

Tallinn University of Technology
School of Economics and Public Administration
Department of Public Economy, Chair of Sociology

KredEx

**Residents' assessments on the changes of residential environment.
A case study.**

INTERREG III B 'Baltic Energy Efficiency Network for the Building Stock'

Katrin Paadam, PhD
Liis Ojamäe, MA

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Introduction and Methodology

The aim of the current research project is to analyse residents' assessments on the renovation works of their block of flats at 171 Paldiski Rd. in 2007 as well as the changes of the quality of their residential environment.

The study has been conducted in two phases:

(1) quantitative survey focusing on residents' assessments on the decision-making processes concerning the flat owners' association in general and within the framework of the current renovation, in particular; on financing mechanism and individual investment capacity; quality of the enacted works as well as improvement of specific aspects of their residence; on individual residents' housing mobility intentions;

(2) qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with a selected group of residents with a focus on their perceptions of the physically transformed quality of their residential environment incorporating the spatial scales of flats, the block and neighbourhood; evaluation of the procedures taken before and during the renovation works and project management; satisfaction with the results of the renovation works on a comparative basis encompassing their earlier distinct residential experiences as well as in the current neighbourhood and block.

I Quantitative survey analysis¹

The field work for the quantitative study has been carried out during the period of 15-20 November 2007 in the evenings (working days) and daytime (weekend) by 9 students of Economics, Tallinn University of Technology (TUT). The students were instructed and trained before the field work and they reported about their activity during the survey period to the TUT research group. The students' performance of assignment has been also randomly checked.

The residents of the block of originally 60 flats at 171 Paldiski Rd. were addressed a questionnaire of 40 questions with 165 indicators. It appeared that currently there are 59 flats as a consequence of rebuilding of two adjacent flats into one and owned by one household. Hence, the 48 successfully accessed residents (initially 49 but 1 was excluded from the analysis for insufficiently filled questionnaire) make 81 per cent of the total number of households in the block (see Table 1.1 below). The rest of the households either rejected the request to participate in the survey or were not accessible for their absence during the survey period.

Table 1.1 Quantitative survey sample

Flats / households living in the block	59	100%
Households accessed during the quantitative survey	49	83%
Questionnaires included into the analysis	48	81%

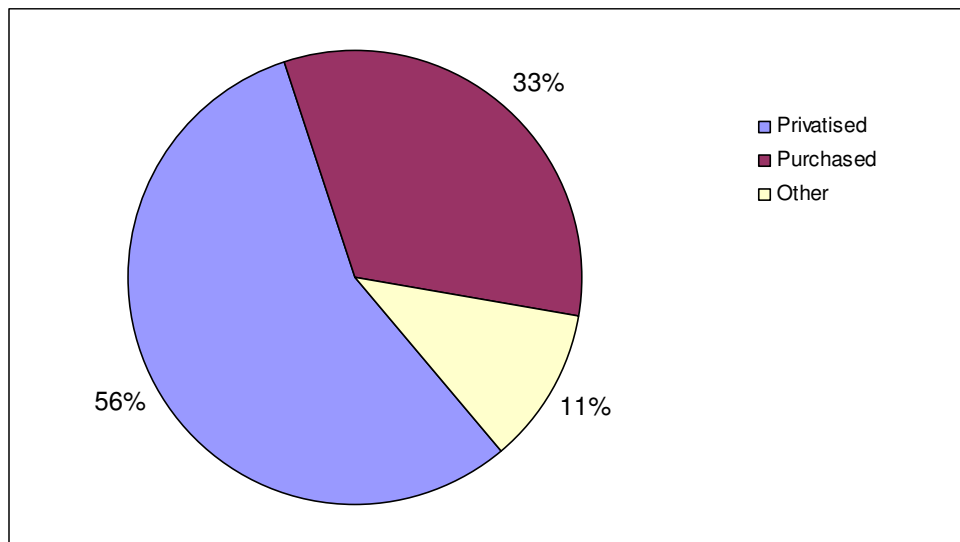
As for the sample, it needs a special comment concerning the size, which is considered to be optimal in terms of the current case study focusing on a particular block. However, the results of the quantitative analysis of the collected data have to be treated with certain reservation towards their statistical relevance in classical terms. Given the relatively small number of flats in the block and subsequent limitations of the quantitative analysis, the following qualitative analysis enables deeper insights into the topic and coming to an understanding of the processes and behaviour patterns in focus.

¹ Data analysis: SPSS 11.0

1.1 Socio-economic background²

The survey involved 60 per cent of female respondents and 40 per cent of male respondents. The majority of the respondents were flat owners (90%; 10% tenants). Over half of the current residents have privatized their flats in the course of the ownership reform (56%), a third have purchased flats at the market (33%) and 11 per cent of the residents have acquired their housing property by various ways such as by inheritance, gift or other (see Figure 1.1).

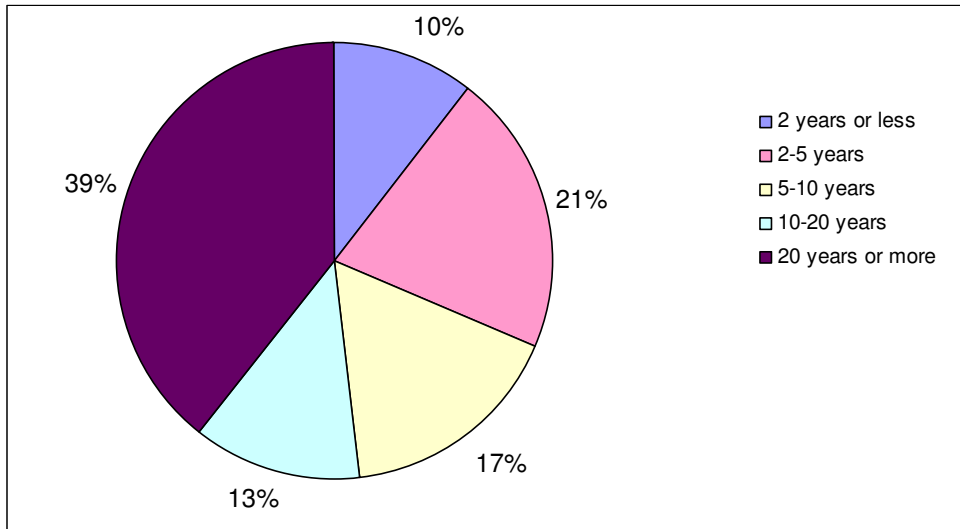
Figure 1.1 Ways of housing property acquisition



A significant number of people have been living in their current flats more than 20 years and some from the 1977 when the block had been constructed. Altogether half of the respondents may be qualified as long-term residents with the shortest period of stay of no less than 10 years. The ratio of tenants is as expected larger among the short-term residents (see Figure 1.2).

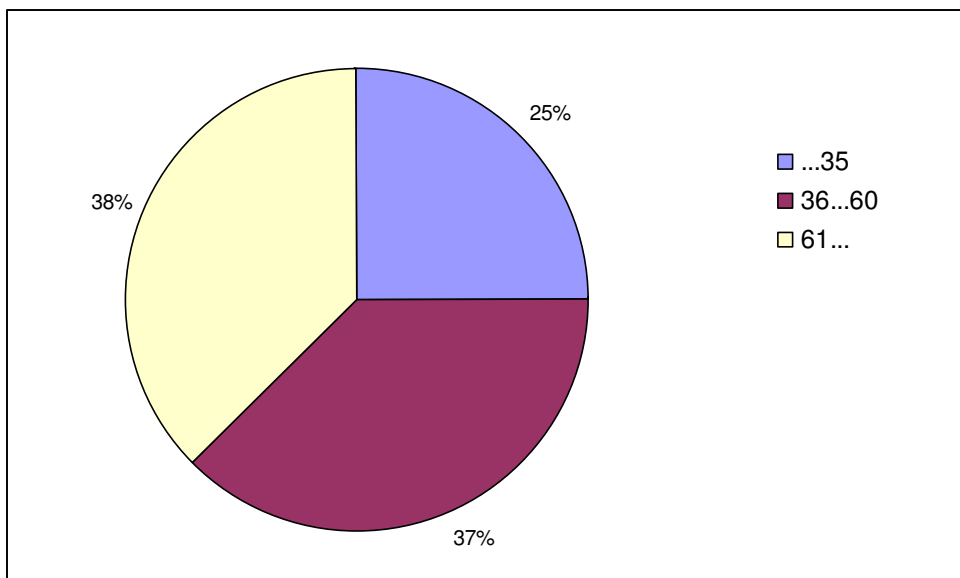
² Data only on residents included in the survey

Figure 1.2 Duration of living in the flat



A considerable share of respondents belong to older age group of those over 60 and almost two thirds are in active working age, whereas only one fourth is made up by younger residents (see Figure 1.3). Age distribution is significant in terms of the vulnerability of particular groups as to their investment capacity into the sustainability of their property, which include 25 percent of households with at least one retired (non-working) person; altogether households of singles make 27 percent of the total. Families with under-aged children make only 17 per cent.

