

## THE PROBLEM OF RESEARCH OF ACTORS OF URBAN CHANGE IN POST SOVIET CITIES – VILNIUS CASE

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**Abstract.** All post soviet capital cities have experienced fast growth and huge transformations in various urban sectors during last decades. Most of these changes are related to changing economic and social structures, which were created during Soviet era and are quite similar in all post soviet countries. This similarity permits to expect some similarities of ongoing processes of change in all such cities. However actual scale and pattern of these changes differ in different countries mostly because of a different location and site factors. One of such factors is different networks of actors of urban change. Possibility to understand and explain spatial processes shaping the space inside the city during last decades depends on understanding the wider context surrounding the city and on the understanding the roles that various actors plays inside it. In many post soviet countries available statistics on urban structure and its transformations is quite limited. The information concerning many factors of urban change is even more unreliable and actual actors shaping the space of many cities remain unrevealed both from society and scientists. This is especially evident in post communist cities. This article deals with the analysis of best possible ways to explore the activity of various actors, which were making influence on development of the city having in mind wider structures, which limited their decisions. Article is based on the example of Vilnius city.

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### Introduction

Most cities have many similarities in their urban structure and many trends of transformations are also quite similar if they evolve in similar time and space. Inevitably actors directly or indirectly involved in city transformation processes can not be entirely different. Therefore studies carried out in any European city inevitable reveal some processes that are common for other cities. Modern urban sciences started to deal with the actors, which are shaping urban space from the beginning of XX century, when Park and Burgess published their classic book "The city" (Park, Burgess, ... 1925), revealing some fundamental processes shaping urban space. Structuralistic and managerialistic approaches in particular, firstly developed by R. Pahl (Pahl, 1970), revealed new kind of forces, shaping our cities. Indeed, it is quite obvious that it would be very difficult to understand the city and transformations of its space not understanding the role of various managers of the city and the importance of structure in which processes are taking place. Many other studies were carried out and many other processes revealed but principally the idea remains the same: there are two main sides of the process of urban change – the choices of various actors of human kind, which tries to implement their goals and the structures, which makes limitations to these choices. The interaction between these two sides defines actual processes of urban transformation in any city (Hall, 1999). This principle scheme is the same in every city and so most tendencies and regularities established by numerous researches are true to the certain extent for most cities. But every city is unique in the sense of its structure (both spatial and social) and in its location, so not withstanding that the main principles of change or main

forces of change are quite similar, the actual actors of change and of course actual spatial outcomes are different.

Urban structure in most post communist cities was at least to some extent created under similar circumstances and must have similarities. So processes ongoing in different post-communist cities, notwithstanding how different they are, tend to have at least some similar background.

Vilnius, as a capital city of EU member state, presents a quite unique field for geographical researches. This uniqueness derives both from its historical and geographical features. City, which is located in transitional zone of Western and Eastern European civilisations, experienced plenty of political, economic and social changes, all of which left noticeable marks on its physical and social structure. Such complicated history, which of course is very much related to its geographical location, used to form quite complex societies, which created and still create very different spaces. The ability to understand these processes of creation directly depends on knowledge of the city and cannot be achieved purely by the use of statistical information, which, on the other hand, is quite poor in this field. The question, what schemes and methods of study of this and similar cities are the best ones, is of major importance, because usual positivistic approaches based on “reliable” data very often cannot be useful in these circumstances. Representation of the city is quite complicated, when one seeks not only to describe studied phenomena (what also is not always an easy task) but tries to reveal main actors shaping these phenomena as well. The aim of this article is mostly related to finding the best possible ways of analysis of actor networks, which makes decisive impact on actual processes of transformations of urban space in post communist cities.

