

Vilnius - between persistence and socio-spatial change

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Vilnius – between persistence and socio-spatial change

DOVILE KRUPICKAITĖ

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to determine the socio-spatial structure of neighbourhoods and their changes in the urban region of Vilnius after 1990 and to identify further trends of potential development. On the one hand the post-Soviet city Vilnius is characterized by a stable mixed social structure with slow processes of social changes in formerly inhabited territories. On the other hand newly-built residential areas emerged with socially homogeneous, better income structures. Based on the general development trends in the urban region of Vilnius and results of the present survey, two prospective scenarios (persistence/social stability and growing social difference/polarisation) in the city region can be distinguished. The most important factors for social stability concern inherited structures (privatization, social mixed population, image, infrastructure) and factors of differentiation by current processes (construction, deterioration of housing quality).

post-Soviet city, socio-spatial change, polarization, social stability, persistence

Zusammenfassung

Vilnius – zwischen Beständigkeit und sozialräumlichem Wandel

Das Ziel der vorliegenden Arbeit ist es, die sozialräumliche Struktur von Wohnvierteln und ihren Wandel im städtischen Gebiet von Vilnius nach 1990 darzulegen und weitere Tendenzen einer möglichen Entwicklung zu ermitteln. Auf der einen Seite ist das postsowjetische Vilnius von einer ausgeglichenen sozialen Struktur mit nur langsamen sozialen Wandelungsprozessen in den früheren bewohnten Gebieten geprägt. Auf der anderen Seite entstehen neue, sozial homogene Wohngebiete mit besseren Einkommensstrukturen. Auf Grundlage der allgemeinen Entwicklungstendenzen im Stadtgebiet von Vilnius und der Ergebnisse aktueller Umfragen kann zwischen zwei zukünftigen Szenarien (Beständigkeit/soziale Stabilität und wachsende soziale Unterschiede/Polarisierung) in der Stadtre-gion unterschieden werden. Die wichtigsten Faktoren für eine soziale Stabilität betreffen vererbte Strukturen (Privatisierung, eine Bevölkerung mit unterschiedlichen sozialen Hintergründen, Image, Infrastruktur) sowie Faktoren der Differenzierung durch gegenwärtige Prozesse (Wohnungsbau, Verschlechterung der Wohnqualität).

postsowjetische Stadt, sozialräumlicher Wandel. Polarisierung, soziale Stabilität, Beständigkeit

Introduction

Though many years have passed since the radical social, economic and political changes in the former states of the Soviet block the Soviet heritage is responsible for certain specific processes and problems. Social processes in urban areas represent one of the actualities. There are two questions to be answered: what processes are taking place and what are their development prospects. Most researches of post-socialist cities (surveyed by VAN KEMPEN and MURIE 2009) point out the obvious differentiation trends of social urban spaces – increasing social disparities, growing residential segregation and social exclusion (HERFERT 2003; HIRT 2007; KOVACZ and WIESSNER 2004; RUDOLPH and AKSENOV 2000) – as an important transformation component of post-socialist cities. However it is obvious that strong social polarization typical for Western cities have not taken place (BRADE et al., 2009; KÄHRIK and TAMMARU 2010; KOSTINSKIY 2001, p. 459; RUOPILA 2006; SÝKORA 1999, 2009; Wiest 2001). KOSTINSKIY names five factors responsible for social stability in post-socialist cities: privatization, social support for housing, an economically weak as well as a socially and ethnically mixed population (KOSTINSKIY 2001, p. 460).

Although transformation of urban space in Vilnius has not finished (BURNEIKA 2008), it is obvious that no radical changes of social space have taken place. Despite the accelerated construction of housing estates and expansion of suburban areas in the last ten years (Fig. 1), their scope lags behind the large-scale constructions of the Soviet years. Even today, more than half of about 550 thousand urban residents live in neighbourhoods of blocks of flats constructed in the Soviet years (calculations made according to the data for 2004: Vilniaus miesto 2007). According to the 2001 population census data and different research (LENKEVIČIŪTĖ 2006, p. 261; PETRAUSKAITĖ 2005), the socio-spatial structure of the population living in different neighbourhoods including the neighbourhoods of tower blocks is highly mixed.

