

## Arisen from ignoring - planning of a secret Soviet stately industrial town Sillamäe

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### Abstract

As the Soviet Union was in utter shortage of uranium, Sillamäe was converted from a modest settlement to an industrial town just within ten years. Planning of the town was a task for Leningrad (St Peterburg) architects from a state planning office Lengorstroyproyekt and a challenging opportunity for Estonian town planners from the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR. While in the beginning the planning process of the secret town at least apparently tried to follow bilaterally systematic involving pattern, the later hectic contacts between Leningrad planning office and local department paradoxically formed Sillamäe as an industrial town with central stately urban ensemble. Leningrad architects' variants for constructing new plan and space of Sillamäe was remodelled by local architects to stately, complex design that was to bring out and accentuate local natural circumstances, as well as implement local planning ambitions.

### Key words:

urban planning, industrial town, stately urban ensemble, Stalinism, East Estonia.

### *1. Introduction*

This article focuses on some detailed architectural planning aspects of formation of Sillamäe during the post-war Stalinist period, 1945 to 1950. Aim of the article is to analyse planning processes of the town area in 1945 to 1946 and 1947 to 1950, as well as to shed light on reasons, relations between involved institutions and local impacts on founding the stately ensemble-like town. After the Second World War, similarly to other East Estonian industrial towns, Sillamäe became a target of forced industrial development. However, due to the Soviet Union's utter need for uranium, Sillamäe became a priority. The Soviet state was interested in East Estonian oil-shale-based graptolitic argillite that contains uranium ore that was considered suitable for producing uranium oxides. Thus, the deposits needed to be explored thoroughly and East Estonian oil-shale had become highly strategic and militarily significant for the Soviet Union.

Wider historical and ideological background and formation mechanisms of Sillamäe against the background and in connection with East Estonian oil-shale mining and industrial towns Viivikonna, Kohtla-Järve, Ahtme, Sompä, Jõhvi, Kukruse, Kiviõli and Kohtla-Nõmme are analysed in Siim Sultson's article "Formation Mechanisms of Stalinist Oil-Shale Mining and Industrial Towns in East Estonia: Soviet Nuclear Needs and Local Ambitions" (2020)<sup>1</sup>, more deeply, fundamentally and comprehensively, in his doctoral thesis "Stalinist Urban Ensembles in East Estonian Oil-Shale Mining and Industrial Town Centres: Formation Mechanisms and Urban Space Identity as the Potential for Spatial Development" (2019)<sup>2</sup> and in his article "Viivikonna – Formation of a Ghost Town Amongst Other East Estonian Oil- Shale Mining and Industrial Towns"<sup>3</sup>. Town planning factors that had an impact on establishing Sillamäe with the East Estonian oil-shale mining and industrial towns in 1944 to 1955 (i.e. role and significance of the town for the USSR, formation mechanisms of the Stalinist urban space of the town, role and influence of architect Harald Arman (head of the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR) in the formation process of urban planning principles + patterns and the compositional identity, implemented in the town), as well as compositional town planning factors that influenced the urban space of the town in 1944 to 1955 are analysed both in the doctoral thesis and the first article, stated above.<sup>4</sup> The formation and structure of the population of East Estonian towns is analysed by historian David Vseviõv in his doctoral thesis "Kirde-Eesti urbaanse anaomaalia kujunemine ning struktuur pärast teist maailmasõda" (The Formation and Structure of the Urban Anomaly in Northeast Estonia After the Second World War)<sup>5</sup>.

Thus, this article focuses above all on Sillamäe's architectural formation via institutional relations, planning processes, and targets in the above stated period. The article explores original archival documents, plans, drafts - some of which are used within the theme for the first time. The archival documents are quoted and analysed step by step in order to restore and analyse the planning processes that formed the urban space and structure of the town.

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<sup>1</sup> Sultson, S. 2020a. "Formation mechanisms of Stalinist oil-shale mining and industrial towns in East Estonia: Soviet nuclear needs and local ambitions", *Journal of Urban History*, 1– 22, [10.1177/0096144219888506](https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144219888506).

