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2 Transformations and Condition of Urban Public Spaces in Lithuania After 1990

2.1 Post-communist Environment of Urban Development

A close connection between city public spaces and general urban processes is a firmly proven fact. These two are closely related phenomena, the quality of which has been crucially affected by overall sociocultural conditions and characteristics to be discussed quite in detail in this text. Socioeconomic and sociopolitical transformations in society go hand in hand with transformations of the cities and their urban systems, also accompanied by consistent changes in their public spaces. Such interconnectedness is emphasised by many researches of urban history and public spaces, and most clearly it can be observed in such places and territories, which undergo extremely swift sociopolitical transformations. To name a few areas of such transformations with the most outstanding examples, first of all, it would be the regions and societies in Eastern Europe – the former communist block countries, which experienced critical social changes by the end of the 1990s. Moreover, it should be noted that most drastically such urban development transformations under discussion were revealed in the countries, which back then were the first to liberate from the rule of the USSR and witnessed quite a radical change of their political systems. It is also noteworthy that due to their specific geopolitical situation such countries had played a special cultural role and had an exceptional status of “the most European republics” while still in the Soviet Union. We bear in mind the Baltic States, which can be reasonably treated as the most integral region in both the territorial and cultural aspects, where the processes of restoration of independence happened in similar ways and where the changed sociopolitical circumstances after 1990 formed certain preconditions for their peculiar, but also somehow similar urban transformations. In most cases, the context of such transformations is defined as

328 See more in: S. Kostof „The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History“, R. Krier “Urban Space”.

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post-communist\textsuperscript{329}, i.e. applying the general term, which also includes a phenomenon bearing the features peculiar to the Baltic region only. They are distinguished by the processes of fast urban development affected by special local conditions. Because to such processes, within a quarter of the century, cities in all three Baltic States have changed essentially, although the course of transformations of their public spaces has been slightly different, determined by specific conditions of urban development in each separate country.

It is obvious that Lithuania can also be ascribed to such post-communist context. Its restored independence in 1990 signified the sociopolitical transformation in time and outset of the new conditions for urban development. Due to such conditions, the post-communist urban transformations happened in several basic phases. The first relatively lasted for a decade following the restored independence – from 1990 to approximately 2000\textsuperscript{330}. It can be called the early transitional phase, during which alongside with the changed sociopolitical and socioeconomic systems the principles of urban planning also changed, although very slowly. Such principles, at the macro level, still bore some features of socialist regulation, especially in the first half of the 1990s, but, on the other hand, private business initiatives and sometimes chaotic architectural and urban activities were present at the micro level. It should be noted that the legal framework for regulation of urban processes was formed exactly at that time, such as enactment of the Law on Territory Planning in Lithuania, 1995; preparation of master plans for Lithuania and its larger cities, which began in 1996;

\textsuperscript{329} At first sight, the term “post-communist” may no longer look relevant and appear quite speculative, especially when talking about the transformation processes of urban spaces in Europe at the beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. But its relevance becomes obvious, when we start comparing the urban development processes in the West and sociocultural and socioeconomic transformations typical to the Eastern European countries. It may seem that transformations of the sociocultural context conditions encompassing such characteristics as social order, locality, social mentality, culture and its expression forms have taken place in these countries a long time ago, and their results are evident; thus making any discussion on the post-communist condition the matter of the past. But when taking a closer look at the urban contexts and nature of still existing problems in the former communist block countries, especially their urban public squares, the reality of the post-communist condition and its transformations, as well as the fact of dealing with its after-effects, are obvious. To cut it short, the problems of urban development and planning, including public space formation, typical to the post-communist countries, still exist and the ways of their solution still are rather peculiar. On the one hand, many post-communist cities, especially the capital ones, have obtained features typical to the Western sociocultural space in the accelerated way, experienced their image \textit{brandifications} and have not avoided some urban planning errors, quite common in the Western European cities of the 1970-ies and 1980-ies (e.g., unnatural densification of downtown areas and building the capitalist business “sanctuaries” in them).

\textsuperscript{330} This periodization is quite relative. Its logic is based on the transformations of general socioeconomic and sociopolitical conditions and events, such as Lithuanian preparation and accession to the EU and NATO, and the related social expectations, as well as changes of the legal regulatory framework of urban planning.
and the first (post-soviet) master plan of Vilnius prepared in 1997, to name just a few. In such post-communist urban environment, the trends of micro cluster urbanisation appeared and started dominating in Lithuanian cities. They can be characterised as complex and lacking attention to urban public spaces. Such a tendency prevailed in all larger Lithuanian cities, – for example, in Vilnius, the urban concept of development of the right bank of the river Neris, the Urban Hill, was implemented (authors Algimantas and Vytautas Nasvytis) with its principles being encoded back in the Soviet times, despite the fact that back then, at the beginning of the 1990s, in European urban theory and practice active discussions were held on the detrimental and negative impact of concentration of administrative functions in the central part of a city\textsuperscript{331}. Thus, at least based on this particular case, it can be reasonably stated that in the first phase of the post-communist urban development of Vilnius an outdated downtown formation concept was realized without even considering any relevant alternatives. This concept under discussion essentially determined not only the image of the modern capital city and urban tissue of its central part, but also the entire system of its public spaces (as we will see later).

In general, during this period of urban development, the formation of Lithuanian cities was slow with a few essential trends of urban development just emerging (thus they can be referred to as the emerging trends): (a) the development towards the outskirts of cities – forming residential areas in the suburbs, which gradually became a dominant feature of all larger Lithuanian cities; (b) features and attempts for densification and reconstruction of the downtown areas, which were quite fragmental and ineffective; (c) conversions of former industrial and military urban areas and their spatial-functional redevelopment, with different scales, character and quality in different Lithuanian cities.

It should be noted that the essential high-quality development of urban public spaces was almost absent at this early phase, with only architectural-urban competitions being held for reconstruction of such spaces\textsuperscript{332}, which in most cases were ineffective mostly due to the socioeconomic reasons. The economic situation in Lithuania, in general, made a crucial impact on urban development in this early transitional phase of post-communist urbanism. Another crucial factor was the peculiarities of urban legal regulation, which alongside with the economic reasons (for example, the Russian crisis of 1998 and other local economic specifics), made the realisations of the most of urban and architectural competition proposals impossible. In such a context, frequent changes of urban legal regulation, as well as weak

\textsuperscript{331} See in more detail: R. Krier “Town Spaces“.

\textsuperscript{332} See in more detail in: Significance of Creative Competitions to Lithuanian Art of Architecture, Linartas, D. 2011. Kūrybinį konkuršų reikšmę Lietuvos architektūros mene: Doctoral thesis. Vilnius: Technika. 210 p.
municipal governance and financial limitations strongly impaired or even stopped the formation processes of urban public spaces.