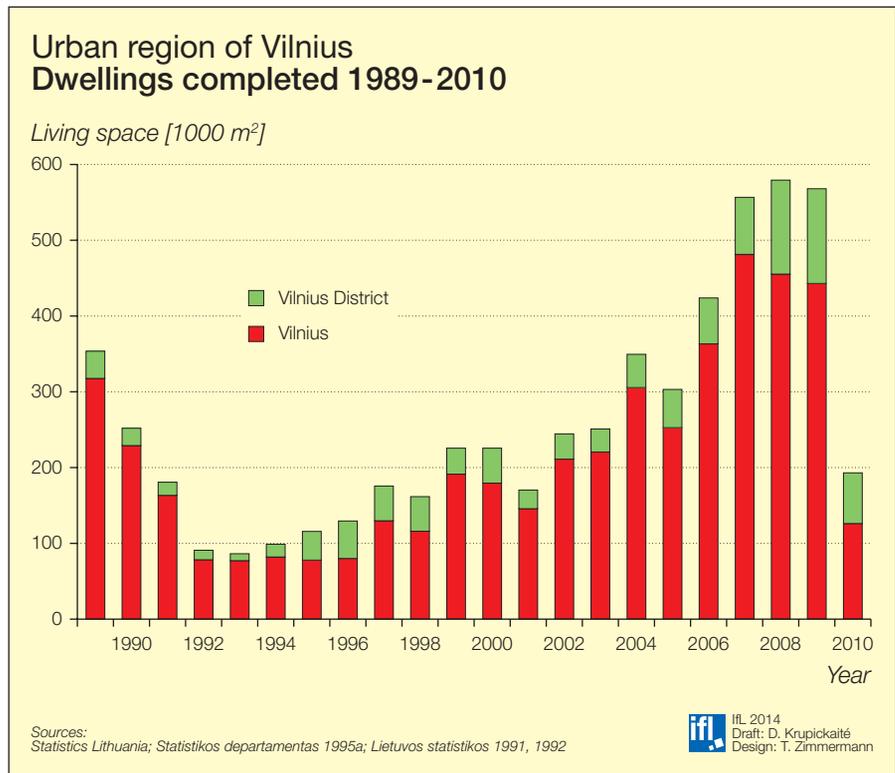


Fig. 1: Dwellings completed 1989-2010

However it cannot be denied that a certain social-spatial differentiation of the Vilnius population (LENKEVIČIŪTĖ 2006, p. 378; VANAGAS 1992, p. 51; VILNIUS IR VILNIEČIAI 1995, p. 19) and the varying prestige of neighbourhoods (LENKEVIČIŪTĖ 2006, p. 258; VILNIUS IR VILNIEČIAI 1995, p. 12) inherited from the Soviet years have been gaining strength in the last ten years (LENKEVIČIŪTĖ 2006, pp. 386-387).

The aim of the paper is to identify the main factors of socio-spatial structure and its changes in Vilnius. The social and housing situations in Vilnius and its suburbs are discussed followed by a comparison of the status of different neighbourhoods and tendencies of changes/stability. The last section of the paper is devoted to discussion about the scenarios and most important factors of socio-spatial changes/stability in the post-socialist city.

Socio-economic situation and housing market after 1990

After 1990, Vilnius and the country in general entered different stages of development. The industrial decline at the be-

ginning of the nineties and the financial crisis in 1997, legal problems related with the restitution of land and other factors caused a rather long-lasting stagna-

Lithuania and the Vilnius Region Foreign direct investments 1997-2010

Year	Foreign direct investment [million LTL]		
	Vilnius	Vilnius District	Lithuania
1997	2 155	48	4 163
1998	3 857	74	6 501
1999	4 992	95	8 252
2000	5 801	135	9 337
2001	6 830	83	10 662
2002	8 298	85	13 184
2003	7 911	98	13 699
2004	9 722	103	16 193
2005	13 320	105	23 896
2006	15 991	126	28 925
2007	20 527	155	35 504
2008	21 165	299	31 733
2009	20 194	273	33 010
2010	20 961	412	35 553

Source: Statistics Lithuania

Tab. 1: Foreign direct investments in Lithuania and the Vilnius Region 1997-2010

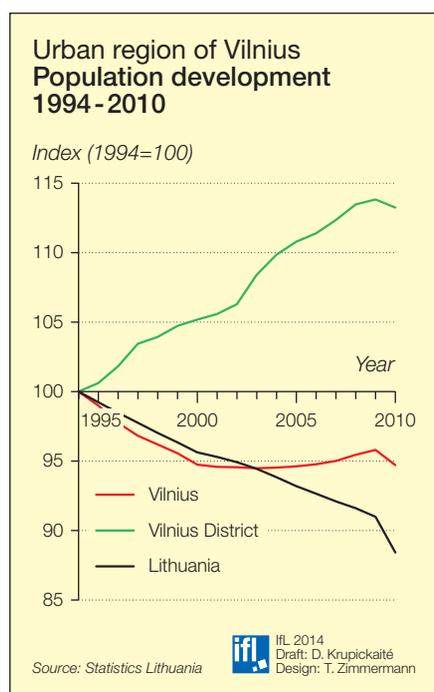


Fig. 2: Population development in the urban region of Vilnius 1994-2010

tion in the construction and property market. Not only the construction of pre-fabricated blocks of flats and the fabrication of the blocks was discontinued but also the construction of many individual houses in the peripheral parts of the city was frozen due to elevated prices of building materials and heating.

There were no conditions for noticeable social differentiation. There appeared many converted territories and, in the real estate market, private plots of land. Yet the economic conditions – accelerated economic growth (Tab. 1) – for intensive construction and possible social territorial differentiation only developed at the turn of the century (Fig. 1).

After the restoration of Lithuania’s independence, Vilnius’ role within the country noticeably increased. The city with the surrounding territories, where just under a quarter of the total population of Lithuania lives, became Lithuania’s dominant region of marked by a large economic gap from the other regions – more than 60 % of foreign direct investment in Lithuania goes to Vilnius (Tab. 1). Despite the general depopulation trend in the country, Vilnius with its surrounding districts preserves a stable (even growing in the peripheral areas)

population figure (Fig. 2) (STATISTICS LITHUANIA 2010, p. 21). The same is true for the construction of housing estates: the number of flats and the amount of available living space per person in Vilnius and the district of Vilnius increased at considerably higher rates than in Lithuania overall (Fig. 1 and 3). This is a good basis for social differentiation, higher diversity of social groups and an opportunity for rather large social groups to emerge raising certain requirements for their living environment.

