

The Particularity of Lithuanian Structuralist Architecture: Case of the Dainava Settlement in Ukmergė District

Key words: collectivisation of agriculture, disurbanisation, functionalism, industrialisation, kolkhoz, modernism, new towns and settlements, reform of modernism, Soviet farm, structuralism, urbanisation.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most controversial periods in the history of Lithuanian architecture, associated with the avant-garde in philosophy, art, music and science, is laconically described as Soviet modernism. One of the phenomenons of contemporary architecture, characterised as a feature of Soviet modernism, is referred to as structuralism. The latter developed in Lithuania (as it did in Great Britain, Holland, Japan) as a reaction to the creative results of the modernist style. This presentation attempts to review the manifestation of these concepts in Lithuania, and their particularities within the context of other European countries and the USSR – with a focus on those ideas which affected changes in townscapes. The present text is part of more extensive research on the concept of structuralism in contemporary Lithuanian architecture. According to its author, such a review may help to define the particularities in the genesis and development of structuralist tendencies in Lithuania, and to understand their possible influence regarding the further architectural process in this country.

2. PRESUMPTIONS OF REGULAR TOWN DEVELOPMENT

There were various reasons for establishing new towns and settlements. The majority of them, however, are components of one policy of urbanisation

within a specific country. Planned towns, small towns, and settlements differed not only in their function, but also in their method of development. It should be noted that the political-economic context differed as well.

According to researchers, the construction of new towns after the Second World War can be divided into East and West blocks. New Lithuanian towns (part of the contemporary process of regional planning in the USSR) can be divided into two main groups: 1) towns (Elektrėnai, Naujoji Akmenė, later Visaginas) with districts (Žirmūnai and Lazdynai in Vilnius, Kalniečiai in Kaunas), and 2) small towns and settlements. Regional planning in Lithuania began in 1956. The urban process was especially motivated by the growth of industry and the collectivisation of agriculture. By 1967 there was no administrative planning scheme, and small agricultural towns developed spontaneously. Later, economic socialist regulations determined the development of the urban agricultural sector.

In both the USSR, and Eastern and Western Europe, the practice of starting new towns showed that the theoretically measured human needs and models of society could not cover all of the subjective internal relationships and consequences occurring within a community. Such projects, which were quite expensive on an economic level, and too complex in a social sense, rarely succeeded. Thus after designing

new towns in the 1930s and 1940s, urban planners in Hungary in the 1950s and 1960s resumed the reconstruction and development of already existing cities¹, and Scandinavians reviewed their earlier strategy of new town planning.² Planners in Great Britain and France also turned to the reconstruction of separate areas of their cities. In the USSR such projects were politically motivated, and even if they did not succeed on the social and/or economic level, a precedent for their implementation had been laid. This was why, according to Lithuanian urbanist Romas Devinduonis³, the concept of polarised urban development that was so popular in Europe in the 1960s did not become widespread in Lithuania until the latter half of the 1970s. Polish urbanist Jakub Wujek also noticed the aspect of delayed technology, which meant that project ideas were rarely tested in practice, with the result that their shortcomings only surfaced much later.⁴

3. PARALLEL EUROPEAN STRUCTURALIST IDEAS IN LITHUANIAN SETTLEMENTS

Structuralist ideas seem to have evolved from discussions by *Team 10* and CIAM, and were later popularised by the Dutch architectural magazine *Forum*.⁵

3.1. Another Idea. This idea was represented by urban design projects in the Pendrecht and Alexanderpolder districts in Rotterdam, where sectioned residential multiple low-rises appeared alongside single-flat, two-flat, block, and high-rise buildings.⁶

The Dainava Settlement [fig. 1] consisted of mostly sectional multi-family dwellings. A few four-flat two-storey residential houses were erected and granted garden allotments in separate locations.⁷ Initially, on the basis of other USSR settlements, only multi-family houses were planned, but given

