

“You Forget about Tartu, if You Don’t Go there.”

About the Use of City Space by Retired People in Tartu

Maris Leponiemi

This article is a part of my Bachelor Thesis¹ “A City within the City: retired people’s mental image of Tartu”. The paper belongs to the field of urban ethnology, with primary attention paid to issues of individual urban experience against the background of social-political and economic processes. Furthermore, there is an analysis of the cultural meaning attached by the aforementioned retired people to the urban environment. Altogether 14 pensioners were interviewed, with an age rank of 54–83 years, 13 women and one man.

Estonia, as with other developed European countries, faces the problem of an ageing population. In 2000, about 1/5 of the inhabitants were older than 65 years. Often the status of retired people means a remarkable decline in income. The 2001 average pension was about 1/4 of the average salary (Sotsiaalministeerium, online). Therefore, the elderly people are one of the social groups who have suffered economically throughout the last ten years of the transition period and the sociologists have noted them to be authentic members of the so-called “Second Estonia”² (Lauristin, Vihalemm 1998). This paper does not automatically intend the categorisation of the social class ‘pensioners’ but it is clear that the economic situation, the habits of spending and consuming culture affect the individual’s perception of his/her environment and (mental) borders. In this particular article, I analyse how city

¹ Defended in June 2002 in the Chair of Ethnology of Tartu University.

² In 2001, Estonian sociologists brought forth a theory of two Estonias, “the First and the Second Estonia” on the grounds of their incomes and social status obtained within last ten years of independence.

Look also www.postimees.ee/index.html?op=lugu&id=17837&number=1788&rubriik=3

space is used in their everyday life. Four research methods are used for collecting the material: theme interviews, participant observation, mental mapping and 'flaneuring' in the city space. I have used half-structured theme interviews, that is, the questions were prepared beforehand but the order and forms of presenting these were not strictly defined.

On the grounds of the collected material, I have divided the purposes that determine the use of city space and time of the interviewees generally into three: 1) obtaining essential goods, mostly shopping for food stuff, 2) entertainment, or leisure time, and 3) taking care of health. Also visiting of official offices, paying bills and spending time with their closest ones – ('the role of grandparents') can be added to the aforementioned division. The latter activity is often carried out in connection with the first or third activity. A few interviewees emphasise the decreasing use of public city space in their senior status due to the laziness or lack of interest that has occurred in their later years. Citizens older than 65 years are free to use public transport easing their movement in the city environs. Those who use this kind of transport are very pleased with it, probably because of free transportation, and it is also one of the most important factors that limits staying in the public city space in a temporal aspect. For example, the last bus to Annelinn leaves about midnight and it finishes the entertainment time or visit to the city centre as the use of taxi cars is impossible due to economic reasons.

1. City space as a place for shopping

1.1. Markets and wholesale firms

One of the most important question areas in the framework of the study was designed to find out about the places where shopping was done, and how often these were visited. Here it turned out that no matter how old the interviewee was, hardly ever their shopping was carried out in shops but instead in wholesale firms and in markets. 'Shopping' means mostly buying foodstuff, other things such as clothes and home equipment etc. are bought rarely. This is caused both by the lack of sufficient financial resources as well as by already having the necessary items. The only informant who chooses the shopping place on the grounds of its pleasant situation is funded by the Nordic countries and thus the buying routine of this person is formed by other factors than those economic. So the main factors in the choice of shopping places are financial possibilities. Almost all of the interviewees emphasise that

they have to judge *where it is more useful to buy for a retired person, as he/she counts the cents and crowns, he/she has to be careful how to manage. All those medicines and bills...* (Riina, 54). Even if there are shops close to their homes or the market-square is very far away from it, they prefer to visit the market areas or wholesales outlets 2–3 times per week ... once per month. The market-square was never characterised as unpleasant or a too distant place, which would be difficult to visit. At most, the whole buying process as such can be unpleasant. The local shop could serve as a place for buying some bread but they are mostly not visited either due to the high prices or, in one case, the former saleswoman was just informed about the low quality of the goods in such shops.

Now I visit the market square, since it is the cheapest place, and all so fresh. Because regarding shops here, for example that one on the corner, I have never bought anything from there, I know the whole business, and everything is always so old there. I buy bread and white bread from a little shop next to it (Elli, 68).

There is this Muuli shop just across the street, but we hardly ever visit it, because the supplies are much more expensive in there than in the market place. Bread is even as much as one crown (kroon) more expensive than in the Market House (Helle, 73).

