon*) level had very limited opportunities to speak with and coordinate.

As a consequence, soviet central and supposedly comprehensive planning created a great number of so-called mono-functional, or “single enterprise settlements” around mines, paper-mills, peat factories, saw mills, sewing plants and food industries. These factories utilised local natural or human resources, but they were not integrated with their hinterland when speaking about infrastructure and service development.

As there was a major lack of CI and living estates, every enterprise built own housing, kindergartens, shops and schools. But the factory built CI was often not considering the needs of surrounding territories and economies of scale within the settlement. It was rather typical, that even small towns had 2-3 different retail, health care, and kindergarten-school systems as by-products of a factory, a military site or a railway centre. The last ones were in own turn directly managed from Moscow or Tallinn.

As a result of the lack of coordination (planning), these settlements were even more vulnerable than surrounding rural areas, because their absolute dependency of their main employer, which was simultaneously also a service provider. Quite similar results gave actually Western (and particularly Nordic) regional policy of the 1950s and 1960s:

decentralisation of manufacturing units, creation of industrial mini-growth poles (Oscarson 1989). These settlements have been in the focus of several researchers like Rex Lucas (1971), John Bradbury (1985), Jarmo Kortelainen (1992) and Ilmar Talve (1983). True, in Western Europe, CI was mainly developed by local communities. This is a big difference.

The “monopoly” of local industrialist in CI development vanished, when Estonian collective and state farms got stronger. Especially at the beginning of the 1980s, the so-called “Soviet nutrition programme” raised subsidies for collective and state farms (figure 3) which became considerable economic agents in Estonia. Many urban dwellers moved to the countryside to work in collective and state farms in the 1980s because of better wages, available accommodation (Raagmaa 1996) and brand new CI. The construction boom in rural areas caused relative de-concentration of the population in Estonia (Marksoo 1992). Rural decline stopped in 1983 (Katus 1989), and during next ten years rural areas enjoyed a population inflow.

Settlements with 200 and more inhabitants, operating mainly as centres and sub-centres for state and collective farms went through rapid growth during the 1970s and especially 1980s concentrating majority of rural population in these settlements.

The process of “decentralised concentration” took place also because the average size of collective/state farms increased. The total number of units has decreased since 1950s (when there were about 2400 state and collective farms) up to the 317 in 1988. The most serious change was at the beginning of 1970s (from 463 units in 1970 to 295 in 1984).

Collective farms, as considerably large and well-subsidised economic units started to play a decisive role in the development of rural settlement system and competed with old central places and branch plant settlements.

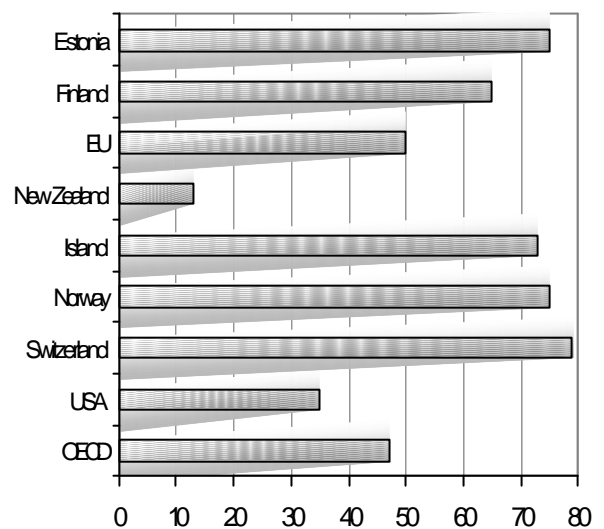


Figure 3. The rate of agricultural producer subsidies in various countries in 1986.

Source: OECD 1996.

In rural areas, virtually all investments into production, social and cultural sphere were made by these farms. They concentrated investments predominantly on their production centres. When two or more collective farms merged, most of these investments were directed to the new, usually the strongest centre, leaving the former centres with their surrounding villages without the necessary level of services.

