

**LABORATORY OF
CRITICAL URBANISM**

MAPPING VISAGINAS.
SOURCES OF URBANITY IN
A FORMER MONO-FUNCTIONAL
TOWN

Edited by Felix Ackermann, Benjamin Cope & Sjarhei Liubimau

INTRODUCTION

Mapping Sources of Urbanity in Former Mono-functional Towns. Investigation, Participation, Visualisation
Felix Ackermann, Benjamin Cope, Siarhei Liubimau
9

FROM SNIEČKUS TO VISAGINAS

Socialist Heritage? Mapping the Existing Academic Literature on Visaginas
Inga Freimane
21

Comments on the Socio-Geographical Specificity of Visaginas in the Context of Lithuania
Vytautas Valatka, Siarhei Liubimau
29

Visaginas – a Zoo of Soviet Architecture? An Interview with Marija Drėmaitė
Indrė Ruseckaitė
35

The Centrality in and of Visaginas
Inga Freimane
41

Visaginas. Looking at the Town Through Photography
Povilas Marozas
49

Public Space Typography in Visaginas
Alla Pigalskaya
55

The Scientific Shape of a Nuclear City: Obninsk as an Assemblage of Research Institutes
Galina Orlova
63

BETWEEN PARTICIPATION AND RESEARCH

History is Us
Diana Poškienė, Oksana Denisenko, Terezie Lokšová, Valiantsina Fashchanka, Yves Haltner
73

Sedulinos alėja is Alive! An Interactive Map Approach
Aleksandr Chaplya, Anika Schmidt, Anna Timoshyna, Gerrit Füssel, Gintarė Norkūnaitė
79

›Re-Visaginas‹: Public Spaces as Communication Platforms
Afra Hoeck, Anja Baniewicz, Anna-Luise Goetze, Joachim Werner, Ida Roscher, Indrė Saladžinskaitė, Leonard Ermel, Paulė Stulginskaitė
83

Knit the Street
Arne Kunkel, Rugilė Zadeikytė, Sibylle Piechaczek, Svetlana Boguslavskaya, Viktorija Stalybka
91

ON MEANINGS OF MAPPING IN PARTICIPATORY FIELD WORK

Mapping Visaginas: Counter Mapping and Participatory Processes
Benjamin Cope
99

The Role of Art in a Shrinking Former Nuclear Town in the EU Periphery
Miodrag Kuč
105

Mapping as a Collaborative Tool in Interdisciplinary Research Projects
Felix Ackermann
111

Combining Social Research and Participatory Planning
Dalia Čiupailaitė
115

Tracing the Tacit Meanings of Nuclear Things
Anna Veronika Wendland
119

A Rough Guide to Evaluating International Academic Project Work
Felix Ackermann
125

–
Appendix
131

INTRODUCTION

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Felix Ackermann, Benjamin Cope,
Siarhei Liubimau
9



MAPPING SOURCES OF URBANITY IN FORMER MONO-FUNCTIONAL TOWNS

INVESTIGATION, PARTICIPATION, VISUALISATION

This book is the second volume documenting an ongoing participatory research on the changing meanings, values and functions of the Soviet layer of the built environment in radically globalised and re-scaled societies. It continues one of the key commitments of the Laboratory of Critical Urbanism to understand the contemporary moment as the outcome of an unprecedentedly accelerated reconfiguration of the geographical scales at which societies are organised. Such reconfigurations of relations between processes at local, national, regional and global scales have turned urbanism into a much more complex and dramatic product than that which we grew used to in the second half of the 20th century. The city currently is no longer a resource which belongs exclusively to state run planning bodies, but a field that is critically rethought from various angles and challenged by various players and tendencies. The issues that this series of the Laboratory's publications seeks to engage with are twofold: firstly, to examine how inhabitants of towns and cities in the Post-Soviet Baltic States, and Lithuania in particular, are, and might be, included in and excluded from the new forms of urbanity thus emerging; and secondly, to reflect on newly required and provoked methods of scholarly research and intervention.

The term »mapping« in the titles of both books on the one hand refers to a way to facilitate data gathering and result display in short-term research projects. Mapping in this sense is a tool of exploration, conceptualisation and docu-

mentation. On the other hand, the recent abuse of the term »mapping« is a symptom of a frustration at attempts to unequivocally address the tangled contexts through which society is currently shaped. An imperative to map is a symptom of a complication of how various phenomena and tendencies are caused by social processes. From both angles, the map as a mode of display of intellectual work is promising to distinguish and visualise the scales and boundaries of studied facts in their relations to other facts. This makes cartography especially crucial today, for scale and boundary are the categories most directly redefined by globalisation.¹ Besides, the proliferation of maps as modes of display is indicative of a situation of a technologically enabled growing cartographic awareness, of a redefinition of existing epistemological hierarchies and of emerging modes of egalitarianism. These not yet fully explored and tested modes of egalitarianism, together with an increasing opening of horizons regarding urban units' patterns of causation, both frighten and fascinate.² Critical urbanism in such a light is research and participatory practice scrutinising the mode of causation of social

¹ The ideas underlying this project have been developed in earlier texts; see: Liubimau, S. (2013) Urbanizing sovereignty. State borders and space uses. *Studia Humanistyczne AGH* 12 (1): 43 – 56.

² Liubimau, S. (2014) Popular urbanism and the issue of egalitarianism. *Architecture [publication] Fund* 03. Available at: <http://www.archfondas.lt/leidiniu/en/alf-03/essays/siarhei-liubimau> (accessed 5 May 2016).

processes in a studied urban environment and responsibly intervening in this urban environment.

The given volume contextualises the particularities of Visaginas within the broader dilemmas of contemporary urbanisation in North-Eastern Europe 25 years after the fall of Soviet communism. This town is seen as an example of the changes that have occurred in the meantime both in the social practices and urban forms in the region. At the same time, it is an example of cities whose lives are still shaped by the fact that dominant sections of their built environments were constructed to form habitats under the Soviet social paradigm. In this overall frame, the particular aim of this volume is to address the specific case of the relatively young urban settlement founded as Sniečkus (after the name of a Lithuanian Communist Party leader) in 1975 as a satellite to the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant. As part of a larger Soviet energy infrastructure, it brought engineers, builders and their families to the east of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. Most of them were Russian speakers from other Soviet Socialist Republics. After Lithuanian independence, many of them stayed in Lithuania, were granted citizenship and remained dwellers of the town, which was renamed Visaginas. The first Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) reactor worked until 2005, the second till 2009. The decision to decommission both reactors was part of the accession negotiation process between Lithuania and the EU. It was the EU that funded

the decommissioning process and therefore created over 2000 workspaces for a few decades ahead. Although at first glance, this looks like a step towards de-industrialisation, it can also in fact be seen as an industrial project.

If regarded from a macro perspective, Visaginas is a showcase of the risks involved in the transition from a town reliant on an external top-down allocation of resources and workforce, to a town compelled to survive in a competitive environment of a multilateral and multi-scalar determination of resources and workplaces. The urban structure and services of Visaginas were planned and built from scratch in the context of the short-term economic abundance related to the project of the adjacent Ignalina NPP. For this reason, Visaginas was considered to be one of Soviet Lithuania's best examples of a centrally planned mono-functional urban unit, highly successful in terms of architectural decisions, quality of living and human capital. From the 1990s – due to the gradual shutting down of the Ignalina NPP largely determined by the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 – the town has stopped growing, with concomitant social phenomena of unemployment, dwellers' anxiety about the future and around 20 percent population decline. This situation is made even more tangled by the combination of the town's ethnic and professional composition. Because of rapid Soviet-mode urbanisation, Visaginas' population historically consisted principally of nuclear scientists, engineers, construction workers and their family members brought from the entire



Soviet Union. What was then perceived as a Soviet elite, today primarily leads to Visaginas being manipulatively labelled as potentially disloyal to the Lithuanian state in the context of the current tension between Russia and NATO. For inhabitants of the town, meanwhile, the prestige of the former nuclear power plant and the fact that the town's housing blocks were collectively constructed by inhabitants in the 1970s and 1980s facilitated local belonging and an identification with place. However, it is not clear what role the 'engineer's habitus' and such a strong identification with place can play in the present context.

The identification of sources of urbanity today is a key task for a variety of locations in different regions of a world where for the last three decades the relations of production, recreation and welfare are being radically transformed across multiple scales. The use of an existing built structure and applying new social technology for keeping urban areas alive and well-integrated depends on two major variables – a town's infrastructural and industrial history, on the one hand, and the major structural vulnerabilities a particular location encounters on the other. The given volume's aim is to qualitatively scrutinise and confront these two variables as manifested in Visaginas and to propose future scenarios for the town in a form of soft planning interventions and community projects.

The town's infrastructural and industrial history is characterised by a) a high density built area

projected predominantly for residential and service uses, with larger sources of employment located beyond the town; b) an extensive presence of planned contact zones in the town, such as Soviet style public art, small plazas, micro green areas, a pedestrian avenue, and forest areas and the Visaginas lake used for leisure activities; c) a rich investment in terms of materials into residential buildings, buildings for public services and public space facilities; d) an 'engineer's habitus' (pro-natural science, scientific progress, nuclear power, detraditionalisation, etc.) as a dominant identity mark of the local population; e) a multi-ethnic and multilingual population with a broad common use of the Russian language. The following features constitute the major structural vulnerabilities Visaginas encounters: A) the lack of a large employer, such as the Ignalina NPP, in the future; B) a decline in the use of the infrastructure of educational institutions' (schools and kindergartens) as the major sign of depopulation and the major threat to urban structure; C) small solutions for the allocation of retail and services in the town, characteristic of Lithuania's urban economies; D) labour migration and the growth of the number of empty flats in the town; E) a gradual hollowing out of the local identity based primarily on professional belonging and the short-term history of the town's construction, rather than on national culture and tradition.

On the one hand, from the 1970s Visaginas was a typical imperial Soviet project. Both

technologically and socially, it was a part of the network of nuclear plants and their respective nuclear towns, centrally planned by The Ministry of Medium Machine Building. It was also exceptional politically, for nuclear scientists in the USSR had a special status. The exceptional status of this spatial project and its inherited partial social, economic and technological estrangement from the rest of the national territory makes it possible to metaphorically compare the relations between Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant and Visaginas to the medieval relations between a castle and a town. On the other hand, despite being an imperial and neo-medieval project, Visaginas is also iconic modernist. Its compact form was built from scratch from the mid-1970s and can be considered in Lithuania as a 'zoo of socialist modernist architecture' (see Ruseckaitė, this volume, 35-39). It was planned in the form of a butterfly, but with only one wing finished. As a result, it is characterised by a high quality infrastructure for a mass welfare society, but with an increasing under-use of its schooling facilities and public spaces. It is now possible to observe how new activities are injected into the abandoned schooling infrastructure. These are mash-ups of education, care, leisure and technology resulting from multi-scalar funding and regulatory paradigms. A community formed in Soviet times sustains the city in a re-established Lithuanian nation-state, while also infrastructurally crucially depending on EU level decisions. Finally, Visaginas fits well the current mood of starting cities anew (start-up cities, smart cities, charter cities,

etc.). It was built in a very short period by one generation, which is still living in town. The effect of this is that people are very engaged and personal about the town's built environment.

Based on the specificity of the case, four distinct, yet intertwined dimensions of Visaginas' urban structure were identified as key arenas for re-tooling its development trajectory:

Mapping the Nuclear Dimension

Although at a distance of 10km from Visaginas, the Ignalina NPP was fundamental to the town's development both in terms of providing work and identity to inhabitants, and directly or indirectly giving rise to the town's social institutes. Now the plant is in the process of decommissioning and a dual process of disconnecting Visaginas and the INPP can be witnessed. On the one hand, the plant is no longer able to support the town's infrastructure as it once did and, on the other, its decommissioning is refracted in an occluding of the plant's place in the town's history. Hence, this dimension of Visaginas' urban scale reveals the town's multi-faceted relations to the nuclear power plant. It implies the analysis of these relations in social, administrative and infrastructural terms, and an examination of how these have transformed over time. It explores the changing role of the power plant in creating social identities in the town. It also raises a question of how local attitudes to the INPP overlap with attitudes to other identity giving socio-spatial projects.

Mapping the Cultural Dimension

One of the remarkable features of Visaginas today is the conversion of educational institutions, such as schools and kindergartens that historically constituted a key component of mass welfare societies and that due to population decline no longer serve their intended function, into sites of a variety of cultural and social initiatives. This phenomenon raises questions of what are the potentials and risks of culture as a resource in the particular context of the town, and also of whether the models of functioning of the cultural sector observed in Visaginas constitute tendencies that will be relevant in other locations. In the case of this dimension, the aim is to scrutinise different cultural initiatives that have emerged as a result of Visaginas' current socio-geographical and political properties in their relations to inherited built environments. Additionally, the aim is to investigate how various initiatives understand culture differently and thus seek to develop their own sense of the potentials and limitations of the cultural sector as a tool for urban change.

Mapping the Public Dimension

The central pedestrian walkway, Sedulinos Alėja that runs right through the 'heart' of Visaginas is, on the one hand, the key element in the town's well-designed, almost decorative planned structure. It is a high-quality public space and the 'main stage' of the city, connecting important institutions and major social groups. On the other hand, with its empty commercial premises, never completed shells of buildings and

now partially functioning public spaces, it is also a sign of the town's interrupted development. From this perspective, the avenue constitutes both a noteworthy case of modernist urban design and provokes wider questions about the future roles of such central pedestrian walkways in contemporary urban contexts, where commercial functions are being displaced to out-of-centre shopping malls and socialising is to a great extent retreating on-line. The interest hence is to map the central pedestrian walkway of Sedulinos Alėja in order to explore the rationality of its plan and the changed configurations that have led to its current form. In other words, the question is how the street was planned as a public space in comparison with the places in which people actually meet and socialise in Visaginas today.

Mapping the Historical Dimension

Visaginas is often conceptualised as a city 'without roots', rapidly built during Soviet times in a sparsely populated north-eastern corner of the Aukštaitija region in Lithuania. Such a depiction of the city detaches it from the local Lithuanian context and can serve as a source of political grievances over the question of whose town this is. At present, an important factor influencing the development of the town is a high level of mobility associated with Lithuania's accession to the EU and the opening of borders for labour migration. A focus on this dimension helps to reveal various aspects of mobility and migration to and from Visaginas through time, and to trace the connections



and disconnections with other locales across different scales (the region, the state, the Soviet Union, the EU).

The positing of these four conceptual dimensions for analysing Visaginas was the outcome of several activities organised by the Laboratory of Critical Urbanism at the European Humanities University. The first of these activities was the Workshop »Cultures of Shrinking«, organised in Visaginas in February 2015. It gathered scholars and practitioners who had previously worked on Visaginas or on compatible locations in the Baltic States and East Germany. The content of Section I of this volume is essentially founded on the presentations, discussions and reflections we had the pleasure to have during and after the workshop. This event was generously supported by The Baltic-German University Liaison Office »Hochschulkontor« in Riga. The second activity was the international summer school »Sources of Urbanity in Post-Industrial Cities« organised in Visaginas in September 2015 with the support of DAAD. It brought together students from Germany, Belarus, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic for a two-week course of lectures, seminars, excursions and supervised fieldwork. The students were asked to create an exploratory mapping project of a particular dimension of Visaginas and to develop a scenario for its future development. Reports and reflections on this event constitute Sections II and III of this book. The third activity is the Workshop »Infrastructure, Sovereignty and Urbanity in the Baltic Region«, organised

in Vilnius and Visaginas in May 2016 funded by Hochschulkontor Riga. This workshop was a valuable context to discuss and reflect on the general agendas, methodology and conceptions of critical urbanism in the context of a dramatically re-scaled Central and Eastern Europe. All the research activities described in this book were participatory for they deliberately attempted to include the perspective and the voice of the inhabitants of Visaginas in the process of research and argumentation making.

The first section of this book sets out a range of approaches to understanding the historical conditions through which Visaginas has emerged and been transformed. The second reports on participative mapping projects engaging local inhabitants in order to develop scenarios for the town's future. The third section presents reflections on the aspects of distinct participatory mapping strategies as tools for research, community building and artistic articulation.

From Sniečkus to Visaginas

The first section of the book is dedicated to a range of approaches that depict the history of the settlement from its construction as Sniečkus to its current existence as Visaginas. The aim is both to get a broad picture of the structural conditions in which Visaginas today exists and to identify the impact that the town's history has had on the ways in which it is presently imagined. The first two texts outline the academic bibliographical and statistical contexts for considering the town. As a starting

point, anthropologist Inga Freimane maps the high volume of academic research done on Visaginas as a post-socialist mono-industrial town. In her text, she shows how the town is seen both as an example of the implementation of broader Soviet industrialisation policy in the Baltic States and as a space of a local community with a specific set of links with past memory, heritage and identity. In their joint text, geographer Vytautas Valatka and sociologist Siarhei Liubimau use census data to analyse the position of Visaginas in the context of contemporary tendencies of socio-spatial change in Lithuania. Their analysis demonstrates how the specific relation between type and scale of industry, ethnic composition and built environment frames current processes of socio-economic change in the town in comparison to other Lithuanian towns and also suggests directions for its future development. The next two texts in this section explore different perspectives on how the built environment of the town is today evaluated. In an interview with the art historian Marija Drėmaitė, architect Indrė Ruseckaitė poses questions about the historical meanings, values and functions of Soviet modernist architecture as present to this day in Visaginas. They discuss ways in which Visaginas can be seen as unique on account of being a mix of different and sometimes conflicting approaches to urban planning and design, negotiated between the spatial planners associated with the USSR Ministry of Medium Machine Building and planners from Lithuanian Institutes. In a text reporting on her anthropological work,

Inga Freimane focuses on how inhabitants frame their relation to the town. She shows the ambiguity of the local quest for centrality as a reaction to a national peripherality of the town, and describes multivocality as a main feature of local strategies for narrativising Visaginas as the centre of very different paths. The following two texts explore how the analysis of particular media opens up new insights into how Visaginas can be perceived and understood. Povilas Marozas analyses how different local and visiting photographers have represented the space of both Sniečkus and Visaginas through recent history. His approach is of a cultural historian that explores the photographic medium as a way to saturate a given urban space with meanings and affects. Alla Pigalskaya in her turn focuses on the medium of public space typography in order to trace and discuss the key milestones in the town's history. Pigalskaya argues that both Cyrillic and Latin continue to be used in Visaginas in a playful way, and that a micro-analysis of typographical continuity and change offers deeper insight into the position of Visaginas in the broader context of post-Soviet historical change. In the final text in this section, Galina Orlova provides a thought-provoking ethnographic account on the urban scale formation enabled by the USSR Ministry of Medium Machine Building. Her focus is on how the co-existence of various Soviet research institutes mediated by this Ministry impacted on the spatial organisation of the Russian town of Obninsk, where the World's First Atomic Power Station was built.

Between Participation and Research

The second section of the book documents participative mapping projects produced during the 2015 summer school. It is opened by the group project »History is Us« made by Diana Poškienė, Oksana Denisenko, Terezie Lokšová, Valiantsina Fashchanka and Yves Haltner. This group dealt with the question of local memory and developed an intervention on the pedestrian street Sedulinos alėja allowing inhabitants to play with iconic representations of their town's history and thus to express their relationship to its various periods and aspects. The »Sedulinos alėja is Alive!« project by Aleksandr Chaplya, Anika Schmidt, Hanna Tsimoshyna, Gerrit Füssel and Gintarė Norkūnaitė documents a research, in which participants explored the current economic practices and potentials of Sedulinos alėja. In so doing, they interviewed local entrepreneurs and members of the public administration. Based on this, they developed an interactive mapping experiment in order to obtain propositions from local inhabitants concerning the street's future functions. In the project group, »Re-Visaginas: Public spaces as Communication Platforms«, Afra Hoeck, Anja Baniewicz, Anna-Luise Goetze, Joachim Werner, Ida Roscher, Indrė Saladžinskaitė, Leonard Ermel and Paulė Stulginskaitė also developed an interactive mapping approach in regard to the pedestrian avenue and its public perception. Their specific focus was on it as a space for the practices of youth groups. In their research phase, they identified youth as both underrepresented in the process of decision-making

concerning the town's development and active in a large number of fields. In a lively public test, they staged a flea market in the heart of the city as a means of suggesting the incremental possibilities of launching temporary initiatives. Arne Kunkel, Rugilė Zadeikytė, Sibylle Piechaczek, Svetlana Boguslavskaya and Viktorija Stalybka dealt with abandoned spaces and their perception by the inhabitants of Visaginas. In their project »Knit the Street«, they designed a table game that functions both as a survey and a community-building instrument. Each game entry simultaneously creates data about people's attitudes to the town's built environment and immediately visualises players' choices.

On Meanings of Mapping in Participatory Field Work

The final section of the book consists of a number of conceptual reflections on the approach implemented by the project. Alternative spatial practitioner, Benjamin Cope considers critical mapping as a way to rework relations between academic research, political activism and local contexts, and reflects on how this was inflected in the particular configuration of an international group working for two weeks in Visaginas. Historical anthropologist Felix Ackermann explores mapping as a collaborative tool in interdisciplinary research projects, and points to an orientation on process and related challenges in international research settings. Sociologist and photographer Dalia Čiupailaitė reflects on attempts to combine social research and



participatory planning in small-scale projects like the one reported on here. Architect and artist Miodrag Kuč rethinks participatory work in the context of shrinking former nuclear towns and points to the potential of art in the process of activation, interaction and participation. Finally, historian Anna Veronika Wendland reflects on her ethnographic work at Nuclear Power Plants as exceptional locations.



