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THE SYSTEM OF URBAN PUBLIC SPACES IN THE POST-COMMUNIST SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT

Tomas Grunskis[a], Martynas Mankus[b]

Department of Architectural Fundamentals and Theory, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University,
Pylimo g. 26/Trakų g. 1, 01132 Vilnius, Lithuania
E-mails: [a]grunskis@gmail.com (corresponding author); [b]martynas.mankus@gmail.com

Abstract. The article analyses the system of urban public spaces and discusses its current situation in the changed sociocultural context of Lithuania. The concept of the system of urban public spaces is approached as a relevant problem, by focusing on the ideological aspects of public space formation. Also, the problem of current transformation of main public spaces in Lithuanian largest towns is discussed considering the background of still persistent post-communist sociocultural situation. In the context of such sociocultural environment, a case of public space development in Šiauliai is presented as one of the most interesting and significant, related to the ideological changes in Lithuania before 1990. Key models of urban public space formation are reviewed in the article with assumptions being made on their possible influence on the situation in Lithuania.

Keywords: system, urban public spaces, sociocultural context, post-communist.

Introduction

As an independent subject of scientific research, the system of urban public spaces is analysed and explored rather rarely. Nevertheless, the issue has received some attention with the focus on certain aspects of its ideological and theoretical assumptions. Besides, it has to be mentioned that the subject falls within different fields of scientific interest, starting with space syntax[1] (Hillier 1996, 1989) and urban morphology[2], followed by urban space[3] or urban design[4]. Additionally, the concept with its different interpretations is met in the spheres of urban planning and design. Still, the qualitative-strategic and conceptual aspects of this issue have not been analysed and develop properly, not to mention the formation aspect. In Lithuania, scientific researches on this issue have been very fragmentary. It is possible that the current situation has been determined by a number of reasons. The scope (or maybe even the scale) of the problem in respect of its urban context on the one hand, and obscurity of the concept on the other, have to be emphasised. In the first case, an urban public space itself has traditionally been a subject of spatial creation, to which the requirements of artistic value and aesthetic uniqueness should apply. But as soon as we start speaking about several urban public spaces or their bigger or smaller systems, we are faced with the problem of their unification and totality in respect of the entire city. The existence of the system of urban public spaces as a

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[1] For more detail see: *Space Syntax Lab* [online], [cited 01 July 2013]. Available from Internet: www.spacesyntax.com.

[2] The authors refer to concepts of urban morphology related to spatial morphology, i.e. a group of representatives of the British and Italian urban morphology (See in: Larkham 2006; Marzot 2002; Whitehand 2001).

[3] *Urban space* (Rob Krier 1979) and his design for urban public spaces in Stuttgart as well as other design projects.

[4] For more detail see: Cliff Moughtin (1999, 2003), Ali Madanipour (1996).

completed urban composition was and still is possible only in the sociocultural environment of some strong social ideology[5], and its aesthetic and structural whole as a completed piece of art was and still is achieved by applying directive tools of urban space formation. Thus, as it could be seen from many examples in the history of urbanity, the process of urban space formation and its organisation peculiarities determine the result and time, in which the latter may be achieved. Such a directive method handling with vast city areas and spaces usually, however, is inacceptable to contemporary society. First of all, this is due to the fact that nowadays too many different stakeholders take part in the process of making essential solutions related to urban development (at least technically, the society representing the public interest should take part); therefore in this sense, democratic urban planning process becomes somewhat complicated. Speaking more broadly on the aspect of scale – macro or general city level – the system of urban public spaces has not been properly research also because a city space as such and its quality simply does not exist within such macro scale boundaries, especially in cases of megacities. This macro level usually falls within the sphere of strategic planning, and less rarely – within the sphere of special planning, where simply no requirements for space quality are raised. A different situation exists in smaller cities and towns, where the systems of public spaces may be tackled on a much more local basis, although legally such macro-centric approach[6] is also based on the same structure of strategic and special planning. By far more usual are the cases where, even in large cities, the system of their public spaces within the macro-centric approach is analysed as a local phenomenon by narrowing its boundaries up to a separate city district or even the central part. Such research boundaries are less related to the occupied area, but rather to phenomenological and cognitive aspects of a city space, as public spaces present in the central parts of the city and functioning as a system are objects, with the help of which the city itself is recognised. They often allow perceiving the city image and city itself as a unique place.

