SOVIET OBJECTS AS SIGNS OF IDENTITY: VILNIUS

Exploring new speculation-free planning policies and paradigms between planners, municipality and civic society

DESIGN AS POLITICS: FOLLOW THE MONEY
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Lithuania:
Post-Socialist Welfare State

3 million of population
67% live in urban areas
16% in capital - Vilnius

Area - 65,200 km²
Density - 52/km² (120th)
Economy:
dependent on Baltic Sea Region

Sources: www.irpud.com; Tadas Jonauskis.
Transformation:
Complex transformations from an authoritarian, non-pluralistic political system to a democratic and pluralistic Welfare State.

Kiril Stanilov
Planner

No market based economic relations between cities were formed, which made the whole settlement network very vulnerable to system change.

Sources: www.irpud.com; own image.
Political/economic shift:
The restitution of land, amount of open territory in the periphery, the relaxation of land development controls and the establishment of an open land market.

CENTRALIZED ‘TOP-DOWN’ PLANNING:
A model of group settlement system

DECENTRALIZED, MARKET-ORIENTED PLANNING:
A model based on economic competition

Sources: www.irpud.com; own image.
Causes of Post-socialist transformation:

1. COUNTRY DEBT

Debt of Lithuania - 17,392 Billion EUR
Debt of Netherlands - 447,537 Billion EUR
2. MARKET-ORIENTED PLANNING

State > Comprehensive planning
3. SHRINKING CITIES. IMMIGRATION
4. SUBURBAN SPRAWL
Industry based economy  ▶  Service based economy
Centralized ‘top-down’ planning  ▶  Decentralized, poorly coordinated, market oriented planning
Compact, monocentric city structure  ▶  Sprawling, polycentric city structure
Growing population  ▶  Shrinking population
Vilnius:
typical post-socialist city in a period of transition

- Major economic centre of Lithuania
- 25% of Lithuania’s GDP

Population: 552,800
Area: 401 km²
Density: 1,391.9/km²

Opportunities for people to enjoy advantages of capitalism appeared. Car based developments following the needs of a market based economy like expansion of private houses into suburbia, shopping malls, decay of public transport are the characteristics of city in a transition period.
Vilnius vs Amsterdam
Amsterdam twice smaller, but four times denser

**AMSTERDAM**
Area: 219 km$^2$
Population: 762,057
Density: 4,459/km$^2$

**VILNIUS**
Area: 401 km$^2$
Population: 544,206
Density: 1,357/km$^2$

City comparison
Historical growth: typical post-socialist city in a period of transition
Vilnius Municipality: VISION FOR 2015

Vilnius City is going to become the Eastern and Central European leader. We will attract more investment, create new jobs, improve the social situation of the public and increase the revenue of Vilnius City budget.

Arturas Zuokas
Mayor

It is not only about privileging financial sector, yes there is a role for municipal services, not to serve the people, but they should create a good business climate.

David Harvey
Sociologist
Foreign Direct investment
Emerging economy (or was it?)

Lithuania is emerging as an ideal destination for foreign investors to immigrate to, particularly due to its attractive geographical location and gateway to Europe.
Vilnius municipality
Huge ambitions! Failed...

CITY FAILURE
PROJECTS

GUGGENHEIM
LUKISKIU SQUARE
NATIONAL STADIUM
MODERN ART CENTER
VILNIUS TRAM
CITY VISION 2015
NATION’S HOUSE
NATION’S HOUSE
Vilnius Identity
Trying to create something from nothing?

MASS OF UNCONNECTED VISIONS
Realised projects
Mainly in business sector and housing

NEW PROJECTS: FDI
IN BUSINESS SECTOR
It's only a matter of time when we will hear about the history of the country's first municipal bankruptcy.
System of planning:
Implementation of spatial plans

The current planning principle works very inefficiently. To my mind it has to do with very weak municipal administration. They are in full command of the political superstructure.

“Current spatial planning system: General Plans and Special plans, which are prepared on the scale of the city, while Detailed plans are prepared on the very local levels. Such system does not cover the medium levels of developments of districts or neighbourhood scale”
Governance:
Decline of elderships from 21 to 17 leaving few employees per eldership (will take effect from 2014).
Getting higher incomes from taxes, government, etc. would only solve municipal debt issue. However the fundamental problem lies in the system of spatial planning implementation, which is highly inefficient. Chaotic spending and naive political short-sighted visions are the issues.
Newtown:
Mash of different urban fabric shows different governing powers present in different periods.

