Vilnius Regional Prosecutor's Office. Architect Kęstutis Lupeikis

LONGING FOR ORDER

THE POST-SOVIET ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE IN LITHUANIA

by **Arnoldas Stramskas**

"The longing for order is at the same time a longing for death, because life is an incessant disruption of order."[1]
Milan Kundera

Architectural discourse is as suitable for reflecting upon two and the half decades of Lithuanian independence as any other discourse. Clearly, there were profound changes. While the signs of the Soviet past are slowly being erased (firstly by the disappearance of monuments), large portions of buildings, even though crumbling, remain visibly intact. In fact, more than half of the population still lives in Soviet-era housing.[2] Soviet architecture in general, and mass-produced apartment blocks in particular, serve not only as a constant reminder of the historical period, but also as a certain critique of attempts to create uniform humanity devoid of individuality. Yet today's built environment, as spectacular and individualized as it might appear, is still largely unexplored. While it is not difficult to ask (and answer) what Soviet architecture did and what kinds of functions it served, it is much more difficult to ask the same question about contemporary architecture. When the oppressor is a clearly identifiable authoritarian regime, at least in retrospect, the signs of that regime are relatively simple to recognize and criticize. When the power shifts and disperses itself into numerous locations and relations, architectural critique becomes a more difficult task, at least within its more socially oriented mode. The catchwords of today's Lithuanian architectural discourse, especially in its "critical" mode, deal with architectural debates of craft versus art, the roles of the capital and the state, national character and authenticity, globalization and democracy, and morality and responsibility. What follows is an attempt to delineate and transgress these debates by pointing out that architectural discourse is uncritical in terms of social processes and finds itself in a certain impasse (like many other spheres) and that proposed solutions to the problems are shortsighted and outmoded. Even if there are signs that architecture is somewhat distancing itself from professional specialization and isolation in some ways, and that certain positive developments[3] are occurring, overall the parameters of architectural discourse remain impoverished and without the ability to generate deeper reflection or theory about social processes of which architecture is a significant constitutive part. For architecture – both as practice and criticism – to go beyond the present impasse requires a firm shift in architectural aesthetics and criticism towards reconsideration and synthesizing of contemporary political economy with the reconceptualization of politics.

Criticism and unintended consequences

Kim Dovey describes the trap of "critical" architecture in the following way:

> "When someone begins a statement: 'I don't mean to be critical, but…', then we are forewarned that they do, in fact, mean to be critical, and they will be. In the practice of architecture, however, the reverse is often the case.

> "Architecture that is meant to be critical becomes incorporated into, and complicit with, a prevailing economic, political and social order: the 'ever-the-same' returns in the guise of the 'critical.'"[4]

Even though there are emerging voices that aim to question the role of architecture within the present socioeconomic model in Lithuania, these voices are few and far between. Moreover, there is no self-identified "critical architecture" to speak of. Nevertheless, Dovey's quotation above is relevant for the Lithuanian architectural discourse. One important attempt to outline the architectural situation in Lithuania after it regained its independence is the book *Laisvės Architektūra* (*Architecture of Freedom*),[5] which will serve as the main reference point for the purposes of this essay. The book is edited by Tomas Grunskis and Julija Reklaitė, both of whom are representatives of the young generation of Lithuanian architects and critics. The strategy chosen for this collection is not only to offer scholarly and individual perspectives, but also to create space for reflection in which various actors involved in architectural processes express their opinions and insights.[6] In other words, it lets the world of architecture speak for itself. The discussed period spans two decades of Lithuanian independence (1990–2010), which is important in terms of regime change as well as in terms of architectural (and political, economic, social, and cultural) events and tendencies.

> **"THE KEY QUESTION IS HOW ARCHITECTS UNDERSTAND THEIR OWN FUNCTION AND SOCIAL REALITY, NO MATTER HOW FRAGMENTED, UNSTABLE, AND COMPLICATED THAT REALITY MIGHT BE."**

> "Architecture, after all, reflects the society of its own time, because it encompasses many layers: investors, who come up with an idea that something has to be built; a bank, which loans the money; an architect, who draws; a society, which disagrees with everything; a municipality, which agrees with everything; builders, who build in whatever manner they know, and so on. All of it creates these layers – you slice them like a cake, and see how we have lived in those times."[7]