<sup>2</sup> Sultson, S. 2019. *Stalinist Urban Ensembles in East Estonian Oil-Shale Mining and Industrial Town Centres: Formation Mechanisms and Urban Space Identity as the Potential for Spatial Development*. Doctoral Thesis. Tallinn: TALTECH Press, [doi.org/10.23658/taltech.56/2019](https://doi.org/10.23658/taltech.56/2019).

<sup>3</sup> Sultson, S. 2020b. "Viivikonna – Formation of a Ghost Town Amongst Other East Estonian Oil-Shale Mining and Industrial Towns", *Baltic Journal of Art History*, 157 – 177, [doi.org/10.12697/BJAH.2020.19.06](https://doi.org/10.12697/BJAH.2020.19.06).

<sup>4</sup> Sultson, S. 2019; Sultson, S. 2020a.

<sup>5</sup> Vseviõv, D. 2002. *Kirde-Eesti urbaanse anaomaalia kujunemine ning struktuur pärast teist maailmasõda: Doktoritöö [The Formation and Structure of the Urban Anomaly in Northeast Estonia After the Second World War. Doctoral Dissertation]*. Tallinn: Tallinna Pedagoogikaülikool.

## 2. From involving to ignoring

Nowadays, stately central ensemble of Sillamäe consists of three main streets and a boulevard crossing the central square and the recreational area. Southeast–northwest oriented 30-meter wide converging Kalda, and Kesk Streets are situated on two coastal levels and surround the park. The two streets converge at the Central Square that consists of a junction and greenery, are flanked with the Corinthian Palace of Culture, towered town hall and a grand staircase that leads to 40 metres wide and 250 meters long Mere Boulevard that connects the square with the sea. The boulevard is flanked with monumental four-storeyed apartment houses. The composition of the boulevard and the staircase is similar to the Stalingrad staircase axes (monumental staircase between Volga River and the Alley of Heros (Alleya Geroyev)). The rest of the stately urban ensemble is housed with neo-classicist apartment houses, public buildings ornamented with bas-reliefs, balustrades, pediments, columns et cetera. The grid reflects mostly masterplans of 1958 and 1950. Though those masterplans were developed via changes of masterplans of 1949, 1948, 1947 and 1946, the central main street and Tallinn – Jõhvi Road (today Tallinn – Narva Road) generally follow Sillamäe’s grid of early 1940s.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 1. Aerial view of Sillamäe (obviously 1945). Left: area planned for the Viktor Kingissepp oil-shale processing and distillation factory. Centre left: River Sõtke. Centre: greenery and existing residential area and settlement. Source: SM Photo of Sillamäe aerial view 1945.

<sup>6</sup> ERA T-8.1.121; SM Sillamäe map December 1943 – March 1945.

After the second seizure in 1944 (the first in 1940 – 1941), the occupying Soviet Union considered East Estonia, that was well-known for its oil-shale deposits, a resource for oil-shale-based uranium ore (graptolitic argillite) that was suitable for producing uranium oxides, molybdenum and vanadium. The state's acute need for uranium ore was highly strategic and of military importance. In autumn 1944 to 1946, the geological exploration of the East Estonian oil-shale-based graptolitic argillite took place. Meanwhile the state selected a plot of land to establish a settlement for the workers of the Viktor Kingissepp oil-shale processing and distillation (e.g. producing uranium oxides)<sup>7</sup> factory in Sillamäe. Architectural planning of the settlement started simultaneously.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 2. Map depicting area of the Viktor Kingissepp oil-shale processing and distillation factory in Sillamäe (centre left). Source: SM Sillamäe map December 1943 – March 1945.

The plot of land for establishing the settlement for the workers of the factory is described in a plan and an explanatory report sent to the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR by a state firm Lengazstroj<sup>9</sup> that belonged to Glavgaztopprom<sup>10</sup> on 22 November 1945. According to the

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<sup>7</sup> Since 1946, officially the Refinery No 7; sometimes called factory no 1 (for instance, *SM Generalny proekt planirovki*, NII-9, 1947).