The increasing popularity of individual houses and their share of the total apartments built are another important tendency pre-eminently in the Vilnius district (Fig. 4). In the Soviet years, building individual houses in Vilnius city was actually prohibited and in its suburbs it was restricted. Only at the end of the eighties of the last century (during “perestroika”), many parcel plots were allotted (mainly in the Vilnius District) where intensive construction of individual houses began. As mentioned above, the construction of many individual houses was frozen in the last decade of the 20th century. After some time, they were completed and summer

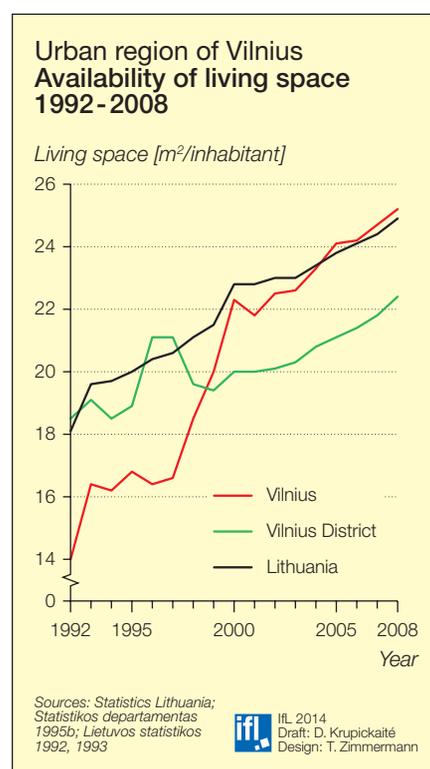


Fig. 3: Availability of living space 1992-2008 of the Vilnius region and Lithuania

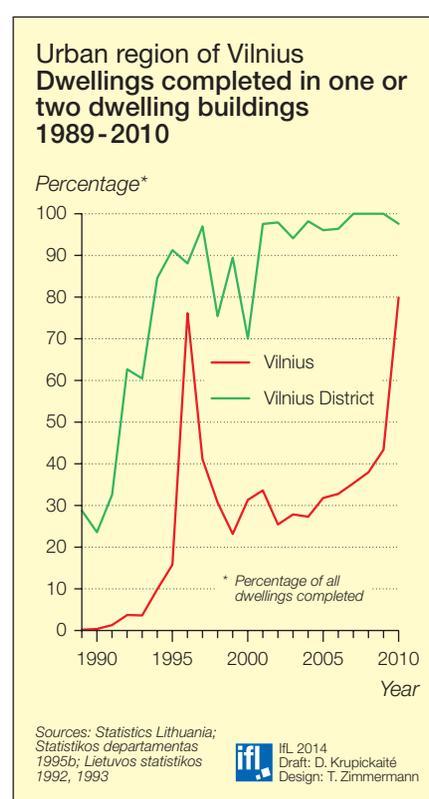


Fig. 4: Dwellings completed in one or two dwelling buildings 1989-2010

houses built in abundance in the city suburbs during the Soviet years were converted into individual living houses. The improved economic conditions triggered the construction of individual housing estates. In Vilnius, they were mainly composed of blocks of flats. In the last decade of the 20th century, the first commercial blocks of flats appeared in the free plots of land in the inner-city areas. After some time, new housing estates emerged in converted areas and in the peripheral parts of the city. The building facilities became more favourable as a result of land restitution and the emergence of a land market. Low credit terms and tax allowances for buying and refurbishing housing accelerated the construction of individual houses even more.

The natural diversity of the Vilnius city area and conditions for development has formed a rather mixed social structure of its population. Many parts (especially north-eastern and eastern) of the city remained scarcely populated for a long time because of the relief. Now they have become prestigious (VANAGAS 1992, p. 71; VILNIUS IR VILNIEČIAI 1995, p. 13).

The exceptional attractiveness of these parts of the city increased under the post-Soviet free-market conditions, especially after the collapse of the Soviet plants and the restriction of construction near the city centre. Meanwhile the southern and south-western parts of the city have turned into industrial territories due to the railway and favourable relief. They were and remain dwelling areas for low-income social groups and national minorities (LENKEVIČIŪTĖ 2006, p. 378). Almost all neighbourhoods of blocks of flats from the Soviet period were designed and constructed on the upper terrace of the Neris valley in the western and north-western parts of the city. They are separated from the central area of the city by preserved natural territories and connected to it by main streets. The territory of the city extending north of the central part has a very diverse structure. Yet the neighbourhoods of individual housing estates in this territory and its peripheries are regarded as prestigious due to good connections to with the centre and nested preserved natural territories. The large free plots of land and conversion territories are regarded suitable for constructing blocks of flats.

The demand for housing estates is another important factor of the dwelling market. In 2008, the available living space per person in Vilnius (24.7 sqm) was comparable with the country's average (24.4 sqm). In the Vilnius district, this index is slightly lower: 21.8 sqm (STATISTICS LITHUANIA 2008). Although the mentioned Vilnius index grew considerably in the last ten years (Fig. 4), it still remains low in comparison with advanced countries and even with some post-socialist countries (BRADE et al. 2008). This indicates a high demand for housing space especially if we bear in mind that based on the expert estimations of the number of labour places and infrastructural loads, the actual number of the Vilnius population is larger: according to the data belonging to the Vilnius Municipality, even 20 % of the earnings in Vilnius are transferred to other municipalities (TRINKŪNAITĖ 2010). Yet in view of the

lower general purchasing power and depopulation trends it could be assumed that housing space suffices. The only potential problems would be: its improvement and creating conditions for young families (which are in the greatest demand for living space) to obtain housing estates (LEONAVIČIUS and ŽILYS 2009). This assumption is proven by the fall of housing prices by 44 % in the years of economic decline (2008-2009) and their insignificant rise in the last few years (OBER-HAUS 2011, p. 42).