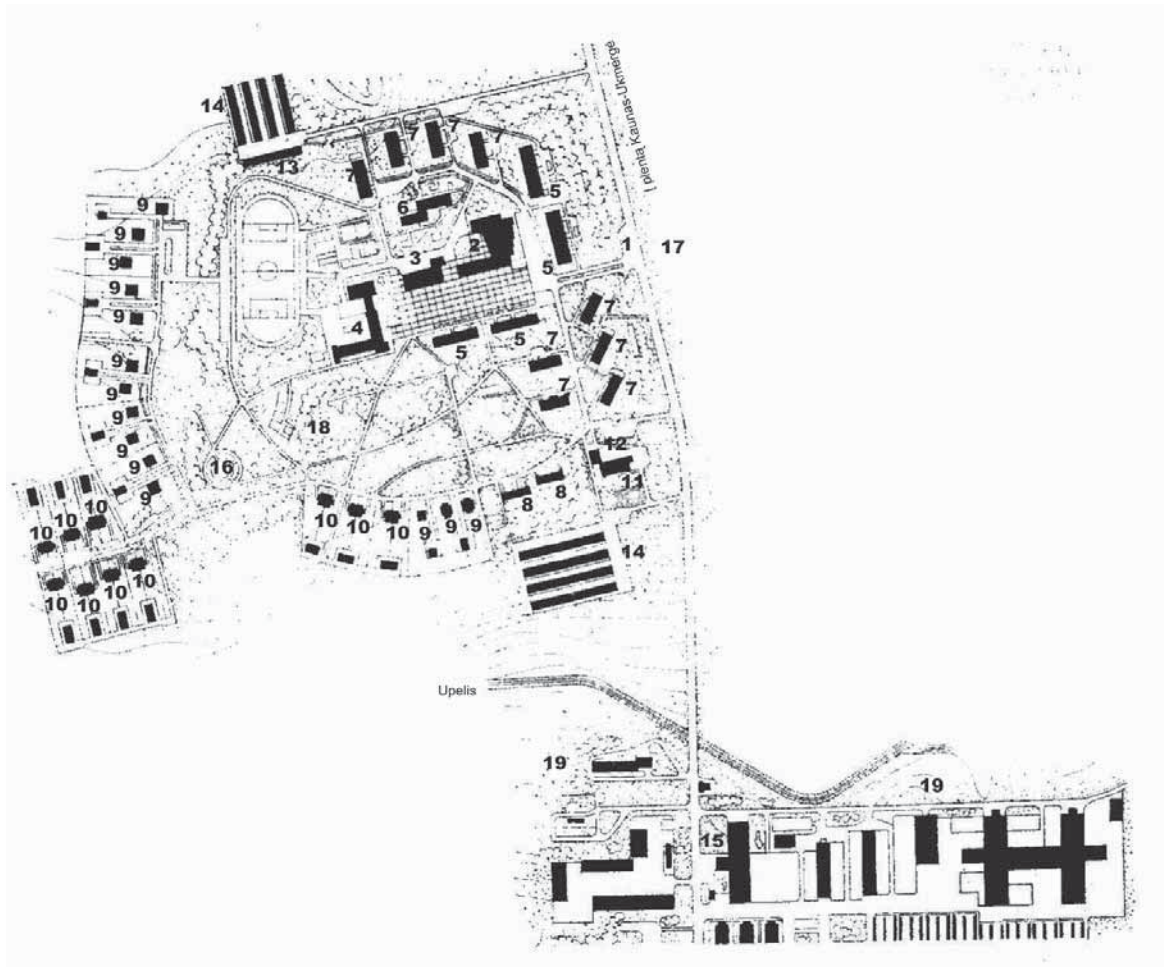


Fig. 1. Ramūnas Kamaitis with co-authors, *The Dainava Settlement in Ukmergė district, 1966-71, site plan*. Source: Jonas K. Minkevichius, *Architektura Sovietsoj Litvy (Architecture of Soviet Lithuania)*, Moscow: Strojizdat, 1987



Fig. 2. Natural elements in the urban tissue of Klausučiai (Jurbarkas D.). Photo by the author, 2005

that the idea was not acceptable to all rural residents, it was decided some time later to construct single-flat houses as well.⁸

Western structuralists supported Patrick Geddes' concept regarding the integration of natural elements into the urban tissue – an idea which was also considered topical by the inter-war modernists. Its implementation, however, was successful only in the *Over-all Development Plan for the City of Amsterdam* (1928-1934), where peripheries were composed of basic functional elements, and natural elements were used for their interconnection with the baroque Old Town.⁹ According to the architects, such solutions had to improve not only the quality of the residential environment, but also the bionic development of the city.