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Socialist Heritage? Mapping the Existing Academic Literature on Visaginas

Inga Freimane
21

Comments on the Socio-Geographical Specificity of Visaginas in the Context of Lithuania

Vytautas Valatka, Siarhei Liubimau
29

Visaginas – a Zoo of Soviet Architecture? An Interview with Marija Drėmaitė

Indrė Ruseckaitė
35

The Centrality in and of Visaginas

Inga Freimane
41

Visaginas. Looking at the Town Through Photography

Povilas Marozas
49

Public Space Typography in Visaginas

Alla Pigalskaya
55

The Scientific Shape of a Nuclear City: Obninsk as an Assemblage of Research Institutes

Galina Orlova
63

SOCIALIST HERITAGE? MAPPING THE EXISTING ACADEMIC LITERATURE ON VISAGINAS

The peculiar history of Visaginas as a satellite settlement of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant has drawn extensive attention from scholars of history¹, architecture², sociology³ and social anthropology.⁴ Here, most frequent was the framework of Visaginas as a post-socialist mono-industrial town. Thus, it was compared to other mono-industrial towns in the Baltic region and beyond.⁵ On the one hand, researchers were interested in Visaginas as an example of the implementation of broader Soviet industrialisation policy in the Baltic. On the other hand, they analysed various processes within the local community related to the socialist past and memory, heritage and identity.

In relation to the first two questions, Cinis et al., for example, compare three Baltic mono-industrial towns constructed in different periods: the uranium production city of Sillamäe in Estonia built after WW2; Stučka, built next to a hydro-electric power station in the 1960s and later renamed as Aizkraukle, in Latvia; and Sniečkus, built in the 1970s and later renamed as Visaginas in Lithuania.⁶ The unifying factor between

² Cinis, A., Drėmaitė, M. and Kalm, M. (2008) Perfect representations of Soviet planned space: mono-industrial towns in the Soviet Baltic Republics in the 1950s–1980s. *Scandinavian Journal of History* 33(3): 226–246.

³ Čiužas, A. (ed.) (1998) *Ignalinos AĖ: Žmogaus Gyvenimo ir Veiklos Sąlygos*. Lietuvos Filosofijos ir Sociologijos Institutas. Vilnius: Eugrimas; Grigas, R. (1996) Socialinių įtampų laukai. In: Grigas, R. (ed.) *Paribio Lietuva: Sociologinė Paribio Gyventojų Integravimosi į Lietuvos Valstybę Apybraiža*. Vilnius: Lietuvos Filosofijos ir Sociologijos Institutas, 146–177; Kasatkina, N. and Leončikas, T. (2003) *Lietuvos Etninių Tyrimų Adaptacija: Kontekstas ir Eiga*. Vilnius: Eugrimas; Rinkevičius, L. (2000) Public risk perceptions in a ›double-risk‹ society: the case of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant in Lithuania. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Sciences* 13(3): 279–289; Rinkevičius, L. (2000) Transitional economies. *Environmental Politics* 9(1): 171–202.

⁴ Baločkaite, R. (2010) Post-Soviet transitions of the planned socialist towns: Visaginas, Lithuania. *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 2(2): 63–81; Baločkaite, R. (2012) Coping with the unwanted past in planned socialist towns: Visaginas, Tychy, and Nowa Huta. *Slovo* 24(1): 41–60; Šliavaitė, K. (2003) Community at risk: conceptualizing, experiencing and resisting unemployment in the nuclear powerplant community in Lithuania. In: Voicu, B. and Rusu, H. (eds) *Globalization, European Integration and Social Development in European Post-communist Societies*. Psychomedia Publishing House, 73–82. Available at: http://stiinte.ulbsibiu.ro/sociologie/NYESS/Papers_Sibiu_2003/07.Kristina%20Sliavaite.pdf [accessed 13 June 2013]; Šliavaitė, K. (2005) *From Pioneers to Target Group: Social Change, Ethnicity and Memory in a Lithuanian Nuclear Power Plant Community*. Doctoral dissertation. Lund University: Lund Monographs in Social Anthropology 16; Šliavaitė, K. (2010) Social memory, identity and narratives of decline in a Lithuanian nuclear plant community. *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis XX. Studia Anthropologica* 4: 52–71.

⁵ On mono-industrial towns, see: Åman, A. (1992) *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe during the Stalin Era. An Aspect of Cold War History*. New York: The Architecture History Foundation.

⁶ Cinis, A., Drėmaitė, M. and Kalm, M. (2008) Perfect representations of Soviet planned space: mono-industrial towns in the Soviet Baltic Republics in the 1950s–1980s. *Scandinavian Journal of History* 33(3): 226–246.

¹ Baubinas, R. (2000) Visagino miesto praeitis, būklė ir perspektyvos. In: Beinorienė, V. (ed.) *Pamoka. Sistema. Analizė: Straipsnių Rinkinys*. Visaginas: Visagino ›Atgimimo‹ Gimnazija, Visagino Miesto Savivaldybė, Lietuvos Filosofijos ir Sociologijos Institutas, Geografijos Institutas, Daugpilio Pedagoginio Universiteto Latgalos Tyrimų Institutas, 35–46; Kavaliauskas, A. (1999) *Visaginas (1975–1999)*. Vilnius: Jandrija; Kavaliauskas, A. (2002) Visagino miesto demografiniai pokyčiai ir kai kurios jų priežastys. In: Čiužas A. (ed.) *Rytų Lietuva: Visuomenės ir Socialinių Grupių Raiška bei Saveika*. Vilnius: Socialinių Tyrimų Institutas, 121–131.



the three cities is that the decision to construct them was taken by the central government of the USSR, i.e. outside national republics, in order to facilitate infrastructural development and thus promote the tighter economic interdependence of the Union and the Republics. Built in places with no pre-war layers, or significantly altering these layers, these towns represent unconditionally planned Soviet urban space.⁷

Discussing the idea(l)s laid in the foundation of these towns, their spatial planning and settlement, the authors argue that while such towns fostered industrialisation and the growth of local economies; they were also »promoting Soviet norms and a unification of the built environment, and thus were weakening the traditional cultures and denationalising the Baltic Republics.«⁸ Whereas such terms as »tradition« and »modernity« need to be further problematised, what the authors refer to is the idea that urban planning and architecture in the Soviet Union⁹ were closely interconnected with a project of social engineering. Such cities were designed to create – materially and discursively – particular kinds of subjectivities of the working class; and thus to serve as sites and symbols of the construction of socialism.¹⁰ Cinis et al. agree on the importance of the link between the material environment of the city as the embodiment of an ideology and the particular kind of subjectivities produced. However, there is a lack of a more detailed explanation of how exactly such processes take place. The authors only

comment that the uniform spaces of planned towns made it easier for the Russian-speaking migrant workers to adapt to the »western space [that they] encountered so often in occupying new territories after World War II.«¹¹

This theme is developed in the work of Rasa Baločkaitė that describes Visaginas as a city of socialist heritage characterised by a specific ethnic composition, an assumed isolation from the rest of Lithuania, an absence of any urban history prior to 1973, a strong pro-Soviet identification and a narrow specialisation of industry.¹² She argues that such features helped to promote socialism in the city: no urban history prior to 1973 was a tabula rasa with no previous inscriptions upon which the Soviet authorities could act; the excellent services provided by the

⁷ Ibid., p. 240–241.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ On Soviet planning principles see Gutnov, A. (1968) *The Ideal Communist City*. New York: Brazillier.; Miliutin, N. (1974) *Sotsgorod: The Problem of Building Socialist Cities*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

¹⁰ Baločkaitė, R. (2010) Post-Soviet transitions of the planned socialist towns: Visaginas, Lithuania. *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 2(2): 63–81.

¹¹ Cinis, A., Drėmaitė, M. and Kalm, M. (2008) Perfect representations of Soviet planned space: mono-industrial towns in the Soviet Baltic Republics in the 1950s–1980s. *Scandinavian Journal of History* 33(3): 226–246, p. 241.

¹² Baločkaitė, R. (2010) Post-Soviet transitions of the planned socialist towns: Visaginas, Lithuania. *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 2(2): 63–81.

town drew it closer to a socialist welfare utopia; industry provided secure employment; remoteness facilitated a secret-like atmosphere while maintaining the site as open and migrant communities aided the Russification of the region.¹³ Such benefits, however, turned into drawbacks after the collapse of the Soviet Union, making Visaginas a very complex and difficult case of post-socialist transformation, unlike other mono-industrial cities.¹⁴

The question of how similar/dissimilar Visaginas is in relation to other mono-industrial towns in the Baltics and beyond is very interesting. The academic interest in mono-industrial towns has been extensive and varied and includes: a focus on social aspects of transformation (Stenning on Nowa Huta,¹⁵ Poland; Wawrzynski and Szczepański on Tychy, Poland¹⁶); turning a mono-industrial city into an open air museum of socialism (Scribner on Eisenhüttenstadt, Germany¹⁷); urban identity and coping with urban socialist heritage (Young and Kaczmarek on Łódź, Poland¹⁸) and the transformation of over-developed mining settlements (Kideckel on the Jiu Valley, Romania¹⁹; and Walkowitz on Ukraine²⁰), among many others. However, as Rasa Baločkaitė notes, this attention is rather episodic,²¹ i.e. there is a need of more direct comparison between various places and aspects of transformation. Her article comparing the socialist heritage in Visaginas, Tychy and Nowa Huta is directed specifically at this aim, which brings us to the second area of the literature on Visaginas.

Viewing socialist heritage as almost the only symbolic resource upon which these mono-industrial towns could redefine their identity, Baločkaitė reveals different strategies employed in coping with »the unwanted past« of socialism.²² The main theoretical concept around which the analysis is based is that of »place identity« defined as »institutionally produced and/or institutionally supported public discourse about a place, which, unlike individual opinions or group interests, is constructed on the basis of historical heritage.«²³ So, in order to assess how socialist heritage is incorporated into new place identity, the author focuses on the self-representation of these towns through various institutionally produced materials, such as websites, tourism brochures, photo albums, etc.

Another work by the author includes the examination of the community's perception of, responses to, and interpretations of the transition from the socialist past to the new political and economic order. This text is based on a qualitative content analysis of the local weekly newspapers, *Dobryi Den* and *Sugardas*. According to the findings of this research, three periods of residents' responses to transformations are identified: the period immediately after independence that was characterised by resistance to changes and strong pro-Soviet identities; followed by the period of slow appropriation and the »homing« of Lithuania, a reconceptualisation of former homelands as external and a process of »diasporisation«; and the third period

starting from 2002 related to the closure of INPP, characterised by uncertainty about the present and the future.²⁴ The latter period is also characterised by Soviet nostalgia as a »restorative discourse, through which an individual reclaims one's own dignity and respect, by transporting himself or herself onto an idealised chronotope of the Soviet past«.²⁵ The author notes that such nostalgia is rooted in a deficient present and facilitated by the presence of objects from the past, but does not elaborate how exactly it happens (by looking at these objects?; remembering them?; living through them?)

The issue of social memory is also at the centre of articles produced as part of Kristina Šliavaitė's doctoral research *From Pioneers to Target Group: Social Change, Ethnicity and Memory in a Lithuanian Nuclear Power Plant Community*.²⁶ For example, while examining inhabitants' narratives about the past (1970s – 1980s) and present (post-Soviet period), the author questions how inhabitants' constructions

Stenning, A. (2005) Where is the post-socialist working class? Working-class lives in the spaces of (post-)socialism. *Sociology* 39(5): 983–999;

¹⁶ Wawrzynski, J. (1986) Nowe Tychy: an assessment of the Polish new town. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 29(1): 34–38; Szczepański, M. (1993) Planning, housing and the community in a new socialist town: the case of Tychy, Poland. *The Town Planning Review* 64(1): 1–21.

¹⁷ Scribner, C. (2000) Tender rejection: the German Democratic Republic goes to the museum. *Journal of English Studies* 4(2): 171–187.

¹⁸ Young, C. and Kaczmarek, S. (2008) The Socialist past and postsocialist urban identity in Central and Eastern Europe: the case of Łódź, Poland. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 15(1): 53–70.

¹⁹ Kideckel, D. A. (2004) Miners and wives in Romania's Jiu Valley: perspectives on postsocialist class, gender, and social change. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 11: 39–63.

²⁰ Walkowitz, D. J. (1993) *Normal Life: Identity and the Unmaking of the Ukrainian Working Class*. National Council for Soviet and East European Research.

²¹ Baločkaitė, R. (2010) Post-Soviet transitions of the planned socialist towns: Visaginas, Lithuania. *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 2(2): 63–81, p. 65.

²² Baločkaitė, R. (2012) Coping with the unwanted past in planned socialist towns: Visaginas, Tychy, and Nowa Huta. *Slovo* 24(1): 41–60.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Baločkaitė, R. (2010) Post-Soviet transitions of the planned socialist towns: Visaginas, Lithuania. *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 2(2): 63–81, p. 73.

²⁵ Baločkaitė, R. (2010) Ibid., p. 76.

²⁶ Šliavaitė, K. (2005) *From Pioneers to Target Group: Social Change, Ethnicity and Memory in a Lithuanian Nuclear Power Plant Community*. Doctoral dissertation. Lund University: Lund Monographs in Social Anthropology 16.

of these periods is linked to their identity. Whereas earlier times are portrayed as »one of rapid development, modernisation, and the upward mobility of individuals, [t]he post-Soviet period is constructed as a rupture of this path and related to economic and social decline.«²⁷ The author notes that the conceptualisation of both periods is different among various segments of society, and that this difference in meaning is often organised along ethnic lines. The results of the study are explained in relation to changes in the dominant ideology – from the Soviet emphasis on modernisation and urbanisation with a characteristic priority given to the working class, to the consequent devaluation of such ideology that causes a crisis of meaning and insecurity for the workers of the plant.²⁸ The insecurity related to work among the community of atomshchiki (nuclear power plant workers) is elaborated in further research by the author.²⁹

Particularly interesting is that while the identity of the town is closely linked to the fate of INPP, Kristina Šliavaitė notes that narratives of decline are often channelled by local inhabitants through commenting on the changing material environment of the city. For example, whereas the optimism of the first stage of construction and the good quality of life is expressed as the »»birth of a new place« and »kindergartens built so well, with pools,«³⁰ »signs of the process of decline were argued to be first visible on the body of the town.«³¹ However, as the author's main concern is social memory and not the

examination of place, this theme is mentioned just briefly.

Overall, whereas various topics have been examined in the academic literature on Visaginas, the materiality of the city itself is rarely addressed. Following the human geography discussion on what constitutes »place«, it seems at times that Visaginas also is examined as a mere background and »container« of social life, despite the fact that it serves as a metaphor through which local inhabitants illustrate social and economic decline³² or »accelerate« Soviet nostalgia.³³ Therefore, more work has to be done in this area.



²⁷ Šliavaitė, K. (2010) Social memory, identity and narratives of decline in a Lithuanian nuclear plant community. *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis XX. Studia Anthropologica* 4: 52–71.

²⁸ On the working class and change of ideology, see: Kideckel, D. A. (2002) The Unmaking of an East-Central European working class. In: Hann, C. M. (ed.) *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies, and Practices in Eurasia*. London: Routledge, 114–132.

²⁹ Šliavaitė, K. (2003) Community at risk: conceptualizing, experiencing and resisting unemployment in the nuclear power plant community in Lithuania. In: Voicu, B. and Rusu, H. (eds) *Globalization, European Integration and Social Development in European Postcommunist Societies*. Psychomedia Publishing House, 73–82. Available at: http://stiinte.ulbsibiu.ro/sociologie/NYESS/Papers_Sibiu_2003/07.Kristina%20Sliavaite.pdf [accessed 13 June 2013].

³⁰ Interview with Yuri, in: Šliavaitė, K. (2010) Social memory, identity and narratives of decline in a Lithuanian nuclear plant community. *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis XX. Studia Anthropologica* 4: 52–71, p. 59.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

³² Šliavaitė, K. (2010) Social memory, identity and narratives of decline in a Lithuanian nuclear plant community. *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis XX. Studia Anthropologica* 4: 52–71, p. 62.

³² Šliavaitė, K. (2010) Social Memory, Identity and Narratives of Decline in a Lithuanian Nuclear Plant Community. *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis XX. Studia Anthropologica* 4: p. 62.

³³ Baločkaite, R. (2010) Post-Soviet Transitions of the Planned Socialist Towns: Visaginas, Lithuania. *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 2[2]: p. 76.

COMMENTS ON THE SOCIO- GEOGRAPHICAL SPECIFICITY OF VISAGINAS IN THE CONTEXT OF LITHUANIA

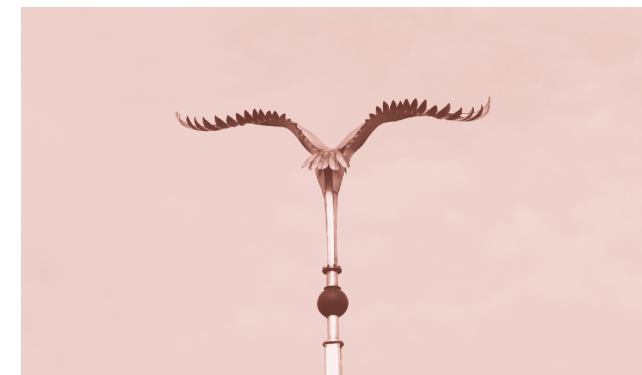
Scholarly attention to the town of Visaginas as a distinct historical and geographical fact is attracted due to the town's peculiar combination of anomalous and typical features of urban development. This short article's aim is to frame this combination of anomalous and stereotypical features of Visaginas in the context of Lithuania. And, further, to ground the characterisation of the town in the analysis of small area population census data. This approach to the analysis of socio-geographical structure and change enables the treating of cities not as single units, but as combinations of different types of smaller areas. So far, such a focus on the internal structure of cities, socio-spatial segregation and spatial peculiarities, is rather uncommon for scholarship of Central and Eastern Europe. The proposed angle on Visaginas – which is divided into 49 units – is built on the methodology elaborated by Vytautas Valatka in his study »Residential Differentiation in Post-Soviet Lithuania«, defended as a PhD thesis in 2015 at Vilnius University. The most relevant indicators representing different aspects of the data on which analysis was based are: the share of flats of higher status occupational groups; average number of persons per dwelling; children-pensioner ratio; Polish ethnicity; 1970s housing.

Visaginas is usually seen as a specific kind of homology between type and scale of industry, ethnic composition and construction type. The only compatible urban unit in Lithuania is Elektrėnai, an older electricity industry town

built in the 1960s. However, Elektrėnai is a significantly smaller town than Visaginas, and has an older population and lower quality housing. Besides, Elektrėnai has a local Lithuanian population, while Visaginas is multinational. The latter point is definitely a unique feature of the city. According to 2011 census data, out of 5898 enumeration areas in Lithuania there are only 55 with more than ¼ or 150 foreign born inhabitants. And out of these 55 areas in Lithuania, 49 are located in Visaginas. By way of comparison, in Vilnius there is only one area like this in Žirmūnai and 4 in Naujoji Vilnia. In this respect, Visaginas is the only place in the country with a rapidly imported Soviet population.

In terms of housing structure, Visaginas is unique too. The town totally consisting of large modernist housing estates has no analogues in Lithuania in terms of planning solutions and quality of housing. Elsewhere in Lithuania, there are four microrayons also built in this period of construction – Fabijoniškės, Justiniškės and Pašilaičiai in Vilnius and Šilainiai in Kaunas. However, these four microrayons are grey, lack green spaces and possess larger scale housing. Visaginas has less 9-12 story buildings, the building types are more diverse, and there is a larger share of brick construction. The town is much better planned in terms of its public spaces, more pedestrian friendly and has a more human scale.

As the level of urbanisation before WWII in Lithuania generally was low (less than 20



percent), more than 60 percent of the populations of Soviet mode industrial towns currently live in large housing estates. Cities and towns with newer Soviet housing stock are today in a better situation. Regional analysis of small area census data shows that towns in the eastern part of Lithuania – Visaginas, Utena and Vilnius – have inherited from Soviet development projects newer housing estates and are in a better situation than Klaipėda, Šiauliai and Panevėžys. Although Visaginas has the largest share of Soviet housing estates,¹ this is not disadvantageous as there has basically been no suburban development around the town, except for some bigger individual investments in allotment gardens' facilities. This means that inhabitants' resources – even those of the most affluent – are concentrated on preserving large housing estates. And, therefore, in a long-term perspective Visaginas is better off than for instance some microrayons of Vilnius. In a pessimistic scenario of a situation of budget shortages and a general weakening of state redistributive capacities, densely populated large housing estates are likely to be more resilient. In such a long-term perspective, compact Visaginas enjoys one of the most favorable conditions in Lithuania.

Another unique feature of Visaginas is its deindustrialisation trajectory. Despite the fact that the decision to close the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (INPP) was taken a while ago, the decommissioning is a gradual process. The INPP is still a source of a large number of

well-paid jobs and Visaginas is, thus, experiencing effects of deindustrialization two decades later than the rest of Lithuania. During 2001–2011, Visaginas saw a substantial decline (30–40 percent) of craft workers, machine operators and clerical support workers. Nevertheless, a growth of professionals was also evident. Generally, the direction of change is similar to that of other Lithuanian cities. From 2001 to 2011, population in the town has declined by 9 percent, but the number of households has remained stable – the decline was 2.5 percent, which in a Lithuanian context is a positive indicator. Hence, this data can be interpreted as evidence that the emigration of young people has given their parents a possibility to live closer to Western standards of living.

The main socio-economic tendency in Lithuania after 1990 was a fast decline of the working class, and a growth of managerial and professional occupations. Growth was concentrated mainly in Vilnius and is followed by a segregation into lower and higher occupational status groups. To make a comparison with Visaginas, older Soviet housing estates in Vilnius underwent a process of quickly losing their higher status population, while newer housing estates became more crowded. A higher status population became concentrated in inner city locations

¹ Cities and towns having a lower share of large housing estates may be in an advantageous situation too. First, there is space for the development of new housing projects in case there is need. And, second, there is no need to shrink housing stock in cases where the population is in sharp decline.

and in suburbs, while panel housing estates are in a constantly worsening situation. From such an angle, the situation of Visaginas is better than the conditions in some older Vilnius micro-rayons. It is less complicated to bring all actors: inhabitants, municipal and EU resources together to support housing infrastructure in Visaginas. Places like Fabijoniškės, Justiniškės and Pašilaičiai, and older Vilnius microrayons, cannot enjoy such a concentration of interests.