<sup>8</sup> Sultson, S. 2019, 87–89, 95; Sultson, S. 2020a, 5–7.

<sup>9</sup> Leningrad State Building Enterprise of Synthetic Liquid Fuel and Gas Industry.

<sup>10</sup> The USSR's General Directorate of Synthetic Liquid Fuel and Gas at the USSR's Council of People's Commissars.

explanatory report, signed by architect Jevseyi Vitenberg<sup>11</sup>, Lengiprogaz<sup>12</sup> was designing a planning projects both for the factory and the settlement in collaboration with Lengorstroyproyekt. The settlement with the west-east length of 1.2 kilometres and with a population of 2,500 people was intended to be erected 1.2 kilometres to the east of the factory, between the coast (Gulf of Finland) and Tallinn – Narva Road<sup>13</sup>. The 78-hectare plot of land had to contain a 38-hectare residential area and a forest park on upper coastal level, whilst the lower coastal level was meant to form an immediate access to the sea.<sup>14</sup> The Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR approved the request on the session of 13 December 1945. However, the plan contains Arman’s signified approval on the behalf of the department with the date of 19 December 1945. The same date is used by architect Vitenberg’s signified confirmation on receiving one copy of the plan with the approval of the department on the address of Lengazstroj, passed on 22 November 1945.<sup>15</sup>

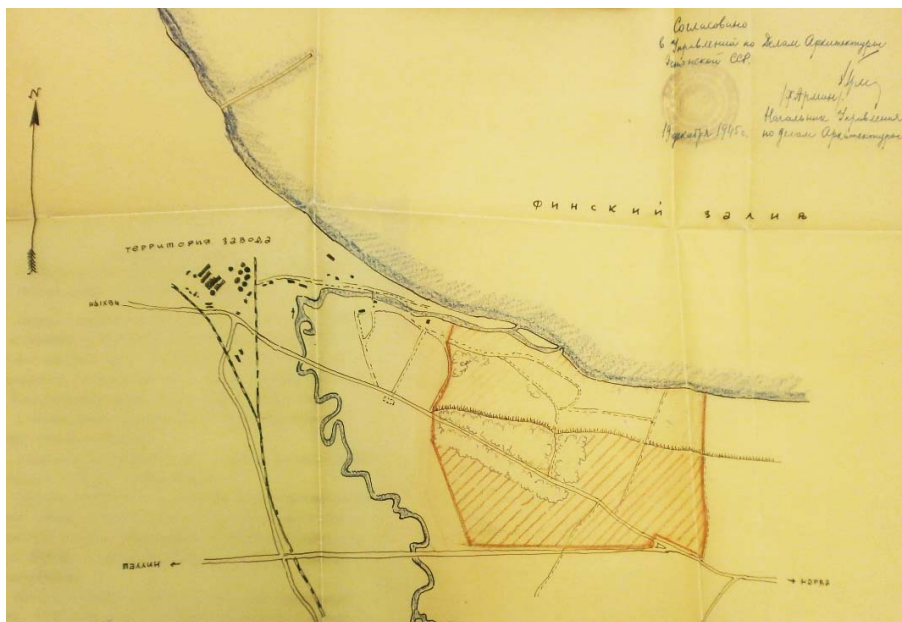


Figure 3. Lengazstroj’s 1945 map, concerning the establishment of a settlement (territory inside the light brown lines, including the hatched area) for the workers of uranium oxide production factory (on the top left) in Sillamäe. Source: ERA R-1992.2.2, 66.

<sup>11</sup> Architect of Lengorstroyproyekt (Leningrad filial of all-Soviet Union Gorstroyproyekt (Planning Institute for Town Building under the USSR’s Ministry of Heavy Industry)). His signature is present both on the explanatory report and design for the plot of land.

<sup>12</sup> Leningrad filial of all-Soviet Union Giprogaz (State Institute for the Design of Gas Pipelines and Gas-Industry Enterprises).

<sup>13</sup> Probably there is a mistake on the plan. The plan shows Tallinn – Narva Road south to Jõhvi – Narva Road. In 1940s, Tallinn – Narva Road went nearby the coastal line, Jõhvi – Narva Road was south to that. Thus, the explanatory report concerns Jõhvi – Narva Road; ERA T-8.1.121; SM Sillamäe map December 1943 – March 1945.

