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DWELLING IN VISAGINAS: THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF POST-SOCIALIST
TOWN

Master's Thesis

Supervisors: Doctor Aet Annist and Professor Geoffrey Swain

Glasgow and Tartu, 2014



Ethics Committee for Non Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

NOTIFICATION OF ETHICS APPLICATION OUTCOME – UG and PGT Applications

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APPLICATION OUTCOME

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hulmone'.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Notification of Ethics Application Outcome	i
University of Glasgow Declaration of Originality Form	ii
University of Tartu Declaration of Originality Form.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	3
1.1. Choice of Study Area.....	3
1.2. The perfect <i>atomgorodok</i> and what came after.....	4
1.2.1. The historical overview and the development of town	5
1.2.2. A site of Soviet industrial heritage?.....	13
1.3. Research questions.....	18
1.4. Limitations of study	20
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	21
2.1. Heidegger's phenomenology	21
2.2. Space, place and self	23
2.3. Phenomenology applied.....	26
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	29
3.1. Fieldwork	29
3.1.1. Overview of fieldwork and conditions of research	30
3.1.2. Reflections on my position as a researcher	31
3.1.3. Ethical challenges: juggling between two ethnic groups	32
3.2. Cartography undisciplined	33
3.2.1. Data collection for map.....	34
3.2.2. Selection of spots on the map	36
3.3. Interviews.....	36
3.3.1. Choice of informants.....	37
3.3.2. Interview situations	39
3.3.3. Approach to interview analysis.....	41
3.4. Participant observation.....	42
3.5. Summary	43

CHAPTER 4: MAPPINGS	44
4.1. Structuring the Playing Field	48
4.2. Visuality and Visibility	52
4.3. Where Have All the Pregnant Women Gone?	58
4.4. Unrealized Plans	65
4.5. The Politics of Location.....	68
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS	70
5.1. The city and the self.....	70
5.2. ‘Our city on foreign land’: appropriation and ownership of place	73
5.3. Visaginas as the city of borderlands	76
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS	78
BIBLIOGRAPHY	80
APPENDIX 1a: Plain Language Statement in English.....	86
APPENDIX 1b: Plain Language Statement in Lithuanian	88
APPENDIX 1c: Plain Language Statement in Russian	90
APPENDIX 2a: Maps of Visaginas used in the desk study.....	92
APPENDIX 2b: Maps of Visaginas used in the desk study.....	93
APPENDIX 2c: Maps of Visaginas used in the desk study.....	94
APPENDIX 3: Profiles of informants.....	95

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Choice of Study Area

The thesis aims to understand the relationship between the material and the social environment of the city of Visaginas from the phenomenological point of view by employing Martin Heidegger's concept of *dwelling*. The goal of this study is to see how the attachment to place is created through interpreting and experiencing the material environment of the post-socialist city and the various transformations that such a city embodies. This focus balances between geographical, architectural, and social features of town, and is therefore neither only an urban study, nor only an anthropological inquiry. Rather, the study is important for the contemporary debates on how *people constitute place* as well as how *place constitutes people* as examined from the interdisciplinary angle.

Visaginas is an interesting choice for focusing on the interaction between social and material worlds for a number of reasons. Visaginas was founded in 1975, and is thus one of the youngest cities in Lithuania. Given that many inhabitants do not have 'roots' in this city, region, or even country; it is interesting to reflect on how the place attachment is created among them and what role the material environment of the city plays in it. In this respect, the present study can potentially be useful for the scholars of migration, since many people presently reside in places that are not their 'ancestral lands' writ large.

Another important dimension of studying place attachment in Visaginas relates to relatively recent closure of two units of Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (hereafter, INPP) in 2004 and 2009 respectively as a political decision upon Lithuania's accession to the European Union (for accession negotiations, see Maniokas *et al* 2005: 317-18). Initially

designed by Soviet authorities as a satellite-settlement for the workers of the plant, it is a mono-industrial town (Cinis *et al* 2008). The city had faced a crisis after closure of INPP since the connection between local inhabitants and industry stretched beyond the tax revenue and economic considerations (Šliavaitė 2003). While the questions of social memory have been thoroughly discussed in the literature (Baločkaitė 2012; Šliavaitė 2003, 2005, 2010), the spatial analysis of town transformations is somewhat missing. Thus, the study attempts to bridge this gap.

With regards to the structure of thesis, the present chapter provides the background on the history of Visaginas and the review of academic literature. Thereafter, research questions are set and potential limitations of study identified. The following Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework on which this study draws, while Chapter 3 outlines methodology employed for addressing the research questions. Chapter 4 presents the empirical data collected during fieldwork that should be read together with the map produced by the study. Chapter 5 presents the analysis of empirical data. The last Chapter 6 provides conclusions of the present research.

1.2. The perfect *atomgorodok* and what came after

The first part of this section provides the historical background of Visaginas and discusses the connection between the town and Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant. Three main periods of city development are identified as: 1) the construction stage in 1970's and years prior to the collapse of Soviet Union; 2) the changes city underwent in the independent Lithuania prior to accession to European Union; 3) present stage when INPP stopped functioning and is being decommissioned. Where relevant, the description is supplemented by photographs and statistical data. The second part of the section provides a literature review.

1.2.1. The historical overview and the development of town

Visaginas is a small town, and it takes less than half an hour to cross the city along one of the main roads – Taikos prospektas. It is only in 1995 that the administrative status of the city was ascribed to Visaginas – twenty years after its foundation and three years after it has been renamed. Prior to 1992, Visaginas bore the name of one of the leaders of the Lithuanian Communist Party Antanas Sniečkus. Given the fact that in year 1991 Lithuania had left the sinking ship of the Soviet Union, the change of name comes as no surprise.

However, many street names in town still remind us of this recent chapter of Lithuanian history for their characteristic socialist rhetoric. An occasional traveller can find here the streets of Hope (*Vilties gatvė*), Peace (*Taikos prospektas*), Friendship (*Draugystės gatvė*), and Youth (*Jaunystės gatvė*), not to mention the iconic street of Space (*Kosmoso gatvė*). Altogether, there are fifteen streets in Visaginas and as one walks through town, s/he will undoubtedly notice the resort-like feeling that this place has. I do not suggest that it is similar to the European resorts of Cote D’Azur or Italian Riviera, but it certainly has something in common with resorts of the Baltic scale. For example, Lithuanian resorts of Druskininkai or Palanga come to mind. Perhaps, the tall pines scattered across town, proximity to lake Visaginas, and the unmistakably socialist architectural ensemble are the main reasons for such a connection.

The city of Visaginas is rather remotely situated in the north-eastern part of country, very close to the junction of state borders between Lithuania, Latvia and the Republic of Belarus. The geographical location of Visaginas can be explained by the fact that it is a satellite settlement of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant that was designed to satisfy the energy needs not only of Lithuania, but of the former Soviet Union’s single North-West power system needs (Ignalina NPP homepage 2014); and also because the decision to design the city was directed by the powerful secret Ministry on Atomic Energy of the USSR, covered under the name of Ministry of Medium-Scale Machine Building¹ (Cinis *et al* 2008: 237), or *Minsredmash*.

¹ rus., Министерство Среднего Машиностроения

The history of town is closely knit with the history of the plant and can be divided into three main stages, according to the major political transformations in the country. The first period starts with the decision to construct INPP and the satellite, the first General Development Plan for which was confirmed on the 13 September 1974 (GDP 1989: 7) according to the *VNIPIET* – All-Union Science and Research Planning Institute for Complex Energy Technology². The constructions were supervised by *Minsredmash*, and accomplished on the ground by Western Construction Company, or *ZUS*³. Altogether, there were three sites: the plant, suburban industrial area, and the city. People who were working for *Minsredmash* often lived in ‘closed’ towns characterized by the veil of secrecy and strict management of personnel. For example, in order to leave or enter such towns, residents had to acquire special permission.

The Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant was not a secret enterprise, but both the plant and the town had the ‘post-box addresses’⁴ that were usually assigned to be used for posting to the ‘closed’ cities. The INPP bore the П/Я 1940, for example, and Visaginas П/Я А – 7631. However, Visaginas had never been a traditional ‘closed’ town in the sense that people could leave and enter freely. On the other hand, it had enjoyed the benefits of being related to the *Minsredmash*. Many people who were involved in the construction works and work on the INPP had an opportunity to apply for housing which was of ‘improved quality’ (Cinis *et al* 2008: 238). The provision of goods, such as food or clothing, was also among the best in the Union, salaries were among the best in the Republic. These incentives attracted many people from various corners of the USSR to Visaginas (Šliavaitė 2010: 56-8). Such privileges led some researchers to conclude that during Soviet times Visaginas was a site of privilege (Baločkaitė 2010: 66-7), and even ‘something of a socialist paradise’ (Cinis *et al* 2008: 239).

² rus., *ВНИПИЭТ – Всесоюзный Научно-Исследовательский Проектно-Изыскательный Институт (Комплексной) Энергетической Технологии*. ‘VNIPIET in Leningrad/ St. Peterburg began its history in 1933. In 1945 the Institute was appointed to be the leading planning organization for atomic industry objects. A majority of industrial enterprises and scientific-research centres of the nuclear industrial complex of USSR were constructed according to VNIPIET designs. The most important among them were the first USSR scientific research reactor (1946); the first USSR commercial uranium-and-graphite reactor (1948); the first nuclear power plant (NPP) in the world in Obninsk City (1954); Beloyarsk (1964 – 1967), Leningrad (1973 – 1981), Kursk (1970 – 1978), Ignalina (1983 – 1987) and other NPP with different reactor types and capacities. VNIPIET had its branches in Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, Novosibirsk, Sosnovy Bor and Urals branch in Ozersk. Chief architects Viktor Akutin and M.A. Belyi’ (Cinis *et al* 2008: 243, footnote 41).

³ rus., *Западное Управление Строительства*

⁴ rus., *П/Я – почтовый ящик*

The construction works were proclaimed as *Vsesujuznaya Udarnaya Stroika*⁵ – All-Union Communist Youth League’s construction works – status normally assigned to construction works of outer importance; and were aided by the army building brigades called *stroibat*⁶. Altogether, around 22 000 skilled and military workers were employed for the construction of site (Cinis *et al* 2008: 236). Needless to say that the construction works were of grandiose scale characteristic for the centrally planned and state-sponsored socialist projects (see Picture 1), and were often compared to other famous building works, such as Bajkal Amur Railway, or *BAM* (Kavaliauskas 2003: 47). The reason why the construction of INPP was so important is because at the time of the construction it was the most powerful reactor in the world (World Nuclear Association website, 2014). The scale and the speed of the construction could be illustrated best by the time in which they were accomplished, since the building of the first block of the INPP, for example, took mere five years, from the start in 1978 to putting reactor on-line in 1983.

The future workers were mainly drawn from the ‘closed’ towns. In the decade 1979 – 1989 more than 25 000 immigrants arrived in the city (Kavaliauskas 1999: 30), the majority of them were of Russian origin (see Table 1). As of year 1979 only 6 % of the inhabitants were of Lithuanian origin. The first arrivals were often accommodated in the hastily built living quarters, caravans, or lodged in the houses of local inhabitants (see Picture 2 and Picture 3).

⁵ rus., комсомольская стройка

⁶ rus., стройбат, or строительный батальон



Picture 1: General view of the INPP as of 30 May 1983 (*Photo by V. Čiupačenko. Courtesy of the Visaginas Centre of Culture*)

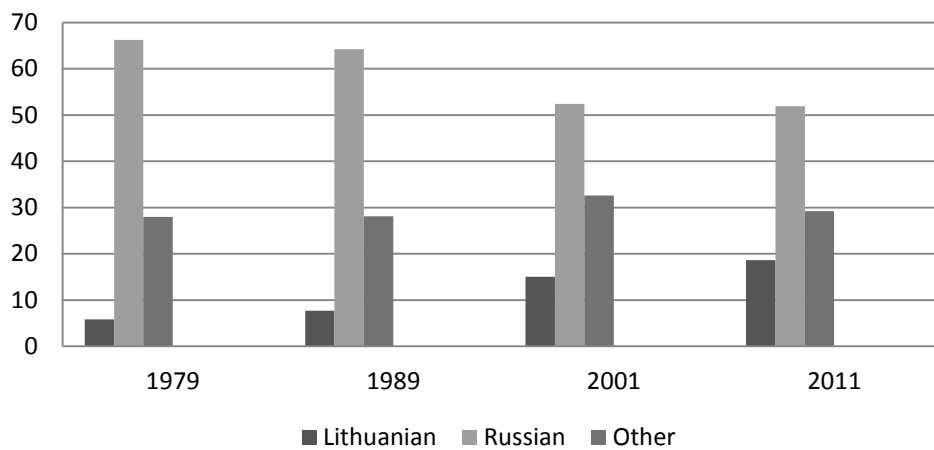


Figure 1: Visaginas inhabitants according to their nationality in percentage as of years 1979, 1989, 2001, 2011. *Elaboration on data of Lithuanian Official Statistics Portal and Kavaliauskas 2003 (for year 2001)*



Picture 2: The pioneers' base in Dukštas were the new arrivals for the construction work were settled, 1977 (Photo by V. Čiupačenko. Courtesy of the Visaginas Centre of Culture)



Picture 3 The living quarters of the arrivals from OSMU – 4 and Chelyabinsk, 1977 (Photo by V. Čiupačenko. Courtesy of the Visaginas Centre of Culture)

The planning of town was not an easy enterprise and, as some researchers note, was characterized by the tension between the *VNIPIET* planners and local architects. The town was decided to be organized as the ‘butterfly’ pattern around the lake Visaginas that consisted of three wings and the ‘body’. The plan was borrowed by the chief architects V. Akutin and M. A. Belyi from Sosnovy Bor, Leningrad where main ideas included circularly grouped houses around kindergartens and schools inside each neighbourhood (microregion), organic planning, main focus on pedestrian boulevard (in Visaginas – Sedulinos alley) and ‘8 minute principle’ (designed so that centre could be reached within 8 – 10 minutes from each corner of the city). Lithuanian architects were designing cultural, public, and service buildings.

The tension between the two groups of planners persisted on the issue of scale of town – local architects always had to fight with ‘gargantuan’ dimensions that Leningrad planners were used to and that were alien to the local context (Cinis *et al* 2008: 239). Despite such contradictions, the city was built well. For example, 40 % of the dwellings were built of red brick – ‘meaning an exceptional attitude to the welfare of atomic workers – red brick represented the ‘improved’ quality of housing’ (Cinis *et al* 2008: 238; see also Gutnov *et al* 1968 and Miliutin 1974 for principles of Soviet urbanism).

It is necessary to note that not all plans related to the construction of town were completed. Additionally to the already built two reactors of the INPP, another two units were to be constructed, and the town was to be expanded north-eastwards to where the hospital complex is situated nowadays (General Development Plan 1989 [1985]: 7-8). The collapse of the Soviet Union brought these plans to a halt. The decisive role in stopping the construction of the third reactor was played by Chernobyl disaster and the anti-nuclear movement of the Lithuanian Greens that placed the legacy of the INPP, as a reactor similar to Chernobyl’s, under suspicion (Rinkevičius 2000b).

Lithuanian independence caused strong antagonisms between the community of town and the authorities of Lithuania. As some researchers note, most of the Soviet mono-industrial towns in the 1990’s were considered as problematic not only because of the economic restructuring and similar concerns, but because of the ‘nationality problem’: ‘previously privileged people living in the ‘soviet paradise’ neither understood nor supported Lithuanian national movement’s intentions to separate from the USSR in

1988' (Cinis et al 2008: 239). Because of the specific demographical situation and the long period of uncertainty related to the question of under whose authority (USSR's or Lithuania's) the INPP should fall, many Russian-speaking families had left the city to return to their homelands. The remaining residents of Sniečkus, because of the altered political ownership of territory, were 'displaced without relocation' (Baločkaitė 2010: 72-3).