More attention should be paid to current tendencies of the differentiation of Visaginas inhabitants in relation to the urban environment, although mapping has revealed that inhabitants of different occupational groups are relatively evenly distributed all over the city. Besides, more research needs to be done on social mobility across generations among Visaginas inhabitants, in order to see how much relatively high socio-economic status is determined by foreign born inhabitants who came to work at the INPP. Even more interesting is how Visaginas looks in a Lithuanian context in terms of the emigration of youth. How important is Russia as a direction of emigration, which is not the case for the youth from other Lithuanian towns? There is no official data available on this matter. But such information would add to our understanding of the combination of typical and unique traits of Visaginas.

Therefore, the typical features of Visaginas are mainly to be found in the challenges that de-industrialising cities and towns encounter in

Lithuania. Its uniqueness is mainly constituted by a higher quality and bigger diversity of different dimensions of urban life, and therefore is of a predominantly positive nature. Generally, taking into account Visaginas' higher quality housing, multinational population and the availability of EU structural funds, the town is rather advantaged and has very good opportunities in comparison to other parts of Lithuania, to re-tool itself in the course of de-industrialisation. Keeping good quality of schooling and childcare facilities; developing further infrastructure integrated into the natural environment; and extending the sports facilities makes Visaginas a potential attractor for populations of post-Soviet origin, and for young families and singles participating in the 'new economy' in Lithuania and worldwide.



ViSAGINAS – A ZOO OF SOVIET ARCHITECTURE?

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARIJA DRĖMAITĖ

What is specific about Visaginas as a mono-functional town, both in the context of the former USSR and Lithuania?

Visaginas is certainly special in the context of Lithuania, first of all because it is the only city planned and constructed in late socialism (in the late 70s), engaging with new ideas of urban planning. Visaginas is a special place where ideas of organic planning were introduced on a large scale, and where a concern about nature, the natural and a healthy way of life became of great importance. These ideas arose as a reaction to the urban planning concepts of the 60s, when trees would be cut down, the ground flattened, industrial prefabricated buildings assembled in the countryside and historic city centres and old towns renovated giving priority to traffic. The late 70s can be seen as a turning point in Soviet planning. Natural terrain and trees started to be preserved, and new structures were designed according to this logic. These aimed to bring people back to an organic way of life and a sense of peace within nature, with city centres created for pedestrians only and highways constructed around urban districts. In addition, this was a time of the thought that public buildings should be individually designed in opposition to the logic of standardised shops, kindergartens and schools buildings.

Fragments of this idea are visible in late Soviet residential districts – the so-called ›microrayons‹ or ›rayons‹ – where a search for uniqueness prevails, but one is not able to grasp it so

clearly, except in some very late examples, such as Pašilaičiai in Vilnius. Visaginas is a new town, entirely planned from scratch. It represents the ideas of late Soviet urban planning, revealing them as a whole and on different scales – from the layout of the city to the arrangement of its public spaces. From this point of view, therefore, Visaginas is exceptional in Lithuania. In the broader context of the former USSR, one can find the same ideas in Sosnovy Bor in the Leningrad Oblast, a town built to serve the Leningrad Nuclear Power Plant, and in Pripyat, near to the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. In this context, Visaginas is also an interesting case because of the mixture – the layout of the city and the microrayons were planned in the design institute in Leningrad, while its public buildings were designed in Lithuanian institutes, mainly at the Kaunas branch of the Urban Planning Institute. The variety of housing blocks itself is a mixture, representing many different series and types of houses. It is all this together that makes this special mix.

Can we treat Visaginas as a pure example of the architecture and urban design of that time? Or even perhaps as some kind of a Soviet architecture zoo, where the main ›species‹ of late modernism all lived in one place?

If we say that a pure idea is one single idea implemented from scratch to the end by one general designer, then Visaginas is not pure, because it is a mixture of too many design ideas. It is like a basket full of different fruits

from different gardens. The city layout, which is made according to the butterfly model (one central body and four wings around it), is one idea. The housing blocks of different types are designed by different Soviet institutes and built in different materials. The three residential microrayons (the fourth part of the ›wing‹ was not executed) form different compositions. In this respect, a single overall idea is not visible. I would say the same about the public buildings, because, for instance, there were two kindergartens designed by Kaunas architects, which were absolutely marvellous and specially designed in opposition to standard forms.¹ They contained special courtyards, a swimming pool and luxurious public spaces. I do not know the idea behind it, perhaps they had unlimited funding or some special commission, but this does not change the exclusiveness of these realisations. The same is true about the hospital and the commercial centres that all were specially designed for Visaginas. From this point of view, all the latest design ideas and building construction possibilities of the period were implemented. Therefore, I would agree with the idea of an architecture zoo, but in a zoo probably not all the species are the best ones. Residents of the atomic towns were privileged and could enjoy better living and working environments. One must also take into account that these people had to be attracted to certain places from different regions of the Soviet Union.

It is an interesting point that specialists moving from one atomic city to another were

in some way hunting after better conditions. And at the same time, the atomic free-movers somehow stayed detached from the specifics of history and place in a way which was very ›Soviet‹. In the light of this internationalism, should Visaginas' urban and architectural heritage today be treated as an ›imported‹ or as a ›locally produced‹ one?

It is difficult to say what the overall evaluation is nowadays. But in those days, the local, Lithuanian architects were critical about the place, because they said it was different, alien and that one did not feel at home there. In general, in Lithuania it was seen as an alien city and many said they felt a different environment than in any other Lithuanian prefabricated suburb. My question is: what was the reason behind this mixture of different buildings? I have heard from Lithuanian architects that there was an argument, that they were not happy about the fact that the new town was being designed by Leningrad planners. So there was a compromise – the master plan was drawn in Leningrad, the public buildings designed in Kaunas and the housing was a mixture. Visaginas, therefore, reminds me of the episode of writing a letter from the Soviet animated film, *Three From Prostokvashino*. During holidays in the countryside, a boy Fiodor decided to write a letter to his parents. He starts to write, then the letter is overtaken by the dog Sharik who shares news about his matters, and then afterwards a few words concerning fur falling out are added by the cat Matroskin. As a result, one can easily



imagine the reaction of the parents when they received this letter.

Despite the distracting mix, the richness of the public spaces in Visaginas is unbelievable. It is completely different than that of any other residential district, because of the overload of amphitheatres, shelters, artistic installations and small architecture elements. Are there any similar cases in other Lithuanian towns?

In the 80s, pedestrian areas started to be installed in the historic centres of Lithuanian towns, and this all coincides with an emergent mood of organic urban planning. The first pedestrian boulevard in the Soviet Union was made in the mid 1970s, in the northern Lithuanian city of Šiauliai. It was called Vilnius Boulevard and contained early postmodernist elements – painted walls, special lighting, benches and pieces of small architecture. Soon, another pedestrian boulevard was installed in Kaunas city centre – Laisvės Boulevard was specially designed and remade in 1982 as a former transport line. One can see these as examples of a conceptual turn: city centres should be reserved as safe pedestrian areas and for flows of people, and they should have attributes that are specially designed. But today, it seems that people rarely make use of these public spaces in Visaginas. It seems that everything is ready ›for‹ this, but that no one is keen to take the opportunity. On the other hand, perhaps the scale and proportions of the public spaces are not of

the ›human scale‹, and this is the reason why people choose cosier spaces. The scale of the public spaces in Visaginas was taken from different contexts and examples; and probably this is why a wideness and openness of public spaces is evident. They seem to presuppose that the city should have three times more residents than it has now or that it should be more densely built.

Is it possible that Visaginas is a potential site of architectural heritage and what would be the criteria by which its values would be defined? And what should be the position of the state in this matter?

Anything can become a heritage site in the contemporary heritage movement. But if we talk about the criteria by which heritage is defined, then many questions may arise, such as whose heritage, and for whom? Is it a site of pride in architectural achievements? Or is it a problematic site, exhibiting the history of being affiliated to the Soviet Union, a history of industry, and of controlling, resettling and mixing people. We might also again think of pureness as a criterion – is it a pure example of a certain design of a certain period, or is it a mixture of everything? Or is it a site of curiosity, attracting foreign visitors as an amusement park? In the latter case, I don't think that the state would want to take responsibility in preserving such

¹ These buildings are located at Vilties 1 (currently serves as the ›Centre of Ethnic Cultures and Communities‹) and Vilties 3.

a site (I mean, by listing it on the National List of Cultural Heritage). The role of the state is quite important if we want to officially preserve this structure. On the other hand, there might be great private interest, for example, that can be animated by publishing an architectural guide, spreading it worldwide and attracting people to the site as one of curiosity, as a strange, interesting post-Soviet place. This is a difficult question, because the quality of the construction in Visaginas was not always the highest, and the passage of time shows this: the city looks like it is in decay, and needs more investment and people to make it alive according to the scale to which it was planned. This is especially obvious after the closing of the INPP – the functionalist city has lost the main source of its function. This is the main point of interest and at the same time a tragedy, because the whole community is in stress after the main source of their income has been cut: now they have to re-orient to something else. New work places, new industries and new jobs have to be introduced or supported; and this is the point where the state should show interest and bring support. This town might be very interesting, beautiful, exceptional and provide comfortable living conditions, but for now it is decaying and, in the face of an unclear future, negative moods prevail.

There are two future scenarios for Visaginas: the optimistic plan A if a new nuclear power plant will be built and the second half of the butterfly will be completed. And Plan B, or the

current phase – life without any new developments. Usually the tragedy of modernist mono-functional structures is the loss of their primary function. If form follows function, then form is lost when the function is gone. So if plan A happens in Visaginas, form will continue following function. But if plan B plays itself out, what about form and new function then?

Speaking about form and function, there are two possible ways: either we find a function that fits the organisation of the structure, or we reorganise the structure according to a new function. It is the same with Visaginas: it has lost its primary idea and function, and a new function fitting the existing structure has not been found. I would see urban tourism as one of the possible solutions, at least during the phase of transition. Visaginas has many advantages – lakes, forests and a well-developed sports infrastructure. It would also be interesting if every single building was carefully researched and labelled according to what series and design institute it represents. Many interesting discoveries may occur: perhaps we would find out that Visaginas represents the full range of Soviet planning and design institutes. This might offer a positive way of reappraising the presence of *The Mix* in Visaginas. So, if we come back to the question of transformations of urban and architectural form, the answer for Visaginas might not be as easy as in the case of Lazdynai in Vilnius, for instance. The picture is very clear in Lazdynai or Elektrėnai, that



in a way are »time capsules« as they represent a certain period from the start to the end. Do we have the same historical perception about Visaginas already or is it too new? It is easy to perceive the new infills clearly in Lazdynai and Elektrėnai, in the way they distort or complement the existing structure and the original layout. Visaginas, on the contrary, is full of everything, so any changes or infills might simply be invisible. On the other hand, new additions might be helpful and correspond to the phenomena of *The Mix*, because in some sense Visaginas is a collage-like post-modernist town. So in concluding, I would say that *The Mix* and *Tourism* might be keywords for future scenarios of Visaginas.

THE CENTRALITY IN AND OF VISAGINAS

Geographical remoteness and the fact that Visaginas is a satellite settlement to the now closed Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant are sometimes used to explain why the town is shrinking. This makes the theme of centrality very important for Visaginas at the moment. On the one hand, there is a search for a geographical and semantic centre of the town. On the other hand, the town itself, as well as some places and narratives within it, are marginalised.

I would like to frame this quest for centrality by reflecting on the process of researching »What could a museum of Visaginas look like?« during the summer school and elaborating on the empirical findings of my MA project »Dwelling in Visaginas: The Phenomenology of a Post-socialist Town«. ¹ Thesis conclusions were presented in Visaginas during a workshop, Cultures of Shrinking, in February 2015 and were among the preparatory materials for the summer school covered in this volume.

Upon first arrival to Visaginas in February 2014, my aim was to analyse how the material reality of the town has changed from the initial construction phase in the 1970s and 1980s and how, by addressing these changes, local inhabitants narrate, negotiate and affirm their agency and their sense of belonging to the place. The map included in this volume was created in the process of informal and several mobile interviews, as well as by walking the city on my own. Places that local inhabitants frequently mentioned or considered important were depicted on the map,

whereas I myself accomplished their categorisation into five topics and fifteen case studies. Not all the places are going to be mentioned for the sake of brevity and clarity of argument. In the original, the map was supplemented by a lengthy twenty page text.

On the map, the first category is »Structuring the Playing Field«, which includes places that »order« life in Visaginas. Centre stage in these discussions was occupied by the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (spot 2 on the map). INPP served as a city-building factor, and the majority of people living in Visaginas are from the community of atomschiki – nuclear power plant workers,² who arrived mainly from other nuclear »closed cities« across the Soviet Union. So, even though the plant is situated some eight kilometres away from the city, it actually occupies the central role in the life of the majority of Visaginas inhabitants. Interestingly it has been argued by some researchers that the nuclear history and the INPP is »the unwanted history

¹ Freimane, I. (2014) *Dwelling in Visaginas: the phenomenology of a post-socialist town*. Masters Thesis. University of Tartu. Available at: <http://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/43417> (accessed 05 November 2015).

² Šliavaitė, K. (2003) Community at risk: conceptualizing, experiencing and resisting unemployment in the nuclear power plant community in Lithuania. In: Voicu, B. and Rusu, H. (eds) *Globalization, European Integration and Social Development in European Postcommunist Societies*. Psichomedia Publishing House, 73–82. Available at: http://stiinte.ulbsibiu.ro/sociologie/NYESS/Papers_Sibiu_2003/07.Kristina%20Sliavaite.pdf (accessed 13 June 2013).



of the socialist past³, that is silenced in the official representation of the city. On this ground, because of the particular ethnic composition in the city, the dissatisfaction with the closure of the plant felt by the Russian-speaking community of atomschiki was expressed as a sentiment against the present day Lithuanian ruling elites in town or, more precisely, as negative sentiments directed towards the Visaginas City council (spot 1 on the map). Although the situation might have changed after the last elections, at the time of writing the thesis the majority of people working in the Council were of Lithuanian origin and were not permanent residents of Visaginas. They came from the nearby towns of Zarasai, Utena, Ukmergė and Ignalina. According to one informant, because the local authorities are not locally based, they are not very enthusiastic about promoting the development of the city and »fighting for it« after the closure of INPP (Vasiliy, Visaginas, March 2014). This is also negatively perceived, because these powerful »outsiders« do not partake in the city-patriotism and sense of exceptionalism felt by many members of the community – not only because local inhabitants work at the INPP, but because of the fact that it was they who built the city.

The salience of participation in, or at least witnessing, the construction of the town (officially designated as year 1975) became most apparent when communicating with members of the Builders' Club in Visaginas and conducting mobile interviews with informants. On the map,

this is indicated by some places in the category of »Visuality and Visibility«. As some researchers point out, narratives of decline are evident among the town's inhabitants.⁴ This issue came to the fore during the mobile interviews on the Festivalio Street blocks (spot 6 on the map). Such narratives of decline were channelled by invoking the visual imagery of the abandoned buildings of the town. That is why I decided to employ the concept of dwelling to explain how some informants almost equate the »body of the city« with the »body of the self«. The Festivalio Street blocks are emotionally saturated despite the fact that they are located in the outskirts of town, and were described by some informants as the »semantic centre of the town« (Matas, Visaginas, March 2014).

It is possible to argue then that not only the INPP is a ground for claiming acknowledgement, status, power and centrality, but also the town. Such a close connection between the town and its residents can be used to explain such a negative attitude towards »the others« who rule the city. As one of the informants said, »this is our city not on our land« (Konstantin, Visaginas, February 2014). In connection to this, it would be interesting to trace how the decision over the demolition of two of the buildings (spot 4 and 5 on the map) just before and right after our summer school that had stood without windows and doors for at least the past twenty years was taken in the City Council. Ironically also, in the place of one of them, a builders' supplies chain store is being built.

The ambiguity of this quest for centrality and also its multivocality can be discussed also in relation to the Visaginas Centre of Culture (spot 8 on the map). This is one of the places in the category of »Where Have All the Pregnant Women Gone?«, addressing the closure of schools and kindergartens and their reconstruction into various cultural institutions. The Centre of Culture was created in 2009 as a co-ordinating body of the majority of cultural institutions in town. In 2013, the administration of the Centre was moved to what had previously been the first school building of Visaginas. Upon my visit, I was told that a museum is being planned in the Centre. However, to my surprise, the artefacts that were gradually collected for the museum consisted of various folk craft items, in addition to an extensive black-and-white photography collection that represented the construction of the town. Ironically, a regional ethnographic museum was being developed in this planned post-Soviet city hosting a nuclear power plant. Such a paradox can be explained as an attempt by the Lithuanian members of the Centre of Culture to narrate the history of Visaginas as having pre-socialist layers, and thus reinstall their symbolic authority over the place.

The implication of this is that places can be perceived and narrated in multiple ways, i.e. they are multivocal in the sense that different voices exist simultaneously and »make place« differently. Margaret Rodman argues that by paying attention to multilocality and multivocality, we can empower place conceptually and

encourage understanding of the complex social construction of spatial thinking.⁵ To a certain extent, this idea follows a logic similar to Felix Ringel's conceptions of »temporal complexity« and »temporal flexibility«, albeit these are applied to the temporal, and not the spatial, dimension.⁶ Ringel attempts to challenge the idea that particular social groups – post-socialist societies or specific »generations« can be designated as having only one specific temporal orientation due to their respective repertoire of memories. Rather, Ringel argues, there is »a variety of coexisting and simultaneous temporal references and frameworks«.⁷

Such simultaneity of temporal and spatial references is felt in Visaginas not only by the presence of particular objects and spaces, but also by their absence – a point addressed by the category of »Unrealised Plans« on the map. When one comes to Visaginas, among the first things

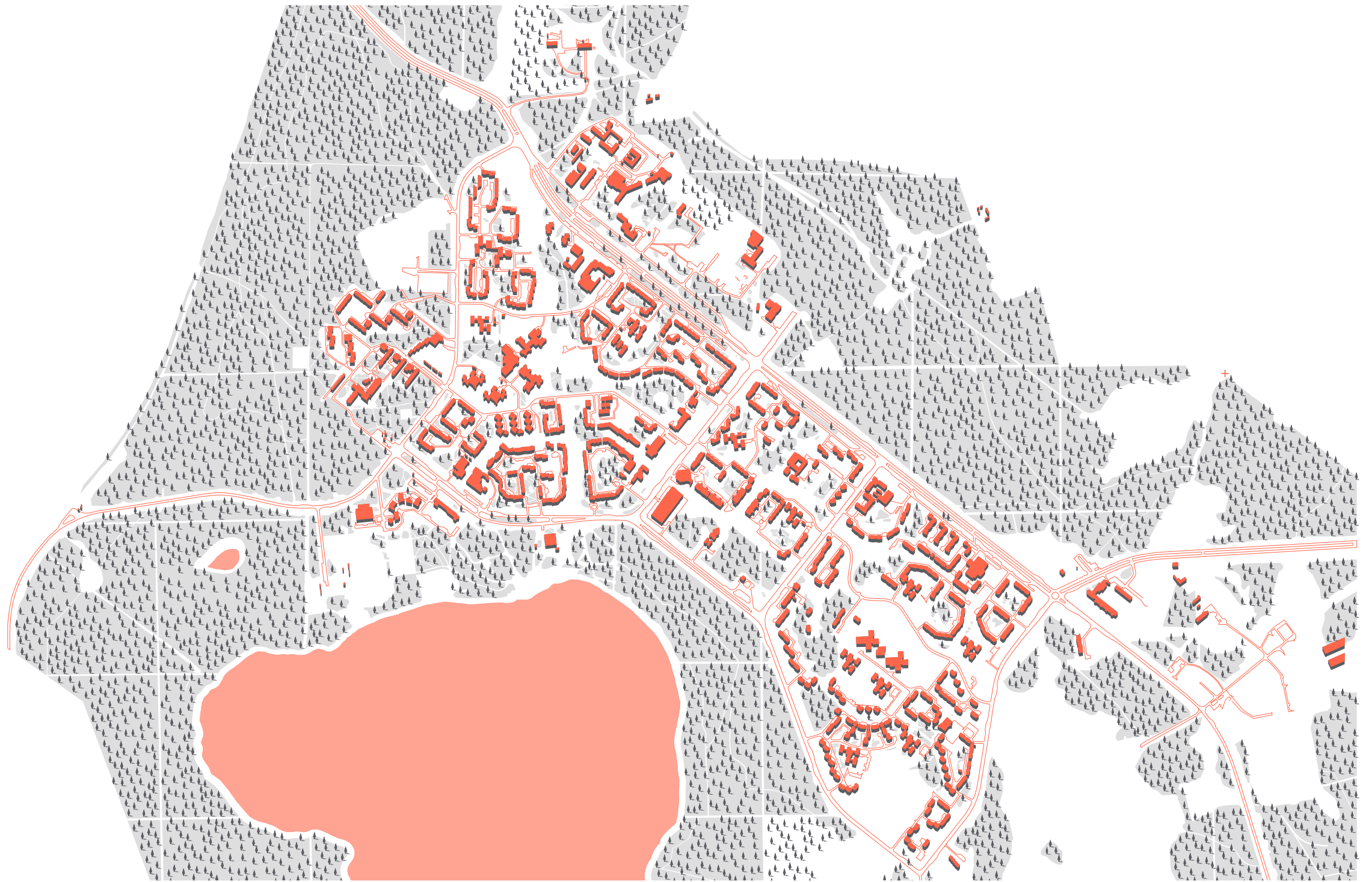
³ Baločkaite, R. (2012) Coping with the unwanted past in planned socialist towns: Visaginas, Tychy, and Nowa Huta. *Slovo* 24(1): 41–60.