The market square in Annelinn, the open market by the river Emajõgi, the central Market House and wholesale firms Tirsi (Turu 37a and Ringtee 78), and to a lesser extent, the Sepa market (in Ropka district) are the favourite shopping places. This is precisely due to the lower prices and bigger choice of goods. Also *Säästumarket* (literally 'Saving Market' in Võru 140, and in Turu street) and less-specialised markets in the further districts of Tartu are important shopping places. In order to buy goods with cheaper prices, the interviewees do not mind taking a bus from one side of town to another. *Sometimes I take a bus from Annelinn to Ringtee, if I have to buy socks, a pair of socks is 12.50 there, otherwise it is 17. I guess it is a wholesale firm. I have a monthly season ticket, I undertake this extra trip, and I look up the foodstuff at the same go. There are those cheap underwear and socks, 13 and 15 crowns, one can always find use for them* (Paul, 63).

Of course, those benefits can be minimal sometimes: *Shops are very close here, but rather expensive ones. I mostly visit the market-square. Look, old people ride for free, just sit on the bus and go there. And there, in the market place, you can choose. You can choose what is better and what is cheaper, I do not know if everything is better but you think this*

way (Salli, 83).

The fact that the market-square and wholesale companies are the most popular shopping places can be explained not only by the lack of financial resources but also by the habits and established way of living. Several interviews reveal paradoxically that, even if the bad financial situation is almost always emphasised, it is not the only factor in buying: *I visit wholesales, once or more per week, and the market-squares, I buy for my dog and for myself, I buy what I like to, though whatever I can get cheaper, I have to count the cents, sort of* (Sille, 71).

My visit to the Market House with one of the informants revealed that she had an established shopping route (or path, comp. Lynch 1960) with certain shopping points (nodes) by certain sellers. The choice of the sellers was determined by personal experience about their honesty, not so much by the price or appearance of the goods. As the visit was quite short (about 30 minutes) it was difficult to decide about the service directed towards senior people. There is no reason to think that impolite answers or adding some stale buns among the fresh ones were caused by the age of the client.

1.2. Shops and other places

Besides my interest regarding shopping for food, I tried to find out about the places in the city areas where the interviewees are used to buying other supplies and clothes. The clothing stores in the city centre are hardly ever visited by the seniors. The interviews reveal their general attitude that everything is very expensive in the shops, and the need for clothes, shoes etc. is reduced in that age grouping.

[If you need new clothes, shoes etc., where do you go? ML] *The market square in Annelinn and in Ropka. How much does a senior need them? Young ones have to buy them, the elderly manage somehow, and we are never barefoot anyway.* [Do you visit those markets for cheaper stuff? – ML] Yes (Ene, 70).

The interviewee is not always satisfied with those items that she/he can afford to buy from the market-square. *Actually I have not bought those clothes lately, on the grounds that you have to have money for that. In the beginning, then yes, we bought cheaply from the market-square, for example Italian shoes but they did not last during the rainy days. We have noticed that if you want decent stuff, then you actually cannot get it for less than 1000 crowns* (Paul, 63).

Almost all of the interviewees claimed that they do not need any new clothes at their age. However, a visit to the clothing stores of Tartu

with a 60 year old female interviewee revealed that even if they would like to buy clothes and had money for that, suitable ones are very difficult to find. The offered clothes were too small, too “trendy” and colourful or of too low quality. Finally, the interviewee decided to use the service of a tailoring company. Here we can probably see a vicious circle where the shops and other clothing firms do not take retired people as a possible solvent target group and thus do not provide suitable items.

The most important places to shop for clothes are second-hand shops both next to home and further away areas. Items of clothing are looked for (garden) working and for re-making. Such visits are undertaken in connection with other activities in the city areas as well as separately. *We visit this second-hand shop further away; we have not visited the closer one. It is in Võru Street; we get off the bus, buy and remake them at home. Very many people do it this way. Many of them who often visit such places and say that one can get really beautiful things from there, that one can dress up greatly. But we cannot go there often; it is a big and difficult undertaking* (Ene, 70; Heldi, 73).

Three of the interviewees have their clothes made by dressmakers about once in three years. However, in such case the tailors are familiar ones, not the official professionals in sewing firms. Shoes are bought hardly ever, and if so, then again from different markets and bargain sales. The favourite shops are shoe centre ‘Walking’ in a new building – Emajõe Business Centre, *Plasku* (‘Flask’) in vernacular language, next to the main bus station in the city centre, a big shopping centre *Lõunakeskus* in the suburbs and *Pereking* (mostly domestic footwear) in Riia Street. As the aforementioned *Lõunakeskus* is not a part of informants’ weekly (shopping) route, advertisements in the media or information from acquaintances affect the route change. As it came out in choosing or not choosing some place for buying clothes, the economic reasons are not always the most important ones – there are just not suitable forms of footwear to acquire. *There are no good boots in shops. An older person has a wider foot. I went to this Lõunakeskus and Plasku in the centre but haven’t found suitable ones* (Eve, 63).