What becomes immediately apparent is that the Hegelian understanding of architecture as one of the highest-ranking fine arts is extremely prevalent among Lithuanian architects, who want to see architecture as an art form that expresses spirit through built form. Because of such an understanding, they regret the devaluation of the role of the architect and the profession, which is seen as becoming merely one craft among many other crafts. What is peculiar is that the boundary between art and craft is not questioned. Nor are there signs that any of the avant-garde artistic movements, which questioned such a division, or more precisely the division between art and life, as meriting any basis for separation, have had any influence on today's Lithuanian architects. If the spirit of time materializes through the aesthetics of glass and steel, maximizing the utility of space, and a lack of harmony with the environment – why do local architects, who render such an architecture with their own hands – feel such a conflict and nostalgia for the architect's autonomy and for artistic architecture? Darius Čiuta is among the rare representatives of art in architecture. While many architects talk melancholically about the vanishing art, Čiuta not only advocates, but also tries to materialize his visions. In his view,

> "Architecture does not exist as an art. Once every three or five years there emerges a building that one could discuss. All the rest are technical, engineering solutions."[8]

Čiuta is also one of those who acknowledge the conflicting nature of art in architecture: "If there is no architecture, there is no conflict."[9] For him, it is possible to create another kind of architecture, but this requires "moral" choices that often have financial ramifications. Yet, is it possible to assert that the problem (if it is agreed that such a problem exists) is merely an individual choice made by an architect? Even more, is "art" in itself a guarantee for another space, that is different both socially and politically? So far, architecture merely reproduces sociopolitical micro-managerial programs, i.e., it assigns bodies to their proper place, be it the home, the workplace, or a supermarket. While for contemporary Lithuanian architects, architecture is symptomatic of societal processes that most of them describe as negative (e.g. commodification of culture, commercialization, instrumentalization of politics for capital), and they wish or hope that architecture could remain on the margins of – if not outside – these processes.

The question should be posed as follows: what critical spatial practices might be deployed so that Lithuanian architects would be able to create and materialize their projects provided there were "a proper" legislative base, a client who took into account the architect's suggestions, and room was left for experimenta-

tion? As long as architecture remains strictly a building maximizing its function without an attempt to grasp in what ways it is a reflection of social and spatial processes and in what ways it is creating new scenarios of inclusion/exclusion and spatialization of power, it will remain a hostage and simultaneously a political and economic tool. The architect's powerlessness stems not from the contemporary situation, in which external factors bind architectural expression, but from the narrowness of architectural education and professional specialization that is deeply embedded in workings of and for capital. It is not a question of whether one could make compromises or not, similar to the popular representation of an architect vividly portrayed by Ayn Rand's protagonist in *The Fountainhead*, Howard Roark. Roark embodies unbridled individualism and creative autonomy that is maintained by any means necessary, as if countering Henri Lefebvre's claim that "architecture and the architect, threatened with disappearance, capitulate before the property developer, who spends the money."[10] The key question is how architects understand their own function and social reality, no matter how fragmented, unstable, and complicated that reality might be.

The Roarkian perspective is expressed by the artist-architect Kęstutis Lupeikis, who designed the Vilnius Regional Prosecutor's Office, which was received with mixed reviews. Critics, such as Vytautas Rubavičius, claimed that the building was the opposite of what the law should represent (transparency and accessibility) due to its disregard for the surrounding urban fabric, its diagonal windows, its black dominating cube form, and its lack of "any human feelings."[11] However, Lupeikis counters all these accusations when defending his artistic vision. Thus, it is worth quoting him at length. Concerning the windows he states:

> **"The windows received varying reception from people; one remark was that the employees would walk diagonally. When answering that question, I argued that while doing his job one should probably be working instead of staring through a window. Then everything will be straight."**[12]

Another claim is about the surrounding environment and artistic integrity:

> **"My response to such criticism is: dear ones, do we have to revert to the typical Soviet panel housing? Where would this take us? Architecturally this is a poor context, it is not valuable – my position towards this is skeptical. In post-Soviet space the context is valued too much and this demonstrates a certain creative inability. Elsewhere in the world this does not cause many problems. In the West no one thinks about the context but rather about the artistic value of an object itself – the idea. For instance, volume is not a problem in New York – you have money, you build a larger building. Therefore the overall result is effective. [...] After winning the competition, a master plan of the area had to be changed and this procedure involved consultations with the local community. They came to the meeting and, as always, it started with an uproar – not because of the volume, not because of the cube, none of that. Their discontent was due to a square, where children are usually playing. Yet, when I was taking pictures there, it was not even possible to step on the grass for all the dog feces. For any construction proposal you get a few old pensioners, who reject any kind of construction, especially one that takes place near them. I can hardly imagine a scenario where the crowd gathers and starts designing. In my understanding this would be total nonsense; it would be the same as if a crowd started painting a picture together. Should an artist stop practicing if society rejects him? If you are an artist, it is in your interest not to do it in a bad way."**[13]