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## 1. Methodology

One of more general tasks of this paper is to discuss possible ways or methods to analyse city transformation processes in general and influence of different actors of urban change in particular. So there is no need for detail analysis and argumentation of used methods in order to prove reliability of received results. Author did not carry out any data analysis or other similar empirical studies. On the contrary – it is an attempt to look at the possible ways to study hidden, “uncounted” processes of urban change in post-communist cities concentrating on the capital city of Lithuania – Vilnius. Author does not try to argue that usual research methods or discourses based on mimetic representations are worse or better research methods, though they were highly criticised in post modern social science for their “search for truth” (Dunkan and Ley, 1993; Rorty 1991). Though post-positivistic approaches, in many cases related to work of French linguistic theorists (Derrida, 1978, 1981), slowly percolated into geographical thinking, finally questions of representation have taken their place in early 90-ies (Hamnet, 1996). Most of them in fact were first of all critical appraisal towards traditional research methods but they had very little to offer instead. The alternative approaches, such as constructivism in social science, also starts from the critique of old traditional mimetic approaches but they are based on hermeneutics. The social world is not material objective reality. It is inter-subjective, it is socially constructed by the acts of actors (Berger and Luckman, 1966). The researcher or interpreter can't avoid being subjective and therefore the perfect copy of the world is not possible. However the involvement in research processes, direct participation can help to make proper interpretation of these processes.

Traditional lagging behind of peripheral regions is common for various social phenomena and social science is not an exception. The majority of researches carried out in post-communist states are still mostly based on traditional positivistic methods, which mostly

rely on objective empirical analysis of reliable data. The role of interpreter is usually not under discussion. As it was stated earlier, author does not try to argue that these methods are irrational or unreliable. There simply is not always possible to use traditional positivistic approaches for illustration and explanation of spatial processes in urban environment and especially in post-communist cities, when changes are fast but information illustrating these changes is very poor and unreliable.

The ontology of the notion “post-communist city” is another important methodological question here, cause the use of it supposes that such cities are somehow different from other cities and this uniqueness makes influence on processes taking place there and consequently on best ways of researching of these processes. Using it, presumes that some general regularities common for all post-communist cities could be established. This is of course an assumption, which is to be proven. First of all it should be stated, that the actors of urban change, whoever they might be, take their actions in the urban space don't bother about doing it in post or not post communist space. This means that the simple knowledge of the fact that they act in post-communist city, does not make serious impact on behaviour of various actors of urban change. The impact of communist heritage on the development of the city should be made in other ways but not through consciousness of “actors”. Then there is no necessity to analyse what meaning the notion “post-communist city” has for those involved in urban change processes. It's the task of those who are involved in research to define the meaning of this concept if it is agreed that it has some explanatory power. Perhaps it would be important to argument if it had such power at all and then to agree what it precisely means. The concept “post-communist” is widely used in various social sciences. Number and variety of highly rated scientific journals or books on post-communist economy, post-communist culture, post-communist world, etc. is quite big, so it would be irrational to argue about the importance of post-communist phenomena (e.g, phenomena, which exists due to previous existence of communist regime) on various parts of social life at present. The studies on post-soviet cities are not so “popular” as it was stated during Tartu workshop (Jauhiainen, 2009), held under international academic network on Post-communist Urban Geographies (<http://citiesaftertransition.webnode.cz>). However, if such phenomena as post-soviet society, economy, world, culture exist, it would be logical to expect that there should be also a “post-communist city”, the place where all these things come together, and act together. The post-communist city then could be defined as a space, where various social phenomena evolve in the structures, which were to some noticeable extent formed by the soviet regime. The precise meaning of this concept is highly subjective but it is also inter-subjective. Obviously everybody has its own understanding what exactly is post-communist city but this understanding derives also from collective knowledge and experience. So it wouldn't be irrational to state that at least to some extent the meaning of this notion is similar for most of us. Then does this meaning permit us to state, that cities with such characteristics has some uniqueness, some similarity, that some processes evolve differently here and has different spatial outcomes? Author of this paper states, that they do, cause every spatial process depends on at least two sides and both of them were influenced by soviet system and evolved differently in soviet system and in western democratic countries. Both – actors taking part in processes and structures limiting their choices are product of history, and it is substantially different on different sides of “iron curtain”. Then the interaction between actors and structures should be different as well as spatial outcomes of this interaction.