It could be presumed that if people do not go to work daily any more, enjoying visiting shopping places is a chance to get out of the home. However, this can not be concluded from the interviews. The material resources are low and also most of the interviewees lived an active life shopping being an inevitable duty not a variety.

Finnish researcher Timo Kopomaa brings out the dual social move-

ment in the open public city space: horizontal and vertical. Vertical moving marks the movement between roles of the user of the space. Horizontal moving marks movement between spaces or places (Kopomaa 1997: 30). If the interviewee passes from market place to Kaubamaja or the small shops in the centre, we can observe, with some concessions, those two movements taking place simultaneously. His or her role as an actual shopper will be alternated with the role of window-shopper. *Well, after all the official affairs I walk in the city, watch the shop windows* (Ella, 70).

When I go to town, then I go to Kaubamaja and Kaubahall, and to bookshops. There I watch and wonder and if there are sales, I buy children books (Ebe, 56).

According to Baudrillard, big shopping centres and large consumption are evidences of consuming becoming one of the main parts of life. In such big malls, people buy on the principle *pars pro toto* as it is not possible to acquire all the goods (Åström 1993: 321). In the lives of the interviewees, big shopping centres (for example Kaubamaja and Kaubahall) have importance as prestigious consuming places. They do not visit those places as nodes of an everyday shopping route but only when so-called luxury goods are needed, mostly gifts for close ones. *I have nothing to do in the big shops, only when I need to buy a present* (Sille, 71).

As the supplies are comparatively expensive, big shops cause both mental and physical rejection for the interviewees. The informant may remember and have liked the big shops in her childhood during the First Estonian Republic but nowadays these shops mean unpleasant experiences due to the noise, size and level of prices. Also, a certain place may be less favoured because of the lack of companions with whom to visit it (the same can be observed in the case of cafes and theatres).

[But buying clothes from those “real shops”, doesn’t it happen sometimes?] *I never go there, not even to have a look! It is so expensive there and the price says everything and eyes get so tired there. We went to this Zeppelin; there are many firms and things like this, very colourful and noisy... But what concerns shoes and clothes – we do not even go to such departments* (Ella, 70).

It is very complicated to mark the changes of shopping places and habits of senior age compared to those of working age. In some cases, the retirement came along with the new Republic of Estonia, and thus the solvent period and deficiency in goods were alternated with low

pensions and full shops. Also some of the former shops and other familiar firms are lost and new ones (e.g. second-hand shops) have taken their places and therefore the continuous shopping habit has been hindered.

I visit shops less than I did at my working age. Then I started my life and needed everything (Elli, 68).

One reason which reduces the interviewees' use of city spaces for shopping is the appearance of mail-order catalogues within the last ten years; and the services which have also become available close to one's home. So the shopping place has partly moved over to the private sphere of home. Two of the informants mentioned buying things every now and then from the sale agents who go from door to door; and four of them buy milk products twice a week from the milkman who comes to neighbourhood. Those factors are also narrowing elements in the use of city spaces for shopping.

2. City space as a venue for spending free time

2.1. Day Centres

12 of the 14 interviewees are reached via Pensioners' day centres. Therefore, such organisations have an important role to play for them in the daily use of city space and time. They spend their free time either in the centre or engaged in activities connected to the centre. There are three such institutions in Tartu. The main tasks of those are to help senior and handicapped citizens in their everyday activities. Besides day centres, there are non-governmental organisations like *Kodukotus* with a specialised elderly people's institute (Ahland 2001; Sotsiaalabi osakonna allasutused, online). All the senior unions in Tartu offer free time activities involving libraries, computers, health and culture lectures, handicraft associations, senior dance and gymnastics clubs, choirs, meetings with interesting people etc. Last but not least – in Tähtvere Day Centre the elderly people may have a cheaper lunch. The interviewees' attitude regarding the centres is unexceptionally positive; they bring forth the good sides and all the reductions that come through them.

Being a member of such a centre or union affects directly the use of city time: for example, a cheaper senior theatre ticket that can be obtainable via the union is valid for certain day-time plays. It is characterised as a positive phenomena because walking in the city in dark nights is considered an unsafe thing to do. One respondent participates in the senior dance group in the centre three times per

week but with the dance group he visits different parts of Tartu at least once per month. When the group is invited to give a show outside of Tartu, the social city space (*i.e.*, dancing with his group) is expanded outside the physical borders of Tartu. Every now and then, the space not meant for senior citizens becomes changed into older people space. The NGO *Kodukotus* arranges twice per month dance events for the elderly at the night-club *Terminal*, which is situated on the ground floor of a student dormitory in Narva Road 27, and in the university Building of Physics in Tähe Street. There is a library bus once per month at the day centre in Tähtvere, which reduces the seniors' need to visit the different libraries in Tartu.

