



European Sustainable Energy Seminar

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Venue: Nordic Folkecenter for Renewable Energy, Ydby, Denmark



Policies for Sufficiency as Climate Policies Presentation of Sufficiency Policies and Proposals from Estonia

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Presentation is part of Proceedings: https://inforse.org/europe/seminar_2026_INFORSE-Europe_Denmark.htm



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Sufficiency Measures in Estonia

Created by Juta Kruusmäe

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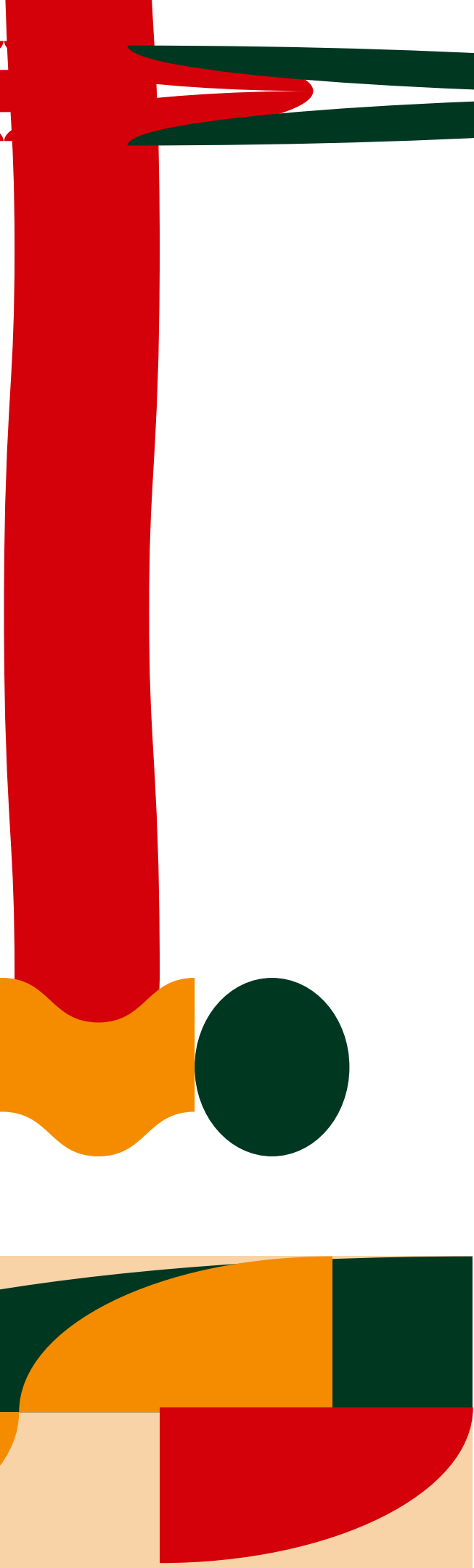


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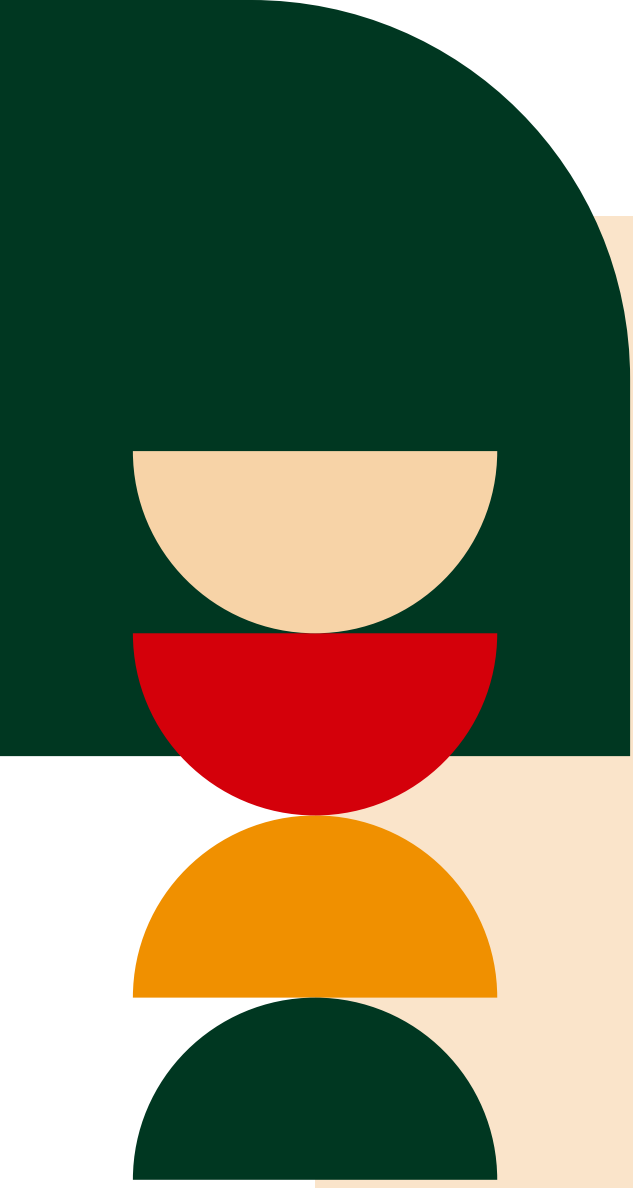
Estonian context