The influence of the state and municipalities on the dwelling market is small. The stock of social housing in Vilnius and its suburbs, as all over the country, is insignificant. According to K. Sakalauskienė, the head specialist of the Department for Social Housing of the Municipality of Vilnius, it accounts for less than 5 % of the total housing stock. Almost the whole social housing stock is represented by flats not privatized before 1998. They are rather evenly distributed in the territories of municipalities what prevents from emergence of concentration sites of low-income population groups. In 2007-2008, in Vilnius alone a few houses were built with municipality means in the Pilaitė neighbourhood for socially vulnerable families. Yet in no time, the residents of the neighbouring blocks of flats started complaining about the new settlers.

Despite long-lasting efforts, no appreciable improvements have occurred in the field of renovating housing estates. The process is impeded by a lack of state support and the economic weakness of the population. Until 2009, only 36 blocks of flats had been renovated in Vilnius according to the data of Dwelling House Renovation Agency (www.renovacija.lt).

In general it can be pointed out that in terms of social transformations a situation has developed in the last two decades which can be regarded as ambiguous: on the one hand, the expansion and increasing role of the city creates conditions for social diversity and differentiation strengthened by the circumstance that the quality of the old Soviet buildings

is deteriorating. On the other hand, the spatial structure of the city, dispersion of social housing, general depopulation trends in the country and economic decline in 2008 showed that the situation is not as simple as it may seem. The question is what tendencies and attitudes were revealed by the present survey.

Socio-spatial differentiation – empirical analysis

In July 2007 a household survey was carried out. In total 786 residents were surveyed in five neighbourhoods, which are representative for residential housing in the urban region (Fig. 5): up-scale perimeter blocks in a closer inner-city location, built since the end of the 19th century represented by Naujamiestis (New Town; N=155); large-scale housing estates of prefabricated blocks in a broader inner-city location, built in the 1970s or 1980s represented by Karoliniškės (N=160); villas/mansions in Žvėrynas (N=156); new detached houses in a suburban location, built after 1990 represented by Didžioji Riešė (N=160) and the new large-scale housing estates in a broader inner-city location (converted territory), built after 1990 represented by Šiaurės miestelis (North Town; N=155).

The obtained enquiry results showed that the case study areas widely differ in social structure and in the attitudes of respondents towards their residential areas, although there are many similar aspects in seemingly different areas.

The main impact on rising socio-structural differentiation in the case study areas is mobility and the structure of immigrated households after 1990. In the prestigious, old settled case study areas (Naujamiestis, Žvėrynas) with a relatively mobile population (about half of them moved in after 1990) (Tab. 2) rich newcomers live next to old residents, who are often indigent pensioners (Fig. 6). The greatest spread is within the mansion neighbourhood Žvėrynas: about 10 % of the households have a very low income, 20 % a very high one. The spread in Naujamiestis is less marked because of the

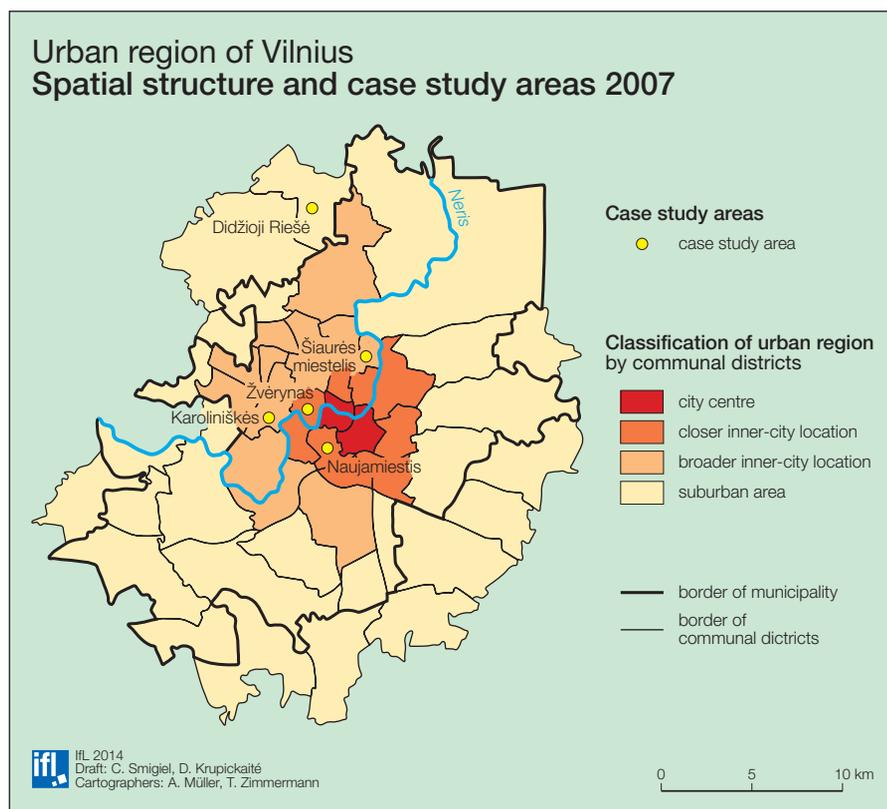


Fig. 5: Spatial structure and case study areas 2007

immigration of young population: students, living in flat-sharing communities in rented dwellings.

Another situation prevails in Karoliniškės, a large-scale housing estate built in the 70s, where the fastest social degradation is expected. This area has had the lowest mobility since 1991 (31.7 %). At present there is still a mixed social population structure, but increa-

singly residents with low income are moving in (Fig. 7). Another problem is the ageing population (34.2 % of the population is older than 50 years old) and the high percentage (31.4 %) of non-Lithuanian nationalities.