The active participation in the day centres is varied from five days (all possible activities of the centre) to once per week (only the religious meeting). During summer seasons and weekends the centres are open for a limited period. Most of the informants take part in club work in several day centres. The important task of the centres is to offer gymnastics and health lessons. Through the senior unions, it becomes possible to visit places where one could not go on self-initiative:

[Through the union, I went to] a *computer course*, and the course in *sexual education*, and this swimming centre *Aura*, 'Europe' paid it all (Riina, 54).

2.2. Theatre, exhibition, concert, museum

My question, how do the respondents entertain themselves, was often answered negatively: it is not necessary to have entertainment at such an (high) age, they never have such wishes, and that they do not have enough money for entertainment. However, in the course of interviews it turned out that it is not so. Almost all of the seniors like to visit the theatre. Often the Vanemuine Concert Hall is also mentioned as a loved place. The favoured places are the Large and Small Vanemuine, only a few have visited the new *Sadamateater*.³ No one mentioned visiting the smaller, so-called alternative theatres. A certain border is experienced in connection with *Sadamateater*. Coming over of this border is difficult for a senior citizen, the theatre is seen as a *theatre for young people*, *we retired people have nothing to watch there*.

[Do you visit only the Vanemuine or other theatres, too?] *With this Kodukotus I went everywhere, but in Tartu, here I visit theatre Vanemuine. I have not reached Sadamateater; my son says that there is*

³ Large and Small Vanemuine, *Sadamateater* are the theatres of Tartu.

nothing for elderly people, only one play where the actor is alone on the stage... (Eve, 63).

There will be this Tarmo Pihlap memorial concert in the Concert Hall soon, ticket price is 120.- /—/ Next door woman, she is a working retired person and money is not a problem for her, if you are a pensioner and want to go, then go, but the financial resources are so low (Anni, 75).

The frequency of theatre visits is various. Some of the informants go there as much as possible with the cheaper retired people's season ticket. Some of them do not go there at all, either they dislike theatre art or they simply do not have companions. Also, the same phenomena as in participating in dance group can be observed here – sometimes routes connected to theatre expand outside of the physical borders of Tartu. The members of the union, *Kodukotus*, go together to see plays in Viljandi, Tallinn etc. Two of the informants have joined the Vanemuine Society, in order to see dress rehearsals cheaply or for free.

We joined this society because of the dress rehearsals, then we can see them for free. It is very useful to our thin purses. This society takes us to museums, and we can watch the singing competitions. There are not so many dress rehearsals per year, but it is still a good deal. We cannot go there every time, sometimes this rehearsal is closed (Ene, 70; Helle, 73).

A cheaper ticket may include a consciously smaller theatre impression as the atmosphere and the audience of the dress rehearsal are not the same as during “the real play”, also the time of the play is “not the right one”.

Generally, I have visited the theatre quite a lot, and one can visit the dress rehearsal, even if the impression is not that “real” (Eve, 63).

One of the respondents brought forth the interdependency between the possibilities to visit the places of entertainment and seasons of the year. During winter months, it is impossible to save money for theatres etc. due to the high rents and heating bills and the main entertainment comes via the TV-set and home library. During summer months, it is easier to pay for such expenses, too.

This year [in March – ML] we haven't been anywhere yet – you cannot go anywhere during wintertime, the rents are high (Paul, 63).

Seasonal interchange of the use of city space may also be observed in other cases. Theatre is a free-time place to be in winter, whereas in summer (theatres are closed then), the respondents are fond of visiting the Song Festival Arena and other areas where the open-air concerts are held, either with a purchased ticket or for free. Perhaps, it is possible for the informants to spend more money on entertainment during summer

seasons, or they want to definitely visit habitual and known events, like Song Festivals.

I go to the Song Square in summer, because there is this Midsummer Day Festival. [Are those by ticket? – ML] Yes but I can afford that. Yes there are concerts and I've been there (Hilli, 83).

I go to male choir concerts. In summertime, I go to the Song Square happenings. If there is something more difficult but interesting, we've been there, too. Mostly in this Concert Hall. Not lately as there are so many things to do, there's no time to go... (Eve, 63).

In regard to my question, if and how often they visit churches, it came out that the churches are used less on religious purposes but for (free) concerts. The informants look up the advertisements from the newspapers and they consider such church concerts especially good chances for retired people to enjoy mostly quite expensive music events. No one said they were regular visitors of ceremonies and four of the respondents go to church in Tartu hardly ever no matter what the reasons were. The informants who were obtained through the Tähtvere Day Centre have a weekly one- hour religious meeting in the Centre.