In the second case – the concept – it is noteworthy that the concept of the system of urban public spaces has not been clearly formulated and compatibly approved. It is highly possible that such general approval can never be reached, not to mention absolutely different understanding of such concept by experts of different areas. Nevertheless, the currently used concept "public space" covers too many things from objects to purposes of urban spaces. The clearest example could be a case of urban parks, which according to the contemporary Lithuanian legislation of territorial planning should not be attributed to urban public spaces but rather to the system of urban greenery. This determines their classification as purely landscape architecture. Such attitude might be somewhat acceptable provided public spaces are looked upon as separate objects or phenomena existing in a city. But if they are regarded from a fairly different angle – as a system – the aforementioned park case seems to be controversial. Thus, speaking of systems of public spaces, it has to be emphasized that their concept, which is objective, efficient and subject to analysis, has to be established yet. It is also noteworthy that this article is a part of a larger scientific research, so only a few aspects related to the research subject have been tackled within. The research boundaries cover Lithuanian towns, and a part of the research generalisations is based on certain existing regularities characteristic to the post-communist sociocultural space. The latter – post-communist – aspect is one of the cornerstones defining a certain geopolitical space with specific factors and models of urban development prevailing within it, where urban public spaces have undergone the most intense transformations.

Relevance of the problem regarding the system of public spaces

A system of urban public spaces as an existent fact is easily recognisable in any larger city. Its character, boundaries, shape and structure often depend on peculiarities as well as contemporary conditions of urban development. It is closely connected to the city formation processes and history. Besides, just as the city itself, the system of public spaces by its structure may be shaped in a natural way, formed purposefully and be of a mixed-adapted type. The period of time required for the system to form is often a determinant of prevalence of the morphologic features within such system. The features may cover not only the plan structure and development, but also the aspect of spatial composition. Each of the above may be a subject of scientific or even interdisciplinary research. It is also noteworthy that the system of urban public spaces as a real givenness is most easily recognizable in traditional older parts of a city or its downtown areas. Such areas accommodate most of public/social functions; therefore, traditionally public spaces are developed in these parts of the city. Public spaces are most abundant

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5 Here, the authors have in mind the urban space formation concepts and doctrines of the early Classicism, Classicism, the 19th c and even those attributable to the Socialist Realism.

6 The micro-centric and macro-centric approaches are used as concepts in the article on the issue of urban composition (Grunskis 2010).

in central parts regardless of the size of the city. The quality of the downtown area usually has some effect on the vitality of separate public spaces in the city.

The already mentioned aspect of sociocultural environment, where strong sociocultural characteristics of social order (according to Lewis Mumford, the equivalent of politics) determines urban development conditions, becomes especially relevant to public spaces and their systems at the time of their transitions. This is the period of change of paradigms of social order and it determines the formation processes of cities and their public spaces as well as the results and quality of such processes. Depending on the geopolitical and geoeconomic situation, this transitional period may have several phases: a breaking point; transition to new city formation regulations, the wave of urbanisation determining essential changes in the city image, structure, social nodes and identity; and a stage of structural and qualitative transformation of the city and its spaces. Taking a closer look at urban public spaces and their systems in the downtown areas in Lithuania, it could be noticed that a rather ambiguous situation has been dominant for over a decade already. The most noticeable feature in this situation has been (and still is) failure to rearrange main town squares that still contain former attributes of soviet ideology. They have remained essentially unchanged for these two past decades. The authors have in mind the main (former Lenin's) squares in contemporary Kaunas, Klaipėda and Vilnius, where the *status quo* still prevails[7]. Thus, based on the recurrent tendency rather than solitary cases, a conclusion may be drawn that the post-communist–transitory sociocultural situation still persists and no progress in terms of the quality transformation phase of the structure and spaces of the downtown areas has been achieved so far. One could provide many explanations on the underlying reasons; however, looking from the perspective of the system of urban public spaces, the problem of cyclicality and narrowness emerges if focusing on just one aspect of this issue (some particular public space) and approaching it on a local level only. It is somewhat possible that after changing a standpoint and by providing a complex look to the system of urban public spaces, such mental cyclicality boundaries could be overcome. We do not bear in mind the compositional or aesthetical wholeness, but rather the arguments and requirements to the aforementioned public spaces to be preconditioned by a broader context. It is possible that failure to reach a common agreement on the purpose and use scenarios of these public spaces is the