Natural components were also widely used in Lithuanian urban design projects [fig. 2]. For example, in seeking to arrange the landscape surrounding residential housing in Dainava [fig. 1], the traditional construction of agricultural-purpose

buildings close to each residential house [fig. 1: 5, 7, 8] was abandoned in favour of the construction of such buildings in separate groups [fig. 1: 14, 15]. Such planning included playgrounds for children near residential quarters, and ensured the formation of a better landscape and the development of recreation spaces.¹⁰ This innovative solution had



Fig. 3. Ramūnas Kamaitis with co-authors, *The public center in Dainava* (Ukmergė D.), 1966-71. Photo by the author, 2005



Fig. 4. Zenonas Dargis, Multi-family houses in Skaistgirys (Joniškis D.). Photo by the author, 2005



Fig. 5. Typical present-day situation. Ēriškiai (Panevėžys D.). Photo by the author, 2005

some weak points which surfaced quite early on: houses were too far away from agricultural-purpose buildings, and the concept of common exploitation of the buildings meant that they had no owner. Development of an 8-hectare park began around the settlement [fig. 1: 18]. The “collective gardens” [fig. 1: 17] in Dainava were the first of their kind in a rural environment.¹¹ A watercourse and “green line” separated the agricultural-industrial area [fig. 1: 19] from the residential sector.

3.2. Interior-Exterior Dialogue. Attempts were made to erase the boundaries not only between interior and exterior, but also between city and house, indoors and outdoors, big and small, detail and totality, private and public. In this way the concept evolved into the idea of the integrity of opposites, and finally started to modify the very concept of “designing”: it was declared that projects for a kitch-

en and for the country were designed along analogous principles.¹² According to Wim J. van Heuvel¹³, an archetypal example could be architect Aldo van Eyck’s project for an orphanage in Amsterdam (1955-1960). This complex looks like a small city and a solid building at the same time, and is composed of rectangular repeating elements shaping private as well as common spaces. This permitted not only the modelling of special combinations out of typical elements, but also the enrichment of the human residential environment with the help of visual connections.

Public centres in new Lithuanian settlements were designed as integral architectural ensembles. The public centre in Dainava [fig. 3] was comprised of a kindergarten [fig. 1: 6], medical centre, bathhouse with laundry [fig. 1: 12], the first shopping centre – with eatery, club, and public services – in Lithuania [fig. 1: 2], a Soviet farm administration and postal building [fig. 1: 3], and a bus stop [fig. 1: 1]. Although they were composed out of typical elements, most design projects were individual in nature. Many of the projects for these settlements were unique, but were usually repeated once they were well accepted – with the result that in the later stages, many of the settlements began to show certain resemblances.

3.3. Other Housing. Structuralists suggested to dissociate primary functional elements from the functional structure of parallel-piped building, and to compose creative forms out of these elements. Such expanded compositional measures meant that the townscape had to become more colourful, thereby visually reducing volumes and space, animating street perspectives, and decreasing a sense of monotony.

The pre-cast block houses built in the Dainava settlement were the first such constructions in a rural environment [fig. 3]. Although they were awarded the USSR national prize, the architects of the settlement were accused of a straight-forward use of prefabricated products manufactured by home building integrated plants.¹⁴ More original results were achieved in settlements erected some time later in Klausučiai [Jurbarkas D.; fig. 2], Juknaičiai [Šilutė D.], and elsewhere.

In comparing design projects from the post-war period with those of the 1960s and 1970s, one can find a feature characteristic of the development of the scientific modelling applied in countries in the West, i.e. the beginnings of the replacement of the functional character of urban territory modelling with an organic one.