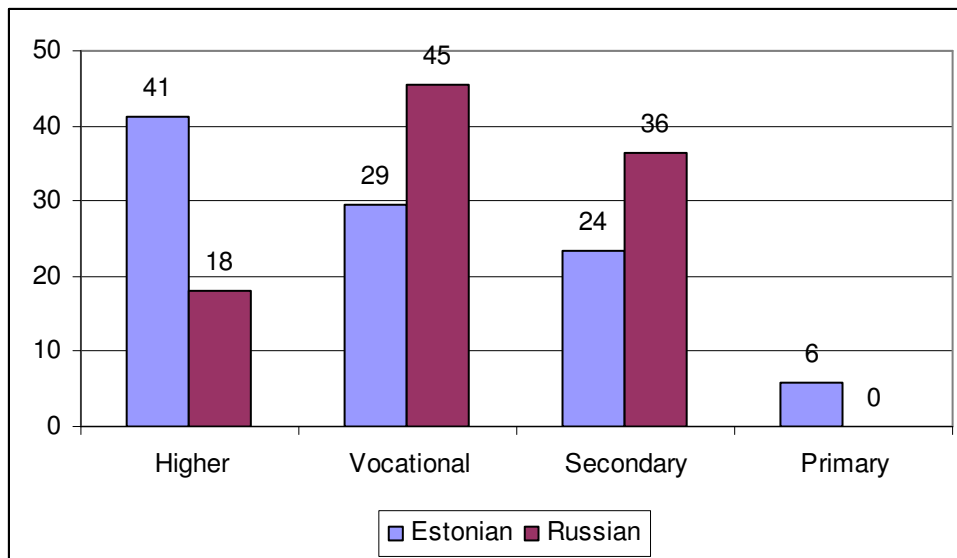
Figure 1.3 Distribution of age groups (years)



One third of the respondents were Russian-speaking. However, relying on the subjective estimations apparent in later interviews the share of the Russian-speaking residents is bigger in the block.

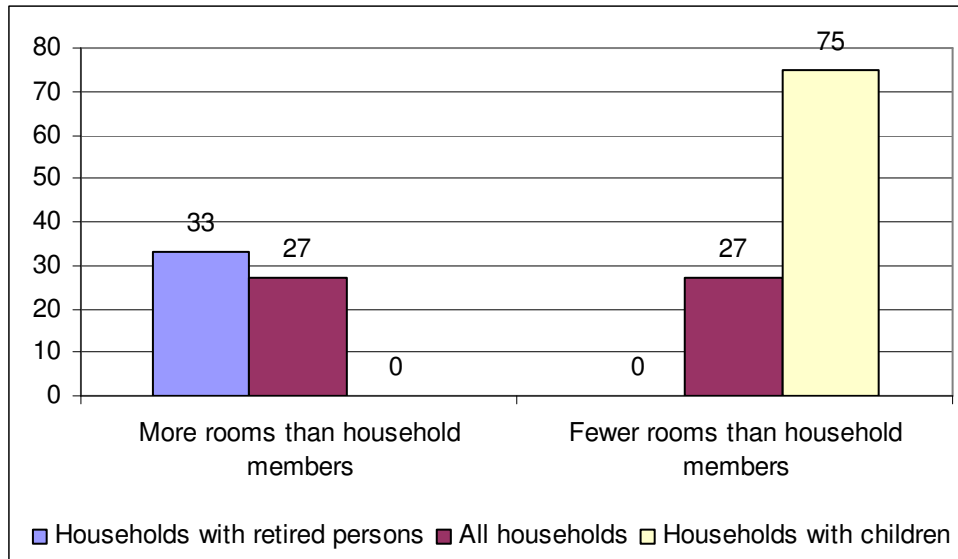
The educational level of the respondents represents rather the typical picture characteristic of Estonia with greater share of Estonian-speaking population amongst those with higher education. In view of the transforming relations in the housing field and residents' expected participation in these changes their education and language proficiency as sources for knowledgeability are of utmost importance (see Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4 Education level in language groups



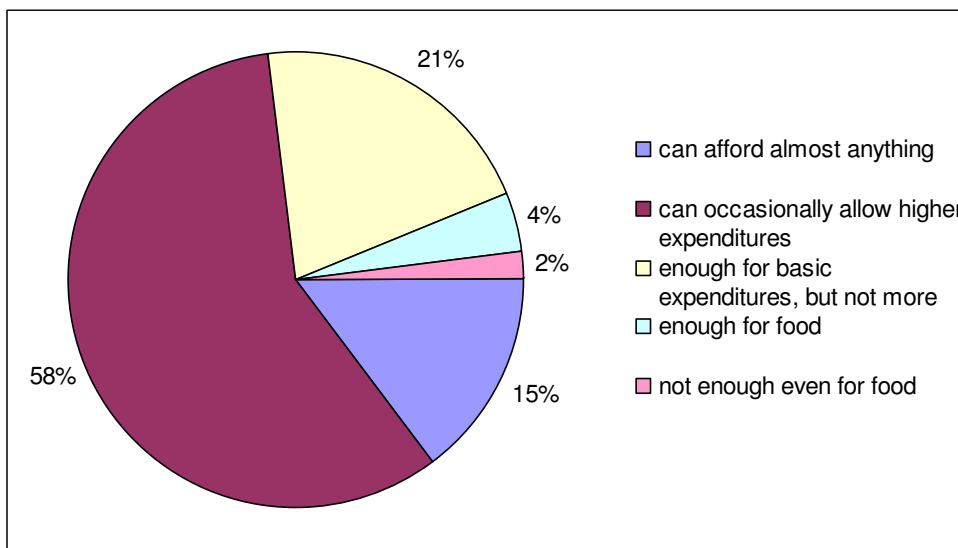
The immediate living conditions vary among the respondents' households in terms of space at their disposal as well as in relation to expenses. The distribution of families in flats speaks of a post-parental period for the older residents as there is relatively more space at their disposal – apparently after the leave of their adult children. In particular, for people out of work force, the spare space might be exhaustive of their economic resources. At the same time, households with children have more scarce conditions with more members than the availability of rooms (see Figure 1.5).

Figure 1.5 Space at the disposal of households



According to the respondents self-estimations the majority of households manages their basic expenditures for housing, food and clothing as well as occasionally on housing redecoration, travelling etc. Slightly over one fourth has to calculate their expenditures carefully and 3 people report on seriously troubled economic situation (see Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6 Self-estimation of household's economic well-being



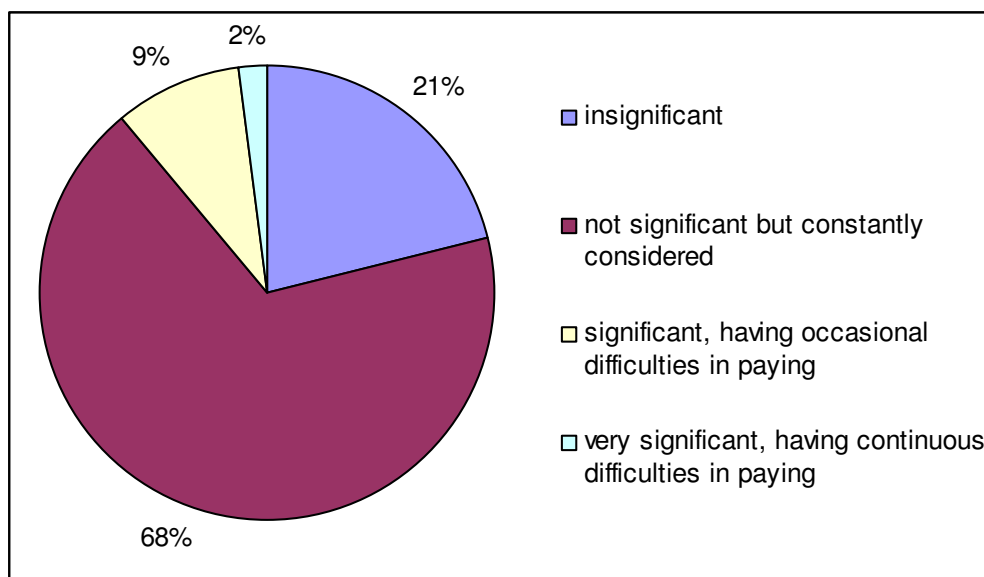
The data on households' net income show that almost one fifth lives on a very scarce budget, half as many households belong into the highest income group. As an average, the better-off households are younger rather than old households on pension (see Table 1.2)