⁴ Šliavaitė, K. (2010) Social memory, identity and narratives of decline in a Lithuanian nuclear plant community. *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis XX. Studia Anthropologica* 4: 52–71.

⁵ Rodman, M. (1992) Empowering place: multilocality and multivocality. *American Anthropologist* 94(3): 640–656.

⁶ Ringel, F. (2013) Difference in temporal reasoning: temporal complexity and generational clashes in an East German city. *Focaal – journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 66: 25–35.

⁷ Ibid., p. 26.



Map of Visaginas

one is told about the city is that »Visaginas is in the shape of a butterfly, well... without one wing.« The absent »wing« was supposed to include another three micro districts of Visaginas (spot 11 on the map), as it was planned to expand the city together with the building of another two reactors at the INPP. However, after the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, such plans were abandoned. Nowadays, apart from the hospital complex, Lithuanian school and several other buildings, the area set aside for these micro districts is covered with a forest and fields, with some farmsteads located there. For many residents, however, this »void« stands for the unfinished socialist project.

Another »void« that was »filled« during the independence years is placed in the last category on the map – »The Politics of Location«. It is situated in the geographical centre of the town, where the Communist Party Centre was planned to be built (spot 12). Given the priority that was ascribed to residential housing, it was decided to postpone the construction of the centre until, alas, it was altogether too late. However, one can still see how the centre was supposed to look on the miniature model of Visaginas in the town library. Instead of it, a Catholic Church (point 14) was constructed here between 1995 and 2001. Not only does such a positioning in the centre of town confirm the popularity of religion in post-socialism that has also been noted in relation to other locales,⁸ but it is also interesting in relation to a politics of location, especially when compared to the spot assigned

for the building of a church for the rival Orthodox religious community on the outskirts of town (spot 15 on the map). Whereas in Balzer's case,⁹ it was the question of »Whose steeple is higher?«, in Visaginas it is the question of »Whose position is more central?«.

Overall, it can be argued that the question of centrality is very important for Visaginas, as often it is connected to power and authority, both symbolic and real, embodied in objects or narrated in multiple ways. Here, a remark on mapping is due. There is a tendency to privilege verbal communication and praxis in the anthropological enquiries on human existence, epitomised in the methodology of interviewing and participant observation. The outcomes of anthropological encounters are also usually conveyed in textual form, i.e. ethnographic monographs. When doing research in Visaginas, while I found mapping a very useful methodological tool, it was hard to »convert« the results of my study into visual form. Without a long explanatory text, the map presented here is mute – merely an image of some locations supplemented with photographs. Or is it not?

Also, as a concluding remark I would like to stress that narrativity is important not only in the final stages of research as the ability to narrate the place, but also in how we conceptualise our position to and in places. As Nickolas Entrikin points out, the position of the student of place as simultaneously an outsider and an insider, as relatively objective and relatively

subjective, forces one to »rely upon forms of analysis that lie between the centered and de-centered view; such forms may be described as narrative-like syntheses« (Entrikin 1991: 4).¹⁰ Therefore, bearing in mind where one's own central vantage point belongs is of paramount importance.

⁸ Rogers, D. (2005) Introductory essay: the anthropology of religion after socialism. *Religion, State and Society* 33(1): 5-18.

⁹ Balzer, M. M. (2005) Whose steeple is higher? Religious competition in Siberia. *Religion, State and Society* 33(1): 57-69.

¹⁰ Entrikin, J. N. (1991) *The Betweenness of Place: Towards a Geography of Modernity*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

ViSAGINAS. LOOKING AT THE TOWN THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

In recent scholarly works on photography's relation to architecture, the question of photographic imagery's role as a truthful reflection of the subject photographed constantly recurs. Notwithstanding the wide variety of writings exploring the relationship between the photographic medium and the built environment – whether it concerns the genre of architectural photography, or the use of photographs in architectural history or design practices – a great number of recent writings have set out to question the myth of the innocence of the photograph.¹ Critical accounts from philosophy, sociology or linguistics seem to offer reliable ways of confronting this by constructing more responsible and self-reflective interpretations of photographs that engage with the hidden historical, social, economic, ideological and technical contexts that are so often left outside the frame. And yet, in this new sensitivity to the contextual specificities of the production, dissemination and reception of architectural imagery, one's newly adopted role of an active interpreter of photographs (and an abandonment of the role of the connoisseur-interpreter of architecture) pleads for a reflection on the different and sometimes differing contextual positions from which these interpretations are made. This peculiar problem became very evident, while I was attempting to analyse photographs of Visaginas (formerly Sniečkus)² in order to construct a certain historical narrative about the changing relationship between the town's inhabitants and its architecture. Here, the situatedness of my own critique was not to be left aside.

In 2007, I came to Visaginas to look for an appropriate site for my university assignment. Guided on the one hand by vague memories of this strange town which I visited on several occasions during my childhood and, on the other, by an awareness of the closure of its main engine, the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, I expected it to be an interesting site for developing an architectural project. With little knowledge about the intricate histories of the town, I strolled through its streets and pedestrian boulevards, documenting this discrete exotic example of a failed Soviet modernist project with my camera. Photographing the town became somewhat of a ritual during all my subsequent visits, as the pictures provided valuable visual material which I would use to visualise my ideas and to present the site to others. After deciding to proceed with researching the town in architectural history studies, my use of photography persisted. Due to the inconsistency of

¹ See, for example, Micheline Nilsen's *Architecture in Nineteenth-Century Photographs*, Iain Borden's *Imaging Architecture: the Uses of Photography in the Practice of Architectural History*, Andrew Higgott and Timothy Wray's *Camera Constructs* or even Robert Elwall's *Building with Light: An International History of Architectural Photography*.

² When founded in 1975, the town was named Sniečkus after former first secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party, Antanas Sniečkus, before being renamed as Visaginas in 1991 when Lithuania became an independent country. As the works of the photographers of the town that I examine were mostly photographed from 2000 onwards (except for the works of Vasilij Chiupachenko) I keep the name Visaginas while discussing them and use the name Sniečkus when talking about Chiupachenko's work.



↳ Povilas Marozas, 2013 ©

local archival sources and the inaccessibility of certain archives within institutions that were responsible for planning, constructing and administering the town, the photography of Visaginas made by people who lived there or just were passing by seemed the only ›primary‹ source material to work with. Also, with only one scholarly source on the history of the town, written within a specific institutional and ideological context and mostly relying on the memories of people who live in the town, photography appeared as something that needed to be studied.³

The works of the few Visaginas' photographers included in various local publications suggested consistent first hand documentary accounts that captured the town in different stages of its development. It was only after finding the book by Lithuanian photographer Gintaras Česonis, who produced a completely different version of the town, that discrepancies between the images made by different authors started to suggest a certain narrative. Given the complex historical context of the town, these photographic accounts could hardly be seen as neutral depictions by photographers' cameras. The peculiar circumstances within which they were made needed to be questioned. Here, the ideas of the materialist analysis of photography developed by Victor Burgin and a few others writing in the book ›Thinking Photography‹⁴ suggested a productive way of approaching photographic works on Visaginas. These ideas challenge the widely assumed status of a photograph as ›evidence‹. Burgin's claim is that a photographic

image should be analysed by interrogating ›the relationships between the visually apparent functions of elements of the image as they come together to constitute a dominant social discourse.‹⁵ Such a focus on the hidden ideological contexts of the production, dissemination and reception of photographic images seemed to be well-suited for the construction of a historical narrative about this particular town. In my enquiry into specific versions of the built environment of Visaginas in photographic images, I focused on the works of four photographers – Vasilij Chiupachenko, Vitaly Bogdanovich, Gintaras Česonis and Nicolas GrosPierre. By locating their photographic practices within specific ideological and institutional contexts, I attempted to explore how the varying positions

³ Here I refer to the works of Algirdas Kavaliauskas, who moved to Visaginas after the country became independent and worked in the town council. He was commissioned to write a history of the town by the council. In his work, a strong Lithuanian nationalist mood is felt and the author came into conflict with local people for ›misinterpreting‹ some of the memories upon which the history is mostly based. The works of Kavaliauskas are referred to by most other scholars researching Visaginas, for example, in texts on Visaginas by architectural historian Marija Drėmaitė. See: Kavaliauskas, A. (2003) *Visaginas. Istorijos Fragmentai (1975–1999)*. Vilnius: Jandrija; and Drėmaitė, M., Petrušis, V. and Tutlyte, J. (2012) *Architektūra Sovietinėje Lietuvoje*. Vilnius: Dailės Akademijos Leidykla.

⁴ Burgin, V. (ed.) (1982) *Thinking Photography*. Houndmills and London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

⁵ Streitberger, A. (2009) The Psychotopological text. Victor Burgin's writings in perspective. In: Streitberger, A. (ed.) *Situational Aesthetics. Selected writings by Victor Burgin*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, xvi–xvii.

adopted by the photographers in relation to the town (the ›world of objects already constructed as a world of uses, values and meanings‹⁶) – conditioned the way it was represented through images.

By looking at the works of two local cameramen, Vasilij Chiupachenko (the first photographer of the town) and Vitaly Bogdanovich, who share an intimate relation to Visaginas and its people, it was easy to see a change in relations to the town in transformed historical conditions. The former unproblematically celebrated the construction of Sniečkus in the first two decades of its existence and promoted the successful implementation of the communist project, whereby the built environment was staged as an outcome of the heroic communal efforts of the people. The latter attempts to nostalgically document material symbols of the town's expiring identity on account of the closure of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant and, by contrasting it to the colorful doings of its young, to negotiate a space for their future under new circumstances. In contrast, Gintaras Česonis and Nicolas Groszpiere have drawn a far darker picture of Visaginas by seeking to engage with latent registers of the phantasy, memory and knowledge of the viewing subjects. By abstracting the town's architecture and capturing lonely human figures, or omitting any signs of life altogether, both photographers tried to evoke associations to certain pasts and to represent Visaginas as a mysteriously alien and exotic site for the pleasurable consumption of a disengaged viewing subject.

This critical interpretation of the works of the four photographers of the town views these pictures not only as describing its physical site visually, but also as constructing specific versions of it, emitting specific messages and provoking specific associations. The look of the town is constructed from ideologically and institutionally pre-determined positions. In this context, the photographs could be seen as a rich source material for the interpretation and construction of a certain knowledge about the town. But here, the very act of interpretation itself becomes problematic as it is conditioned by the ideological and institutional positions adopted by the interpreter. In order to address this problem, which in the Visaginas case is far more pressing than in other contexts, I used my own photographic account alongside the works of Vasilij Chiupachenko, Vitaly Bogdanovich, Gintaras Česonis and Nicolas Groszpiere to invite readers to critically reflect upon the context in which my own interpretations are situated.

⁶ Tagg, J. [1993] *The Burden of Representation*. Essays on Photographies and Histories Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 188.

PUBLIC SPACE TYPOGRAPHY IN VISAGINAS

Typefaces are used in visual navigation to help organise and differentiate city spaces, to create landmarks and to produce a hierarchy of different locations. Typography is considered as something functional, a means to transmit a message. But in diverse cultural contexts, there are different kinds of approaches to the usage of typefaces. In Visaginas, visual navigation has been shaped in two different periods – the Soviet and post-Soviet. They look rather different: Soviet typography is monumental and solid, while post-Soviet is fragmented and colourful (Fig. 1, 2). Given that they have such a diverse appearance, can we conclude that they represent a different meaning and function? To explore the difference between Soviet and post-Soviet visual navigation in the city deeper, I propose to look into the history of public typography. In Soviet times, the uniformed, standardised space of cities was produced not only by typical prefabricated buildings, but also by the use of visual propaganda. The typeface policy in both public spaces and publishing developed in Soviet times was part of overall propaganda techniques. In post-Soviet times, an opposite tendency can be observed. Cityscapes started to be filled with typefaces on billboards, signboards, etc., without any deliberately determined typeface policy.

The homogenisation of Soviet cities was attained through a uniform structure of visual agitation or propaganda. The most significant and uniform segment of Soviet propaganda was formed by the display of the role of the Communist Party

and its decisions in building communism and socialism. This segment of visual propaganda was offered the most significant places in cities and towns, and as a rule was depicted on stationary constructions. The second segment of visual propaganda was information about socialist competitions and the fulfilling of five-year plans. The third segment was propaganda directed at the formation of communist ethics and morals, and the responsibility of each individual in this process. This section of propaganda incorporated materials devoted to culture, atheism, sports, satirical publications or wall newspapers. This information was up-to-date and connected to local histories and contexts. It differed from one city to another. Visual unity was maintained by strict regulations of typeface usage. To transmit messages about the Communist Party, serif typefaces were recommended, while for five-year plans – sans serif, and for satire – handwritten texts were ordained¹ (Fig. 3, 4, 5, 6). The use of the languages of the

¹ The following recommendations were common in Soviet times: »Political posters were mostly carried out by various sets of sans-serif (grotesque or ›rublenyj‹) typefaces. Why? First, because sans-serif best meets the objectives of political posters due to its simple graphic shapes and readability. Second, the graphic structure of serif typeface corresponds to the present, since classical serifs corresponded to the classical 19th century, and Renaissance serifs to the Renaissance époque.« in Смирнов, С. (1974) Наглядная агитация. Минск: Беларусь, pp. 45-46. Serif typefaces are characterised as typefaces that are »monumental, solemn that are distinctive through the utmost clarity, purity and differentiation of graphic forms. Therefore, they should be used in critical, festive and solemn memorial work.« In Смирнов, С. (1988) Шрифт в наглядной агитации. Москва: Плакат, p. 67.



Fig. 1

national republics was encouraged in the USSR. Yet, unified visual messaging conventions were implemented through the principle: national in form, Soviet in content. The Soviet visual means of transmitting ideological messages were detached from national and local writing and typography traditions. Every typeface was developed by the Division of New Fonts at the Scientific Research Institute for Polygraphic Machine Construction (NIIPoligrafmash) situated in Moscow. One typeface was developed for every language of all the republics of the USSR.

The uniqueness of Visaginas is that it was built in the Lithuanian SSR, where the Lithuanian language based on the Latin alphabet was used, whereas specialists from all over the Soviet Union spoke mainly Russian and principally used the Cyrillic alphabet in writing. On photographs, one can see that the typography of public spaces was carried out in two languages – in Lithuanian and in Russian, using Latin and Cyrillic alphabets respectively. On the inscription on the stone commemorating the foundation of the city in 1975, the initial name of the city, Sniečkus, and the name of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant were inscribed both in Lithuanian and below in Russian. These versions are almost visually identical – using the same typefaces of the same size. However, photos from demonstrations and diplomas of honour demonstrate that paperwork and everyday communication were conducted in Russian. For example, banners and slogans at a construction site, announcements



Fig. 2

of promotions, especially those that are written by hand, are in Russian (Fig. 7, 8). Visaginas was included in the unified country's landscape by means of industrial constructions and visual agitation. Local forms of writing were ignored. Typographically, a space was created that fits well to a Soviet modernist town with panel pre-fabricated houses and concrete recreational areas.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the typography of public spaces in Visaginas had to become Lithuanian and be based on the Latin alphabet. Institutionally authorised visual navigation has been made monolingual. Nevertheless, the language of everyday communication has remained Russian. Today in Visaginas, public space communication inscriptions are made in both Cyrillic (in Russian or Belarusian) and Latin alphabets (in Lithuanian and English). For example, a sign on the main hotel is offered in three languages: Lithuanian, English and Russian (Fig. 9). But in addition to billboards and city navigation signs, designations of small business and entrepreneurs have also appeared in Visaginas. These are improvised, hand-made advertising pillars with texts in Russian, Belarusian and Lithuanian languages (Fig. 10, 11, 12). The brands that represent institutionally authorised and fixed typography are made mostly with serif fonts. Thus, the typefaces used in global brands in this respect resemble Soviet typography. The typefaces of hand-made ads, pillars and graffiti, meanwhile, are essentially (on the level of the grapheme) linked to sans



Fig. 3

serif fonts. Despite the diversity of possible variations of hand-made texts, the pre-eminence of sans serif text relates them to the modernist tradition.

In Visaginas, some graffiti are in Latin and some in Cyrillic. In Cyrillic graffiti, separate letters in writing is the prevalent form. This refers to contemporary European traditions of everyday handwriting, common in Europe since the mid XX century² (Fig. 13). Both in Russia and Belarus, graffiti is usually made in Latin alphabets, which graphically reproduce their European counterparts (tags, stencils and graffiti itself), whereas Cyrillic letters belong to local traditions of writing (for example, the semi-canon of ancient Russian letters and fonts). Graffiti produced with stencils can also be regarded as a rationalisation and optimisation of processes of writing for public spaces. Stencils allow the making of texts with minimal time and human resources, but also with personality traits erased. Stencils were used in Soviet times for demonstration banners, just as they are in post-Soviet times as a kind of graffiti or tool to design signboards (Fig. 14, 15).

A characteristic feature of Visaginas public spaces is the reproduction of modernist aesthetics both in Soviet and in post-Soviet typography. The only novelty is the differentiation of ethnic communities in the town, such as the Belarusian one, from the rest of the Russian-speaking population, through the emergence of institutional and informal visual navigation, such as



Fig. 4

handmade pillars, signboards and graffiti. In spite of the radical changes in political and economic context, the approaches to the everyday usage of typography remain without significant changes. By means of typography as a part of visual navigation and communication, Visaginas has been included into larger cultural and economic contexts, rather than reproducing local traditions.

² Soviet modernism is characterised by copperplate letters connected to each other with a right incline.



Fig. 5



Fig. 8

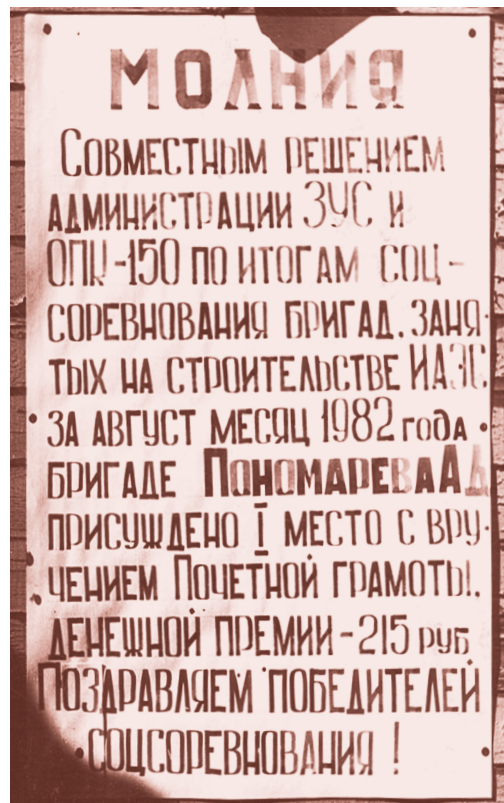


Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 15

THE SCIENTIFIC SHAPE OF A NUCLEAR CITY: OBNINSK AS AN ASSEMBLAGE OF RESEARCH INSTITUTES¹

The battered sign with the timetable of public transport informs passengers of the schedule of bus No. 1 through the FKhl stop towards the ISKhr.² The buses in the direction of the VNIISKhr are marked with a cross. The rest of the buses go to »building« No. 100 of the »Signal« Factory. I propose to use this routine semiotic condensation of traces of urban life for a commentary on the set-up of the town itself.

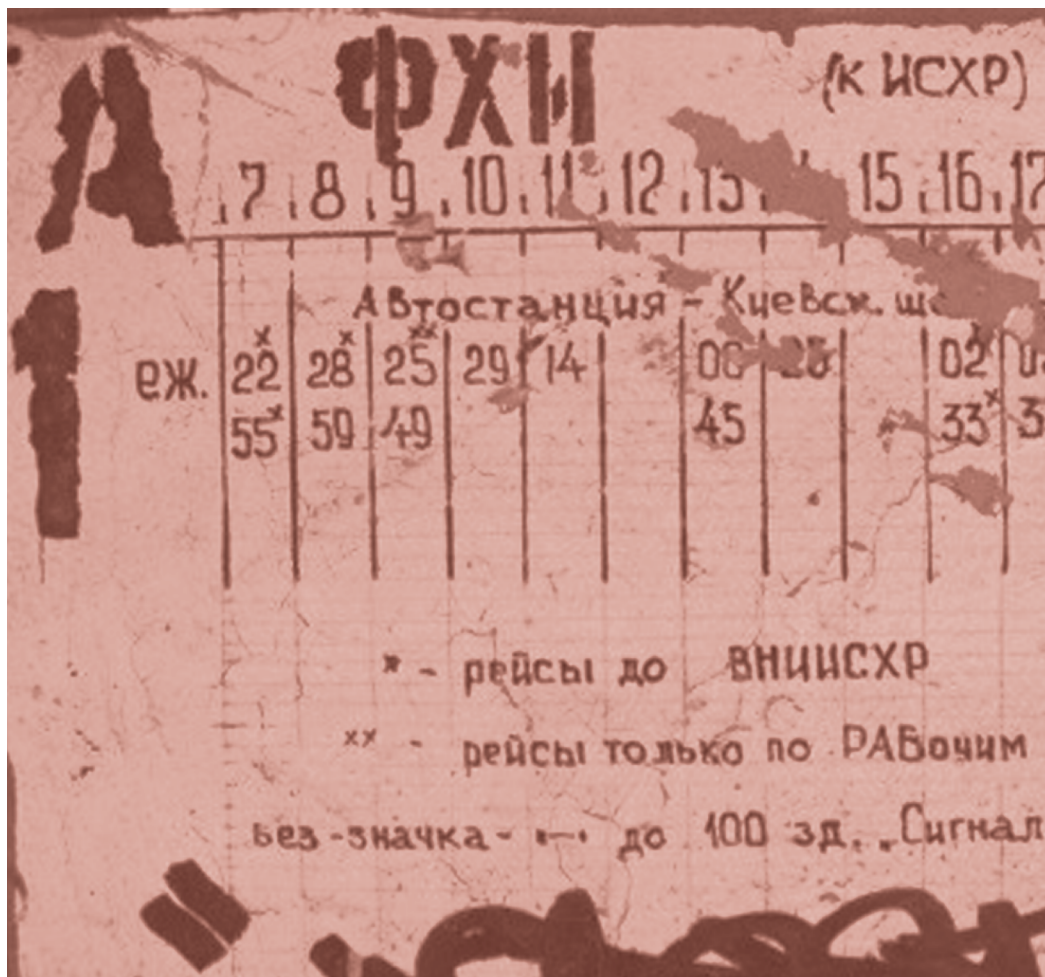
The »FKhl« stop – the fifth from the bus station – is that of the branch of the Karpov Scientific Research Institute of Physics and Chemistry where, from the end of the 1950s, they have not only studied the effects of radiation on already existing materials, but also with the help of radioactive exposure created all sorts of polymer concretes and nuclear-doped silicon. The Institute has a VVR-c nuclear reactor that was put into operation in 1964. This is why the complex of institute buildings lies outside the city, on the so-called »Karpov Site.« In addition to »Karpov«, there is one other named site in the town, the »Fyodorov« Site. This is how they christened the experimental test site of the Institute of Applied Geophysics (from 1968, the Institute of Experimental Meteorology). In 1956, this site was organised 100km away from Moscow by the former polar explorer and head of the Hydrometeorological Research Centre of the USSR, director of the IPG, Evgeny Fyodorov. The geophysicists who came with Fyodorov, study the radioactive pollution of the environment – and above all of the atmosphere. It was for them that was designed, and in two years

built, a sky laboratory – with a Meteorological Mast of a height of 310 metres, packed with sensors. The »Fyodorov Tower«, together with the 30 metre deep shaft which was dug in search of data about underground nuclear explosions and fluctuations in the earth's crust by other geophysicists (seismologists from the »Moscow« Central Observatory) on the opposite side of town, gave the town its vertical profile and became its key symbols.

