

Communicative Proactivity in Architectural Initiatives Supported by the Lithuanian Council for Culture

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Abstract. The paper aims to highlight the need, distinctive features and problematic issues of cultural and communicative activities in architecture field by using a case study of the projects in architecture funded by the *Lithuanian Council for Culture* (LCC). The identification of the problems in supporting non-commercial initiatives in architecture since 2014 up to 2020 is the scope of this paper, which is developed using an analytical descriptive approach. The analysis covers scientific and professional literature, legal documents, recommendations of professional architectural organisations, information from the LCC and semi-structured interviews with 7 experts. Problems regarding the funding of projects in architecture by the LCC are identified by using statistical information from the LCC database and the dissatisfaction/satisfaction with LCC activities, project approval for funding, general issues of cultural policy expressed in interviews, and by looking for correlations between them. Analysis of the statistics of project funding reveals several problems. Funding for the projects in architecture field is particularly low, compared to the projects in other fields of culture and art. Geographical distribution of architectural projects is uneven, as majority of projects were submitted by applicants from Vilnius. Funding is mostly allocated to institutions with experience, established groups of participants and time-tested ways of operation; non-standard, breakthrough initiatives are rarely supported.

The article states that problems related to the dominance of the narrowed concept of architecture, to the lack of cultural communication, and to the modest public knowledge of architecture lead to the devaluation of architecture and, consequently, to the diminishing of the quality, diversity and long-term cultural value of the surrounding environment. Architectural education of society would be the most effective way to address these problems. It is important to grow everyday users, politicians, investors, developers, activists, and preservers of local heritage able to understand and critically evaluate architecture. In order to increase the cultural significance and importance of architecture for society, architecture practitioners and theoreticians should be encouraged to make the most effective use of the opportunities offered by the LCC. Activities to be funded should be selected by the potential long-term value of their results and their impact on the public and/or the professional community. In order to balance the geographical distribution, revisions to the list of evaluation criteria and their weight should increase access to support for activities in regions, for ambitious early applicants and for innovative, out-of-the-box undertakings.

Keywords: architectural communication, cultural activities in architecture, architectural education of society, financial support for culture, Arts Council

Introduction

In recent years, European architectural policy has gained acceleration towards comprehensive, culture-centred approach and high-quality architecture. The steady movement represented by awards promoting the quality of contemporary European architecture and by a range of EU initiatives has been recently marked by a breakthrough in the notion of a high-quality environment as declared in the *Davos Declaration* [9] and its accompanying documents [7], and *New European Bauhaus* [8] movement.

The lack of cultural communication, social involvement, cooperation and education between the professional community of architects and society is a persistent and acute problem both in Lithuania and other European countries. This has a negative impact in a few directions. Rather than being treated as a cultural and artistic field, architecture is considered as a part of the construction sector with cultural contribution of architecture being overshadowed by

its design production. Despite the social, economic, cultural significance of architecture and its daily exposure, the public is not aware of architectural processes and their results, and consequently of their importance and impact, thereby often failing to seek quality. The devaluation of architecture affects the quality, diversity and long-term cultural value of the surrounding environment, its change and development. The *Lithuanian Council for Culture* (hereinafter referred to as LCC) established in 2013 tries to address these challenges by funding cultural activities in architecture. The targeted funding is directed towards non-commercial actions that have no direct relations with architectural design and are focused on cultural development being not funded or underfunded by other sources.

The identification and causality of the problems of support of non-commercial initiatives in architecture is the research area of this paper. The article deals with the projects in architecture

supported by the LCC that are considered as a way and a tool to ensure the cultural dissemination and to address communication challenges in the broad field of architecture. The aim of the paper is to highlight the need, distinctive features and problematic issues of cultural and communicative activities in architecture field by using a case study of the projects in architecture funded by the LCC. The period analysed covers the timespan from the start of project funding in 2014 to the start of a pandemic in spring of 2020, which disrupted the usual procedures. The paper is developed using an analytical descriptive approach. The analysis covered scientific and professional literature, legal documents, provisions and recommendations of professional architectural organisations, information from the LCC: funding statistics [15] and a summary of the initiators of projects demonstrating the ratio of the funds requested to the funds received from the LCC provided on the official website www.ltkk.lt, and semi-structured interviews with 7 (seven) experts. The semi-structured expert interviews were carried out with a selected group of respondents (4 persons from Kaunas and 3 persons from Vilnius; 3 men and 4 women; representing different creative generations, having many years of experience in cooperation with the LCC both participating in the calls of institutions and implementing the funded projects in architecture field). In the text of the article, the respondents are coded in consecutive order, with the abbreviation of their city of operation (Vilnius or Kaunas) and their gender (male and female). The answers of the respondents were analysed and interpreted without changing the opinions and positions expressed by the respondents. The interviews were written and/or oral. To address the need for cultural and communication activities in architecture field, and the reasons for their lack of scientific literature, legal documents and the attitudes of professional organisations of architects were investigated. Problems regarding the funding of projects in architecture by the LCC were identified by using statistical information from the LCC database and the dissatisfaction/satisfaction with LCC activities, project approval for funding, general issues of cultural policy expressed in interviews, and by looking for correlations between them.