The second period of post-communist urban development – mature transitional phase – was present, relatively, since 2000 up to the economic crisis of 2010. This was the period, when the features and trends of soviet planning could no longer be observed, both in urban planning practice and regulation, when a city and its parts were no longer perceived as a static aesthetic-compositional system and its legal planning framework became close to its European counterparts333. In this phase, urban development was implemented very intensively in all previously mentioned directions, including outskirts of towns (a); downtown areas (b); and urbanisation of industrial territories (c). This was the period of extremely intense urbanization not only with clear features of gentrification, but also with urban complexity being observed. The latter became very obvious by the end of the period, when bigger tasks of urban territory development were solved in the central and peripheral parts of cities. It should also be emphasised that urban sprawl processes accelerated to a great extent in all larger cities. They were especially activated after enactment of the state housing policy in 2006. It is noteworthy that in the newly developed urban residential areas, especially those in the suburbs, the engineering infrastructure and communications often complied only with minimum requirements, and, in addition to this, the development of social infrastructure and quality redevelopment and formation of urban public spaces in such areas was neglected. Speaking of urban public space formation in this phase, it is important to distinguish certain single cases of redevelopment, which complied with municipal economic capacities, but it has to be stated that the complex redevelopment of urban public spaces in largest Lithuanian cities was not implemented in essence.

In general, the post-communist urban development situation in Lithuania was delayed. We could mark, relatively, the end of such situation with the global economic crisis in 2010, when urban and architectural development in Lithuania paused due to socioeconomic reasons, and all kinds of former soviet elements and features were eliminated from the urban legal regulation procedures and formation practices. Simultaneously, the larger Lithuanian towns gained more features of Western European cities matching more to their sociocultural environment.

Although, if we focus on the smaller urban scale – central public spaces in larger cities, former bearers of soviet ideological representation, we will not be able to state the post-communist condition as being over. The current situation is present due to the delayed redevelopment of main public spaces in most Lithuanian towns – it just started in 2018-19. This fact is true speaking of the main squares of all larger Lithuanian cities – Vienybės in Kaunas, Atgimimo in Klaipėda and Lukiškių in Vilnius – they

333 According to the present-day features, the Lithuanian urban regulation system is similar to the German one, although has its peculiarities and contradictions. See in more detail: ......
should be considered the essential landmarks of urban development transformations. Bearing in mind that the starting point for such transformations was 1990, when the removals of main soviet symbols – Lenin’s monuments – started, it should be noted that the quality transformations of these public spaces was clearly delayed and lasted for almost 29 years. Therefore, if today we can consider the post-communist situation in urban development to be over or essentially changed, the end of post-communist condition in urban public spaces can be dated only in the year 2018-19.

Urban development after 2010 (which can be named as the final phase of post-communist urban development) has been evolving in two basic, aforementioned directions: (i) towards the outskirts – periphery – of the city and (ii) inwardly – towards densification of urban centres and subcentres. It should be noted that recently the development tendency or urban sprawl towards residential suburbs has been gradually declining, and the trend of quality development and densification of downtown areas has been by far more intense. Images of such city centre areas have been changed by reasonable use of urban tissue potential in different Lithuanian cities, which also affected their public space systems and cityscapes. Especially this is true in the capital city of Vilnius, which experiences a very rapid transformation of its new commercial urban centre.

It should be noted that in the environment of such intense quality urban development with rapid spatial, as well as structural changes in the central parts of cities, a requirement of social engagement has been finally entrenched in the legal framework of urban processes. In many cases, provisions of social engagement are the crucial safeguard to ensure a certain balance between different social needs, and this applies in particular to formation and transformations of urban public spaces. Although, on the other hand, it may also have a negative impact on the processes of urban transformation due to the influence of social power on economic and commercial development aspects.

It is worth mentioning that during this recent final phase much more attention is being paid to urban public spaces, both by the municipal authorities and developers of urban complexes, and an urban public space becomes an important sphere of activities of these social power subjects

See more on the subject of social power in the article: Grunskis T. Tradition of Social Convention in the Development of City Morphology: The Law of Decaloque an Freedom of Constitution. SACRUM IN CULTURAL SPACE. (Ed. A. Samalavičius). 2005 Vilnius Gediminas technical University, Vardö Seminar Foundation, Stokholm. ISBN 9955-9791-2-72005
the processes of public space formation at different parts of the city; on the other, sociopolitical, when newly developed urban public spaces and new objects appearing in them provide for some public relations arguments and even symbolic meaning to representatives of political power. With the help of such arguments, mostly a message of attained goal and achieved result is being communicated to society, and often it is a process of targeted leverage in itself aimed at the continuity of political power and publicity. In such a way, urban public space and its formation are turned into a political measure rather than just being an object of urban planning or architecture. This is especially relevant in cases of Vienybės (Kaunas) and Lukiškių (Vilnius) Squares (we will discuss them in more detail later).

Discussing such dual environment of transformations of urban public space, we can state that these transformations in larger Lithuanian cities have gained clear features of amount and complexity, both at their design and implementation levels. A great number of public spaces has been planned and reconstructed not merely through their aestheticization or superficial reconstruction, with the help of some “cosmetic repairs”, but also by redeveloping them on morphological-structural and semiotic levels. The scope and possibilities of these reconstructions have been greatly affected by favourable economic conditions, which in cases of urban public space (re)development have been mostly ensured through the financial support of European structural funds and improved financial capacities of municipal authorities in different Lithuanian cities, as well as general social expectations regarding the phenomenon of urban space, the ambitions to use the social potential provided by a public space. This potential in different Lithuanian cities and especially in different parts of the cities is not the same, as the cities of post-communist condition are not unanimous in the aspects of their structure and identity. If traditionally central city parts and commercially attractive sub-centres have greater possibilities for realization of social potential, the situation in the areas of soviet urban cultural heritage – modernist residential districts – is essentially different. This applies in particular to the development of urban public spaces, as in the current situation of changed sociopolitical and socioeconomic circumstances, modernist residential districts, which comprise a major part of post-communist urban territories, and their public space systems are extremely hardly transformable due to their large areas and structures based on the peculiar (former socialist) land management/ ownership principles. Therefore, the quality of public spaces in such urban parts has remained almost the same within the entire period under discussion since 1990, and is still
in the stagnant state\textsuperscript{335}, whereas a small number of changes has been related more to renovations and developments of architectural objects in them, rather than reconstructions of public spaces as such.

