

Socialist city in a post-socialist condition: The history of transition

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Abstract

Decentralization and shift to market-driven planning systems that started after the fall of USSR all over Central and Eastern Europe, had followed a predetermined path, however it varied depending on socioeconomic and spatial features of a specific location. This paper analyses socialist housing history, its politics, planning culture, institutions, concepts, and ideals that shaped socialist city and its infrastructure in USSR and in Lithuania. It juxtaposes socialist planning principles, construction volume and ideals behind the concept of *microrayon*, to its actual quality, poor implementation patterns and prevalent underdevelopment culture. Furthermore the paper covers the origins of a legitimacy crisis that Lithuanian planning system entered after independence together with processes and their outcomes that shaped Lithuanian cities during first decade of an independence. Lastly, this paper offers an explanation for chaotic post-socialist transition during and after the “wild east” phase highlighting planning flaws, socio-economic changes in the society, planning incompatibilities and other challenges that Lithuania faced after the shift from planned to a market-driven economy.

Keywords

Post-socialist transition, USSR housing history, USSR housing policy, *microrayon microrayon*, socialist housing, post-modern condition, socialist city, soviet planning, Lithuanian housing, Lithuanian transition

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Introduction

The fall of the Soviet Union can undisputedly be regarded as a major turning point towards decades of decadence of USSR made urban structures and social fabrics not only in Lithuania, but also in entire region of Eastern and Central Europe. After Berlin wall crumbled in 1989, newly born democracies found themselves in yet inexperienced capitalist environment, which had a dramatic impact on all the layers of Eastern and Central European (EEC) cities. Urban environment stood among major values of communist rule, and was seen as the main political tool for both population control and housing for working class. Furthermore, it is a fact that vast areas of socialist city was public by default, accompanied with state built, owned and managed housing estates; and from its management perspective, a subconscious dichotomy of either everyone's or no-one's property and responsibility.

Quick withdrawal of governmental initiative and state subsidies for public amenity and housing sector resulted in deep crisis shock waving through Eastern and Central Europe (Stanilov, Housing trends in Central and Eastern European cities during and after period of transition, 2007). One of the main causes for its quick deterioration is the model of how it should exist and sustain itself, and it cannot be separated from main concepts and ideals of modernist movement. The envisioned green fields of 'free space' or, as the modernists call it, 'the floating space' between system-built housing and second, no more than utopian model of its maintenance where it was seen as a sole responsibility of inhabitants collective.

Shift to market economy and consequent wincing sense of community, high individualization and diminished government initiative, led to a failure if this model. Already in the 1960's Jane Jacobs started raging modern planning as soulless and undermining the necessity of 'organic' and 'pluralistic' strategies; up until 1972 July 15'th which stands as symbolic date when modernism was dynamited together with (prize winning version of Le Corbusier's 'machine for modern living') Pruitt-Igoue low-income housing project in St Luis (Harvey, 1991, pp. 39-40) It was the same year when Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour stated: "architects had more to learn from the study of popular and vernacular landscape [...] than from the pursuit of some abstract, theoretical, and doctrinaire ideals. It was time they said, to build for people rather than for Man." (Harvey, 1991, p. 40).

Generic city

'Idyllic' 'modern' environment currently dominates Eastern European urban landscapes as nowhere in the world it was used in such scale and consistency. Russian movie called 'Ironiya Sudby, ili S Lyogkim Parom'¹ (Irony of Fate or With a light-hearted feeling) where main character thinks that he arrived home to Moscow, while actually he went 'home' to almost exact apartment in a same looking building, located in same planned neighbourhood, but only few hundred kilometres away – in St. Petersburg, expressively illustrates the context an absurd reality of scale and territorial implications of a socialist city [Fig. 1].