Table 1.2 Average monthly income, EEK

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	3001-5000	9	19
	5001-10 000	13	27
	10 001- 15 000	7	15
	15 001 - 20 000	8	17
	üle 20 000	4	8
	Total	41	85
Missing	Not answered	7	15
Total		48	100

These differences in income levels are reflected on respondents' estimations of their ability to cover the monthly costs for their housing, which include housing loan repayments: for one fifth the costs are insignificant and clearly the majority (2/3) has to consider their expenditures on a regular basis, although do not see them significant, ten percent has permanent or temporary difficulties making their payments (Figure 1.7).

Figure 1.7 Estimation of the share of housing expenditures in family budget



1.2 Participation in the activities of the flat owners' association and assessment on management of the renovation process

The following analysis of the assessments involves exclusively only the flat owners of the observed block as concerned with the rights and responsibilities of decision-making and investments.

Regarding the current active period of renovation in the block, most residents have also heightened interest in matters concerning the management practices of the flat owners' association (FOA) and renovation procedures or other extra costly expenditures, in particular. For example, almost a third of the flat owners have expressed their opinion on the planned renovation works and two third of them report that their suggestions were considered fully or partly. Only some respondents reported being disinterested in block management issues. It is assumed that this group is larger when the residents having not responded to the questionnaire are to be added (see Figure 1.8).

The members of the flat owners association are predominantly satisfied with the activities of their institution (FOA), the more after the visible results of the renovation work (see Figure 1.9). A few indications of dissatisfaction are related with miscommunication between members and the board of management.

Figure 1.8 Flat owners' participation in the block management

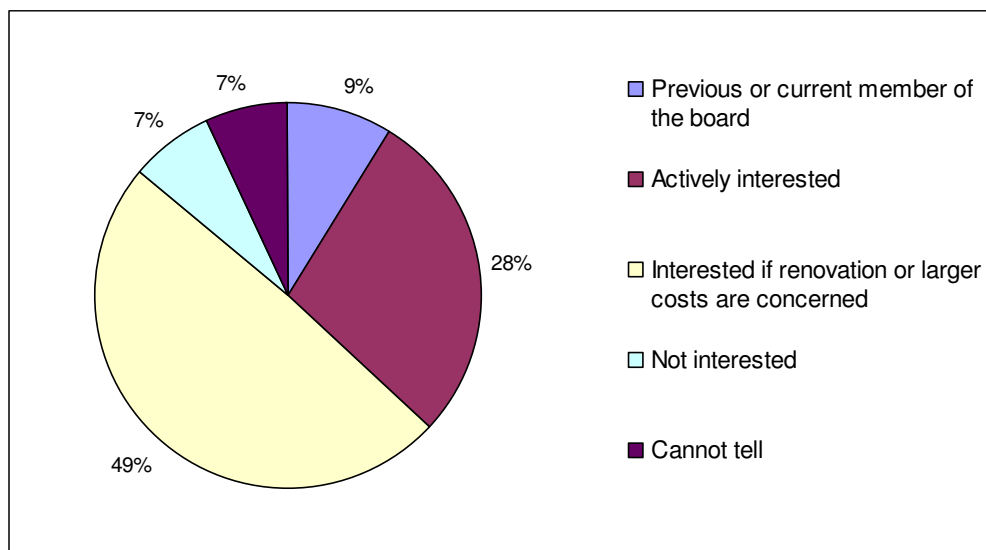
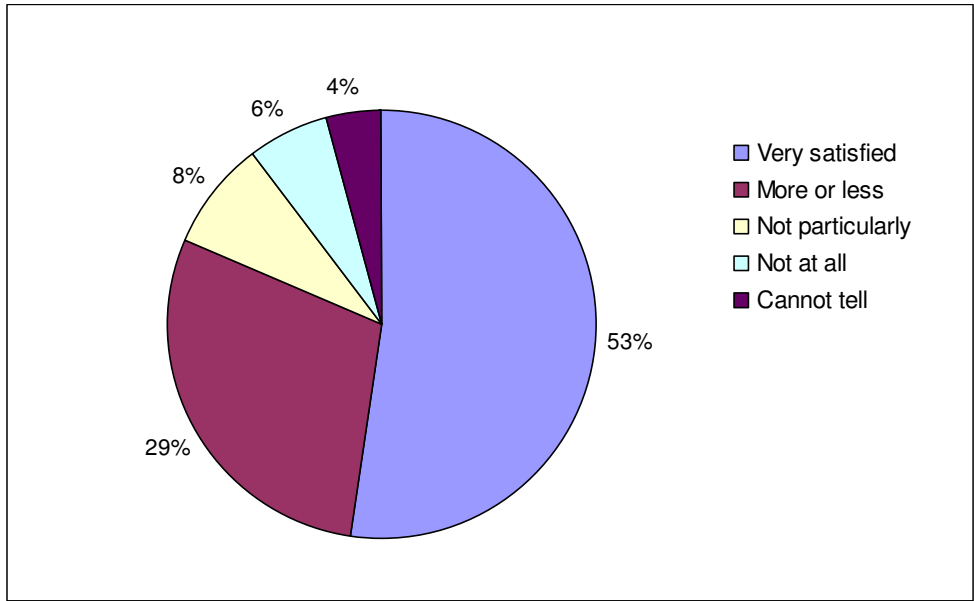
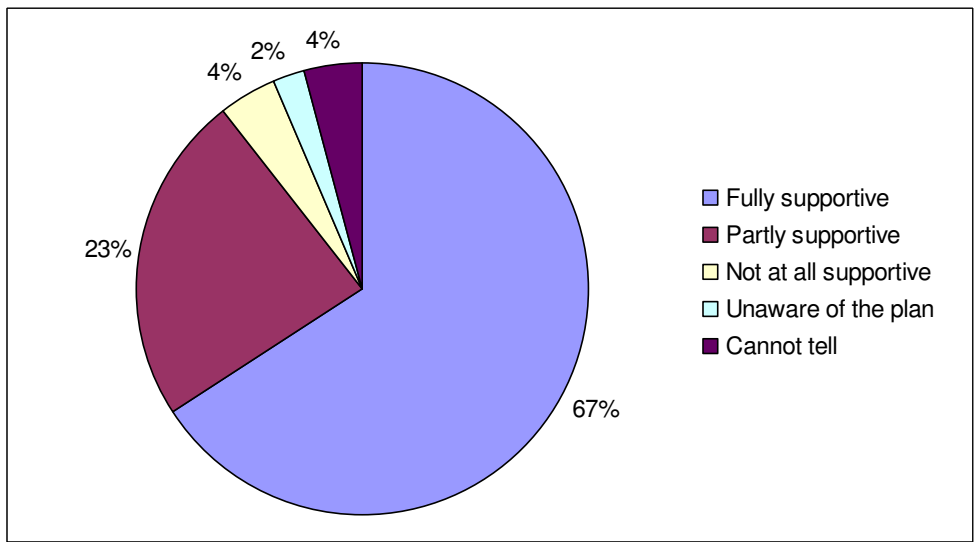