- The Soviet legacy hinders the principle of sufficiency. Due to **historical deprivation**, Estonians prefer to own things, such as a personal car. This is why conscious consumption reduction and the sharing economy have not yet become social norms. Now also rooted free-market capitalism, a digital-first economy, national security and individual liberty; environmentalism or circular economy is not a priority.
- A lack of funding and systemic support hinders development. Although there is significant **interest** in the circular economy at the **local level** (e.g. municipalities, civil society), actual development is hindered by **shrinking budgets** and a lack of national, systemic support for new initiatives.
- The "Out of Sight, Out of Mind" Regional Bias (**Ida-Virumaa**). Estonians care about forests, but public silence on water, and soil contamination, ecosystem degradation, as well as corporate accountability. Also, **energy poverty**.

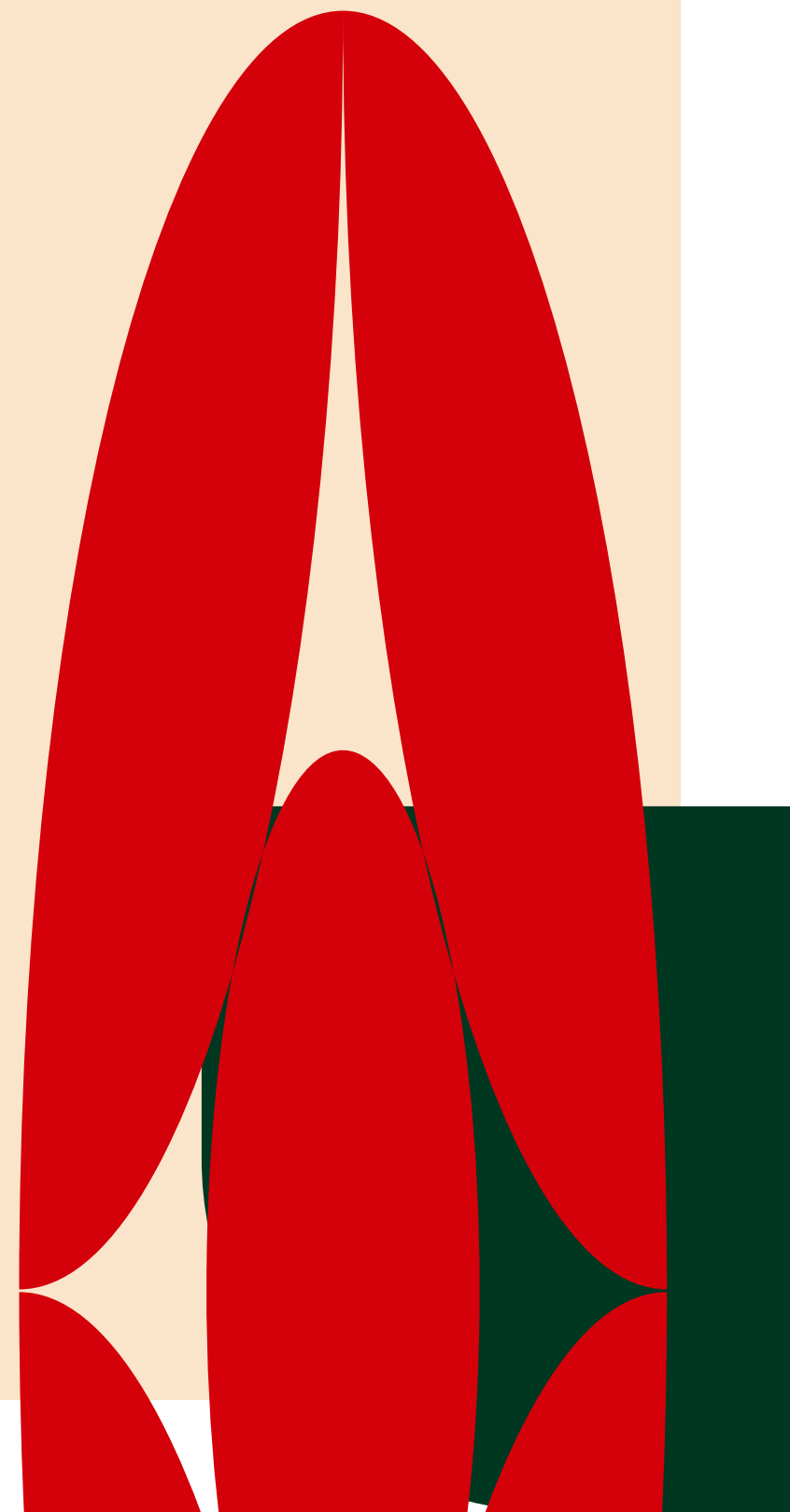


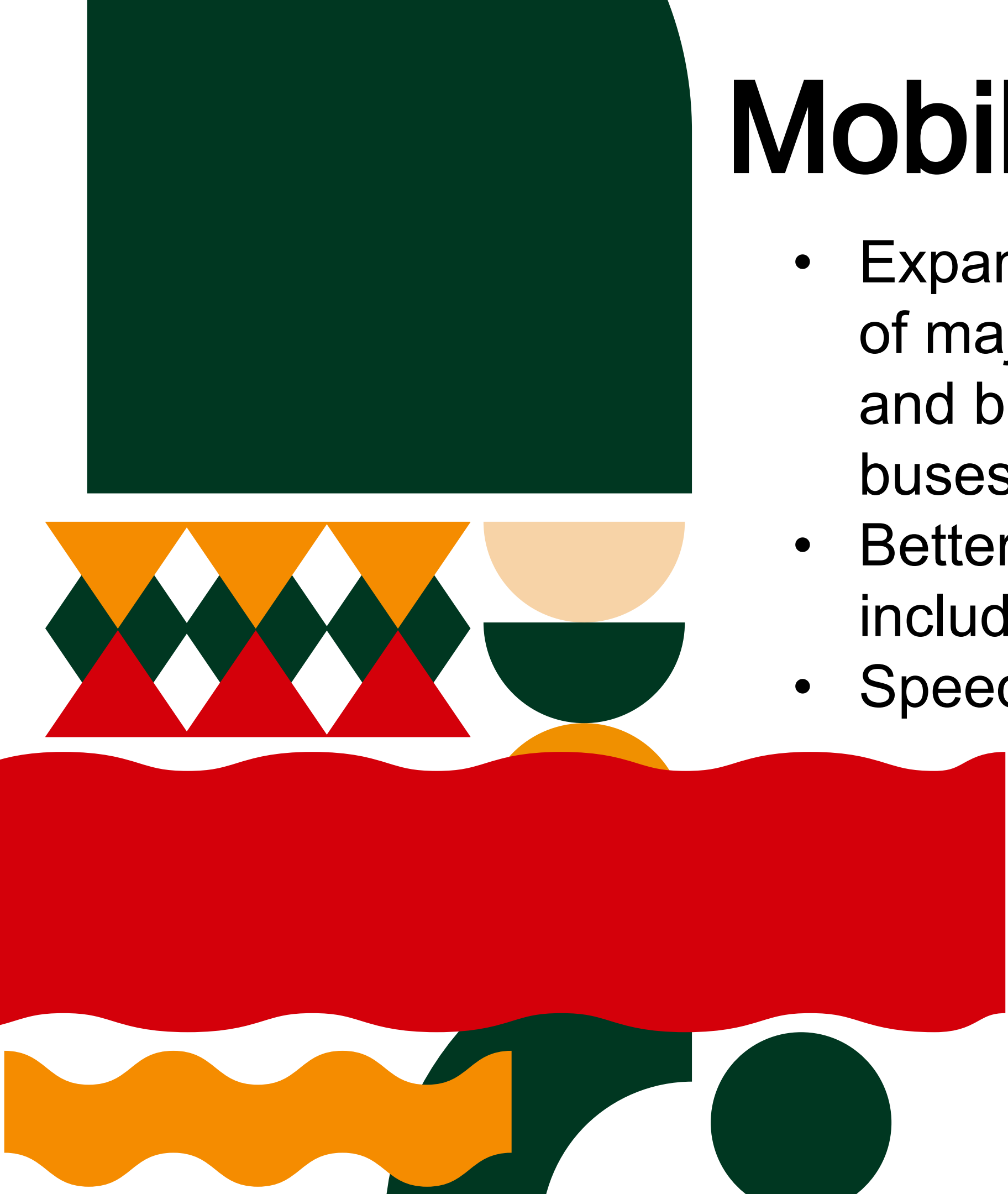
Housing & Buildings

- Focus: Policies prioritize **renovating and improving energy efficiency** of existing buildings, rather than reducing housing size. Soviet-era inefficient housing stock → strong sufficiency potential (reduced heating demand)
 - The first version of the Estonian National Building Renovation Plan for 2050 has been prepared by the Ministry of Climate + 2 universities
 - The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications' **tips on how to save energy in homes** in response to the energy crisis in 2022
 - Trend: **more land was developed for fewer people** (Estonia saw one of the highest growth rates in built-up area per capita among OECD countries (2000–2014), despite a 5% population decrease, indicating inefficient land use).
- 



Housing & Buildings #2