In comparison to the old large-scale housing estates the population in the newly built residential neighbourhoods Šiaurės miestelis (new large-scale hous-

ing estate) and Didžioji Riešė (new suburban detached house) is socially very homogeneous and very exclusive especially in the suburban neighbourhood. Most of the residents belong to the middle or higher middle class with higher incomes and a university degree (Fig. 7). It is an above-averagely young immigration population, 43.2 % in Šiaurės miestelis are between 25 and 34 years old, mostly young one or two person households. In Didžioji Riešė dominate middle age households from 35 to 49 years (45.6 %), the typical immigrated family with children (72.2 %).

While the absolute majority of dwellings in Vilnius as well as in Lithuania is privately owned partly in some case study areas the tenure situation is different (Fig. 8). In central parts of the city we find a higher number of rented dwellings, which indicates the higher number of newcomers and a higher potential mobility of the population. Therefore the link between home ownership and the mobility of the population is more complex. Residents who had to choose their own housing, but not privatize of the existing, are less likely to change their housing. Furthermore, those living in detached houses are less likely to change their housing: as shown by results of the study, this is a dwelling, which fulfils the housing ideal in all groups of respondents.

Another important aspect for evaluating socio-spatial tendencies in surveyed areas is the satisfaction of households with their dwelling and neighbourhood situation. In general there is a high degree of housing satisfaction (Tab. 3). The best scores were given by residents in central parts of the city, not in the newly-built residential areas. The greatest number of respondents dissatisfied and very dissatisfied with their dwellings lives in Karoliniškės: about one fourth. Although a large majority of households in the large-scale housing estate is fairly satisfied and totally satisfied.

The distribution pattern of satisfaction with the residential area (Tab. 4) is similar to the pattern of dwelling satisfaction. Hence only a small number of respon-

Urban region of Vilnius Immigration into different neighbourhoods by time period [%]					
Case study area	Naujamiestis (n=154)	Žvėrynas (n=156)	Karoliniškės (n=160)	Šiaurės miestelis (n=160)	Didžioji Riešė (n=155)
Neighbourhood type / Period	upscale perimeter blocks	villa / mansion	large scale housing estate 1970	new large scale housing estate	new suburban detached house
before 1945	5.8	8.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
1946 – 1970	14.3	19.2	4.3	0.0	0.0
1971 – 1990	22.7	25.1	64.0	0.0	0.6
1991 – 2000	18.2	23.7	13.7	0.0	24.4
2001 – 2007	39.0	23.7	18.0	100.0	75.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own survey 2007

Tab. 2: Immigration into different neighbourhoods by time period (in %)

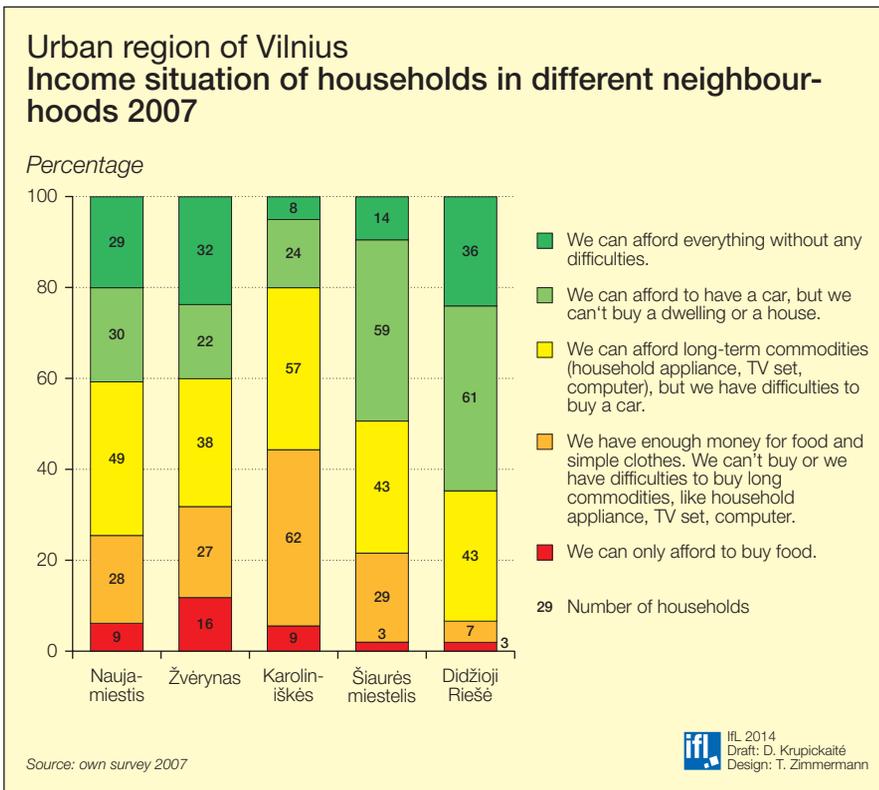


Fig. 6: Income situation of households in different neighbourhoods of the urban region Vilnius 2007

