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HELMİ ÜPRUS AND THE OLD TOWN OF TALLINN

The current paper focuses on the establishment of the protection zone in the old town of Tallinn. The leading researcher of the previous comprehensive work in the 1950s and 1960s was Helmi Üprus¹. The contribution of the prominent art historian in the international arena, as well as in the context of today's local national heritage, has not received the recognition it deserves. The role of Helmi Üprus, one of the most outstanding and versatile 20th century Estonian art historians, has been especially crucial in initiating several new research trends. One example is the complex study of the historical centre of Tallinn, which led to state protection of the old town in 1966.

Various authors have written on Üprus's contribution to protecting the Tallinn old town,² but the considerable volume of her research in urban construction requires a much more thorough introduction. The bibliography of her works compiled in 1991 contains a list of her sci-

Translated by Tiina Randviir.

¹ Helmi Üprus (1911–1978) studied at the University of Tartu (1930–1936), worked in the Estonian National Museum (1936–1947) and in the Art History Department of the Soviet Estonian Institute of History (1947–1950). From 1953 until her death, she was a researcher at the Restoration Workshop (later the State Restoration Board and State Design Institute of Cultural Monuments). She wrote papers on architecture, art and folk art and was one of the main authors of “Eesti arhitektuuri ajalugu” (1965) (Mart Eller, “Helmi Üprus kunstiteadlasena”, *Vana Tallinn VI (X)* (Tallinn: Estopol, 1996), 11–15).

² Leo Gens, “Vana Tallinn ja selle uurijad”, *Sirp ja Vasar*, 26 VIII 1966; Jevgeni Kaljundi, “ICOMOS-i peaassambleel Budapestis”, *Sirp ja Vasar*, 28 VII 1972; Marika Valk, *Helmi Üprus (1911–1978) – Eesti arhitektuuri, rahvakunsti ja kunstiajaloo uurijana*. Diploma work. Department of the History of the USSR at Tartu University (Tartu, 1984, manuscript at the Institute of History and Archaeology of Tartu University); Eller, “Helmi Üprus kunstiteadlasena”, 11–19; Dmitri Bruns, *Tallinna peaarhitekti mälestusi ja artikleid* (Tallinn: Estonian Museum of Architecture, 2007), 18–22; Riin Alatalu, “Vanalinnade kaitsetsoonid Eesti NSV-s. Linnasüdame säilitamine totaalkaitse meetodil”, *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi*, 18, 3–4 (2009), 79–97.

entific legacy.³ The list is quite long, testifying to Üprus's more than twenty years of dedication to protecting Tallinn's old town as an integral constructional whole. These research papers can mainly be found in the archives of the National Heritage Board,⁴ where the organising of Helmi Üprus's personal archive is almost finished⁵. The following overview concentrates on her research on urban construction and the published materials.

Although Üprus's research on urban construction mainly dealt with Tallinn, she was also keen on other Estonian historical towns.⁶ Kaur Alttoa remembered that when he investigated the Viljandi town centre as a young historian of architecture in the early 1970s, Üprus had a great interest in it.⁷ However, this was more than an attachment to the town where she spent her younger years. She, for example, stressed that for every historical town the main motif or leitmotif must be established, which is one of the significant criteria in evaluating the existing volume of buildings and the whole built environment. In addition to the distinguishing and dominating features in urban construction, a leitmotif should also include general tendencies that had influenced the relevant developments.⁸

³ The bibliography published on the occasion of Helmi Üprus's 80th birthday contains her published articles, manuscript material and personal papers in the archives (*Helmi Üprus. Bibliograafia*, koost Jevgeni Kaljundi ja Anne Lass (Tallinn: Instituut "Eesti Ehitismälestised", 1991)).

⁴ In the archive of the Tallinn Cultural Heritage Department, the research materials from before Tallinn old town was placed under protection have not been systematised. According to the Tallinn City Archives, they do not have any works compiled by Üprus. There are no research papers at the Museum of Architecture collections either. Materials about the decision to protect the old town exist in the personal archive no 27 of Dmitri Bruns.

⁵ Helmi Üprus's archive of 465 items is divided into sub-series: biographica (11 items), correspondence (9 items), collected work-related materials (239 items), conference materials and papers (17 items), manuscripts (169 items), publications and booklets (10 items), and photographs (10 items).

⁶ Helmi Üprus's interest in small Estonian towns is evident in various materials that she collected about them: Rakvere, Kuressaare, Haapsalu, Paldiski, Viljandi, Valga, Pärnu and Võru (the National Heritage Board's archives (henceforth MKA), the archive of Helmi Üprus, 181) and about Võru, Pärnu and Haapsalu (MKA, the archive of Helmi Üprus, 240). A more thorough study was published on the development of urban construction in Paide (Helmi Üprus, "XVIII–XIX sajandi ehitismälestised jutustavad Paidest ja maast tema umber", *Paide rajoonis* (Tartu: Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia kodu-uurimise komisjon, Eesti NSV Looduskaitse Selts, 1972), 150–164).

⁷ Interview with Kaur Alttoa 9 December 2010, the notes are in the possession of the author.

⁸ Kaur Alttoa mentioned Vabaduse Street in Valga as a leitmotif, in the late 19th century, it was quickly turned into a grand urban ensemble in the town that had become a railway junction (Kaur Alttoa, *Valga linn. Ettepanekud ehitismälestiste riikliku kaitse alla võtmiseks*. Kd. I. Tekst (KRPI, 1984, manuscript in MKA, A-1145), 19).



Fig. 1. Helmi Üprus with colleagues in Finland in 1961. Photo by Knut Drake from the Estonian Historical Archives, 5298-1-223-6.

Helmi Üprus was not directly involved in registering other Estonian historical towns in the list of national monuments in 1973, but her methodology worked out for Tallinn was certainly used there.