In the XX century, the governments took over the distribution of public funds for the arts and culture from wealthy patrons. According to the list provided by the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), in part of European countries, the funding of the arts and culture is handled by the national Arts Councils, in the other part by the ministries responsible for the field of culture [27]. National Arts (Culture) Councils are government non-profit organisations

dedicated to promoting the arts and culture through the provision of grants or other forms of financial assistance to individual artists and arts organisations. They often operate in a semi-autonomous way at arms-length from the government to prevent political interference in their decisions. This conceptual model was adopted from funding academic research and applied to arts funding by the economist J. M. Keynes, who established the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1946 [29]. At a similar time or later, national Arts Councils were established in other European countries, such as Switzerland, Ireland, Nordic countries, and others. Speaking of the closest neighbours of Lithuania, the practice in Estonia and Latvia is based on their cultural policy. The Ministries of Culture provide support to the development of the architectural sector by granting State funds. The Ministry of Culture also supports the participation of Latvia in the international Venice Architecture Biennale, the organization of the process of the Latvian Architecture Awards, and other activities. The practice in Poland is quite different: heritage architecture is considered part of the cultural field, while contemporary architecture is determined to be within the responsibilities of the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology [17].

The literature analysis reveals several questions that have been raised concerning national Arts Councils' priorities for arts support policy, such as consumerist and mediating approach towards art acknowledged as an 'industry' [11]; instrumental cultural policies that stress the measurement of public value in clear and quantifiable ways and a short-term solution to adopt 'impact' as a short-cut for 'value' [4, p. 106]; "a common pressure on national organizations to consider "the local" and to develop place-based approaches as a priority" [6, p. 325]. National Arts Councils redefine "their roles beyond that of determining the beneficiaries of government funds, to that of agencies developing creative practice, promoting organisational growth and stimulating arts audiences" [1, p. 9]. Although many studies have analysed the funding activities of the Arts Councils in the national context [1, 4, 6, 17], regrettably, no analysis of the funding of the field of architecture by national Arts and Culture Councils, nor the activities of the LCC, has been found in the scientific literature. These underexplored fields are the preconditions for the novelty of this study.

Preconditions for the lack of significant communication and cultural contribution

According to Architects' Council of Europe, architecture is the only one of the arts that everyone needs as it provides a physical shelter for all human activities; ironically, it is the one that is least known

to the public [25]. Despite the social exposure and economic importance of the built environment, the significance of architecture as a cultural and artistic field is poorly recognised by society, whereas the architecture professionals feel unacknowledged. The cultural and artistic background of architecture is often overlooked in legal, administrative, evaluation processes, in the execution and implementation of architectural projects, where architectural creativity is simplified and devalued to procedures, an utilitarian level of construction or an economic calculation of costs. The devaluation of architecture is accompanied by unsustainable construction, faceless urban expansion, vanishing cultural values, identity, traditions, lost historical sites, etc. [9]. Most of these tensions could be explained by the low level of public attention to architecture and its ignorance, the lack of communication traditions and the inability to create new ones as well as by the distancing of the architectural professional community from society.

The causality of the devaluation of architecture should be looked for in its dual conception. In its broadest sense, as part of the cultural phenomenon, architecture is significant for its respect to the heritage, time values and place identity, for public involvement, formation of people's behaviour and welfare, for long-term results and immediate availability. The *Davos Declaration* (2018) calls architecture as a cultural act since the ways in which society coexists, develops and shapes its environment are cultural at their core [9]. The *Davos Declaration's* commitment to develop high-quality architecture is refined and prepared for practical usage by the European Commission document *Towards a Shared Culture of Architecture: Investing in a High-Quality Living Environment for Everyone* (2021) [7]. Both documents are based on a holistic approach to architecture, growing out of the culture-centred approach where the concept of high-quality architecture includes the active creation of social cohesion and welfare, ensuring environmental sustainability and contribution to global health and well-being [7]. A significant shift towards the quality of architecture in correlation with environment and society, can be found in the *New European Bauhaus* movement and its values, which are growing into a new cultural project: *beautiful | sustainable | together* [8]. The abovementioned initiatives outline a clear vector of architecture as a cultural phenomenon towards "architectural quality and design thinking as key contributors to the transformational movement" [7, p. 3].

The definition in the *Law on Architecture of the Republic of Lithuania* (2017) stating that "architecture is functional, spatial and visually perceivable artistic formation of buildings, urban complexes and landscape" [16], however, reduces architecture to design of architectural objects and

spaces, i.e. to the formation of the built environment and its material results. This approach is closely linked to the regulation of the architect's profession in the European Union countries to ensure public interest, public health and welfare, and to the regulation of architectural activities by legal documents of construction. *The Professional Standard for Architecture Sector* (2018) agrees that activities in architecture 'are very diverse, but essentially consist of two basic types: design-related activities and services, activities and services not directly related to design' [3]. In Lithuania, legal regulation by laws and other legislation as well as ensuring of professional qualifications are obviously focused on the narrow direction of the concept of architecture, i.e. on creation and implementation of the material product of the built environment, leaving the component of culture outside the defined field. The narrow interpretation of architecture, which centres on architectural design as a commercially regulated activity, disconnects it from the cultural-value framework, from social needs and expectations, interdisciplinary merging of different spheres of human activity, from multifaceted perception, interpretation and representation of architecture, and thus from all that makes architecture complete and of high quality.