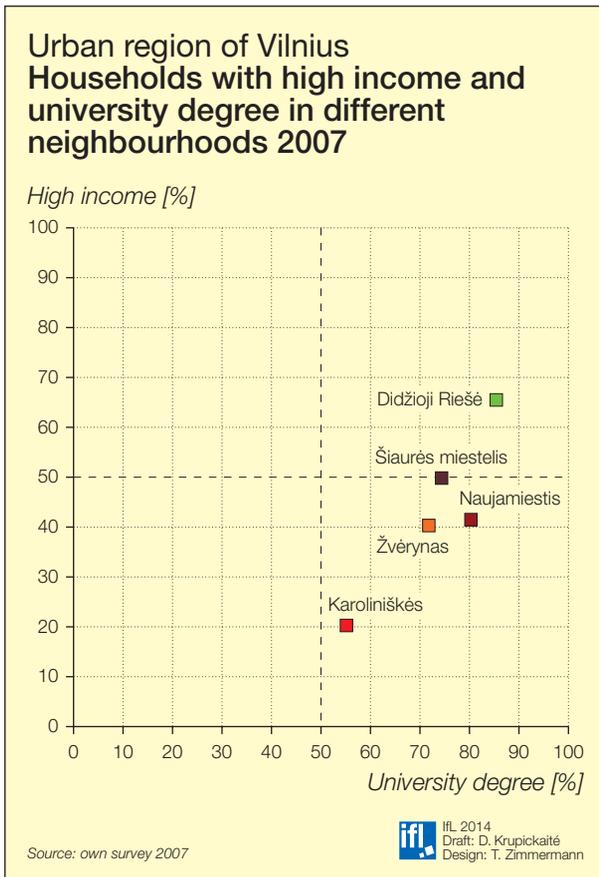


Fig. 7: Households with high income and university degree in different neighbourhoods of the urban region Vilnius 2007

Residents from Karoliniškės are dissatisfied. All in all the satisfaction in the large-scale housing estates is higher than expected, also in relation to evaluating the reputation of the neighbourhood, the social and communication infrastructure, the security and natural environment, while in other case study areas the respondents partly are much more dissatisfied with transport connections e.g. in the suburban Didžioji Riešė or in relation to green spaces such as in the inner city areas Naujamiestis and Šiaurės miestelis.

Based on the results of the survey, it is possible to characterize each of the studied areas.

- Residents of the suburban Didžioji Riešė were distinguished by the best evaluation of their residential area, a family structure with the highest social status, a very high level of identification with their neighbourhood and therefore with very low potential mobility. This is the most stable settlement with increasing social status situated in very favourable proximity to the city centre.
- Though the new large-scale housing estate Šiaurės miestelis stands for a fairly young age structure and homogeneous social composition of their inhabitants, it has much in common with other blocks of flats: many rented dwellings, many potentially mobile residents and a low identification with the residential area implying high rotation rates in the future. Yet the favourable location of the area is likely to maintain its high social status.
- Both old inner city residential areas, the prestigious neighbourhoods Žvėrynas and Naujamiestis have preserved their good image and are regarded as the most attractive in the city. Yet they are also different. In Žvėrynas only few residents are mobile and in-

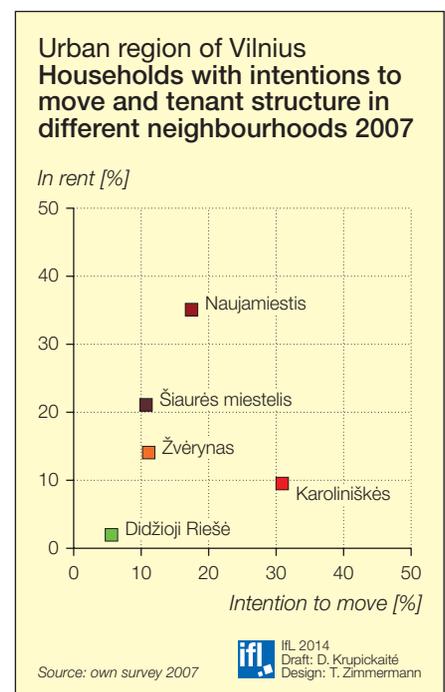


Fig. 8: Households with intentions to move and tenant structure in different neighbourhoods of the urban region Vilnius, 2007

Urban region of Vilnius
Satisfaction with the dwelling/house in different neighbourhoods 2007

	Case study area				
	Naujamiestis	Žvėrynas	Karoliniškės	Šiaurės miestelis	Didžioji Riešė
very satisfied	46.8	41.4	8.2	38.3	34.9
satisfied	44.8	51.7	69.0	59.8	65.1
fairly dissatisfied	7.8	5.5	20.3	1.3	0.0
totally dissatisfied	0.6	1.4	2.5	0.6	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own survey 2007

Tab. 3: Satisfaction with the dwelling/house in different neighbourhoods 2007

Urban region of Vilnius
Satisfaction with the residential area in different neighbourhoods 2007

	Case study area				
	Naujamiestis	Žvėrynas	Karoliniškės	Šiaurės miestelis	Didžioji Riešė
very satisfied	54.5	53.9	19.5	32.5	31.0
satisfied	33.8	42.2	64.8	64.3	68.4
fairly dissatisfied	11.7	3.9	11.9	3.2	0.6
totally dissatisfied	0.0	0.0	3.8	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own survey 2007

Tab. 4: Satisfaction with the residential area in different neighbourhoods 2007

tend to move. The probability of increasing social status is especially great in Žvėrynas because of the attractive environment, the proximity to the city centre and high level of identification of the residents with their neighbourhood. In contrast Naujamiestis is inhabited much more by students and other mobile groups of the population. The location and specific character of the neighbourhood implies that its structure is not likely to change towards a decreasing status.

- The most unfavourable yet non-critical social situation is characteristic for Karoliniškės. On the one hand the quality of housing is low in this large-scale housing estate and more residents are dissatisfied with their dwelling and would like to move. On the other hand, the diversity of social and age structure is an expression for a permanent social stability. It is strengthened by the fact

that many residents have been living in the area for years (even since their birth) and tend to identify with it. Moreover, the area is favourably situated with respect to other parts of the city and it has a perfect service and transport infrastructure and many green spaces nearby. This case study area will remain fairly attractive to people of average social status.