BACKGROUND TO PROTECTING HISTORICAL TOWNS

The value of historical towns was first appreciated in the mid-19th century, when nostalgia for the past formed a reaction to intensive urbanisation. The medieval town and the Gothic were glorified, for example, by A. W. N. Pugin, William Morris and John Ruskin, who criticised the

new towns of machines and factories. As the antipode of contemporary towns, Morris described a town of the future where the medieval idyll would reign. Ruskin, worried about the disappearing identity of towns, was keen on old urban districts and dark streets. He was certain that the modernisation of Paris would influence other historical cities of Europe.⁹

After WWI and its destructions more attention was paid to historical towns. One of the first restorers who expanded the heritage protection ideas to towns in the first half of the 20th century was the director of the School of Architecture in Rome, Gustavo Giovannoni. His ideas on scientific conservation later formed the foundation for the Athens Charter (1931)¹⁰. This was the first document to mention the need to protect historical sites. As a compromise at the time of futurist and functionalist planning ideals, Giovannoni presented a theory of respectful modernisation of historical sites, calling it the ‘thinning out of urban fabric’ (*diradamento edilizio*). This meant keeping heavy traffic out of urban centres, not establishing new streets, the conservation of valuable buildings and the demolition of less significant buildings. The document of the 4th Congress of Contemporary Architecture (CIAM), *La Lettre d’Athènes*, in 1933 recommended a respectful attitude towards historical monuments (both single objects and urban ensembles), ‘if they constitute excellent examples of past culture and if protection does not force people to live in unhealthy conditions’; any aesthetic assimilation of new architecture into historical buildings was categorically forbidden.¹¹

In the mid-20th century, the basis of the concepts of the restoration and conservation of monuments was the restoration theory of Cesare Brandi¹², the first director of the Central Institute of Restoration (*Istituto Centrale del Restauro*) established in Rome in 1939. According to Brandi, one aim of restoration was to recreate an artwork’s figurative entirety

⁹ Hans-Walther Krufft, *Geschichte der Architekturtheorie. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (München: C. H. Beck, 2004), 376–389; Jukka Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006), 180–181.

¹⁰ The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments (1931). http://www.icomos.org/athens_charter.html (accessed 26 January 2011).

¹¹ Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation*, 219–222, 284–285. CIAM’s decisions were later rewritten by Le Corbusier, who published them in 1943 under the title The Athens Charter.

¹² Cesare Brandi (1906–1988) was a professor of art history at the universities of Palermo and Rome, and the first director of the *Istituto Centrale del Restauro* (1939–1959); from 1948 he worked for UNESCO abroad. Brandi’s theory can be seen as an internationally acknowledged paradigm in the development of conservation policy, on which the Venice Charter’s principles also rely (*Ibidem*, 228, 237).

and potential unity, without producing artistic or historical forgery. Brandi thought that every addition should be clearly distinguishable close up, and not ruin the uniformity of the image from a distance.¹³ Although the protection of historical sites became more important after WWII, no relevant theory emerged. Still, Brandi's restoration theory was seen as a methodological foundation that could be used in all types of heritage.¹⁴

In the second half of the 20th century, heritage protection and restoration work was supervised by international organisations and established by legal documents. The Venice Charter (1964)¹⁵ stated that an architectural monument was not only a single object, but could also be a site with significant historical meaning. The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)¹⁶ operating under the auspices of UNESCO, based its work on the Charter. The concept of monuments had thus expanded, providing the foundation for the protection of historical towns.¹⁷

The legal acts passed in Soviet Estonia show that the Soviet Union felt compelled to follow the rest of the world in protecting cultural monuments. The only all-Soviet document on the post-war protection of historical towns was the regulation issued by the Soviet Architectural Committee in which Tallinn and Narva, together with 30 other Soviet towns, were enlisted in a special register; 'the protection of historical architectural ensembles and single heritage objects had to be considered in planning and restoring these towns'¹⁸. The early legislative foundation for

¹³ Cesare Brandi, *Theory of Restoration*, ed. by Giuseppe Basile (Firenze: Nardini, 2005), 47–59.

¹⁴ The current author has adapted Brandi's restoration policy to historical towns based on the policy's urban construction structure and planned spatial composition. The article concludes that an historical old town can be supplemented by new buildings if these rely on the principles of maintaining the integrity of the image (Lilian Hansar, "The Lacuna, an Empty Space in Urban Construction. Cesare Brandi's Restoration Theory in the Integral Preservation of Old Town Areas", *Koht ja paik / Place and Location IV*, ed. by Virve Sarapik (Tallinn: Estonian Literary Museum, Estonian Academy of Arts, Estonian Semiotics Association, 2008), 139–151).

¹⁵ The Venice Charter (International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites) was passed on 31. May 1964. http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.htm (accessed 25 January 2011).

¹⁶ ICOMOS was founded in 1964 (From the emergence of the concept of world heritage to the creation of ICOMOS. http://www.international.icomos.org/hist_eng.htm (accessed 25 January 2011)).

¹⁷ One of the earliest examples of protecting European towns is the Dutch Law of Monuments and Historical Buildings (1961); Malraux's law (1962) in France protected whole urban districts; the Civic Amenities Act in Great Britain in 1967 used the term conservation area; one of the first conservation areas was established in Birmingham (1975) (Peter J. Larkham, *Conservation and The City* (New York, London: Routledge, 1996), 42, 120).