I haven't been to church for a long time. I used to visit those concerts there. I like singing not so much the sermons (Salli, 83).

But this Salem church has really this living god there, and there are those very good concerts, they have the whole programme in a week. Last Sunday I went there 2 times, it was very good (Riina, 54).

One of other reasons to visit city churches is the invitation of the voluntary evangelists who stop people on the streets and in graveyards and knock on doors, and also people go there for curiosity. One of the informants has agreed with their spouse to go through all temples of different sects; one of them admits to be a Bahá'í who do not have a temple of their own.

We go to churches quite rarely. We went there, whose members come to our door once per month, those Jehovah's Witnesses. It is beautiful there, worth a visit, they do not force anything. It is over there, close to the new bridge. They study the Bible, like a course and lecture, it was interesting and nice. Not like in our church, singing and praying. No juveniles. They are quite intrusive, though (Ella, 70).

Visiting exhibition halls is not as favoured as visits to theatre and concerts. Here the ticket price or free ticket is a less important factor, it is more a matter of individual habits. For example, respondent Anni has a cold attitude towards the exhibitions in Tartu, even if she would like to visit them somewhere else, outside of the town. Riina, on the

contrary, considers exhibition visits one essential part of her life in city.

I like concerts a lot, but the exhibitions... I have not visited any in Tartu, I even don't know where they are... sometimes I read about it from the newspaper. If it were Versailles or the Louvre... (Anni, 75).

And if there are some exhibitions, I always go if possible, at least in order to have a walk, I take this purpose, either to an exhibition or opening one. There was this very interesting exhibition on Women's Day there in Vanemuise Monumentaalgalerii. I take a decision and begin to go. How were they called, something like women... feminists, there were all kind of themes, very interesting, could be more (Riina, 54).

In seven cases, the informants mentioned, in passing, the role of a grandparent affecting their use of the city space. Depending on the age of the grandchild, the grandparent's city space is expanded to churches, different museums (including the Estonian Agricultural Museum, which lies about 2 km from the city border), McDonald's and fun parks during summer time. When I asked to point out important places in Tartu for her, Riina was guided by the role of nanny and/or relative.

Ropka and Rahu, I live here somewhere... It is important... What else – sister's place in Annelinn, I go there to baby-sit, then this day centre in Mõisavahe; and Ristiku Street at my son's place, grandchildren. Also this Killustiku Street, there live my parents in law, and in the graveyard and in the church in Narva Road (Riina, 54).

All the interviewees mentioned graveyards Rahumäe, Maarja, Raadi, Pauluse as places to visit more or less regularly (more in summer season). Such visits carry several functions. Besides remembering the passed ones on their relevant days, they go there to have a healthy walk and to look at the graves.

I go to churchyard quite often, as I like to, even daily, it is nice to walk there (Hilli, 83).

A couple of years ago I took part in a walkers' group. We went to churchyards and other places where one does not go usually (Ene, 70).

2.3. Cafés and other eating places

Finnish researcher Jaana Ojala notes in her book about the history of the cafeterias of Jyväskylä, that whether the visit to a café belongs to everyday or a holiday alternates accordingly to the attitude of the visitor, place and the visiting situation. Daily routine visits to a cafe will be a festive undertaking if the visitor wants, for example, to reward her/himself for something with a cake (Ojala 1999: 119). For my interviewees, eating out is rather a rare holiday entertainment, as almost all

of them emphasised the extremely high prices in such places. If the respondent has never been very fond of it, he/she has kept it this way. Some of them admit trying hard to continue it as often as they used to do it while still working and several say that they go for it less than they would like to, once per month or less. Sometimes, the shopping in the market-square is continued with a following reward – a visit to a café.

If you go to take care of something to centre or to market-square, then you go there, quickly, when you have free time. I go to this Teatrikohvik terrace, a nice view and. But I think, yes, this purse, I am not used this way, perhaps someone has to have counted cents throughout the life, but not me. Nowadays I just cannot afford to visit cafés, if you go there once, then you have this "hole in the purse". A cup of coffee and a cake, they are so expensive now (Anni, 75).

Mostly this visit takes place about once per month, with the members of senior's social network – friends and relatives. More favourable places are *Teatrikohvik*⁴ as there are other people of the same age and the visit can be a part of the theatre visit, also the cafes Werner and Wilde are popular. Interviews reveal some places that have stronger emotional background, probably thanks to the long experience of the respondents. *Teatrikohvik* is visited most often, in connection with theatre visits. In a few cases, the interview gives an expression that a visit to *Teatrikohvik* is difficult to recall since the place is not taken as a "real café". Such a statement can be illustrated with an interview situation where a spouse comments on the given answers.