"The production of the industrialized, rationalized and massively urbanized society as envisioned by modernist movement was embraced by communist ideologists after Second World War – not only as architectural style, but more importantly, as a major ideological foundation for the construction of new 'modern' societies." (Neelen & Dzokic, 2004, p. 81) "Le Corbusier, in common with many architects of the modern movement, was convinced of the social role of architecture. In an era of great social and political change, Le Corbusier perceived architecture as a crucial instrument in addressing the ills of contemporary society. An appropriate architecture would combat social unrest. Architecture could prevent revolution."

1 *Ирония судьбы, или С лёгким паром!*;
Released December 31, 1975,
Directed by Eldar Ryazanov & Igor Petrov.

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(Leach, *Architecture or revolution?*, 1999, p. 112). Le Corbusier's extremely valid arguments on exploding hygienic crisis and architectural chaos of early 20th century accompanied with personal fascinations about how everyone would benefit from well-organized habitat, urged to rethink the existing city model. Later it became evident that, in some cases, instead of solving problems, it backfired and created more serious ones (socio-economic segregation, marginalization, ethnic stratification etc.). Reasons have multiple dimensions and range from architects lack of self-study and understanding human nature to rationality that deprives people "of the pleasures of incidental discoveries and presupposes that we march from place to place with a sense of unflagging purpose." (Botton, 2006, p. 246) Here it becomes evident that modern movement made some miscalculations that in the end can "[.] always be traced back to nothing more occult than a failure of empathy, to architects who forgot to pay homage to the quirks of the human mind, who allowed themselves to be seduced by a simplistic vision of who we might be, rather than attending to the labyrinth reality of who we are." (Botton, 2006)

"He forgot how drab reinforced concrete can seem under a grey sky. He forgot how awkward it is when someone lights a fire in the lift and home is on the forty-fourth floor. He forgot, too, that while there is much to hate about slums, one thing we don't mind is their street plan. We appreciate buildings, which form continuous lines around us and make us feel safe in the open air as we do in a room. There is something enervating about a landscape with towers distributed without respect for edges, a landscape which denies us the true pleasures of both nature and urbanisation." (Botton, 2006, p. 245)

Modernists can be praised for bringing Europe out of urban misery of early 20th century but history has proven that Le Corbusier's' initial ideas and concepts were short-sighted. Urban environments were modern only at the time of construction, failed to sustain themselves at the change of regimes, furthermore, it is these concrete blocks and cities that now represent failure of architecture going hand in hand with a failure of the regime (Leach, *Introduction*, 1999).

Post modern/socialist condition

If we are to believe Harvey's statement, that postmodernism creates a "conception of the urban fabric as necessarily fragmented, a 'palimpsest' of past forms superimposed upon each other, and a 'collage' of current uses, many of which may be ephemeral." (Harvey, 1991, p. 66), then the things about to be explained in this paper may justify the juxtaposition of post socialist and postmodern conditions. Shifts in attitudes that happened in western societies are also evident in former communist bloc countries, rather comparable, but lagging twenty years. In the most basic sense, the moment when the 'virtues' of modernity were replaced with postmodern ones came together with the first cracks in Berlin wall.

The fall of USSR, or in Leach terms 'revolution', naturally created three socio-economic conditions, namely: socialist, transitional and post-socialist, which are crucial to analyse and define subsequent transversality in their time and nature, furthermore, understand socio-economic and socio-cultural dichotomies within post-socialist city.

It is worth pointing out that housing (in former USSR) was never a priority up until the reforms of Nikita Khrushchev. In 1960's immense countrywide plans were made to build more than 50 million dwellings, which substantially diminished housing shortage within the borders of USSR, on the other hand, there were some major drawbacks. Firstly, pace of urbanization was sacrificed over quality of construction, secondly, soviet dwellers had much less square meters per person than in the west and lastly, residential houses were never a priority if compared to the amounts spent on industrialization. Therefore, common problem in EEC revolves around the physical condition of these structures that "are environmentally inadequate



[Fig. 1] Similarity of Soviet urbanity, despite the context and cultural implications. On the left, Moscow; on the right, St. Petersburg.

or structurally unsound, others have been designed for a now redundant social programme, and still other carry the stigma of association with previous regime” (Leach, Introduction, 1999, p. 3). In addition, spatial planning entered a legitimacy crisis in early 1990’s and lost its planning instruments with regulatory powers, which led to deterioration of public space and communal amenities. (Lieshout & Annet, 2004, p. 146). As a result, rise of individual-praising capitalism trapped the masses within their own lives and emotions, that Richard Sennet sees more as a trap than liberation (Sennet, 2002, p. 5), and it “prompted people to think of the public domain as meaningless” (Sennet, 2002, p. 12).

