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POUR L'EDUCATION, LA SCIENCE ET LA CULTURE**

**CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD
CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**CONVENTION CONCERNANT LA PROTECTION DU PATRIMOINE
MONDIAL, CULTUREL ET NATUREL**

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE / COMITE DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL

Thirtieth session / Trentième session

Vilnius, Lithuania / Vilnius, Lituanie

08-16 July 2006 / 08-16 juillet 2006

Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda: State of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and/or on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Point 7 de l'Ordre du jour provisoire: Etat de conservation de biens inscrits sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial et/ou sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial en péril

**UNESCO-WHC EXPERT MISSION REPORT /
RAPPORT DE MISSION DE L'EXPERT DE L'UNESCO-
CPM**

Historic Centre (Old Town) of Tallinn (Estonia) (C 822) / Centre historique (vieille ville) de Tallin (C 822)

3 to7 December 2005

This mission report should be read in conjunction with Document:

Ce rapport de mission doit être lu conjointement avec le document suivant:

WHC-06/30.COM/7A

WHC-06/30.COM/7A.Add

WHC-06/30.COM/7B

WHC-06/30.COM/7B.Add

Giorgio Piccinato

1. Scope

The mission originated out of a request from the Estonian National Committee for Icomos of March 2, 2005, and endorsed by the mayor of Tallinn on June 9, 2005. Despite a reassuring periodic report dated 25/10/2005, earlier in March 2005 a letter was addressed to the Director of the WHC by Mr. J. Taam, Chairman of the Estonian National Committee for Icomos, pointing out a number of problems regarding a proper conservation policy for the Old Town, and asking for advice by an international expert designated by the WHC. The then Mayor of Tallinn, Mr. T. Palts, while stating that some problems were already solved, joined in the request for independent opinion. The mission took place between Saturday, 3 and Wednesday, 7 December, 2005.

Two topics were initially mentioned as possible threats to the heritage and to the status of the city as it is included in the Unesco World Heritage List: the 17 storey extension of an existing hotel in the “buffer” zone and the privatisation of a 17th century bastion of the city walls. Doubts were also presented regarding the management of the coast for new military instalments and the transport and storage of hazardous material.

The Estonian National Committee for Unesco took the responsibility of organizing all mission’s logistics and activities. On the field visits, work lunches and meetings were carried out with the highest officers of Estonian Icomos, Estonian Unesco, Tallinn Cultural Heritage Department, Tallinn City Planning Department, Tallinn City Government, Ministry of Culture, National Heritage Board. Without the assistance of the Committee, and especially of Ms Margit Siim, Deputy Director, this mission would not have reached any reasonable conclusion.

2. Context

Historical background

Tallinn first settlement was founded on the slope of Toompea Hill around the 11th century, when trades routes and a well protected harbour made it an important centre of trade and handicrafts in the northern part of the Baltic coast. Already recorded in a 12th century Arabian map, its first name was Kalev and later, for many centuries until 1917, Reval, although Estonians called it Tallinn. The lower town built between the fortified Toompea Hill and the harbour developed around the roads converging on the Town Hall Square, a radial structure still preserved. The city was the object of incursions and invasions from many neighbours throughout the centuries: among them Slavs, Danes, the Knights of the Sword, the Knights of the Livonian Order, the Teutonic Order, Swedes, Russians. Tallinn received its city rights in 1248, becoming part of the Hanseatic League.

The first fortress on Toompea was started by the Knights of the Sword and in the 13th and 14th centuries transformed into an imposing castle by the Livonian Order. In the 13th century a wall was built around the lower town, including Toompea; most houses were rebuilt in stone and with a number of storeys from the 14th to the 16th century. Cannon towers and earthen fortifications were also built under the Swedes that controlled the city from mid 16th to early 18th century.

In 1710 Tallinn entered the Russia of Peter the Great, starting a long period of progress. An Admiralty with an important naval base was built, as well as imperial palaces outside the walls. In the 19th century many large industrial plants were built and a railway connected the city to St. Petersburg in 1870. It was in this period, up to the first world war, that some relevant interventions were made in the old core: the town wall was broken in many places and old town gates were eliminated to leave more space to the increased traffic. Houses were demolished or rebuilt, but the city maintained intact its monumental heritage. Significant public and private buildings were erected, some of them in a distinctive “art nouveau” style, all of them today listed and protected (although curiously not mentioned in the world heritage documents).