[When did you last go to a café? – ML] *I do not remember at all. Haven't been for a very long time.* [Spouse: What are you talking about, you just were to this *Teatrikohvik*...] *Yes, of course, we were there recently. In the cafeteria, if I don't count the cafés of theatre and sport buildings, I have not been [during the last year] (Paul, 63).*

So, I have always visited cafés and continue to do so. I like to. Always have. In old times, then Werner all the time. But now I do not like it any more, there is no such atmosphere any more. There were those good buns. Now the place lacks the right attitude, there is no such culture any more, and the café culture is different (Sille, 71).

Visits to restaurants and other eating-places have remained with the period of active working (pro Soviet) time. Eating out is extremely exceptional and mostly a part of some family memorable day, or

⁴ Theatre Café, situated in the building of Large Vanemuine having a beautiful view over Tartu.

connected to a former workplace.

Wilde, McDonald's, we just sat with our family. Also in the restaurant Neljas Aste, and in the Korean restaurant. Children invite me. The sponsors support my former workplace a lot. And it does not matter that I am retired now, they still invite me! (Sille, 71).

Only one of the respondents mentioned having lunch outside of home or day centre every now and then. It allows her to combine entertainment and looking for information (TV, newspapers) which she lacks at home. Also, as it was observable in the process of making church mostly a concert place, the restaurant is transferred primarily to place of enjoying rather dance than food.

[In restaurant *Nostalgia*, at Pikk Street] *there was this dancing floor from 22.00; we did not go to see this entertainment as you had to buy a separate ticket for it. We danced by ourselves, and spent 100 crowns on average. A little wine and beer and bric-a-brac. Teatrikohvik, restaurants Nostalgia, Entri, Aleksandri. We did not want to eat and drink, but to dance. Two crazy ones. At least once per month* (Anni, 75).

Cafes, theatres, exhibition halls and day centres are the public space of the city. However, the respondents also mentioned their home as a place, which fulfils several functions at the same time, often being the most pleasant place to be. Here, having entertainment at home, not inevitably outside of it, could serve as an example. The older people get more of their everyday events and festive events inside of the home walls (Pohjolainen 1983).

My entertainment is TV. I like to read good books at home (Paul, 63).

My hobby is to do handicraft at home (Elli, 68).

TV is a cheap and good friend for me (Salli, 83).

3. City space as a place for taking care of health

There were no common ways to take care of one's health, as the health condition, time spent for taking care for it and places to do it were various. Three out of 14 respondents had retired due to bad health and thus they had to deal with health care a lot. Another three claimed that they never visit doctors and others visited such places irregularly.

Besides the family doctors close to interviewees' homes (Maarjamõisa, Mõisavahe, and Gildi Streets) and the Dental Clinic at Raekoja Square, help is sought from private/alternative doctors. There are gymnastic groups at the day centres, which are poly-functional: they help to keep people in good shape as well as partly satisfy the need for communication. Retired people meet each other there and also the

group trips are organised outside of the city space.

A pensioner's moving route can be expanded due to the obtaining of cheaper health goods. For example, one interviewee used to fetch certain reduced-price health goods from the clinic, Maarjamõisa, close to her home. After the reduction was abandoned, she also changed the purchase place, and after finding an even cheaper one, she did it once again.

But now those Rohupood shops have emerged, also in this Karete shop. And I went there. In ITAK [in Ringtee] one package was 67.50, but in Rohupood 62.20. Five crowns is money too, and now I go to this Rohupood, and in Maarjamõisa I said I will not come here again, since I get it cheaply from another place (Ella, 70).

Also, the interviewees mention fetching health care brochures from different town libraries, although it is difficult to be there in time (the brochures are very popular). In choosing chemists and places of health care services the comfortable physical position or accessibility are not as important as the cheaper or free service. The sums, which tip the scales in favour to one or another place, often seem very small to a bystander. Nice and suitable company for an older person may sometimes overcome the financial side.

I used to go to gymnastics in Kodukotus. But it was not free and the fee got bigger. Then I went to this Kalda Street centre, it was for free, and now it is 4 crowns per hour. Then a familiar person in that Kodukotus asked me to come back there, that it is 25 crowns per month while we pay 32 crowns per month here. We said that it is really much. But as two friends of mine went to Kalda Street, I went there too. There were all strange for me in there at Tähtvere, I did not like it. Now I do not want to give up this Kalda Street, even if it is financially more difficult for me (Ene, 70).

