CITY, CATCH THE TIME!
Rediscovering socialist neighbourhoods in a new capitalist society
Case in Vilnius Lithuania

Summary of the graduation project

The graduation project is called “City, catch the time! Rediscovering socialist neighbourhoods in a new capitalist society”. The study case is Vilnius, capital of Lithuania. Focus of the project is socialist housing estates, known as microdistricts.

In the beginning of the year I have stated that those housing estates constructed until 1990s in all cities of the former USSR are declined, unattractive, and unsafe. However, after analysis of the study case city Vilnius I have found that the city has more problems than the housing estates. There is a big threat of sprawl, and all developments go away from sustainability. While housing estates are popular among citizens, have public transportation, green space, doors for development. Although still have a threat of decline and stigmatization.

Considering threats of the city and advantages of housing estates I have developed vision for the city: instead of monocentric sprawling city it has to become a polycentric city with network of centralities, connected by public transportation. A huge socialist housing area in the north of the city supposed to become one of the centralities. Now the site is in a complete city periphery, big sleeping district with 150 000 residents.

Strategy goal was to change that periphery into a centrality. According to study of modernist city was defined rules how it could be changed into a compact and diverse city. This part of the project is named concept rules for the strategy. Applying these rules, transport oriented development principles and advantages of the site was designed strategy how revitalize housing estates area and create a lively centrality. The strategy is divided into phases and projects like: developing three main axes with public transportation and creating an urban centre in between them. The centre is connected with the microdistricts. This connection is a tool to revitalize housing estates by changing their public space system and adding functions on the nodes. The strategy also defines links from microdistricts to the surrounding landscapes.

In the design part was elaborated one of the routes linking housing areas and the centre. The route project has main intervention areas: the centre – conversion of shopping malls into urban blocks, pedestrian shopping street, station area and urban square; in Fabijoniskes microdistrict – forming urban street, designing new houses along the route, moving public and commercial functions to the route, designing urban square and park avenue; in Pasiuliai microdistrict is formed route with a cultural and sports program, is designed community square and leisure and entertainment park. The approach of the project is to have less open space, but high quality and make space for new low rise housing. The effect of the interventions is – lively integrated housing areas, created centrality and a polycentric city.

Background image – route crosses housing estates with ground floor shops. In the back is seen urban centre with a tram line and station.

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