<sup>14</sup> ERA R-1992.2.2, 63–67, SM photocopy of the similar plan.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 64, 66; SM Vypiska iz protokola no 2.

Thus, Sillamäe was being designed by Lengerstroyprojekt already in autumn 1945. In 1946, a masterplan of Sillamäe was analysed in the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR. Probably and presumably analyses concerning compilation of the masterplan, started in autumn 1945. Though copies of the masterplan are absent in the archives, it is possible to give some indications of the issue. On 17 April 1946, Lengiprogaz submitted the masterplan to the department. The masterplan was analysed in the session of the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR on 27 April 1946. Representatives of Lengiprogaz (architect A. Mitin) and Lengerstroyprojekt (architect Vitenberg) were present. Based on conclusion of the survey of the Expertise Bureau of the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR, passed on 26 April 1946, the session suggested as preconditions of acceptance correcting the masterplan: to waive construction nearby Jõhvi – Narva Road<sup>16</sup>, to change configuration of the eastern and the western parts of the settlement, due to sanitary reasons to increase distance between the factory and the residential housing area, to well maintain territory on the lower coastal level between the gulf and the upper coastal level with the residential housing area and to coordinate the masterplan with the Sanitary Inspection and the Department of Local Air Defence.<sup>17</sup>

In early-June 1946 the Viktor Kingissepp oil-shale processing and distillation factory (that belonged to Glavgaztopprom and now was designing the town in collaboration with Lengerstroyprojekt) submitted the next version of the masterplan to the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR. Within a month, prior to the conclusion by the Expertise Bureau of the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR, passed on 1 August 1946, architect Otto Keppe, engineer-economist A. Shipko and engineer Y. Zavyalov made surveys of the masterplan.

Architect Keppe mentions that the masterplan needs to be more elaborated and detailed: for instance, it is impossible evaluate how much greenery massifs would be remained. As describing the masterplan for the settlement with the population of 2,000 people, Keppe points out that the main street (now Kesk Street) as the east-west axe is flanked by houses (two-storeyed apartment buildings) on the southern side, the street's northern side near slope of the upper coastal level forms a sight with a forest towards the gulf. The main street is crossed by another street (now Tchkalov Street) that's other end (now Tallinn – Narva Road) separates the main street, goes parallelly and then turns to the main street. The rest of the streets are rather small. Sports centre, that is placed in front of the central square, ends up in the east nearby the coastal beach. The settlement was intended to be housed with four-apartment buildings, some hostels, individual houses<sup>18</sup> between the above-mentioned another street and southern gully and cottages in the eastern part. Keppe suggested: to move the cottage more nearby the slope in order to guarantee better view out of the windows towards the sea and the shore; to decrease measures of the

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<sup>16</sup> See footnote 13.

<sup>17</sup> ERA R-1992.2.12, 56–60, 64.

<sup>18</sup> Individual houses, usually one-storeyed buildings, were not private properties in the Soviet Union. The issues could not be equalised with private houses.

central square; to add a promenade along the slope and in front of the cottages and proposed to shift Sillamäe from the south and the east.<sup>19</sup>

Engineer Zavyalov pointed onto controversy in the masterplan: while the explanatory report promised distance between the industrial area and the residential area 1.2 kilometres, the plan suggested the distance to be 0.9 kilometres. Engineer-economist Shipko remarked that, though, amount of population of Sillamäe (2,000 people) was fixed correctly, suggested to take into account actual and statistical data of age-specific structure of the settlement.<sup>20</sup>

The following conclusion by the Expertise Bureau of the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR, in addition to the experts' surveys, proposed to build only individual houses in quarter adjacent to the industrial territory, to connect residential quarters via a promenade along the slope with the Sports centre, to plan a road between Sillamäe and eastern Vaivara train station and to extend borders of Sillamäe settlement up to the Gulf of Finland (i.e. to build onto lower coastal level, as well)<sup>21</sup>.