There is no need to argue, that cities are on the constant change and post-communist cities are certainly not an exception. 20 years of development in democratic capitalistic society should have diminished differences of various social processes taking place inside these cities (comparing with those, taking place in old democracies), but it would also be irrational to state that now under more or less similar democratic environment everything evolved similarly everywhere in Europe. Majority of members of society in post-commu-

nist countries was educated or even made career during soviet times and inevitable was influenced by the different value systems, attitudes and behavioural patterns. And absolute majority of those in power now, were quite influential in that period or at least were educated in soviet education system too. So actors, which are involved in urban transformation processes have been influenced by the soviet system at least to some extent and this simply must have influence on their behaviour at present. Summarising - societies in post-communist cities are different from those in Western Europe. "The playground" in with actors play their games, also is different. The urban structure (a physical one) is a product of history and major part of any metropolitan post-communist city, as a rule, was formed during Soviet times, when rapid urbanisation had been taking place. These areas were planned and constructed for "socialistic" residents and society. And these physical structures changes slower than the society itself, so working like a "burden" of some kind.

The common process of transformation from communist to democratic society, the process of disappearance of main economic and social differences between former communist and democratic societies, tend to create similar spatial processes in all post-soviet cities, e.g. rapid suburbanisation, development of office centres, retailing and entertainment space creation, deindustrialisation (not an exceptional feature of post-communist cities, but its time is) and etc. However one should admit, that being post-communist, does not mean that everything is the same in these cities. This is just one similarity, which makes influence everywhere in the post-communist space. However many other local factors could be and often are different, so final outcomes of transformation and development processes should be different in every city. So using term post-communist or post-soviet city, author tries to stress common history, which formed distinctive societies and spaces. Common features are making quite similar influence on the development of such a city everywhere in post-soviet space, but this does not mean that the actual processes shaping cities at present are similar everywhere. However, at least partly, understanding actor networks, which are changing our cities at present, is impossible without paying attention to communist past. This influence is diminishing but still will be felt for decades, though perhaps influence of other factors, not related to the communist past (like ongoing economic crisis, globalisation, landscape features, growing environmentalism and other traditions, etc.) could have greater importance on present processes.

## **2. Keeping in mind wider context of urban transformations in post-communist cities**

Most geographic studies pay very great attention to the context in which analysed processes are taking place. In fact one of the main exceptional features of geography is its emphasis on the context. Various phenomena studied in geographical researches are also an object of studies of other disciplines, whereas geography should see them in the time-space continuum emphasising interconnectedness of all processes and space. Such a holistic approach is the most appropriate in geography and contextual theory, developed by Swedish geographer T. Hagerstrand (Hagerstrand, 1970).

The understanding of actors or actor networks that are involved in urban transformation processes can not be achieved if one losses context in which these actors are "playing". The general socio-cultural frame in which "the game" is taking place defines the rules of "the game" and of course the final results. That is why the analysis of actors shaping the space of the city, should start from the analysis of its position in the wider regions. Post-communist cities of Central Europe have similarities in this sense, cause all of them are located in transitional zone, which is influenced by at least two cultural civilisations. From that point of view, Vilnius is quite an exceptional city, because it is located right in the middle of such transition zone. Two main cultural centres or namely civilisations used to make major impact on the development of Central European regions and finally formed two major wes-

tern and eastern Europeans cultural regions (not mentioning south-east Europe, which was also strongly influenced by Muslim culture). At present, formally rather strict line, separating dominant areas of these cultures, is an eastern boundary of EU. Lithuania, being located in the centre of Europe, appeared right in the centre of “battle” field of these two “forces” and consequently in the periphery of both cultural regions. Though, perhaps purely incidentally, the influence from the west dominates, the impact of Eastern European civilisation can always be felt here too. In fact one could call Vilnius the capital of the most peripheral central region in Europe (at present the city lays only in 20 km from the state border with Belarus and its most closely to Eastern EU border located EU capital). Other peripheral regions are located on the edges of the continent. Such situation has made huge impact on the societies that occupied the city, urban structures, which were created by these societies and consequently on the actor networks, which used to shape and still are shaping the space of the city. Due to this location the choices, which are made by various residents of the city and various groups of interests are different from those in other cities as are the structures that limit these choices.

Though from the first sight for an ordinary visitor Vilnius would not seem to be very multicultural city (for example racial differences of its residents are very small) but in fact, it was never throughout the centuries dominated by a single ethnical or religion group. This is not a proper place to discuss complicated history of the city but one analysing its spaces should have in mind this context, which has always shaped and still is shaping the space of the city. Other post-communist cities of Central Europe also to some extent have similar situation (simple fact that they are “post-communist”, reveal influence of East European civilisation).