Figure 1.9 Flat owners' satisfaction with the FOA



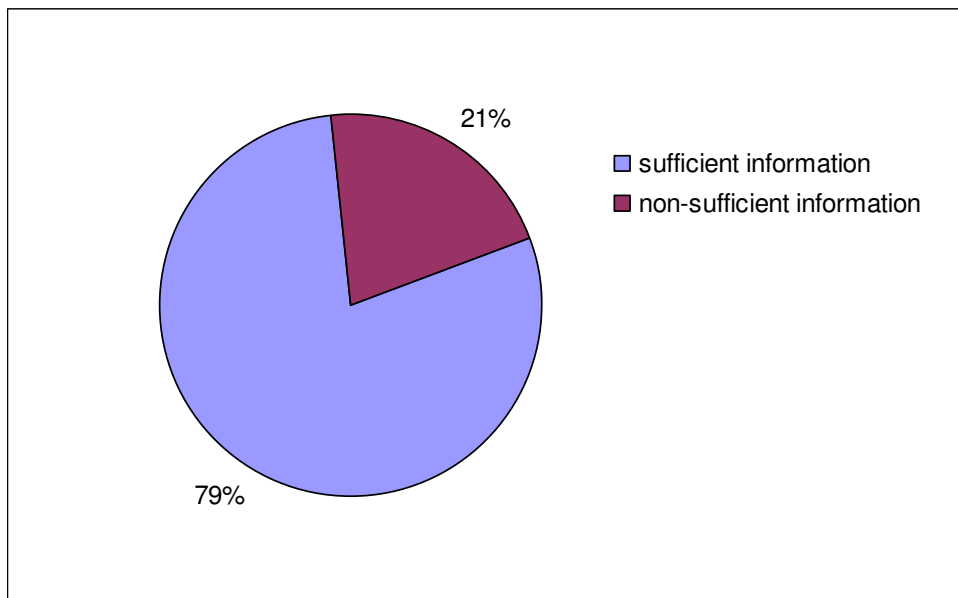
Somewhat surprisingly high (90 % partly or fully, see Figure 1.10) seem to be the support given to the renovation plan and the related financing scheme. This is especially upon the pre-research information on the rather complicated nature of initial introduction of a renovation idea allowing to assume that residents' responses had been modified on reflections of the generally satisfactory outcomes of the real renovation works (to be discussed further in the presentation of the results of the qualitative study).

Figure 1.10 Flat owners' support to renovation plans



In either way there are two distinct aspects to be highlighted in connection with satisfaction: the generally strongly perceived need for renovation, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, preparation and organization of renovation works, which 23 percent of the respondents declared to have been dissatisfied with. One of the key factors distinguishing between different levels of satisfaction is considered to be residents' opinion about the provision, access and quality of information. As shown on Figure 1.11 one fifth of the residents considered themselves to have been mal-informed on the renovation plans. The data reveals also a correlation between high satisfaction level with the enactment of renovation works and availability of sufficient information (see Figure 1.12).

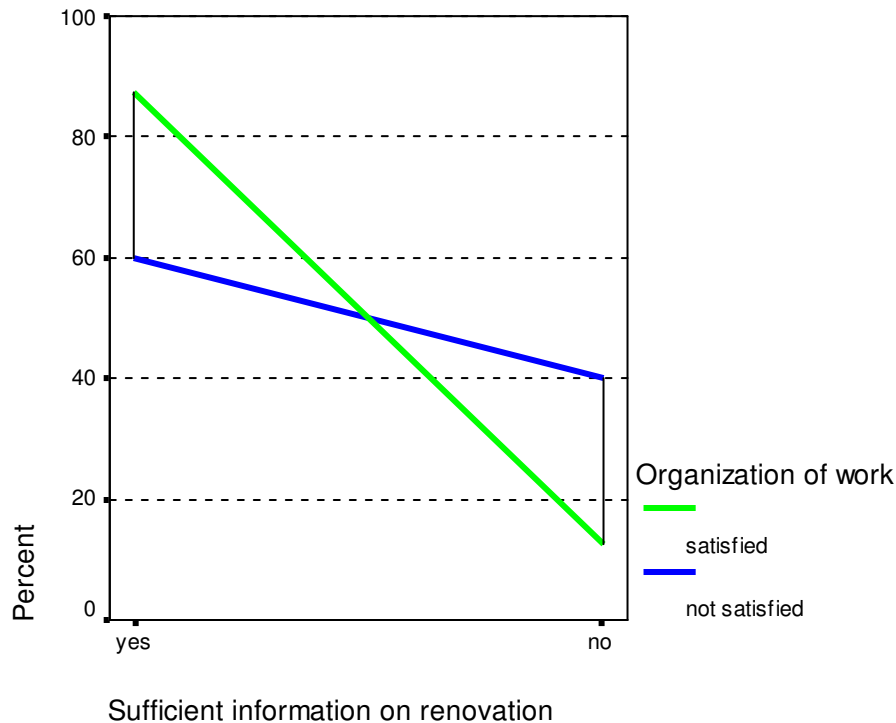
Figure 1.11 Flat owners' perception of the provision with information on planned renovation works, costs and financing by the board



In general, dissatisfaction with the procedures of organization and enactment of renovation works having been presented as responses to an open-ended question is associated with the following:

- * the period of renovation was considered to be too long (8 respondents);
- * discomforts emerging during the renovation period, including undefined dates for the start and completion of various works (e.g. change of windows) and insufficient cleaning up after finishing the works (5 respondents);
- * insufficient access to renovation project documents (2 respondents);
- * violating the laws and manipulating with fellow residents – flat owners during the decision-making process (1 respondent);
- * too large-scale and costly project for a short time-span (1 respondent)

Figure 1.12 Flat-owners' assessment on availability of information on renovation plans and satisfaction with organization of renovation works



Most flat owners realize that renovation cannot be carried out without a bank loan. Quite obviously, the employed and active in the labour market as well as better off residents are more positively disposed towards borrowing; older flat owners out of labour force are more cautious but see no other option for financing the renovation costs either (see Table 1.3).

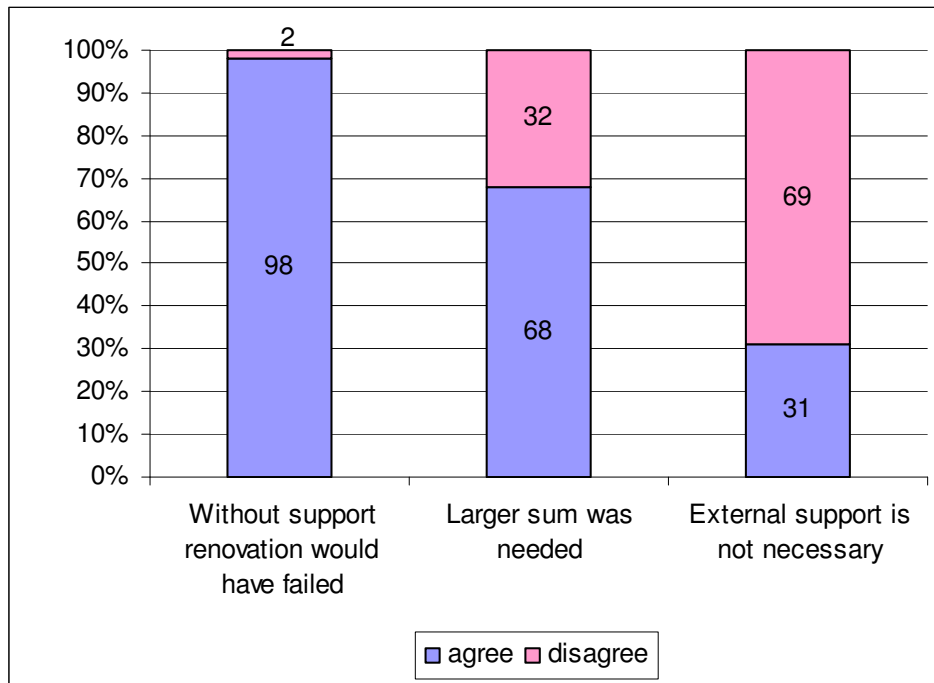
Table 1.3 Attitudes towards borrowing

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No risk	12	28
	Risky, but the only option	29	67
	Great risk, do not support	1	2
	Total	42	98
Missing	Not answered	1	2
Total		43	100

At the same time the majority agrees upon the importance of the contribution made via KredEx by EU and national/local funding schemes; the respondents are rather

unanimously on the opinion that the renovation plan would have otherwise failed. While two third of the addressed would have welcomed even larger support, one third considers renovation works to be the responsibility of flat owners and external support played but insignificant role in the decision-making process (see Figure 1.13).