So, the time when (after eighteen months of 'statelessness') the agreement was signed on 18 September 1991 between the Ministry of Nuclear Energy of the USSR and the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Lithuania, and the INPP was officially recognized as the object of Lithuanian jurisdiction, marks the second stage of the development of town. The INPP was a valuable economic asset for the country, since it satisfied Lithuanian energy needs, and also provided an opportunity for energy exports. For example, in 2004, when both reactors were still online, the INPP produced 13.9 billion kWh out of the total 19.3 billion kWh of all energy produced in the country (World Nuclear Association 2014). Also, the importance of the plant for the local community both as a source of employment and identification should not be underestimated. For example, in 1999, 5108 persons were employed at the plant (Kavaliauskas 1999: 218-9).

The Lithuania's accession to European Union marks the third stage in the history of town. This time is particularly important because of the fact that when Lithuania had submitted an application to enter the European Union, one of the requirements on behalf of EU was the decommissioning of the INPP as holding reactors similar to the Chernobyl RBMK type (WENRA 2000: 6). The negotiations between Lithuania and EU have been addressed elsewhere (Maniokas *et al* 2005). As an outcome of the negotiations finalized in the Protocol 4 of the Accession Treaty of Lithuania to the European Union, the closure of Unit 1 was foreseen by 2004 and of Unit 2 by 2009. Both units were shut at the scheduled date, and at the moment the INPP is being decommissioned.

Figure 2: Average gross monthly earnings in the region of Visaginas* and the surrounding regions in the year 2004, 2009, and 2012 respectively (LTL). *Lithuania's Official Statistics Portal, 2013a*



* Visaginas region encircled

The closure of industry had a negative effect for town economy, while also revealing that such dynamics are unique in comparison to neighbouring regions and the rest of Lithuania as the majority of towns benefited from the entry to the EU. For example, whereas the average gross monthly earnings in Visaginas had remained rather high and stable during the period 2004 to 2012 (see Figure 2), the gap in earnings across regions is slowly diminishing. With the levelling of living standards, it is possible to claim that Visaginas is gradually losing its once privileged position.

Some evidence of demographical shrinking is present. The number of inhabitants is decreasing, from about 32 438 persons in 1989 to 22 585 persons in 2011 (Lithuanian Official Statistics Portal 2014). Also, the town's population is aging. For example, the average age of inhabitants during the construction phase was around 20 – 35 years old; in 2005, the average age was 36 years old, and had increased to 41 years old in 2012 (ibid.). Not surprisingly, the number of people of working age had also dropped by almost 7000 people in 2010 (ibid.), after the closure of the second unit of INPP. It is possible to argue that such dynamics are also reflected in the fabric of town, as in the closure of schools and kindergartens, for example.

Overall, the question of how to develop the town in the future is of acute importance at the moment. On the municipal level, new priorities such as development of nature tourism have been set. Visaginas is situated in the beautiful lake district of Lithuania, and this could attract tourists. Given the rhetoric embedded in Soviet ideology of

conquering nature with which this town was constructed (and settled by high-profile engineers) such developments seem to show the paradoxical sides of post-socialism; and also pose questions of how successful such strategies can be.

1.2.2. A site of Soviet industrial heritage?

The peculiar history of the Visaginas as a satellite settlement for the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant drew extensive attention from scholars of history (Baubinas 2000; Kavaliauskas 1999, 2002, 2003), architecture (Cinis *et al* 2008), sociology (Čiužas 1998; Grigas 1996; Kasatkina and Leončikas 2003; Rinkevičius 2000a, 2000b) and social anthropology (Baločkaitė 2010, 2012; Šliavaitė 2003, 2005, 2010). Most frequently, the framework of Visaginas as a post-socialist mono-industrial city was employed, and thus it was also compared to other mono-industrial towns in the Baltic region and beyond (Baločkaitė 2012; Cinis *et al* 2008). Particularly, the researchers were interested in where does the city fit within a broader Soviet industrialization policy in the Baltic; how the case study represents implementation of this policy on the ground; and how various developments within the city and local community reflect post-socialism.

In relation to the first two questions, Cinis *et al* (2008), for example, compare three Baltic mono-industrial towns constructed in different periods: Sillamäe in Estonia (uranium production, built after the Second World War), Stučka in Latvia (built next to hydro-electric power station in 1960's and later renamed into Aizkraukle) and Sniečkus (built in 1970's and later renamed into Visaginas) in Lithuania. The unifying factor between the three cities is that the decision to construct them was taken by the central government of USSR, i.e. outside of national republics, in order to facilitate infrastructural developments and thus promote the tighter economic interdependence of the Union and the Republics. Built in places with no pre-war layers or significantly altering these layers, the towns represent the unconditionally planned Soviet urban space (2008: 240-1). Discussing the idea(s) laid in the foundation of the towns, their spatial planning and settlement, the authors argue that while such towns fostered

industrialisation and the growth of local economies; they also were ‘promoting Soviet norms and a unification of the built environment, and thus were weakening the traditional cultures and denationalizing the Baltic Republics’ (ibid.).

The latter statement can be elaborating in view that urban planning and architecture in the Soviet Union (on Soviet planning principles, see Gutnov *et al* 1968; Miliutin 1974) were connected to the project of social engineering; since such cities were designed to create, materially and discursively, a particular kind of subjectivities of the working class, thus serving as sites and symbols of the construction of socialism (Baločkaitė 2010: 63-4). Cities such as Visaginas were, to be more precise, a showcase of socialism. The link between the ideology and working class cannot be underestimated, and some researchers claim that in order to understand the present condition of working class, for example, one has to pay attention to the changes in the ideology (Kideckel 2002: 121-2).

Whereas Cinis *et al* assume the link between material environment of the city as the embodiment of ideology and the particular kind of subjectivities it produces; this link is not elaborated sufficiently in explaining how exactly such process takes place. The analysis does not move beyond the statement that ‘the uniform Soviet space in these towns released them [immigrant workers] from such perplexity to adapt with western space the Russian-speaking immigrants encountered so often in occupying new territories after the World War II’ (2008: 241).

Baločkaitė (2010), on the other hand, focuses on the ‘social content’ of town and presents an excellent analysis of the characteristic features of Visaginas as a city of socialist heritage that is characterized by the specific ethnic composition, isolation from the rest of Lithuania, absence of any history prior to 1973, strong pro-Soviet identification and narrow specialization of industry. She argues that as much as such features of Visaginas helped to promote socialism: no prior history to 1973 was a *tabula rasa* with no previous inscriptions upon which Soviet authorities could act, excellent service of town drew it closer to socialist welfare utopia, industry provided secure employment, the remoteness facilitated secret-like atmosphere yet was an open site, and migrant communities aided russification of the region (Baločkaitė 2010: 66-9); such benefits turned into drawbacks after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The author argues that because of these characteristics, Visaginas is a very complex and difficult case of post-socialist transformation, which also echoes Cinis *et al* (2008) conclusions that whereas other Baltic towns demonstrate the same ideological, physical and environmental patterns of industrialization and urbanization as Sillamäe, Stučka and Sniečkus; the ideology behind their construction and particularly settlement with Russian-speaking migrants makes them a more complicated example of mono-industrial cities (2008: 241).

The question of how similar/ dissimilar Visaginas is in relation to other mono-industrial towns (on mono-industrial towns, see Åman 1992) in the Baltics and beyond is very interesting. The academic interest in mono-industrial towns has been extensive and varied and includes: focus on social aspects of transformation (Stenning 2000, 2003, 2004 on Nowa Huta, Poland; Wawrzynski 1986 and Szczepański 1993 on Tychy), Poland; turning mono-industrial city into the open air museum of socialism (Scribner 2000 on Eisenhüttenstadt, Germany); urban identity and coping with urban socialist heritage (Young and Kaczmarek 2008 on Łódź, Poland) and the transformation of overdeveloped mining settlements (Kideckel 2004 on Jiu Valley in Romania and Walkowitz 1993 in Ukraine) among many other themes. However, as Rasa Baločkaitė notes, this attention is rather episodic (2010: 65), i.e. is in need of more direct comparison between various places and aspects of transformation. Her article comparing socialist heritage in Visaginas, Tychy and Nowa Huta are directed specifically at this aim.