key problem behind the discussed situation of public squares in some largest Lithuanian cities. It is true that each individual case is unique and complex in its own way, but even in the case of Lukiškių Square (Vilnius), where the purpose of this public space has been established on the legislative level, no actual result has been achieved. This could possibly indicate that the directive method does not guarantee a result. On the other hand, there are no clear criteria for formation of these spaces, or such criteria have not been universally approved.

Speaking about urban public spaces in a broader sense, it is noteworthy that whereas this system is more or less developed in downtown areas of cities, the "bedroom" suburbs and residential districts of the soviet period usually have fewer features attributable to the system of public spaces. This may be a subject of a separate research and it is worth-mentioning in short that the said features are different and traditional urban approaches are inappropriate for such parts of a town. However, in places of concentration of public functions and in places sometimes referred to as "sub-centres" such systems of public spaces must function and be developed, as this can influence the quality of residential environment within the location. In these particular cases, the formation period of urban tissue is especially significant as the doctrine of the morphostructure is modernist, and it preconditions a non-traditional approach to the quality of urban public space as an object and formation regularities pertaining to the system of public spaces. One can find very few cases with the system of urban public spaces functioning as a consonant whole in residential suburbs having very little relation to the downtown areas. Nowadays, such system does not usually work and is lifeless if could be existent at all. This phenomenon has been caused by numerous reasons, one of them being the social density of urban tissue; in other words, the number of residents. Here, an interesting paradox emerges: high population concentration is necessary for the system of public spaces to start working and be alive, but very often it is impossible because the urban environment and the system of public spaces existing within such environment are not attractive enough to stay/act in them and use them. In other words, population is needed in order to have a sufficient number of social functions in a certain part of the city, but it is impossible to attract people without developing a favourable urban medium and environment. Thus, here certain interdependence exists, to which cyclicality or a kind of vicious circle is inherent. A possible solution: a systemic look towards the formation of public spaces and selection of appropriate strategic development models

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[7] See study on this subject Almantas Samalavičius and Rimantas Buivydas (2011).

covering the renewal as well as new formation of public spaces. As demonstrated by vast and versatile experience of European towns, very often the actual added value generated by public spaces functioning in a city and its separate parts becomes apparent only after the situation is improved and public spaces are changed. Their significance has certain effect not only on socioeconomics but also on the quality change of urban environment and possibilities of formation of the local identity.