¹⁸ Ernst Ederberg, "Narva vanalinna üleschitamise probleeme", *Eesti NSV Arhitektide Almanahh* (1947), 60–61.

the development of the Estonian heritage protection system was the 1948 regulation of the Soviet Council of Ministers on improving the protection of cultural monuments, which allowed special restoration workshops to be established in the Soviet republics (in Estonia in 1950).¹⁹

Although the regulation of the Council of Ministers of Soviet Estonia established the first conservation areas as early as 1947 (Toompea Hill in Tallinn and Old Narva),²⁰ the first definition of a conservation area was included in a regulation in 1949: '[---] complex cultural monuments with special research, historical or artistic significance can be declared conservation areas by a regulation of the Council of Ministers of the ESSR; these are protected on the basis of statutes issued by the government of the Estonian SSR for each conservation area'²¹. Despite great efforts made by Ernst Ederberg²², the head of the Department of Heritage at the Architecture Board, to save the ruins in Narva, the ruins were nevertheless demolished in the 1950s.²³

Having thoroughly researched the first general plans of other Estonian historical towns, I have concluded that the prevailing opinion on the post-war sustainable plans in historical town centres was inaccurate. Far more extensive changes in historical urban centres than in Tallinn and Narva were designed in Viljandi, Kuressaare, Rakvere and Paide, where the war destruction was not, in fact, so drastic. The wartime plans and plans of the 1950s were meant to replace historical urban centres with new buildings. As the plans were too ambitious, the keyword in the 1960s became reconstruction, which essentially meant gradual replacement of old buildings with new and bigger buildings.²⁴

In the 1960s, the protection of the historical environment had become a major issue in the international heritage protection movement, because the modernist utopia oriented towards the future was not acceptable to the heritage conservation ideology. The increasing innovation process

¹⁹ Helmi Üprus, "Tänapäeva teenistuses", *Sirp ja Vasar*, 30. IX 1960.

²⁰ *Eesti NSV Teataja*, nr 19, 25. VII 1949.

²¹ "ENSV Ministrite Nõukogu määrus Kultuurimälestiste kaitse parandamise abinõude kohta", *Eesti NSV Teataja*, nr 7, 28. II 1949.

²² Ernst Ederberg (1891-1973) was the head of the Heritage Conservation Department at the Board of Architecture in 1944-1950.

²³ According to Andres Toode, the Narva Executive Committee decided to demolish the ruins in its old town in 1953 (Andres Toode, "Südalinnast ääremaaks: ehitustegevus Narva vanalinna piirkonnas sõjajärgsest ajast kuni tänapäevani", *Narva Muuseumi toimetised* 9 (Narva, 2009), 177).

²⁴ Lilian Hansar, *Linnast muinsuskaitsealaks. Linnaehituslike struktuuride muutused Eesti väikelinnades 13. – 20. sajandini*. Dissertationes Academiae Artium Estoniae 4 (Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2010), 105-124.

in historical towns was thus one of the main arguments in the emerging protection movement. Urban innovation and general modernisation also took place in Soviet Estonia. The new Cultural Monuments' Protection Law of 1961²⁵ essentially repeated the definition of a conservation area in the regulation passed in 1949: the Council of Ministers of the ESSR could declare complex cultural monuments and their surrounding protection zones national heritage protection areas. The 1964 regulation on cultural monument protection also designated as architectural monuments ensembles and complexes with architectural-historical value.²⁶ Although the above-mentioned documents did not include the concept of the town, they can still be regarded as a legal basis for preparing the protection of the historical centre in Tallinn, which started in the 1960s.

Decision-making in Soviet society was often influenced by personal relationships, as proven by numerous interviews and memoirs. At the same time, we should remain critical of memoirs and the press, as ideological revaluations have inevitably changed people's recollections.²⁷

The background to the protection of Tallinn has been described in several interviews by Dmitri Bruns²⁸ who has been called the 'saviour of the old town'. He considered the protection of the old town in Tallinn to be his greatest achievement during the twenty years he worked as the chief architect.²⁹ The architect Rein Zobel³⁰ confirmed Bruns's support for the Tallinn protection zone and his essential role in getting this approved by the relevant organs of power.³¹ In his memoirs, Bruns described the proposals made by the young architect Paul Härmson in his research in the early 1960s on demolishing and renovating the centre of

²⁵ "Eesti NSV seadus Eesti Nõukogude Sotsialistliku Vabariigi kultuurimälestiste kaitse kohta", *Eesti NSV Ülemnõukogu Teataja*, nr 23, 15. VI 1961.

²⁶ "Eesti NSV Ministrite Nõukogu määrus Kultuurimälestiste kaitse korraldamise kohta Eesti NSV-s", *Eesti NSV määruste ja korralduste kogu*, nr 51 (250), 31. XII 1964.

²⁷ Epp Annuk, "Totalitarismi ja/või kolonialismi pained. Miks ja kuidas uurida nõukogude aega?", *Võim ja kultuur* (Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, 2003), 13–39.

²⁸ Dmitri Bruns worked as the chief architect of Tallinn in 1960–1980.

²⁹ Ants Juske, "Dmitri Bruns – terve peatükk Eesti arhitektuuriajaloo", *Eesti Päevaleht*, 19. I 2008; Anastassia Belitško-Popovitš, "Arhitekt, kes oskas päästa vanalinna", *Pealinn*, 12. V 2008; Ants Juske, "Dmitri Bruns – mees, kes päästis vanalinna", *Eesti Päevaleht*, 13. I 2009.

³⁰ Rein Zobel graduated from the Architecture Department of the Tallinn Polytechnic Institute in 1952, and worked in 1954–1972 at the Restoration Workshop and State Restoration Board. From 1972, he taught at the Estonian Academy of Arts, and is now Professor Emeritus.

³¹ Interview with Rein Zobel 31 January 2010, the notes are in the possession of the author.

the Tallinn old town³². These proposals evoked fierce protests and discussions in the press, inviting the public to debate the topic of the old town. However, as a result, it was possible to commission a new comprehensive study in 1964 from specialists. Bruns remembered that when he talked about protecting the old town in 1966, Helmi Üprus was rather sceptical, as she had earlier presented a similar idea to Harald Arman, the head of the Architectural Board, who considered establishing any protection zones totally unrealistic.³³

At the beginning of 1966, Üprus and Zobel, in cooperation with Rasmus Kangropool, the head of the Tallinn Inspection of Protecting Architectural Monuments (TAMKI)³⁴, began compiling the regulations on the protection zone of the old town. Due to previous research, the documents were quickly finished and accepted in various state institutions without major problems. Bruns recalled how Vaino Väljas, the Secretary General of the Tallinn City Council signed the documents and mentioned that he had never seen architects manage to compile something as clever.³⁵

It is now worth remembering that, in addition to comprehensive research, Helmi Üprus had published several relevant articles in the press long before the Tallinn old town was protected.³⁶ In 1960 Rasmus Kangropool wrote that Tallinn, whose old town was listed in the register of significant Soviet historical towns, quickly needed a protection zone and complex reconstruction plan in an area surrounded by a wall and green zones.³⁷ Thus the Soviet leaders must have been aware of the need to protect the Tallinn old town, which may have been one reason why the relevant documents were approved.