Although the builders of most of the newly constructed Lithuanian towns, separate districts, and settlements failed to implement some design project solutions, one could clearly see certain parallels with the ideas of de-urbanisation, and the humanisation of the environment, that were being developed in Western societies. One should note, however, that such simultaneously developed ideas usually meant different things to residents of the Soviet bloc countries, and those in Western countries.

3.4. The present-day situation of towns developed in the latter half of the 20th century is quite varied [fig. 5]. Old industries have been successfully revived in some settlements, former Soviet farm centres, and kolkhozes (e.g., poultry farming in Dainava, and dolomite excavation in Skaistgirys). In certain former collective farms, agricultural partnerships have been established and function successfully (e.g., in Ēriškiai), or new agricultural branches have been started and developed (e.g., greenhouse farming in Aristava). Some of these types of settlements have been amalgamated into the larger cities (e.g.,



Fig. 6. Combine harvester, a symbol of collectivisation, alongside the monument to the victims of Soviet occupation. Skaistgirys (Joniškis D.). Photo by the author, 2005

Didžiosios Kabiškės near Nemenčinė and Vilnius, Dainava near Ukmergė, Juknaičiai near Šilutė). In order to attract and keep young professionals on the Soviet farms, these settlements usually had a higher quality of housing than previously existed in the larger cities. Today, these towns, now part of a larger metropolis, are becoming more and more popular as suburban residences.

4. IN SUMMARY

Although Lithuanian agricultural settlements were built on the basis of socialist directives, they had some characteristic features. Socialist, political, economic directives and impersonalised creations were represented in the same way as was the striving for Western ideas during the information blockade, and the contraposition vis-a-vis the threat of assimilation [fig. 6]. Another important feature of Lithuanian agricultural settlements was determined by the absence of deportees from other Soviet republics. Volunteer colonists preferred bigger towns to agricultural settlements (unlike the expatriates in Siberia, Kazakhstan, or elsewhere). In the 1960s and 1970s, Dainava (Ukmergė D.), Klausučiai (Jurbarkas D.), Skaistgirys (Joniškis D.), and Kabiškės (Vilnius D.) were illustrative examples of Lithuanian agricultural settlements.

Undoubtedly, such newly developed functions had a certain influence on the further evolution of these towns, and the situation in some of them has undergone marked changes.

Notes

¹ Pjer Merlin, *Novyje goroda (The New Towns)*, Moscow: Progress, 1975, pp. 193, 212.

² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

³ Romas Devinduonis, 'Lietuvos ir Vakarų Europos regionio ir miestų planavimo praktikos paralelės' ('Regional and Urban Development Parallels in Lithuania and Western Europe'), in: *Archiforma*, no. 1, 1998, pp. 41-45.

⁴ Jakub Vujek, *Mify i utopii architektury XX vieka (Myths and Utopias in Architecture of the 20th century)*, Moscow: Strojizdat, 1990, p. 12.

⁵ Wim J. van Heuvel, *Structuralism in Dutch Architecture*, Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010 Publishers, 1992, pp. 6-10; *Team 10 Online*, <http://www.team10online.org/>; Max Risselada,

Dirk van den Heuvel (eds.), *Team 10 1953-81. In Search of a Utopia of the Present*, Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2006.

⁶ Van Heuvel, 1992, p. 12.

⁷ V. Rupas, *Sovershenstvovaniye zastroiki sielskich posiolkov Litovskoj SSR (Improvement of the Settlement Development in Lithuanian SSR)*, Vilnius: LitNIINTI, 1981, pp. 32-33.

⁸ Jonas K. Minkevichius, *Architektura Sovietsoj Litvy (Architecture of Soviet Lithuania)*, Moscow: Strojizdat, 1987, p. 241.

⁹ Leonardo Benevolo, *Europos miesto istorija (La citta nella storia d'Europa)*, trans. Aušra Čižikienė, Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1998, p. 218.

¹⁰ Rupas, 1981.