And again, like in the case of industrial settlements, local administrative units village soviets (*külanõukogu*) and county (*rajoon*) administration had practically no authority to speak with in the social sphere development. Construction of housing and CI was probably the most powerful “tool” (even better than high salary) to attract new labour force.

At the same time, historical centres, being outside of collective farm territories and investment policies, stagnated and declined by population; mainly because of the lack of co-operation between collective farms in respect to CI. People, living in small towns, were employed in surrounding collective farms.

Production activities of the collective farms were quite well coordinated by the *Agrotööstuskomitee* (Agro-industrial Committee) at the *rajoon* and state level, which included wide structure of support services. Planning procedures and construction activities were carried out by the *Maaehitusprojekt* (Rural Construction Project) or KEK (Kolkhoz Construction Office) structures. These structures were actually acting as design and construction companies. They had to follow building standards and other guidelines, but they did not plan service and production units on the larger (*rajoon*) scale. Or did it just *pro forma*.

Stronger enterprises (collective farms) just swallowed weaker ones, concentrated economic power and construction activities to the new centres. They had also greater lobbying capacity to shift central infrastructure investments (e.g. roads) in the benefit of their territory. Collective farms in Central and Northern Estonia were very rich at the middle of the 1980s: they set up new industrial enterprises (e.g. electronic assembly and car spare parts production), of course, they built new very attractive housing and CI for their workers, and least but not least, they renovated large manor houses and cleaned up parks just for a pleasure (!). This is why collective farm chairmen were also called “red barons”.

3.4. Estonia's new planning system within the framework of new administrative structure

In 1989, in these collective/state farm settlements lived more than 60% of rural population. Their share was gradually growing during previous decades, but started heavily decline during the 1990's. As a majority of these settlements have one and only employer – a state or collective farm – they were greatly affected by economic decline of the dominant enterprise(s).

In Estonia's rural areas, extremely rapid restructuring, the processes of collective farm disintegration (destruction), took place since the end of the 1980s. The primary sector lost 80% jobs during the 1990s (Eamets et al. 1999), and most local centres were not able to preserve a critical "weight" to be attractive for new small entrepreneurship. This led to a new migration to the centres, rising social exclusion and extra social costs.

Several schoolhouses, kindergartens, cultural houses and the like, constructed during the 1970s and 1980s, are partly or entirely out of use because of low demand and high operation costs. On the other hand, these facilities would need remarkable investments to be renovated and upgraded.

However, some municipalities, especially central towns at the regional and sub-regional level, are building new CI, and many of them are trying to do so, without considering already existing regional overcapacity. Quite often, the reasons are political. And definitely the lack of long-term planning and strategic thinking: analysis, calculations and collaborative action. Despite a "production" of all kinds of strategies and development documents on the national and county levels – these papers remain usually on the shelf and do not approach community level in real terms.

County government are responsible for preparation of county plans, supervision of the local governments planning activities, and participate together with other institutions in the preparation of national planning guidelines. However, land use and development plans elaborated on the County level do not count much, because of no authority and budget for development. County governor is appointed by the national government and has limited number mainly controlling functions. There are no county councils operating any more. Extensive centralisation started when the regional councils were dismissed in 1994.

Only a minority of rural communities have figured out their own comprehensive (strategic development and land use) plans. There is no capacity for that task as far as

average population of rural communities (*vald*), renamed village soviets in most cases, is about 2500 inhabitants (when excluding cities).

Well, if the comprehensive plan is ready, it does not mean much because of the lack of finances on the community level. Only 16 local self-government out of 247 manage with own revenues in Estonia (!). The rest of communities are dependent on state subsidies, especially when we speaking about “hard investments” in CI.

To a certain extent, county associations of local governments influence development and planning activities on the county level. In 1994-1999, county governor and associations of local governments decided jointly distribution of the part of state investments, under so caller regional state investments programme. This is not the case any more – decisions about the CI investments are now only made by ministries or by the central government directly.

The associations of local governments are working in very different manner in Estonia, but in general, there is too few co-operation going on between communities. The idea of joint action and collaboration has not arrived yet.