Viewing socialist heritage as the almost only symbolic resource upon which these mono-industrial towns could redefine their identity, Baločkaitė (2012) reveals different strategies employed in coping with the ‘the unwanted past’ of socialism. The main theoretical concept around which the analysis is based is ‘place identity’ defined as ‘institutionally produced and/ or institutionally supported discourse about a place, which, unlike individual opinions or group interests’, is constructed on the basis of historical heritage’ (2012: 41). So, in order to assess how socialist heritage is incorporated into new place identity, the author focuses on self-representation of these towns through various institutionally produced materials, such as websites, tourism brochures, photo albums, etc.

The work also draws on the theoretical framework developed by Young and Kaczmarek (2008) in relation to Łódź, Poland who argue that the formation of post-socialist urban identity involves three strategies: de-communicization, return to pre-socialist Golden Age, and Westernization/ Europeanization (2008: 54-5). Baločkaitė extends this framework further, arguing that the repertoire of identity formation in the planned socialist cities that cannot draw on pre-socialist past involve other strategies, such as invoking the de-ideologized images of young, green city (in case of Visaginas and Tychy), active forgetting of socialist past and mimicking West (Tychy), commercialization of past through heritage tourism and reframing of narratives about town's history (ironic gaze, Nowa Huta), and bifurcation of consciousness into private remembrance and public forgetting of past (Visaginas).

The theme of Soviet past is well elaborated in the anthropological work of Rasa Baločkaitė (2010, 2012) and Kristina Šliavaitė (2003, 2005, 2010) who focus on topics of identity, social memory, nostalgia, narratives of decline, and challenges of the new times, such as uncertainty related to (un)employment. Here, the link between ideology and personal identity comes to the fore. For example, Rasa Baločkaitė examines community's perception of, responses to, and interpretations of the transition from the socialist past to the new political and economic order while conducting qualitative content analysis of the local weekly newspapers *Dobryi Den* and *Sugardas*.

According to the findings of this research, three periods of residents' responses to transformations are identified: period immediately after the independence that was characterized by resistance to changes and strong pro-Soviet identities; followed by the period of slow appropriation and 'homing' of Lithuania, reconceptualization of the external homelands and the process of 'diasporization'; and the third period starting from 2002 and related to the closure of INPP and characterized by the uncertainty about the present and the future (Baločkaitė 2010: 73). According to the author, the latter period is also characterized by the Soviet nostalgia as a 'restorative discourse, through which an individual reclaims one's own dignity and respect and by transporting himself or herself onto an idealized chronotope of the Soviet past' (Klumbytė 2009: 93, in Baločkaitė 2010: 76). The author notes that such nostalgia is rooted in deficient present and facilitated by the presence of objects from the past, but does not elaborate how

exactly it happens (by looking at these objects? remembering them? living through them?).

The issue of social memory is also at the centre of articles produced as part of Kristina Šliavaitė's (2005) doctoral research *From Pioneers to Target Group: Social Change, Ethnicity and Memory in a Lithuanian Nuclear Power Plant Community* at the University of Lund. For example, while examining inhabitants' narratives about the past (1970's – 1980's) and present (post-Soviet period), the author questions how the way inhabitants construct these periods is linked to their identity (2010: 52-4). Whereas the earlier times are portrayed as 'one of rapid development, modernization, and the upward mobility of individuals, [t]he post-Soviet period is constructed as a rupture of this path and related to economic and social decline' (2010: 66-7).

The author notes that conceptualization of both periods is different among various segments of society however, and that this difference in meaning is often organized along the ethnic line. The results of the study are explained in relation to the changes in dominant ideology from Soviet emphasis on modernization and urbanization with characteristic priority given to working class and the consequent devaluation of such ideology that causes crisis of meaning and insecurity for the workers of the plant. The insecurity related to work among the community of *atomschiki* (nuclear power plant workers) is elaborated in the further research by the author (see Šliavaitė 2003).

What is particularly interesting for the present research is that while the identity of town is closely linked to the fate of INPP, Kristina Šliavaitė notes that narratives of decline are often channelled by local inhabitants through commenting on the changing material environment of the city. For example, whereas the optimism of the first stage of construction and the good quality of life is expressed as 'birth of a new place' and 'kindergartens built so well, with pools' (interview with Yuri, in Šliavaitė 2010: 59); the 'signs of the process of decline were argued to be first visible on the body of the town' (Šliavaitė's 2010: 62). However, as the author's main concern is discerning of social memory and not the examination of place, this theme is mentioned just briefly.

Overall, the research on Visaginas is centred around two main axis. On the one hand, Visaginas is examined as an example of the Soviet urban planning and thus compared to

other instances of mono-industrial towns both in the Baltics and beyond (Cinis *et al* 2008). Here, the transformation of town in the post-socialist times appears as an important category. However, the analysis of this strand of thought is not exhaustive as it focuses on formal features of urban planning for the sake of comparison with other places; the detailed account of material environment of the city is thus sacrificed. Also, it does not provide a detailed overview of the community inhabiting the city. Such drawback, however, is eliminated by the studies of the second axis that also focuses on the post-socialist developments of town, albeit from the social point; and in which categories of social memory, identity (both place identity and personal identity), and inhabitant's narratives are crucial (Baločkaitė 2010, 2012; Šliavaitė 2003, 2005, 2010).

Whereas the city is considered to be important, it seems at times that it is examined as a mere 'background and container' of social life (Jedrej 2010: 689-90) despite the fact that it serves as metaphor through which local inhabitants illustrate social and economic decline (Šliavaitė's 2010: 62) or 'accelerate' Soviet nostalgia (Baločkaitė 2010: 76). The dialogical relationship between the city and its inhabitants on the ground is only briefly illustrated and undertheorized since both authors prioritize chronological perspective over spatial analysis. The present work, thus, attempts to bridge this gap in the literature by providing a phenomenological analysis of how material environment of town is linked to people's identity.

1.3. Research questions

The study explores the city of Visaginas in two respects. On the one hand, it examines the material environment of the city and attempts to understand how it has been changing from socialist to post-socialist times. On the other hand, it focuses on the societal dimension and examines how people live through the materiality of place and how they interpret it. By bringing these two inter-related issues together, I propose the following research question: *how by appropriating the material environment of town*

and the post-socialist transformations that it embodies the local inhabitants 'dwell' in Visaginas, i.e. create attachment to place.

In order to be able to answer the above stated question, a set of other questions must be asked. Firstly, I would like to explore various *dynamics of town transformation* since its foundation in 1975; and especially in relation to how the city was initially planned, what has or has not been built in Visaginas, and how the built environment is transforming over time. These changes are conceptualized as brought not by the mere passage of time, but as ones that have some characteristic traits of post-socialism: liberalization of market, change of political authority, and the development of various new cultural institutions.

Presumably, the shift of paradigm from socialist to post-socialist times has left some trace upon the materiality of city, so the question of *how post-socialist transformations are manifest in the physical environment of town* is asked both in relation to Visaginas as a collective place and also in relation to singular places of town, such as individual buildings and public places. Such question is important here because the dialectical relationship between the material environment of the city and local inhabitants is assumed.

In relation to this, the second set of research questions is asked that concern with *what significance the material environment of the city carries for the local inhabitants*. Here, I focus on how local people conceptualize the places of town and by tracing the local, or *emic*, understanding of town environment I hope to uncover the link between material environment of the city and place attachment of inhabitants.

The central assumption here is that by talking about particular places in particular manner, people position themselves in particular way in relation to these places. Given that spaces of town are conceptualized here as representing some wider discourses of post-socialist town transformations, such *positionality* in relation to places can be theorized as positionality towards not only physical building or public square in town, but as the positionality towards the discourses that these places represent. Therefore, the examination of people's perceptions of place can provide a clue as to *how local*

inhabitants appropriate the environment of town, or, to use Heidegger's term, dwell in it.