In summary, it should be reasonably stated that within almost three decades of independent Lithuania, its urban development, transformations and formation of public spaces have been carried out in several essential phases: from the outset of the changed sociopolitical and socioeconomic conditions in 1990, Lithuanian cities have gradually transited from their \textit{post-communist} urban condition towards European sociocultural practice of urban development and its legal regulation. The attributes and attitudes of \textit{post-communist} urbanism have been progressively vanishing from Lithuanian urban planning and development processes. Within the period under discussion, larger Lithuanian cities have changed a lot in the territorial (area), quality (urban structure), visual (cityscape) and cultural identity aspects, although different in each particular case. These processes can be boldly referred to as the \textit{post-communist urbanisation}. If the end of the \textit{post-communist} condition of urban development in Lithuania, in general, can be considered the year 2000-2002, this date should be treated as a mere beginning of transformations of the main urban public spaces – representational squares, and it means that essential changes of content of urban processes directly affect the quality transformations of urban public spaces and their scope. Therefore, in this theoretical discourse, we can state that the aforementioned \textit{post-communist} condition has run over in comparison to the general urban development of public spaces in Lithuania and could be observed up to the second decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.

\subsection*{2.2 Evolvement of Urban Public Space System and Sociocultural Environment}

In the transitional situation of post-communist urban development, social approach to urban public spaces, social expectations and requirements for them have been changing throughout all the periods discussed above. As every city is a dynamic structure closely related to transformations of society, as well as socioeconomic and sociopolitical situation, an urban public space can reasonably be looked upon as one of the indicators of such situation; and its morphologic, semiotic and compositional

\begin{fullwidth}
\textsuperscript{335} See in more detail on the quality and development issues of modernist city areas and their public spaces in the following publications by the Author: The System of Urban Public Spaces in the Post-communist Sociocultural Context\textsuperscript{\textcopyright}, "Tarybinio laikotarpio viešųjų erdvių transformacijos Lietuvoje. Vilniaus Žirmūnų ir Lazdynų atvejis" and "On the Condition of Post-communist Urbanism and Urban Public Squares in Lithuania.". \textit{Postcommunist Urban Public Spaces. Transformations and Changes}.
\end{fullwidth}
quality, among other things, can indicate the social value system of a particular period and summarised approach to an urban public space. Most of discussions related to public spaces in larger Lithuanian cities in the recent decade essentially were about different social expectations for such spaces, which were difficult to agree on for society and its representatives. In most cases, especially in the cases of main urban public spaces, different social groups requested for different semiologic contents (speaking in terms of F. Choay) for a specific public space, constructed by different symbols and spatial-morphological solutions adapted to a concrete place. These solutions, in their turn, encoded certain scenarios for the use and purpose of public space. The more mono-functional and concrete were the scenarios, the less attractive was considered the public space and the more difficult it was to achieve any agreement. Another issue in such discussions usually is that discussion participants not always are able to interpret unanimously the meaning of the public space while speaking about it. Although legally it is defined in quite a universal way, actually it is a space accessible to all members of society, at any time, it is often the case when an urban formation without any features of socialisation is considered to be a public space, such as public facilities, while in some other cases, empty, unidentified city areas without any signs of identity, which can be shaped into accesses to public facilities, are understood as public spaces. (There were cases, when traffic circles were identified as urban public spaces.)

In the post-communist urban public space evolvement, two totally contradictory notions of urban city space and, at the same time, concepts of space morphology – the traditionalist and modernist – collide. Their collisions and tensions are typical in the urban situation of post-communist condition, while application of the related different approaches generates absolutely different spatial morphological results. In cases of the traditionalist approach, requirements of the traditional urban grid – morphotype – and the resulting scale of development are posed for space formation and structure. The analogues of this approach can be urban public spaces shaped by the structures of old town parts close to traditional urban formations. In case of the modernist approach with dominant community and municipal spaces and socialist land ownership principles, when private ownership land plots practically do not exist, buildings (objects) freely arranged in a particular space are developed essentially on large recreational or compositionally aestheticized areas. Their more distant or closer

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336 See in detail: F. Choay, *The Rule and the Model On the Theory of Architecture and Urbanism*, Cambridge: MIT Press. 1996.

337 The approach is described in the Teritorial planning Law of the Republic of Lithuania: https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.23069?positionInSearchResults=35&searchModelUUID=d1acd1fc-c751-401f-8735-3df0ae85ce61

338 This approach is represented by Collin Row, Aldo Rossi, Rob and Leon Krier.

339 This approach is represented by Le Corbusier, F.L. Wright and modernist school of urban planning and design.
accesses and environments are often treated as urban public spaces with the difficult
to fix physical and legal boundaries. This feature has been and still is characteristic
to all urban formations of modernist residential areas of the socialist period. When
attempts are being made to apply the qualities of traditional urban grid (private land
plot) to their structures, a lot socioeconomic difficulties follow. Thus, a tension between
these two urban approaches and concepts has appeared in post-communist cities
and their parts, which were implemented according to the principles of socialist land
ownership. It may be present and recognized both, in central parts and in suburban
residential districts, therefore it is important to emphasise that such intersections
different urban ideologies (traditional and modernist) in urban tissue generate
deformations of urban – morphological structure (a term by I.Alistratovaitė\textsuperscript{340}).
Formation of urban public space in such a context is quite contradictory. Public spaces
developed in central parts of cities according to modernist principles of composition
and spatial morphology, lacking structural exclusivity and essential elements of
traditional morpho-structure, in many cases have remained the formations containing
features of unsolved deformations of morphostructure. Examples of such formations
are present in all large post-communist cities. The land management system based on
private land plot ownership and qualities of traditional urban tissue in core parts of
cities allows for quite simple solutions of such problems. Whereas the cases of similar
morphostructural deformations in modernist residential districts are by far more
difficult to solve. The reasons of such deformations on the macro, as well as micro
scale lie in the mentioned before transformation of sociopolitical and socioeconomic
conditions, when rules and content of the entire urban planning system experience a
shockingly fast changes. Similar conditions were present in Lithuania, in 1945, after
sovietisation and the related urbanisation, which lasted for almost half a century.
Back then, the sociocultural characteristics of \textit{Place} and \textit{Order} altered in essence
thus determining drastic transformations of urban planning system and urban public
space formation principles. The aforementioned characteristics are directly related
to another two – \textit{Mentality} and \textit{Culture} – characteristics, while all four of them help
to define the qualities of sociocultural environment. The entire theoretical pattern
of sociocultural environment and its characteristics is related to Lewis Mumford’s
theoretical insights on city history\textsuperscript{341}, but in application of this approach to urban
public spaces just four basic characteristics are used, the detailing of which helps to
explain the peculiarities of urban public space transformations.

The characteristics of the \textit{Place} defines inclusion into a certain sociopolitical
or socioeconomic territory with specific rules or sets of rules applicable to it. This

\textsuperscript{340} See more - Alistratovaitė, I. 2004. Morfologinės struktūros transformacijos centriniaiame miesto
rajone (Lietuvos pavyzdžiu) (daktaro disertacija). Vilnius: Technika.