One gets a sense of a certain arrogance and irony in the proclamations made by Lupeikis. Artistic vision comes before everything. Users of the building need to perform their tasks dutifully and not try to combine leisure (and pleasure) with work. Ideas of urban planning and community engagement are perceived as bureaucratic nuisances. Clearly, there cannot be any meaningful dialogue with the inhabitants of the surrounding area because they are not worthy of discussion. Artistic autonomy needs to be preserved at all costs, which is the price of progress. It is also a polemic with city planners and urbanists who can also be quite dogmatic and bureaucratic, as expressed in the following statement: "Any deviations from (distortions of) anything that is normal, logical, systematic, objective and reasoned economically, socially, etc., is understood as deformations of urban planning."[14] Yet, leaving these ethical or moral issues aside, I would argue that this particular building without a clear intent at subversion is, in fact, subversive. The unintended consequence of this is that the building creates an effect on the conception of law, which is already highly compromised and mistrusted. Those who would like to see a building of law being transparent and welcoming believe that architectural content and form have to coincide with or perhaps generate trust in the institutions housed in those buildings.[15] What is of interest is that although Lupeikis intended to create "the experience of respectful awe",[16] the project passed a commission of architects and prosecutors without capturing the Kafkaesque irony of it all. K. Michael Hays, in his influential essay on the role of architectural criticism, asks the following questions:

> **"What is the responsibility of architectural criticism or of critical historiography? Is it to teach and to disseminate information about the monuments of culture? Is it to deliver technical insights and opinions about the capabilities of the architect or the form of a building? Or is it [...] to concentrate on the intrinsic conditions through which architecture is made possible? In order to know all we can about architecture we must be able to understand each instance of architecture, not as a passive agent of culture in its dominant ideological,**

institutional, and historical forms, nor as a detached, disinfected object. Rather we must understand it as actively and continually occupying a cultural place – as an architectural intention with ascertainable political and intellectual consequences."[17]

Politics against consensus

Jacques Ranciere claims that art becomes political not by directly communicating political messages or being recognized as political, but by questioning, experimenting, and stepping outside its own forms.

> "Politics and art, like forms of knowledge, construct 'fictions', that is to say material rearrangements of signs and images, relationships between what is seen and what is said, between what is done and what can be done."[18]

Architecture, in this case, has a privileged position because its output occupies space, partly composing spatial and social fabric. Buildings can and do evoke various feelings, serve different functions, and generate social conflict or social "harmony". When architecture leads to conflict, it creates spaces of dissensus, which for Ranciere is foundational for *politics* as opposed to managerial *police*. Architects and various critics affiliated with architecture eagerly denounce symbols of architecture-gone-wrong, and the right bank of the river Neris in Vilnius might serve as an example. The area became a symbol of finally catching up with ultra-modernity via its concentration of skyscrapers. Mega-shopping and entertainment malls called "Akropolis" in major cities are also good illustrations. Skyscrapers are mostly criticized neither for their form nor for their function, but for falling outside boundaries of the urban context – for distorting the urban landscape. Mega-malls are criticized for their social impact and their inexpressive, box-like architecture, seducing the masses with vanity fairs and abandoning more noble forms of culture. While both of these arguments are valuable to a certain degree, they do not go beyond such pronouncements. It could be argued that built forms are in a sense positive to the extent that they unveil ideological foundations of a new society and provide space for reflections on the role of architecture in society and on the role of buildings not only as material objects occupying space, but also their social functions, their power effects, and the sociality of architecture in general.

Perhaps eye-soaring objects are an indirect contribution to a largely non-existent vocabulary of Lithuanian architectural critique. According to the pessimistic scenario, which currently appears to be resembling reality most closely, discussions about the "wounds" of the city fabric merely serve the function of displacement in psychoanalytic terms. Few buildings get scapegoated, while architecture's social/political aspects remain within the narrow confines of debates about drawing boundaries between art and craft. Architectural discourse,which merely engages in the functional,technical, and rational characteristics of a "good" building, including formal criteria for taking into account the surrounding environment, incessantly contains architecture within a professionalized field. Democracy gets re-enacted via this selective critique, proof that the debate is ongoing.