1.4. Limitations of study

One of the main drawbacks of this study is the extremely short period of time dedicated to conducting ethnographic work. Overall, I have spent in Visaginas sixty days in four visits between 13th February and 29th July, 2014. So, whereas I was able to identify the key processes involved in constructing the place attachment in Visaginas, the theoretical model built from them is not saturated.

Secondly, I would like to identify the fact that I have not developed an elaborate approach in participant observation as another shortcoming of this study that is due to my inexperience in conducting fieldwork. The fieldwork in Visaginas is my first serious endeavour to apply the scientific methods of social anthropology to the empirical case study. However, given the fact that data collected was analysed by three different methods (mapping, interviews and participant observation), I would like to argue that the triangulation of data has contributed to overcoming this drawback.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Heidegger's phenomenology

The approach employed in this dissertation is rooted in the theoretical framework of phenomenology. Phenomenology is a philosophical school developed by Edmund Husserl at the beginning of the 20th century. According to the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, phenomenology ‘studies the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity’ (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy online, 2013). To put in other words, it is concerned with human experience of the world and various experiential perspectives of it through which a person knows and constructs reality (Tuan 2003 [1977]: 9).

However, it is not Husserl's, but the work of his student Martin Heidegger that forms the theoretical core of this dissertation. Heidegger is mostly prized for the book *Being and Time* (1927), where he develops the concept of ‘being-in-the-world’. Miles Richardson (2003) elaborates on this concept while discussing what role the material culture plays in the construction of social reality in Spanish America by drawing on two examples of being-in-the-market and being-in-the plaza. I quote here:

‘As a single, unitary phenomenon, being-in-the-world means that for us to be we must have a *world* to be in. We cannot otherwise exist. Yet ‘world’ is not an external thing, existing apart from our actions and awaiting our entrance; but it is dependent upon our *being in*. Through our actions, our *interactions*, we bring about the world in which we then are; we create so that we may be, in our creations’ (Richardson 2003:74, author's emphasis).

The author proposes that it is through the *definition of the situation* of the intersubjective interaction that the material environment as a setting could be brought together with our own physicality to constitute the being-in-the-world (Richardson 2003: 76). So, it is through the ongoing process of interaction that the situation is being defined, thus contributing to the objectification of the sense of situation upon setting

that becomes the material image of the emerging situation. Similarly, albeit on far less elaborate ground, the present study focuses on the link between the materiality of the city and society inhabiting it from the phenomenological perspective in relation to the city of Visaginas.

What this example illustrates is that Heidegger's phenomenology elaborates on how humans experience the world, while being part of it. So, the reason why Heidegger became so popular among the scholars of space is because he provides an interesting perspective on how humans interact with the material environment around them, the discussion where the concept of 'place' occupies the central role. Most explicitly his position has been expressed in one of the later essays on *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* (1971), where place is conceptualized as bringing together, or *gathering*, the objects around it.

In one infamous example of this essay, the bridge is considered to be a 'thing' that accomplishes its proper function and thus summons the fourfold (earth, sky, gods, and humans) together. In doing so, the bridge not only connects different parts of 'the elements' of the world, it creates a particular and distinct place that, from Heidegger's point of view, that is at the base of *dwelling*. Within this research, the concept of *dwelling* has been defined as appropriating space, inhabiting the world, and 'being at home'. John Gray (2003) has examined how this concept can be applied to shepherding practice of going around the hill in the Scottish Border region. I quote here:

'*Dwelling* refers to the creation of meaningful places that together form a surrounding world (*Um-welt*). It entails people's relationship to the world, motivated by concern and consequent involvement. 'Dwelling' thus privileges the practical and the spatial in the constitution of knowledge and meaning. The formative acts of dwelling and knowing are doing things with objects, picking them up, manipulating them, and discarding them' (Gray 2003: 232, author's emphasis).

Whereas the *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* (1971) is often held to distil Heidegger's position on place, Jeff Malpas, for example, challenges this assumption and argues that the preoccupation with place is evident, albeit implicitly, throughout Heidegger's work and even in the *Being and Time* (Malpas 2007).

To come back to the example of bridge, when the place is ‘created’ through it, the situation also opens the possibility for space to emerge; conceptualized as the room, as the extension. Although Heidegger’s writings at times appear too vague, and at times too poetic, they nevertheless set solid ground for further development of the concept of space and place in the second part of the 20th century.

2.2. Space, place and self

The concern with different locales is characteristic to anthropology, since the essence of the discipline is rooted in its interest in distinct cultures scattered across the globe. The specific attention to space, however, emerged only with the work of Durkheim (1915), and Hubert and Mauss (1909) who focused on space in relation to time and ritual. Here, the discussions of space became connected to the discussions of sacred architecture and symbolic appropriation of landscape not least because space was seen as one of the categories mediated by society and that could, therefore, reflect the distinctions and divisions within it. Some researchers, however, rejected resorting to symbolism and metaphor and attempted instead to prove that in some cultures, space was perceived as neither homogenous nor isotopic, and even having different quality in different cultural contexts (Littlejohn 1963: 17). Despite these attempts, the overall view of space as a neutral background and container to human activity prevailed (Jedrej 2010: 689-90). Nowadays, the earlier image of cultures as spatially separated has been questioned, especially because it relies on the unproblematic link between identities and place (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 6-7).

The theoretical development of spatial thinking in anthropology is largely due to the inspiration drawn from human geography and the ‘spatial revolution’ of the 1970’s when the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘place’ came to the forefront of the academic attention. This ‘revolution’ was started by two monographs: Edward Relph’s (1976)

Place and Placelessness and Yi-Fu Tuan's (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Both of the books elaborate on the phenomenological basis of geography and discuss the relationship between space and place. However, Tuan is following the closer reading of Heidegger in his definition of concepts. Here, place is seen as almost type of object in which one can dwell, and space is conceptualized as providing humans with room that gives the ability to move. The author sees these two concepts as interrelated but in such a way that space is defined by a network of places (2003 [1977]: 12). Relph (1976), on the other hand, is more creative and introduces a new idea that space can have different modes of experience, such as immediate, bodily, instinctive or the ideal, intangible, cerebral (1976: 9). As later researchers have noted, the idea that 'space is heterogeneous and infused with many different lived dimensions is largely taken for granted in geographical studies [even] today' (Seamon and Sower 2008: 44). So, what is interesting in relation to place is that it is seen as the locus of human experience, intentionality, action, and agency, i.e. centre of the experience of the world. Thus, the idea of embodiment is introduced. This idea is 'closely related to place, and recognizes that the position of a phenomenon in space and time is an essential determinant of its characteristics' (Ricketts Hein *et al* 2008: 1269). For example, Yi-Fu Tuan draws on the fact that it is man who imposes schema on space by the very fact of distinctive features of human body: upright posture, ability to differentiate between left and right, front and back. Thus, 'in literal sense, the human body is the measure of direction, location, and distance' (2003 [1977]: 44).

Such conception can be seen as a break from theorizing body as the duality between objective and subjective self, as the concept of 'embodied space' 'draws these disparate notions together, underscoring the importance of the body as a physical and biological entity, as lived experience, and as centre of agency, a location for speaking and acting on the world' (Low and Zúñiga 2003: 2). Therefore, this concept creates connection between space, place and self that is of direct relevance to this study. However, one of the theoretical questions that has to be raised is still due and related to how these concepts are linked to identity.

Discussing various 'sense of place', Relph introduces the idea of the *insideness* and the *outsideness* of place: the stronger the feeling of insideness the person has, the tighter is

that person's identification with place (1976: 49-55). Such conceptualization of identification with place located on the border of the categories of inside and outside is similar to how identity is understood in anthropology despite the different point of reference: the insiderness/ outsiderness mainly refers to association with some physical place, while anthropological categories of identity and sense of belonging draw mainly on the association with the group of people. However, to use Anthony Cohen words, the 'dissociation' might be even more important term here than 'association' as communities are often defined by the difference to 'others' than by similarities among 'themselves' (Cohen 1994: 51). When the term 'identity' is employed in this study, it follows primarily Cohen's definition identified here.