The years of the first independent Republic of Estonia (1918-1940) were quite relevant in terms of planning. Plans for new residential districts, with various typologies for different income levels were prepared, giving rise to a suburbanisation process that will become stronger in the years to come; new roads and green spaces were also created. Heavy damage came during the war, with the destruction of 40% of the building stock; among others, a soviet bombing in 1944 left an empty area in the old city today under discussion.

In the socialist period (1944-1991) some public buildings were erected in the Old Town in the typical historicist style of the Stalinist era, but most development occurred in the outskirts, usually in form of housing blocks in large scale neighbourhoods; industrial complexes and public facilities were also realised. In August 1966 the government proclaimed the Old Town inside the bastions a state protected zone, to be preserved as an integral whole. This was the first case of integral protection extended to an urban realm in Soviet Union.

The new independent Estonian government established in 1991, legalising private property and initiative and fully opening to the international market, started a whole new chapter in the planning and management process for the city. New growth, influx of external capital from western European countries, development of harbour activities thanks to neighbouring newly independent countries and to increased tourist traffic. In 1993 the new Town Council became operational.

Present conditions

Today the municipality of Tallinn covers an area of 159 km², of which 40 km² are green areas and has 46 km of sea coast. Of the registered land in Tallinn’s territory, 48% is un-reformed state-owned, 9% is municipal land and 31,5% is private. The population, substantially stable in the last five years, counts 400.000 inhabitants; of these, 54% are Estonians and 36.5% Russians. Reversing the old structure, today the employment goes for 80% in the service sector and only 20% in industry. In 2004 Tallinn had almost 3 million foreign visitors, of which 1.8 for one day, most of them Finnish, Swedish, German, Russian and Latvian. Motor vehicles are 40 per 100 inhabitants.

The historic centre of Tallinn was inscribed in the World Heritage List in 1997, under criteria II and IV, “considering that Tallinn is an outstanding and exceptionally complete and well preserved example of a medieval northern European trading city that retains the salient features of this unique form of economic and social community to a remarkable degree”. The conservation area comprises the Castle of Toompea, the lower town and the bastions. Here all activity falls under the surveillance of the Tallinn Cultural Heritage Department. Many buildings are also individually protected as monuments. As a principle, here building activity is allowed only in empty areas, where existing structures collapsed, mainly because of war time bombing. The area is surrounded by a legally designated regulation zone, where height and scale of buildings are also under control.

3. Actors

Real estate developers

The national privatisation policy that came into effect after 1991 independence has radically changed the context of conservation policy. Land and buildings do not belong to the state any more and the legislation for protection has direct consequences on the market. This goes together with a new impulse to growth and changes in the economic activities and land use. The privatisation process itself is far from being completed and constitutes an actual element of uncertainty in the implementation of planning. Developers play today quite a relevant role in the city, building new housing, hotels, offices, shopping and leisure centres. A whole new city is being built next to the old one, characterised by a growing number of high rise buildings.

Tallinn Heritage Preservation Department

It is responsible for conservation and maintenance of the city's cultural and built heritage. It designs and implements special projects relative to the preservation areas. It advises on every action taken or proposed for the old town and its environs. Its advice is binding in the Old Town precinct, but less so in the surrounding zone, where most problematic cases occur. Its power is practically none outside these areas.

Tallinn City Planning Department

It is divided into two divisions: Comprehensive Planning Division and Detailed Planning Division. The first Division is responsible for preparing and implementing a comprehensive plan for the city and its 8 districts. The plan now operational is a Comprehensive Plan adopted in the year 2000. The second Division gives the permit to build on all urban land, in direct connection with the Heritage Department if the interested plot is in the conservation zone or in the "buffer" zone.

City Enterprise Department

In charge of fostering economic development, national and international investments in the city.

Ministry of Culture, National Heritage Board

It is the last instance for all controversial cases regarding the cultural heritage. When a case is particularly delicate it goes to the State Advisory Commission which has the highest authority. It might happen that conflicts arise between the City and the National Government (as apparently happened with the Viru Hotel extension) to which a developer can appeal directly.