Generalisation about similar outcomes that occur within different geographical and cultural environments might seem reductionist; on the other hand CEE region faced very similar patterns of chaotic transition and consequent deterioration of their urban environments. In addition, Kiril Stanilov in his research on post-socialist transformation concluded that it was not realistic to expect that CEE countries could have prevented the “Wild East” phase of the 1990’s and could have preserved from squandering the precious urban assets and some positive characteristics of the former socialist cities. “As it is a fact that neither of the CEE countries managed to accomplish these heroic tasks is strong evidence that the process of post-socialist urban form transformation (socio-spatial fragmentation, suburbanization, urban space commercialization, rise of car ownership etc.) followed a path that has been determined by the nature of the post-socialist transition.” (Stanilov, Urban planning and the challenges of post-socialist transformation, 2007) In a broad Central and Eastern European context, these universal conditions are the essential part of urban planner’s daily routine, whilst spatial outcomes differ only slightly depending on specific country.

In Lithuania’s case spatial outcomes, naturally, vary as of geographic location, industrial significance or socio-economic features of different cities, but in order to draw a clear picture of its specificity, it is important to describe the origins of post-socialist condition in post-soviet Lithuanian cities.

Soviet housing history

According to soviet data, WWII destroyed 1710 cities, towns and villages, but despite the devastation major the goal was to rebuilt industry as fast as possible and housing did not become a major issue up until Stalin’s death on 5 March 1953. Until then USSR leadership never faced the housing issue and did not realize how serious housing shortage was. Khrushchev’s solution for diminishing the

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shortage was to build as many housing units as fast and as cheap as possible, consequently, quality was sacrificed over quantity. In defence, Khrushchev asked: “Do you build a thousand adequate apartments or seven hundred good ones? And would a citizen rather settle for an adequate apartment, or wait ten to fifteen years for a very good one? The leadership must proceed from the principle of using available material resources to satisfy the needs of the people as soon as possible.” (Morton, 1984) A Sixth Five-Year Plan (1956-60) doubled investment in housing and building increased from 1.5 million in 1956 to 2,7 million residential units per year in 1959. Even though the considerable government interest in housing lagged almost 50 years, but cheap five-story walk-ups served as an easing factor to housing crunch (Morton, 1984). Lowered ceilings, tiny corridors and combination of toilet and bathroom in one room were rather upsetting for public, however an enviable rate of 2 million dwellings per year was a major achievement in consistency. From 1957 onwards, country managed to diminish shortage, but did not eliminate it, yet Khrushchev brought some major changes into construction industry. Standardized, prefabricated housing elements replaced conventional building materials permitting construction during harsh and long winters reduced the need for high-skilled labour at the same time. Standardized construction skyrocketed from 1.3% in 1959 up to 54% in 1980 and constituted to more than 75% of construction in cities with a population over 1 million inhabitants.

By the end of 1980's vast areas from Western USSR borders to Siberia, were covered with similar looking structures destined to become a milestone of soviet era. It is evident that politics and physical infrastructure are two inseparable forces that shape socialist city, however it is no less important to analyse, planning culture, institutions, concepts, ideals and, most importantly, incompatibilities that compromised the possibility for smooth transition.