New Trends of socio-spatial development

The survey showed rather different trends in residential quarters. A consistent development is characteristic of the prestigious up-scale perimeter block (Naujamiestis) and villa/mansion neighbourhood (Žvėrynas) in the inner city. Due to the high reality prices the old socially vulnerable residents living in these residential areas since Soviet times are gradually ousted by residents of a higher

and even the highest (Žvėrynas) social status. The especially favourable location in respect to the city centre, a fairly (very in Žvėrynas) attractive neighbourhood (green spaces) and persisting good image make these areas attractive and highly appreciated – Žvėrynas, which even today is renowned for the highest reality prices in the city, in particular. However due to insufficient financial support by the municipality and a lack of means by local residents these areas are changing rather slowly. The investments into the public spaces and into the neighbourhood of private spaces (e.g. house facades, infrastructure for common use, yards for blocks of flats etc.) are small. Therefore the situation in these neighbourhoods cannot be evaluated as very good. The trends, however, are positive and in the course of time these areas will remain prestigious.

It is rather difficult to outline a clear perspective of the large-scale housing estate Karoliniškės because two variants are possible. On the one hand this neighbourhood is a rather convenient place in respect to the city centre and natural attractiveness, has a well-developed social, service and transport infrastructure and is not too densely built-up. Hence the residents are satisfied: for example 94.4% of respondents in Karoliniškės agreed that “transport connections are very good”. These factors make the neighbourhood rather attractive. On the other hand the social structure of residents is becoming increasingly socially vulnerable. There is a rising process of demographic ageing because many inhabitants have been living here since their birth or since the construction of the blocks of flats. These flats are their home and the home of their children. Currently they identify themselves with these areas forming communities. They appreciate the living environment: 80.6% of respondents in Karoliniškės agree that the neighbourhood has a good reputation and 76.1% would like to live and stay here forever – despite the deteriorating quality of dwellings, especially of the equipment for common use (pipes, roofing, elevators etc.)

and the imperfections of heat insulation – currently the greatest problem of this neighbourhood. Against the background of a steadily liberated housing market the perspective of this neighbourhood type will depend on the refurbishment of the housing stock. In the positive case it will remain the living place of low-middle class representatives, in case of missing refurbishment the probability of social decline increases.

Logically the situation in the newly-built neighbourhoods is very different. In Didžioji Riešė and many other suburban quarters first houses were built at the end of the 80s though the plots of land had no infrastructure and roads. After restoring independence, when building materials and energy resources became more expensive, the infrastructure and roads remained unfinished until the end of the 90s. Nevertheless, representatives of higher social status moved to suburbia. Since 2000 many houses have been finished or rebuilt and many new houses have been built. They are inhabited by people of a higher social status with their families. They are satisfied with their dwellings, identify themselves with the residential areas and develop communities. The residential areas are located in the nearest suburban zone and have a fairly good connection to the city. Their image is steadily improving and property prices are rising. The mentioned disadvantages – unfinished technical infrastructure, e.g. lack of water supply and sewerage, low capacity electricity lines, roads without asphalt and concrete pavements, etc. were solved in the last years and these settlements will become prestigious.

The new blocks of flats built after 2000 in the conversion zone not far from the city centre are rather attractive concerning their relatively good quality of housing, the existing social service and transport infrastructure. Therefore many households of higher and even high social status moved to this neighbourhood. The survey results show that the neighbourhood Šiaurės miestelis is more or less a temporary residential area for many re-

spondents because of the high residential density. As many dwellings are only rented it makes a high rotation of residents possible in the future. With an increasing supply of dwellings the area will be inhabited by residents of medium social status, i.e. we can expect a certain decline of prices and social composition.

Scenarios of socio-spatial differentiation

Based on the general development trends of Vilnius and the results of the present survey, two prospective scenarios of the further development in the city and two opposite groups of factors determining the social spatial structure of the city can be defined. One scenario is stability or persistence, determined by conditionally positive factors preserving the social spatial diversity of the city. The other scenario is growing social difference or polarisation, determined by “negative” factors promoting transformations.

The former still persisting mixed social structure of the population is presumably the decisive factor of social spatial *stability*. It plays an important role in all parts of the city populated before 1990. This factor has been strengthened even more by the privatization of housing. The population thereby obtained property with which it can do whatever it wants. This is especially obvious in central parts of the city, where the social mixture is especially high. There you can find old poorly pensioners who will not move because they have spent her whole life in that place and are satisfied with the quality of housing. Meanwhile, the new residents often are obviously of higher social status. Gentrification is very slowly taking place. The same tendencies are observed in other slowly gentrified parts of the city, e.g. Užupis (STANDL and KRUPICKAITĖ 2004). Another important factor predetermined by privatization is the lack of concentrated areas of social housing stock and concomitantly of socially vulnerable groups.

A few important factors related with the image of large-scale estates of the So-

viet period should also be pointed out. Firstly, in Soviet times, they were rather preferred residential neighbourhoods. Still more than a half of the Vilnius population resides in them and they are viewed as “normal” residential neighbourhoods. They are the neighbourhoods with well-developed transport and social infrastructure. Especially the oldest large-scale housing estates that seemingly should be subject to degradation most are situated in very attractive territories with respect to the city centre. One specific for the Vilnius factor is a segmented city landscape offering many attractive living spaces in all parts of the city, including large-scale estates from the Soviet period. Such stability factors pointed out by KOSTINSKIY (2001) as social support for housing and economic inability of the population bear an ambiguous character in Vilnius city. They play a stabilizing role in the central parts of the city helping socially weaker social groups – pensioners in the first place – to maintain their housing. Meanwhile in the neighbourhoods of Soviet blocks of flats these factors promote the concentration of socially vulnerable social groups. Not only the residing vulnerable social groups cannot move from these neighbourhoods but also the newly immigrated who are unable to pay for better housing. Also the low-income social groups cannot afford to refurbish their housing due to economic inability. An active public policy could become a serious factor in stabilizing the situation (NEUGEBAUER, WIEST and KRUPICKAITĖ 2011), but previous attempts to support the refurbishment of blocks of flats has not made much progress.