The articles published in the local cultural weekly *Sirp ja Vasar* [Hammer and Sickle] in the 1960s on the need to protect the old town were surprisingly free of ideology. This was especially true as far as Helmi Üprus was concerned, as she discussed the research on Tallinn

³² Härmsõn worked at the Research Institute of Construction and investigated the Tallinn old town at the end of the 1950s in connection with his dissertation, which he defended in 1964 (Paul Härmsõn, "Tallinna Vanalinna kui tsentri arendamise probleem", *Linnaehituse küsimusi Eesti NSV-s. Artiklite kogumik* (Tallinn: Eesti NSV Ministrite Nõukogu Riiklik Ehituse ja Arhitektuuri Komitee, 1963), 47–63).

³³ Bruns, *Tallinna peaarhitekti mälestusi ja artikleid*, 19–21.

³⁴ The Tallinn Inspection of Protecting Architectural Monuments (TAMKI) was founded in 1958. Between 1958 and 1998 it was headed by Rasmus Kangropool.

³⁵ Bruns, *Tallinna peaarhitekti mälestusi ja artikleid*, 19–21.

³⁶ Helmi Üprus, "Tallinn kui linn-muuseum", *Rahva Hääl*, 18. III 1955; Üprus, "Tänapäeva teenistuses"; Helmi Üprus, "Vana-Tallinna omapära", *Sirp ja Vasar*, 3. IX 1965.

³⁷ Rasmus Kangropool, "Vanalinna uuestisünd", *Sirp ja Vasar*, 23. IX 1960.

in various articles meant for the general reader.³⁸ They are enjoyably expressive, but at the same time highly professional in using precise professional terms and in being remarkably convincing. Her level of humanities, education, professional erudition and deep sophistication allowed her to avoid expressing her ideas in the era's typical hollow, pathetic manner. She was someone who was totally dedicated to serving high ideals and this for her meant the continuation of Estonian culture in the historically developed relationships with Europe.

In addition to an international background and legal foundation, a significant role in protecting Estonian old towns was played by local historians and architects, as well as by the administrators who supported them. Thinking along the lines of heritage protection was certainly enhanced by the educational level of the people working in the system, education largely acquired before the Soviet occupation.³⁹ In addition, the heritage protection movement was a form of opposition to the Soviet regime: it contained an undertone of concealed resistance, radiating the aura of people maintaining national values.

BIRTH OF METHODOLOGY FOR RESEARCHING THE OLD TOWN

The Restoration Workshop, established in 1950, was the first special institution to research architectural monuments, and to compile and implement restoration projects. Nearly all of the historians, architects and engineers who later influenced Estonian heritage conservation, worked there. Helmi Üprus was one of the leading researchers involved in the Workshop from 1953 on.⁴⁰ Although in the first decade of her working life she dedicated herself to valuable single objects in various Estonian towns,⁴¹ she soon actively supported the idea of turning Tallinn into a town-museum, and pointed out the importance of the ensemble principle in protecting architectural heritage – 'by determining whole protection

³⁸ Üprus, "Tallinn kui linn-museum"; Üprus, "Tänapäeva teenistuses"; Üprus, "Vana-Tallinna omapära"; Helmi Üprus, "Vanalinn tänapäeval", *Sirp ja Vasar*, 15. IX 1967, 22. IX 1967 and 29. IX 1967.

³⁹ In the 1930s, Üprus the art historian was influenced by S. Karling, A. Tuulse, F. Linnus (Eller, "Helmi Üprus kunstiteadlasena", 12–13).

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, 14.

⁴¹ E.g. the Town Hall and the Pharmacy in Tallinn, Herman Castle, Town Hall and the House of Peter the Great in Narva, the Town Hall in Tartu etc.

zones⁴². The initial idea of turning old Tallinn into a town-museum was to restore and reconstruct as exhibits only a few characteristic buildings, primarily more popular types of building and storehouses. However, the Restoration Workshop's specialists decided to postpone the plan to display individual buildings in order to carry out thorough research on residential architecture. Üprus explained that all previous treatments of residential architecture in Tallinn were limited to describing the most general features of just one type of residence (a wealthy merchant's house), which was not enough to understand the historical development of residential architecture. Acknowledging the earlier researchers of the buildings in Tallinn (W. Neumann, E. Nottbeck, E. Ederberg),⁴³ she stated that selecting only buildings of one type and era, disregarding connections with urban construction issues and ignoring natural, historical and social factors, was wrong.⁴⁴

Between 1958 and 1961, only Helmi Üprus and the architect Teddy Böckler dealt with the residential architecture in the old town of Tallinn at the Restoration Workshop. Although the work was based on thematic plans, the reports show that it was not possible to carry out the research work. Both Üprus and Böckler had the additional task of supervising the work on objects that were being restored or demolished. Within three years more than 30 registered immovable properties were investigated, 159 reports on buildings were compiled and 500 carved stones were documented. Literature on residential architecture was studied, as were sources in Estonian archives and architectural terminology was elaborated. In 1961 Üprus admitted that it was necessary to continue researching the buildings and that the fragmentarily collected materials should be systematised.⁴⁵

The first real step towards protecting the old town was the reconstruction project of the Tallinn city centre, which was started in the early 1960s. Riin Alatalu⁴⁶ has examined the documents and organisational

⁴² Üprus, "Tallinn kui linn-muuseum".