Aesthetical–ideological aspect. The case of post-communist Šiauliai

Speaking about systems of public spaces and situation of their post-communist environment, it is important to mention the ideological aspect of use of public spaces. In recent history, main public spaces in cities – squares – were used to manifest the ideological context of the time and its values. The use of such spaces was even regulated and restricted in one way or another[8], and exclusive attention was paid to their aesthetics. It is possible that the model of use of such spaces (maybe even an archetype) formed in the Soviet period has remained till nowadays. Central representational urban public spaces formed according to the principle of a prevailing mono-dominant most often were not designed for collective recreation or free communication[9]. Clearly regulated, understandable to everyone spatial semiological system was developed in such spaces, directing to a specific activities or even conduct, which was clearly enough conveyed by the objects representing the ideology of the time, spatial composition and morphology. Other – not ideologised – public spaces in the city were often treated as ancillary or satellite. The systems of urban public spaces usually contained a strongly expressed hierarchy aspect of public spaces based on ideological criteria. The use of public spaces was directly connected to their place in such hierarchy. In the 1970s however, development of a new type of urban public space commenced. It was a pedestrian street (a typological prototype of an alley and boulevard) and its outset could be related not only to the mitigation of ideological climate, but also to possible transformation of the aesthetical landmarks. It was the time, when with gradual naturalisation of Postmodernist aesthetical stylistics and thinking in Lithuanian architecture, the tradition of narrative "story-telling" space formation was developed. It manifested in many areas from interiors of buildings to urban public spaces. Interesting and exceptional in this sense is a case of Šiauliai. Back in the Soviet period, a system of public spaces – Vilnius Street that consists of the pedestrian passage and the Square of the Sundial – was initiated in the downtown area. It contained some features of place identity with aesthetics and sculptures inherent to this town only.

Generally speaking, the appearance of pedestrian streets in the context of public space of a highly ideologised town may be considered an interesting phenomenon of the late Soviet period that encompassed not only the construction of new pedestrian streets, but also reconstruction of the old ones. This was the phenomenon or rather a trend that changed the central parts of many Lithuanian cities/towns: Šnipiškių Street on the right bank of the river Neris in Vilnius (by architects A. and V. Nasvytis, 1965–1968), Laisvės Avenue in Kaunas (by architects A. Paulauskas and V. Paleckienė, 1977–1982) and Vilniaus Street in Šiauliai (by architect V. Taujanskienė, 1976), just to mention a few. It may be considered also a precedent and attempts to develop more humanised and intimate spaces – the cases in Šiauliai and Kaunas were the first implemented pedestrian zones on the entire territory of the former USSR. In many cases, such pedestrian street functioned as an expanded formant of a public space structure incorporating significant objects, structurally connecting separate areas into the whole, which still contained the features of the system. But in the ideological sense, in the second half of the 20th century, the concept of a pedestrian street (or even a zone) appeared rather as the anti-modernist, attribute of classic (traditional) urban structure. First cases in Lithuania provided an opportunity to have a different look at historical parts of towns by emphasizing, although indirectly, their historical and cultural value. Now, we can make an assumption that conditions favourable for appearance and expression of certain post-modernist aesthetic and ideological trends had been formed. The main features of Postmodernism – such as complex whole, space as a value, metaphorical language, exposition of and emphasis on historicist elements, double coding – fitted ideally for a character formation of a vivid pedestrian street. Thus, in the case of Vilniaus Street in Šiauliai, informal space for communication was formed with different points of social attraction and elements-sculptures providing some cultural connotations and aesthetical value to the space. It was one of the first examples of a street as a public space in Lithuania, whe-

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[8] For example, a separate police [militia] post on Lenin's Square or more intense patrolling on such squares.

[9] *"According to the soviet understanding of publicly tolerated activities, sitting on the pavement in the downtown area "doing nothing" was forbidden. Forbidden in a similar way was a number of other free and informal sitting, strolling and talking."* N. Milerius (2009).

re not only buildings but also advertisements designed on purpose, murals and pieces of supergraphics served as the space formants. The image of the space completed with small architecture and sculptural accents approached close to Las Vegas analysis by R. Venturi and Scot-Brown (Venturi *et al.* 1977). In the latter case, the lack of valuable historical context was successfully compensated by a new optimistic narrative of public space. One more, especially important public space of the same period is the Sundial Square in Šiauliai (by architects A. Černiauskas, R. Jurėla and A. Vyšniūnas, sculptor S. Kuzma, 1981–1986). This is a space – memorial of complex urban composition functioning, both, as a part of the public space system and a significant local space connecting the town centre with the neighbouring recreational and memorial territories. This urban public space was used to give a meaning to a number of historical events important to Lithuanian cultural self-consciousness: the Battle of Saule (1236) and the 750th anniversary of Šiauliai. In the semantic sense, the space was formed to reconstruct the historical narrative of the town ruined during the WWII, with the use of archetypal images (a pole, way and gate) and searching for a specific archetypal language of meaning (time, Sun and Sagittarius). Its composition of clear geometry is formed of symbols creating very special *genius loci*: a wayside shrine, sculpture of Sagittarius and the amphitheatre. A set of objects bearing historicist references was used in the design project: the composition of classical sculpture on the column, the wayside shrine with proportions of the Parthenon and