On 2 August 1946, the session of the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR, led by Arman and presented by Vitenberg, based on the proposals of the expertise bureau, *inter alia* suggested to take into account view towards the settlement from the southern Tallinn – Narva Road, to incorporate territory (i.e. lower coastal level between the Gulf of Finland and the town park) into Sillamäe borders. However, as the experts referred to absence of key plan with gridding<sup>22</sup>, the session decided to accept the masterplan on condition that Lengorstroyproyekt submits the missing issue<sup>23</sup>.

More than a month later, on 7 September 1946, the department submitted a reminder to the Viktor Kingissepp oil-shale processing and distillation factory on acceptance of the masterplan on the above-stated condition. Previous co-operative involvement was replaced with silent ignoring. Documents concerning response of the addressee or other thematic issues seem to be absent in the archives.<sup>24</sup>

On 8 January 1947, the Vice-Chairman of the Estonian SSR's Council of Ministers Konstantin Boitsov asked Arman immediately to inform the council on state of designing of towns and settlements of the oil-shale basin. In his response of 14 January 1947, Arman confirmed that compilation of masterplan of Sillamäe would be finished by Lengorstroyproyekt during January.

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<sup>19</sup> ERA R-1992.2.12, 51.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 49, 50.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>22</sup> For instance, in order to fix which existing forest massifs, ways, roads and buildings remain and which ones will be removed etc.

<sup>23</sup> ERA R-1992.2.12, 45, 46.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

However, on 21 January 1947, presumably as a response to Arman's earlier request, architect Vitenberg *inter alia* stated that "in connection with transition of the plot of land to another authority and change of the task," the planning institute was "deprived of possibility to provide data of the settlement" asked by the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR. Eleven days later, on 1 February 1947, architect Vitenberg submitted Arman a request concerning acceptance of two blocks of Sillamäe. Vitenberg stated, that in connection with transition of the plot of land of Sillamäe to Refinery No 7 the settlement would be enlarged. Due to necessity to proceed with launch of building the town within the nearest 1.5 to 2 months, the architect asked Arman coordination for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> residential blocks of two-storeyed houses instead of homestead houses<sup>25</sup> formerly fixed in the accepted masterplan. But - the department internal handwritten resolutions on the request indicate that response of the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR was negative.<sup>26</sup>

### *3. From ignoring to respect*

Though since August 1946 compilation of masterplan of Sillamäe seemed a closed classified issue, the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR still processed the masterplans and was aware of the developments. For instance, in February 1948, the MPVO<sup>27</sup> within remarks on masterplan of Sillamäe *inter alia* suggested on the behalf of better air defence to maintain natural greenery as much as possible, preferably as forest parks and avoid cutting of trees while designing streets and squares<sup>28</sup>. Greenery as a sanitary or a recreational means in urban planning had an additional meaning for the Soviet urban planning – it was considered as a mean of military air defence. In case of closed and strategical Sillamäe such a mean was indispensable. Consequently, the Arman leaded department was still involved the planning of Sillamäe in the beginning of 1948. As respectfully stated in explanatory report of 1948 masterplan, comments of the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR were taken into consideration while the masterplan was analysed and coordinated<sup>29</sup>.

Meanwhile, the 1947 masterplan<sup>30</sup> (in collaboration with NII-9)<sup>31</sup> and the 1948 masterplan<sup>32</sup> (in collaboration with GSPI-12)<sup>33</sup> of Sillamäe were designed already by architect Aleksandr Nikayev. The 1949 masterplan as additional version of the 1948 masterplan designed Nikayev in

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<sup>25</sup> *In the Soviet Union, the homestead houses, usually one-storeyed modest non-private buildings, with small garden could accommodate one or more families.*

<sup>26</sup> *ERA R-1992.1.137, 1, 5, 7, 16.*

<sup>27</sup> *The Department of Local Air Defence of the Estonian SSR's Ministry for Internal Affairs.*