- Building materials and circular economy, treating waste as a resource: **materials from demolition are reused** or recycled - at least 2 construction and demolition waste sales platforms (*ehitus - ja lammutusjätmete müügiplatvormid*), e.g., the Sustainable Renovation Information Centre
 - Pay-per-use Model: **renting a mobile sauna** vs building one
 - Tiny Houses: They are available, but are mostly used as summer houses or Airbnb rentals, not as primary residences.
- 

A large dark green rounded rectangle is in the top left. Below it is a row of geometric shapes: three orange triangles pointing down, three dark green diamonds, and three red triangles pointing up. To the right of these are two semi-circles, one orange (top) and one dark green (bottom). Below these is a large red wavy horizontal bar. At the bottom left is an orange wavy horizontal bar, and at the bottom right is a dark green circle.

Mobility

- Expanding reliable public transport outside of major cities is needed, as is better train and bus transport, including on-demand buses.
- Better cycling infrastructure is needed, including around schools.
- Speed limits should be reduced.



Consumer Goods / Products

- **Repair Cafes** : Community/NGO -organized (e.g., Tartu Paranduskelder), or Municipality -led: Tallinn Circular Economy Centers have Repair Shops, paid professional repairers and offer mending opportunities for free for citizens.
volunteer -driven & passion -driven approach vs continues funding .

“We can’t repair this, we do not have spare parts for this...” R **epair untapped potential:**
3D Printing Metal and Plastic **to create spare parts** for white good and smaller electrical appliances that otherwise would be hard to find. Paranduskelder at Tartus. Benefits:
Prolongs Equipment Lifespan. (Public libraries could link more with the repair concept)

Consumer Goods / Products

- **Borrowing rather than owning** : At Tallinn's public libraries: the Chest of Musical Instruments (‘ Pillilaegas ’) and the Chest of Tools (‘ Tööriistalaegas ’). Tartu Library of Seeds (‘Seemneraamatukogu ’), the Plants Exchange Box (‘Taimevahetuskapp ’)