ARCHITECTURE'S RELATION to democracy is, in fact, one of the unfolding tensions in the architectural discourse. For example, Eugenijus Miliūnas is unafraid to proclaim, "Architecture and dictatorship are absolutely one and the same thing."[19] Although this might sound like a mere provocation in times when democracy is not questioned, it does open space for discussion. According to some architects, planners, and theoreticians, architectural democracy should manifest itself via participation in planning processes and through community engagement with representatives of the various social segments that will be affected by the newly built environment. Tomas Grunskis claims: "We do not know many things yet, and in a young society it is forgiven. But community engagement, being one of the traditional European social cohabitation values, is yet unknown in our social environment."[20] Typically, community engagement only appears when consensus on a certain issue must be achieved. Yet a consensus becomes fragile and apolitical when concepts of democracy, community, and participation are questioned. According to Ranciere, there are conflicting views, or rather practices, of tdemocracy. One is the democratic messiness of unpredictable excess. The other one, practiced most thoroughly by state structures, attempts by all means to eliminate that messiness. As a result, these clashing visions of democracy lead to the paradoxical situation where democracy in name is standing against democracy in practice.[21] The state serves the managerial role of providing consensus, which voids democracy of any content in politics: "Consensus is the 'end of politics': in other words, not the accomplishment of the ends of politics but simply a return to the normal state of things – the non-existence of politics."[22] For Ranciere, democracy is precisely that unmanageability with all its faults, mistakes, and conflicts that should be valued. Additional problems appear when democracy is perceived as a rule of the majority, which is a prevalent conception. We quickly reach a complex stalemate when the majority might either be the dominating force or be dominated itself. Reduction of the majority, which can dictate the rules for the rest, just like the minority's domination over the majority (which is the case, at least in economic terms) cannot be viewed as a positive trend. The concepts of minority and majority are flawed themselves

> ## "ARCHITECTURE'S RELATION TO DEMOCRACY IS, IN FACT, ONE OF THE UNFOLDING TENSIONS IN THE ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE."

Swedbank Headquarters, Vilnius. Architects: Audrius Ambrasas Architects.

because they assume old-fashioned conceptions of identity and ideological allegiances that no longer characterize subjectivities that might be multiple and multiply, or even contradictorily, aligned. Participatory planning that is slowly entering the architectural vocabulary becomes an empty signifier in practice, just like "green economy" or "corporate social responsibility" that are inscribed in laws but almost never exercised in practice. It is an increasingly criticized practice for its illusionary democratic aspect,[23] which creates the illusion that the "people's" voice was heard and that "choices" were made, but in reality, it is merely seen as a bureaucratic annoyance to be overcome in order to proceed with the initial plans. Community as such is devoid of content and is turned into an ideological phantom, hence its popularity within the symbolic economy (which was previously called civil society). In fact, what it often means is the management and self-interest of cultural and NGO industries. Instead of direct participation, the representational model remains, and these new players become de facto representatives of a community and civil society because by definition they do not belong to the state or to the capital, two other pillars holding up society in this model. Nonetheless, connections between capital, state,

and the so-called third sector are much closer within this new regime than they might appear.[24]

It is obvious that the architectural problem is political. And how do architects understand politics? Grunskis claims:

> **"It might well be the case that the post-Soviet label, attached during the first decade of independence, is still valiad in Lithuania today. One of its features is distrust in politicians and depoliticization of everything everywhere, including architecture. It might be that such extreme (separated from politics) architectural liberalism is equally bad in a social, as well as in a creative sense. With an archaic understanding of freedom dominating, civic freedoms in Lithuania did not grow together with the architectural reality and did not become a law. There is even less to say about the spirit of the period..."[25]**