<sup>28</sup> *ERA R-1992.3.3, 33–34.*

<sup>29</sup> *SLV Detalny projekt, Tom I, GSPI-12, 1948, 24.*

<sup>30</sup> *SM Generalny proekt planirovki, NII-9, 1947.*

<sup>31</sup> *Scientific Research Institute No 9.*

<sup>32</sup> *SLV Detalny projekt, Tom I, GSPI-12, 1948.*

<sup>33</sup> *State Specialised Planning Institute No 12.*

collaboration with architect Michail Posphechov. Both architects authorized masterplans of 1950 and 1958. The 1947 masterplan, as was suggested by Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR in 1946, has planned both coastal levels of the town for residential area. The 1948 masterplan has extended the residential area on the lower coastal level and taken more into account local natural and relief conditions.

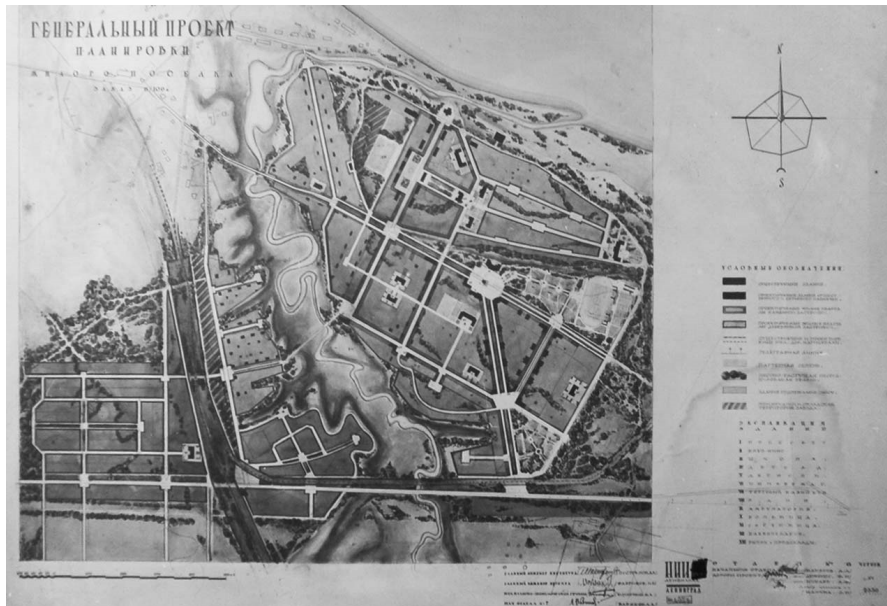


Figure 4. Sillamäe centre by Lengorstroyproyekt (Alexandr Nikayev), 1947, without the crossing of converging axes and Mere Boulevard. Middle: Central Square with the Palace of Culture. Right: recreation area and park with a stadium. Source: SM Generalny proekt planirovki zhilposyolka zavoda no 1 i razvertki glavnyh ulic (fotomaterialy). NII-9, 1947.



Figure 5. Sillamäe centre by Lengorstroyproyekt (Alexandr Nikayev), 1948. Centre: Central Square with Palace of Culture (right). Right: recreation area and park. Source: SLV Detalny proyekt planirovki zhilogo posyolka. Tom I. GSPI-12. 1948.

The 1949 version of the latter one has deepened those features, for instance adding grand staircase and boulevard that connects the central square with the sea. Additionally, the 1949 version continues respectful attitude towards local institutions, though directly not mentioning the department. From the compositional point of view the 1949 masterplan is greatly influenced by Arman that actively processed the masterplans, at least up to the summer of 1949, and was in touch with the following masterplan versions (1950, 1958).

Stalinist central gridlines of the masterplans for Sillamäe have many compositional similarities with the Stalinist central gridlines of Tallinn and Pärnu, designed by Arman.<sup>34</sup>



*Figure 6. Sillamäe centre by Lengorstroyproyekt (Alexandr Nikayev and Michail Posphechov), 1949. Centre: Central Square with Palace of Culture (right) and grand staircase (top). Top right: Mere Boulevard crossing with converging axes via the staircase. Bottom right: stadium near converging axes. Source: SLV Projekt planirovki zhilogo posyolka. GSPI-12. 1949.*

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<sup>34</sup> Sultson, S. 2019, 82–84, 95–98; Sultson, S. 2020a, 16,17.