The mixture of eastern and western European cultures is evident everywhere in Vilnius both in its historical and modern parts. This mosaic wouldn't be complete without mentioning the influence from Jewish and in lesser scale Muslim cultures, which lasted for around 6 centuries. Different groups have different priorities and try to produce different spaces, though quite similar constrains often reduces these differences in practice. Understanding this mutual dependence between actors and space or structures, which limits their choices, is always of major importance in geographical researches. One can't understand processes ignoring space and vice versus, though it is quite common even to geographers to loose this focus in their representations. This need to escape from the dualism, which almost always exists, when one analysis human activities or structures, which make influence on them, separately, was the main goal of structuration theory, developed originally by T. Giddens (Giddens, 1979). Later geographer D. Gregory emphasised that this is the most appropriate approach, when social systems are seen together as milieu and as a consequence of activities, which form them. (Gregory, 1987). This is important both analysing phenomena at wider scale (for example the city as a part of wider region) and researching phenomena inside the city (actor networks, that shape the space of the city in this case).

Such a clash of these two cultures in the central Europe made remarkable footprints in Vilnius landscape, when different parts of the city have different dominant features. Middle ages created the downtown of the city, where western European landscape dominate. The second major part – “Newtown” was formed during the Russian empire period mainly in XIX century and is dominated by the structures, styles and forms common for the Russian empire. The third major part of the city – Soviet areas. The growth of the city was fastest during that era and consequently vast territories of boring soviet towers of blocks dominate here as in majority of post-soviet cities. This soviet city still composes the biggest part of Vilnius (and it is not an exception from other post-communist cities). In most cases this means wide areas of many-storey blocks, vast industrial areas, week suburbanisation, lack of service sector developments, etc. Present transformation processes, evolve in these soviet spaces and should “fight” with this soviet heritage and results of this fight depends on both sides. For example soviet residential “microregions” were planned so, that there simple is no spaces for small service business and consequently it does not appear there in many cases (local pubs, small shops etc.). This has even further impact on whole society,



cause prevents of formation of middle class in such countries. It would be silly to argue that soviet physical heritage does not make impact on spatial processes at present.

The forth, the newest part of the city, was formed during last 2 decades of deep economic depressions and fast growths. City gained structures common for western civilization – dominating centre and suburbs. Commercial, entertainment centres appeared instead of manufactures or derelict areas in the central parts of the city. On the other hand, chaotic style, infill developments, lack of planning and social infrastructure is more common for post-soviet Russian cities than for west European ones. Though these four parts can be easily distinguished by the eyes of sophisticated visitor of Vilnius city, none of them has been developed separately, without influence from other periods. Always elder parts were somehow influenced by newer period and new areas develop on the spaces that were to some extent influenced by the processes, which have been taking place earlier. So present processes in all post-communist cities take place on the background, which was formed or influenced by the Soviet system, which actually is a product of East-European civilisation.

Though its is very important to understand that the historic heritage makes very big influence on the conditions of urban transformations at present day, sometimes is even more important to understand how this heritage influences actual actors that make decisions on present urban developments. The biggest part of the formal territory of the city was formed during soviet period as well as “fundamentals” of present actor networks. As it was mentioned earlier, many influential persons have been educated during Soviet times and many of those now in power used to have strong positions during Soviet era too. The behaviour of such persons and groups of persons inevitably should be influenced by their world-view and their value systems. The newest period, which lasts almost two decades gave new opportunities and “free hands” for these actors as well as introduced new ones, quite often from abroad. This situation finally should have formed multicultural actor networks, where different actors have quite a different cultural background, values, goals and consequently take different and often quite unclear actions. As a consequence, a huge variety of projects have been implemented in the city and not all of them made positive impact on the city and its image. And lot of projects, which are necessary but unprofitable or potentially too profitable, weren't implemented (like improvements of network of education infrastructure, which has still soviet spatial pattern or the case of national stadium, construction of which was once again halted).