Let's compare these two concepts of architecture and its directions of activities. The narrow conception of architecture is related to the construction industry, while the broader, complex conception is linked to the cultural realm. In the prevailing narrow conception, architectural design for the development of physical structures is ordered and funded by public and private sectors, and its processes are regulated by legal instruments. Architectural projects are realised by the persons with an architectural education and a relevant professional qualification, as satirised by Samuel, by the real architects, as "only architects who build things are deemed to be real" [22, p. 154]. In terms of demand, funding and number of participants, architectural design works are significantly larger in scale than the activities and services not directly related to design. The latter activities and services include public education and its training for a thorough understanding of the environment, critical analysis of architecture, its communication, monitoring and studies, hereby involving both professionals with an architectural background and professionals in related fields with activities connected to architecture: art critics, heritage conservation experts, historians, sociologists, artists, etc. Many of these activities are not profit-making, therefore, not funded by the private sector. Some are funded by the public sector, but often insufficiently. Hence, these initiatives remain overshadowed, outside the scope of architectural activities.

Weak points of sustainable communication are also found in the architectural education of society. Nowadays architecture is a component of the great culture is being questioned. The holistic ideology known since the ancient times has been forgotten altogether or has become the subject of the modern discourses [2]. As the architecture criticism article “Why You Hate Contemporary Architecture” states, “Nothing built today must be mistakable for anything built 100 or more years ago. The rupture between our era and those of the past is absolute, and this unbridgeable gap must be made visible and manifest through the things we build” [20]. The author is obviously referring to the visual differences. According to Robinson, the needs and wishes of the buildings users are rarely taken into account today. He is concerned that the professionals already trained at architecture schools are too focused on mathematics, engineering and the theory of form. The perception of the craft, emotions and architecture as the epicentre of the great culture is emphasised insufficiently. A strictly mechanical worldview leaves no room for human consciousness, for our personal and emotional relationship with universe. Perez-Gomez, one of the most eminent contemporary phenomenologists of architecture, points out that “An environment that becomes increasingly devoid of qualities, reduced to a set of coordinates in a global positioning device, for instance, tends to exacerbate our contemporary psychopathologies – our sense of despair in view of the “meaningless of existence”, contributing to a debilitating nihilism” [19, p. 109]. The final outcome of the architectural process cannot be determined at the origin as the process is variable, whereas the meanings can be redefined and reconsidered during the process [5]. In view of this multidimensional concept, it can be said that architects and society are involved in the process of architecture as players communicating with each other through the meanings assigned to architecture. In other words, the relationship between technology and creation in the communication process of contemporary architecture is uneven. In particular, by moving away from the aspirations of holistic design and by failing to recognise architecture as a relevant component of the great culture.

The reasons for the paradoxical situation why architecture is poorly known to society despite its constant use should also be found in the lack of communication resulting from the deliberately created autonomy and closeness of the profession: self-organisation, self-regulation, elite self-positioning etc. According to Till, “the will of architects to erect and then maintain boundaries around the discipline of architecture is one of the defining characteristics of the profession” [28, p. 5]. Some distancing emerges from the general criteria

defining professions such as university-level education, internship, knowledge and norms of practices (as codes of ethics), established disciplinary identity and autonomy [30, p. 70]. Another restrictions separate architects as professionals through the features of control such as limiting access to the profession, certifying competence to practice, accountability of external bodies that set detailed requirements, monitor performance and sanction failure [18]. Furthermore, the community of architects wraps its identity in a unique professional worldview, beliefs and rituals, like a ‘club’ culture. A distinctive collective identity is evolved through competitions and awards, profession-oriented magazines, similar lifestyles and choices. Professional self-consciousness seeks segregation from other members of society [24, p. 11-12], often accompanied by a dominant elite orientation elevating itself above the unintelligent and uncreative society [23]. In the profession of architecture, ideals outgrow the fundamental values, become like a belief-system, a creed that with its obsessive and all-engaging nature could be compared among other professions only to soldiering and priesthood [21]. The fostered unique character, autonomy and closed nature of the discipline deepens the gap between the community of architects and the general public. The fact that society has actually no idea of what architects do, why, how and what kind of works are produced is one of the results of poor communication, insularity and detachment of architects from the rest of society.