The Mayor and the deputy mayors

He has the final word in city affairs.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The Old Town

Old Town keeps being well preserved and fully deserving its place in the World Heritage List. Its physical aspect is accurately taken care of, car traffic is limited, street furniture adequate. Most

relevant buildings are occupied by public offices, diplomatic residences and, increasingly in last times, by well off inhabitants. There are also some handicraft laboratories, what gives a warm sense of real life.

However, here too an increasing flood of tourist-led activities are changing the urban scene into a standardised scenario of cafés, pizzerias, fast food and mass souvenir shops. This is quite strong in summertime, when the Old Town becomes crowded with tourists and its distinctive urban and architectural atmosphere is missed. Here the problem does not touch physical conservation but rather the city's policy in terms of control of type, size and number of commercial enterprises in its historic core.

The “buffer” zone

Dangers do exist as for the environment surrounding the Old Town: lack of proper consideration to the necessary care for the natural and architectural context is likely to bring damage to the appreciation of the historic core itself. Here, now every new building proposal must obtain approval from the City Heritage Department and then the permit by the City Planning Department.

However, it must be taken into account that the so called “buffer zone” is actually consisting of many elements built or organised in different times and with different purposes. Therefore every answer on if and how it is possible to make any change must consider the resulting output in that area and not only what effect, it will have on the preserved old town area.

The “buffer zone” itself is not at all deprived of historic value, if we correctly enlarge our idea of history beyond the middle age that marks the Old Town. These considerations should be taken into account by those in charge of designing new proposals and evaluated by the city responsible authorities when issuing the permits.

Considering all the issues involved, an integrated Management Plan extended to the “buffer” zone could be developed as an instrument of protection as well as of social and cultural development for the whole urban community.

The city

Tallinn is indeed a city quite rich in potential natural and man made resources that would need to be taken into account, outside the old town preservation zone. Neighbourhoods from the late 19th – early 20th century, dismissed but architecturally relevant industrial or administrative compounds and, possibly the most important, a waterfront to be properly developed and brought back to the citizens fruition are only some of the planning topics that city planning has to face.

The recently approved (2000) Comprehensive Plan is not but a land use plan which does not give guide lines on how to design the new development areas nor how to upgrade or regenerate the existing neighbourhoods outside the walls: building regulations alone do not seem able to provide a satisfactory output:

The variety of conditions throughout the municipal territory calls for an innovative and articulated approach in dealing with future developments: like most cities throughout Europe, it would be advisable that also Tallinn work out instruments and procedures operational between the two levels of the comprehensive plan and the so called detail plan.

The Skoone bastion.

Permanent public ownership of the whole system of fortifications is highly advisable, since this is a facility of high historic value that must be controlled and managed with the necessary continuity and at the highest technical level. It seems reasonable to grant always full accessibility to the wall system and to avoid new permanent structures in it.

This does not necessarily mean that temporary proper uses for leisure or cultural purposes should not be allowed. Even heavier works in some cases can be allowed: it is the case of the important restoration works linking two main bastions presently under way with the program of re-using them within an articulated civic museums network. Other initiatives are proposed by private developers: among them underground parking facilities and structures for open air amusements.

Once again, the need for a comprehensive plan for the city wall is quite evident: its aims should be to reorganise and make consistent the whole internal path network and studying the connections of the walls with the external urban pattern, both in terms of traffic flows and land uses. With such a more general understanding of the role and the characteristics of the wall system within the city it will be easier to evaluate any further development proposal.

The extension of Viru Hotel.

The project presented by the developer for the hotel extension brings up a number of problems.

One: it is applied to an existing building that is itself a proper document of an already historic architectural style. Size, shape and connections of the extension are such as to damage the image of the original building and to make it difficult to view it properly.

Two: the original building is indeed ill located, definitely too close to the Old Town and too imposing in terms of size, but the extension make things even worse, since it increases the general size, closing down the view of the Old Town from the north-east.

Actually, what is most lacking is a proposal for the whole area of Viru Square; the area is indeed very delicate, since it includes various elements like a main entrance to the Old Town, a park, a shopping mall, a theatre, the walls and is also a main traffic node. It is to be hoped that existing legal constraints will not hamper a more proper solution to the area development.