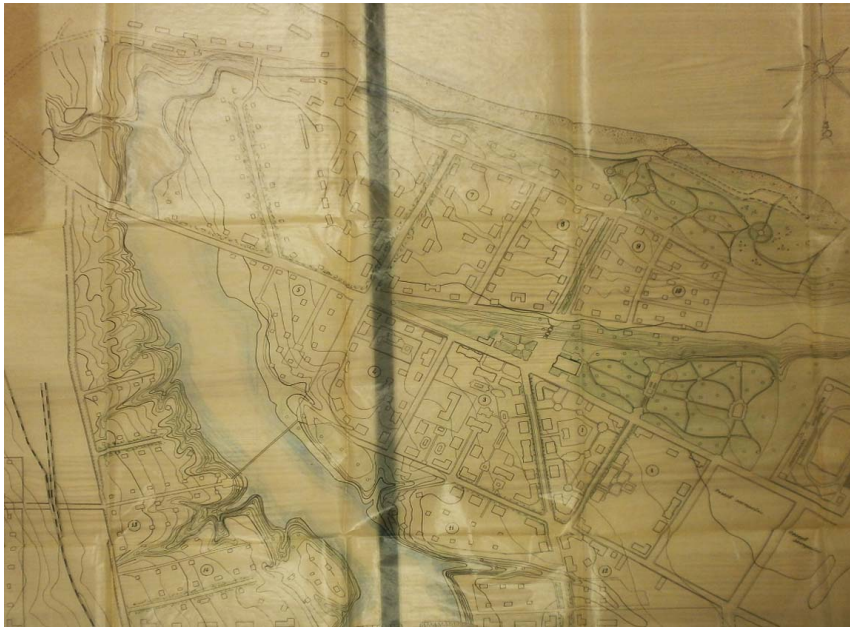


Figure 7. Sillamäe centre by Lengorstroyproyekt (Alexandr Nikayev and Michail Pospechov), 1950. Centre: Central Square with Palace of Culture (right) and grand staircase (top). Top right: Mere Boulevard crossing with converging axes via the staircase. Bottom right: stadium between converging axes. Source: ERA R-1.5s.212, 10–4.



Figure 8. Sillamäe centre by Lengorstroyproyekt (Alexandr Nikayev and Michail Pospechov), 1958. Centre: Central Square with Palace of Culture (right) and grand staircase (top). Top right: Mere Boulevard crossing with converging axes via the staircase. Bottom right: stadium between converging axes. Source: SLV Generalny plan, zakaza 229, 1958.

Additionally, in 1949 the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR awarded first prize to Sillamäe for excellent and comprehensive implementation of the masterplan<sup>35</sup>. Thus, local planners led by Arman were again involved and even respected by the Leningrad architects and officials.

#### *4. Discussion with conclusion*

What was the reason of such a development?

The Soviet Union's acute need for oil-shale-based uranium ore caused the geological exploration in the East Estonia in 1944 to 1946, the state selected a plot of land for the refinery in 1945. The original hand-drawn plan sent with an explanatory report to the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR by a state firm Lenzgastroi on 22 November 1945, describes both graphically and in writing a 78-hectare plot of land that contains a 38-hectare residential area and a forest park on upper coastal level and a lower coastal level as an immediate access to the sea. The residential area on the upper level is hatched with brown colour, while the park is marked with a stylised greenery, but the lower level as non-residential area is not hatched and its empty area is marked with some stylised fragments of greenery on the drawing. However, on the drawing, the lower coastal level within borders of the planned settlement was originally hatched with brown colour, as well, but the hatching was erased. Originally, the hatched area was bigger than 38 hectares and laying on both coastal levels.<sup>36</sup> What was the reason to decrease the area? It is possible that the hatched area was originally made bigger than intended by mistake and the incorrect hatching was erased. However, during the period of compiling the plan the state intensified geological exploration of the East-Estonian oil-shale-based argillite. The exploratory works that were taken very seriously became more detailed and extended as the Soviet Union that in comparison with the USA still lacked nuclear weapons was in a hurry.<sup>37</sup> Obviously, Sillamäe's coastal line as potential area of the ore deposits was reserved for possible usage. That could explain reluctance of Glavgaztopprom and Lenzgastroiprojekt to use the lower coastal level as residential area, though in the explanatory report of 22 November 1945 architect Vitenberg argued choice of the residential area by means of dominating south-western winds and natural protecting barriers, green plantations and River Sõtke (but the latter as ravine could not be considered as a barrier against wind - Sultson)<sup>38</sup>. In late spring to late summer 1946, the reluctance to follow suggestions of the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR was cemented due to mineshaft building works that had been started and ongoing planning of the Sillamäe experimental uranium oxide factory that had to be launched by the fourth quarter of the same year. An official launch for building both the closed factory (Refinery No 7) and its settlement in Sillamäe were fixed by a