\textsuperscript{341} L.Mumford. The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects. Hardcover,
MJF Books 1997.
characteristic is changed, when, within a short period of time, a certain territory (a state and its urban system) or cultural space becomes a part of another territory with its own rules. Lithuania had a few examples of this dated back in the 18th and 20th centuries, when it was occupied by the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. Both aforementioned cases proved a very extreme change of principles of urban planning and public space formation. In the first case, typical urban planning schemes and plans were used for urban development and public space formation\textsuperscript{342}; they were implemented and developed not according to the local municipal, but rather the imperial model. In the soviet case, modernist urban doctrine, to which the socialist form of ownership and planned economy was very favourable, was applied to the processes of urban development and formation.

Related to the characteristic of the \textit{Place} is the sociocultural characteristic of \textit{Order}. First of all, it includes a social order, which influences directly the formation of cities and their urban places. After the changed pattern of social order following the soviet occupation in 1945, the main socioeconomic rules in Lithuania changed; and after this crucial sociocultural turning point – World War II – the only modernist doctrine of the restored world was applied in the sociocultural space of the entire USSR. Based on this doctrine, post-war cities and public spaces were developed in all countries, which today are referred to as “the post-communist”. Characteristic of \textit{Culture} is one of the sociocultural characteristics, which defines forms and peculiarities of culture, also affected by the characteristics of \textit{Place} and \textit{Order}. It may roughly be identified with all forms of expression of culture, covering its every area, including architecture. Characteristic of \textit{Mentality, in this case}, it is related to Peter Dinzelbacher’s archetypes of social mentality, including the mental structures of space, community, time, sociality, etc., which are typical to a certain territory with its specific social order and which possibly determine culture and its forms of expression.

All four sociocultural characteristics are closely interrelated and affecting one another. They are applied to explain the \textit{sociocultural environment}, which determines directly the formation principles of a city and its public spaces, the applied compositional and morphologic patterns, semiotic and symbolic codes in them. Within half a century of the soviet rule in Lithuania, the entire complex of these characteristics had formed the urban results identified as a \textit{post-communist condition}, whereas in 1990, having them (the results) as soviet urban cultural heritage, a new period of urban and sociocultural development started.

The effect of the sociocultural environment on urban public spaces can be seen more clearly, when we start analysing larger combinations of urban public spaces, rather than their separate units. Such combinations can be called networks or systems of urban public spaces. This theoretical approach helps to observe the

\textsuperscript{342} See more in the article Grunskis T. Miesto ir jo visuomeninių erdvių formavimo idėjos XIXa Lietuvoje. Urbanistika ir architektūra. Volume XXVIII , 2004 No.3.
complexity of public spaces formed in different stages of urban development, which is present in most of societies influenced by specific sociocultural conditions of Place, Order, Culture and Mentality in concrete time. It should be noted that under the influence of strong ideological environment (typical to the soviet period), such systems of public spaces have always been arranged with compositional-symbolic motives being emphasised and the aspect of structural complexity and connectivity being applied as general urban principle. Systems of urban public spaces also exist in the sociocultural environment of liberal democracy, but are formed based on different arguments and principles, such as economy of movement, structural connectivity and multifunctional.

A system of urban public spaces, in general, can be defined as a traditionally existing and functioning in any urban tissue object, composed of structurally and functionally interrelated urban public spaces of different types, sizes and purposes. This system may have different morphological, aesthetic and compositional features, which depend on geography, geomorphology, size, socioeconomic and sociocultural factors of a particular city. Usually such a system is mostly developed in central parts and subcentres of the city, where social functions and commercial-social functional nodes are present. Dynamic development patterns are very often characteristic to an urban public space system, especially as far as their modes of action, viability and social processes are concerned.

Features and elements of urban public space system are present in different urban theories. Although the issue appears in very different fields of scientific interest, starting from Space Syntax\textsuperscript{343}, Urban Morphology\textsuperscript{344} to Urban Space\textsuperscript{345} or Urban Design\textsuperscript{346}, and the concept itself with its different approaches can be found in the areas of urban planning and design, this theoretical concept of urban public spaces still has not been properly developed. Possibly, on the one hand, this has been preconditioned by the scale of the issue with respect to its urban context, on the other, its ambiguous understanding. Traditionally, an urban public space per se is an object of spatial planning and design, to which the requirements of artistic value and aesthetic uniqueness are applied. Although speaking of several urban public spaces

\textsuperscript{343} See more in: Space syntax Lab, Bill Hillier; Hillier, B. Social Logis of Space; Hillier, B. (1996) Space is the Machine, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

\textsuperscript{344} We bear in mind the general concepts of urban morphology, which are directly linked with the concept of spatial morphology – part of the British and Italian schools of urban morphology.

\textsuperscript{345} Krier Rob, Urban Space, London: Academy editions, 1979.

\textsuperscript{346} See more on this subject: Moughtin Cliff, Urban Design. Street and Square, Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003. Moughtin Cliff, Urban Design: Methods and Techniques, Oxford: Architectural Press, 1999. Also in: Madanipour Ali, Design of Urban Space, Chichister: John Willey & Sons, 1996. Madanipour Ali, Public and Private Spaces of the City, London: Routledge, 2003. Madanipour Ali, „Why are the Design and Development of Public Spaces Significant for Cities?“, in: Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design, [London], 1999, 26 (6), p. 879–891.
or their systems, the problem of their unification and totality in respect of the city is faced. Moreover, the system of urban public spaces as a finite urban composition is possible only in the sociocultural environment of strong ideology, and its aesthetical and structural entirety as a finite work of art has been and still is achieved by the use of directive urban space formation measures. Such directive methods for mastering large city areas and spaces often are not acceptable for the contemporary present-day society. The dominance of compositional aspect in evaluation of such systems possibly form a negative preconception towards them. In the present-day situation in Lithuania, urban public space systems of the soviet period is an urban heritage, which traditionally is treated as negatively. Their complexity and sudden desymbolisation and deritualisation after the transformation of sociocultural environment in 1990 have determined the present-day situation, where practically all redevelopment problems of public spaces have been tackled very fragmentarily with the tasks for their reconstruction being made only locally, and their complexity and structural interaction have been treated as a negative heritage of soviet urbanism. In post-communist urban situation, visual and compositional desovietisation of such public spaces is a natural outcome of the changed sociocultural environmental characteristics, however, localisation of public space problems ignoring the general principles of their systems’ structural connectivity and complexity make a negative impact on their development processes and possibilities.