Figure 1.13 Flat-owners’ estimations on the need for external financial support (% from responses to a particular question, see also Table A.1 in Appendix)



1.3 Satisfaction with the renovation process

All residents regardless of their status - as owners or tenants - were requested to express their opinion on the renovation works. The respondents assessed the need for renovation works in regard to the condition of their block before renovation, the results of each renovated object/element as well as the costs of each of the enacted works.

Residents agreed that renovation of the main structural elements of the building such as roof and heating system as well as other supporting actions to save energy needed to be taken (see Figure 1.14 below; see also Tables A.2-A.4 in Appendix).

Figure 1.14 Respondents having acknowledged the need for renovation, %

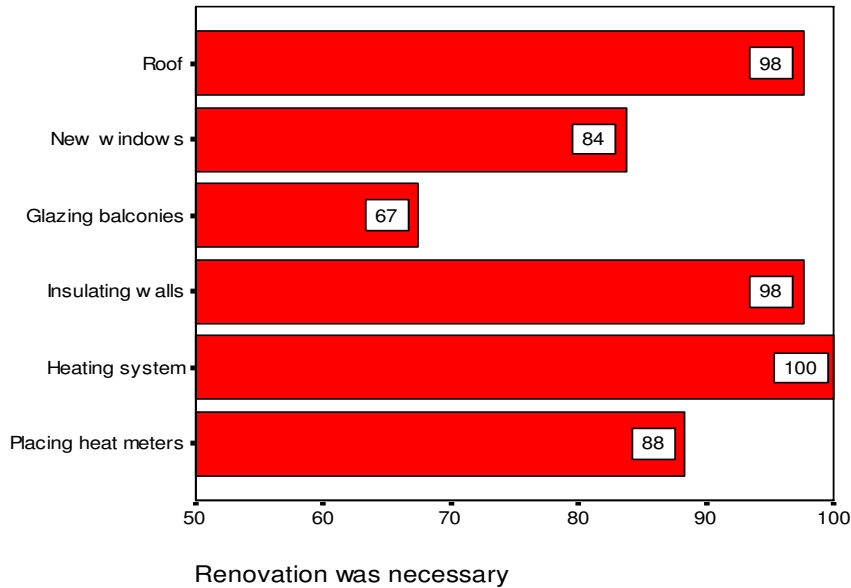
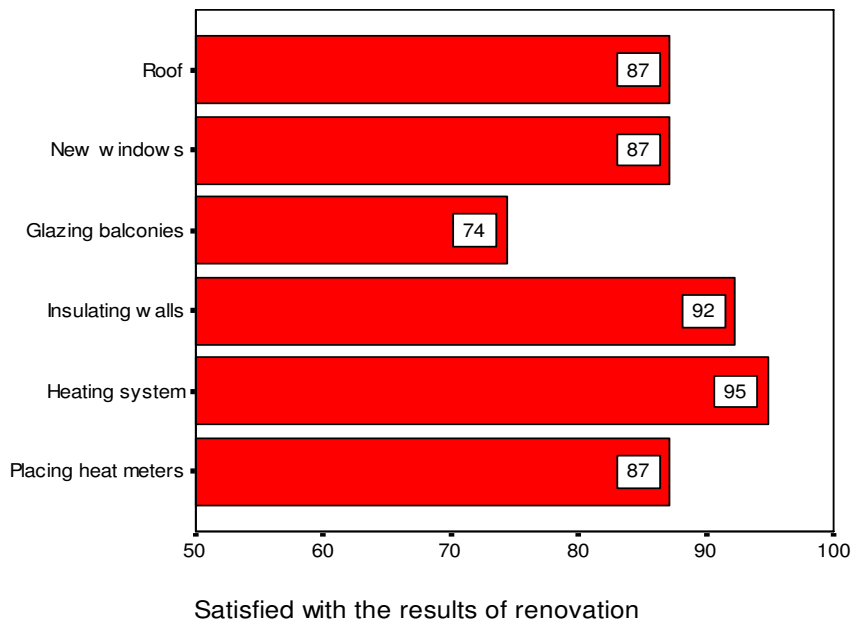


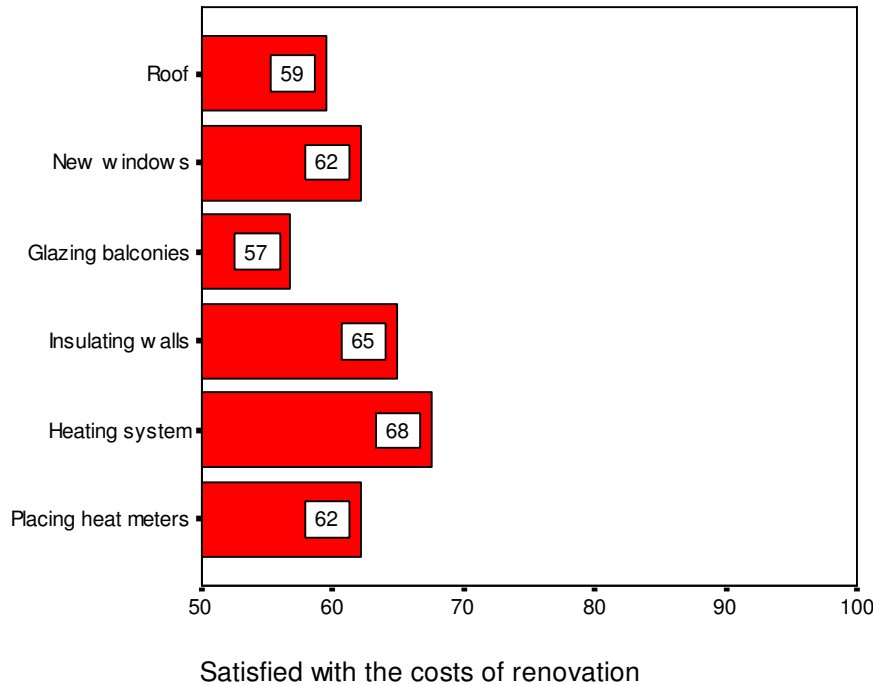
Figure 1.15 Respondents satisfied with the results of renovation, %



Compared to estimations on the need for renovation works the actual satisfaction with the results is somewhat lower, which can be partly explained by the timing of the survey shortly after the completion of the renovation works (see Figure 1.15). Similarly the actual costs cannot be fully estimated for such a short-term experience (see Figure 1.16). Also, the lower satisfaction rates on costs are related with residents' insufficient knowledge and information: more than a fifth of respondents explicitly acknowledged that they have not been provided with proper information on the costs. The question on

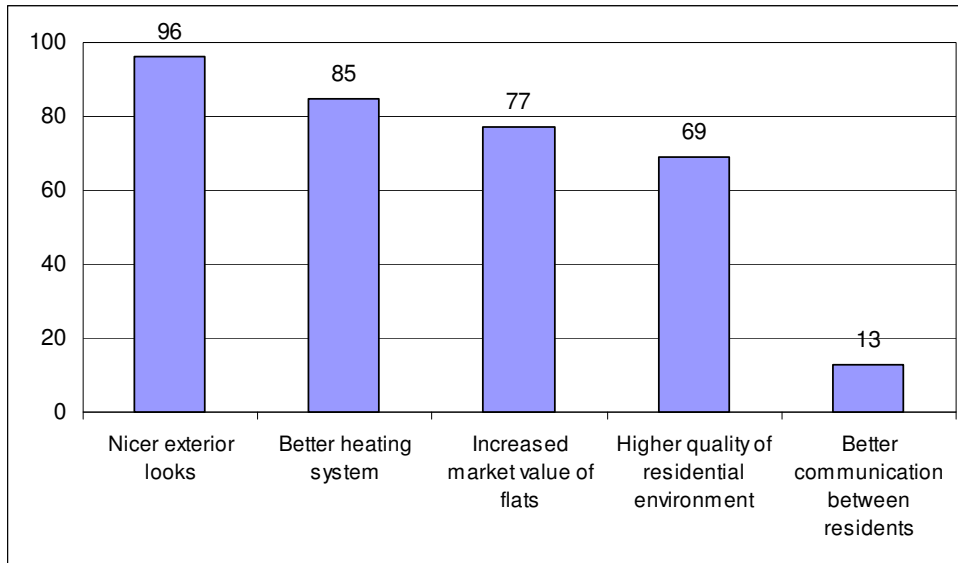
costs has been treated with relatively high non-response for apparently the same reasons. The more detailed discussion of residents' estimations of the results of renovation in functional and economic terms, however, is provided by the qualitative analysis.