⁴³ See e.g. Eugen von Nottbeck, Wilhelm Neumann, *Geschichte und Denkmäler der Stadt Reval II* (Reval: Franz Kluge, 1904), Voldemar Vaga, "Tallinna keskaegne elamu", *Eesti NSV ajaloo küsimusi I*. Tartu Riikliku Ülikooli toimetised 87 (Tartu, 1960), 41–88.

⁴⁴ Helmi Üprus, *Elamuarhitektuuri uurimistööde temaatilised plaanid 1958. a. ja 1959. a. ja 1958. a. teostatud tööde aruanne* TRT, 1959, manuscript in MKA, P-170); Helmi Üprus, *Vana Tallinna elamuarhitektuuri uurimistöö aruanne ja ettepanekud tööde jätkamiseks 1961. aastal* (TRT, 1961, manuscript in MKA, P-276).

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*. A thorough inventory of the Tallinn old town was carried out in 1965–1966 (see below).

⁴⁶ Alatalu, "Vanalinnade kaitsetsoonid Eesti NSV-s", 86–89.

work of the undertaking, which lasted many years and involved many research and design organisations. In 1964, the Restoration Workshop was commissioned to establish the architectural and urban values of the Tallinn old town, and to propose specific recommendations for reconstructing the old town. The architect Rein Zobel was appointed the head of the project, assisted by the senior researcher Helmi Üprus, the architect Teddy Böckler and the chief engineer Heino Uuetalu.⁴⁷ The research work consisted of several stages. First, a programme was put together,⁴⁸ and checked through an experimental project in a district of the old town (an area inside Rataskaevu, Pikk jalg and Lühike jalg streets).⁴⁹ In 1965–1966 an inventory of all the buildings in the old town, in terms of architectural history, was compiled.⁵⁰ The conclusions of this work formed the basis for documents for protecting the old town. It seems quite amazing today that it was possible to produce an innovative methodological basis for researching and protecting the historical environment in the closed Soviet society.

The methodology for researching the Tallinn old town was a collective effort of the Restoration Workshop, where Zobel dealt with town plans and urban structures, and Üprus compiled the inventory of buildings.⁵¹ Urban construction was not a favourite topic of architectural historians in Estonia and in Europe – ‘the time was very young’, as Zobel said.⁵² It has been assumed that the innovative methodological approach was inspired by relevant foreign literature, although the newspaper clippings in Üprus’s personal archive mainly reflect only the planning and renovating of German towns.⁵³ The list of Üprus’s books handed over to the National Heritage Board⁵⁴ contains works on the history of urban con-

⁴⁷ “TRT Restnõukogu koosoleku protokoll nr 14, 30. XI 1959”, *Teaduslik Restaureerimise Töökoda. Restaureerimise Nõukogu koosoleku protokollid 01.10.1956–30.11.1959* (manuscript in MKA, the materials are not registered or paginated).

⁴⁸ The programme was adjusted and supplemented in 1964–1966 (Helmi Üprus, *Tallinna vanalinna hoonestuse arhitektuurajaloolise inventeerimise aruanne*. Kõide VII (TRT, 1966/67, manuscript in MKA, the archive of Helmi Üprus, item 40), 1.

⁴⁹ *Eksperimentaalprojekti kaustad* (manuscripts in MKA, P-983 to P-990).

⁵⁰ *Inventeerimise kaustad* (manuscripts in MKA, P-854 to P-906).

⁵¹ Rein Zobel recalled that using the term structure in analysing urban construction was inspired by the philosophy lectures by Lembit Valt (Interview with Rein Zobel 31 January 2010, the notes are in the possession of the author).

⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵³ Helmi Üprus’s archive contains newspaper clippings in German and French, e.g. *Berliner Zeitung* (1968–1974), and *Les Lettres françaises Arts, Sciences, Spectacles* (1964–1967) (MKA, the archive of Helmi Üprus, item 348 and item 352).

⁵⁴ The Heritage Board library has a list of Üprus’s books (a total of 270 books).

struction, but the publications tackling the protection of historical towns only date from the 1970s, when the Tallinn old town was already under protection. We can thus assume that the authors of the research methodology were Estonian historians and architects themselves,⁵⁵ which is confirmed by Rein Zobel and Fredi Tomps.⁵⁶

The programme as methodological instructions for researching the Tallinn old town, compiled in 1964, played a significant role in the history of protecting Estonian historical towns. It emphasised the scientific approach, which meant thorough research on the parts that formed the old town as a whole, and providing a methodological system for it. The programme focused on the urban whole and used the terms structure and element. The urban construction as a whole consisted of three parts: Toompea Hill, the lower town and the entrenchment zone. Zobel explained that the structures of the first two parts, as built-up areas, were different, but still obeyed the general rule in which the elements of both structures were urban quarters determined by the historical network of streets. Elements of each quarter, in turn, were historical plots of land, and their elements were individual buildings. This was therefore a system of 'self-structural' elements, where all elements possessed a structure on a different level. In addition to urban structures, social and functional structures were differentiated.⁵⁷

In the course of subsequent research, the methodology was elaborated further and the terminology changed. For example, the entire old town was seen as a whole, defined by the network of streets, the structure of quarters and immovable properties, the layout and bulk of buildings and the historically valuable architecture.⁵⁸ This definition of an urban

⁵⁵ Leo Gens called the Restoration Workshop headed by Üprus and Villem Raam a highly effective collective of professionals and a centre for training researchers. Gens pointed out that a modern research methodology was created in a short time, and significant discoveries were made in the Estonian history of architecture, as fieldworks was cultivated along with archive work. This made it possible to present a scientifically proven analysis (Leo Gens, "Vana Tallinn ja selle uurijad", *Sirp ja Vasar*, 26. VIII 1966).