It should be noted that in the post-communist urban situation, partly due to the aforementioned negative preconception and post-soviet experience, concept of urban public space system itself has not been compatibly approved with conceptual contradictions and theoretical fragmentation being inherent to it. The clearest example to illustrate this statement can be the case of urban parks, which in the contemporary legal framework of the territory planning in Lithuania are not treated as urban public spaces, but rather as a system of green areas. This determines their inclusion into the sphere of landscape architecture with exceptionally local tasks of aestheticisation and systemic treatment of parks and public gardens through the plant-growing prism only, which eliminates the aspects of sociality and urban coherence. Going into more detail with the situation of urban public parks and pubic gardens, many cases show that the majority of public spaces of this type in Lithuanian cities are left unsettled not only aesthetically, but also in the morphological-structural aspects, which require for solutions of space formation and fixing of morphostructural deformations. Because of the typical soviet modernist formation concept and ideologised tradition of recreation, a lot of city parks in Lithuania were formed in places, which remained undeveloped after the WWII and which were given a clear status of ideological symbol. They were consciously incorporated into the recreational systems of urban public spaces in central parts, which originally were developed even earlier, in the 19th century. In soviet times, a part of elements belonging to this system was redeveloped with their semiologic content or type being changed (turning a square, cemetery or city quarter into a public garden). Urban public space systems, which differ by
their quality, composition and typological diversity, can be easily recognised as a harmoniously developed body in urban tissues of Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipeda. All main types and subtypes of urban public space are included in the system\(^{347}\). Thus, an urban public space system as an existent fact is easily recognisable in any larger city, especially the post-communist one. Its character, boundaries and structure often depend on the specific peculiarities of the city growth and sociocultural conditions of urban development. Sociocultural characteristics of a specific period – when and during which period the system was formed – often precondition its dominant morphological, compositional and symbolic features. They include not only the aspects of plan structure and development, but also the spatial composition, and each of them may be treated as an object of separate scientific or even inter-disciplinary research.

Speaking about public space systems in more detail, it should be noted that urban public space system as such is recognizable both in traditional and modernist parts of Lithuanian post-communist cities. Traditional – older – city parts (in Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda) contain the most of public functions, and urban public space systems in such places are being developed according to the economy of movement and versatile use of space principles, as well as rules of social viability. Whereas modernist “sleeping” suburbs and residential districts of the soviet period in Lithuanian cities usually display less attributes of traditional public space system and bear their own specific features. It is noteworthy that such features differ in essence, and therefore traditional urbanist viewpoints and approaches of analyses usually are not fit for such city parts. Although the urban public space systems, where public functions and places are concentrated in modernist districts (they can be called “subcentres”), can function and be developed according to the general rules applicable to urban central parts, yet with different space formation tools and principles being applied. An argument of the soviet-period urban tissue formation is especially relevant in these cases, as the modernist morphostructure formation doctrine of that period, which determined untraditional approach towards urban public space system, also influenced different principles of public space system formation for these city parts. It has to be stated that nowadays, existent in most modernist residential districts of Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda, such urban public space systems are no longer functional and viable. This phenomenon can be explained by several reasons with at least two, possible to name clearly: (i) social density of the urban tissue or, to put it simply, the number of residents, and (ii) mono-functional character and size. Interestingly, in the first instance, we face some paradox: for a public space system to function and be viable, it is necessary to have a massive concentration of residents, although in most cases this is impossible, as the urban environment and public space system existent in it are unattractive in socioeconomic and other approaches. In other
words, in order that some part of the city would contain sufficient number of public functions, it needs population, but it is impossible to draw it without the socially and economically attractive urban medium. Thus, we face the interdependence with a cyclic recurrence and exclusivity of solution. In some cases, as we have in Lazdynai district, Vilnius, another important obstacle is present – the issue of the modernist period architecture and urban cultural heritage, when the entire residential district is protected as cultural heritage, thus its essential transformation and densification are hardly possible. A likely solution is a systemic approach to the reformation of such modernist residential districts and their public spaces through a selection of appropriate strategic development models, which would cover the renovation of such districts and their heritage protection. Another reason for non-functionality of modernist residential districts as mentioned before is their mono-functionality and scale. In a general case, modernist urban public space systems in residential districts of all larger Lithuanian cities are well-developed, but have just a single – recreational – function, i.e. they are mono-functional and have a big scale. In soviet times, the purpose of mass pedestrian flows and functional interconnection between separate microrayons was foreseen in these essentially recreational modernist public space systems with lots of green areas (a prototype of a park and public garden as an urban public space). Such purpose was programmed for absolutely different automobile use and traffic situation in former Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. Nowadays, the functional interconnection has changed in essence, as the major part of residents of these districts cover even local distances by car, and most of public spaces of a park prototype are no longer attractive because of their size and lack of social visual control.

Speaking of the modernist urban public space system, it is necessary to remember that residential district planning back in the soviet period was inseparable from the staged servicing concept of residents. The design principles of the system were based on the arrangement of servicing shops and companies according to their visiting frequency. One of the most important aims of such planning was the most optimal use of travelling resources and time, but such a model could exist only under ideal conditions, where each resident was forced to keep strictly to a certain prefixed daily routine\textsuperscript{348}. Although criticized abundantly, such a system was quite successful in economic aspect in the soviet times, therefore, with some reservations, it was implemented up till the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990\textsuperscript{349}. According to this principle, each residential district was comprised of several microrayons, in which a public centre – complex with a shop, household servicing centre, public catering and administrative functions – was designed, i.e. it was attempted to

\textsuperscript{348} The topic is further discussed in: Goldhoorn B., Sverdlov A. Mycrorayon: Transformations of the Soviet City under Capitalism. Volume, 2009, vol.21, p14-15.

\textsuperscript{349} More on the subject: Vanagas J. Urbanistikos pagrindai. Vilnius: Technika, 2008.
provide multifunctional features to these centres. Such public servicing centres were important elements of microrayons both in functional and compositional aspects, and main public spaces were formed around such centres according to the principles of interconnecting system. Almost all public servicing centres of modernist residential districts were built according to the same typical scheme (except several cases) with only slight modifications. Moreover, similar hierarchical dependency existed also in the public space structure of residential districts and microrayons. In most cases, such urban complex of public servicing centre had its own public representational space (a prototype of square), where an artistic-sculptural focal point was often built. Such focal points were present in microrayon public spaces of residential districts of the early (Žirmūnai, Lazdynai in Vilnius), as well as later soviet period (Eiguliai, Taikos in Kaunas, Pempėnai in Klaipėda). All the aforementioned recreational and representational public spaces were joined into a harmoniously functioning public space system, which was arranged according to the principles of modernist utopian city and socialist social order. Residential environment formed in compliance with such principles could be perceived also as a huge public space, the separate areas of which contained different typological and functional features of it. Although roughly, such features allow to distinguish one type of modernist urban public space from the other – squares, pedestrian paths, parks, etc. – although sometimes a clear physical line between them can be drawn only partially. The general modernist feature bringing all these types together is their dominant mono-functionality typical even to the entire modernist functionalist urban mentality. Whereas multifunctional features could be noticed in such district centres, a single function prevailed in microrayon centres (of lower hierarchy). Although all aforementioned types of public space comprised the whole public space system and hierarchy and were important for the urban structure of the district, its organization principles failed to ensure the viability of spaces after the transformation of sociocultural environment. The structure of the public space system/ hierarchy was the following (starting from the lowest element): (i) more or less closed public yards; (ii) public parks; (iii) public pedestrian routes with dominant recreational function; (iv) public spaces of microrayon centres; and (v) public spaces of district centres with the most important public-purpose buildings.