The quotation above basically outlines "what is to be done" in the Lithuanian architectural context. The idea appears to be widely shared by those engaged in fields related to architecture,

and solutions have to come specifically from the state. According to the architect and public figure Audrys Karalius, architecture is left to be evaluated by architects themselves, and "society [...] remains without state-directed guidance."[26] Similarly, Vytautas Rubavičius claims, "Although state power and the scope of direct governing have obviously decreased, sub-national territorial and urbanistic formations have not become more self-sufficient. In order to activate cities and regions, a clear state policy is necessary."[27] Such a traditional political model is reminiscent of Foucault's elaboration on the long history of the "pastoral modality of power", which drew on various figures promising survival and redemption, and which eventually materialized itself with the state being conceived of as the shepherd and society as the flock.[28]

While this model is clearly no longer dominant, Lithuanian architects still perceive the state to be a sovereign agent that holds (or should hold) monopoly and autonomy over decision-making. It should have a certain transcendental ability to know and do what is best, preferably for the sake of the collective social body. However, as expressed by Lupeikis, this social body is itself the problem. Or as Ambrasas stated, it is architects' work in the environment where "society [...] disagrees with everything". Although this might not be the case at all because "society" is not only non-interfering, but most of the time it does not even know about projects before construction begins. Appeals to the state might simply be due to practical reasons, but what is revealed in architectural discourse is that the state should be that shepherd that not only regulates and decides, but also directs and guides. The message is that society cannot be trusted – it does not know, yet, what is best for it. As long as the political is perceived as the politicians' arena or as a dialogue with them, real politics are not likely to emerge.

The landscape of political economy

One does not need to talk about the economic crisis, the crisis of values (a frequent appeal in Lithuania), or more than two decades of post-Soviet transformations to realize that transformations are occurring everywhere (in the geographic sense). Society as an indivisible, local, territorial, and political unit is disintegrating. Within the architectural discourse, when attempts to grasp sociopolitical realities are made, Europe in particular and the whole Western world in general are often idealized, longed for, and desired. Although quite a few architects are expressing a certain skepticism towards processes of Europeanization, it is possible to come up with an underlying premise that Europeanization is at fault only in the forms that are materialized in Lithuania. According to this position, social maturity, political culture, effective and all-encompassing education, law, justice, and state support do in fact exist in the West. While there is no need to deny that qualitative differences do exist between the former Eastern Bloc and the West, the idealization of the West

is a symptomatic example of a lack of sociopolitical imagination and a neocolonial inferiority complex. Social, political, cultural, and economic crises that are ongoing in the West are arguably no less significant than Eastern European transformations, and there is much talk about Western values and models as not yet having achieved the ideal points of convergence. "Speaking critically, our architects do not read much and, of course, do not write."[29] Trust in and a desire for the abstracted Western model, as if it were frozen in time, merely reproduces teleological notions of progress and modernity. Representatives of the Lithuanian architectural milieu are communicating their desire to jump on the train, which has already departed. What is needed instead is a vigorous analysis of what has happened in the West (as well as in the East) and why idealist models have collapsed or are collapsing. This would, perhaps, allow a more adequate response to present conditions instead of trying to go through the same stages of "inevitable" development. Yet, Lithuanian architects' responses are mostly appeals to art and national(ist) features in architecture, state protection, individual morality, and responsibility.

> **"LITHUANIAN ARCHITECTURE OF THE PAST 25 YEARS IS A MIRROR OF SOCIAL DECOMPOSITION."**

IT IS EASY TO GET the impression that Lithuanian architects live and act as postmodernists and adapt themselves to decentralized, capitalized, self-managed, and networked environments, yet theorize as modernist urbanists. Formal and technical qualities, which are considered as art-science, guarantee quality of architecture and its internal laws, while at the same time there is an adherence to educational, Corbusierian power and the need for architecture. It has to fulfill social and aesthetic functions by creating a new human-citizen, making him/her proud of his/her country, place, and tradition. Jonas Minkevičius might be one of the most radical representatives of such a tendency, equating Soviet and European non-freedoms of the nation, which today include importing unwanted tolerance, destroying sovereignty, and undermining the foundations of the nation. Minkevičius is openly articulating his chauvinistic position and calling for the creation of "authentic" national culture. However, such a position in more subtle forms is felt throughout the architectural discourse.