Transportation of hazardous material

It is true that a recent survey demonstrates that an accident on the rail line directed to the harbour could have disastrous effects on a large area that includes the Old Town. This is due to the transportation and storage on the open of chemicals (like ammonium) of dangerous nature; such traffic has greatly increased since Tallinn has become the trade and transport centre for the exports to the European Union from some of the former Soviet republics. The issue is known by the municipality, but it seems difficult that radical measures could be taken, since this a matter of national interest. The same must be said about the possible reorganisation of the naval base for the Nato.

The government of urban space

The Planning Department of Tallinn has actually the highest role in the spatial government of the city. This is true also for the Old Town, although here the role of the Heritage Preservation

Department is also crucial. Like in similar cases throughout Europe, administrative offices are clogged by daily work regarding building permits from all over the municipality, and don't find easily the time and the means to face more problematic issues. It was until now probably understaffed, although presently a number of new technicians seem to have been assumed.

It is now managing the Comprehensive Plan for the all municipal territory adopted in the year 2000; a special Division is in charge of the detail plans. Responses of the municipality to development proposals are usually on a case by case procedure. There are no guidelines for the development of the designated areas by the comprehensive plan. The so called "detail plan" isn't but a plan for its own plot. Such a procedure puts officials in a very weak position, since they cannot use any established criteria for allowing or refusing consensus out of personal attitude.

Some criteria were infact discussed in the past but they did not seem to be generally accepted in practice. However, the pressure of public opinion is such as to be able to stop or at least ameliorate decisions that administrative offices might take following the letter and ignoring the possible unbalances of the law. This should be considered as an actual help to the decision making process, since it allows, quite especially in the case of heritage preservation, a fuller understanding of the issue by the civil society.

More generally, a less traditional approach is needed for such a challenging environment, giving room to national and international competitions in the most sensitive areas, both by private and public investors. Competitions might be of help also in identifying general criteria to be used in everyday official work. Clear criteria will also be a great help to future developers and designers.

Follow-up

To summarise: the site itself is not in danger, but single projects should carefully revised. As stated above, dangers exist if the present narrow approach to planning and conservation issues will not be enlarged into a more comprehensive one. This should regard the whole urban environment and in the first place the areas surrounding the centre, where careless development would hamper a full appreciation of the historic core. Since authorities and citizens organizations seem to be aware of the challenge, it is to be hoped that things will develop favourably in the future. A review of the situation in a two year time, checking how the above recommendations have been followed, is highly recommended.

5. Consulted Literature and Documents

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- National Heritage Board and Tallinn Cultural Heritage Department, *Periodic Reporting Section II on the Historic Centre of Tallinn*, 2005;
- Kangropool R., *Tallinn. Past and Present*, Jāņa sēta Publishers Ltd, Riga, 1999;
- Various papers provided by the Estonian National Commission for UNESCO.*

Appendix 1

List of people met during the mission

From the Estonian National Commission for UNESCO:

Ms Doris Kareva, Secretary General
Ms Margit Siim, Deputy Secretary General

From the Estonian National Committee for ICOMOS:

Mr Andri Ksenofontov, Member
Mr Jaan Tamm, member (also member of ENC for UNESCO)

From the Tallinn Cultural Heritage Department:

Mr Boris Dubovik, Head, Heritage Preservation Department
Mr Olev Liivik, Senior Specialist, Heritage Preservation Department
Ms Helene Tedre, Senior Specialist, Foreign Relations Department

From the City Planning Department:

Mr Arvo Rikkinen, Director of Detailed Planning Division
Mr Endrik Mänd, Director of Comprehensive Planning Division
Ms Ivika Maavere

From the City Enterprise Department:

Mr Mart Repnau, Business Development Manager

Mr Jüri Ratas, *Mayor*

Ms Kaia Jäppinen, *Deputy Mayor*, responsible for heritage conservation

Mr Kalev Kallo, *Deputy Mayor*, responsible for city planning

From the Ministry of Culture:

Mr Anton Pärn, Undersecretary for Cultural Heritage

From the National Heritage Board:

Ms Riin Alatalu, Acting Director General

Ms Anneli Randla, Deputy Director General for Research

Mr Jaan Sotter, architect

Appendix 2

Visit of UNESCO expert Prof. Arch. Giorgio Piccinato to the Republic of Estonia 3 - 7 December 2005