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<sup>35</sup> ERAF 1.58.13, 14–15.

<sup>36</sup> ERA R-1992.2.2, 63–67.

<sup>37</sup> Sultson, S. 2019, 86–87; Sultson, S. 2020a, 5.

<sup>38</sup> ERA R-1992.2.2, 67.

secret directive of the USSR's Council of Ministers, passed on 27 July 1946 and a following top-secret joint directive No 039 of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Estonia and the Estonian SSR's Council of Ministers, passed on 6 August 1946.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, at the latest by mid-August 1946, the department was excluded from the planning process of Sillamäe.

Sillamäe as a closed town to be producing uranium-oxide belonged to the sphere of the Soviet nuclear industry that (Leningrad filial of NII-9 in 1946–1947; Leningrad filial of GSPI-12 in 1949–1950, 1958) designed the town in collaboration with Lengorstroyproyekt since August 1946. The department's reminder of 7 September 1946 neither was responded by the Viktor Kingissepp oil-shale processing and distillation factory (that was designing the town in collaboration with Lengorstroyproyekt) nor the masterplan accepted by the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR due to still absent key plan with gridding. As a result, the department's response to Vitenberg's (Lengorstroyproyekt) request of 1 February 1947 was negative.

What could have been reasons for the sudden reinvolvement and even respect?

One of the reasons is institutional position of the Department of Architecture of the Estonian SSR at the Estonian SSR's Council of People's Commissars both in Estonian SSR and the USSR. The department as a local branch of the USSR's State Committee of Architecture under the authority of the USSR's Council of People's Commissars that had the highest executive power of the Soviet urban planning and architecture, had the highest executive power of urban planning and architecture on territory of the Estonian SSR. That local department was led by Arman since the establishing the institution just before the end of the Second World War.

The other reason is that Arman led department was compiling and processing „Technical-Economic Principles for the Development of the Estonian SSR's Region Where Oil-Shale Occurs” (1947) and a large-scale secret project „Planning Task for Industrial and Urban Development of the Estonian SSR's Region Where Oil-Shale Occurs” (1948 – 1950, 1951). Those documents that does not concern Sillamäe seek economic efficiency and high productivity for the East Estonian oil-shale territory. While the oil-shale-based uranium oxides were vital and crucial for the Soviet Union, the occupying state needed oil-shale deposits for heating and producing electricity, oil-shale gas, shale oil, oil-shale gasoline. Both the deposits formed a solid foundation for urban space planning in East Estonia.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Sultson, S. 2019, 88–89; Sultson, S. 2020a, 5–7.

<sup>40</sup> Sultson, S. 2019, 85–97; Sultson, S. 2020a, 7–11.

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SM Photo of Sillamäe aerial view 1945.

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### ***Biography***

Siim Sultson holds a PhD in urban planning history and architectural history. He has worked as a lecturer and an associate professor of Art History since 2000. His field of research and research interests are Estonian twentieth-century interwar, post-war architecture, urban planning, and urban space; living space on the background of Soviet interwar and post-war urban planning; German inter-war urban planning; and Stalinist urban ensembles in eastern Estonian cities: determination, typology, and potential as factors of the cities' spatial development.