Walking daily routes is a peaceful and suitable alternative for bus transport in taking care of one's health. Walking in town is a not stressful way of moving because it is one of the sports that a pensioner goes in for, besides gymnastic groups (Laidmäe 2001). The interviewees walk gladly to shopping places but not when returning from there. In some cases, walking is preferred when the city transport is unfamiliar and when it would take too much time to reach the goal by bus. Disliking walking is substantiated with increased laziness in retirement age and with weakened health. Having a pet affects the use of the city space directly: with a dog, the senior citizen walks long distances and happens upon places where she/he would have not gone otherwise (for example, the further areas of the banks of river Emajõgi; or in one case

the dogs' school).

You forget about Tartu, if you don't go there. You have to keep the laziness away! (Ella, 70).

4. Pleasant and unpleasant areas

If there is space, there are borders. The borders of areas can be mental, physical, they can be social, material, symbolic, continuous or temporary and they are in continuous change. The task of borders is to control the relations between inside and out. The mental borders are harder to come up to than the physical ones being at the same time more flexible (Junkala 1999: 21). There are several factors that cause the feelings of borders and the areas behind boundaries may be experienced directly either as unsuitable or dangerous, or on the contrary, pleasant and cosy. In my paper, I have been interested in the mental borders of the informants – if and how, do they perceive the open and closed areas/borders in Tartu. The informants' emotions concerning mental borders often depend on unpleasant or pleasant memories, on social prejudices or on their high age. Also temporal aspects may have an affect if a place is accepted or not accepted – during the day time *Toomemägi*, the Dome Hill, is a charming and loved place but the interviewees would not go there at night due to criminal behaviour.

Someone like me wouldn't go to Atlantis⁵ and to the restaurant. Of course, if there would be my own company, then, but just me alone, no... (Elli, 68).

I think the graveyard is an especially pleasant place. There are no places for a person as old as me (Salli, 83).

The subjective images of Tartu were studied in the last section of the interview. The most contradictory question was about the pleasant (where it is comfortable and nice to be and where would he/she like to go again) and unpleasant places in Tartu. When talking about pleasant and unpleasant areas, there were particular symbols picked up by the informants. It came out that the informants do have very different attitudes against the (new) symbols of Tartu. A place that awakens nice feelings in one of the respondents has a negative aura in the mind of another.

For example, *Emajõe Ärikeskus* (Business Centre) was a good sign of the renewing city and successful life for interviewee Sille (71), but

⁵ A popular night-club.

several others wish it to never have been built. Also *Kivisild* (Stone Bridge) which was blown up in 1941 and its successor *Kaarsild* (Bow Bridge), built in the 1950s are often remembered as contradictory symbols of Tartu.

It is so nice that there are those new buildings in city centre. And this Emajõe Plasku, I like it, town looks totally different nowadays (Sille, 71).

There are so many large stone buildings, and now this Plasku in city centre, it should not have been built! (Ene, 70).

To restore Kivisild – I am totally against it, what’s gone that’s gone. Just like making an old person young again, it is not the same any more (Paul, 63).

I want to build Kivisild again! Of course, building the tower of this Jaani Church was important, but how many of Tartu inhabitants actually visit it? But Kivisild must be built instead of this awful Kaarsild, to restore the entity: The Town Hall, the Square and the Kivisild (Heli, 74).

With one exception, all the interviewees were deeply satisfied with their present home district and environment, even if the house environment or city district area seems to be unpleasant to a bystander. The reasons of satisfaction are a nearby bus stop, greenery, silence, but quite often, those reasons are not finally formulated. The satisfaction could be a result of a humane wish to think and feel good in one’s own area. It is a person’s home, which is familiar and to which the smaller and bigger deficiencies are forgiven.

Those sleeping-areas⁶ they are not so very favourable... But on the other hand, the older you get the easier it is, all those comforts and central heating, as long as you can afford to pay for them, it is good, no matter how nice or bad the appearance of the houses are. Nothing makes this area especially good, here is no real park, but you know, one gets used to everything (Anni, 75).

From different town districts, Tähtvere with its two-floor garden houses is brought out as an area with a clear image, which has been formed through the years. Besides big houses, nice gardens and eye catching architecture, it has always been “a bit better place”, the area where professors and other educated people live.

[What would you say about this Haava Street? – ML] *Here live the more educated people! Like my husband’s father. /—/ A district of*

⁶ Big blocks of flats, Annelinn, built in the 1980’s and known as a ‘sleeping-room’ in people’s language.

educated people. In Kooli Street, there are usual ones, but here live such educated ones (Elli, 68).

This district Tähtvere is generally a different district. It has always been considered a better one. It was called the district of professors; there are all two-floor houses, a bit bigger ones. Nowadays, all those garden cities look the same, but this Tähtvere is still the most pleasant one (Anni, 75).