The long lasting multiculturalism is a one dominant feature, which was shaping Vilnius and many other central European post-communist cities and creating specific actor networks throughout the ages. Their location inside the area of clash of European civilisations is responsible for this. Another similar force, which was always shaping the processes inside this and many other central European cities, is their location in periphery. The encyclopaedia Encarta describes a peripheral region as a territory located outside boundaries of economic centre, which is dominating territory in the country (Encarta.msn.com). Such popular definition and understanding is most widespread. The concept of periphery is often linked to the dependence from the centre – centre creates and periphery accepts. Consequence of such relations – permanent conservativeness, lagging behind, slow development, passiveness, closeness. It's unimportant marginal zone of transition – bad place to live and do business, though sometimes periphery is even romanticized and becomes a cultural category. On the other hand features of traditional culture survive in the periphery, while centre looses them and periphery of traditional culture appears. A researcher trying to develop representations of the city must have in mind this context.

The fact, which always used to make influence on Vilnius, is its location in the periphery of the Europe or in fact in the peripheries of two “Europes”. This central and together peripheral location inevitably made big influence on whole surrounding region, which stretches far beyond the boundaries of Lithuania. It's a very high probability that a big trans-national problem region appeared due to such location. The eastern parts of Lithuania, Latvia, north-eastern Poland, and western Belarus together forms big problem region,

with slow economy, high mortality rates, low density of population, slower growth of GDP and etc. Perhaps such a location in periphery is a reason why huge spaces of cultural and natural heritage were preserved in the city, while they were demolished in many other European cities. There were simply no need for fast changes – city grew wider, while inner transformations were small. So peripheral location, together with its physical features are most important reasons, why Vilnius became perhaps the greenest European capital city.

Its peripheral location is a reason, why many cultural processes, making huge impact on the development of the space of the city, used to reach Vilnius later than many other cities. Almost all architectural styles came here with a substantial delay, the same as city planning ideology. At present, when the world becomes much smaller place, this delay is not so evident, but it can be easily spotted even in such areas like social science.

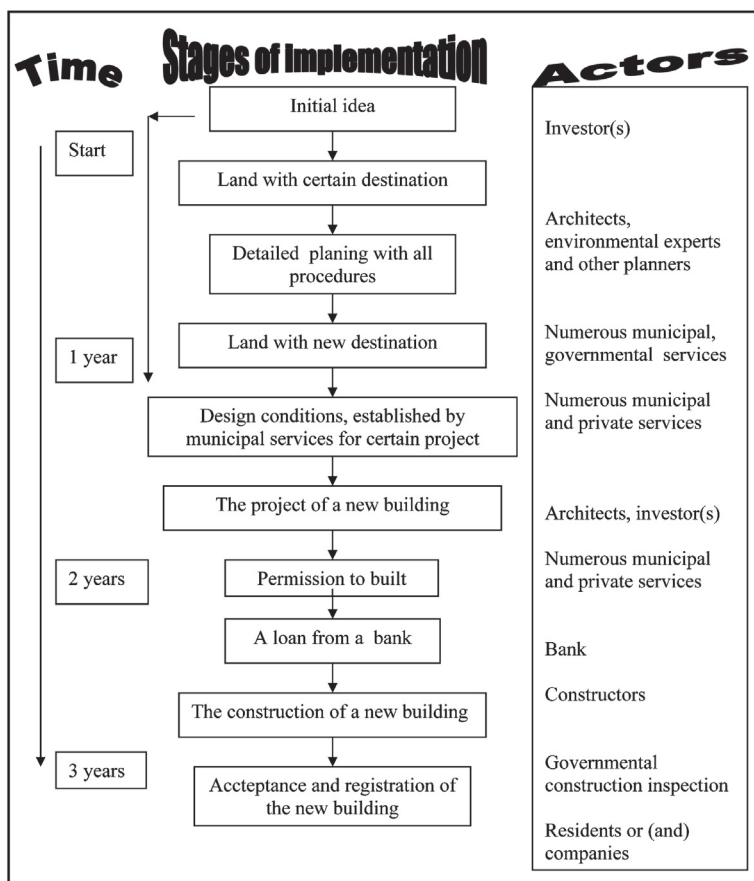
Notwithstanding new geopolitical, economic and even cultural processes, which started after collapse of Soviet Union, the main geographical features of location of Vilnius, as well as many other post-communist cities in central Europe remains almost the same. Its located in the middle of transition zone between West European and East European civilisations. This transitional location marks and determines development of such post-communist cities throughout the centuries making the inevitable impact on their inner structure in various ways.