Figure 1.16 Respondents satisfied with the costs of renovation, %



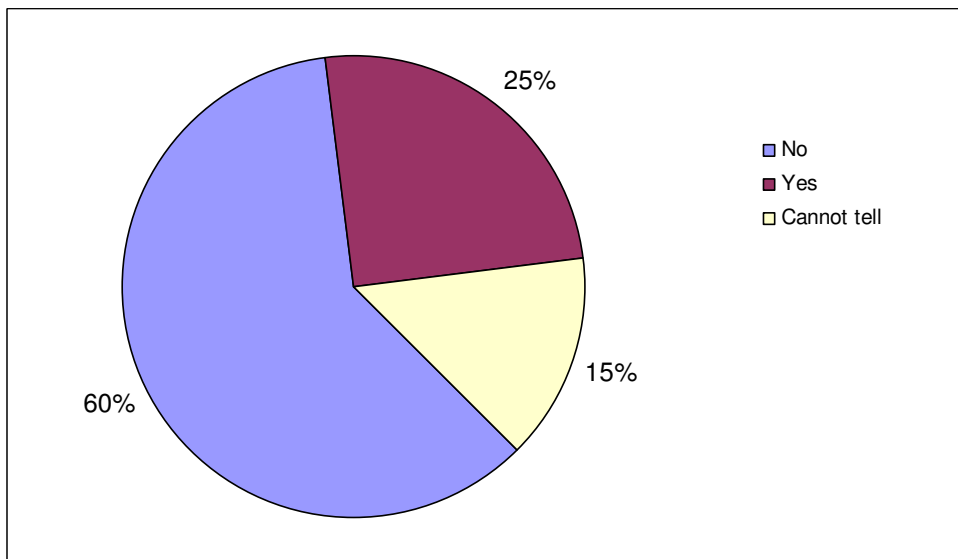
Generally speaking, respondents are of a relatively high opinion of the results of the renovation works concerning, in particular, the visible aspects of their building such as the exterior looks (see Figure 1.17). Some even express a wish that residents in other buildings follow their example, which would certainly raise the overall quality of the neighbourhood. It seems that the *'best practice'* might have a potential in this residential district. Residents also value the renewed heating system and consider their flats more marketable due to the rise of property value and look forward to further improvements of the fundament and stair-halls as well as the green facilities in the courtyard. At the same time only 13 per cent of the respondents estimate communication between residents to have improved and over fourth of them see the situation as even worsened (see Table A.5 in Appendix). In regard to the pre-renovation debates and miscommunication between residents as well as the board of the flat owners association this result does not come unexpected. Expressions on dissatisfaction are revealed on a broad scale articulated as those related with the state policy, fellow-residents behaviour, FOA board's management practices, increasing costs and critique on specific technical and functional aspects such as lack of ventilation, little practical use for glazed transparent balconies.

Figure 1.17 Perceived changes in the residence



While the majority of respondents see their residential futures to be continued in the block, there still are a few planning to move out to other residences within the coming two year period (see Figure 1.18).

Figure 1.18 Respondents' intentions to move within the next two years



Moving, undoubtedly concerns tenants having rented flats only temporarily and they plan to have a home of their own. The potential movers act on a distinct motivational basis:

some consider space at their disposal either too small or too big (pensioners) and costly. It is also mentioned that the connection between the district and city centre is dissatisfactory. A couple of respondents report on their wish to move out of town or abroad. Altogether four respondents consider moving in fear of the rising housing costs while three respondents have postponed their possible move for the satisfactory renovation results.

II Qualitative analysis

In depth interviews for the qualitative study of the renovation process carried out at 171 Paldiski Road were conducted during the week following the field work for the survey. The interviewees were selected by five different methods: (1) the questionnaire included an invitation to participate in the qualitative study, which only a few residents volunteered for; (2) all members of the board of the flat owners' association were addressed and responded positively; (3) the chairman for the flat owners' association provided the researchers with some contacts – all invitations were accepted; (4) contacts intermediated by KredEx on their preceding earlier experiences in the block – received positive response; (5) snowball method has been used to recruit greater number of interviewees. For this case study with a total number of 59 households residing in the block the optimum number of people recruited for the qualitative analysis is considered to be 10-15 interviewees.

The primary aim why the qualitative analysis has been included into the research design is defined by the specificity of this particular case – the experience of participation and direct contribution of the residents and owners of property into the profound modernization of their residence. While the qualitative data enable to have a deeper insight into the problems occurring on that path and provides the analysis with additional and more detailed information, which cannot be collected by quantitative methods it, however, has an independent goal. This implies that when the quantitative research indicates the existence and extent of the studied phenomena, then the qualitative analysis contributes to the discovery of the multifaceted nature of the process in focus linked with the formation of individuals' perceptions and actions. The data of the qualitative study cannot and should not be quantified.

The analysis is presented in a classical way together with quotations from original interview texts.

The emphasis in the following analysis is laid on individual experiences of the renovation process concerning perceptions of the management practice, views on transforming quality of a residence as well as relationships forming between earlier residential experiences and future expectations towards residential development on a broader scale of space (neighbourhood).

2.1 FOA renovation management practice

Self-perception of the board

The board of the flat owners' association consists of a chairman and two members, where the chairman seems to have an exceptionally strong and powerful position in legal terms as well as in real terms. The analysis suggests that this **powerful leadership** of the

chairman has been shaped by previous career, professional knowledge in engineering, accountancy and law as well as extraordinarily enthusiastic approach towards sustainable development of housing property shared by the owners of flats in the block. He is convinced that

'...flat owners have to do something to be able to pass their property over to the generation of their children'.

One of his first actions was to outsource expert evaluations and audits on the condition of the building without the mandate of all flat owners as he considers himself and the board to be entitled to take such initiatives. The chairman argues that this is:

'sole responsibility of the board and is no-one else's business'.

However, the chairman seems to work under the pressure and in **complicated relationships** having formed in the block and between leadership and a group of lay-owners opposing active attempts to change and improve the quality of the building. In order to find positive solutions and bring the flat owners to the decision-making phase the chairman has, in his words, provided all members of FOA with technical and financial information on the options for renovation. Besides, he has foreseen the language-based difficulties in understanding all the details of the planned acts and thus distributed the documents in Estonian as well as in Russian. His efforts have, however, been repeatedly opposed by passive attitudes and non-participation of a part of the residents in the decision-making process where they have been invited to take part in.

In order to guarantee some development of the matters concerning modernization of a block the chairman reports to have been forced to take unusual steps such as extension of the voting period in written form, diminishing the size of the eligible FOA quorum and delegating the right to make decisions on some renovation aspects to the board and, in particular, to himself. Such an extraordinary organization of management of this FOA has led to quite an **autocratic leadership**, which is, though, legitimized by a considerable share of the rest of the flat owners.

The chairman has quite straightforwardly certified this observation while commenting on preclusion of other flat owners from the decision-making that concerned, for example, the choice of design of the new balconies:

'individual flat owners have not the slightest right to express their opinion on this matter... as they are not competent their decision is not optimal...therefore there is the elected board (FOA) to realise the project with the help of experts and designers'

The chairman is highly **motivated to educate and train other flat owners** through the actual experience of renovation but entirely excluding from that 'programme' the experience of joint decision-making. On the other hand, such extreme measures have been taken only after his recurrent earlier but unsuccessful attempts to activate the fellow residents. It has to be mentioned, though, that the chairman takes no sole responsibility

for his management style as he is referring to the board as the main active force and decision-maker.

At the same time the interviews with other board members allow suggesting that compared to the chairman they are less informed of the whole process of, especially, the recent renovation. On the one hand, they count on efficient actions of the energetic chairman by reducing their own input but, on the other hand, the **other board members seem to be more modest in taking the full responsibility** upon the mandate given by other flat owners. Consequently, their role in the decision-making process on a number of matters concerning the renovation has been insignificant, which becomes especially salient on a reflection on the procedures and results of the works coming as a surprise to also a board member like it would to any of the flat owners:

'... he (the chairman) did not tell me that these balconies would be fully in glass and transparent from top to foot...'

The board members' ways of discussing renovation and all the related problems do not differ from lay-residents' perceptions. As for board members one would expect them to be fully informed and active in the organization of the whole renovation programme as well as informing other people in the block and incorporating them into active participation in the process. Since the board members function more or less in the shadow of the chairman (although apparently voluntarily), the image of leadership is bound to the chairman alone also in the eyes of the lay-residents/flat owners:

'our chairman has been such a lonely warrior for the sake of finding a solution for the renovation of our house'.