Cultural communication in architecture from the perspective of professional community

Weak assumptions of communication in architecture field are being responsibly noted by some members of Lithuanian professional community. This fact is positive as it presupposes the possibility to change the tradition of unsustainable communication and fruitless dialogue between architects and the public. Certain qualitative changes in communication were initiated by the professional community through the activities of the Chamber of Architects such as the clarification of the criteria for architectural quality, the criteria for architectural quality established by the *Law on Architecture of the Republic of Lithuania* (2017), and the activities of the Regional Councils of Architecture operating since 2018. To enhance the demand for architectural quality and the vision of its artistic nature beyond the professional community, education, training and information of the society, especially of its part that affects the processes of urban development, is essential. As architect 4-V-f representing the professional press says: “It is now that a turning point is taking place in the way future generations will perceive architecture, so architects,

architecture historians and art critics should do as much as possible to educate society and to introduce quality architecture and its styles.” The words illustrate that an opportunity for communication between the society and the architects is seen by the respondent as a possibility for both the architects and other professionals, for whom the field of architecture is a source of activity. It is a positive approach suggesting that architects are not the only ones able to communicate about architecture and to influence the development of the field. It is a conceptual communication message about the relationship between the real image and its representation: “In the case of conceptual message, what is not the building itself is communicated through architecture as a media: collective identities and the ideas that define them: transparency, progress, solidarity” [21]. Here, the role of a mediator can become both a determining and value-adding factor.

Is today’s society ready to connect architecture with culture? “Most of society do not perceive new architecture as an event of the cultural environment, as an artistic phenomenon representing culture. Especially among investors and developers, architecture is generally seen as a craft, a component of the construction process, with the final result being expressed in square metres and the price paid for them,” thinks architect 3-K-m. This idea supports the authors’ assumptions about missing cultural element in the conception of architecture. Architect 6-V-m both contradicts and agrees with it: “Craft is a necessary component of any creation, and not only of it. It is right to be a good craftsman. Then the artwork can be produced. This overproduction of craftsmen in almost all areas of culture also has a certain positive result - through quantity to quality. The only trouble is that there are far more ‘quantity craftsmen’ and they are either dumping the value of the work or looking for some other source of livelihood, one of which is the ‘crumbs’ of the LCC. ‘High-quality craft’ does not have to be generally acceptable, the key point is that those who don’t accept it are not the critical mass of society”.

According to architect 3-K-m, “the general perception of the quality of architecture by society is quite low, it has not received any education in this field, and therefore is unable to assess architectural processes properly.” Here, we could mention the recent works publicly condemned but not grounded on knowledge-based assessment: restoration of Zapyškis Old Church of St. John the Baptist and landscaping (architect G. Prikockis), the building of St. Mary's Radio in Vilnius street, Kaunas

(E. Miliūnas Studio: architects A. Ramanauskas, D. Miliūnienė, D. Karalius), etc. Architecture is rarely understood in society as an art since the key fundamentals for understanding are missing. “The young generation, however, demonstrates a growing interest, involvement and will to learn more about the environment we all live in. This is supported by various initiatives, social platforms and even mandatory publicity of projects. Often, the emergence of new architecture in sensitive locations such as the old town or the natural environment, generates a lot of debates in society. More and more often we see that society is interested in quality artefacts of architecture, but in many cases does not know what they should be”, explains architect 4-V-f representing the professional press. Architectural communication activities are obviously vital in educating society.

Through its works (buildings, cities or activities), architecture materialises cultural growth of society, relationships between its members, institutions and social roles. In the process, architecture can be understood as an element structuring social relations through the configuration of space and acting through its materiality. Architects should be aware that their works have two lives: the first, when they create, design and participate in its construction; and the second, when it is taken over and used by the client, i.e. communities. It can be a profit-making organisation, a private person, an urban community - the scale and profile of the client do no matter. What matters is whether they managed together to achieve a communicatively fruitful result or not. Given a significant gap between the communicating parties, the causality and extent of which has already been discussed in the text, a successful communication between architects and society seems to be likely in the hands of a mediator. This opens up the possibility for one of the players of culture field, i.e. the LCC, to play the role of a mediator in architectural communication supporting and promoting the involvement of both architects and society.

Challenges and problematic issues of cultural and communication activities in architecture referring to the projects supported by the LCC

Established in 2013, the Lithuanian Council for Culture (LCC) acts as the key institution implementing the national cultural policy, administering the Culture Support Fund and analysing cultural and artistic processes in Lithuania. The LCC enables the diverse development and dissemination of culture and art to ensure the