In relation to the discussion on borders, it is necessary to mention the one from geographers who, among many others, drew on the distinction between space and place in more recent times. Doreen Massey (2008 [2005]) in her book *For Space* calls for the revitalization of the imagination of space and the pluralisation of this concept as we live in a globalized world where politics of place acquire increasing importance. The work of Massey stands for the relational position on space – relatively recent trend in geography in which the importance of networks and flows is emphasized. While such approach favours the interconnectedness between different places, the importance of the place itself is downplayed, and especially because some scholars of the relational approach are dissatisfied with the fact that places seem to require drawing of boundaries, places are 'closed' (Massey 2008: 165-6). However, it is precisely the insistence that boundaries are unnecessary that puts the distinction between space and place in danger of collapse, as boundaries are necessary for maintaining the categories of 'inside' and 'outside' (see also Cresswell 2004).

What is also interesting in relation to scholarship focused on spatial dimension of human existence is how it relates to the studies of time, past, memory, and history. Here, I would like to argue that the overlap in focus on time *and* place should not be seen as contradictory because it often bears fruitful results. For example, Keith H. Basso (1996) brilliantly describes in *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* how the landscape is re-discovered by the indigenous inhabitants every time they walk through it by drawing on narratives of their ancestral myths. Thus,

even if the indigenous inhabitant walks through the unfamiliar places, s/he can nevertheless tell the story of how particular ancestral being had visited this place by examining particular features in the landscape. How different is it when we walk through the streets of town? Is it primarily the social memory that one possesses that enables one to interpret the material world around him/her and invest meaning onto places? Some of these questions are raised in the present work.

2.3. Phenomenology applied

Whereas the first section of the present chapter focused on the basic definition of phenomenology and Martin Heidegger's position on what constitutes place; the second part discussed how the concepts of space and place are elaborated in human geography and anthropology, thus setting the grounds for terminology employed in the study. In order to grow some flesh on this conceptual corpus, this part of the theoretical framework draws some of the empirically rich case studies together in order to demonstrate how phenomenological thinking had been employed on the ground.

One of such studies by Miles Richardson (2003) has been briefly mentioned above. Focusing on the town of Cartago, Costa Rica, the author compares the material environment of the market and the central square, or plaza; and questions how these two settings are linked to the particular type of behaviour and cultural assumptions that each produces while employing the phenomenological perspectives of being-in-the-market and being-in-the plaza. The article includes detailed conceptual descriptions of the material component, the interaction component and the image component of the settings, and theorizes how these are interrelated. In this respect, his work can be considered as theorizing the 'mechanisms' of experiencing particular place. Such proposition on 'how phenomenology works' is very valuable because whereas the

theoretical grounds of phenomenology are well developed, the methods of how the human experience is constituted are very difficult to grasp.

Closer to the theme of place-making is John Gray's (2003) work on the shepherding practices in the Scottish borderlands. Drawing inspiration from the work of de Certeau's (1984) and the analogy between walking and language (in the sense of speaking and not language system) the author examines the practice of going around the hills among the Teviothead shepherds. This practice is structured around the life of *hirsel*, a term referring both to sheep and the area of the hills they graze. Through walking around the hills, Teviothead shepherds appropriate the landscape and invest it with meaning, thus creating the feeling of being at home in the open spaces of the hills.

The author also emphasizes how such practices relate to interpreting various signs in the landscape and relating them to the history of *reiving* between England and Scotland in the Border region among the shepherds; and so contributing to how the Border identity is defined. This case study is very interesting, as it examines the apparently open spaces of the hills as being what has been identified in the conceptual overview as 'places' – centres of human activity and agency. In relation to the present study, Gray's work is valuable as it emphasizes the importance of interpreting the visual elements of material environment in building one's identity.

Perhaps, even closer to the present study is the work of Dimitris Dalakoglou (2010) who focuses on how the long-term Albanian transnational migrants in Greece travel away for work while at the same time building houses in their homelands. The construction of these houses involves significant amount of energy and finance, as people bring building materials to their native villages, ship remittances, assign somebody to look after the house 'while they are away', etc. However, the very need of these building works can be questioned, as some of the Albanian migrants have resided in Greece for prolonged period of time and sometimes even do not have the clear intention to go back to their homelands.

Although this might seem strange from the pragmatic point of view, the author argues that the building, or the *making*, of houses brings together various social relationships and help the transnational migrants to come to terms with their 'fluid transitional and

transnational daily experience' (Dalakoglou 2010: 763). Thus, the "'making' of the house' in transnationalism is the process of the gradual re-making of a new ontology of pre-existing relationships' (Dalakoglou 2010: 772) in a sense that making houses is synonymous with (re-)making of existing social relationships. The reason why this article is important here is because it illustrates how the process of building is connected to inhabiting, or *dwelling*, the place.

All of the three works draw to a varying extent on some of the central characteristics of *dwelling*: lack of distance between the people and things, referential function in everyday life that implies a particular way of seeing the places, gathering of objects and people that create a sentimental attachment to particular places (Gray 2003: 232-3).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The methods employed in this study correspond to the aim of exploring the place attachment through the changing material environment of town. In order to achieve the objective, I use three methodological approaches – *mapping*, *unstructured interviews* and *participant observation*. In addition to description of each method, the present chapter provides an overview of fieldwork conducted in Visaginas from 13th February to 29 July, 2014 for a period of sixty days. Also, a section which describes my position of the researcher is presented and how it might have influenced the research results. Shortly, the challenges I have faced during the fieldwork are outlined.

3.1. Fieldwork

The present study is rooted within the academic discipline of social anthropology at the heart of which lies the inquiry into the cultural variations of social life. Fieldwork has been one the distinctive methods of studying these variations since the time of Bronislaw Malinowski and for almost a century now (Bernard 2006: 345-7). It also lies at the core of this research and the present section provides a brief description of fieldwork conducted in Visaginas between the 13th of February and the 29 July, 2014.

The benefits of fieldwork are multiple, among which is that it provides a first-hand knowledge of the society under investigation by the presence of researcher in the field which contributes to the legitimacy of research, since an anthropologist ‘has seen it for herself’. However, the kind of information collected is also *positional* in respect to who the researchers is, since researcher’s identity plays a crucial part in influencing how, and why, informants interact with the researcher. Therefore, a reflexive stance has to be adopted on behalf of an anthropologist in order to assess how her background has influenced the research conduct and, consequently, has impacted upon the research

findings. Therefore, the second part of this section is addressing my position as a researcher in Visaginas.

3.1.1. Overview of fieldwork and conditions of research

Overall, I have spent in Visaginas sixty days in the period from 13th of February until 29th of July this year. The fieldwork was accomplished in four periods of nine (13 – 22 February), twenty three (11 March – 2 April), six (14 – 20 May) and twenty two (7 – 29 July) days. This is an extremely short time for a thorough ethnographic work, and may rightly be considered as one of the main drawbacks of the study.

The most difficult was the first visit to the city. When going to Visaginas, I did not know what to expect from this town, as I have never visited it before. In this sense, the fieldwork in Visaginas was an ‘exotic foreign location’. So, when I first came to Visaginas by bus from Vilnius, it looked rather gloomy to me. Walking with my travelling backpack through the city during the still cold and snowy February evening, I really doubted I will enjoy my stay in town. Also, the accommodation I was renting was situated in the very end of town and in the block which was considered by local residents as a ‘dangerous place’. The first bad impressions stayed with me during the winter months.

However, in the subsequent visits I managed to find a better accommodation and to overcome the difficulties of entering the field. Whereas my first informants were young people of my age who have introduced me to other local inhabitants, gradually the web of informants expanded through snowball technique. When visiting the city in May and July, the conditions of research were even better. Good weather and blooming trees showed the city in a totally different light. Also, during the late spring and summer visits, I have met with other researchers of Visaginas, on one occasion acting as a guide to the city, and on other as a translator between Lithuanian researcher and Russian-speaking informants. The conversations with these scholars were very useful and aided the progress of the present work.