Fig. 1. The first meeting of *Sąjūdis*, 2 July 1988, the Sundial Square in Šiauliai
Source: http://www.grazitumano.lt/wiki/index.php/Šiaulių_Sąjūdžio_ištakos

amphitheatre space. The latter appears as an element of a new type and even a formant of the public space – one of symbols of *civitas*. The archetypal historical purpose of the amphitheatre is a place for public and democratic events. In this case, it is also engaged as informal space for community meetings. It might not be accidental that one of the first Lithuanian *Sąjūdis*[10] meetings in Šiauliai occurred in this particular place (see Fig. 1).

The case of Šiauliai under discussion is special in several aspects. First, as an example of formation of the new type of public space system, partially related to the changing sociocultural situation in Lithuania in the late 1970s, and showing the establishment of a certain urban trend. Second, it is important for its semiological expression to be related to the Postmodernism, which allowed the society to give a new meaning to the town itself, and on the other hand, communicated cultural values and ideas contradicting the dominant socialist ideology. In the most general sense, this example is a vivid illustration not only of the relationship of some particular public spaces and their systems with the sociocultural environment, but also the factors determining the identity of the place, which still remains important nowadays (see Fig. 2).

Several models of public space formation in transitional sociocultural environment

Formation and development of urban public space system is not just an aesthetic-compositional or morphological problem. More often, strategies of its development are determined by socioeconomic or even sociocultural logics but in very rare cases they can be ascribed to urbanism as the area of formation of artistic urban space. There are just a few examples (as in the works by Rob Krier[11]), where the system of public spaces is formed based only on artistic principles of urbanism. Such principles may be basic when we speak about a specific public space in a city; however, they are partially changed when speaking about the system of public spaces nowadays. The history of development of European cities can provide many examples of such systems. They cover objects from urban reconstruction ideas of the early Classicism up to the 19th century Haussmann's renovations of Paris. Even a superficial review of them can prove the aforementioned tendency that under favourable sociocultural and socioeconomic conditions, urban public space system is realised as completed aes-

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[10] The Reform Movement of Lithuania (the late 1980s–early 1990s). Its goal was to seek the restoration of Lithuanian independence.

[11] The authors of the article have in mind the design project for rearrangement of the downtown area in Stuttgart presented in his book *Urban space* (Krier 1979).

The existing distribution
of public and commercial functions
in the system of public spaces
of the city centre

Psychological border
of the city centre

The suggested commercial
and public functions
in the system of public spaces
of the city centre

Functional nodes suggested
for development (a square
with public and commercial
functions). They would have
an impact on emergence
of functions and vitality of
adjacent territories

Fig. 2. The system of public spaces in the centre of Šiauliai. Analysis and proposals by the AEXN architects

thetical–compositional whole in prevalence of strong political and economic ideology. The 19th century renovations of European capitals were possible only because of strong monarchies of the time and the accompanying imperial thinking. But even more important is the fact that a dominant trend in all examples of such renovations is public spaces and their systems. An equally great focus was placed on the infrastructures and renovations of public space systems including main streets, parks, boulevards and city squares. The system of public spaces and its constituent parts (elements) were made relevant and solved according to the understanding and concept of urban public space of an appropriate period as well as requirements raised to such system. Nowadays, such requirements are changed and – although a unanimous concept of urban public space is more or less entrenched in the legal framework with its subsidiary phenomena providing exclusiveness and identity to the system being defined in less dogmatic way – the formation practice of public spaces is often considered an activity of artistic creation. It is dominated by more subjective rather than objective criteria encompassing only a part of the requirements and leaving more freedom even to interpretations of the design task.