Socialist city

USSR economists and planners calculated that the optimum size of the city varies from 20.000 to 250.000 residents and when it goes beyond these boundaries, it causes great expenditures on construction of highly complex municipal services and transportation network investment. “Thus theoreticians have steadily conceded ground over optimum size, first up to 100.000, then 200.000 to 300.000 inhabitants, although to a degree this reflects an increase in economies of scale accruing from prefabricated construction methods” (French & Hamilton, 1979, p. 11) and was criticized extensively by the government and other officials. As a result, restrictions on population and definition of ‘optimal sized city’, with attempts to control have not been a success and urban growth began to accelerate.

Despite the failure of ‘optimum-sized city’ idea, the concept ‘microrayon’ [Fig. 2] was seen as a major contribution towards the organization of life within city, mainly because it focused on community rather than on individual and therefore, perfectly met socialist agenda. The micro district ranges from 10.000 to 30.000 in population and covers an area of around 30 to 100 ha. It also provides daily facilities such as, repair shops, laundries, schools, kindergartens, pre-school facilities etc. Ideologically, the concept of *microrayon* or micro-district “exemplify the ideal communist residential community in which the nuclear family becomes the husband and wife, most outside activity being performed nearby and communally.” (Reiner & Wilson, 1979) Nevertheless, the implementation had some major drawbacks. While *microrayon* emerged as a basic city-planning unit, the completion of public services lagged behind housing, partially because buildings for services require more technological input and always remained as a secondary theme (DiMaio, 1974).

Housing and rental policies

Soviet press praised many times the increasing pace and, most importantly, the quality of the construction; despite the fact that, in most cases, newly built housing estates were in a need of immediate repairs. Poor labour skills, insufficient organization of construction, and 'quarter plan' culture are identified as the main reasons for the poor quality. Builders, municipalities and inspection agencies rushed through the remaining works in order to report their achievements and advancements at the end of each 'quarter plan'. As a result, tenants occupied buildings with significant flaws and major defects. One soviet official explained: "There are many reasons for inferior work, but the most typical is the desire to 'just get done with the project.' The main thing is to hand over the building on or ahead of schedule. That is why quality is sacrificed right and left in the scurry to meet the deadline. " (Morton, 1984)) Construction quality-control was supposed to be executed by parallel governmental institutions, namely: "construction-control agencies, client's technical inspection, design organizations' inspection and technical control departments of enterprises of the building material industry. Certain cities have also established public control commissions for housing and cultural service construction." (DiMaio, 1974, p. 103) Despite enormous apparatus, partially completed houses were occupied with tenants. Pressure from local *Soviets* and their executive committees forced chief architects to accept the incomplete dwellings. It resulted in new residents asking the same construction companies to come again and finish or repair their mistakes but on the private basis (DiMaio, 1974).

Even though construction quality was a major problem in socialist city, housing conditions were slowly but steadily improving. Soviet leaders became aware of the need to centre the home life in the community as it moved to its main goal of well-built separate apartment for each family. Increased privacy constituted to improved quality of relaxation, and as a result, individual should have become more reluctant to collective forms of entertainment and participation. As already mentioned before, soviet housing had an ambiguous nature - housing as an incentive and housing as a public service, and these two aspects were coexisting since the start of soviet era, furthermore decent housing became a national goal and constitutional right. However, the other national goal – industrialization - seems to come into conflict many times, because looking from purely pragmatic perspective – housing was just a tool to achieve higher industrial capacity, which requires higher labour productivity (DiMaio, 1974).

Despite the quality, rental policies remained quite attractive, but it is hard or nearly impossible to calculate it. The rent for the apartment was based on income, amenity maintenance costs and amount of square meters, but it constituted to merely from 0.7% to 5% of persons monthly income. Certain groups, such as, pensioners, soldiers, medal holders etc. were entitled for a 50% discount regardless of their income. When analysing rental policies it is important to conclude, that even though there some differences in types of rent - public sector variations were very small and do not reflect a substantial patterns or allow linking rental costs to a specific location or quality. As a result, social mixtures were easy and frequent; the only social island remained in the sector of cooperative housing.