3.1.2. Reflections on my position as a researcher

My personal background had impacted the fieldwork experience and the present work in a number of ways. On the one hand, my background as a native Russian-speaker that grew up in Lithuania and fluently speaks Lithuanian was a valuable asset for the present research. The language skills and shared cultural and social assumptions had enabled me to freely communicate and win trust of informants from both ethnic groups residing in Visaginas – Russian-speakers and Lithuanians alike.

Here, I use the concept of ‘Russian-speaker’ instead of, for example, ‘Russian’. The majority of my informants originally come from Russia or are the descendants of the people who came from Russia. However, some were from different places, such as Belarus or Central Asia. In these cases, we conversed in Russian language. Also, some of my informants were of mixed parentage but their mother-tongue is Russian. To put in the words of one of my informant:

‘Visaginas is a very good place to study identity. You know, we have over 50 different nationalities living in the city! For example, what my ethnicity do you think is? Tatar! My mum is Tatar, and from my dad’s line, he is a Serb. But the only language I master well is Russian. I hate Russian folk songs, but I create my own songs using this language’ (Dmitrij, Visaginas, July 2014)

I was aware of the cultural biases and had assumed a neutral position on such sensitive issues as language while maintaining an adequate relation to the informants. Given that in ordinary life I strive to maintain a neutral position on the question of ethnic belonging and to position myself as belonging to both ethnic groups by the virtue of socialization into Lithuanian culture, I normally maintain an ‘in-between’ stance. This has been very beneficial in this research, albeit I did face some challenges in relation to the politics of difference.

However, the cultural proximity to research field has also posed some challenges. For example, one of the first contacts I have made in Visaginas was with the group of young people of my age. Later, we discovered that belonged to the same expanded circle of friends and had found common acquaintances among our friends. This have provided

me with *carte blanche* in conducting more in-depth research since they were very open and were frequently inviting me to join them in passing the leisure time. However, on the other hand, it posed some questions that ‘halfie’ or ‘native’ anthropologists often face (see Narayan 1993). For example, I had some doubts about how to relate to them while conducting fieldwork as the boundary between being friends and being researcher/ informants for research was often blurred.

In relation to other categories, I had not experienced any difficulties with regards to gender or age, both women and men alike of different age groups were willing to contribute their insights to the research. However, what had appeared as a significant factor of my background was the fact that I was studying in the foreign universities, as I normally presented myself as a student at the University of Tartu and the University of Glasgow (see Plain Language Statement in Appendices 1a, 1b, 1c). Talking about power asymmetry between a researcher and research subject, I do not think that this created some kind of power imbalance. On the contrary, on several occasions some of my informants expressed wondering and pleasant surprise that even people outside of Lithuania were interested in studying Visaginas, and thus were willing to participate in research even more enthusiastically.

3.1.3. Ethical challenges: juggling between two ethnic groups

One of the central and recurring ethical challenge which I had faced during the fieldwork is related to the local symbolic politics of two groups residing in Visaginas: Lithuanians and Russian-speakers. As I mention above, I did not differentiate informants on the basis of their ethnic background or language they spoke. Therefore, throughout the study I had communicated with representatives of both groups. However, at times it was difficult to keep an adequate position when an informant, for example, was criticising members of the other ethnic group. I felt very awkward in these situations, and normally accepted the position of neutrality while trying to pass the judgement as objectively as I could. At times, this resulted in very long conversations

on the matter of languages and cultural difference. Some examples of such situations are given in the text.

3.2. Cartography undisciplined

The present study feeds into the discussion of centrality of place in human life and attempts to examine the specific types of spaces created by Soviet urban planning and architecture, how these are changing in post-socialism and invested with meaning by local inhabitants. Driven by objective not only to represent these places visually, but also to provide in-depth analysis of each spot (extracted from interviews with informants), I had decided to create a map that includes location and photographs of each place, while providing the textual analysis as a separate chapter of the dissertation. The reflections that local people provide on various places of town are subjective, and, to use geographer's buzzword, are parts of the 'psychogeography' of Visaginas that often raises the question of who is 'writing the city' (Pinder 2005: 388).

So, whereas the map produced by this work can be seen as an analytical tool employed to organize the empirical findings of research, and not as a full-bodied cartographical endeavour; it can equally be located within the field of critical cartography. Given the challenges that academic cartography is facing at the present, such as availability of mapping software to lay users, artistic experimentations with representation of space, mobile mapping applications, and geotagging; the present map can be considered as 'cartography undisciplined' (Crampton and Krygier 2006: 12-3). By prioritizing narratives over authoritative (geo-)graphical representation, it holds that not all knowledge can be 'scientized'. Thus, I would like to follow Krygier and Wood's suggestion that map is a creative and playful 'proposition' (2009: 198-9) rather than some certain way of knowing the world.

So, while mapping various places of town transformations is the main objective of this research, it is not employed solely to understand the dynamics of post-socialist urban

forms. One has to bear in mind that such transformations have a direct impact on how inhabitants interpret their own selves. For example, by actively narrating the story of building the town and by pointing to the crumbling state of some of the places of their first settlements nowadays, some local inhabitants express sorrow not only for the decaying state of the buildings, but also for their work that seems now to be an altogether fruitless endeavour. How can such a statement be mapped? I propose the present map with the close reading of the Chapter 4 called ‘Mappings’.

3.2.1. Data collection for map

The history of Visaginas spans mere forty years, a very short time for the urban settlement. However, given that it was constructed under different circumstances than it exists now, it is interesting to examine how this sire of Soviet urban heritage is changing over time. In order to assess these changes in the present work, it was first of all necessary to understand how the city was planned and constructed, what plans came to life and which ones were abandoned or not completed. By taking built environment that has been completed during the initial construction phase (mid-1970’s to mid-1980’s) as a baseline, I have decided to map the places that lie outside of this ‘constant’ category and channel important economic, political or cultural development of town. Three sources of information were used for collecting data for the study: personal observations, desk study of Visaginas maps, and interviews with local inhabitants and architecture specialists.

With regards to the first, I have conducted numerous walks in Visaginas in order to familiarize myself with the city and gather data about the place. In addition to this, I conducted six ‘interviews on the move’, i.e. by walking with informants in the city (three interviews conducted with one informant). The importance of this method in qualitative research has been underlined, for example, by Hitchings and Jones (2004) who walked with their informants around domestic London gardens with photographs provided either by researcher or the informant. In my case, the physical environment of the city served as a referent of discussion during the interviews. The route was chosen

by the informants themselves and was used as a way to understand what places in Visaginas are considered to be important by the present informant. Visuality of places played such an important role for the informants (both *en route* and during conventional interviews) that it became one of the central organizing theme of empirical findings. Thus, I would like to support the claim of some researchers of ‘new mobilities paradigm’ who argue for the importance of studying localities through senses, since senses ‘play a significant role in determining how people perceive places and experiences’ (Edensor 2002, Macnaghten and Urry 1997; quoted from Ricketts Hein *et al* 2008: 1268).

Second, and more formal, data collection technique involved the desk study of three maps of Visaginas (see Appendix 2a, 2b, 2c). The first was the city planning map dated to 1986 that explicated which building were constructed and exploited by this year. The second map was produced in 1985 as part of the General Development Plan of 1989. While also designed for urban planners, it included a wider area outside of city borders, including, for example, the area planned for construction of individual housing that was never completed. The third map was a stylized map of the city that was drawn in 2004, and that is casually used for the orientation in town. It was obtained from the informational webpage of the city.

The studying of these maps and documents supporting them, such as General Development Plan 1989 [1985], a pool of potentially interesting case studies for the map were identified, including, for example, the fact that additional microregions were supposed to be built on the other side of the *Taikos Prospektas*, or that the local Communist Party hall was supposed to be situated where the *Domino* shopping centre and the Catholic church stand now. I have visited these places and talked about them with local people in order to examine whether they carry any significance on the ground. As a result, a group of empirical spots was singled out under the title ‘Unrealized Plans’.