After the transformation of socioeconomic and sociocultural situation, the public space hierarchy of modernist residential districts had lost its relevance and started degrading with its separate elements being transformed or abandoned. These transformations can also be divided into several problematic subgroups: (a) changed purpose of public spaces, when after loss of functional attractiveness and significance, possible use scenarios of a public space change; (b) changed architectural quality of public space development, when signature buildings in a public space are changed by reconstruction; and (c) changed volume-spatial composition of an urban complex by adding new development, when in economically attractive centres their urban and architectural totality is changed regardless of the former hierarchy. Moreover, after the change of sociocultural conditions, essential transformations were carried out in
all elements of the aforementioned modernist public space hierarchy. In public yards (i), car parking problems have become much more relevant, their other (recreational) purposes remained, but in some cases the yards have been turned into unattended urban wastelands with chaotic growth of plants and (in rare cases) renovated children playgrounds. The purposes of communication (iii) and recreation (ii) of parks have become less significant due to decreased pedestrian flows and low social density (determined by massive automobile use), as well as no-longer existent recreational infrastructure. Very often these public spaces are almost abandoned, less used and unattended. In former places of representational public spaces (iv and v), car parking lots are formed in compliance with relevant social needs and normative requirements.

All stated-above factors and circumstances possibly influence the asociality of these modernist public space systems in present-day Lithuanian cities, as well as contribute to the difficulties of their redevelopment. Besides, the obscurity of morphological elements (boundaries of land plot and ownership) programmed by the aforementioned socialist land management system often intensify the problems of these public spaces resulting in poor condition and low quality of such spaces.

In summary it should be stated that the situation of modernist public space systems in Lithuanian cities illustrates vividly, how the changed sociocultural conditions can influence their relevance, use and condition. The analysed cases show how exactly the strong sociocultural characteristic of Social Order (according to L. Mumford – equivalent of Politics) and its transformation determines the conditions for city development and formation principles of its modernist parts. Based on the present-day situation, we can easily confirm the situation of critical transformation of modernist city public spaces350, which is present in all larger Lithuanian cities, and foresee the results to be expected in the nearest future.

2.3 Peculiarities of Urban Public Space Transformations in Lithuania after 1990

In recent 29 years of independence, there has been a number of attempts – usually in the form of architectural competitions – to solve the reconstruction problems of former

350 This is the period, during which the paradigms of social order change thus determining the formation processes of a city and its public spaces, as well as their results and quality. Depending on the geopolitical and geoeconomic situation, this period can have several stages, such as the turning point; transition to the new urban formation rules; wave of urbanisation resulting in essential changes of the city image, structure, public nucleus and identity; and structural and quality transformation of a city and its spaces.
ideological urban public spaces. During the period of past five years, the need to reshape urban public spaces in various cities and towns of Lithuania has become even more urgent. Discussions about quality of former administration sanctuaries and public spaces representing the state power have become a recurrent phenomenon, and they are held again on the ideological level. The third wave of urbanization still continuing in Lithuania has been influencing the process of public space formation quite slowly. Today, it is hard to find any actual result of essential reformation of public spaces. The current situation has obvious features of stagnation. The key aspect of public space formation in the recent decade has been deconstruction, or the process in which many formerly important urban public spaces have lost their essential element – monument to Lenin. Lenin's monuments have been removed out of any representative square that used to identify the soviet ideology. Unfortunately, after such removal, nothing new has been invented in their place and the processes of transformation are still going on. One of the possible causes of such stagnant situation under discussion may be the obscurity of urban development concept in Lithuania and still applied paradigm of post-communist urban planning and urban design. The foundational values of soviet Lithuanian school of urbanism (back then called urbanistics) were developed under the soviet planned economy and according to the communist ideology prevalent at that time. Although, when judged from the present-day perspective, the Lithuanian school of urbanism has had some progressive elements, but in its essence it was an instrument of political power in the sociocultural context and social order of the time. The quintessence of its negative features was the prohibited participation of society in the processes of urban and public space formation, absence of main traditional morphological elements, such as ownership and privately owned land plot, and delegation of all powers for reconstruction of cities after the World War II to the political bureaucratic apparatus, to which architects and urban planners were servants. Speaking of the latter two, they had a huge, if not unlimited, authority on the process of urban public space formation, and this has determined a tradition to create public spaces, city quarters, districts or even entire cities as finite results of architectural creation. The tradition to shape urban space and structure as a piece of art was the only acceptable concept of the soviet urbanistics, therefore first of all the aesthetical (necessarily related to the social power) rather than any other requirements were raised to it. Thus, the present stagnant situation in the former representative public spaces possibly has been preconditioned by a few contradictions, one of the main being the incompatibility

351 More on the subject: Significance of Creative Competitions to Lithuanian Art of Architecture, Linartas, D. 2011. Kūrybinų konkursų reikšmė Lietuvos architektūros mene: Doctoral thesis. Vilnius: Technika. 210 p.
352 Such elements manifested by application of the modern network concept in the development of the even and disperse urban system and in several cases of urban regeneration of old towns.
between the urban tradition from the communist past and current social reality. Contemporary urban planners in Lithuania still see the formation of a city and its public spaces as an artistic creation and its result, whereas the society demands its own rights to the city and participation in its development processes, including public space formation. Still applied post-communist paradigm of urbanism does not provide for such possibilities.

The current situation of contradiction or even conflict may be referred to as “the post-communist urbanism”, where the term “urbanism” is used to define the city formation concepts and paradigms, which have been and still are related to artistic creation and essentially or at least in part discord with the traditional (western) approach of city formation. According to the latter approach, the aesthetical aspect is not the key one and socioeconomic, sociocultural and aesthetical issues harmoniously correlate. The situation existing in Lithuania obviously presents a contradiction between the method and approaches, as attempts are being made to apply the concepts and approaches of the 20th or even 19th century to contemporary urban planning processes, thus focusing on the aesthetical aspect of urban form and space. Such post-urbanism as the post-soviet urban formation doctrine can be easily recognized in Lithuania. One of the most controversial examples illustrating this statement, as mentioned before in this text, is the case of the new downtown district in Vilnius. After the restoration of independence in 1990, Lithuania implemented the concept of “Architectural Hill”, developed and started back in the 1970s. It is still in the process of realization in Vilnius, where its new (third) identity of the modern capitalist “Euro” city is being formed. In essence, this activity resembles the soviet period attempts to create a new identity of Vilnius by developing the modernist “sleeping” districts and shaping their image. It is noteworthy that, alongside the representation of financial power near the historical city centre and core, such neoliberal transformation of the existing urban environment has provoked one of the strongest social responses. Nevertheless, the society’s participation in these urban formation processes has been limited to such response only, and its requirements for this location have been and still are ignored. This example is one of the clearest illustrations of the post-urbanism.353