Housing and public services

System of public services was considered to be one of the major achievements of *microrayon*, even though the construction of these public amenities and facilities

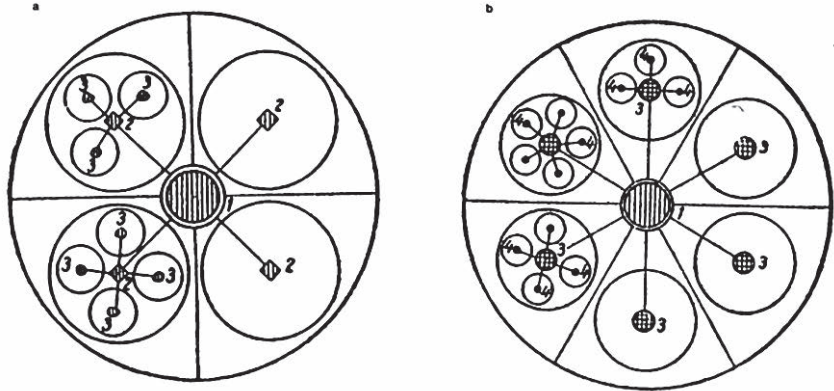
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was constantly lagging. Soviet planners had a clear vision on how typical Soviet city should look and operate. They envisioned a system with five levels (very large cities sometimes had six) where the first one was supposed to serve the population from 2000 to 3000 within a radius of 100 to 150 meters. It was called a primary service level (*pervichnoe obsluzhivanie naselenija*) that included establishments and enterprises directly connected with the dwelling such as post, vending machines, dining room, recreation hall, nursery, studios and also premises to store children's carriages, sleighs, bikes, skis etc. The second level of services was oriented to the needs of entire *microrayon* and included grocery store, places for repairs and laundry, dining room, restaurant, housing office, and an everyday service centre (*kombinat bytovo obsluzhivania KBO*); all operating within the radius of around 400 meters or around ten to fifteen minutes walking distance. Here Soviet planners stress that it is not the size of *microrayon*, which defines the amount of services, but the other way around. Third level of services serves an entire district or *zhiloy rayon* from 25.000 to 75.000 inhabitants and operates within a radius from 900 to 1300 meters. It includes a more specialized, therefore not so frequently used stores, such as barber, savings bank, photo studio, cafe, pharmacy etc., also gastronomes (grocery stores) department store and catering services for the entire district (DiMaio, 1974). An aggregation of population over 100.000 up to 300.000 creates fourth service layer that operates on city level and has facilities making it self-sustainable urban area. Fifth service layer serviced all urban zones (*gorodskaya zona*) from 800.000 up to 1.000.000 inhabitants.

In theory, this model of public services was perceived as an efficient and logical, however Soviet economic reality and local contractors distorted it dramatically. At the end of 1972 newspaper 'Pravda' claimed that the main reason for deplorable situation on the amount of services in newly built neighbourhoods is "that construction organizations consider trade and public catering enterprises as secondary installations "and are unwilling to take on their construction: if they do take it on, they drag out the work for years." (DiMaio, 1974, p. 61) Pravda explains:

"Builders greatly dislike these trade 'points', especially cafeterias: these are a lot of bother, and the desired profit in roubles is lacking. The same roubles could be expended more easily and more quickly in constructing square meters of housing space. A housing construction combines plan fulfilment, for example, is determined chiefly in terms of the number of residential buildings put into operation. If they have been put into operation – especially ahead of schedule – it means the plan is achieved and there will be a bonus. While the "Incompletes" (frequently including unfinished trade and consumer service enterprises) can be put off for "some other time." This "some other time" is then delayed for indeterminate time." (*Pravda*, 1972 November 21 p.3 quoted in DiMaio, 1974, p. 61).