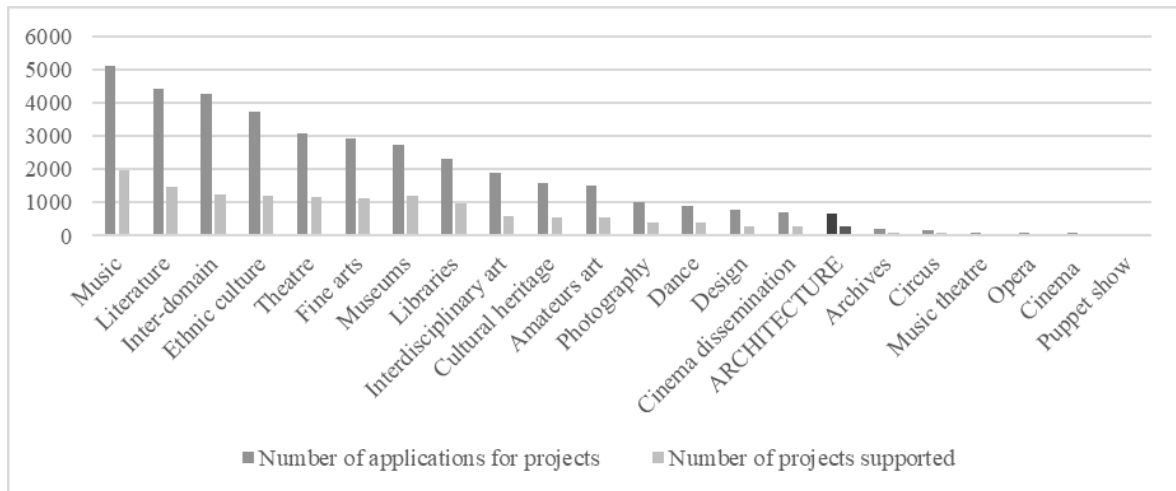


Fig. 1. LCC funding by fields of culture and art in 2014–2020: applications submitted and projects funded [LCC official website [11]]

rational and reasonable use of the allocated funds [13]. Architecture is one of the supported field of arts. The practices of the LCC promote the activities outside the dominant narrow conception of architecture, which focus on the development and dissemination of architecture as a cultural and artistic field. These activities are aimed at opening up to society the backstage of the inherently closed profession of architecture, at increasing communication between architects and society, at educating society and fostering its knowledge through understanding of architecture, thereby having a long-sighted vision of increasing the quality of our environment. It should be noted that the targeted funding of architecture by the LCC is limited to the activities not directly related to architectural design works. It is targeted to the unregulated activities that are not subject to the requirements mandatory for recognition of professional qualifications of the regulated profession [10], whereas outputs of activities are not subject to the nationally defined legal, technical and other requirements. The aim of the activities is to ensure architectural education, dissemination and development or to create an architectural product with the long-term value intended to meet the cultural, artistic and educational needs of society, to fulfil the creative initiatives of the developer, and to have a sustainable and balanced impact both on the environment and national image. The activities shall be carried out by professionals with an education, background and experience in architecture or related fields (art criticism, heritage conservation, history, sociology, art, photography, etc.) that is necessary for project implementation. Compared to funding from municipalities, other public institutions, public and private sponsors, the LCC acts as the key and largest supporter of culture-oriented activities in architecture, and most of these activities would not have been implemented without the LCC funding.

According to the LCC website, cultural and artistic activities in architecture field are funded at a few levels. Activities and results of the competition-winning individual creators are supported by the LCC with individual and educational scholarships. Groups of creators in cultural, artistic, academic or other organisations participate in the competitions of projects. Cultural and artistic organisations apply for funding of their activities and creative programme focused on the development of Lithuanian culture or art participating in the competitions of strategic funding for cultural organisations (e.g. the Architecture Foundation) and for artistic organisations (e.g. the Architects' Association of Lithuania). Support of individual architectural activities and events is also available in other competitions organised by the LCC, although these are rather rare or exceptional cases (such as the national showroom at the Venice Architecture Biennale) [14].

The study focuses on the projects in architecture field supported by the LCC as they combine the cultural and communicative activities and initiatives. An LCC supported project in architecture field is defined as a targeted activity or set of activities with a clear objective and tasks, a specified timeframe for implementation and a measurable financial plan. The activities generate a range of cultural services and products aimed at artistic, scientific and interdisciplinary architectural research, at education, social integrity, technology, and experiments. Compared to the projects funded by the LCC in other fields of culture and art, funding for the projects in architecture field is particularly low (Figure 1). The summarised project funding data for 2014–2020 provided by the LCC demonstrates that only cultural and artistic areas such as archives and circus have fewer applications than architecture field, whereas cinema and its dissemination, musical theatre, opera, and puppetry have not been fully

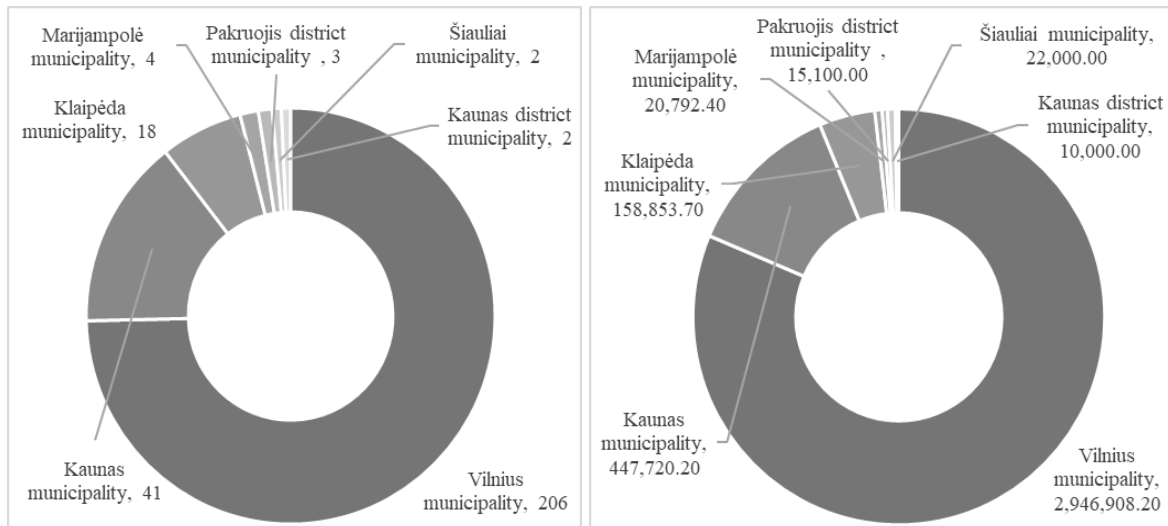


Fig. 2. LCC funding by the municipalities of applicants in 2014–2020: a) by the number of funded projects; b) by the support received for funding [created by authors, LCC official website [15]]