Although, it should be stated that within the recent five years an approach to the city and its public space formation as a sound social process of a dynamic system has finally appeared. Due to active involvement of different social groups and communities, municipal authorities in most Lithuanian cities have started at least to respond to criticism. Urban public space formation processes in Kaunas and Vilnius are carried out accompanied by intense discussions, in which not only the municipal government, but also developers and business representatives take part. Although, so

353 See more on visions and utopias of Vilnius city in: http://www.miestai.net/forumas/showthread.php?t=16216&page=3
far, the results of the public space formation processes in the aforementioned cities still are inefficient, the social engagement in such processes has become a normal practice.

The described above discussions on formation of the main ideological public spaces in Lithuanian cities can be vividly called the *discussion of miscommunication – Urbi et Orbi* ("To the city and to the entire (local) world"). Although being quite different in cases of Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda, such discussions are unified by the aspect of the national level. Still prevailing significance of the national level in almost each representative public square of Lithuanian cities can be explained by the fact that all public spaces in the Soviet Union were used for expression of values and ideology of the soviet state. Such spaces had the highest position in the hierarchy of urban public space system. Although the sociocultural situation in Lithuania has changed, the society’s mentality has not been altering so fast. It may be so that post-communist approaches in the collective memory and social mentality have determined the society’s unaltered expectations related to such spaces, especially, regarding their hierarchy and significance. Thus, at least the major part of society is still willing the central square of the city to represent the national values of the country. One of the clearest examples is the Lukiškės Square in Vilnius. It has been legally confirmed as the main national square, where the symbol of national importance must be presented to embody all fights for independence and history of the Lithuanian nation. A long discussion (lasting for almost 25 years) between the society, municipal and governmental authorities has failed to produce any efficient result. Or rather, with the first tangible results of this discussion achieved in 2018-19, we should identify the situation as still continuing transformation process, because the Lukiškės Square is still in the process of reconstruction. Although we should also notice that solutions are found, when the processes of reconstruction of this space are attempted to depoliticize and shift from the national to the municipal level. All this also concerns other discussed above former ideological squares of Lithuanian cities. Thus, it should be reasonably stated that the stagnant situation of these spaces as mentioned before still has not changed in essence, with only some features of transformation being displayed.

Speaking of systems of public spaces in central parts of Lithuanian cities, it should be noted that reconstruction works of bigger or smaller scale have been planned and their designing processes have started even earlier. As the most outstanding examples could be mentioned the embankments and city parks in Klaipėda and Vilnius, and the Laisvės Avenue in Kaunas, under reconstruction since 2018. But in neither of the aforementioned cases the practice of social engagement has been applied, although caused strong social reactions. The dominant of such reactions was the requirement
of Contraurbanism\textsuperscript{354} – the requirement posed by city communities and activist groups to leave the existing situation of public spaces as it is, without any changes, until the society agrees upon their further destiny.

Therefore, in summary, it should be stated that traditional urban public space system in Lithuania is in continuous transformation in the sense of quality, structure, as well as quantity. While a city is forming and expanding, it becomes more complex, multifunctional and multilayer\textsuperscript{355}. Among other important phenomena affecting the transformation and formation of the system of urban public spaces in Lithuania, it is necessary to mention the appearance of huge-scale shopping malls in the central parts of cities. It should be stated that such huge public-purpose buildings in Lithuanian cities (usually, the shopping malls) start to replace urban public spaces. Such indoor centres gather a lot of functions that traditionally are common to downtown areas or even urban public spaces (commercial lane, plaza, etc.) The peculiar location and character of such centres often cause a certain contradiction to traditional town structure and traditional urban public space system by duplicating or even sharking it. Besides, such a phenomenon, when traditional public spaces occur in public-purpose buildings, develops a certain substitute or alternative for the real city life.

\textsuperscript{354} Thus, a conclusion can be made that the results suggested in the process according to the logics and principles of post-urbanism are likely to further fail satisfying the society, if the paradigms of post-urbanism and tools used by the municipal bureaucracy still remain unchanged. The present situation can be defined as contra-urbanism, the important feature of which being the society’s rejection of conventional urban space formation methods acceptable to professionals and, of course, the results of their activities. Thus we shift from the post-urbanism to contra-urbanism, in the aspect of social reactions.

\textsuperscript{355} For example, in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, in the course of urbanization a number of urban public spaces were invented and formed, including indoor public spaces in public-purpose buildings (the tradition goes back to the Antiquity, but was forgotten in certain later periods of urban development). Machine and technology development in construction allowed for relatively cheap light roof covering of huge areas, what in turn ensured formation of new types of public spaces inside buildings. Thus a passage, atrium, roofed commercial and exhibition halls, etc. were born. Traditional outdoor urban public space system was enriched by new subtypes of public spaces, such as boulevard (traditional street-type urban public space with morphological elements of a park – public garden), embankment with or without green areas. Speaking of the public space of the time, one of its important features should be emphasised: besides the separation of purpose, public spaces were made more civilized and refined. The same was happening to plazas that were gradually turned into squares. With the loss of function and purpose diversity, plaza was cultivated and refined in the course of time gaining some morphological features of a park, whereas its initial and traditional purpose and multifunction was reorganized ideologically and structurally in compliance with new urgent public needs and aesthetic doctrine. Whereas the new derivatives of urban public spaces – markets – were clearly mono-functional, in line with utilitarian and hygiene requirements. (For example, market on the Lukiskiu Square, Vilnius, by the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} – the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century). By becoming real public spaces in towns to belong to the whole population rather than the elite, parks were developed in compliance with similar space adornment and cultivation doctrine since the 17\textsuperscript{th} c. in Western Europe and the 19\textsuperscript{th} c. in Lithuania.
Finally, such urban derivatives absorb the downtown functions, while traditional city centre with its own community culture and local lifestyles is gradually atrophying. In essence, such virtuality stands in contradiction to the traditional development of urban public spaces. Both, in Kaunas and Klaipėda, this phenomenon has made a negative impact on viability of public space systems in the central part of the city, when a major part of public and commercial functions has been concentrated in the artificial shopping malls, and their number and diversity have gradually vanished from traditional public spaces in downtown areas. The situation still remains essentially unchanged in the central parts of Kaunas and Klaipėda.