It is evident that decades of neglect and low priority in public services sector created formidable challenges and obstacles in order to complete the *microrayon* experiment, nevertheless it still remained a major concept of urban living, to bring Soviet theories of united communities into practice. Despite the construction companies, bureaucrats and administrators with their abilities to divert the money assigned to implement public services to accommodate other needs, the aforementioned ideological goal was achieved. Cracks in a system are, of course, inevitable and, to a certain extent, are among tangible factors that, even if operational, cannot cause more than varying inconveniences depending on the scale of under-implemented or underdeveloped infrastructure. On the other hand, the concept of *microrayon* proposes that an integrated neighbourhood, where all the facilities are designed per number of inhabitants, should experience some major tremors and distortions with a failure of one element, and that system, so interrelated, cannot function the way it was designed, if certain parts are missing. Even though each and every part is where it supposed to be, still, it does not guarantee that all of them will function accordingly. This is where the intangible factors become of major importance.



[Fig. 2] Eastern and Central European Typical schemes of city's residential structure in USSR; a) very large cities, b) medium-sized cities. 1: city centre; 2: city district centre; 3: residential district centre; 4: microrayon centre.

81 pav. Miesto gyvenamosios struktūros tipinės schemos (buv. SSRS praktika) a – labai didelio miesto, b – vidutinio dydžio miesto 1 – miesto centras, 2 – miesto rajono centras, 3 – gyvenamojo rajono centras, 4 – mikrorajono centras

Indeed, residential daily patterns are rather unpredictable, and have an essential role in the aftermath of the construction. Population preferences, culture, conceptual models and human nature, if misunderstood or ignored, results in malfunction and eventual decay. Soon after construction of the first *microrayon*-concept-driven areas, the aforementioned issues became visible. For example, some centres become overcrowded, compared to those that stayed half-empty. Even though it did not take much time to realize that it “is more convenient to shop on the way home from work than to shop in the *microrayon*” (DiMaio, 1974, p. 60), but urban planners did not fix the *microrayon* in their later designs. Furthermore, specific regulations to calculate the amount of functions such as car parking spaces, school sizes, apartment sizes etc. were build on a principle that city growth does not theoretically change the population density in the existing districts (DiMaio, 1974). It was thought that parking or facility shortage will be avoided, because of strict government control. It turned out to be an overstatement right after the fall of the regime.

A structural scheme for residential areas was designed in the administrative-command planning environment, rigid, reckless, forthright and ignorant to local social relations, customs, housing typologies, city growth traditions and patterns. (Vanagas, 2003) Lack of flexibility, superimposition and extreme rationality of that time, later resulted in numerous adaptations, commonly shared among all Eastern bloc countries. Miscalculations, underdevelopments, bureaucratic apparatus, superimposition, rigidity, are products of a system whose functionality depends on tight interrelations, therefore failing, means ‘failing together’.

Planning in the transitional period

“The profession of urban planning entered a deep legitimacy crisis since the very concept of government control over private initiative was vehemently rejected as an ill – concealed attempt to reinstate old socialist practises” (Reiner & Strong, 1995; Sýkora, 1999). Vast reorganization and lack of applicable knowledge on how to interact within, yet not researched, context, caused new characteristic urban transformations to emerge. An instant withdrawal of government investment, suspension of involvement in housing market and industry, resulted in an accelerating economic crisis. Former state-run enterprises crumbled in a matter of months after the socialist regime, leaving enormous portions of unemployed urban population accompanied by rapidly growing industrial wastelands. Consequently, jobless citizens, and new market possibilities resulted in mushrooming small-scale businesses that filled grey concrete blocks with a new entrepreneurial activity. Former administrative city centres began to burst with lively commercial functions

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that, in ten years time, replaced almost all other functions in old city cores. Massive suburbanization and industrialization of the periphery put much greater pressure on infrastructure. Increasing stock of privately owned cars that resulted in ever growing traffic congestion. Increasing number of lanes or building two level crossings was only a temporary solution that eventually constituted to even greater amounts of automobiles. Comparatively well-developed public transport system experienced a major desolation and underinvestment, as most of investments for transportation gone into development of road and street network. Finally, dispersal and expansion of urban areas in a post-socialist city contributed to a process of socio-spatial stratification; while some neighbourhoods accumulated unprecedented wealth, others seemed to be doomed to turn into ruins (Stanilov, Urban planning and the challenges of post-socialist transformation, 2007).