The Planning and Building Act passed in 1995 (<http://www.envir...> 2002), has is in great deal copied from the Danish law. Denmark has two tier decentralised self government system, where development and land use planning is carried out also on the county level. Similar regulations cannot be effective in the situation of very centralised administrative system of Estonia. Well, the Estonian system is gradually learning from the Nordic model and more and more positive cases can be given. Also state authorities are looking for locally defined priorities before making investment decisions. But it takes time.

In real life, because of permanent lack of financial resources, investments into the local CI are overwhelmingly dependent on lobbying in the ministries and in the national political structures, which in own turn influence ministries and budget formation. A good mayor should be permanently “on the wheels” between the community and the Capital city. Mayors qualification is measured by investments he/she brought to the community. For a mayor, lobbying is definitely more important than planning. Yet.

Past collective farm practices continue therefore their existence within a new communal system. The reason of preserved *status quo* in the CI development is sometimes very simple: collective farm leaders just continue their “career” on mayors’ posts. The share of old leaders has increased during the last years (Laustam 2002). As the activity of

population remains low in Estonian communities (Raagmaa 2001), local control is weak over the activity of local politicians and administration. People tend to support old leaders, these who managed well during the “good old times”.

Opportunities to apply network paradigm in Estonian planning practices are therefore far not brilliant. Pseudo-planning practices of the Soviet era tend to continue and are resulting ineffective use of community infrastructure. If the Soviet planning authorities forced to follow at least some requirements, then post-Soviet era has created neo-liberal chaos (or multitude of norms and principles) in CI planning practices.

4. Cooperation versus conflict and CI planning in Suure-Jaani locality

This case study was carried out on the base of consultations during the 2001. Three tiny communities (Suure-Jaani town, Olustvere and Suure-Jaani rural municipalities, see their location in figure 1), decided to merge around the historical centre Suure-Jaani and started joint community planning process.

In advance, we may say at the very beginning, that the merging did not take place so far. There main reasons can be outlined:

- 1) merging was financially not feasible,
- 2) political and personal conflicts,
- 3) fatal disagreement about the status of one community infrastructure element – sports hall – construction.

Table 1. The population dynamics in the case study area by communities 1995-2000

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Suure-Jaani town	1444	1445	1441	1418	1406	1378
Suure-Jaani community	2612	2635	2583	2621	2634	2582
Olustvere community	1595	1623	1613	1608	1585	1534
TOTAL	5651	5703	5637	5647	5625	5494

Suure-Jaani area has territory about 460 sq km and is located in Central Estonia, northern part of the Viljandi County, 25 km from regional capital Viljandi. The total population is 5500 in three communities (table 1). Main employment is in agriculture and

forestry. Agriculture has declined drastically during the last decade, so the lack of employment opportunities has caused out-migration and ageing of the population.

4.1. Suure-Jaani town: way to the centre of networks and then to the "central periphery"

Suure-Jaani (SJ) town has long history being a Valula (as it was called this time) parish centre already since 1428. The name Suure-Jaani comes from Holy John – church saint. SJ and its surrounding has many sites with special meaning in Estonian cultural history: Lõhavere stronghold, 12-13 century resistance centre with an important symbolic status, is located 4 km from town centre; Olustvere manor house – one of the best saved and most beautiful manor complexes is located 6 km away; several famous composers have been living in this area. Suure-Jaani was a centre of national awakening during the second half of the 19th century. Local people are well aware and proud of their rich history.

Local Valula church manor started to sell housing estates since 1891 and several dozens of houses were built within a short period of time. First private house owner was a craftsman – a baker. By the end of 19th century a local service centre (*alevik*) was formed, where basic (parish) school, doctor's office, tavern, apothecary, 3 shops, 5 bakeries and several other craftsmen and businesses were operating.

Local market was opened in 1903, kindergarten in 1908, library initiated by the local educational society in 1909, post office in 1910, dairies cooperative in 1911, local bank in 1919. There were 141 houses with 1040 inhabitants in 1922. Local cultural life was active: a chore, an orchestra, and a theatre society were operating.