⁵⁶ According to Zobel, people involved in preparations for establishing the protection zone in the Tallinn old town, visited Lithuania to learn from their experience, but as the materials were in Lithuanian, they could not be used (interview with Rein Zobel, 31. January 2010, the notes are in the possession of the author). Tomps remembers discussing experiences with the relevant Soviet specialists and travelling abroad later to gather material (interview with Fredi Tomps, 20 June 2009, the notes are in the possession of the author).

⁵⁷ Rein Zobel, "Peasuunaks regenereerimine. Tallinna vanalinna osast linna generaalplaanis", *Ehitus ja Arhitektuur*, 3 (1969), 68–71.

⁵⁸ Helmi Üprus, "Täpsustatud lähteandmed Tallinna vanalinna rekonstrueerimiseks", *Eesti arhitektuur. Artiklite kogumik* (Tallinn: Valgus, 1969), 162.

whole based on different sub-structures is also used in today's legal acts that regulate the protection of old towns.

Rein Zobel recalled that, in using the term structure in analysing urban construction, he was inspired by the philosophy lectures of Lembit Valt.⁵⁹ These emphasised structuralism, which focused on the patterns in the elements forming the structure of the researched objects, and the links between them.⁶⁰ Structuralism, which spread in the mid-20th century, was characterised by an aspiration for a universal scientific approach and the production of models that would help to understand phenomena. Structuralism in town planning was expressed in economic and functional optimisation, designed and controlled by the central powers. This was used from the 1950s on in Europe and in Estonia.⁶¹ Structuralism is tightly connected with semiotics. The research method of the latter is structural analysis that relies on the fact that the researched object is a whole, although not an automatic sum of the parts of the whole: each element is only realised in relation to another, and to the entire structural whole.⁶² Structure is therefore always a system, but at the same time it is dynamic: the changing elements that form the whole also alter the whole. Thus the Tallinn research methodology viewed urban structures as a changing system of self-structural elements.

To depart from the main topic for a moment, Helmi Üprus also used the concept of structure to figuratively characterise Rome, a city where different historical eras have blended into one organic whole. 'This mixture has produced a peculiar structure without a structure, where the roots, stems, tops, blooms and fruits of cultural plants of different centuries exist together at the same time, respecting one another, offering themselves to new shoots, allowing themselves to be suffocated to give room for the new, or live on as ruins alongside the new.'⁶³

A significant concept that Helmi Üprus explained was the peculiarity and milieu of the old town. Essential aspects of the development of this peculiarity were natural factors, particularly Toompea Hill, which is above sea level, and the bay suitable for harbours. Another aspect

⁵⁹ Interview with Rein Zobel on 31 January 2010, the notes are in the possession of the author.

⁶⁰ Andrus Org, "Ferdinand de Saussure, strukturalism ja semiootika", *20. sajandi mõttevoolud* (Tallinn–Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2009), 652.

⁶¹ Jussi S. Jauhiainen, *Linnageograafia. Linnad ja linnaurimus modernismist postmodernismini*. Eesti Kunstiakadeemia toimetised 4 (Tallinn, 2005), 17, 93–94, 116, 131.

⁶² Juri Lotman, *Kultuurisemiootika. Tekst – kirjandus – kultuur* (Tallinn: Olion, 2006), 29.

⁶³ Helmi Üprus, *Päikesemängud* (Tallinn: Kunst, 1976), 46.

was the historical building material, limestone. However, Üprus also emphasised that a town never consisted of just styles, constructions of buildings, the provision of public services and amenities, transportation etc, but also of the aesthetic side, the artistic atmosphere and mood. Üprus wrote about the urban milieu as early as the 1960s, and she referred to this milieu as a living accumulation of architectural history. In order to maintain the milieu, Üprus criticised the practice of separating individual objects from the context and the historically evolved situation. She pointed out that St Nicholas Church stood in solitary splendour in a district that remained empty after the destruction of WWII. There was no historical milieu around it as there was in the impressive surroundings of the Holy Ghost Church. Üprus thus found that no matter which way single architectural monuments were displayed, it did not affect the town's singularity as much as maintaining structural development stages. A town acquired its individual appearance depending on how much each stage had left its traces on urban construction. Üprus was convinced that all stages must be researched and respected – this was the only way to understand the peculiarities of Tallinn as a complicated organism.⁶⁴

The constantly supplemented methodology formed the foundation for the subsequent research work. The inventory of the Tallinn old town carried out in 1965–1966⁶⁵ used methodology and a questionnaire which was based on immovable property as the unit shaping the structure and buildings of the old town. The idea was to examine equally all eras and types of buildings. The inventory contained 442 immovable properties and 1277 buildings. In addition to architectural-historical details, the questionnaire containing 73 queries consisted of dates, style, evaluation from the perspective of architectural history etc. Various sub-topics were also researched. Most important among them were the social and functional structure as the main factors in urban development, which had influenced the building structure and created various building types.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Üprus, “Vana-Tallinna omapära”.

⁶⁵ Üprus provided an overview of the compiling of the inventory in the relevant report (Helmi Üprus, *Tallinna vanalinna hoonestuse arhitektuurajaloolise inventeerimise aruanne*. Kõide VII (TRT, 1966/67, MKA, the archive of Helmi Üprus, item 40) and in three issues of the weekly *Sirp ja Vasar* (Üprus, “Vanalinn tänapäeval”).

⁶⁶ Üprus, “Vanalinn tänapäeval”.

Helmi Üprus described the inventory of the old town as a trip of discoveries,⁶⁷ because this was the first thorough examination of the complex of buildings in the Tallinn old town. This material is still used today.

PROTECTING OLD TALLINN

On 2 August 1966 the old town of Tallinn was placed under state protection: a protection zone and a constitution were established.⁶⁸ The aim was to 'maintain the character and originality of the old town as a historically developed whole, as well as all the buildings in it, with their architectural and historical-cultural values and the surrounding territorial planning, network of streets and topographical peculiarities, plus to gradually improve the inhabitants' working and living conditions and make the existing cultural values more accessible for local people and tourists'⁶⁹. This one sentence summarises the conclusions reached after about ten years of research work.

