GUIDED SELF-ORGANIZATION FOR VILNIUS

Exploring alternative spatial planning models and policies. Designing a strategic model of self-organization for context specific neighborhoods and districts.

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‘This project is dedicated to planning not for oppression in any form, but for a world with the ultimate in social and personal liberation, for the ultimate experience of personal and collective meaning.’
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INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION + RESEARCH
INTRODUCTION TO LITHUANIA

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)
FROM SOVIET UNION TO EUROPEAN UNION

Complex transformation from an authoritarian political system to a democratic welfare state.

Kirill Stanilov
Planner

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

Soviets Union
1944-1990

European Union
2004-Now

Sources: www.irpud.com; own image.
POLITICAL/ECONOMIC SHIFT

Geopolitical transformation changed the economic situation and future of cities radically.

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.

Industry based economy
- Centralized ‘top-down’ planning
- Compact, monocentric city structure
- Growing population

Service based economy
- Decentralized, poorly coordinated, market oriented planning
- Sprawling, polycentric city structure
- Shrinking population
SYSTEM OF SPATIAL PLANNING

A gap between spatial plans, no legal document to cover district scale

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.
VILNIUS VISION
FOR 2015

A leader in foreign investment?

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.
HUGE CULTURAL AMBITIONS-FAILED. PRIVATE SECTOR STRIVES
ABUNDANCE OF SOVIET HERITAGE

Unique architecture is left to rot

- Owned by municipality
- Sold and privatized
- Abandoned and rotting
Inefficiency of Vilnius Municipality and political short-sightedness led itself to debts, poor urban planning organization and implementation, centralized power and in the end in almost non-participation in shaping the city. Little coordination between stakeholders, corruption and monopolistic decision power.
COMPETITION AS A RESEARCH METHOD:
MODERN ART CENTER - VILNIUS
Urban context

Neglecting urban context  
(soviet modernism)

Recreating Old Town’s  
urban structure

Creating regular perimetric  
built density

Cultural context
CONCEPT COLLAGE
REVIVING THE FUNCTION OF CINEMA

RESTORING THE FORMER HISTORICAL STREET
PUBLIC INNER YARD
The contest ended up being a disaster. Second place winning projects are disappointment as the rest of the competition, it's conditions and the results. Very sad.

Why?
- Lack of competence among jury
- No restrains from Municipality
- No engagement of public society
GUIDED SELF-ORGANIZATION IN NEWTOWN
EXISTING FINANCIAL STREAMS (FDI+PRIVATE)

Disadvantages:
- little coordination
- possibilities for corruption
- monopolistic decision power
- short-term effects and little economic growth
- risk of financial crises
- create a stable civic economy

Vilnius municipality
No real estate investments in Newtown, mainly infrastructural maintenance

Interests:
Public society
(However there are no funds)

Foreign direct investments
Private profit oriented direct investments to commercial projects

Interests:
Private profit

Real estate developers
Private profit oriented direct investments to new offices, commercial housing projects

Interests:
Private profit

Individual companies
Private direct investments into businesses and commerce

Interests:
Cultural activities, private profit
WHERE TO START FROM?

Start from creating a platform to create a shared economy.

Consortium would be created by existing interested parties to revitalize a certain district or an area.
**CASE STUDIES:**

Consortiums, NGO’s and Co-operatives, which already function in US, ES and now is also getting started in Lithuania.

**Consortium**

Collaborators include AIA Dallas, Greater Dallas Planning Council, Dallas Architecture Forum and the Dallas Center for Architecture.

**Aims:**
Challenge will build awareness of urban design solutions capable of shaping Dallas forward, develop a more refined and specific strategy for connecting our downtown and river, and assist in securing future public and private investment.

**Public organization**

Led by the community activists in Balsiai, one of the Vilnius suburban districts.

**Aims:**
Transport network improvements, street paving and lighting, gas stations, construction of bicycle and pedestrian paths. Maintaining and building public facilities.