funded during the period analysed [15]. Development of cultural activities in architecture with long-term value is obviously unappealing to the professionals working in architecture or in adjoining fields. Interviewees generally agree that inactivity in applying for LCC projects results from the indifference of the very architects' guild that could be explained by too great involvement in architectural design and by the lack of their responsibility in communicating and educating society.

As for the trends in funding of LCC projects, it should be noted that among the traditional art fields, the LCC has been quite generous in its support of architecture. The summarised project funding data for 2014–2020 provided by the LCC shows that 41 % of all project applications in architecture field submitted in that period (276 from 670) were funded. Only circus (55 %) and dance (46 %) received greater support, whereas funding of project applications in the other traditional fields of art was distributed as follows: fine arts and photography (39 %), theatre and music (38 %), design (36 %) and literature (33 %) [15]. Having in mind the cultural significance and importance of architecture for society, the greater reach by the LCC supported projects and their greater impact on society and culture could be expected only through encouraging professionals in architecture field to make use of the LCC support by developing architectural projects.

Even if a reliable communication mediator is available, the responsibility for communication and public education, and for the unused potential of the LCC falls on professionals in architecture. The inactivity of professionals in architecture in LCC supported activities is not the fault of society, but the indifference inside of the very architects' guild. The fact that the architect is not considered a person with a broad cultural profile able to share and educate

society with his or her cultural insights is not just a problem of society. Thus, cultural activities in architecture field are essential for both sides: for the architectural community and for the public.

The portfolio of architectural projects could be characterised by uneven geographical distribution, although its balancing is one of the missions of the LCC. Even taking into account such circumstances as the location of the major architecture events organised in the country, i.e. KAFē in Kaunas, Open House in Vilnius as well as the concentration of universities, research centres, and public organisations in the capital of the country, unevenness of the geographical distribution of architectural projects within the country is stunning both in terms of the assignment of the applicant – the implementing organisation – to the municipality, and of the location of implementation of projects.

According to the summarised data on project funding in 2014–2020 provided by the LCC, as many as 206 projects in architecture field submitted by applicants from Vilnius were financed in this period, whereas the number of submitted projects from other locations was the following: 41 projects from Kaunas, 18 projects from Klaipėda, 4 projects from Marijampolė municipality, 3 projects from Pakruojis district municipality, 2 projects from Šiauliai and 2 projects from Kaunas district municipality [15]. Thus, during the period under consideration, applicants from Vilnius city municipality submitted 74.6 % of all funded projects in architecture field, and the support for these projects amounts to 81.3 % of the total funds allocated to projects in architecture field (Figure 2). The proportion of the funded projects in architecture field submitted by applicants from Vilnius demonstrates an unacceptable concentration of activity generation in the capital. Even in the cases where the successful applicant from Vilnius

municipality is an organisation with activities in other Lithuanian cities as well, the analysis of the funding of specific projects shows its power position, with the support being shared with sites in other cities in a much smaller relative proportion than was promised in the application, as stated by application developer 7-K-f. Comparing the statistics on the funding success of project applications, applications from organisations based in Vilnius city municipality are supported obviously more often than those from organisations based in other municipalities. The frustration and disbelief of local residents in receiving support is vividly explained by an architect from Klaipėda who refused to participate in the study and to be interviewed: “they have to take care of everything themselves, look for sources of funding on their own as there is nothing they could expect from Vilnius”.

In general, a tendency to export projects from the scientific and cultural centres towards the periphery is observed, thus taking advantage of the preferential funding for activities in regions. For example, the annual event organised by the *Architect Algimantas Zaviša Support and Charity Foundation* is held in Nida. However, this unique site in Lithuania is only the location of the event, meaningfully associated with Zaviša, long-term chief architect of Neringa. The initiative, content and participants of the event are from the Lithuanian cultural centres of Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda. Another example comes from Lithuanian higher education institutions with architecture degree programmes. For the past five years, the competition of projects in architecture has been marked by field trips to the periphery by students and their mentoring lecturers. Often these projects are low-budget, their return on investment or their real contribution to the cultural environment of the periphery is not checked by the LCC, so their impact on the region remains in question. The fact that regional initiatives are very poorly funded is also demonstrated by the discouraging statistic that most of the municipalities in the districts of Lithuania either do not apply at all or have submitted 1 or 2 applications that have not been funded. A similar situation is apparent in many other areas of culture and art. According to the implementation place indicated in the projects in architecture field funded in 2014–2020, as much as 30.4% of all projects were implemented in Vilnius, 12.3% in Kaunas and 2.9% in Klaipėda. This shows a slightly more balanced distribution as the remaining significant portion of the projects indicated are realised in Lithuania, Europe, etc. It should be considered that the latter broad locations of implementation may both indicate the actual extent of the spread, and be a way of concealing much narrower and more specific location of implementation.