- Some **local recycling centres** and municipal waste stations now operate as, or have partnerships with, reuse & donation centres for **clothing and furniture** . The **Reuse Room (Swap Shops)** offers free stuff to all.



#3 Consumer Goods / Products

- The Guidelines for events in Tartu in 2022, same in Tallinn in 2023, then 2025 the Estonian National Guide for Organizing Environmentally Friendly Events (via the Ministry of Climate available in Estonian, Russian and English)
<https://kliimaministeerium.ee/en/estonian-national-guide-organizing-environmentally-friendly-events>
- National policy uptake and systematic impact: in 2023, most **public events** in Tallinn need to serve food and drinks **only in reusable containers and to use only reusable cutlery** (2024 all public events). 2024 similarly in Estonia. This means banning single-use tableware at public events.

Food: Waste Reduction

- ResQ Club (Finnish app): bargain prices to reduce waste + social media groups. Bigger engagement from sellers needed.
- Solar-powered **food recycling cabinets** / food distribution cabinets (sometimes with a refrigerator) for leftover food (*kogukondlik toiduringluskapp*) in different locations, (the community, the municipal government and local entrepreneurs).
A bigger network is needed, and we need to think about how to do it better; currently, there are huge queues.
- Better food management habits at home are needed too.

Photo credit: <https://rohevald.ee/polvas-avati-esimene-kogukondlik-toiduringluskapp/> # *Rohevald* = Green County



and plenty more initiatives here and there...

Read more:

<https://roheline.ee/piisavus/>

Sufficiency as Climate Action project

https://inforse.org/europe/Sufficiency_as_Climate_Action_Project.htm

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