**Consortium**

Led by the Adventure Capital Fund (ACF) and including Futurebuilders England and the Community Alliance.

**Aims:**
Communitybuilders aims to make sustainable investments in community enterprises to build their long term financial viability.
It connects different stakeholders for ongoing long-term processes in public-private partnerships and co-operatives.

ADVANTAGES:
- increased transparency
- distribution of decision power to a wider society
- long-term effects and economic growth
- reduced risk of financial crises
- more stable economy
- sustainable and communal way of living

HOW CONSORTIUM WORKS?

URBAN PROFESSIONALS
Private funding
Time & skills input
Financial and socio-economic strategies

PRIVATE COMPANIES
Private funding
Trade agreements
Space provision
Micro bonds & shares

COMMUNITIES
Crowd-funding
Time & skills input
Micro bonds & shares
Social impact investment

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS
Agreements and legislation
Socio-economic strategies
Facilitator

INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATIONS
Organization funds
Time & skills input
Micro bonds & shares

Strategic model is adapted from ‘Compendium to Civic society’ and developed to Newtown conditions
URBAN THEORIES AND STRATEGIES USED

K.LYNCH
5 ELEMENTS
(1960)

A.TIETJEN
ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY
(2007)

L.D'ACCI
ISOBENEFIT URBANISM
(2013)

J.FERRER
MAT URBANISM
(2011)
CURRENT STAKEHOLDERS

There is a starting point!
(Actor-network theory)

Organization with an aim to revive district of Newtown

Hotels and hostels

Vilnius and Vilnius Gediminas Technical Universities

Municipal institutions

Culture-oriented organizations and companies

Socially oriented companies and organizations

Private enterprises, manufacturers, etc.

Housing developer companies

Huge retailer companies
What political project has to be, is to make use value dominate rather than the exchange value.

David Harvey
Sociologist

CLOSED ECONOMIC CYCLES + CLOSE DISTRIBUTION OF AMENITIES

Shared economy + Isobenefit Urbanism
OPERATING LEVELS

Different scale actors and their responsibilities

CITY SCALE: MUNICIPALITY
Visions for the city as a whole
Defend public interest
Co-operate with civic society
Act as facilitator for communities

DISTRICT SCALE: NEWTOWN CONSORTIUM + NEWTOWN ELDERSHIP
Mapping the data
Working on site-specific strategies
Stimulate community interaction
Promote civic entrepreneurship

BLOCK SCALE: CO-OPERATIVES AND COMMUNITIES
Control over urban environment
Performing DIY
Co-operate with each other
CHosen Site: Newtown

Newtown - a City area, which deals with the most of the historical and spatial changes within Vilnius old town

Newtown was planned very hastily with boring urban fabric: Street network is standard, the whole area is monotonous. There is no clear vision for the future of district.
- 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
CONVERTING ABANDONED SOVIET HERITAGE TO NETWORK OF CENTRALITIES
(Isobenefit Urbanism + Ex-Rotaprint case study)
RESURRECTING ABANDONED SOVIET MODERNISM FOR REUSE
- All of them belonged to the state
- Abandoned mainly due to privatization processes, when municipality sold them
RESSURECTED HERITAGE
STARTS TO WORK AS A NETWORK OF CENTRALITIES
VISION STRATEGY

Walkability: 5min distances

Network of Centralities

Green inner loops connect Centralities

New bicycle routes to connect Centralities

Diverse functions

Increasing built density
ZOOMING TO THE MOST PROBLEMATIC AREA
EXISTING TYPOLOGY

Industrial factories, soviet housing, homestead villas, highrise apartments, warehouses
EXISTING AMENITIES

Commerce, Universities, public institutions, creative enterprises
RECOGNIZING EXISTING FUNCTIONS

40% Residential
34% Commerce + offices
12% Education
10% Other
8% Abandoned or unused
Derelict, poorly used and chaotic public spaces, no hierarchy or system
NEW DEVELOPMENTS
AFTER 2007
Mostly private direct investments to housing sector
EXISTING URBAN TYPOLOGIES