All these major processes of higher scale permit to create just a quite generalised picture of the development of the spatial processes inside city. It connects major cultural context, “major structure” and the main trends of city development and permits to create only very generalised representation of the city. One, trying to understand more precise phenomena such as actual actors shaping the city needs to go into more detailed scale (though keeping in mind these “macro” forces).

### **3. Making representations of actor networks of urban change in Vilnius**

As it was stated earlier, classical positivistic approaches are not fully suitable for researching phenomena taking place in such cities as Vilnius, at least for the reason, that there is no reliable information about inner diversity of the city. There are no data illustrating spatial pattern of cultural and social variety of the city. There is no data about differences of income between citizens in different parts of the city. Data about ethnic mosaic in the city doesn't exist also. Making very sincere efforts authors were able to receive only information about permissions for construction of new buildings in different districts of the city but this information also is not widely available. This could help understand where main changes in the city are taking place but could only very little help to explain them or to find out who are responsible for these changes, which actors play decisive roles (Burneika, 2008).

Formal actors that participate at city creation process are quite obvious and whole city space creation process looks quite simple. As everywhere, it starts from the need of residents and companies to have the space to live or to work. As everywhere these needs are influenced by the financial possibilities of these subjects and this defines their final choices. Private and other investors try to satisfy these choices and needs. These actors try to build new or transform old buildings and other necessary infrastructure so actually causing transformations of city space. Then city authorities try to regulate all this throughout the planning of city space and various other limitation-allowance procedures. Creation of general plan or other visionary strategies of the city marks general context of all inner processes. As everywhere the city government officials also act as an investors and changers of the city space planning and implementing various investment projects in public and other spaces trying to satisfy needs of its citizens and create a positive image of the city. Though actual procedures of construction of new buildings and reconstruction of old ones are quite complicated (fig. 1), a lot of procedures and responsible persons are involved and take a long time but actually it not permits to avoid bad decisions. The figure is based on authors' interview with persons working in department of Urban development of Vilnius municipality and existing legislation.



**Fig. 1.** Simplified scheme of official procedures for implementation of real estate investment project in Vilnius

Actual processes of city governance and its space are still quite unclear and there are very few theories attempting to explain it. Regime theories (Stokker 1995) and Growth coalition theories (Cox and Mair, 1988; Hall and Hubbard 1996; Thomas 1994) presents an example of such attempts. Though these theories concentrate on slightly different aspects of city creation process both of them agrees that power to rule and consequently power to implement changes is fragmented in the city so various groups should act together in order to achieve their goals (especially regime theories). The discussions with municipal officers, analysis of media sources permits to make an assumption that one could find examples of phenomena described in these theories in Vilnius city as well (some kind of pro-growth coalitions between city government and property developers could have been spotted during years of fast economic and urban growth). However these examples seem to be more an exception than the rule. More likely various agents of city change act separately, forming uncertain networks for specific cases (in order to facilitate some profitable development, to make it even more profitable or to stop some inconvenient project). The problem of governing of post-communist cities was not intensively analysed in geographical or other related scientific literature. Martin Horak described situation in Prague (Horak, 2007), mostly concentrating on analysis of two cases – development of transport infrastructure and preservation of city centre. The research, based on interview with various actors involved in these processes, revealed a various factors determining policy formation and decision making process (such as policy of profit, influence of public opinion or inherited images), which



clearly are common for other post-communist cities as well. The establishment of precise actor networks, involved in city creation processes, wasn't the task of the book.

Even good knowledge of all procedures does not help to understand why such a bad examples of city development projects took place in the city and how finally all actual processes of city creation were working. The best way to track these processes, from the point of view of author, is to employ actor network approach combined with the case-study approach. The latter becomes more and more popular in geography since the end of XX century. Social scientist B. Flyvbjerg considers that case studies useful both for empirical and theoretical sciences (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Finish geographer J. Jauhiainen demonstrated its suitability for tracing actor networks in Baltic Sea region (Jauhiainen, 2007). Authors of this article considers that this kind of method is especially effective in the times of such crisis, which are taking place at present. Bankrupts, problems in banking and construction sectors receive great attention from the media and a lot of otherwise hidden actors, which are involved both in city creation and consumption, could be revealed. Roles that these actors play also often become evident. Representation, as state J. Jauhiainen (Jauhiainen, 2007) is about networks, how humans and non humans come together as hybrids in networks. Trying to stress the importance of both types of these actors, their combination sometimes is called "actants" (Latour, 2005). In fact its one could expect that space creation processes would be understood much more correctly if one does not exclude from them such objects as buildings, money, equipments, machinery or elements of landscape. Most important for a researcher is to "open" these networks so that these "actants" would be visible. There are no doubts that such an approach has its limitations and narrowness but in some cases it helps to reveal phenomena that otherwise would be invisible. Author presents few examples of such openings, which permit to reveal actors and processes otherwise hidden from the eyes of scientist.