Perception of residents

There is a clear division between flat owners as it comes to their opinions, perceptions and behaviour patterns concerning the management practices of renovation works in the block: (1) the supportive, positively tuned group and (2) the opposing, negatively tuned group. Despite the currently predominating positive reflections about the actual results of the works, the process itself - from the initial phases and throughout – as well as the actions taken by the chairman have been criticized and counteracted by a specific group of flat owners.

(1) Supportive group is characterised by, first of all, **trustful approach towards leadership**. This group is fully aware of the need for renovation of their property and has been either actively participating in decision making, also making occasionally additional inquiries on specific aspects of the works or strongly supporting the process in principle but without active participation.

They report that they have been disseminated **sufficient information** on the then forthcoming works as well as on financing; on occasions when they needed additional information they had never been denied this opportunity by the chairman:

'...he (the chairman) is an experienced constructor (former career as an engineer) and he knows about these things... he has explained me the things that I have asked him to...'

The group is clearly supportive of also their leader's performance during the whole process and value greatly his personal efforts; they have even become **protective of chairman** against the attacks from the opposing group:

'I thought all the time (throughout this process)... I prayed his heart not to fail... it was indeed a really ugly and sneaky attack towards him...'

'I mostly sympathize the chairman....he really took such a huge project on his shoulders and look how many bad words were told him. In his place I would have sued them for such slander! He should be granted with a golden medal for having taken up all this trouble!'

The positively tuned group is **critical of the opposing group** who has been counteracting the renovation efforts taken by the chairman and have certainly slowed down the whole process:

'They really tried to get rid of our chairman...they are stuck with the old way of thinking...they have got everything for nothing (distributed public flat in the Soviet system) in their earlier lives and they think that this has to continue.'

The analysis of the interviews shows that there is a contingent of residents/flat owners who have **continuous adaptation difficulties at the transition from one social system to another** and in the context of ownership and housing reform, especially. This would be of utmost importance at this point to indicate that individual **age and economic capacity has but little significance** in shaping these contrasting attitudes of **trust and prejudice** characteristic of retired elderly people of more or less equal social positions:

'I do not know that exactly how things stand in our flat owners' association but I have not been treated with any injustice, I have been looked after and I have been told all about the costs...the chairman has sent us letters with all explanations'

'We know about the amount of the loan but about the detailed use of the sum...this is to say is a blind spot. The chairman did not bring any of the detailed data for the general meeting...we do not really know about the reconstruction project...is there a project after all? We do not know about that...'

The negative and positive dispositions are rather defined by **particular life and residential experiences of individuals** having shaped their ability to understand the

changes or the need for changes as well as to interpret new information, demands for actions having been missing from their earlier experiences.

(2) Opposing group of the block argues on a drastically distinct basis by stating exactly the opposite to what has been expressed by the supportive group. Their main arguments to **initiate counteractions toward the FOA leadership** and its chairman, in particular, concern **lack of provision with information**, which according to their words was denied them even when asked. This group has been completely irritated by ways the **decisions** on loan and the following renovation plan were taken **without the final consent of all the flat owners**.

'I told at the general meeting to the members of the board that they had taken the decision to reach into our pockets without asking us. This was against the law to lay that way the burden of not only hundreds of thousands but millions on our shoulders.'

Neither was it brought, in their words, into the conscious of the residents that the FOA had participated in the KredEx competition for raising additional funds:

'One morning when leaving for work we simply noticed an announcement hanging on the information board 'Hurray! We have won the competition!' What competition? Where? On what conditions? Then we, the residents, started to phone to one another...'

The opposition became very active and communicative but did not succeed to stop the process that had already begun. Rather, when KredEx took the initiative and participated at the meeting with flat owners and explained the conditions for renovation to be enacted partly on their funding, the opposing block started to change their attitudes. Apparently, **the KredEx intermediated additional funding became a strong motivational basis for the shaping of attitudes of acceptance**.

2.2 Transforming residential quality

The following analysis is based on data collected at the time when the renovation works have not been fully completed, which is why the process cannot be referred to as such. This implies that the residents find themselves partly in difficulties in responding to specific questions concerning, for example, heating costs, functionality and efficiency of the glazed balconies for the coming winter season etc.

Aesthetics and functionality

There is a predominant agreement between all interviewed flat owners that one of the best outcomes of the renovation concerns the profoundly changed aesthetics of their building: painted walls, new windows and glazed balconies as well as entrance doors.

The interviewees tend to be **proud of this change** of especially the exterior looks of the block having been attributed personality compared to the rest of the surrounding buildings. The renewed appearance of the block quite obviously contributes to **strengthening of the sense of residential identity** and willingness to continuous stay in this building:

'I like that the house looks nice now. All houses used to look alike and you really couldn't make a difference between them'

'The house, as it is now, is like a fairy-tale!'

'The design for colours...it's so harmonious. When you look at the house next to ours...you could simply cry! I am, indeed, satisfied!'

Interviewees hope that the improved aesthetic quality of their building would be respected by residents and reflected in their **more caring daily behaviour** in their residence:

'Beauty has a disciplining effect on people!'

The most spectacular change, undoubtedly, concerns aside the repaired, insulated and repainted exterior walls also the newly installed or reconstructed **balconies**. At the same time the balconies represent one of the most ambiguous attempts to change the quality of the building in terms of the newly created aesthetics as well as functionality. While the residents consider the new looks of their balconies attractive, they are dissatisfied with or doubtful about the functionality of the glazed space.

The positive features of the renovated balconies are associated with their beautiful appearance, personality of the design, especially compared to surrounding buildings and enlarged access to daylight.

However, **negative attitudes** are quite unanimously expressed on the quality of the realization of the project of balconies, which primarily concern untidy installation work as well as mess up or soiling of the floor space and walls of individual balconies – remaining to be cleaned up and repaired by the residents. There is no information about the warranties to be provided by the builder.

The residents are rather doubtful about the logic of the energy saving and convenient use of the balconies in terms of the construction specificities, which may appear during different seasons (snow, rain) and seem to need also more information on the matter.

While part of the interviewees are satisfied with some of the changing functions of balconies that should change the habitual ways of residents' behaviour, for example, drying laundry or piling up their balconies with unnecessary things, the other part is disappointed losing these very qualities in their previous way of residing. They admit having lost additional storage room and otherwise useful space, the more that flats in this type of buildings have no sufficient extra space designed for these purposes:

'They could have discussed this with residents, perhaps there could have been more reasonable solutions for balconies. The spacing of the glazed sections of balconies do not allow keeping warmth ...you want to storage vegetables there but you cannot. It was our useful space but it's gone'.

It has been mentioned that the additional space provided by balconies previously has diminished after the renovation in relation with the insulation of walls leaving less space for spending time resting on balconies.

Another aspect of dissatisfaction associates with earlier investments into the improvement of balconies (self-glazing) and change of windows and the imposed new investments. However, not all concerned agree on this matter.

Comforts and economy

Despite the final results of the reconstruction of the whole **heating system** cannot be fully estimated at the current stage, the interviewees' have expressed great satisfaction with the increased comforts, generally, in their flats. They admit that their flats are considerably warmer, concerning particularly corner flats and those on the upper floor. Highly appreciated are the newly installed radiators and heat metres, which enable meeting residents' distinct demands:

'Feel... it's pretty cool here. I like to be in cool rooms...turn the heat down. I dreamed about this opportunity to regulate the heat but did not believe that we really get it. I actually planned moving away but when they started to change the heating system I thought I wait and see...'

'I never had a room that warm during the 20 years time and I can regulate the heat myself!'

There is, however, a problem noted in relation with the installation of the new noise and wind-proof as well as energy saving windows – the missing ventilation system.

Major reconstruction of the building has been highly valued by residents for the subsequent changes guarantee the **sustainability of the whole building** for an extended period. Also, the improved structures enable individual flat owners to economize at the expense of the diminished need for redecoration of their flats.

There are high expectations as to the reduction of heating costs for the coming season and continuously for the future. There are, though, uncertainties about loan-related costs.

Identity and distancing

Residential identity forms on different spatial scales. In case the qualities of wider residential space are insufficient and do not meet expectations of residents the identity is with high probability confined within the immediate space of a flat. The shaping of residential identity also strongly relates with previous entire residential experience and the duration of residing in a particular place.