Homestead villas
4 story housing block
5 story soviet housing block
11 story highrise soviet apartments
9 story Highrise soviet apartments
New housing units

4 story housing block, L shape
Manufacturing factory
Manufacturing + offices
Office building

Abandoned factory
Train station depot

5 story stand-alone villa
3 story housing block
Highrise office block
Shopping mall
PROJECT TIMELINE

Design proposal is divided to policy making and physical interventions

HOW

PHASE 1: ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS FOR CIVIC ENTERPRENEURSHIP 2014-2020
PHASE 2: URBAN LIFE AND PUBLIC SPACE QUALITY 2020-2025
PHASE 3: CULTURAL AMENITIES AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY 2025-2035

WHAT

USING ABANDONED SOVIET STRUCTURES
CONVERTING ABANDONED FACTORY TO A GREENHOUSE
PLINTH HOUSING FOR CO-OPERATIVES
LOCAL MARKET-PLACE FOR LOCAL ECONOMY
NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING STOCK
NEW COMMUNITY HOUSE AS PEOPLE'S PALACE
CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE MUSEUM
URBAN DESIGN TOOLBOX

Urban design methods and criteria used to design quality of spaces, accessibility and urban life

- **Grind inside the grid**
  - Outer grid for car transport, inner - pedestrians

- **Walkability and cycling**
  - Healthy and sustainable way of living

- **Programme bar**
  - Programme bar reflects to the existing needs

- **Public space hierarchy**
  - Public + Private + Semi-private
  - Space for democracy and freedom of speech

- **Open plazas**
  - Boulevards to emphasize continuity of space

- **Visual corridors**
  - Space for democracy and freedom of speech

- **Local dominants**
  - Landmarks, external points of orientation

- **Urban nodes**
  - Strategic focus points of orientation

- **Typology follows function**
  - Specific design to adapt the function

- **Incremental building**
  - Design is able to adapt and change its form
  - In purpose of saving resources

- **Efficient urban density**
  - Residential, commerce, office, cultural, public
  - Healthy and sustainable way of living

- **Multi-functional**
  - Residential, commerce, office, cultural, public

- **Walkability and cycling**
  - Programme bar
  - Public space hierarchy
  - Open plazas
  - Visual corridors

- **Long-term phasing**
  - 2015, 2020, 2030

- **Top-down + Bottom up**
  - Spatial plans + community voting power

- **Open-ended approach**
  - Design changes with existing needs

- **Creating identity**
  - Blocks have certain characteristics

- **Creating edges**
  - Boundaries and breaks in the continuity

- **Adapting to existing**
  - Design reflects to existing architectural values
PHASE 1: 2014-2020

Essential functions for civic entrepreneurship to appear

- Art sculpture to cluster design events
- Abandoned factory reused as community greenhouse
- Newtown community boulevard marketplace
- Lifted villas on plinth for renting it and parking
- Art sculpture to cluster design events
- Abandoned factory reused as community greenhouse
- Newtown community boulevard marketplace
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UNUSED SOVIET MODERNISM

Converting abandoned to a centrality for newtown consortium and community
ABANDONED SOVIET FACTORY
ABANDONED SOVIET FACTORY

Converting abandoned factory into a greenhouse and public gathering area
CO-OPERATIVE PLINTH HOUSING

Existing homestead villas in Newtown
CO-OPERATIVE PLINTH HOUSING

Lifting villas on a shared plinth
CO-OPERATIVE PLINTH HOUSING

Using plinth for rental, own commerce, parking, house extension

WE BECAME CIVIC ENTERPRENEURS!
CO-OPERATIVE PLINTH HOUSING

Incremental building model is available if there is a need for extension.
HOUSING CO-OP
ADVANTAGES

- shared parking
- block waste collection
- communal gardens
- service facilities
- wider houses

