

## Effects of Socio-Economic Changes in Post-Soviet Estonia on Landscape Diversification

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The focus on this paper is south-west part of Estonia located in the surroundings of Pärnu County, on the coast of Baltic Sea. The end of the USSR epoch caused great economical and sociopolitical reformation of Estonia. Like other post-soviet countries, this caused considerable changes in the socio-economic and administrative structure. Land management system and urban development significantly changed in the past 20 years, which reflects overall socio-economic and political situation in Estonia. Nowadays, suburbanization and development of second houses become the major and most evident processes in current urban dynamics of modern Estonia.

There are multiple processes explaining this phenomena, and various factors triggering this process, which are analyzed in the current paper. The suburbanization process is not only influenced by the economic and political factors characteristic for Estonia. This process is now notable in various European cities and becoming new characteristics of modern urban development in Europe. Overall, the structure of European cities become less compact and dense, and more dispersed. There are multifold and complex factors explaining process of intensive second home development. The most evident are socio-demographic (depopulation, reset-

tlement) and economic reasons (change in employment and occupations structure). Regionally, this is typical for northern and eastern Europe (Estonia).

The research aims at spatial and socio-economic analysis of landscape patterns in Baltic coastal area of Estonia. The process of active suburbanization, which is analyzed in the current work, is caused by complex socio-economical factors which arise from sociopolitical changes since the end of the USSR. Study area encompasses Baltic coastal region of Pärnu County. The social-economic triggers causing intensive construction of summer cottages and landscape types were examined. The methodology is based on the socio-economic analysis of suburbanization based on statistical data and mapping of the landscapes. Mapping was performed using GIS, land cover maps and Landsat data. Fieldwork and in-situ observations were performed to detect built-up areas in Pärnu surroundings and proved intensive construction residential buildings in Pärnu, demonstrating changes in immobility system in modern Estonia, which affects landscapes. The results illustrate highly heterogeneous and diverse landscape types in the study area.

**Keywords:** Estonia, landscape diversification, suburbanization, landscape, changes.