In the observed case the pre-renovation identity was forming on the level of a flat rather than on the level of a block, which has been reinforced by the diverse contingency of residents with distinct expectations and behaviour and miscommunication or non-communication of their interests between one another. The analysis shows that to a large degree this is a continuous situation despite of the recent complicated joint-efforts in participating in the renovation actions. This is obvious that the daily behaviour of residents of the block is based on a different understanding of even the simplest of manners:

‘When I look at some people in our section I find myself incapable of saying hello to them as they pass me with a cold gaze and I am happy that they do not step on me. Sometimes they do not respond even to simple hellos...this is difficult to understand. If I were a chairman of the flat owners association I would not know how to organize these people...’

Nevertheless, residents have become remarkably more sensitive about their building and the immediate surroundings, e. g. the courtyard and the space and roads around the house. Regardless of differences in attitudes towards the practice of management of the current modernization flat owners are looking forward to accomplishment of the entire renovation scheme including the repair of base of the building, the pavement and the stair-halls, in particular.

The current concerns about the immediate surroundings encompass the loose traffic on inner roads of the neighbourhood as well as generally car-oriented spatial planning. There is not enough space for the shaping of a sense of identity in the immediacy of a block as it is open for strangers. Also, and this especially concerns the FOA-related activities, the residents miss a community house that would provide space for organized meetings or other activities. There are no qualities that would add to the formation of a sense of ‘us’ and, thus, the respective behaviour pattern.

This is observed that the location of the block in a wider spatial context of the district is predominantly appreciated for its developed infrastructure and accessible natural environment and usability for various out-door individual and family activities (swimming in the lake, skiing in the nearby forest, walking). However, the interviewees are of different opinion of the facilities available. The long-term residents have experienced changes on a wider scale of their environment, which are considered either

positive in terms of the enlarged scale of services offered or negative in terms of the public space constrained in the course of privatization and commodification.

The experiences of the changing qualities and availability of the public space, on the one hand, and remarkable renewal of the residential building, on the other hand, seem to have an effect on shifting ways of residents' identity building. **The former distancing from the immediacy of their residential building is being gradually substituted by explicitly intensified interest in the block and development of the closest neighbourhood. The expectations of residents seem to be associated with 'best practice' as a workable concept:**

'This is my personal experience... I meet someone walking a dog in the street and telling me...this is the most beautiful house in Õismäe (the district) – an example to be followed by all of us'.

Conclusions

1) Initiating the renovation programme for the block at 171 Paldiski Road has been a complicated process primarily for the split of attitudes between residents/flat owners and unusual management practice. The latter is characterized by relative weakness of the board of FOA and a controversial mix of autocratic and responsible leadership style of the chairman.

2) The experience of the divided groups of supportive and opposing flat owners suggests that there is a need for the involvement of wider circles of residents into the facilities management training that would avoid unnecessary miscommunication and misinterpretation of information concerning the project and financing of the renovation programme.

3) Involvement of an external institution (KredEx) into the decision making process has significantly influenced coming to an agreement about the renovation in two respects: (1) provision with additional funding and (2) arbitrary position of the external institution: professional approach met by residents' unprejudiced attitudes.

4) Residents' attitudes, especially those originally of opposing nature, were in the majority transformed during the process of renovation along with the gradually increasing visibility of the results. There is a clear correlation between level of satisfaction and information provided, inquired, interpreted and understood. Therefore efficient dissemination of information throughout the process of renovation is of utmost importance.

5) The assessment of the results of renovation is predominantly positive, especially concerning the improved aesthetics, conveniences of living (warm rooms) as well as costs evaluated as reasonable upon the risen quality of the residence. There is more dissatisfaction with works concerning the glazing of the balconies, to a lesser degree with instalment of new windows and heat metres. Lower assessments on the two latter aspects of renovation are related with (1) earlier wasted investments into replacement of windows and (2) inability to evaluate the actual efficiency of the investment too shortly after the start of the heating period.

6) While the results of redesigning of balconies are considered attractive, their functionality is being criticized by a part of the residents with an interest in the multiple use of balconies, which have become limited after the renovation.

7) Flat owners value highly the transformed exterior looks of their building and considerably improved heating system – the expected efficiency and appreciated possibility for individual regulation of heat as well as economizing the costs. Upon this

change the majority of residents expect the rise of the market value of their property, which has currently no explicit effect on their residential mobility.

8) Attitudes towards renovation in any of its respects, including the assessment of costs, has no clear relationship with residents' age or socio-economic position, rather with cultural dispositions shaped in general social experience of an individual.

9) The generally positive reflections on the results of the renovation in the block suggest that there is a greater potential of residential identity to be built on the enlarged spatial scale of a residence – the earlier missed experience but a basis for the formation of more sustainable individual and collective future residential strategies.

Appendix

Table A.1 Flat-owners' estimations on the need for external financial support

		Count	Col %
Support was essential for the accomplishment of the renovation of our house	agree	47	98%
	disagree	1	2%
Total		48	100%
The amount of support was too small	agree	30	63%
	disagree	15	31%
	not answered	3	6%
Total		48	100%
External support is not essential, the primary responsibility lies on owners	agree	15	31%
	disagree	29	60%
	not answered	4	8%
Total		48	100%

Table A.2 Respondents' acknowledgment of the need for renovation

		Count	Col %
Renovation of the roof	necessary	44	92%
	unnecessary	1	2%
	cannot tell, do not know	1	2%
	not answered	2	4%
Total		48	100%
Replacement of windows	necessary	39	81%
	unnecessary	8	17%
	not answered	1	2%
Total		48	100%
Glazing of balconies	necessary	30	63%
	unnecessary	14	29%
	cannot tell, do not know	1	2%
	not answered	3	6%
Total		48	100%
Insulation of exterior walls	necessary	47	98%
	unnecessary	1	2%
Total		48	100%
Reconstruction of the heating system	necessary	48	100%
Total		48	100%
Installation of heat meters	necessary	41	85%
	unnecessary	3	6%
	cannot tell, do not know	3	6%
	not answered	1	2%
Total		48	100%

Table A.3 Satisfaction with the results of renovation

		Count	Col %
Renovation of the roof	satisfied	41	85%
	dissatisfied	3	6%
	cannot tell	2	4%
	not answered	2	4%
Total		48	100%
Replacement of windows	satisfied	36	75%
	dissatisfied	4	8%
	cannot tell	2	4%
	not answered	6	13%
Total		48	100%
Glazing of balconies	satisfied	31	65%
	dissatisfied	9	19%
	cannot tell	3	6%
	not answered	5	10%
Total		48	100%
Insulation of exterior walls	satisfied	44	92%
	dissatisfied	2	4%
	cannot tell	2	4%
Total		48	100%
Reconstruction of the heating system	satisfied	45	94%
	dissatisfied	1	2%
	cannot tell	2	4%
Total		48	100%
Installation of heat meters	satisfied	41	85%
	dissatisfied	3	6%
	cannot tell	3	6%
	not answered	1	2%
Total		48	100%

Table A.4 Satisfaction with the costs of renovation

		Count	Col %
Renovation of the roof	satisfied	26	54%
	dissatisfied	3	6%
	cannot tell	13	27%
	not answered	6	13%
Total		48	100%
Replacement of windows	satisfied	26	54%
	dissatisfied	4	8%
	cannot tell	11	23%
	not answered	7	15%
Total		48	100%
Glazing of balconies	satisfied	22	46%
	dissatisfied	8	17%
	cannot tell	11	23%
	not answered	7	15%
Total		48	100%
Insulation of exterior walls	satisfied	29	60%
	dissatisfied	2	4%
	cannot tell	11	23%
	not answered	6	13%
Total		48	100%
Reconstruction of the heating system	satisfied	29	60%
	dissatisfied	1	2%
	cannot tell	11	23%
	not answered	7	15%
Total		48	100%
Installation of heat meters	satisfied	26	54%
	dissatisfied	3	6%
	cannot tell	11	23%
	not answered	8	17%
Total		48	100%

Table A.5 Perceived changes in the residence, %

	agree	no change	disagree
Nicer exterior looks	96	2	2
Better heating system	85	6	2
Increased market value of flats	77	6	2
Higher quality of residential environment	69	13	6
Better communication between residents	13	60	27