Whether they are nationalists or cosmopolitans, what these professionals share in common is the desire to plug themselves into global currents of the world of architecture through competitions, exhibitions, and architectural biennales. Architecture loses its meaning in a local sense because the local is already constructed as a result of the global. Be it authentic, local, regional, or global architecture, it participates in the same symbolic economy, annihilating space via buildings and materializing capital. Yet, it is not enough to see new buildings as merely transforming fictitious capital into something specific. Land itself, as argued by David Harvey, "is not a commodity in the ordinary sense. It is a fictitious form of capital that derives from expectations of future rents."[30] Harvey locates recent eco-

nomic crises exactly here – as the accumulation of capital that was expended on real estate creating a speculative bubble that was inevitably destined to burst. For Harvey, urbanization in general "has been a key means for the absorption of capital and labor surpluses throughout capitalism's history."[31] The recent and short-lived economic boom that started after the Baltic states joined the European Union and ended with a crash in 2008–2009 was in large-part sponsored by Scandinavian banks' credit for consumer goods and real estate construction, acquisition, and speculation. Swedbank, a Swedish bank that entered the Lithuanian market in 1999, is one of the key players in the credit and financial market. Swedbank's headquarters, which were opened in 2010, is considered to be one of the best buildings of the two decades of Lithuanian independence. The architects' team headed by Audrius Ambrasas designed the building that won local and international awards and recognition. It is praised for its use of material (vertical wooden panels that soften the high-rise appearance and change the surface depending on the observer's position), the interplay between vertical and horizontal volumes, and the integration of an elevated recreational space open for the wider public. For Kastytis Rudokas it is an ultimate example of aesthetic and political democratization:

> **"Among the key features of this building is the integration of public space into an institutional one, which gives meaning to private property, architectural space. On the premises of the bank there is a café and an outdoor terrace, which becomes a kind of observational platform, from which the view towards the old part of Vilnius opens up. We may claim that such a model of integration, until now uncharacteristic of Lithuanian banks' functional and architectural structure, is stemming from a global societal model, where relations between social and cultural groups are equated, and the horizontal model of integration is becoming more prominent within the economy. In general, this object, like the whole new Vilnius city center with its sociocultural structure, reminds one of the Internet space, where members of a society with different needs and goals coexist harmoniously – from sporting youth and absent-minded shoppers to CEOs and city officials."[32]**

THIS KIND OF analysis is a perfect example of an attempt to eliminate any political content through celebratory espousal of "democratic" architecture by engaging the sociopolitical and the aesthetic. Architecture becomes a materialized part of a neoliberal utopia of a free-market and a networked society, forgetting that even the most visibly open spaces are increasingly policed and controlled, whereas free-market participation is always rigidly structured in terms of who has the means and access to it in the first place. The question to ask, then, is how one might reconcile the fact that the "best" architecture is being made possible by unsustainable infinite financialization of capital that often bears heavy social costs.[33] The difference between the Swedbank headquarters, which is universally applauded as an example of "good

architecture" and which thus pacifies potential discussion about its content (financial capital), and Lupeikis's black cube is provoking and raises questions concerning operations of law and the "democratic" nature of state institutions.

Typical solutions to urban crises often evoke post-industrial intra-city competitions by stimulating tourism and cultural industries. Vilnius mayor Artūras Zuokas is credited as being among the most influential visionaries and as a crucial figure in shaping the city in its present form. Among his ideas was a Guggenheim and Hermitage museum project. The winner of the competition for its architectural implementation was Zaha Hadid, recently deceased, one of the brightest stars of neo-avant-garde (which some would call neoliberal) architecture.[34] Zuokas's idea was that Vilnius could have a success story similar to that of Bilbao in Spain, adding local flavor through the heritage of Fluxus and cinematic avant-garde star émigrés Jurgis Mačiūnas and Jonas Mekas. It was supposed to generate a stream of tourists and make Vilnius a regional capital of art and culture. However, because of various voices of discontent and an ongoing economic crisis, the plan was post-poned indefinitely. The logic, however, is rather clear. Architecture needs to be either "authentically" old (Vilnius is a UNESCO heritage site due to its relatively large old town, and it markets itself as such) or globally recognized, experimental, and atypical in order to draw attention, stimulate tourism, and attract more investments.[35]