Two factors of rising socio-spatial *differentiation* can be determined: the construction of new housing estates and the deterioration of housing in the old neighbourhoods. Both depend on a few sub-factors. The survey showed that the newly-built residential areas are distinguished by socially homogeneous, better income structures. The suburban settlements of individual houses are established by communities of higher social status. The popularity of this type of set-

tlement remains high, many of them are fenced or even guarded (KRUPICKAITĖ, POČIŪTĖ and PEČIUKONYTĖ 2010-2011). Growing transport and time costs could lead to the situation that life in the suburban settlements will become a privilege of the wealthier.

New blocks of flats in converted areas, attractive in relation to the proximity to the centre and infrastructure, are highly appreciated and inhabited by people of upper-medium social status. The large share of rented dwellings means the probability of removal mobility is high. Yet due to the relatively good state of housing in these areas marked social changes are not likely to take place in the nearest future. All factors promoting the emergence of large new neighbourhoods (e.g. loan policy, absence of position in municipalities on how to increase social diversity therein etc.) also can be defined as factors that increase social differentiation.

The new housing estates first of all mean a relatively high quality of housing chosen by the population according to their requirements and possibilities. An opposite situation is in the housing estates of the Soviet period. The housing quality in the Soviet blocks of flats is unsatisfactory; the refurbishment perspective is conditioned by a financial inability of the residents. The newly settled residents are also restricted by their financial possibilities. It is quite possible that in the future these areas will develop into unattractive “ghettos” for vulnerable social groups. Yet it is hard to believe that the larger part of the city territory will turn into “ghettos”. Bearing in mind the location of these estates and their gradual refurbishment it is believable that they will persist as “normal” residential neighbourhoods populated by low- and medium-income social groups.

Conclusion

Vilnius case study adopted two opinions groups in discussion on the social differentiation of the population in post-socialist cities. The processes are ambivalent: social differentiation of the population

takes place and it may eventually become problematic. There is a possibility that large scale housing estates of the Soviet period can become large areas populated by socially vulnerable groups. However, this process is relatively slow, stopped by certain factors.

In general the path of socio-spatial stability is caused by inherited structures of socialist/transitional time and the path of differentiation by actual processes.

The most factors of stability are: privatization together with further social mixture with lack of concentrated areas of housing of socially vulnerable groups. Another important factor is image and quality of environment and social and communication infrastructure in large scale housing estates neighbourhoods.

External factors, such as economic growth, would activate a potential socio-spatial differentiation. This asserts primarily through the construction of new residential areas. The newly built neighbourhoods are settled by population of relatively similar, as a rule higher, social status. This in turn leads to the fact that in the older, especially in worse conditions characterized neighbourhoods, remains to live or gets up population of the relatively lower social status.

The probability of one or the other path – differentiation or stability – depends on the possibility to maintain existing social diversity and to govern actual processes.

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Résumé

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Vilnius – entre statu quo et évolution sociospatiale

Le but de cet article est de déterminer la structure sociospatiale des banlieues et leurs évolutions dans l'agglomération urbaine de Vilnius après 1990 et d'identifier d'autres tendances de développement potentiel. D'un côté, la cité post-soviétique de Vilnius est caractérisée par une structure sociale mixte stable avec des processus d'évolution sociale lents sur des territoires auparavant inhabités. D'un autre côté, des zones résidentielles sont récemment sorties de terre, marquées par des structures socialement homogènes à meilleurs revenus. À partir des tendances générales de développement dans l'agglomération urbaine de Vilnius et des résultats de la présente étude, deux scénarios prospectifs (statu quo/stabilité sociale et différenciation/polarisation sociale croissante) peuvent être distingués dans son agglomération. Les facteurs les plus importants de stabilité sociale concernent les structures héritées du passé (privatisation, mixité sociale de la population, image, infrastructure) et des facteurs de différenciation liés à des processus actuels (construction, détérioration de la qualité de l'habitat).

ville post-soviétique, évolution sociospatiale, polarisation, stabilité sociale, statu quo

Резюме

ДОВИЛЕ КРУПИЧКАЙТЕ

Вильнюс – между устойчивостью и социально-пространственными изменениями

Целью данной работы является представить социально-пространственную структуру жилых районов и их изменения в Вильнюсе после 1990 г. и определить дальнейшие тенденции вероятного развития. С одной стороны, постсоветский Вильнюс характеризуется сбалансированной социальной структурой с весьма медленными процессами социальных перемен в существующих жилых районах. С другой стороны, появляются новые, социально однородные жилые районы, в которых концентрируются жители с более высокими доходами. На основе общих тенденций на территории Вильнюса и результатов последних опросов могут быть намечены два будущих сценария развития – устойчивость, постоянство / социальная стабильность и растущие социальные различия / поляризация. Наиболее важными факторами для социальной стабильности являются унаследованные явления (приватизация, население с разным социальным происхождением, имидж, инфраструктура), также имеют значение факторы дифференциации, вызванной текущими процессами (жилищное строительство, ухудшение качества жилья).

Постсоветский город, социально-пространственные изменения, поляризация, социальная стабильность, устойчивость