Thus, it is not difficult to notice that in some cases recent and rapid wave of urbanization has caused temporal atrophy of some traditional public spaces in the downtown areas (the Laisvės Avenue, Kaunas). But, of course, we cannot state that urban public space is perishing. Rather, it is not developed and formed as intensively as the whole city develops and is formed. The recent attention to the downtown areas and their infrastructure development does not comply with the development of the public space system of the city, although traditionally the two cannot or, rather should not, exist separately. For example, the public space of Vilnius embankment now looks more like a wilderness rather than a solid city embankment. And we can find more of such examples. The social power entity of self-governance, the decision-making body for formation of such spaces, is still not as strong and proactive as it has to be, and the social power entity of private capital or financial elite in most cases focuses only on the commercial benefit of sociality and develops public space inside buildings.

Besides this “parasite” phenomenon (of shifting public spaces indoors) in respect of urban public space systems, it is important to mention some other transformation trends of Lithuanian urban public spaces. While making a review of the changing patterns of Lithuanian public spaces and their systems within recent 29 years, it is not difficult to discern a few essential features and peculiarities:

1. Desovietisation and deconstruction, when after destruction of ideological symbols of soviet public spaces or their removal to museums (culture reserves of soviet period attributes\(^{356}\)), a major part of main representative squares in largest Lithuanian cities remained in a stagnant condition, because after quite reasonable desovietisation and deconstruction of their semiological code and symbolic meaning, their spatial structure and morphology remained unchanged for almost three decades. Such stagnant situation possibly indicates the stated-above situation of post-communist urbanism. It is noteworthy in this aspect that almost all soviet symbols were removed from local public spaces. Until the recent five years, such elimination process was carried out quite smoothly without raising any crucial discussions. But within the last quinquennium, elimination of

\(^{356}\) In Lithuania, such a reserve of the soviet period attributes is the Grūtas Park.
still existent symbols directly related to the soviet sociocultural context has been severely criticized and discussed. Petras Cvirka (famous soviet Lithuanian writer) Square in Vilnius and the WWII Memorial of Soviet Soldiers in Klaipėda can be presented as examples.

2. Speaking of smaller, formerly ideologised urban public spaces, some cases in Klaipėda and Vilnius indicate that former soviet ideological symbols have been replaced with the new ones, more consistent with the social needs that prevailed after the restoration of Lithuanian independence. This trend can be named as the reconstructivist replacement of symbols, which was carried out in two directions:
   (a) in the preplanned manner, when upon the initiative of municipal or national authorities, by the way of announced competitions, projects for reconstruction of the squares were implemented (for example, Vincas Kudirka Square in Vilnius, Lietuvninkų Square in Klaipėda and new Monument for Darius and Girėnas in Kaunas);
   (b) spontaneously, when upon the society or local community’s initiative, certain collections of religious symbols, analogous to the Hill of Crosses near Šiauliai, appeared in places of former soviet symbols. Later, this spontaneous tendency of religious symbolisation was aestheticised and reformed. Quite reasonably it can be called spontaneous sacralisation (the hill of crosses at the 6th Fort in Kaunas, cases in Vilnius near the Cultural Centre of Trade Unions and Aukų Street can be mentioned as the examples). These were the cases of spontaneous social initiatives, carried out within the first decade after the regained independence not only in the larger Lithuanian cities, but also all over the country.

3. Another important trend is the placement of new local independence symbols in memorial places and urban public spaces - some kind of memorial reconstruction. In this case, only the example of Tuskulėnai Memorial in Vilnius can be mentioned as a sound reconstruction of urban public space. Other examples are more local and related to monument formation, rather than reconstruction of public spaces. As illustrations, the cases of Vytautas and Pope John Paul II’s Monuments in Kaunas, as well as the Monument for Victims of 13 January 1991 near the TV Tower in Vilnius can be provided.

4. Functional revitalisation should also be mentioned among the distinguished trends prevalent within recent 15 years. This is the tendency of attempted revitalisation of urban recreational public spaces with the use of different infrastructure tools, mostly upon municipal initiatives. In this case, no new identities are formed, but rather attempts are being made to improve the physical condition of urban public spaces with the help of objects of landscape architecture, sculptures and

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357 See more in: Grunskis, T. “Monument to Freedom - a Dilemma between Space and Object”, in „Vilniaus paminklai. Kaitos istorija”, p. 48-58.
decorations. Revitalisation of some part of public spaces, their systems and elements are still planned. Such plans have become relevant and the designing processes have been made public in all larger cities of Lithuania. For example, according to such plans, embankment public spaces in Vilnius, Klaipėda and Kaunas will be renewed. So far, it is difficult to evaluate the quality of the revitalisation projects due to the lack of more detailed information.

5. *Traditional aestheticisation* is a trend dominant in the recent decade, when urban parks and public gardens are renewed or planned to be renewed with the help of aesthetic measures typical to the 19th century, by providing new identity features and recreational attractiveness to them. One of the most significant examples is the Bernardinai Garden in Vilnius, for the structure of which the historiography material has been used, but the final image equals just mediocre analogues of the 19th century. A similar principle was used for the planned renewals of other urban parks in Vilnius - Reformatų, Sapiegų, but due to negative social response the projects were suspended in 2019.

6. Trend of artificial *commercialisation* of urban public spaces can be observed in the territories of new commercial centres, when near newly developed office and commercial buildings local public recreational spaces – new urban attractors – are formed, with the help of which some added value impression is attempted to make for such newly developed commercial objects. This trend is relatively new and present mostly in Vilnius, where the competition among office renters is extremely severe and where the communication of commercial identity and attractiveness is relevant. As examples of this trend, the *Ogmia Centre, Hanner* and *Kvadrum, Green Hall* and other commercial complexes in Vilnius should be mentioned. Whereas the Europa Square project implemented back in 2004 has to be stated as one of the most successful examples.

7. Among important trends of urban public space transformations, the aforementioned *degradation* of modernist public spaces should be emphasised. Because of the huge territories, the renovation of these spaces and their systems is implemented extremely slowly and has a synoptic initiative character. Thus the transformation of modernist public spaces in former soviet residential districts is in the delayed stagnant condition due to the imperfections of the complex governmental program for residential quarters and narrow view of municipal officials, as well as limited amount of resources.

- After a short review of the dominant trends and examples of the situation of urban public spaces and their systems in Lithuania within the period of 1990-2019, the impact of the sociocultural environment on their transformation processes and essential features, it should be noted that under the still the prevailing *post-communist* condition the transformation processes of urban public spaces and their systems have been gradual and a crucial turning point can be discerned, when actual transformation processes of the main urban public spaces of former ideological representation have been initiated according to the
contemporary social needs and peculiarities of the sociocultural environment. It is also noteworthy that the formation and transformations of urban public spaces and their systems have been related to their socioeconomic conditions and possibilities, which is their turn, have determined the increased attention to the quality and renovation of urban public spaces within the recent decade.