Inconclusive conclusions

Audrys Karalius claims that in order for the situation to change, "time, experience, responsibility" are needed.[36] But what experience has been accumulated during this time? And to whom should architects feel responsible? Architects have practical skills but lack theoretical insights. Architecture will neither become a modernist tool for the creation of a New Man, nor will it become completely obsolete and meaningless. Architecture, whether intentionally or not, affects the environment and those who use it, partitioning the space and spatializing sociality. In short, it is part and parcel of social reproduction. Thus, there is a need for a "double movement" of architectural de-specialization (stepping outside its disciplinary framework)[37] and self-education of non-architects on the issues concerning architecture as a constitutive part of the sociopolitical field. More importantly, post-Soviet chaos might be a productive moment to experiment, engage, subvert, and play with uncertainty. It is far from being the same as open-heartedly embracing the prevailing neoliberal logic as opposed to a rigid state logic, which merely orders and stagnates. The contemporary situation does not fall neatly into such an imagined dichotomy of two differences, of two choices. Instead, it is an interplay of both of these and numerous other factors (historical, philosophical, cultural, technological, social, etc.). When buildings are built based on capitalist fantasies of infinite creativity and accumulation, they should be treated not as excesses or exceptions without context, as some critically minded architects claim, but positively, as raw material for infinite critique, situations of conflict, and ideological deconstructions of the processes that are revealed through them. Lithuanian archi-

tecture of the past 25 years is a mirror of social decomposition. Thus, it should serve as a space for engagement with outcomes of this decomposition instead of glossing over it. There is a dissensus in all spheres of life already. Architecture and architects might contribute to that culture of dissensus or might cultivate fantasies about the social unity and spirituality of their art-craft. Architecture has its specificities, like all arts that have a sufficient degree of autonomy to qualify as art, but it has more commonalities with the processes that surround it. It is about time to start engaging in these processes and offering new modes of analysis and action instead of attempting to return to imaginary "models that work". Models that do not exist, and, probably, never existed. Paraphrasing Marcel Proust, one could claim that "the only way to defend architecture is to attack it."[38] ⊠

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19 Grunskis and Reklaitė, *Laisvės architektūra*, 171.

20 Grunskis and Reklaitė, *Laisvės Architektūra*, 261.

21 For elaboration of "democratic paradox," see Ranciere's essay "Does Democracy Mean Something?" in Jacques Ranciere, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), 45–61.

22 Ranciere, Dissensus, 42–43.

23 For an overview of debates (and unconvincing solutions), see Markus Miessen, *The Nightmare of Participation* (*Crossbench Praxis as a Mode of Criticality*), (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010).

24 For a good source outlining these debates from activist and academic perspectives, see INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, ed., *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, (Cambridge: South End Press, 2007).

25 Grunskis and Reklaitė, *Laisvės architektūra*, 21.

26 Grunskis and Reklaitė, *Laisvės architektūra*, 220.

27 Vytautas Rubavičius, *Postmodernusis kapitalizmas*, (Kaunas: Kitos knygos, 2010), 226.

28 Michel Foucault, "'Omnes et singulatim': Toward a Critique of Political Reason," in *The Essential Foucault: Selections from Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, (New York: The New Press, 2003), 182.

29 Grunskis and Reklaitė, *Laisvės architektūra*, 314.

30 David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, (London: Verso, 2012), 28.

31 Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, 42.

32 Kastytis Rudokas, "Swedbank" centrinė būstinė", accessed January 14, 2013, http://www.autc.lt/public/HeritageObject.aspx?id=1293.

33 A non-typical situation occurred in 2011, when a deeply indebted head of a construction company planted an imitation of a car-bomb in Swedbank's garage and demanded 1 million Euros. He was arrested and sentenced. Instead of seeing it as an isolated and extreme incident, this case may serve as an illustration of human costs stemming from finance-fuelled economic booms and busts. Emigration was, however, a much more popular exit option from financial crisis.

34 Owen Hatherley, "Zaha Hadid Architects and the Neoliberal Avant-Garde", *Mute Magazine*, 26 (2010). Accessed October 20, 2012, http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/zaha-hadid-architects-and-neoliberal-avant-garde.

35 Grunskis and Reklaitė, *Laisvės architektūra*, 234.

36 Grunskis and Reklaitė, *Laisvės architektūra*, 291.

37 Almantas Samalavičius states that even though there has already been a course for a decade on architectural criticism at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, the overall situation is bleak: "So far we do not have a single anthology of architectural theory or criticism, and almost none of the works of Western architectural criticism. Furthermore, there is not one text compendium of representative character which would reflect upon contemporary tendencies and directions in architectural criticism". Cited from Almantas Samalavičius, *Architektūros kritika* (Vilnius: Technika, 2010), 5.

38 The original goes as follows: "The only way to defend language is to attack it." Quoted in Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, (London and New York: Verso, 1998), 5.