ARCHITECTURE
- ENERGY SAVING TECHNOLOGIES
- HOUSING RENOVATIONS
- WIDER HOUSES (shared construction)
- SHARED STORAGE FACILITIES
- INNER PLAYGROUNDS
- COMMUNAL WORKSHOPS
- USE OF EMPTY PLOTS

INFRASTRUCTURE
- SHARED PARKING
- WATER HARVESTING
- SHARED SERVICE FACILITIES
- WASTE COLLECTION
- ENERGY PRODUCTION
- COMMUNAL BACK ALLEY

ECONOMY
- SHARED COSTS OF INFRASTRUCTURE
- INDEPENDENT FREE SPACE TO RENT
- MORE EFFICIENCY (working together)

SOCIETY AND CULTURE
- BACK ALLEY VS COMMUNAL SPACE
- SPACE FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION
- COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION
- SAFER BLOCKS
- CREATION OF JOBS
- COMMUNITY PRIDE
PHASE 2: 2020-2025

Urban life and public space qualities
REUSING ABANDONED OBJECTS
FOR INCREMENTAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Abandoned cafe in Newtown
INCREMENTAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Structure from reused concrete beams
IF I WANT, I CAN DO MY OWN INTERIOR
INCREMENTAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Structure allows incremental growth model

I CAN BE OWNER OR A RENTER
NEWTOWN PEOPLE PALACE, CONSORTIUM HQ
AFFORDABLE SOCIAL HOUSING, CO-FUNDED BY RESIDENTS
ABANDONED FACTORY REUSED AS COMMUNITY GREENHOUSE
LIFTED VILLAS ON PLINTH FOR RENTING IT AND PARKING
STREET PROFILE AND HIERARCHY OF PUBLIC SPACES
COMMON SPACE FOR CO-OP NEEDS
STREETS LEADING TO CITY PANORAMAS

Introducing bicycle roads, new density and cutting trees blocking views to the city.
PHASE 3: 2025-2030
Cultural amenities and economic prosperity
HQ OF CONSORTIUM, ELDERSHIP AND A COMMUNITY HOUSE
PROPOSED URBAN DENSITY
PROPOSED PUBLIC SPACE NETWORK
PUBLIC SPACE NETWORK + NEW URBAN DENSITY
CREATING EDGES
EFFICIENT BUILT DENSITY
VISUAL CORRIDORS
WALKING AND CYCLING
PUBLIC SPACE HIERARCHY
PUBLIC PLAZA
REUSING EXISTING
CREATING CHARACTER
GRID INSIDE THE GRID
LOCAL LANDMARKS
MULTI-FUNCTIONAL
URBAN TRAFFIC NODE
PUBLIC PLAZA
REUSING EXISTING
EFFICIENT BUILT DENSITY
VISUAL CORRIDORS
INCREMENTAL BUILDING
WALKING AND CYCLING
URBAN DESIGN TOOLBOX: METHODS USED
SPATIAL DESIGNER SUGGESTS VARIOUS TYPOLOGIES FOR COMMUNITY

Urban design units vary by price, space quality, GFA, FAR and etc.
URBAN BLOCK DESIGN
VARIATIONS

Existing situation

Mixed typologies

Urban courtyards
+ Condensed villas

Plinth housing
+ Lifted villas

Urban courtyards
+ Lifted villas

Diverse urban courtyards
PEOPLE VOTE FOR PROPOSAL PROJECTS
People of Newtown are building their future!
USING STRATEGIC MODEL AS PEER TO PEER PRACTICE

0. Learn from case studies
1. Create networks of centralities
2. Strengthening active communities
3. Platform for collaboration and strategy implementation: Consortium
4. Housing co-operatives for sustainability
5. Design policy strategies
6. Context-specific spatial plans and proposals
The city of Vilnius with specific neighborhoods has huge potential to become more efficient in terms of finance, public space quality and even more resistant to bursting real estate bubbles.

Re-organization of active stakeholders in planning, long-term vision for site-specific context and sustainable material use shall create more opportunities for civic economy to grow, communities to emerge as a power structure and give a whole new urbanity to the city.