After the Tallinn old town was placed under protection, Üprus wrote a series of summarising articles, where she mentioned that the position of the historical centre was more secure than ever before, because the long-germinating idea had finally been realised. Üprus wrote that the new protection zone was a fact which the urban constructors, architects, engineers and all the inhabitants had to take into consideration. 'Legal weights has been placed on the scales to protect aspects of heritage conservation.'⁷⁰

Compiling subsequent reconstruction projects for the old town was now much easier for the heritage conservationists. On the basis of the above-mentioned inventory, the foundation for working out the principles of reconstructing the town centre was established. More important principles of preserving the old town included: the principle of spatial regeneration (reconstruction must occur on immovable properties), the architectural inverse principle (the usage of a building should be deter-

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ "Eesti NSV Ministrite Nõukogu määrus nr 256 Tallinna vanalinna riikliku kaitsetsooni loomise kohta", *Eesti NSV Ülemnõukogu ja Valitsuse Teataja*, nr 37, 2. VIII 1966.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁰ Üprus, "Vanalinn tänapäeval".

mined by architecture or location), and the principle of equality of styles.⁷¹ One essential conclusion was that despite its age and the surviving medieval structure, the old town had always kept up with the times.⁷²

The general keyword in research work and projects was regeneration, which was interpreted as a method of revivifying an historical building, a city centre or an urban district, uniting elements of restoration, reconstruction and repair. The regeneration method made it possible to adjust the architectural heritage to contemporary demands by preserving and restoring architectural and historical values.⁷³

Regeneration thus constituted quite a liberal approach to the historical environment, a fact which is reflected in the writings of Helmi Üprus and Rein Zobel. They stressed that Tallinn had always been a town that was able to creatively redesign itself, where all the building periods and styles, including the contemporary, had a right to exist. The aim of the regeneration project was not to preserve the old town as a museum, but to adapt it to suit modern functions of life.⁷⁴

After Tallinn, the idea of regeneration spread all over the Soviet Union. In 1969 a special meeting took place in Moscow to try to establish opportunities to preserve historical town centres.⁷⁵ The heritage conservation and protection zones in old towns in Soviet Estonia attracted international attention as well. For example, Üprus introduced the Tallinn old town protection zone in 1971 at a meeting of a heritage conservation society in West Germany. A proposal was made to protect the entire historical centre of Lübeck in a manner similar to that in Tallinn. Üprus's report on researching the buildings in the old town was well received by the meeting. The following aspects were especially appreciated: a comprehensive inventory of the buildings as the foundation of the regeneration plan, treating the old town as a whole, emphasising the importance of social structure and the structure of the old town (not individual monuments), a scientific approach to spatial reserves in the building volume, planning architecture-based functional zones, and the principles of re-

⁷¹ Dealing with the old town as a whole, and inspecting and reconstructing buildings was also possible because there was no private property in the Soviet Union.

⁷² Zobel, "Peasuunaks regenereerimine", 68–71.

⁷³ Dmitri Bruns, *Tallinna vanalinna regenereerimisalane tegevus aastail 1960–1980* (Tallinn, 1997, Museum of Estonian Architecture, f 24, n 2, s 8), 25.

⁷⁴ Zobel, "Peasuunaks regenereerimine", 68–71; Üprus, "Vanalinn tänapäeval".

⁷⁵ For example, as a joint decision of the Soviet Lithuanian Ministry of Culture and the Sate Construction Committee, 67 historical town centres were deemed worthy of preserving (Fredri Tomps, "Arhitektuurimälestiste kaitsest Eesti NSV-s", *Ehitus ja Arhitektuur*, 3 (1970), 16).

constructing urban districts as complexes.⁷⁶ Helmi Üprus also introduced the results of her work at various other conferences, both at home and abroad.⁷⁷ Her research has been published in several countries.⁷⁸

In one of her last articles on Tallinn⁷⁹, Üprus raised various significant issues. The protection of wooden buildings in culturally and environmentally valuable areas today has eliminated worries about their disappearance, although the relationship between old and new architecture is still topical. Üprus noted that new architecture should not damage the structural and aesthetic values of the old. She presented a fascinating discussion about buildings as social goods, in which she stated that the 'architecture-historical and aesthetic coefficient'⁸⁰ placed an old building on a different level from goods. Üprus believed that it was possible that the architecture of the past and the architectural landscape could be commercialised. From an art historian's point of view, she dealt at length with the shortage of researchers of architecture and the lack of relevant research institution, also mentioning a need for education in heritage conservation. She emphasised that the task of protecting and redesigning historical towns must be taken very seriously, and that it was by no means easier than creating new ones. This, however, would require an excellent knowledge of heritage, and she finished her article with the example of Tuscany, where 'the immortal masters created the new through knowing the old'.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Helmi Üprus, "Külas SFV ja Taani restauraatoritel", *Ehitus ja Arhitektuur*, 1 (1974), 28–35. Summarising the decade-long old town research, Üprus stressed the importance of social, functional and natural factors in Tallinn's development (Helmi Üprus, "Sotsiaalsete, funktsionaalsete ja looduslike iseärasuste osatähtsus Tallinna vanalinna kujunemisel", *Ehitus ja Arhitektuur*, 1 (1974), 13–22).

⁷⁷ E.g. at the Baltic art historians' conference in Tallinn (1976), Budapest (1973) (Eller, "Helmi Üprus kunstiteadlasena", 19). Üprus's papers and conference materials are in her archive (MKA, the archive of Helmi Üprus, items 260–275).