In a general case, few more or less clear formation models of urban public spaces and their local systems may be distinguished in a contemporary city. These are: (a) initiative; (b) directive and (c) of mixed type. The first encourages initiative "from the bottom layers (of society)"; the second encompasses planning "from the top"; and the third combines both. In case of the initiative model, local communities are involved

in the formation processes of public spaces with the help of local government institutions to identify the real needs of the place and its community's expectations related to public spaces. Based on "opinion polls" of such local community, further activities may be performed by appropriate professionals regarding the changes of public spaces. European practice can provide a lot of examples of such models, including the *Estonoesunsolar* project carried out by architects Patrizia Di Monte and Ignacio Grávalos[12]. Lithuanian project "vietos.org"[13] (Vilnius) is based on a similar model. In case of the directive model, public spaces are formed on the municipal level carrying out the foreseen in advance and pre-planned municipal activities depending on the resources in possession. The latter aspect usually determines only minimal changes and ways for their implementation, based more on economic rather than public interest criteria. The clearest illustration of this model is the renovation of public spaces in Vilnius centre, which has been reasoned more on the logics of infrastructure and economy rather than the motives or strategy of formation of the unanimous whole. Most often, such directive public space formation activities are very local, without any signs of strategic evaluation. In case of the mixed model, the activities are carried

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[12] See more in: *Celeste.network* [online], [cited 01 July 2013]. Available from Internet: http://www.celesteprize.com/artwork/ido:123687/; *Gravalosdimonte* [online], [cited 01 July 2013]. Available from Internet: http://gravalosdimonte.wordpress.com/

[13] See more in: *Vietos.org* [online], [cited 01 July 2013]. Available from Internet: www.vietos.org
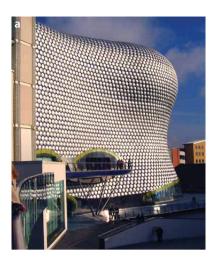
Fig. 3. Examples of urban regeneration in the United Kingdom: a – *Future System Selfridges* building in Birmingham (*Source*: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_City_Plan); b – Newcastle–Gateshead as an example of urban regeneration (*Source*: http://www.rudi.net/node/17796)

out upon real interaction of the two aforementioned types and by equal sharing of initiative. Similar principles were followed in the British *urban regeneration* strategy, where upon the municipal cooperation with local communities and matching different initiatives public spaces were changed and formed as well as the identity and significance of certain places with the help of separate objects. Examples of Newcastle–Gateshead urban regeneration project[14] and *Future System Selfridges* building in Birmingham[15], UK (see Fig. 3) are worth mentioning.

The aforementioned examples show that formation of systems of urban public spaces differs depending on the scope of the problem under analysis and size of the city. Models for carrying out such activities may be selected on individual basis, and activities may be carried out synoptically. Contemporary city applies different models of public space formation by stimulating separate places and generally, by forming the whole. Possible ways of implementation include social stimulation and cooperation and interaction of different social stakeholders in the city (see the illustration). Speaking of the Lithuanian context, signs of all models may be found in different cities/towns, but the country still lacks a systemic approach to the process of urban public space formation. Local activities mainly focus on the result of renovation of a separate public space. Urban public space formation may be a long-term pro-

cess, but as it can be seen in the urban development of the two recent decades in Lithuania, problems of urban public space formation are solved rather ineffectively due to their municipal dependence, and these activities most often are focused on the most important and economically efficient public nodes of the urban tissue. In other areas of cities, beyond the downtown boundaries, no formation or renovation processes of local public spaces can be found. And if any, extremely local activities prevail.

