

Call for Applications

PhD School, Tallinn, Estonia

7-11 September 2026

THE FUTURE OF MASS HOUSING HERITAGE

EXPLORING THE RESILIENT SUSTAINABILITY OF SOCIALIST-ERA HOUSING DISTRICTS

The Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), RWTH Aachen University, Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe in Leipzig (GWZO), with the support of Tallinn University and Tallinn University of Technology (Estonia) are jointly convening the PhD School “**The future of mass housing heritage. Exploring the resilient sustainability of socialist-era housing districts**”, in the framework of the collaborative research project cities.building.culture.

Based on the cities.building.culture research agenda, and the fieldwork conducted in cities and towns in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Armenia and Georgia, this PhD School contributes to the goal of developing **frameworks for resilient sustainability** in the transformation of residential architectural heritage from the Soviet era in a comparative perspective. Working on the example of Tallinn, participants will collectively explore questions such as:

- What are the **local challenges** of mass housing districts, and how are they **experienced and addressed** by different stakeholders?
- What **governance strategies** for sustainable development have been implemented so far, and what lessons emerge from their successes and failures?
- What **local values and knowledge**—traditional or newly negotiated—can guide future transformations?
- What **spatial and practical interventions** are needed to make Soviet-era residential areas more resilient and sustainable?

During a five-days program, participants will have the opportunity to work closely with academics, local experts, representatives of NGOs, and local authorities, engaging in a combination of lectures, seminars, and interactive workshops.

The PhD School provides a unique setting to:

- Develop insights into current research on sustainable urban transformation, the management of mass housing of the socialist period, and resilience
- Benefit from the expertise of local institutions and organizations active in housing, planning, and cultural heritage;
- Connect and exchange ideas with peers and professionals from across Europe;
- Explore mass housing districts of Tallinn through guided fieldwork and meetings with key stakeholders.

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Workshop Themes

Participants will engage with practitioners and local actors through workshops focusing on:

- Retrofitting and Renovation
- Maintenance and Neglect
- Open Spaces and Mobility

Eligibility

The PhD School is open to doctoral candidates from the fields of architecture, urban studies, planning, heritage conservation, urban geography, anthropology and related disciplines.

How to Apply

Please submit the following materials by **April 30, 2026** in one PDF document:

- A motivation letter (max. 1 page) explaining your research interests and their relevance to the PhD school themes
- A short CV (1 page)
- A brief abstract of your current doctoral project (300 words)

Send your application materials to iuga@staedtebau.rwth-aachen.de.

For more information on the project, please visit our website cities-building-culture.com. Successful applicants will be notified by email no later than **May 15, 2026**.

Fees

Attending the PhD School is free of charge. We will provide accommodation for the duration of the PhD School and contribute towards travel expenses within Europe.

Further details, including the final program and schedule, will be announced upon selection.

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