Long-term residents say that left-overs of the powerful ropes that secured the meteorological mast were used in the construction of the suspension bridge connecting the »old town« to the first summer house area. The bridge turned out to be the ideal device for the conversion of the institute's resources, both material and symbolic, into the flesh of the city. Having fallen into disrepair after the closing of the »era of the institutes«, this engineering ruin had for many years been the major argument of allotment owners, activists and veterans of the atomic industry in their fight with the post-Soviet administration for their right to a city cut from experimental Soviet templates. Last year, the

¹ The work on this article was supported by RANEPa's research grant as part of the projects »Ideology and Practice of Technological Breakthrough: Men and Institutions« (2013) and »Visual Translation in Humanities« (2016).

² A list of abbreviations is provided in the glossary at the end of this text. Abbreviations have been transliterated, but left as they are in the original text as residents refer to the research institutes in this form.



Олег Тимофеев, 2010 ©

bridge was restored and decorated with Russian national symbols.

At one point, the role of the initiator of the construction of the bridge had been played by Josef Tabulevich, the deputy director of the main local institute – the Physics Institute. Tabulevich had appeared on the secret Object »V« of the Ministry of Interior Affairs at the beginning of the 1950s, when neither the Physical Energy Institute, nor the city of Obninsk, nor even the Soviet authorities were present here. But his arrival was already five years after the coming into existence of Laboratory »V«, where German and Soviet physicists in the frame of the atomic project devised nuclear reactors, and a small settlement with two prison zones – one male and one female. The object was constructed and serviced by prisoners, whose names today's city no longer remembers. Until the mid-1950s, Tabulevich was responsible for all the construction in the town: be it industrial, residential or social. With his name is connected the development of the first general plan, created by the Leningrad Design Institute – the Soviet Atomic Agency structure designing all the atomic cities of the USSR, from Chelyabinsk-40 to Visaginas – according to one template. The planting of pavements, paths and sports facilities into the bare earth at this spot deep in the region around Moscow is also associated with the civiliser Tabulevich. For a time, he combined the roles of policeman, prosecutor, judge and registrar all in one. Journalists, regional historians and the first generation of

settler-scientists warmly call this man the father of the city. And the bridge – the fruit of the enthusiasm of the end of the 1950s and Komsomol construction – is unofficially named after him.

With the expansion of the town, the Tabulevich Bridge, the meteorological tower and the »Fyodorov Site« have all turned out to be almost in the centre and are today inscribed into the urban fabric and give it its sense of vivid heterogeneity. Residential blocks are interspersed between empty spaces, forest areas and long fences behind which are situated the research blocks and testing sites originally constructed outside the town. But the »Karpov Site« continues to exist in the midst of a quasi-rural setting on the outskirts of the town. The workers of the FKhl are taken to work by company buses, while anyone else can make it to far away »Karpovka« in 10-15 minutes on public transport, which gives a sense of the dimensions of a city where today no more than 100,000 inhabitants live. Nonetheless, for the first settler-physicists, a 100,000 inhabitant city seems unreasonably large. They remember times when the space lived in was the same as that of the institute, hanker after a lost simplicity and feel no love lost for the new city and its administration.

The next step is the »IMR«. Here is to be found the experimental sector of the Institute of Medical Radiology, where on rats and dogs they study the effects of radiation on live organisms. The clinical sector of the same institute is to be

found in the city. Its employees use nuclear medicine to fight tumours in the human organism. The experimental sector was built from 1958-1962 by order of the director of the Soviet nuclear programme, Igor Kurchatov. In the 1960s, this was the most open and welcoming institute of the half-closed, special purpose city. You get the impression that photo journalists from the town newspaper *Vperyod (Forwards)* scarcely left the premises of the IMR. And photos in which young women laboratory workers in their white uniforms can be seen bending over their conical flasks or electric microscopes in sun-filled laboratories were rarely absent from the pages of the newspaper.

The last obligatory point of route number 1 is the ISKhR, a site of the VNIISKhR: the All-Russia Scientific Research Institute of Agricultural Radiology. The institute was formed in 1970 in order to deal with the effects of using radio-nuclides in agriculture. On the experimental sectors of the NII, crops are irradiated with gamma-settings in order to disinfect them and defend them against parasites. At the peak of the military nuclear programmes, employees of the institute developed the Food Programme of the USSR in the event of a nuclear winter. And after the accident in the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station, they organised the radiological monitoring of farmland on contaminated territories.

The Instrumental Plant »Signal«, to whose building bus No 1 comes from time to time, is

a significant part of the programme chosen for the town's development. Knowledgeable citizens (I was told about this by the former director of one of the local NII's) associate the appearance of a major factory producing radio-isotope technology and equipment for atomic power stations with the strengthening of the control of Communist Party organs over the city of scientists and engineers. The decision about the construction of the »Signal« factory was taken in February 1969, half a year after the theoretical department of the Physical Energy Institute – the very same where Tabulevich had been in charge – had been disbanded for samizdat. Strong proletarians stood against unreliable intellectuals in a proportion of 1:2 (by 1975, the proportion of workers was intended to constitute ½ the number of employees of the main NII and number about 4000 people). At the same time, the border between »thaw« and »stagnation« was established.

The project for the construction of the factory was signed by Efim Slavski, the Minister for Medium Machine Engineering. At the moment of the taking of this decision, the stake of the atomic agency in the town-forming group of enterprises was 58.8%. If we take into account that in this group were included not just physicists, but also construction workers, and that MSM was famous for its construction capacity, then the popular expression »Our town was built by Sredmash« is given concrete content. Slavski was an honourable citizen of the town. At the same time, it was not the done thing to

speak aloud of the departmental affiliation to the Minister or of the presence of the Ministry in the town.

On the wall of the World's First Nuclear Power Plant (Soviet nuclear scientists set great stall by their being first and even underlined it in the plant's name) put into active service in 1954, for a long time was written: »The First Atomic Power Station of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR«. But de facto, the atomic power station was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry for Medium Machine Engineering and was situated on the territory of the secret scientific research institute. At the same time, it functioned as an international shop-window, or more precisely as the interface of the Soviet peaceful atom. It served as the surface for the contact of two milieus, hiding from eyes the details of the devices of atomic science and technology. Stamps depicting the »First in the World« were released at a time when the settlement on the edge of which the station was built, was not yet even on maps. The first nuclear tourists visited the power station in the autumn of 1955, when Object V was a guarded zone and prisoners were working everywhere. A year later, the settlement of the physicists became the town of Obninsk. After another five years, it became the place of the localisation of profiled NII's specialising in studying the effects of artificial radiation. The Obninsk Nuclear Power Plant did not produce very much energy. On the other hand, with its graphite moderator the reactor AM-1 was a forerunner and laboratory of

generations of Soviet reactors to come. In this capacity, it produced a serious techno-political effect. The closed object grew into an open city. And the openly working nuclear reactor drew to it representatives of various branches of knowledge. Nuclear meteorologists needed it for monitoring. Radio-medics for healing through radiation.

In 1966, for the 10 year anniversary of Obninsk, Jemma Tupikova and Nonna Chernyk – popularisers of Big Science and journalists in the town newspaper – published the book, *The Town of the Peaceful Atom*, in which they aptly characterised the relations between the city and the power station: »It was the First in the World Atomic Electric Power Station that legitimised the birth of Obninsk.« They emphasised the foundation pit, the design, the start-up of the reactor and the Kurchatov. In so doing, they neglected everything that did not fit the genre of a report on the victories of Soviet science and technology: the secret genealogy of the town, the thirty German physicists, the first scientific director of Laboratory »V« Heinz Pose, the protected zone and the soldiers with dogs. The decisive role of the Sredmash Institute and other scientific-research centres in the creation and support of the infrastructure of Obninsk was also left off-camera.

The town whose brand was a decorative nuclear power station, in fact lived and worked as the town of a dozen research institutes. The rare archival documents to which it has been

possible to gain access, local historical literature, the recollections of the first generation of Obninsk inhabitants and also – the names of the bus stops – create an impression of how the institutes played the defining role in urban space and practices.

It was the institutes, both by clubbing together and separately, who »built« the residential blocks and roads, took responsibility for the health centres and schools, and supervised heating systems and sewers. The experimental production of the PhEI prepared trays for canteens and rubbish bins for the park. And the Director of the Institute of the Physics of the Earth was personally responsible for the efficient functioning of the boiler heating housing districts. Engineers and physicists participated in architectural discussions about the future of the town, criticising the old-fashioned few story buildings and the absence of flat roofs. And a former submarine worker who, after resigning in the mid-1980s, got a job in the FKHI as a security engineer at the reactor commented: »And where else could I get a job then? In the town, there were only the institutes.« The dimensions of the cultural space of the town were given by the »Scientists' Club.« In its pomp, in the pages of the town newspaper were printed the texts of scientific lectures, announcements of defences of dissertations and other »news from the institutes.« Weighing the political influence of various players in the city, the former director of the PhEI confided in me that not just in the 1950s, but even at the end of the 1970s,

his resources outweighed the possibilities of the first secretary of the Obninsk Gorkom.

»Everything was forever, until it was no more.« In the 1990s, the atomic institutes, left without support from the state budget and having lost a part of their symbolic capital after Chernobyl, abruptly curtailed their presence in the city. They handed the residential areas over to the city administration, shut the kindergartens, sold the recreation complexes, reduced in size and got into debt with the energy companies. However, the structural effect of the presence of the institutes in the town was used by the new administration, city activists and business in order to translate the expectations imbued by the state in Big Science from a Soviet to a post-Soviet language. In 2000, the town became the first Naukograd (Science City) of Russia and received state financing for the realisation of a »Programme of development of the city of Obninsk as a Naukograd.« The hopes of the institutes for additional financing for their research did not however bear fruit. Money was received for developing the social infrastructure of the town and the creation of an innovative environment. The city of institutes was called on to work through its political unconscious – to do what it had not done over the course of the previous half century – to look at itself as an atomic cluster and formulate inter-institute structures for managing innovation.

The connection between neighbours on the route of bus No 1 – the FKHI and the IMR – between

radio-pharmacy and medical radiology – constituted the basis for the Naukograd's first innovation project.



BETWEEN PARTICIPATION AND RESEARCH

History is Us

Diana Poškienė, Oksana Denisenko, Terezie Lokšová, Valiantsina Fashchanka, Yves Haltner
73

Sedulinos alėja is Alive! An Interactive Map Approach

Aleksandr Chaplya, Anika Schmidt, Anna Timoshyna, Gerrit Füssel, Gintarė Norkūnaitė
79

›Re-Visaginas‹: Public Spaces as Communication Platforms

Afra Hoeck, Anja Baniewicz, Anna-Luise Goetze, Joachim Werner, Ida Roscher, Indrė Saladžinskaitė, Leonard Ermel, Paulė Stulginskaitė
83

Knit the Street

Arne Kunkel, Rugilė Zadeikytė, Sibylle Piechaczek, Svetlana Boguslavskaya, Viktorija Stalybka
91

HISTORY IS US

Built as a satellite town for the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (INPP) in the 1970s, Visaginas today officially posits itself as a Lithuanian town with European values and distinctive natural surroundings. Whereas previously town museums referencing the past and presence of the INPP had existed, currently these are superseded by official attempts to date the origins of the settlement to the 16th century¹ and to represent its cultural past through showcasing traditional Lithuanian artefacts in a school museum. What references there are to the town's nearer past tend to focus on its construction, with an emphasis on the fact that the inhabitants built the town themselves. However, nowadays the majority of references to the nuclear plant seem to be fading, almost non-existent.² From the perspective of the state and of the EU, which is concentrated on decommissioning, the nuclear past is regarded as a problem rather than as a question of techno-cultural heritage to which many people in town attach their identity. Moreover, the city's population was and is mostly Russian speaking, but its persisting multicultural and multilingual nature is not officially addressed. It seems that the topics of the INPP and not nature related tourism are now sensitive and contested. The official representation of the past is selective and does not represent the actual variety of pasts, stories and roots present within the town. Everyone living in Visaginas has roots: only they look different.

We feel that the dominant understanding of the past in Visaginas needs to be challenged to

represent multiple pasts from the perspective of different population groups. The past has a potential to be a source of a sense of belonging, identification and understanding of one's own position. Therefore, we perceive the act of remembering and representing as an implicitly political, selective action that can take on many forms. The past is not something static, coherent or linear – some stories last and co-exist, whereas some emerge and disappear fast.³ The durability of particular pasts depends on their constant re-presentation, materialisation and other performative actions. Thus, we are digging for various pasts that are present in Visaginas. For we want to make them all visible and present next to each other. Having a particular past recognised should not be a matter of privilege. In this line of reasoning every past has the right to be represented.

Our work goes in two directions. First we want to find and re-present the widest variety of pasts that exist in the city. There already are some clear material representations of different pasts in the urban space. Our goal is to build on what is already present, making the

¹ See the official website: <http://www.visaginas.lt/index.php?2904255304> (accessed 25 July 2016).

² Baločkaite, R. (2012) Coping with the unwanted past in planned socialist towns: Visaginas, Tychy, and Nowa Huta. *Slovo* 24(1): 41–60.

³ Ringel, F. (2013) Difference in temporal reasoning: temporal complexity and generational clashes in an East German city. *Focaal – journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 66: 25–35.



faded pasts visible and re-presented again. It is important to ensure that our activity is not excluding, since exclusion seems to be a leitmotiv in the city's history: as the pre-NPP history of the region was silenced in the «nuclear» narrative of the Soviet times, so the Soviet-related narrative of Visaginas (former Sniečkus) as an «atomograd» is silenced now. As we see, some pasts can have a tendency to be exclusive towards others, while we try to bring pasts into non-hierarchical coexistence. The other line is uniting. By showing that different pasts can exist alongside each other, we aim to trigger the creation of a shared ground to which inhabitants can relate and on which the future of Visaginas can be built.

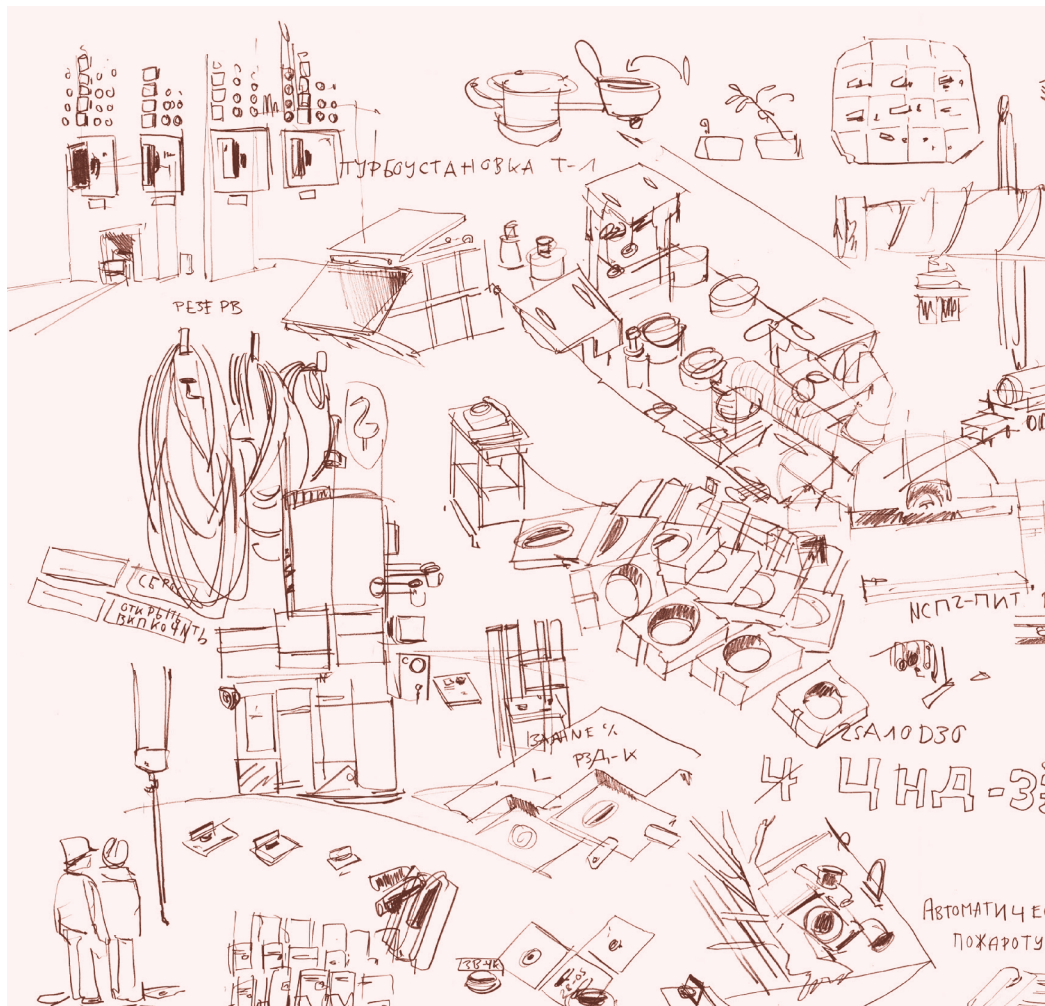
Thus, our intervention has two equally important purposes. First, it is an exploratory action that aims to collect the pasts present in Visaginas and to reveal in which ways people relate to them. Secondly, our research is purposefully engaged, and aims to make people think about their personal histories and the ways they are represented in the city. This has a potential to trigger more focused actions shaping the museum currently being planned for the town through independent civic action. From the start we worked on this simultaneously in two directions. We carried out interviews on the street and in various institutions, and explored the town and the nuclear power plant in an attempt to scrutinise the variety of life trajectories and pasts present in Visaginas. At the same time, we tried to identify symbols and

artefacts that serve or possibly could serve as a representation of this variety. We identified many possible symbols and put them on a «memory map» of Visaginas.

The centrepiece of our intervention is a two square metre board with a depiction of a metaphor of nuclear technology, familiar to many Visaginas dwellers. It is a мнемосхема (mnemoscheme), a visual representation of the RBMK reactor, as one can observe in the main NPP control rooms. It is a powerful symbol referring to the nuclear past that once was heavily present, but now seems to be awaiting complete erasure. When in operation, an RBMK is constantly recharged with fuel. And already working fuel assemblies are regularly placed in new positions in order to achieve balanced reactivity. This is close to our idea of history: it is not a static thing, it is constantly in operation, narratives can change positions, and there is constant work going on behind it. Likewise, history can be potentially dangerous if misused. Imbalances and silencing of pasts can cause damage. Moreover, the very term mnemoscheme is connected to mnemotechnics – to learning, memory, and the act of making structure out of otherwise amorphous material.

We created square-shaped postcards with simple, open questions in Russian and Lithuanian.⁴ The other side of the card was left empty for

⁴ Such as: "Do you remember?" or "What is your Visaginas?"



people to select a stencil of a symbol referring to local heritage, and to spray that symbol or to draw/write their own ideas that could work as an answer. People were asked to create two postcards, one of which was affixed to the reactor diagram, as a ›fuel‹ of history,⁵ and the other could be taken home as a memory, sent, etc. »Load your history into the reactor!« We also created a memory map representing the sites of history already existent in the city. Along with those already represented on official maps, we bring attention to sites that refer to various other pasts, not gaining official, mainstream attention. The sites are represented by icons, some of which were transformed into stencils for postcards. This should not be understood as a process of re-writing, but rather of making under-represented sites of history visible, playing with symbols and integrating them side-by-side with places already well-recognised or even promoted. The map was included in the brochure handed out during the intervention.

ground for reclaiming the right for representation from which a non-exclusive future of Visaginas can unfold.