To ensure even geographical distribution, the LCC develops region-specific funding programmes for cultural and artistic activities, enabling them to be disseminated in municipalities far from the capital. Although it is the right way to ensure even development in regions, applications are simply not submitted. The activities to be supported in regions include initiatives and product development in other culture and art fields, but not in architecture field. The low availability of cultural activities in architecture over the regions is neither in line with the strategic funding directions for accessibility and education declared by the LCC, nor in compliance with the great need for architectural education of regional communities.

A special attention should be paid to the problem of the LCC system that can be defined as the dominance of large organisations *versus* the enthusiasm of start-ups. This is a trend observed both in architecture and possibly in other fields since the LCC system of expert evaluation of projects is similar for all fields of art. In Lithuania, two major organisations of architects are operating: Architects' Chamber of Lithuania and Architects' Association of Lithuania. Basically, the organisations are competing in the public space, partially duplicating each other functions and not always responding to the needs of Lithuanian architects, but monopolising the role of communication flagships. Analysis of the statistics of project applications for funding reveals that the most frequently funded projects are the traditional, co-cultural creative and research activities such as book production and publishing, organisation of conferences, creative workshops, exhibitions and lectures. Funding is mostly allocated to large, complex events and to ongoing, established activities organised by other big experienced institutions. It is natural having in mind the experience and knowhow of the applicants and the audiences they attract. On the other hand, non-standard, breakthrough initiatives such as video narratives, out-of-the-box publications, interactive activities, are very rarely rated sufficiently high due to their unusual character and, as a rule, due to the low level of knowhow and experience of young applicants. Generally, the following applicants are supported: large professional and social organisations, universities, publishing houses, i.e. entities with experience, established groups of participants and time-tested ways of operation. This makes it particularly difficult to get funding for young, inexperienced start-ups, which are often the ones to initiate new types of activities as they are side-lined by large, experienced organisations. As application developer 7-K-f notes, “We would like to see the projects that actually implement diversity of views and beliefs, education and training of society and young people, principles of accessibility,

i.e. basically what the strategic guidelines say. The projects that are not driven by fashion trends, by the opinion of one or a few influencers in the public space, the projects that demonstrate respect for history, classical culture and values. Surely, ensuring the mandatory requirement of project quality". Start-ups with the above characteristics, which are seeking to position themselves in the cultural environment, could be able to enter and participate in LCC project activities more quickly along with the large organisations, if a special quota or exemption is provided that require no experience as long as the high artistic and cultural value of the project is maintained.

Furthermore, the LCC does not fund the study process at higher education institutions, but this may be one of the short-sighted limitations of activities. Enriching the study process of young people and future professionals with cultural activities should be supported by the LCC. Interdisciplinary strategies could be delegated to the projects with young people, and the stagnating situation would change gradually. Therefore, new players, i.e. start-ups with little or no experience in architectural design, but willing to assume a mediating role and to be responsible for creative communication in architecture field, should be allowed to take a more active role.

The long-term impact of LCC projects on the quality of the surrounding environment would be based on the fact that all members of society are in some or another way involved in the processes (as developers, customers, participants), use (as residents, users) and evaluation (as observers, activists). Although the target audience of the project activities is twofold, i.e. the public and the professional community of architects, the planning and implementation of project activities is more focused towards the former group. The desired objectives of project activities and their results identified by the interviewees are informing, introducing, educating society as well as developing creativity, innovation, openness and the will to improve (7-K-f) leading to the maturity of society (3-K-m), whereas their exposure indicators are represented respectively by reinforcing the value system of attitudes and changing attitudes through reflective experiences (7-K-f), influence on future processes (3-K-m), stimulated debates and reduced negative tensions between the community and architects (2-K-m). Expecting the projects to generate both the high-quality content and long-term value, respondents see the creation of cultural heritage as the primary mission of the project and the longevity of the results as the value of the project (6-V-m). Thus, the interviewees were critical about following fashion trends, opinions of one or a few influencers acting in the public space due to short-

term or limited relevance (7-K-f), as well as about chat platforms due to non-critical feedback and undocumented output (6-V-m). So-called 'paper projects' - fruitless activities that have never reached their final tangible realisation – were highlighted as particularly avoidable (7-K-f).

The impact of projects on society and environment as well as the long-term cultural value of projects is obviously seen as a twofold category. To establish social and environmental impact, it should be measured and demonstrated. The LCC employs a certain system of project impact assessment, where project participants make self-assessment of the project impact against given indicators. Being questionable in terms of reliability and partiality, this assessment system is more existing as a formal and redundant approach rather than as a practical tool giving real results. For example, long-term value is a more relative concept as one project participant gains the experience, while another finds it relevant to add a new book to his/her professional bookshelf.