⁷⁸ Helmi Üprus, "Zur Regenerierung der Altstadt Tallinn/Reval", *Deutsche Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, 29, 2 (1971), 104–120; Helmi Üprus, "The old Town of Tallinn and its Future", *Monumentum* 8 (Leuven-Paris: ICOMOS, 1972), 71–97; Helmi Üprus, "Architektur der Altstadt Tallinns und ihre Abhängigkeit von der mittelalterlichen sozialen Struktur", *Hansische Studien 3. Bürgertum. Handelskapital. Städtebünde* (Weimar: Böhlau Nachfolger, 1975), 252–264; Helmi Üprus, "Das Wohnhaus in Tallinn vor 1500", *Häuser und Höfe der handeltreibenden Bevölkerung im Ostseegebiet und im Norden vor 1500. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Soziologie des Wohnens. Acta Visbyensia* 5 (Visby: Museum Gotlands Forsnal, 1976), 141–164.

⁷⁹ Helmi Üprus, "Ajalooliste linnade ja ansamblite kompleksse uurimist", *Sirp ja Vasar*, 24. IX 1976.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

CONCLUSIONS

The most significant result of the comprehensive research work – where Helmi Üprus was a leading light – before the Tallinn old town was placed under protection, was the new methodological approach which produced a qualitative change in how Estonian towns were investigated and valued. For the first time, attention was paid to the social, functional and natural factors which influenced the development of an historical city centre as a whole. The inventory of all the buildings led to the conclusion that the layers of every architectural era needed to be preserved; half a century ago that approach was novel. Another significant development was the introduction of several new terms of urban construction. The concepts of a whole, structure and element are still used in the terminology concerning the protection of old towns.

The above-mentioned keywords point out the essential sources related to the protection of Estonian old towns, i.e. the extremely thorough research work by Helmi Üprus. This material is still topical today and needs to be further examined. The more so as today's legal documents related to protecting old towns are not based on comprehensive research and methodological clarity. The contextual efficiency and in-depth approach at the time when the new methodology was worked out have been replaced by rigid rules and regulations.

In the early stages of the new research methodology, the focus was on systemic examination of historical materials, whereas later when conclusions were drawn, we increasingly perceive Helmi Üprus's emotional attitude towards the old town. She constantly described the old town by using such terms as singularity and milieu. Üprus thus saw the forever changing Tallinn as a living organism, where in addition to buildings, its atmosphere and individuality were being shaped by its historical development.

Helmi Üprus as an art historian had a remarkable ability to tackle individual issues that required detailed investigation, to make generalisations and to connect them to a wider context. At the same time, her texts are poetic in a way which helps people to better understand the value of an old town. One of my favourite texts describes tranquil inner courtyards, which Üprus considered refuges where people could be on

their own and relax, and that offered an intimate view from a window, in order to 'provide an essential moment of doing nothing'⁸².

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KOKKUVÕTE: **Helmi Üprus ja Tallinna vanalinn**

Artiklis keskendutakse Tallinna vanalinna kaitsetsooni loomisele, millele eelnenud mahuka uurimistöo juhtivaks teadlaseks oli 1950.–1960. aastatel Helmi Üprus. Juba 1955. aastal kritiseeris H. Üprus kavatsust kujundada Tallinnast vaid üksikobjekte eksponeeriv linn-muuseum, juhtides tähelepanu sellele, et vanalinna arhitektuuripärandi kaitsmisel on oluline ansambelilise printsiipi. 1960. aastate alguses alustatud Tallinna kesklinna regenereerimisprojekt oli esimeseks reaalseks sammuks vanalinna kui terviku kaitsmise ettevalmistamisel. Teadusliku restaureerimise töökojale tehti ülesandeks välja selgitada vanalinna linnaehituslikud ja arhitektuurilised väärtused ning esitada ettepanekud regenereerimiseks. 1965.–1966. aastal viidi H. Üpruse juhtimisel läbi kogu vanalinna hoonestuse arhitektuuriajalooline inventeerimine ja linnaehituslik analüüs, mis oli aluseks Tallinna vanalinna riikliku kaitse alla võtmisel 1966. aastal.

Eestis ajalooliste linnade kaitse ajaloos on oluline tähtsus Tallinna vanalinna uurimiseks koostatud metoodilisel juhendil. Selles rõhutatud teaduslik lähenemine tähendas vanalinna kui tervikut moodustavate osade põhjalikku uurimist ning selleks vajaliku metoodilise süsteemi koostamist. Uurimismetoodikas määratleti linnaehituslik tervik ning võeti kasutusele struktuuri ja elemendi mõisted. Lisaks linnaehituslikele struktuuridele eristati sotsiaalseid ja funktsionaalseid struktuure. Selline, erinevatele alastruktuuridele tuginev linnaehitusliku terviku

⁸² Üprus, "Sotsiaalsete, funktsionaalsete ja looduslike iseärasuste osatähtsus Tallinna vanalinna kujunemisel", 22.

käsitlus on kasutusel ka tänastes vanalinnade kaitset reguleerivates seadusandlikes aktides.

H. Üprus on kajastanud Tallinna uurimistöid mitmetes avalikkusele suunatud kirjutistes. Neis on nauditav väljendusrikas, aga samas erialasele professionaalsusele toetuv täpne sõnakasutus ning lugejat kaasa haarav sisendusjõud. Kui uurimistöde alguses oli esiplaanil ajaloolise materjali süsteemne uurimine, siis järelduste tegemisel on järjest enam tunda H. Üpruse emotsionaalset suhet vanalinnaga. Tema tähelepanu keskmesse kerkisid vanalinna iseloomustavad mõisted nagu omapära ja miljö. Nii nägi H. Üprus ajas muutuvat Tallinna elava organismina, mille atmosfääri ja individuaalsust kujundab lisaks hoonetele selle ajalooline areng.

H. Üpruse juhtimisel koostatud põhjalikud linnaehituslikud uurimistööd ei ole tänaseni kaotanud oma aktuaalsust ning vajavad kindlasti põhjalikumat tundmaõppimist. Seda enam, et tegemist oli teadlasega, kes oli end täielikult pühendanud aate teenimisele ja aade tähendas H. Üprusele Eesti kultuuri jätkumist ajalooliselt kujunenud sidemetes Euroopaga.