To sum up, our goal was to challenge dominant narratives in order to represent the diversity of currently present pasts in a more just and productive way, and to link visual representation with specific local memory. This has a potential to deepen the notion of belonging and identification with Visaginas. But we also ironically play with pop cultural symbols which represent the past, showing that no narrative is sacrosanct. The attempt to bring various pasts together in a non-hierarchical way can possibly work as a

⁵ Ideally, the ›charged‹ reactor will be displayed in Visaginas afterwards.

SEDULINOS ALĖJA IS ALIVE! AN INTERACTIVE MAP APPROACH

Recent years have brought fundamental changes to the economic and social structure of the young town of Visaginas. The closure of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant has led to a decrease in the availability of jobs, with the town experiencing high rates of emigration resulting in an ageing and shrinking population. These tendencies affect the functioning of public spaces and local businesses, as visible on Visaginas' central pedestrian street, Sedulinos alėja, which stretches almost through the whole town. Many see this street as the past and present social and commercial centre of town.¹ At first glance, now it seems an area of empty shops and minimal economic activity. However, it remains a high quality pedestrian street, with wide public spaces, greenery along the walkways and many paths crossing and paralleling the main street, connecting it with adjacent housing blocks and backyards. The renovated part offers a barrier-free physical environment with ramps and handlebars along the walkways, whereas the other parts are characterised by deteriorated concrete pavement and less street furniture.

We asked ourselves to what extent this street faces problems similar to shopping streets in other shrinking cities, or to town centres which cannot compete with outlying shopping centres. To explore the economic and social functions of this street deeper, we decided to work on a tool that would enable us to think about potential future scenarios for its activation. We carried out site mapping and interviews as a basis

on which to develop an interactive map. During our first on-site explorations, we were surprised to find more businesses than we expected. We identified more than 80 shops and offices, showing a great variety within service and retail segments, from new and second hand clothing, crafts and tool shops, hairdressers and cosmetics to supermarkets and repair shops (clocks, shoes, jewellery). Only five premises remained unused.

Six interviews with shop owners and employees revealed the high degree of residents' identification with the town and interest in proposals for new activities. In these, Sedulinos al. was depicted as Visaginas' face. The problems mentioned were the presence of abandoned buildings, the not yet renovated parts of the street, and a lack of facilities for public events (like open air cafés, public toilets, street furniture). Surprisingly the impact of the shopping mall on the businesses located on the street was assessed either neutrally or positively. Interviews with the vice-mayor, the town's chief architect and the head of the strategic planning department helped reveal future visions for Visaginas, such as <city of sports> or <smart city>. The reliance on external funds was stressed, as a long-term strategy for the town's development is problematic without financial injections from the EU. The Visaginas business incubator, which provides advice and training for

¹ Although others see the centre in the recently opened shopping mall on Veteranų street or in the area around the Town Hall.



newly emerging business ventures and accommodates 19 non-retail companies, has no current activities on Sedulinos al. Reflecting on the findings of the preliminary mapping and interviews, the group came to the conclusion that Sedulinos al. is an underestimated street, which has greater potential for social interaction and non-commercial use.

To check this we provoked an exchange with local people to elaborate visions beyond major EU funded projects. We produced a big (2m²) map, which displays different types of businesses on the street and bubbles with symbols indicating ideas and comments arising from interviews and interactions with town dwellers. In the booklet given to people on the street, we described the context of our research and invited people to join us for the public presentation of this map for two hours on a late Friday afternoon. The location for it was the centre of the square where Sedulinos al. joins Veteranų Street. One person moved around with balloons and a big sign announcing the aim of the map table. As another means to trigger attention, we positioned large bubbles with questions (e.g. »Where is the next coffee bar?«) and exclamations (e.g. »Nice pavements. Let's skate!«) along Sedulinos al. We experienced a relaxed atmosphere with a lot of attention by strolling town dwellers, who stopped by and exchanged ideas about the map in groups of 2-5 people. Photographs of some of the locations helped to orientate on the map and triggered discussions. Balloons given out and possibilities to draw

attracted children and enabled parents to interact in a calmer atmosphere. Like us, Visaginas inhabitants were surprised by the variety and density of businesses.

When sharing their concerns about the street's future, people mostly picked the icons generated from the analysis of interviews. But in some cases, they also added their own textual information. It was interesting to see that signs with purely commercial activities were not used. Instead, people proposed places for culture and socialising. The most common wishes related to WiFi access points on the street, cafés and public toilets, and the renovation of the remaining part of the street (quality of pavement and lighting, street furniture, etc.). Ideas suggested covered a range of activating solutions, such as street music, places for interaction, a multilingual library and the demolition of an abandoned building. The density of pin bubbles signifying proposed solutions was especially high on two crossings – with Veteranų and Visagino Streets. Suggestions sometimes supposed an expanded view of the street, when they referred to connections between Sedulinos al. and institutions nearby (for instance, a proposition to turn an abandoned school into a library).

To sum up the impressions and findings from the group's fieldwork and interactive mapping, Sedulinos al. is a well-designed public space with a striking density and variety of already existing businesses. Moreover it has further potential due to the obstructions to it becoming



over-commercialised. The variety of people's ideas concerning the facilitation of social and cultural interaction can be regarded as a solid common ground for the street's future development. Despite the current unfavourable conditions, people care a lot about the town's development and have visions for it. Building on this, small-scale projects and activities could reveal and materialise people's projections for the whole town. For instance, we could see empty shops as contact points and venues for events, exhibitions (e.g. output of cultural workshops in schools), courses, instrument sharing, displaying local products, etc.). Just to name a few ideas that came up during the research: what if there would be jointly produced urban furniture by the Builders' Club, water dispensers, or a »History of Town Planning« space for workshops and exhibitions (as part of making Visaginas a travel destination for urbanists)? Could Visaginas then serve as a showcase and a pioneer for new socially and citizen oriented functions of high streets? Animating this central walkway, building on its interesting features and reconnecting it with the rest of Visaginas can be an effective way of changing perceptions of life in town. Given the enthusiasm with which people shared their ideas for the street, we suggest that Visaginas can seek further to harness the input of inhabitants. Through enhancing our interactive mapping, one can arrive at solutions of what can be done to create a place with an alternative value for citizens and visitors.

›RE-VISAGINAS‹: PUBLIC SPACES AS COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS

Our initial brainstorming and exploration of Visaginas led us to the idea that public spaces constitute an important issue for the town's further development. Through walks and excursions, we noticed a large number of public spaces, leftovers from the ambitious Soviet plan of continuous growth – wide streets, relatively large areas for sports, community places like a space to play chess, amphitheatres, etc. They all seemed to be rather underused and sometimes, due to the town's unclear future and lack of resources, rather uncared for. Thus, our group started to think about how to connect public space and social actors in new ways. As a result, our project looks at the potential of public spaces to become sites for interaction, where local youth can take a pro-active role and experiment with diverse modes of their use.

So far, one can observe a strong influence of consumer culture on youth leisure in Visaginas. The main arena of public interactions among young people is the only shopping mall, providing such commodities as Wi-Fi and quality coffee. Our group's idea was not only to establish an institutionalised youth zone outside of the consumerist milieu, but also to initiate a co-production of cultural public life. Therefore, we worked on ideas of public space re-uses and re-creations triggered by young people, and on ideas of building a new socio-cultural identity stemming from a rethinking of the common.

One of our observations was of a lack of inter-institutional communication. Most of the existing

cultural centres in town were formed under different socio-political circumstances, and these origins still have an influence on their work today. A clear advantage of Visaginas is an educational infrastructure outstanding for a town of this size. Different institutions work with youth, but in conditions of constant competition with each other. Moreover, they rarely work outside of repetitive pre-defined programs. In this context, we understood public space as a resource to re-communicate and reconcile implicit inter-generational tensions. Participatory action aimed to involve a variety of communities and to reveal the diversity and complexity of the town's public spaces. Youth as the group most radically experiencing socio-economic changes was planned to become the key actor in readdressing the modes of uses of public space.

Our first step towards a clearer working concept was a pilot public intervention. To better understand people's attitudes to their town, we organised a picnic on Sedulinos Alley. On the one hand, this made it possible to have a direct contact with inhabitants and to collect statements and visions for Visaginas. On the other, we could test people's degree of enthusiasm to participate in a public event. So, we drew a big map of Visaginas on the ground, which included not only the existing part, but also the missing second butterfly's wing. The second wing was to be built in Soviet times, but this plan was never fulfilled. In our scheme, it served to visualise future scenarios and the wishes of the polled



citizens. We asked people to mark their favourite spots and their visions of where is the centre of the town. The intervention showed a willingness and passion of inhabitants in relation to the tools of soft planning. An important observation was that the centre was often depicted as something other than places where people actually spend their leisure time. Young people were particularly active in the course of the intervention, with most filling the second wing with concrete wishes about entertainment and spare time activities. Based on this information, we chose a target area for our intervention project – the area around the crossing of Sedulinos al. and Visagino Street, a partly refurbished pedestrian zone.

In the process of work, we came to the idea to focus on six different fictional public space intervention scenarios. An overview map of Visaginas showed the locations in which we grounded these scenarios. The ideas of these fictional interventions were presented on six posters. When explaining these interventions we connected them to specific public places in town, and to potential institutions and actors that could be involved in their realisation. Furthermore, we saved some space for comments by people who visited the public presentation of the intervention ideas. Below is the list of the six interventions with short explanations:

Leaking Walls proposed the use of the walls of abandoned buildings on Sedulinos al. for social interactions, like watching movies, presenting

self-made animations, or organising an open karaoke bar.

RADIOactive meant the launch of a youth radio in a town with a vast presence of public loudspeakers, a legacy of its nuclear heritage. Hence, young people could create their own programs and tell their stories of the town by using the existing loudspeaker infrastructure, build for evacuation purposes. The idea was that music and announcements could be broadcast once a week.

Ком кафе was projected as a free space for inhabitants to share ideas while drinking coffee, reading books from the library and bringing their own books to exchange with others. A place to hang out and watch an exhibition, to knit new socks, to have a nice chat and discuss school topics with classmates, or to participate in an unusual event. This was a vision of a local-community-based book-store for Visaginas.

Blusturgis was a community building exchange market, where town dwellers could offer vegetables from collective gardens, self-made art-crafts, and second-hand clothes. It is an opportunity for the youth to get first experiences with money by selling hand-made products, and to encourage an understanding of co-working and gift-economy principles.

Kubus project twisted existing notice-boards, so locals could present their stories and visions of Visaginas. It provides an offline open frame to





share and exchange ideas, services and contacts. It is an example of a public sphere which is open for unexpected discussions between locals and town guests. Kubus can also be a platform for artistic expressions.

is an open question. Generally, the proposals elaborated by us were meant to open up a continuing discussion about the usage of public spaces in the town in the near future.

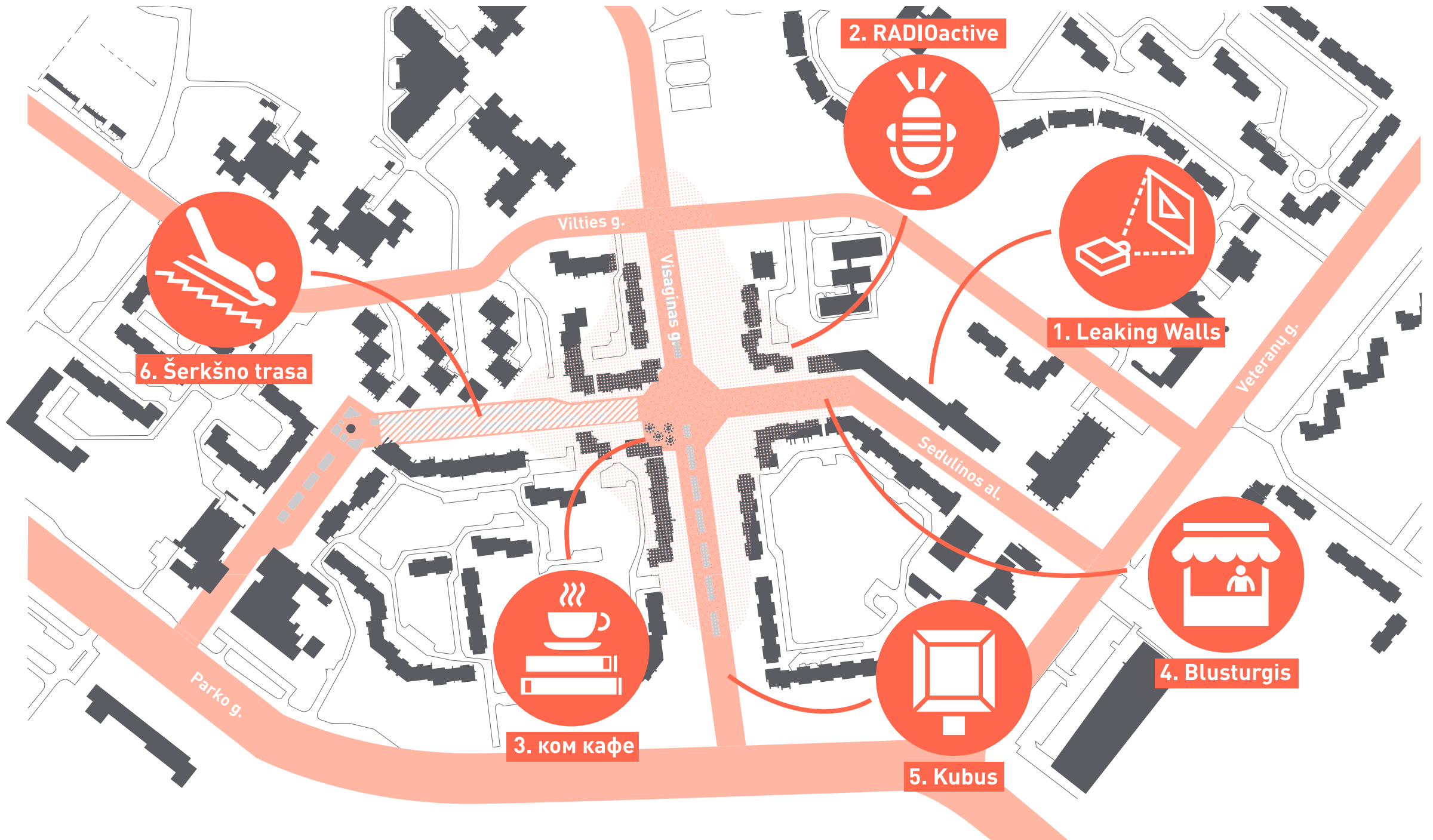
Šerkšno trasa is a bob or sled trace for sledding from the fountain down Sedulinos Alley. It is an interactive playful outdoor practice for wintertime.

All these activities were projected to be conducted cooperatively by various institutions and informal groups and individuals.

The results of the group work, including both the preparatory research stage and the six fictional intervention scenarios, were shown within a public exhibition on Sedulinos Alley. On the one hand, we showed posters of the general overview of potential places and the specific fictional project proposals. On the other hand, we invited and attracted people to spend their time in public space and to feel able to exchange visions and wishes. The Blusturgis intervention project was really tested and took place in a 1:1 scale, providing a sketch of the potential exchange market. The presentation again showed us the interest in the topic and people's engagement, as we got diverse and positive feedback.

Whether our presentation already managed to trigger people to take over responsibility and organise real projects out of our external input





kNiT THE STREET

As a group, we decided to focus our research on abandoned buildings and areas as displaying the dilemmas for Visaginas' future in the most acute way. These built structures directly show the town's demographic decline and become a visible scar in the everyday life of its inhabitants. This choice of research object allowed us to concentrate on one specific issue in order to achieve deeper insights. During our pilot fieldwork, we identified three different types of underuse of the city's infrastructure: areas with empty multi-storey buildings, empty single objects integrated into the inhabited built structure, and derelict land. These land use types are represented in our project by Festivalio Street, the unused school in the third micro-rayon and the wasteland in the third micro-rayon.

Once the field of interest and its physical locations were identified, the aim was posed to also identify techniques with which we could study these by interacting with local inhabitants. In the case of Visaginas, such interaction was supposed to be very important, because most of the town's builders still reside in the town and have a strong emotional relation to its built environment. On this basis, we headed towards the concept of an interactive game that would be simultaneously a method to gather information about people's attitudes towards abandoned buildings and a source of encouragement for Visaginas dwellers to physically interact and explicate their personal connection to these buildings. Such a solution was expected to enable the integration of the various academic

backgrounds of group members and to make their mix of different research perspectives a catalyst for creativity. On the other hand, it prevented the group from reaching the fastest, well-tested ways to obtain results.

The resulting survey-game »Knit the Street« is a schematic itinerary, inspired by the flow-chart-like guidelines of popular magazines that are based on a decision tree. It exists in the form of a survey on paper and in the form of a table-game on a board. The game has a »Start« and »Finish«, while each person follows a certain path depending on his or her answers. The first questions are whether one plans to stay in Visaginas and whether this choice is influenced by the existence of an underused built environment in the city. After it, respondents were asked to evaluate the situation of abandoned buildings and to comment if they have any personal connection to the three locations studied. Further, they had to choose which of the three locations most urgently required intervention. Then they had to choose a concrete option for this intervention, based on post-GDR examples. The last question was whether tools exist with which one can influence municipality decisions. This approach made it possible to focus interviews on architectural and civic issues, and avoid dominant economic narratives. In the table version, we used variously coloured threads to show the paths of different participants in the survey-game. As a result, individual interview paths were created, and participants could see their peers' decisions.

Because of the variety of questions posed and social characteristics of informants recorded, the group was able to collect quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. In so doing, we strove to avoid too fast and too general conclusions, like »women prefer the preservation of abandoned buildings because of their sensitive nature« or »men are likely to choose demolition as a more logical, »cold« option.«

The group had to clarify among themselves, and for future users, that at this stage »Knit the street« is rather an artistic than a scientific research tool. The timing of the project determined that the method could be applied only in a trial mode. Therefore, instead of aiming to analyse the conclusions based on the collected data, we concentrated on revealing the ways in which this tool of data collection and of community building is helpful and in which it is limited.

The paper version of the survey-game allowed us to interview 51 people aged from 16 to 80. Out of these, 20 were young people interviewed collectively in a closed session in a local school. Others were randomly approached passers-by in the town's public spaces. Although we did not follow any specific sampling method, we agreed that people from different age and gender groups should be covered in approximately equal proportions. The interviews took place on a working day in the afternoon.

This pilot research shows that most respondents (especially among middle-aged and elderly

people) plan to live in Visaginas. A high rate of emigration plans could be observed among youth. One of the most popular explanations for leaving is »I want to get an education«. But regardless of people's emigration plans, they are interested in what will be done with the three studied locations. We discovered a relationship between a personal connection to a location and pointing to this location as in the most urgent need of intervention. For example, the empty school building was often singled out for intervention because an informant finished that school and feels connected to its building. Older inhabitants had emotional connections to Festivalio Street as it was the starting point of the city. The wasteland is important to people who live or work nearby.

Remarkably, most of the interviewees wish to create and improve their city, and to save the buildings if they could still be used. Moreover, young people are willing to take part in the improvement of the city themselves, sometimes without receiving payments or help from officials. In contrast, older inhabitants of Visaginas are not so enthusiastic about doing something on their own initiative. They would rather wait for private or EU investments. The interviewed people noted that the type of improvement of unused buildings (either renovation or reconstruction) depends on the source of investment. Reconstruction is expected when there are private investors. If it is the municipality that invests, renovation is expected.





Respondents suggested several ideas and wishes for the usage of abandoned objects in town. They wished to have more public services in which they can spend their spare time: for example, a swimming pool, playgrounds for children, a skateboarding area, etc. Some interviewees suggested turning the abandoned buildings into social housing for the poor or for children. Our research shows that some respondents have negative communicational experience with representatives of the municipality. Often people that expressed their opinion about the administration said that they do not have any opportunities to influence the decision making process. At the same time, more active people are sure that there are ways and tools to influence or carry forward their ideas.

Our group consisted of people from different scientific and disciplinary backgrounds. This richness in ways of thinking and working influenced all stages of the project. While people who had a primary goal to gain empirical data and to work in a scientific manner wanted to put a focus on structure and comprehension, people more engaged in creative work wanted to concentrate on the readability and appearance of the game. It can be said that working together as an interdisciplinary group enables many possibilities to achieve a promising outcome, but that constant interaction and communication is the main issue to work on.



ON MEANINGS OF MAPPING IN PARTICIPATORY FIELD WORK

Mapping Visaginas: Counter Mapping and Participatory Processes

Benjamin Cope
99

The Role of Art in a Shrinking Former Nuclear Town in the EU Periphery

Miodrag Kuč
105

Mapping as a Collaborative Tool in Interdisciplinary Research Projects

Felix Ackermann
111

Combining Social Research and Participatory Planning

Dalia Čiupailaitė
115

Tracing the Tacit Meanings of Nuclear Things

Anna Veronika Wendland
119

A Rough Guide to Evaluating International Academic Project Work

Felix Ackermann
125

MAPPING VISAGINAS: COUNTER MAPPING AND PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

On the first day of the summer school, we read a text by the Counter Cartographies Collective (3Cs) that emerged at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill as a spin-off of a reading group on such issues as the functioning of universities in contemporary capitalism, counter-mapping and militant research.¹ The text describes how this group engaged with ideas of critical cartography to develop an approach that conceived of mapping above all as a methodology striving to enable a new relationship between research and activism. The collective intervened in protests over how the university treated Labour Day (the university administration had a holiday, while teachers and students did not) by asking different sections of the community how they understood and experienced work. As a result 3Cs produced a mapping of how the university works, believing that in the age of the cognitive economy the production of knowledge is a political tool.²

The reasons for looking at this text in the rather different context of Visaginas were that it defined mapping as a process of social engagement in two important senses. Firstly, for 3Cs, to map meant to chart how a local community (that of the University of North Carolina) functions in a context of globalisation. In other words, mapping is a methodology through which to depict how a given local context emerges out of the complex extended structural conditions of the contemporary world. This we saw as the key challenge of trying to understand what has occurred in the transition of Visaginas from a

mono-functional Soviet town to its difficult position in today's local, national and international contexts. Secondly, 3Cs understand mapping as a process of critical reflection on how the mappers relate to the social groups they are mapping. In other words, those mapping seek to build on how the groups they map are already involved in campaigns for social justice and attempt to understand how their world-views are constructed. They also strive that their mapping should be of further use for the community in which they live and work.