A part of an old residential building in the downtown of Vilnius collapsed in 2005. Later appeared that this happened because of another company, which was building a new residential house nearby.

All the mess that started afterwards presented a good opportunity for a researcher to draw a picture illustrating complexity of city creation processes. It become clear who gave a permission for a new building in protected downtown area, who invested money, what role legal institutions play here (deciding who is guilty and who will have to pay for the damage), the role of insurance companies in city development business, how can geologists help to establish who is guilty, how people can or cannot protect their interests concerning new developments near their homes, how the loan was received and even what probable profit the company would have had if the project was successfully fulfilled. The final agreement concerning compensation for residents of collapsed building was reached only at the end of 2009, when the responsibility of constructors was approved at the court.

A quite similar situation appeared due to the crisis in real estate market. The huge demand for residential property raised the volumes of construction very high, cause this was the most profitable investment area. However it wasn't completely evident why these new development received such a particular spatial characteristics. For example the most densely many-storey buildings were constructed on the edge of the city (fig. 2).

One wouldn't expect that ordinary people preferred to live in such new buildings of a poor quality on the outskirts of the city, when the prices of older ones located closer to the centre were similar. When the system of making fast profit started to collapse, and banks started to suffer from bad loans it appeared, what was the role of city managers, as they were called by R. Pahl (Pahl, 1970) in these processes. Banks, trying to earn as much money as possible, created a rules, permitting to receive a loan up to 95 % of flats price if it is a newly built house. If it's an old building (notwithstanding that quality of these buildings was higher in many cases) you could only expect 70% loan. Very seldom a young family, which presented the biggest segment in the market, could find some 40 thousands euro, so they had to buy a cheap new one. So the system of fast construction on a cheap land at the edge, loaning of big loans, selling of poor quality houses and further construction was created.

This raised prices so fast that the investment in construction was much more profitable than in other economic sectors. This finally slowed readjustment of economy and development of other sectors and caused much deeper economic depression that it probably should have been. The city planners gave permission for this type of developments though probability that these areas very soon will become a zone of social exclusion is very high. Well, who holds money, holds power and one may state that these developments are standing evidence of uneven distribution of power in the city. Anyway, it is evident that at least in some cases not a demand or preferences of population is driving force determining spatial structure of transformation of city space but supply side factors. In this case these are managers that hold one or another kind of power in a certain city.



**Fig. 2.** New dense residential developments on the edge of the city – an outcome of activity of various managers of the city instead of preferences of buyers

The demolition of old swimming arena and construction of new residential buildings in or near territory of old Jewish cemetery, which was closed a few centuries ago and completely destroyed in Soviet period, presents a good opportunity to exam the internationalisation of actor networks. The area was designed during soviet time establishing various open spaces and sporting facilities, which are not in use for several last years). The very central location makes it very attractive for investment and attempts to build new buildings there, finally appeared to be successful in small scale. Normally this wouldn't be an exceptional case and process of development would have gone further. It would not raise a lot of attention from the media and hidden processes behind these developments would not come to daylight if it weren't an old Jewish cemetery. This time it created a big problem of ethical kind and consequently actor networks of international scale evolved. The various Jewish organisations from Israel and Congress of USA were involved in this event trying to preserve old cemetery from new constructions. Finally the decision to legitimate all existing new buildings (apparently constructed partly illegally) and prevent all future constructions was agreed. Obviously the decision to "close" such an attractive place for investments wouldn't be achieved without actors from different, quite influential countries.