Generalisation

In the most general case, a system of urban public spaces may be defined as an object existent and functioning in the urban tissue of a certain city, comprised of different types of urban public spaces interrelated structurally and functionally. The system may bear different morphological features depending on the geographical position, geo-morphology, size and socioeconomic and sociocultural factors of the city. Most often, such systems are well-developed or evolved in central parts of the city and sub-centres, where social functions and functional nodes are concentrated. Dynamic development models are most often characteristic to the system of urban public spaces, especially when speaking about their work mechanisms and processes.

The issue of formation of the system of urban public spaces cannot be tackled univocally. Nowadays synoptic–individual public space formation activities prevail, where more attention is paid to the most important and economically efficient places of the urban tissue. Different Lithuanian towns present signs of different models of public space formation, but it is noteworthy that Lithuania still lacks a systemic approach to the urban public space formation process. An aspect also

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[14] See more in: *UvA-DARE, the institutional repository of the University of Amsterdam* [online], [cited 01 July 2013]. Available from Internet: http://dare.uva.nl/document/124785

[15] Find more on this subject in: Kennedy, L. 2004, *Remaking Birmingham: the visual culture of urban regeneration.* London: Routledge.; as well as Woods, C. 1994. Local urban regeneration initiatives: Birmingham "Heartlands", *Cities* 11(1): 48–58. Also: *Big City Plan* [online], [cited 01 July 2013 Available from Internet: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_City_Plan.

worth mentioning is a certain transition of an attitude towards the concept of urban public space system and its formation. On the one hand, even if local systems of urban public spaces are seen and formed as the whole, understanding their interrelation and interdependence may change the arsenal of their implementation tools, acting parties and set of criteria. On the other hand, if the formation practice of public space systems in Lithuania can change from the dominant directive to the initiative or mixed model, this could possibly influence some quality changes of urban environment, not only in central parts of cities/towns, but also in residential suburbs. Only after changing attitudes into more systemic formation models of urban public spaces and matching different strategies, any quality changes in public spaces of Lithuanian towns can be expected.

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MIESTO VIEŠŲJŲ ERDVIŲ SISTEMA POSTKOMUNISTINĖJE SOCIOKULTŪRINĖJE APLINKOJE

T. Grunskis, M. Mankus

Santrauka. Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas miesto viešųjų erdvių sistemos klausimas ir aptariama esamą jų padėtis pakitusioje sociokultūrinėje aplinkoje Lietuvoje. Jame aktualizuojama miesto viešųjų erdvių sistemos koncepcijos problema, nagrinėjami ideologiniai viešųjų erdvių formavimo aspektai. Aktualizuojama dabartinė didžiųjų Lietuvos miestų pagrindinių viešųjų erdvių kaitos problema užsitęsusioje postkomunistinėje sociokultūrinėje situacijoje. Sociokultūrnės aplinkos kontekste kaip vienas įdomesnių ir svarbesnių aptariamas Šiaulių miesto viešųjų erdvių plėtros atvejis, kuris susiejamas su ideologine kaita Lietuvoje iki 1990 m. Straipsnyje apžvelgiami pagrindiniai miestų viešųjų erdvių formavimo modeliai ir daromos prielaidos dėl jų galimos įtakos Lietuvos situacijai.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: miesto viešųjų erdvių sistema, postkomunistinis.

TOMAS GRUNSKIS

Architect, PhD, Assoc. Prof., Dept of Architectural Fundamentals and Theory,Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Pylimo g. 26/Trakų g. 1, 01132 Vilnius, Lithuania.
E-mail: grunskis@gmail.com. Web: www.grunskis.net

Publications: author of 58 articles in popular professional and scientific magazines. Research interests: urban morphology and anthropology, urban design and public space formation, interdisciplinary research. Projects: author and co-author of several winning projects in urban design and architecture.

MARTYNAS MANKUS

Master of Architecture, VGTU, 1996. Bachelor of Architecture, VGTU, 1994. E-mail: martynas.mankus@gmail.com

Projects: author or co-author of more than 50 projects of architectural and urban design. Research interests: postmodern architecture, modes of representation.