The desire to suggest this text as a starting point for the summer school's reflections arose as a result of the lively encounter with representatives of a variety of Visaginas organisations during a workshop organised by the Laboratory of Critical Urbanism in the town in February 2015. During these discussions, we were struck by the fact that representatives of the local community had a passionate interest in what we were doing. We were forced to reflect on the fact that our work was important both for what we could learn and for what it could offer to those already engaged in seeking to find scenarios of development for Visaginas. At the same time, it was difficult not to be overwhelmed by the impossibly high expectations that locals

¹ Dalton, C. and Mason-Deese, L. (2012) Counter (mapping) actions: mapping as militant research. *ACME* 11(3): 439-466.

² See: www.countercartographies.org (accessed 25 July 2016).



had of us: that through our summer school we would provide solutions to the problems facing the town (such as population drain, lack of work opportunities, etc.).

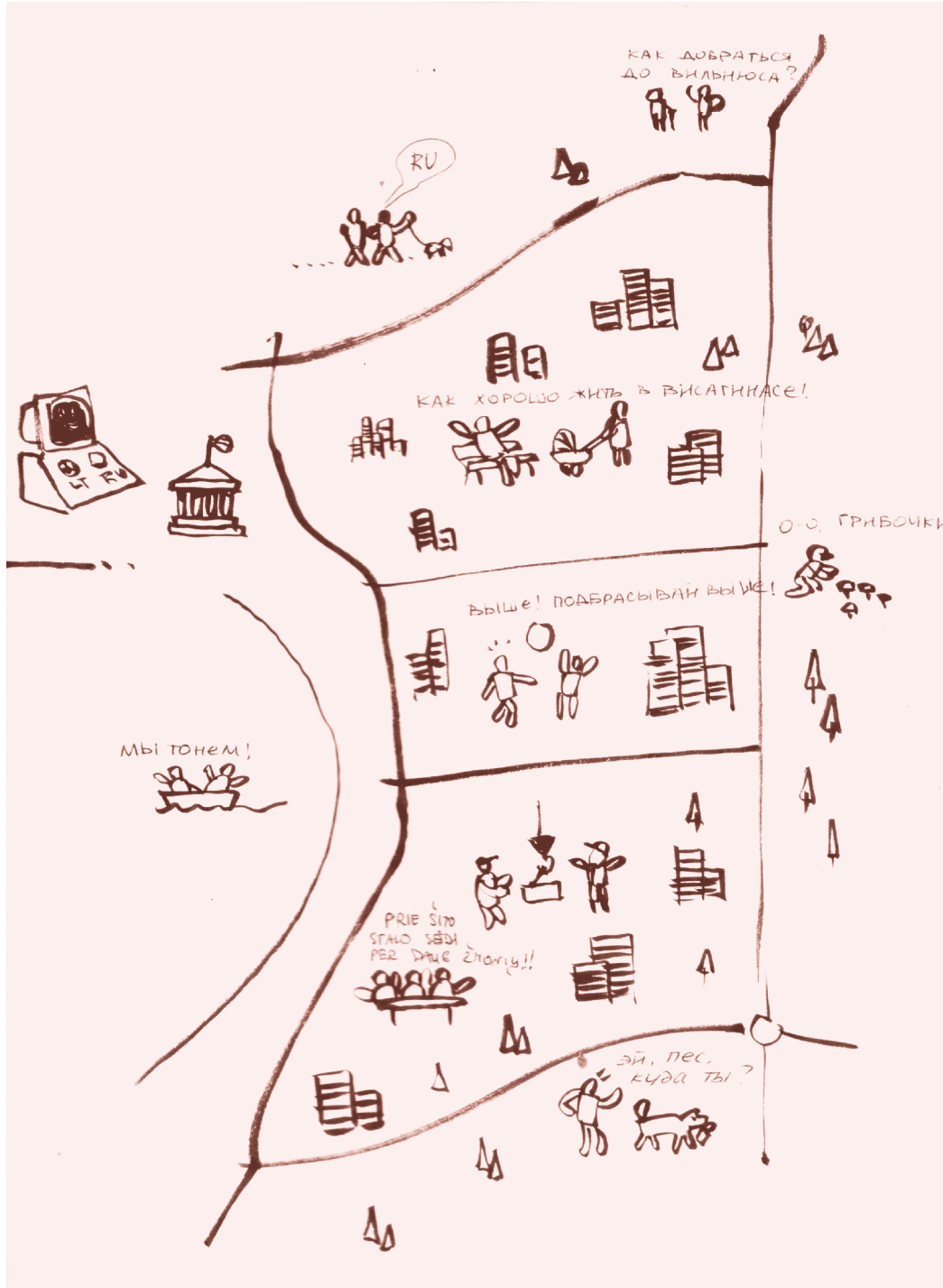
This context raised two issues. Firstly, it brought into sharp focus that working in a small town confronting difficult structural conditions is quite different than working in a capital city (or an American university town, even Chapel Hill). The presence of 30 people from different countries for two weeks in the context of a small formerly mono-functional town in the north-east corner of Lithuania sharpens the sense that the question of how this interaction takes place is one that needs continual reflection and action. Secondly, it is interesting to note that the maps that emerged through the ongoing process of stimulation, provocation and negotiation between tutors and participants in Visaginas turned out to be rather not computer graphic 2D representations, but material objects/installations. They were physical objects presented in public space in which the interaction, response and co-creation by residents became a significant part of the process.

This installation aspect of the mapping process raises new questions: what to do with the great amount of interesting, confusing and often paradoxical information obtained from locals?; what to do with the intense and wide range of emotions experienced in interactions with those who talked during the exhibition (and the disinterest of those who did not); what to do with

the big, unwieldy objects themselves (at the time of writing in improvised storage in a cultural centre in Visaginas); how can the hybrid objects produced after the interactions be read and what can they lead to further? In the uncertainties of how to proceed further with the results looms the question of the limitations and use-value of such intense, diverse, exhilarating and exhausting big group short-term mapping projects: what can academics and students do in relation to a relatively unknown place that is of value to the place and themselves?

The above dilemmas raise an interesting question about the essence and role of mapping in a post-modern or uncertainly-modern moment. For mapping as conceived as part of modernity, for instance by Bruno Latour,³ is a process of charting far away spaces, often with the use of local expertise and even local cartographers, and then moving these maps to centres of social and economic power where they could lead to new developments (of trade, conquest, etc.). Maps make it possible for strangers to navigate around spaces they do not know. Today, our ambition with maps is different: we argue that mapping is needed to understand our relationship with the complexity of the forces structuring the everyday situations in which we find ourselves. Our everyday existences are the products of both our agency and the structural

³ Latour, B. (1986) Visualisation and cognition: drawing things together. In: Kuklick H. (ed.) *Knowledge and Society Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present* 6. Jai Press, 1–40.



conditions in which we find ourselves: their very locality in space and time is the product of diverse relations that have no clear spatial frame. Mapping in this light, as I understand it, is a multi-dimensional process of seeking to navigate the relation between ideas, people, things and institutions as they produce spaces, and plotting the results thus obtained.

Our project could not be a counter-mapping as 3Cs performed it. Visaginas is not the University of North Carolina in that the spatial configuration, the social challenges and the political atmosphere are different. Likewise, the political, personality and idea convictions of our disparate band of colleagues and participants, as well as the diverse political convictions forged by their different personal geo-political histories, meant that we could not maintain a cohesion of political visions of the use of mapping in the way that 3Cs describe. However, the difference of outlooks within our group also raises a question to 3Cs of how their vision of the function of mapping as a political and social tool is connected to their location as a militant group on an American university campus. What I therefore argue is that the social, philosophical, political and ethical aspects involved in trying to counter-map with a diverse group in Visaginas raise issues that need to be taken further.

THE ROLE OF ART IN A SHRINKING FORMER NUCLEAR TOWN IN THE EU PERIPHERY

The town of Visaginas has been studied mostly from the perspective of shrinkage and diminishing work opportunities due to the decommissioning of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (NPP). Its multiple transitions – post-nuclear, post-industrial, post-Soviet, EU-driven – have rarely been looked at through the lens of changes to culture and cultural institutions. Alternative culture is hence generally regarded as an esoteric practice of local youth, while artistic expression is perceived as a peripheral hobby, embedded in rigid institutions, led by ›eternal‹ directors and characterised by task-based cultural production. What makes Visaginas particular in such a situation is its cultural isolation from the Lithuanian context and a strong generational polarisation. While the older generation of town builders and nuclear establishment (atomshchiki) tend to preserve cultural values from the best days of Visaginas, their children are looking into a variety of ways to make life in town possible without stressing economic decline due to closure of the NPP. The educational mobility of young people and the international experience they bring back make a significant contribution to local culture. Talking to one of the local cultural producers about youth mobility, an interesting formulation of Europe appeared. In response to my rather banal question »What is for you Europe?«, he stopped for a couple of seconds in search for a good example and said, »Europe is when I as a Lithuanian citizen of Russian origin go for a summer to Cyprus to work in a Chinese restaurant in English(...)«. This shift from a preservationist

understanding of culture to culture as a battlefield between generations is mediated by municipal administrative reorganisation, promising regional tourism and the development of the IT sector.

In summer 2015, Visaginas celebrated its 40th anniversary with a public spectacle that focused on pre-Soviet narratives of the place. The stories of the town builders and of the diverse cultures brought to Visaginas to work at Ignalina NPP were not represented. That gave locals a strange feeling about the role of culture and art in identity building. Based on discussions about this event, we started exploring the images of the future that art can bring into a discussion with conflicting interpretations of recent history. In an attempt to publicly debate these questions, we organised a small co-mapping picnic in front of the Hotel Aukstatija, which for many represents the city centre. A discussion on what and where is the city centre brought us back to the original plan of Visaginas as a butterfly-shaped town, with a central mega-structure uniting administration, shopping and leisure. In reality, only one wing was built, while the place of the ›missing centre‹ is taken by the new Catholic Church, a symbol of post-Soviet re-imaginings of history and identity.

Our contacts with random strollers/participants brought us interesting conversations and conclusions. By imagining what could be a new version of the NPP that would accelerate the local job market and ›build‹ the missing



wing of the city, many pointed to new forms of eco-tourism, a good educational infrastructure for further nuclear research, and excellent human resources. The strong metaphor of the missing second wing particularly allowed younger citizens to imagine functions that are currently lacking in the town and to project them. Two features appeared to be at the core of all young people's comments: adventure-based leisure (beyond leisure infrastructure, such as a swimming pool) and a diversification of city functions (from a chocolate factory to an IT cluster). The accumulation and careful analysis of the results obtained suggest that artistic expression has a potential to show possible paths and scenarios for urban development better than staged participation models provided by master-plan executive powers.

Based on this experiment, we started to look at public spaces that are a priority for the local authorities (often with a clear financing model). Although subculture has become the only accessible culture for many young people, we started with an exploration of the structure of existing youth organisations and clubs. It turned out that only two institutions were open for program change according to members' suggestions. One of them is a ›youth centre in exile‹ that currently negotiates a new location in one of the town's abandoned buildings. Another is a socio-pedagogical experiment freshly established by two young girls. Both strive not just to be an alternative to existing soviet-like cultural milieus, but to re-think youth life

in Visaginas in general, by touching such topics as new labour forms or youth mobility.

In conversations with the leaders of these organisations, it was pointed out that the authorities (even from the younger generation) still look at youth culture as something that has to be ›managed‹ and put under the aegis of widely recognised programs. The example of a local street artist rejecting to submit a ›business plan for graffiti work‹ clearly shows the difficulties when it comes to art in public space and the administration of culture. A similar outcome can be recognised in the example of the newly built Domino shopping mall, used by young people as a free wi-fi zone and a shelter in days of harsh weather. In the absence of any other place, except a beach promenade covered by security cameras, the shopping centre reduces the potential for young people's cohesion and socio-political claims. As an answer to this situation has emerged a youth practice of hanging out in the forest. During the night, the police are not able to access such spaces with a car and neighbours complaining because of noise is reduced to a minimum.

It seems that many inhabitants of Visaginas would like to see the city as a green-tech-knowledge-IT-nuclear-research-campus, without a clear vision of how this could happen. A dependency on external factors has narrowed the potential for looking into one's own resources and dynamics among the town's well-educated youth (mostly the children of scientists). For



that reason, strengthening organisations and bridging them with local production and available resources represents a challenge for new authorities. The fact that many young people living abroad would like to return to Visaginas, if the conditions for running one's own business were to improve, shows a rather uncommon tendency for an average shrinking town. For this to happen, new cross-institutional models and hybrid forms of cooperation are necessary.

For that reason our proposition for cultural hybrids, such as a market or radio station, invite unusual collaborators to reach a common goal and eventually, given a sustainable growth of the formats, to ›produce jobs‹. This plan involves multiple scenarios and not just one ›path of success‹, allowing conflict to be a constructive part of negotiations and claims. Additionally, we looked at the way to internationalise this plan, to involve young people from other parts of Europe to become part of Visaginas' future and thus to break its cultural isolation. Our assumption was that art and youth-centred critical urban pedagogy in the context of Visaginas could produce powerful images of the future, to discover new utopias that are desperately needed in a time of uniformed cities.



MAPPING AS A COLLABORATIVE TOOL IN INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH PROJECTS

The ›Mapping Visaginas‹ summer school was both an educational and a research project. Its idea was to introduce students from various disciplines to mapping as a collaborative research tool. The approach was not to speak about mapping, but from the very beginning to start testing this practice and its possibilities. Instead of an introduction, participants were asked to create a map with their own bodies, which implied agreeing on its scale, direction and form. It was rather easy to show in this way their place of study, the alphabetical order of their names or a timeline of their recent travel. It was more complex to map disciplinary affiliations, because this necessitated self-description in various dimensions at the same time. This exercise made it clear that mapping is not about drawing nice looking images and that the establishment of a common understanding of the scale and main dimensions of maps is a matter of communication.

Further, participants were asked to use mapping as a technique of documenting, structuring and visualising fieldwork observations. In the first instance, these were individual mental maps of how our local partners saw Visaginas, obtained through moderated group walks. They required a capability to represent subjective information and to relate it to other information layers. This spontaneous activity proved that without prior introduction to the principles of complexity reduction and professional information design, it is hard to create a map that is readable without additional text

explaining what is represented and what it means. The mere presence in each group of a student of design or architecture was not enough to overcome this obstacle, since most participants did not have experience of producing a visual representation to document their empirical work.

This problem produced a tension in all the small groups and among the school's tutors. The most pressing questions were – what are the roles of representatives of different disciplines and respectively of different modes of knowledge production? How can the analogue and digital drawing skills of designers and architects be fruitfully combined with the insights of students and scholars trained in the humanities? While the latter tended to ask about the validity of the research, the former tried to avoid a merely instrumental usage of their skills. As an outcome of this tension, the summer school created a constant discussion about the ways we work in different disciplines and also about the ways in which mapping can be useful.

Issues regarding techniques emerged in the context when students were asked to use mapping as a tool to document their visits to former school buildings which have been turned into cultural institutions. The interviews taken under the supervision of tutors worked well. But the resulting maps showed that visual information needs to be contextualised. Most participants were used to contextualising in a very narrow



sense – to put text on a map. This mainly concerned participants trained in humanities disciplines. The result was the need to reduce both the amount of text and the complexity of information a map contains. Because those trained in humanities (especially in a German context) are focused on producing long academic texts, rather than short essays, they rarely reduce information. The practical task to create a map of a particular cultural institution showed that reduction itself needs to be trained prior to the stage of visualisation.

During the workshop on language and public space, we worked on ways to document examples of typography other than by taking pictures. In the participants' maps, very different approaches were taken to how to use mapping as a tool not only to reduce information, but also to structure it. They managed to create situational maps of where and how language mattered. The discussion that followed showed that it is problematic to connect Visaginas related information to a broader regional context. A good example was participants' research on self-made typography of small-scale businesses. For German participants, self cut letters and improvised forms to combine them looked slightly trashy, but fascinating and nice. Belarusian participants found it often just very ordinary, because they are familiar with this 1990s' practice.

At the phase when the groups worked on their final projects, mapping became a hybrid

technique: participants used it to document their discussions and ideas, but also to predefine the result. This task was rather complex. Mapping was supposed to facilitate a participative research situation, in which Visaginas inhabitants would learn something about the group's research and provide empirical information regarding research questions. This intertwined task meant that the result had to meet complex criteria and this difficulty often produced negative feelings among participants. On the other hand, the project was organised as an open space with an open end as to how interaction and communication with inhabitants of Visaginas could be achieved. In the end, all the groups included interviews with locals into their fieldwork and developed conceptual frameworks for bringing the gathered information together. This resulted in designing mapping tools which gained a lot of attention and feedback during their final interactive presentation.

Mapping practices during the Visaginas project demonstrated another issue: we produced a small brochure in English (the summer school working language) and Russian (the presumed language of Visaginas). This outcome was politically rather problematic, because official representatives of the municipality and people from the audience at our final presentation asked us why there is no Lithuanian version. In a situation when language is a politically meaningful issue, the need both to reduce the amount of text and to choose a limited set of languages because of limited resources



reinforces an existing conflict between the de facto function of Russian as the lingua franca of Visaginas and the de jure right of Lithuanian as the state language, in many regards privileged in public space.

To sum up, on the basis of feedback from participants and tutors, mapping is a fruitful tool through which to bring together students of different cultural and disciplinary backgrounds, and through which to blend learning new ideas and skills. It is helpful for gaining information about a given context and for producing work that can provoke new interactions with locals and suggest innovative ideas about a town. However, despite introducing mapping exercises from the beginning of the project and providing students with knowledge about diverse approaches to cities relevant in the case of Visaginas, it was also felt that a problematic moment was the transition between the introductory and fully empirical parts, i.e. from input sessions to working in small groups to produce a final project. Thus, when preparing future schools we would aim to include group activities to enable reflection not just on mapping, but on the steps through which one can pass in building up a complex, short-term research project.

COMBINING SOCIAL RESEARCH AND PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

The summer school was a context to implement an exploratory mapping project of a particular dimension of Visaginas, so as to develop a scenario of its future development. While exploring the town for a week from multiple perspectives, students had to choose a topic, site, or issue for their own project. The group I was collaborating with picked for their project the issue of unused buildings and wasteland sites. Abandoned, unused buildings in cities are entangled in multiple layers of meaning, potentials and social-economic-political-personal relationships. They may be seen as sites of loss, as symbolic expressions of a town's fate, as economically unviable places, but may also have importance for inhabitants as sites of memory. Besides, empty spaces hold a potential for new possibilities. They may be turned into spaces for sociability and leisure, renovated, or demolished. The student group focusing on these spaces decided to suggest possibilities for the re-use of these sites and came up with various suggestions, based on previous examples from different or similar contexts, such as the conversion of unused buildings in the former GDR. There is a pool of possibilities of what to do with such sites and buildings, already explored and implemented in other towns. Quick solutions may be suggested, but what is their heuristic, educational, local, social sciences and cartographic value?

The starting point of the school was the idea of critical mapping. One of the issues this idea includes is the role of the researcher in the field

and in the process of mapping. Critical mapping as presented in the text by Dalton and Mason-Deese,¹ includes the notion of autonomy, self-organising and rethinking reality in new terms, seeing a space from different points of view. The map researchers create expresses their point of view towards a space, and is based on prior knowledge, habitus and disciplinary perspectives. Following the idea of critical mapping, a researcher should not come to the field as an expert and suggest solutions for people and a space without trying to make sense of how people see, experience and value their environment. While discussing the idea of critical mapping, students raised questions: for whom are we doing this map?; what kind of political statement could it be?; how could this map benefit local citizens?; and what are alternative ways of mapping? These questions come down to the issue of participation.

Participation as a strategy for research has a particular goal. Usually, it is related to planning. Research is participatory, because it aims to improve the living conditions of the population addressed. Participatory planning allows engaging local knowledge, strengthening place attachment, creating transparent governance, having people's voices be heard, and developing a place's character. The idea of citizen participation in planning, the participatory research

¹ Dalton, C. and Mason-Deese, L. (2012) Counter (mapping) actions: mapping as militant research. *ACME* 11(3): 439-466.

and grassroots movement for public spaces, public culture and places for the sociability of local people, and enabling accessibility is an ongoing movement in urban studies, fostered by a new attitude towards urban planning. It is founded on several approaches. Among them is the idea of the ladder of citizen participation, described by Sherry Arnstein²; Freire's belief that poor and exploited people can, and should be, enabled to analyse their own reality; and turning away from the modernist urban planning widely criticised by prominent urban sociologists since the 60s. The participatory approach towards planning resists the ideas of modernism, such as the authority of planning or the voyeurs described by Michel de Certeau.³ Participatory planning aims to assess, use and/or create the feeling of ownership for places in the city. Public spaces are seen as commonly owned, used and enjoyed, but also as politically appropriated. A more recent approach incorporates play, communication in public space and various initiatives of tactical urbanism. It leads to various arts based initiatives to appropriate public space, and to engage in the discussions over its future.

It is important to rethink what participation in terms of research actually means. When people are addressed in research during interviews or surveys, they are participating. Does that make a research participatory? My students' group created a tool which allowed to map suggestions by inhabitants concerning the abandoned places in their town, but also to map emotions, ex-

periences and memories related to the selected sites. Such an instrument could be used for participatory planning. By using it when talking to the town's inhabitants, the students implemented a form of counter-mapping, for they collected a map of the ideas of town inhabitants through a tool that differed from the municipality's approach.