None of these networks and processes could be found in usual statistical data. Even most evident changes in the city could be easier noticed simply going with camera through it than analysing cold statistical figures even if they existed. Simple visit to Vilnius central market place gives better understanding of variety of cultures in the city and surrounding region than long work behind your computer or with statistical books, though, of course, in some cases this is more effective method of research. One could very seldom expect to meet an ordinary elder women or man without any higher education speaking fluently in three different languages as most of sellers of Vilnius market place do. Very often they can't tell exactly, which one of these languages is their native, but this only once again illustrates the actual spirit of the city.

## Conclusions

All post-communist cities – their physical structure and societies, which inhabit them, were inevitably influenced by their similar soviet history and at least to some extent have to have similarities in their present urban processes. In many cases actors, which are involved in city change process and urban transformation processes themselves are relatively new, fast changing and hidden from the eyes of researches due to lack of reliable information. Usual positivistic methods are not suitable for the analysis of ongoing process as well as their causes.

There are many ways to create representations of the city, but its inner diversity often could be best understood using actor network and case study approaches having in mind the complex context in which studied phenomena are taking place. The location of the city in peripheral zone of several civilisations makes both negative and positive impacts on its development cause beside of lagging behind it helps to create interesting variety of spaces, preserve natural and cultural heritage. The location of the city creates multicultural society and is responsible for complicated history, what creates variety of various structures and phenomena in the city. Actual processes shaping the city at present depend on structures, which exists throughout the ages. These structures were very much influenced by the Soviet history in post-communist cities.

One, trying to research these phenomena, should take into account not only context in which they are taking place but also all human and non-human actors involved. The best way to notice complexity of these networks or “to open” them is to involve oneself in them, to participate as a actor of the network. When it is not possible to employ usual techniques, case study approach is the best one, especially when things are starting not to go in their ordinary ways.

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## POST-SOVIETINIUS MIESTUS KEIČIANČIŲ VEIKĖJŲ TYRIMO PROBLEMA – VILNIAUS PAVYZDŽIU

### Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama post-komunistinių miestų erdvės pokyčių tyrimo problema, koncentruojant dėmesį į miestus keičiančių veikėjų analizės ypatumus. Pagrindinis straipsnio tikslas yra pasiūlyti tokių veikėjų tyrimo metodus, geriausiai tinkančius post-komunistiniams miestams. Straipsnis remiasi Vilniaus miesto pavyzdžiu. Nagrinėta Vilniaus miesto plėtros tyrimų metodikos, kuri leistų objektyviai ne tik įvertinti miesto plėtrą bet ir jos veiksnius, problema

Nors akivaizdu, kad kiekvienas miestas unikalus, tačiau post-sovietiniai miestai neišvengiamai turi bendrų bruožų, o todėl dalis juose vykstančių procesų taip pat turės panašumų. Svarbiausi tokių miestų panašumai, darę ir tebedarantys įtaką miesto erdvės kaitos procesams, yra susiję su bendra istorija, kuri suformavo panašias erdves ir visuomenes bei su periferine padėtimi, kuri stabdo įvairių procesų paplitimą, bet kartu dažnai leidžia išsaugoti unikalų kultūrinį ir gamtinį pagrindą. Miestuose vykstančių tyrimų analizė turėtų prasidėti nuo makro lygmens, kad tyrėjai nepamirštų bendrojo konteksto įtakos jų raidai. Detalesnė „mikro“ lygmens analizė leistų pastebėti konkrečius miesto erdvę keičiančius veikėjus ir veiksnius. Miestų plėtros tyrimai negali remtis vien objektyvia statistine informacija, jau vien todėl, kad jos labai trūksta ir daugelis procesų ir ypatingai jų veiksmų liktų neatskleista. Post-pozityvistinių metodų naudojimas leidžia pastebėti ir įvertinti tuos procesus, kurie nepastebimi įprastais metodais. Etaloninio tyrimo bei veikėjų tinklo principais besiremiančios studijos gali padėti atskleisti tuos reiškinio aspektus bei veiksnius, kurie antraip lieka nežinomi. Tokie metodai ypač naudingi įvairių krizių bei staigių pokyčių momentais, kai įprasta įvykių tėkmė sutrinka ir jie pritraukia žiniasklaidos, piliečių bei politikų dėmesį