Conclusions

1. Problems related to the dominance of the abovementioned narrowed concept of architecture, to the lack of cultural communication, and to the modest public knowledge of architecture lead to the devaluation of architecture and, consequently, to the diminishing of the quality, diversity and long-term cultural value of the surrounding environment. Architectural education of society would be the most effective way to address these problems. It is crucial to grow everyday users, politicians, decision-makers, investors, developers, private customers, participants of the construction process, activists, preservers of local heritage, and keepers of traditions able to understand and critically evaluate architecture, thus contributing to formation of a higher quality environment.

An educated person participating in the environment formation processes will aim for a high-quality, harmonious, sustainable, aesthetic architectural environment, which will have an impact both on the development of culture, art and socio-economic relations, will enhance the social relationship and security of the communities, will improve physical and mental health. The knowledge of heritage sites and local identity, and the development of value preferences will contribute to the informal preservation of cultural heritage values. Additional, more diverse education of architecture students will stimulate the need for innovative, out-of-the-box solutions, interdisciplinary cooperation with other professionals and communities. Stronger feedback between designing and researching architects will lead to the examination of the most pressing issues and to more effective collaboration

and dissemination of research results. Continuous professional development will contribute to a more efficient response of architects to changing social, economic and environmental situations, to understanding and applying the principles of more sustainable environment in their daily design tasks, to professional problem solving and managing the challenges of community involvement.

2. In Lithuania, architectural professionals alone are not able to achieve the necessary effective cultural communication and inclusive cooperation between architects and society; professionals from related fields, whose activities are directly related to architecture field, would be helpful for this purpose, and operation of a stable mediator is especially required. The successful communication between society and professionals in architecture possibly is in the hands of a mediator employing players in culture field. Here, the role of a mediator can become both a determining and value-adding factor.

Since 2013, when the LCC had assumed the role of a mediator in architectural communication through the funding of cultural activities in architecture in the form of projects, a range of problems and challenges have become visible. Activities in architecture field are particularly poorly funded due to the low number of applications, thereby the apathy of the architectural guild and the lack of involvement of professionals in related fields. Funded activities are clustered in the big cities and especially in the capital, while activities in regions are more imitative than real. Project funding tenders are won by large, experienced professional and public organisations, universities and publishing houses, whereas for new entrants and start-ups winning turns into a challenge. Generally, funding is allocated to large and complex events, established ongoing, traditional, and conventional co-cultural creative and research activities, rather than out-of-the-box, innovative undertakings. In terms of outputs and outcomes, the impact of projects on society and environment as well as the long-term cultural value are obviously not always obtained as promised and expected.

Recommendations for the LCC

1. In order to increase the cultural significance and importance of architecture for society, architecture practitioners and theoreticians should be encouraged to make the maximum and most effective use of the opportunities offered by the LCC. The most effective way to reach architects active in design would be

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through Architects' Chamber of Lithuania and Architects' Association of Lithuania, and architectural theoreticians - through higher education institutions. They would be motivated by transparency of evaluation and sharing of best practices. Projects shall include as many players in architecture field as possible to achieve exposure and long-term value of projects as the impact they contain is a multidimensional set. Such practice both provides a better result and builds social connections, gives vitality to architecture field and makes the public aware of architectural processes. To obtain sustainable results in architectural development, the involvement of all the players in architecture field in the project process, where each has his or her own role and responsibilities, leads to both collective and individual responsibility.

2. Activities to be funded should be selected by the potential long-term value of their results and their impact on the public and/or the professional community. This includes the cultural, artistic or scientific quality of the outputs, the durability of the process, product or impact, the extent of dissemination in terms of geography, professional interests, social layers, the penetration of dissemination. etc. One of the safeguards for the quality of activities is the experts' view that only architects and professionals in adjoining field (art criticism, heritage conservation, history, sociology, fine arts) with activities related to architecture,

can be involved in implementation of the activities planned. More attention and control should be given to the intermediate stages that are funded, so that they reach their final realisation, e.g. the publication of a book. A preventive mechanism should be applied since activities that are funded but are not fruitful take away the implementation possibility of fruitful activities from other applicants.

3. The project evaluation criteria should be revised to direct the selection process towards quality, relevance, significance, communication, coherence and expertise of the project and its outcome. In order to balance the geographical distribution, revisions to the list of evaluation criteria and their weight should increase access to support for activities in regions, for ambitious early applicants and for innovative, out-of-the-box undertakings. To avoid potentially low-quality start-ups due to their lack of experience, a quota of such projects and/or a limit on the funds to be allocated are recommended.

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Kopsavilkums. Publikācijas mērķis ir izcelt kultūras un komunikācijas aktivitāšu nepieciešamību, īpatnības un problemātiku arhitektūras jomā, izmantojot Lietuvas Kultūras padomes (LCC) finansēto arhitektūras projektu gadījuma izpēti. Problēmu apzināšana nekomerciālo iniciatīvu atbalstīšanā arhitektūrā no 2014. līdz 2020. gadam ir konkrētā pētījuma apjoms, kas izstrādāts, izmantojot analītiski aprakstošu pieeju. Izpēte aptver zinātnisko un profesionālo literatūru, juridiskos dokumentus, profesionālo arhitektu organizāciju ieteikumus, informāciju no LCC un daļēji strukturētas intervijas ar 7 ekspertiem.

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