¹¹ Minkevichius, 1987, p. 243.

¹² *Team 10 Online*.

¹³ Van Heuvel, 1992, p. 16.

¹⁴ Minkevichius, 1987, p. 243.

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Lietuvos struktūralistinės architektūros raiškos savitumai Ukmergės rajono Dainavos gyvenvietės pavyzdžiui

Reikšminiai žodžiai: žemės ūkio kolektyvizacija, dezurbanizacija, funkcionalizmas, industrializacija, kolūkis, modernizmas, nauji miestai ir miesteliai, modernizmo reformos, struktūralizmas, urbanizacija.

Santrauka

XX a. vidurys ir antroji pusė paženklinta dideliais urbanistiniais pokyčiais. Lietuvoje imta projektuoti ir statyti naujus miestus (Elektrėnai, Naujoji Akmenė, vėliau – Visaginas), miestelius ir miesto tipo gyvenvietes. 1971 m. Ukmergės rajone pastatyta Leonpolio tarybinio ūkio Dainavos eksperimentinė-pavyzdinė gyvenvietė. Šios ir vėlesnių eksperimentinių-pavyzdinių gyvenviečių patirtis buvo pritaikyta kitų miestelių projektavimui ir statybai.

Lietuvos naujieji miesteliai, nors projektuoti pagal to meto direktyvas, turėjo savitų, kitoms sovietinio bloko miesto tipo gyvenvietėms nebūdingų bruožų. Kai kurių tyrinėtojų manymu, architektūra buvo to meto pagalbinė priemonė, identifikuojanti respubliką ir politinę santvarką. To meto architektūros teoretikai, atvirkščiai, teigė, kad tik Lietuvos architektų iniciatyva buvo atsižvelgta į vietos etnografinius savitumus. Esama teiginių apie prieškarinio mokyklos tęstinumą ir Vakarų bei Centrinės Europos patirties įtaką pokario Lietuvos planavimo darbams. Manytina, kad to laikotarpio Lietuvos architektūros ypatumus lėmė projektavimą reglamentuojančios direktyvos, politinė ekonominė situacija, jaunosios architektų kartos ideologinis ugdymas, kūrėjo nuasmeninimas ir priešprieša asimiliacijos pavojams, Vakarų architektūros idėjų siekiamybė informacinės blokados sąlygomis.

Kitas svarbus Lietuvos naujųjų miestelių bruožas – juose neatsirado tremtinių socialinės grupės. Atvykę savanoriai kolonistai kūrėsi saugesniuose didmiesčiuose, atvykėlių valdininkija nebuvo gausi, jos palaiptui mažėjo. Todėl etninė periferijos sudėtis didžiąja dalimi išliko nepakitusi.

Šiandieninė XX a. antroje pusėje kurtų miestelių padėtis gana skirtinga. Kai kuriose buvusių tarybinių ūkių centrų gyvenvietėse pavyko atgaivinti senąją pramonę (pvz., Dainavoje – paukštinkystę, Skaistgiryje – dolomito kasybą). Kai kuriuose buvusiuose kolūkiuose įsitvirtino sėkmingai veikiančios žemės ūkio bendrovės (pvz., Ėriškiuose) ar buvo imtasi naujų žemės ūkio šakų (pvz., šiltnamių žemės ūkio – Aristavoje). Kai kurios iš šio tipo gyvenviečių pateko į didesniųjų miestų įtakos zonas (šalia Nemenčinės esančios Didžiosios Kabiškės, prie Ukmergės esanti Dainava, netoli Šilutės – Juknaičiai). Siekiant pritraukti ir išlaikyti jaunus specialistus valstybi-

niuose ūkiuose, buvo statomi kokybiškesni būstai nei didžiuosiuose miestuose. Todėl didmiesčių įtakon patekę naujieji miesteliai šiandien tampa vis populiariesne priemiestinio gyvenimo vieta. Naujosios funkcijos neabejotinai turi įtakos šių miestelių tolesnei raidai. Kai kurių iš jų vaizdas jau dabar ryškiai pakitęs.

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