Suure-Jaani became an independent small town (*alev*) in 1924 and town (*linn*) in 1938, when there were 12 shops, 2 restaurants, 2 bakeries, a hotel, post-office, and several artisans in 1939. There was also a shoe factory, co-operative dairy, and co-operative farmers society, which was purchasing machinery and organised marketing its members production. Population was growing, but not as fast as before. At the same time, the share of urban-type employment increased.

Soviet occupation stopped development of Suure-Jaani in 1940: all co-operative societies were dismissed, industries and shops nationalised. There was a short higher activity period 1950-1959, when Suure-Jaani was a small *rajoon* centre, but since then, no particular development took place until the 1990s. Almost all investments to the production

facilities, CI and housing were made to surrounding collective and state farm centres in Olustvere, Sürgavere and Tääksi; or just outside of the town border (!). Only a sub-regional secondary school remained in the centre of Suure-Jaani and was extended.

Since the beginning of 1990s, some similar pre-war developments like opening new shops and small industries took place. However, the population decline continues, no new houses have been built and communal finances are pure. People living in old Suure-Jaani “catchments area” communicate mostly within their “traditional” collective/state farm areas or are commuting for a work and services to the county centre Viljandi, located in a 20-30 minutes drive distance. Some people are commuting for a work and services even to Tallinn, which is in about two hours driving distance.

So we can distinguish three periods in Suure-Jaani development. First period, 1891-1940, building up a local service and small-scale industry centre like it was described by Walter Christaller and Edgar Kant. What above sources did not mention, but Alfred Marshall (1952) did in 1890, was active networking of enterprises in business and people in cultural field. Local centre was also an important place for social life, for meetings and communication (two restaurants, cultural society houses).

Second period, 1940-1992, stopped previous development track and the life stagnated in town. Suure-Jaani lost its central role both economically and socially: collective/state farms carried out these functions. Suure-Jaani became “a central periphery”.

Third period started with a new capitalist stage, which is actually more benefiting larger county centre Viljandi and also national capital Tallinn, because of high mobility of population and much better career opportunities in larger centres. Well, the history of “golden ages” sat deeply into the people’s and politicians minds and they try to re-establish previous status of their town status via improving town environment and construction of new CI.

4.2. Flourishing and declining Agricultural Ring

Suure-Jaani rural municipality was established via merging of several small communities in 1897. Sürgavere community was established separately in 1890, but was shared between three neighbouring units during the 1938/9 municipal reform.

Olustvere rural municipality was established in 1876. Centre of the municipality has been the manor mentioned already in 1424. Current complex of the manor was built by duke Paul and Nikolai Fersen at the end of 19th Century and beginning of 20th. 1914 was ready new administrative house in Tääksi and community centre was transferred there.

During the Soviet period, several changes in administrative structure were made so that different parts of the current Olustvere municipality belonged to different village soviets and even different *rajoons*.

1970s and 1980s were very good for rural development. A large complex of Olustvere Agricultural School was built next to the Olustvere manor house. This complex was also supported with additional CI like a basic school, a canteen, a sports hall, a swimming pool, etc. Olustvere community built another sports hall by the Tääksi basic school in 2001.

Sürgavere Collective Farm was also able to invest to the CI. In the mid 1980s they started construction of a large sports hall and cultural centre, but could not finish this house by the end of 1980s.

4.3. Joint CI planning process in Suure-Jaani area

Olustvere-Suure-Jaani joint development strategy process took place in 2001 and it followed three basic stages:

- 1) data gathering and strategic analyse,
- 2) wider public participation and vision building, and
- 3) programming and implementation.

First stage took place March – May 2001, when was carried out an extensive data search from statistics, documents and direct sources interviewing both officials and key persons of all communities. Only one community had comprehensive plan from 1998. Simultaneously started working temporary joint management group consisting of all mayors and councils chairmen.