Saturday, 3 December 2005

17.35 Arrival at Tallinn Airport (OV 0144) from Copenhagen

Met by:

Ms Margit Siim, *Deputy Secretary-General, Estonian National Commission for UNESCO*

Departure for Hotel Viru
(Viru Square 4; www.viru.ee; Reservation number 783340)

Sunday, 4 December 2005

10.00 Departure from the hotel.

10.00-12.45 City tour guided by
Mr Jaan Tamm, *member of Estonian National Commission for UNESCO and Estonian National Committee for ICOMOS*;
Mr Andri Ksenofontov, *member of Estonian National Committee for ICOMOS*

13.00 Lunch hosted by **Ms Doris Kareva**, *Secretary-General, Estonian National Commission for UNESCO*
(Restaurant Karl Friedrich, Raekoja Square 5)

Afternoon Private time

Monday, 5 December 2005

10.45 Departure from the hotel.

11.00-12.45 Meeting at Tallinn Cultural Heritage Department (Raekoja Square 12) with
Mr Boris Dubovik, *Head, Heritage Preservation Department*
Mr Olev Liivik, *Senior Specialist, Heritage Preservation Department*
Ms Helene Tedre, *Senior Specialist, Foreign Relations Department*

13.00-14.00 Meeting at Tallinn City Government (Vabaduse Square 7) with
Mr Arvo Rikkinen, *City Planning Department*
Mr Endrik Mänd, *City Planning Department*
Ms Ivika Maavere, *City Planning Department*

Mr Mart Repnau, *Senior Specialist, City Enterprise Department*

14.00-15.00 Meeting at Tallinn City Government with
Mr Jüri Ratas, *Mayor of Tallinn*
Ms Kaia Jäppinen, *Deputy Mayor of Tallinn, responsible for heritage conservation*
Mr Kalev Kallo, *Deputy Mayor of Tallinn, responsible for city planning*

Participants:

Ms Helene Tedre
Mr Boris Dubovik
Interpreter

15.00 Lunch hosted by Tallinn Cultural Heritage Department

Tuesday, 6 December 2005

09.45 Departure from the hotel.

10.00-11.00 Meeting at Ministry of Culture (Suur-Karja 23) with
Mr Anton Pärn, *Undersecretary for Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture*

Participants:

Ms Margit Siim

13.00 Lunch hosted by **Ms Anneli Randla**, *Deputy Director General for Research, National Heritage Board*
(Restaurant Balthasar, Raekoja Square 11)

after lunch Visit to National Heritage Board (Uus Street 18)

Wednesday, 7 December 2005

05.15 Departure from the hotel.

06.35 Flight to Copenhagen from Tallinn Airport.

Appendix 3

Media overview

(sent with translation by Ms Margit Siim)

Estonian daily *Eesti Päevaleht*, 8 December 2005

Report by Askur Alas

New City Government is Considering Giving Permission for Building Viru's Son [extention to Viru hotel]

New City Government of Tallinn will review the hotel extention project that was stopped by previous city government. Finnish hotel investors presented on Monday another application for issuing a building permit for 17-storey hotel extention with 180 rooms that is planned to be built next to 23-storey Viru hotel. Administrative Court decided that the decision of former mayor Tõnis Palts not to issue the building permit for the extention was not legally founded.

According to the Deputy Mayor Kalev Kallo who is responsible for city planning, the case of the so-called Son of Viru needs to be studied with great care. "For the time being, there is no fixed position on whether we will give the building permit or not. This issue has to be reviewed," Kallo said.

Kallo also thought that a compromise could be reached with developer. Other valid options include compensation with substitute land or some other form of compensation.

According to Mayor Jüri Ratas the issue should be settled in co-operation of city government and specialists. "My final decision will depend on how the view to Old Town will be preserved," Ratas said.

According to Olev Liivik, Senior Specialist of Tallinn Cultural Heritage Department, his institution will not give its consent to the hotel extention, because the big black box would block the view to Tallinn Old Town.

Expert is Against the Project

According to UNESCO WHC expert Giorgio Piccinato, the seven year old project is outdated and weak in its architectural value.