This attempt to act in a participatory fashion raises questions for further improvement. How to involve local people in the development of the tool? Where and how could the information obtained be used? There are also multiple ethical, methodological and design issues. According to Bergold and Thomas (2012), »participatory research methods are geared towards planning and conducting the research process with those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study. Consequently, this means that the aim of the inquiry and the research questions develop out of the convergence of two perspectives—that of science and of practice. In the best case, both sides benefit from the research process.«⁴ The convergence of the perspectives of science and practice is a demanding process. There is a need to rethink the power relationships in the field, the research design and the inclusion of local actors. As Bergold and Thomas put it, »participatory research requires a great willingness on the part of participants to disclose their personal views of the situation, their own opinions and experiences. In everyday life, such openness is displayed towards good and

trusted friends, but hardly in institutional settings or towards strangers.⁵«

This was possible to observe in the different situations of the tool's application. A participatory approach needs an open and playful, or serious atmosphere where ownership is handed over or even initiated by the people who are addressed by the research. »Knit the Street« was not participatory in this sense, for it was not developed together with local inhabitants and for the purposes they see as important. But, when it was brought to the public space in the form of a game-board, it succeeded in creating discussions and communication between town inhabitants. A space had to be opened up for communication that was safe and inclusive. For instance, filling in questionnaires in a school classroom was not inclusive. But talking to the same young people with the aid of the tool generated rich discussions and ideas. It is vital to create a safe space in which openness, differences of opinion and conflicts are permitted. The street turned out to be the most successful as this type of space. As a counter-mapping tool, this project created a cloud of alternative understandings and wishes of how people see and evaluate their town. It equally became a tool to increase awareness and foster thinking about the town's built environment.



² Arnstein, S. (1969) A ladder of citizen participation. *JAIP* 35(4): 216–224.

³ De Certeau, M. (1988) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

⁴ Bergold, J. and Thomas, S. (2012) Participatory research methods: a methodological approach in motion. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 13(1).

⁵ Ibid.

TRACING THE TACIT MEANINGS OF NUCLEAR THINGS

When we were visiting Ignalina NPP, our small student-tutor working group was given a guided tour to unit 1, which is partly in the process of being dismantled. My students were at a nuclear plant for the first time in their lifetime, so their attention was initially absorbed by the rituals which are produced by the requirements of radiation safety and nuclear security: saying good-bye to one's cell phone, being submitted to a security check, remembering number codes, squeezing through turnstiles, putting on special garments and struggling with radiation measurement equipment, unfamiliar footwear, hard hats and the »chepets« – a white cotton cap, the typical headwear in Eastern European nuclear plants.

Nuclear is exceptional, and it is accorded exceptionality through many symbolic, political and social practices. Since the very beginnings of the industry as a defence project, there was a strong relationship of »being nuclear« to concepts of military strength and national grandeur. A nuclear energy economy requires mastering highly complex processes and forms of knowledge. The complexity and the risks of the industrial process require specialised training and lifelong learning on the ground. Nuclear safety and security requirements produce specific regulations, restrictions and prescriptions. Nuclear exceptionality raised this technology to a quasi-mythological status, reproduced in the visual and symbolical orders of the »Peaceful Atom« and the professional hierarchies related thereto. Researchers of nuclear history, such

as Gabrielle Hecht, Kate Brown and Sonia D. Schmid, have produced prolific evidence on how these hierarchies were established and how they persist to the present.

Studies on the Soviet nuclear industry show that nuclear workers traded workplace risks for »exceptionalist« social status, which meant living in a utopian Soviet showcase city and enjoying privileged access to scarce resources. Hecht gives us valuable insights into the technological regime of nuclear power and the discursive techniques of declaring something »nuclear«, de facto leaving the rest in the »unclear«. Nuclear zoning is closely related to stages of surveillance intensity, wage structures, workplace arrangements and healthcare provisions. So, African uranium miners are not regarded as belonging to the French »nuclear« space which defines standards of radiation protection and gives access to resources and civil rights.

From the viewpoint of anti-nuclear activism, exceptionalism means that nuclear operators and state regulators deliberately retain the nuclear space in the status of an arcanum, with highly restricted access for the public. This exceptional space, the critique reads, is exempt from the control of ordinary citizens or critical scientists; the operators, in this view, jealously stick to their privilege, since de-exceptionalisation would mean subordination to public control, and demystification of a former privileged social sphere.



Accordingly, when preparing the NPP trip, my goal was to develop a critical research position towards the exceptionalism theory and towards the everyday workplace experience at a nuclear plant, both of which had been discussed in lectures beforehand. My idea was to link these questions to the material world and to the history of artefacts – a history which is of central emotional significance to the citizens of Visaginas, as we had learned during our research in the city. Thus, I asked my students to follow the »participant observer« method: to confront yourself with the very centre of exceptionalism – the nuclear power plant – and carefully register, record and describe what you see, hear, and feel – even if something appears to be marginal, or not comprehensible at first glance. Such things could be important indicators for social orders and historical transformations which stand »behind« the artefact.

Being an ethnographer-archaeologist at a nuclear plant, which is a highly controlled technosocial space, can confront the researcher with complex questions of scholarly ethics; as I experienced during my NPP fieldwork in Ukraine and Germany. These questions include those of becoming very close to the object of research and the problem of »critical distance«, which are not easy to tackle when you are working with shift personnel for many weeks. They arise when being asked for your political opinion on nuclear energy by the people who provide you with knowledge about their work, biographies and self-conceptions. They concern developing

an autonomous position which does not necessarily have to reproduce mainstream anti-nuclear thought, but should remain sensitive to the risks and problems of the nuclear man-machine relationship. Thus, as in the concept of autonomous science, the crucial point is making the close relationship to the research object a subject of reflection, rather than claiming an illusion of »scholarly distance« in a field where participation and observation is highly related to trust. Starting from the trust that you develop in people who teach you how to behave in hazardous environments, and finishing with the trust that they invest in you when talking about the problematic aspects of nuclear work. Trust and critique thus have constantly to be negotiated and rearranged. There is no positivist »objectivity« for a participant observer at a NPP, and he or she has to make sure that the reader is well informed about this.

So all of us went to Ignalina NPP as industrial archaeologists, eyes wide open, trying to be self-reflexive on our position. Since our small group was granted enough space to split up, every single one gathered his or her very personal collection of industrial archaeology. The design student had brought his A3 sketchbook and a pencil, and dived into the aesthetics of technical equipment: the refuelling machine, the chessboard-like structure of the RBMK reactor surface, the servo drives of the control rods and the instruments at the main control room. The two Lithuanian students were eager to interview the plant's security officer who

accompanied us. I tried to decipher the Lithuanian signs on doors and to bring them into accordance with my knowledge of the unit's technology and construction plan.

Afterwards, I listened to a Visaginas friend's comments on the post-Soviet linguistic processes that stand behind the signs at the Ignalina station: »First, we had only Russian signs. Then there were Russian signs on the top and small Lithuanian ones on the bottom. Then came big Lithuanian ones on the top and small Russian ones on the bottom. And now, we have only Lithuanian signs.« However, since one can replace signs more easily than people, most of the nuclear specialists at Ignalina station anyway still talk in Russian. I learned that there are many exceptions for the Lithuanian-only rule. When climbing the stairs in building »D« between the reactor building and the turbine hall, I noticed that the Cyrillic letters for »otmetka« are still on the walls, and live in peaceful co-existence with the more recent »žymė«. They both represent the very first lesson you learn at a nuclear plant: »otmetka« enables orientation in a labyrinthine space. They do not count in floors at the plant, they count in »levels«, which are given in altitude meters above or below ground level. At Ignalina-1, otm./žym. +25,2 means: the reactor hall's floor. Nuclear workers know their »otmetki« by heart.

There is another space left almost untouched by Lithuanisation: the main control room speaks Russian as well. However, the components have

international codes. As a Russian nuclear engineer put it, »a »1YD11D001« is the main coolant pump No. 1 at unit 1, even in Africa it is.« My impression was that the NPP is as pragmatic a space as it is exceptional: priority is given to safe operational procedures and to the unambiguity of information. So, the former imperial language plays a dominant role to this day, since it is still the language of the operators. My learning process on »signs« that morning was about a highly complex imperial-national-transnational-global language story, which is, at the praxeologic level of the post-Soviet NPP, a story of power and knowledge.

The process of dismantling has not yet reached the reactor building, but in the turbine hall, it is in full progress. The mile-long turbine hall, which is a common structure for units 1 and 2, gives a rough impression of what it meant to bring the gigantic amounts of energy produced by nuclear fission to the grid. Now, there is no noise, no heat there anymore. It is for this reason the nuclear people told me that they avoid going to the »mashzal« now. »It is a depressing walk.« Amidst the piles of steel scrap, which go to decontamination and then to recycling, we come across a container which is filled with piping equipment cut into pieces. On top of the pile, there lies an uprooted small tree, covered with dust. This alien object catches my students' attention. »What is this plant doing at the plant?«, they ask. »I suppose that when the unit was operating they had palm trees and pipals in the turbine hall,« I said



recalling my research experience. Such trees in large flowerpots feature in many visual sources on Soviet nuclear stations and I had also seen them when working at the Rivne NPP, a four-unit station in Ukraine.

When I saw this scrap with a tree on top at Ignalina, I spontaneously remembered the pre-modern *lacrima rerum* concept, »the tears of things«, which ascribes emotions to things. »Things cry«, when a natural order is disturbed. In a way, modern histories of technology with objects as »actants« tell a similar story. When speaking with nuclear specialists, I often heard that they ascribe quasi-human qualities to the artefacts they are working with. It is surely for this reason that they avoid the turbine hall now, I suppose. They may see it as *lacrimae rerum*, a disruption of their personal order, whereas outsiders see »post-industrial landscape scars« (Anna Storm) and problems of nuclear waste processing.

Amidst the gigantic turbo-electrical equipment, when it was still working, the living plants conveyed the message of something familiar, human-sized, household-like. They gave an everyday ambience to a nuclear place which was usually charged with symbolic and political exceptionalism. In official photography, the plant at the plant may have stood for a message of the compatibility of nuclear technology and nature. At Rivne station, the nuclear workers apparently like the plants for all these reasons. The *mashzal* palm trees are meticulously cared

for by the turbine staff. When I had asked them, »Why do you have these trees here? In Germany, this would not be allowed for reasons of workplace safety«, they replied: »It is just nice to have a living creation here, something green, and they are doing well in the warm air.« In a way, the plant at the plant stands for a bottom-up perspective on one's workplace, and for sub-zones of less restrictive regimes. The dead tree amidst the Ignalina scrap may be a silent witness of what people were doing in order to subvert the orders of exceptionality. The living plant was uprooted once the lifetime of the nuclear plant had come to its end. The people who used to care for the machinery and for the trees are gone as well – to other places, to labour migration, to retirement, or to dismantling jobs. The bottom-up history of nuclear work is irreversibly disappearing, if it is not remembered and recorded. In a certain way, the uprooted plant in the plant stands for the not yet established, tacit popular history of nuclear things, and of emotions related to things, which is beyond official narratives. This became my personal starting point for our further work on »city history as critical assembly« in Visaginas, and for the idea to make artefacts tell their stories.

A ROUGH GUIDE TO EVALUATING INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC PROJECT WORK

Academic work today is carried out in a growing complexity of relationships within and beyond academic disciplines. Moreover, in the context of globalisation and internationalisation, academia with its large number of nomads contributes to the globalisation of the production of knowledge. A third factor adding complexity to the everyday challenges of academia is a turn towards the project-based funding of work in both the humanities and sciences. Overall, this context fosters a need for academics to compete over limited resources to build long-term professional networks and to create temporary project constellations. This rough guide is aimed at a comprehension of the factors that enable project-based work to contribute to the sustainable development of academia – both in regard to research questions which may be answered only in long-term working constellations and in regard to building networks that would carry further than just to a next project.

The need to organise research around projects with a limited time frame and the long-term necessity to use these projects for the creation of lasting academic bonds with colleagues and partners look, at first glance, like a logical combination. But in practice they often turn out to be in contradiction with each other. This text addresses issues which impact on the relationship between temporary academic project management and the creation of strong long-term networks. It is based on participant observation at the European Humanities University in Vilnius, the European University

Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder) and Geschichtswerkstatt Europa, a program of the foundation ›Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft‹ set up by the Institute of Applied History in Frankfurt (Oder). This research is a part of larger project on the applied humanities which is aimed at a more inclusive approach towards academic projects and their influence on society. Its core assumption is that the way we collaborate in academia is rapidly changing and hence we reflect upon the impact of this on the way we think and write.

The limitation of this approach is that to a large extent it is a self-reflection, raising a methodological problem of our capacity to carry out participant observation within our own projects, when we are the main actors and scarcely capable of distance. The main source of inquiry for this text are projects carried out between 2008 and 2012 within Geschichtswerkstatt Europa in Frankfurt (Oder) in varying constellations of small grants for the exploration of memory of WWII in Central and Eastern Europe. Group work carried out by participants of the international summer school on sources of urbanity in Visaginas in 2015 is another.

First, a successful project is one in which project partners are in touch after its formal completion. In practice, projects are built temporarily to reach a certain goal under a formal frame that needs to be met by project participants. This does not suppose a formal need for further cooperation. Very often, tensions and conflicts



during project work are so challenging that after the formal end participants are happy to start new collaborations in new constellations with a similar outcome. A way to change this dynamics is to pay more attention to various dimensions of group work.

A second issue is that the set up phase before the formal beginning of a project has a decisive impact on how a project is carried out. As usually there is much focus on the formal steps of a project, the phase before the official start is seen as a must for everybody, but not as a key phase of research. Since funding institutions often expect a clear outline of questions, tools and results, the pre-planning or application phase is decisive for the future project work. This is not just the case of project participants agreeing upon central questions and methodology. More important is the set up of the dominant model of communication. Usually there is a strong asymmetry in the way a project is configured, because it needs an impulse to meet formal deadlines and often one person is in charge of this. This asymmetry in many projects has a disturbing impact later on.

A third is about keeping in mind the amount of resources people have for a particular project. The available resources often have an invisible but considerable impact on the way different project partners interact. Projects are a vehicle to structure and to get funding for ongoing research. But in order to get this funding and to carry out the outlined research, many resources

which are not described in the project proposal are meaningful. These start from time, as different participants may be able to afford different sets of obligations because of a variety of projects being carried out concurrently. And it ends with language, as even if there is a clear lingua franca in a project, the level of proficiency among participants is different. This puts limitations on how partners can argue in moments of conflict and may add to already existing asymmetries in the project set up. A further resource linked to the time and institutional affiliation of participants is mobility. While some participants can allow themselves to travel freely in space and time, others cannot. In these senses, the institutional constellation exerts a heavy influence on one's degree of flexibility to change work scenarios, if needed.

A fourth aspect is the organisation of project communication. The formal organisation of communication is as important as the informal communication channels shaped by the factors outlined above. Asymmetries arising from project set up and from the differences in resources mentioned above are usually represented in the way project groups communicate. Thus, it is crucial how much attention group members pay to the way they carry out informal communication. This of course includes spoken and unspoken, oral and written communication. In a long-term perspective, formal communication channels seem to provide a ground for the regular discussion of project related issues. The quality of group work in the perception



of participants will grow once there is a regular slot for feedback on how group work is carried out. Certainly research questions, and methodological and practical issues have priority for everyday meetings – no matter whether they be real life, or via skype or e-mail. But there should be time reserved – once per week or once per month – for group reflection on how collaboration is going.

Finally, is the issue of the time reserved for post-production and review processes after a final report is submitted. This has a decisive impact on a project's sustainability. For many reasons, project-based research timings suggest that the formal completion of a project is the moment when results and reports are handed in. Often the result, regardless of its format, receives the largest attention by group members. And as deadlines are usually met at the last moment, there is little space left for reflection upon what group members have learnt about the subject beyond the formal result and how the interaction between participants from various backgrounds added to this. One solution is to reserve more time for this phase in the initial project frame. Or, alternatively, groups may agree to spend some additional time, not outlined in the project description, to evaluate the project profoundly and to ask about the next steps deriving from this experience.

APPENDIX

Acknowledgements

129

Short Biographies of Contributors

131

Summary in Russian and Lithuanian

137

Imprint

139



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РЕЗЮМЕ

Эта книга – второй том, документирующий исследования трансформации значений, ценностей и функций советского архитектурного слоя в глобализирующихся и ремасштабирующихся обществах. Она реализует одно из ключевых обязательств Лаборатории критического урбанизма – рассматривать настоящий момент в качестве результата беспрецедентно ускоренной реконфигурации тех географических масштабов, в которых организовано общество. Такая реконфигурация отношений между процессами в локальном, национальном, региональном и глобальном масштабах сделала урбанизм более сложным и драматичным продуктом, чем то, к чему мы привыкли во второй половине двадцатого века. В настоящий момент город уже не ресурс, принадлежащий исключительно государственным организациям по планированию, но критически переосмысливаемое, открытое вызовам со стороны различных игроков и тенденций поле. Эта серия публикаций Лаборатории задаётся двумя вопросами. Во-первых, – каким образом жители городов в пост-советских балтийских государствах включаются в и исключаются из возникающих новых форм городской жизни? И, во-вторых, – какие методы научного исследования и вмешательства требуются этой новой ситуацией?

Термин картографирование в названиях обеих книг с одной стороны отсылает к способу сбора данных и презентации результатов в краткосрочных исследовательских проектах.

В этом смысле картографирование – это инструмент исследования, концептуализации и документации. С другой стороны, злоупотребление термином «картографирование» в последнее время – это симптом провала попыток однозначно обратиться к тем сложным контекстам, которые оформляют сегодняшнее общество. Императив «картографируй» – это симптом усложнения того, как различные феномены и тенденции вызываются социальными процессами. С обеих перспектив карта как способ представления интеллектуальной работы обещает выявлять и визуализировать масштабы и границы исследуемых фактов в их отношении к другим фактам. Это делает практику картографирования особенно значимой сегодня, т.к. масштаб и граница – две категории, наиболее непосредственно переопределяемые глобализацией. Кроме того, быстрое увеличение количества карт говорит о растущей технологически обусловленной картографической осведомлённости, о переопределении существующих эпистемологических иерархий и о возникающих новых способах эгалитаризма. Эти ещё толком не исследованные и не проверенные способы эгалитаризма, а также все большая открытость горизонтов причинности городских процессов одновременно пугают и очаровывают. В этом свете критический урбанизм – это практика исследований и участия, занимающаяся вопросом причинности социальных процессов в изучаемой городской среде, а также ответственно вмешивающаяся в эту городскую среду.

SANTRAUKA

Ši knyga – tai antrasis tomas, kuriame dokumentuojami tyrimo, skirto suprasti sovietinio architektūrinio/urbanistinio sluoksnio prasmų, vertybių ir funkcijų kaitą radikalai globalizuotose ir pakitusio mastelio visuomenėse, rezultatai. Joje tęsiamas vienas kertinių Kritinio urbanizmo laboratorijos įsipareigojimų – nagrinėti šiuolaikinius procesus kaip nepaprastai suintensyvėjusios geografinių lygmenų, kuriais organizuojama visuomenė, rekonfiguracijos rezultatai. Dėl tokios lokalinių, nacionalinių, regioninių ir globalinių procesų santykio rekonfiguracijos urbanizmas tampa daug sudėtingesniu ir dramatiškesniu reiškiniu negu tas, prie kurio buvome pripratę antroje XX a. pusėje. Miestas šiuo metu nebėra valstybinėms planavimo institucijoms priklausantis resursas. Miestas tampa kritiškai iš įvairių perspektyvų persvarstomu lauku, jam metami įvairių veikėjų ir tendencijų iššūkiai. Ši Laboratorijos publikacijų serija kelia dvejopus klausimus. Pirma, siekiama išsiaiškinti, kaip miestų gyventojai posovietinėse Baltijos šalyse ir būtent Lietuvoje, gali būti tiek įtraukti, tiek atskirti nuo naujai besiformuojančių miesto gyvenimo formų. Antra, siekiama suprasti, kokių naujų mokslinio tyrimo metodų ir intervencijų poreikį kelia šie pokyčiai.

Kartografavimo sąvoka šios serijos knygų pavadinimuose reiškia būdus, kuriais trumpo laikotarpio projektuose renkami duomenys ir pristatomi rezultatai. Šia prasme kartografavimas yra tyrimo, konceptualizavimo ir dokumentacijos būdas. Kita vertus, tai, jog pastaruju

meto piktnaudžiaujama šia sąvoka, gali būti laikoma nesėkmingų pastangų vienareikšmiškai aprašyti ir aiškinti sudėtingus šiuolaikinės visuomenės formavimosi kontekstus simptomu. Paskata kartografuoti simptomiškai atskleidžia, kaip komplikuojasi tai, kaip socialiniai procesai veikia įvairius reiškinius ir tendencijas. Žvelgiant iš abiejų perspektyvų, žemėlapis kaip intelektualinio darbo pateikimo būdas žada apibrėžti ir vizualizuoti tiriamų faktų ir santykių tarp jų lygmenis ir ribas. Todėl kartografija šiandien yra tokia svarbi – lygmenys ir ribos – tai tiesiogiausiai globalizacijos performuojami reiškiniai. Be to, žemėlapių kaip reprezentacijos būdo gausa atskleidžia technologškai įgalintą augantį kartografinį sąmoningumą, egzistuojančių epistemologinių hierarchijų persvarstymą ir naujas egalitarizmo formas. Šios, dar ne pilnai ištytos ir išbandytos egalitarizmo formos, kaip ir vis labiau atsiveriantys urbanistinių procesų priežastingumo horizontai, kartu ir gąsdina, ir žavi. Tokiame kontekste kritinis urbanizmas tampa ir tyrimo ir dalyvavimo praktika, kurios tikslas – nagrinėti socialinių procesų priežastingumoodus nagrinėjamojoje miesto aplinkoje. Kartu – tai atsakomybė veikti šią miesto aplinką.

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