Four separate working groups were initiated for the most important directions by the end of the first stage:

- 1) Education;
- 2) Infrastructure, land use and planning;
- 3) Entrepreneurship and tourism development;

4) Social issues.

These workgroups met 3-4 times. They gathered data and made a strategic analysis in their fields. They also defined investment priorities for the new community and worked out further action lines.

Second stage started when strategic analysis paper was published by the consultant at the end of May. Joint seminar of councillors and executives of all communities took place, where possible futures were discussed and vision was drawn. A new common vision was compiled together with wider public using local media (newspaper), personal networking, and public meetings (e.g. seminar with local enterprise leaders, interactive presentations during the planning week).

Third stage actually did not start. The consultant prepared a new strategy and vision based draft investments and action plan for the discussion. But mayors did not present this document to the community councils for approval. Merge of three communities did not take place.

First reason was financial. Merge was just not feasible. Second reason was political: a group of town politicians just wanted to be on the power and merge would benefit other groups. We are not going in more detail here.

Third major reason was hopeless disagreement in sports hall construction. The SJ area has two normal sports halls in Olustvere and Tääksi, one small hall by the SJ Secondary School and newly constructed large sports hall in Sörgavere. Not enough, some SJ politicians are dreaming to build even bigger sport hall.

All in all, it would be really silly idea to build another big house with high operation costs for such a small population. Already the construction costs are about twice as big as the budget of town! Project is ready and the only hope has been put on the lobby to get state investments. Main supporter of this project is present mayor. His message is clear: our secondary school children need better conditions for sports.

Quite a similar “venture” was the construction of the Sörgavere sports hall located five kilometres from SJ. This project was started already in the 1980s by the collective farm. Then stopped almost for ten years and proceed with the help of “friendly parliamentarians” late 1990s.

Well, one third – library - is still missing. And this money cannot be found from the community budget either. The director of Sörgavere sports hall is a former Sörgavere

collective farm leader – a powerful man, who succeeded to “beat out” both state and community money for the construction of that hall. His message is clear too: we should finish first the partly built complex.

Two similar ideas. Two ambitious projects. Two powerful persons. One highly important political conflict question.

But this fight is actually for nothing, because normally only 40 men play a basketball in Sürgavere during the winter weekends. This means about 3 hours per weekend. When divided by two, the result is 1,5 hours.

Conclusion from the normative/positivist planning: both projects are unfeasible, because there is no demand.

Conclusion from the network approach: let's cooperate in order to utilise better existing resources and encourage people to have more sports!

Conclusion from the post-soviet practice: let's have a better lobby in capital city!

5. Conclusion

This paper introduced a new research field for the next years. The result of this first writing was description and comparison of two different, Eastern and Western, planning systems across the history with a particular stress on planning and development of service centres and community infrastructure (CI).

A much deeper analysis of literature, legislation and practices would be still needed. According to our discussion based on observations and literature review, “transition” of planning ideology and practice from the “hard” normative-positivistic post-war tradition to the “soft” collaborative network approach took place only partly in Estonia. Politicians actually do not understand the ideas behind the new planning doctrine (law) like wide participatory and proactive networking. In reality, old management procedures are still dominant.

During the post-socialist transition period, spatial structures went through drastic change. Especially rural and old industrial areas lost major part of their employment and remarkable share of population. CI: schoolhouses, kindergartens, cultural houses and the like, extensively built by collective farms during the 1970s and 1980s, are partly out of use because of low demand and high operation costs.

Estonia will be probably a part of the EU and applicable for structural and social funds soon. In one hand, the weakness of appropriate planning procedures may halt opportunities to receive EU funding. On the other hand, inability of central government and county authorities to guarantee functional planning of CI and continuing lobbying practices create serious danger for waste of public resources.

Alerting example from the Suure-Jaani case study shows the lack of reasonable thinking in post-Soviet CI planning at the community level. Curious enough, we may argue, that networking as a sort of political collaboration has approached its upper limits, where reasonable standards and feasibility criteria's are not arguments and where emotions in combination with political ambitions and personal interest tend to dominate.

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