"I would have preferred it if the old Viru hotel would not have been constructed at all, but this building has at least some character. The extention does not have even that," the expert said to *Eesti Päevaleht*.

Piccinato emphasised that preconditions of building something in the buffer zone of UNESCO WH site - that of Tallinn Old Town - include a very good project, architectural design contest and a clear vision of the future of the whole existing area.

"The most important thing of all is that the city needs to have a vision of the whole area - there is a park, a theatre, next to these buildings is Old Town. One cannot say that this building must not be constructed because I do not like it. But there is always a possibility to say: Sorry! This does not agree with a holistic vision we have about the development of this area, " Piccinato said.

The expert did not want to give a definite answer to a question whether building the Son of Viru would result in deleting the Tallinn Old Town from UNESCO WH list. This issue would need further studies, he added.

Tallinn City Government has to respond to the new application by 25 December.

Estonian daily *Eesti Päevaleht*, 7 December 2005
Interview by Askur Alas

UNESCO expert Giorgio Piccinato: Tallinn May Become Disneyland

According to UNESCO World Heritage Committee expert Giorgio Piccinato (70) who visited Tallinn, we need, first and foremost, a general vision of development.

[Alas] What is your mission and job?

[Piccinato] I came to Tallinn as UNESCO consultant at the invitation of local UNESCO commission and Tallinn City Government to see the situation and to give recommendations on the heritage conservation policy. I work full-time as a professor in Rome University. My fields of interest are planning, urban design and history.

[Alas] What kind of heritage must be protected?

[Piccinato] Heritage does not mean buildings alone, but also certain fields of livelihood, like handicraft for example. Heritage is also national identity that no one can do without. Heritage is not simply a way to sell one's image. But when major economic changes are taking place, there are certain threats that one must know how to avoid. Your society is changing quickly, therefore the problems and difficulties are also bigger.

[Alas] What kind of problems could you name?

[Piccinato] For example, the problems between developers and heritage conservators . Parking. Public space and public buildings. Society's changing lifestyle enforces the society to make its priorities straight. Let us take the case of Skoone bastion that shows the attitude of the city towards its property. For example, the city wall system needs to be maintained, but also to be developed in the interests of the residents. Another problem is the conflict between creating a modern architecture and retaining the old one. Here one must choose.

[Alas] What should be kept in mind when protecting Tallinn's heritage?

[Piccinato] One destructive possibility would be to turn the city into Disneyland. This could be a threat for Tallinn. Old Town should not be turned into a theme park, too many fast food restaurants should not be allowed here. One would be enough, but here are several already. A city is a city and it should not completely be sold to tourists. The only way to avoid that is to raise social awareness.

[Alas] What will you remember about Tallinn?

[Piccinato] I was here only for a very short time, but I will surely remember Old Town and the old houses near the Old Town area. I probably would not remember modern architecture. I also was not particularly impressed by it.

Estonian daily *Postimees*, 7 December 2005
Report by Urmas Seaver

Viru Hotel is Asking Again for Permit to Build Extention to the Hotel

Summary: The Court decided that city planners cannot refuse issuing a building permit to a 17-storey extention to Viru hotel based on a decision made by a former Tallinn City Government of Tõnis Palts. Therefore, the owners of Viru hotel are applying once again for a building permit. The city planners claim that their refusal is not based on city government's decision, but on the fact that the project presented by Viru hotel is bigger than the detailed plan of 1999 allows. According to Tallinn City Council's chairman Toomas Vitsut the architects could work on the project some more and to find a compromise that would be acceptable for all parties.

Translation of the last passage of the article:

Expert's Opinion

UNESCO World Heritage Committee expert Giorgio Piccinato, who saw Tallinn during the weekend and met with city authorities on Monday, said that Viru Centre is an ugly project.

However, according to deputy mayor Kalev Kallo, who is responsible for city planning, the expert did not present a clear position on the issue of 17-storey extention to the hotel.

According to Chairman of Estonian National Commission for ICOMOS Jaan Tamm, Piccinato will probably formulate his opinion about the hotel extention in his report in two weeks time.

According to current plans, the 17-storey extention to Viru hotel is to be built in Tammsaare park, at the site of the current water pool. The building area is 22 m x 22 m.