Post-transitional challenges

First decade of an independent Lithuania ended with a better understanding of market principles and mechanisms that shape the city, but transition from centralized planning model to a decentralized, market-driven planning, still had major flaws. Firstly, public participation in planning process was highly discouraged; legislations did not endow any powers to citizens' involvement in design rather than a right to be informed of on-going process and future changes. This originates from strictly hierarchical system of socialist times where decision-making was concentrated at the top layers of the government, and lower rank specialists carried out planning. Such system provoked innumerable mistakes and false understanding of spatial demands in post-socialist societies. Even though plans were carried out with a sufficient amount of detail, it did not have a larger strategic framework; moreover, absence of a model guiding to an articulate expansions and transformations of post-socialist environments was not even seen as a major drawback. Origins for such way of thinking lie in forty years of communist domination; after struggling for independence and major oppressions, made everyone very sceptical and aware of anything related to social organisation. (Stanilov, Urban planning and the challenges of post-socialist transformation, 2007). Population, market and government resistance for involvement into any kind of larger frameworks for control is the most challenging and perishing factor in urban planning process of that time.

Chesterton once formulated that "A man who does not carry within him a kind of vision of his perfection is just as monstrous as a man without nose." (Bloch, 1995), which can be juxtaposed to Socialism-phobia that can be linked to a lack of a visions and all the miscalculations that created irrecoverable damage to Lithuanian cities. The rise of new CBD's all over Eastern Europe including Lithuania caused by investment-hungry municipality politics to ignore cultural heritage of the city. Developments usually began at the vicinity of old town centres and constituted to an even greater congestion, and pressure on environment. Strive to be progressive, innovative and shake off the socialist memories of the past, switched green lights to practically all market activities. Similar, to a certain extent, consequences can be seen all over the world and therefore - universal and easy to guess. Chesterton once put beautifully, that "The whole modern world has divided itself into Conservatives and Progressives. The business of Progressives is to go on making mistakes. The business of the Conservatives is to prevent the mistakes from being corrected." (Chesterton, 1924) Fortunately, Wild East capitalism era has ended and spatial planning began to stabilize, unfortunately, profit-driven designs are hard to improve, while now, there is lots space hope for the new way of thinking to emerge.

Conclusions

A fundamental problem in Eastern Europe, including Lithuania is built environment, whose 'ideals' are so extensively implemented throughout entire region and still remain inseparable from modernist movement. Soviet Ideologists and theoreticians envisioned new and modern socialist society models. The result, of course, could not be more impressive than monotonous structure cover vast urban landscapes. Prefabrication and mass production substantially diminished housing shortage, however, today, renovation of these housing estates remains an extremely complicated task.

The fact that none of the Eastern or even Central European countries managed to have a smooth transition to market-driven democratic systems, shows that harsh reality of post-socialist transformation period is nothing more than a consequential outcome of commercialization, rise of individualism and weakening sense of community. It lies at the very nucleus for most of contemporary problems whose outcomes vary depending on location; nevertheless process generated somewhat similar results.

Even though the post-socialist transition started with inability to propose anything coherent, on a city scale, and uncontrollable capital flow, the Wild East capitalism era ended with a better understanding of processes and forces that shape the city. Exploding entrepreneurial activities, commercialization, and gentrification translated into physical and spatial outcomes that are hard to reverse, on the other new developments tend to become more and more coherent and contextual.

All in all, the chaotic post-socialist transition has many explanations that range from the way they are planned, to socio-economic changes in the society, however the fact that same changes can be witnessed all over Central and Eastern Europe, suggest that the phase of post socialist transition followed a predetermined path. If we would analyse from an individual perspective, all the flaws of this transition can be seen as the only legible way to sustain and survive, and as a manifestation of the freedoms that did not exist before.

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