- Location of the territory in the city core
- Full of architectural heritage
- Urban fabric shifts from old town to soviet grid
- One of the oldest city districts

Population: 27,892
Area: 4.9 km²
Density: 5,700/km²
Newtown was planned very hastily with boring urban fabric: Street network is standard, the whole area is divided to rectangular quarters and squares. Rectangular street network was positioned on top of the former building groups, leaving irrational and inefficient urban tissue.
Morphological analysis
Most problematic areas can be found within the blocks themselves, where conflicts appear between inefficient urban tissue. No consistent morphology.
No unified vision
Some short-lasted initiatives

MASS OF UNCONNECTED VISIONS
Soviet modernism
Abundance of unique architectural heritage from Soviet Union.
Cinema of Lithuania

- built in 1965
- took really important part of Lithuania independent culture of Cinema
- In 1990-1991, 93% of the shares were owned by the municipality of Vilnius
- In 2002 privatization by “Heaven apartaments”
- Plans to build highrise housing
- Public petition against the demolition
- In 2005 Cinema was closed officially and rotting since.
DESIGN

Transforming system of spatial planning
Change in organizational spatial planning
Isobenefit Urbanism is planning and self-organization. By avoiding overlooking just Top-down philosophy, as well as just Bottom-up, we can define a Modern Postmodernism vision, mixing the positive contributions of both.
Operative levels
Distributing responsibilities and power

CITY SCALE-MUNICIPALITY
- efficient spatial planning system
- defend public interest
- cooperate with public

DISTRICT SCALE-ELDERSHIPS
- implement spatial plans and distribute work
- stimulate community interaction
- organize local events

BLOCK SCALE-CENTRALITIES
- control over urban environment
- stimulate urban pedagogy
- common space of community
Financial scheme
Money for implementation

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PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP
+ EU FUNDS
- Education centres
- Cultural centres
- Public squares
- Housing
- Industry

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP
+ CROWD FUNDING +2%TAX
- Activity centres
- Public spaces
- Inner quarteryards
- Community gardens
- Local events
Change in legal framework
Reactivate elderships

Distributed power!

More governance at local levels!
Change in legal framework
Empower communities to maintain public space by themselves

1. + →

2. + + + →
Another kind of socialism in soviet modernism
Capitalism vs Socialism?

Capitalism

1. Self regulating labor market
2. Self regulating land market
3. Private ownership of capital
4. Profit motive drives all transactions
5. Free financial market.

Socialism

1. Government owns land
2. Government owns capital
3. Government allocates all scarce resources.
5. All people are considered equal.
Capitalism-socialism partnership in architecture?

- Common architecture
- Collective ownership
- Government influences land market
- Government working with people
Concerns about urban development, real estate speculation, and the monetary economy’s production of social separation made us build an institution not designed for economic profit.

Martin Berghamer
Artist
Netown Centrality network
Reusing and transforming disused soviet modernism to Newtown Centralities
What is City Centrality?

'We will consider a city centrality as a part of the city with a certain concentration of amenities such as public cultural assets, libraries, museums, art galleries, public buildings, higher-order commercial and retail functions, notable and memorable historic buildings and spaces, Etc.’

ISOBENEFIT URBANISM
0. District of Newtown
1. Repositioning Newtown eldership
2. Converting unique soviet modernism to Newtown Centralities
3. Creating continuous public space network to connect Newtown Centralities
4. New developments to adapt the rectangular urban grid system
0. Existing Newtown

1. Repositioning eldership

2. Network of centralities

3. Public space network

4. Adapting to urban grid
Role of architect/planner?

1. Sit in Newtown eldership
2. Talk with communities
3. Mediate between municipality, people and investors
4. Organize discussion forums of what is needed in the district
Further work

Spatial planning
- Restructure system of spatial planning
  Strategic guidelines

Strategy
- Masterplan of a district interventions, in relation to proposed spatial systems

Pilot projects
- Detailed 2d/3d drawings of block scale intervention

Feedback

Scenarios

Case studies
Further work

Modern art center and offices instead of "Lithuanian" theater contest (9)

UAB LRN projects and Lithuanian Union of Architects announces hybrid (open to invited participants) architectural conceptual administrative building, the Modern Art Centre embankment g. 17 (formerly "Lithuanian Cinema") competition.

Purpose of the contest:
- Examine the plot options, with the development of a new office building with a modern art center, which will create an urban-area architectural integrity and identity.
- Create an attractive public space.
- Develop an administrative building, an architectural design concept.

Project Presentation - 2014. March. 6 d. 15.00.

Awards:
- First place winner - £ 30,000,
- Second place winner - £ 5,000,
- Third place winner - £ 5,000,
- The fourth-place finisher - £ 5,000,
- The fifth-place finisher - £ 5,000,
- The sixth-place finisher - £ 5,000.

The main criteria for assessing participating in tenders (by priority):
- Modern Art Centre (hereinafter - MMC) planning exercise enclosure;
- The architectural expression of contextuality and the environment;
- Plan-spatial solutions functionality and rationality (the total office space and useful area ratio).

Jury:
First Hab. Dr. Viktoras Butkus (Modern Art Centre founder, curator)
Second Dr. Lolita Jablonskienë (National Gallery of Art, Head of Vilnius Academy of Arts, Associate Professor)
3rd Professor. Arkady Varanka (Academy of Fine Arts)
4th Sarah Prikockiene, architect (Lithuanian Architects' Union)
5th Edgar Neniškis Architect (Lithuanian Architects' Union)
6th Vitas textbooks Cultural Heritage Department, Senior Director of Vilnius (Lithuanian Architects' Union)
7th Arthur Blotny, Vilnius. weeks. Urban Development Department (Lithuanian Architects' Union)

Tender conditions

Accessories: A detailed plan, MMC task (program), monument claims 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, panoramic photos 1, 2, 3, participant identification code
THANK YOU