The city centre is also an area, which for no special reason awakens negative or, on the contrary, rather positive emotions as one can be there “in the middle of life”. The pleasantness of certain areas of Tartu is often substantiated with a general emotional background connected to it: places often visited in working age and those places with which the respondent associates his/her Tartu-identity that can not always be clearly articulated. *Tartu is my town, and mine is always sweeter than strange ones (Salli, 83).*

The places are not only geographical but also historical. The experiences, impressions and feelings are fixed to the places and thus the past memories have an important role in making a place unpleasant in Tartu. Although the Soviet Army has left Tartu years ago, the town district where it was mainly located has still a negative form – even if the interviewee’s own home is far away from it, for example in Ropka district.

[Are there any districts in Tartu, where you would not like to go? – ML] *To this army district in Annelinn, I don’t like this Russian Army division. It is so dirty and nasty and awful. It is situated over there, behind everything. I have never liked it (Sille, 71).*

There were those Stakhanov and Sovetskaya Streets, when I came here [1971 – ML], that is such district where I do not go practically. I do not go to the airport either⁷ (Paul, 63).

Another informant who had experienced fear in a particular place about 20 years ago immediately recalled it and presented the place as still existing nowadays Tartu. [Are there any districts in Tartu, where you would not like to go? – ML] *I would not like to go to those men who drive around in a barrel. It was unpleasant, I was scared. Crazy Germans, fortunately all of them are alive. [?] 20–30 years ago (Riina, 54).*⁸

⁷ The airport close to Tartu used by Soviet Army, not in active use any more.

⁸ I failed to get a more detailed description of this event.

I also asked if the interviewee considers Tartu a safe or unsafe town. Hardly ever the respondents had experienced the direct personal maltreatment in town, therefore it can be said that the imagination and opinion about the non-safe areas is formed on the grounds of media and the stories of acquainted people. Tartu is considered a safe town; it comes out in the often-stated opposition regarding Tallinn. Tartu is peaceful, small, silent and pleasant while Tallinn is unpleasant and dangerous.

[Is Tartu safe? – ML] *I don't know, not lately, I don't dare to go out during nights, and I see that the younger ones don't dare either. But compared to Tallinn and Kohtla-Järve, of course it is much safer* (Eve, 63).

A rarely active informant, who seldom reads newspapers and whose moving routes are limited to a day centre, Market House once per week and walking her dog along the river banks, has no clearly negative experiences regarding any of the town districts and she is not afraid to walk her dog even in dark hours. Here I assume that her brave attitude has been formed through a narrower social circle and irregular media observation, because of which news causing fears reach her less than other respondents.

5. Conclusion

The most determinative factor in the use made of urban space and choice of spatial practices can be said to be economic aspects and financial possibilities, followed by health factors and the existence of social networks (for example whether the senior citizen in question has a companion for their different undertakings). The main purpose for using urban space is shopping for foodstuffs. The route and places frequented for this task are mostly determined by cost considerations and habit. That makes the open food markets, wholesale food firms and second-hand shops valuable and often visited places in urban spaces, whilst large shopping centres are considered expensive, inaccessible and raucous places, lacking comfortable conditions for senior citizens. In addition to expense, it might also be proffered that senior citizens have a tendency not to select modern shopping centres as locations for buying clothes as they generally do not contain outlets which stock suitable attire.

The pensioners' second main purpose in using urban space, spending free time, is largely dependent on their low financial income. Senior citizens' look continuously for cheap, yet still high-quality possible

ways in which to enjoy cultural life, either in the day-care centres or by using special discount tickets made available to senior citizens. In the case that they are unable for some reason to use public urban spaces, the private space of their home will also be utilised as a place of entertainment. In this case, the television, radio and home library replace visits to the theatre and cinema. When visiting the theatre, the time of day attended depends on when discounted tickets are available. Eating out, going to public restaurants and cafes is disproportionately expensive compared to senior citizens income and they can afford less of such entertainment than was possible during their employed lives.

The third purpose of pensioners' urban space use is related to taking care of their health. There is no clear model of health behaviour in city spaces as health conditions vary a lot inside the studied group. One activity may have several functions, for example, senior citizens use walking to the exhibition hall or to the shop, instead of taking a bus, in order to have some physical exercise. They also participate in the low-price or free exercise groups conducted at the day centres and listen to health care lectures in the same place.

Whether a certain area in Tartu is particularly liked or disliked in senior citizens' minds depends on their personal experience, as well as the image gleaned from media coverage. Crime does occur in Tartu, yet it still represents a relatively peaceful and safe town if contrasted with other areas and towns in Estonia.

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