However, as it was already noted, the main source on the ideas for the present map and their elaboration came from analysing the unstructured interviews with local inhabitants. These are described below.

3.2.2. Selection of spots on the map

Out of the initial pool of cases for the map, fifteen spots, grouped into five categories of places, were selected to be represented on the map. The selection of spots was conducted according to how often it was mentioned by the informants, or how strongly they felt about these spaces. Perhaps, the only exception to such selection is the group titled ‘Where Have All the Pregnant Women Gone?’ that elaborates on one peculiar dynamic evident in town – the closure of pre-school and school educational institutions (kindergartens and schools), and re-moulding them into various cultural institutions, such as Centre of Culture or Ethnic Minorities Centre. These places are very interesting for the present study, and have therefore been incorporated here despite the infrequent mentioning about them outside of circle of people directly related to them.

Overall, such selection resulted in five categories of places that are discussed in detail in the following section: ‘Structuring the Playing Field’, ‘Visuality and Visibility’, ‘Where Have All the Pregnant Women Gone?’, ‘Unrealized Plans’, and ‘The Politics of Location’.

3.3. Interviews

The qualitative unstructured interviews with the inhabitants of Visaginas formed the core of this study. This method was employed in order to understand the informants’ own perception of town and their particular life stories that are tied to the history of Visaginas. Thus, the method is justified for its ability to maintain an open conversational style where informants are free to express their opinions. In the following sections I explain the choice of informants, provide an overview of interview situations and approach taken in interview analysis.

3.3.1. Choice of informants

To get in touch with potential informants for the study I used the snowball method. Prior to conducting the study, I had decided to keep the informants' sample open and not to narrow it down to any specific target group. Thus, any person of adult age could be considered as an informant for the study irrespective of gender, ethnicity, occupation, length of stay in the city, etc. (see Appendix 3 for profiles of informants). The reason for such a decision was that I wanted to understand how different people constructed their sense of belonging to the city. Given that prior studies (Šliavaitė 2010) conceptualized the whole population of the city as the community of *atomschiki* (community of workers of the INPP), I aimed at refining this conceptualization, and wanted to see whether the perception of the city differs across different groups residing in town.

Prior to arrival to the city, I had collected a list of potential informants from my friends and acquaintances who knew anyone living in Visaginas. I had used some of these contacts. However, the majority of informants for the study were recruited from developing the network of people I personally met in town. This proved to be a more valuable approach, because it was easier to approach people, and when introduced by a local resident personally, the informants were clearly more open and friendly.

Thus, I could note a clear difference between the first period of stay in town where I was trying to make contacts with locals myself through talking to people in various public places, and when I was expanding the network beyond the first contacts. Some people of this extended network consisted of resourceful individuals and experts in particular areas and who also knew many people in town. In addition to this, I had attended some public organizations in Visaginas and had recruited some of my informants from these organizations. Overall, I had communicated with twenty seven people in Visaginas. Fifteen of local inhabitants were Russian-speakers (majority coming from Russia or their descendants), eleven people of Lithuanian origin, and one person of mixed Russian-Lithuanian parentage.

The number of people I had communicated with was roughly equally split between three age groups of (25-35), (35-60), (60+) years old. Within the first group of young people, the number of females and males is equal. During the fieldwork, I had spent the majority of my time with these informants who have easily accepted me into the group – a fact which can be explained by my age and cultural background similar to theirs. The second group I had spent most time with were people of retired or close to retirement age. Although the gender distribution in the group was equal (4 women and 4 men), on the ground I had communicated more with women. This is down to the fact that two organizations that these women were representing (as I recruited them through the organizations) had almost solely women-based membership.

In addition to the basic characteristics, one important variable of informants' profiles has to be mentioned here – roughly half of my informants were representatives of some governmental or non-governmental organization (13 of 27 informants). This was not the initial aim for the study, and can be explained by two facts. On the one hand, I was seeking more information about town history and knowledge about town architecture, and, therefore, had approached several official channels to obtain this information, such as archives of the Visaginas City Council, local historian, and one of the first architects of Visaginas, etc. On the other hand, my network of contacts had developed through the network of resourceful individuals who often were representatives of non-governmental organizations.

Overall, I had conducted twenty two recorded interviews with twenty one persons. On three occasions, the interviews were conducted with more than one informant. Given that recorded interviews are at the base of this study, it is necessary to note the difference in breakdown of informants with whom the interviews were conducted. The majority of the interviews were taken with Russian-speakers, only four of the interviews were held with Lithuanians. This bias could be explained by the fact that the majority of Lithuanians I met were representatives of the official organizations that I had attended not always for the purpose of recruiting informants, whereas the Russian-speakers were recruited through the unofficial web of contacts and specifically to take part in the interview. With regards to gender, nine of the interview informants were female and

thirteen male. Age wise, interview informants mostly came from two distinct groups – people aged (25-35) years old and people aged around or over 60 years old.

3.3.2. Interview situations

The interviews were conducted in the period 14.02.2014 to 29.07.2014. I myself conducted the interviews in two languages – Lithuanian and Russian. The interviews lasted from half an hour to three hours (on average hour and twenty minutes), and were recorded with a verbal consent between the informant and me. The fact that I did not take a written consent from the informants can be explained by the fact that verbal agreement has a strong force in this cultural context. For example, when I was renting an apartment, no renting contract was signed between the landlady and myself. Thus, I was cautious that bringing out some official papers might be perceived as strange by the informants and can affect their conduct during the interview and the openness of the conversation. Prior to the interview, I had explained the study background to the informants and gave them a Plain Language Statement about it (see Appendix 1a, 1b, 1c). During the second stage of fieldwork, I had visited the town with the draft version of the map for this research in order to check whether I had understood the information provided by some informants correctly, asking the permission to incorporate their insights in the study.

Interviews were conducted in different places. As mentioned earlier, I had developed my informant sample through the network of the resourceful individuals, and so approximately half of the recorded interviews were taken at the site of these organizations, with three interviews taken on the day when the organizations were officially not open. It has to be noted that three of the organizations were grassroots, and thus individuals were not employed in the organization, but were rather people who had established them. The fact that interviews were taken on site of these organizations had benefited the study because I was able to observe the informants in their normal everyday environment, which helped me to contextualize their claims.

However, at times it also had posed some difficulties for the study. For example, interviews with three informants were conducted in their work place with other people being present in the same room. This had significantly affected the style of conversation as the informant was replying to my questions in a very dry and official manner, meanwhile I had avoided asking an informant too personal questions. One of these interviews is also the shortest of this study and lasted only twenty five minutes. I must admit that keeping the balance between personal and ‘official’ perspective on town constituted one of the main challenges of the interviewing process.

Other interviews were conducted either at the informant’s home or at my place, and six interviews were recorded while walking on the street. Three of these interviews were conducted with the same person, on two occasions because the informant himself had chosen walking as a convenient way to converse, and on one occasion because I had asked the informant to show me the places in Visaginas which he had mentioned in the interview. With regards to other mobile methodologies (for an overview of mobile methodologies, see Ricketts Heim *et al* 2008), on two occasions I had also asked informants to show me around town, one was recorded while walking with the group of friends for the barbeque outside of city, and one while sitting outdoors.

These walks were particularly useful for the study, because I had been able to directly address some questions about spaces of town *en route*. Also, these walks were useful in explaining my informants better the purpose of the study, since one of the informants, for example, had a misconception that I am studying ‘dead cities’. By pointing to various elements of the spaces of town, I explained that I study the interaction between the material and social environment and, in this sense, a ‘living’ city rather than a ‘dead’ one.

During the interviews, I aimed to address questions that could be divided into two categories. One set of questions related to the person’s biography as well as personal experience of town. The second set of questions were town-related, I was asking people about particular buildings and spaces of town, as well as history of its construction. However, given that interviews were unstructured and influenced by the interview situation, sometimes they resulted in long conversations off-topic. In these cases, I consider the choice of topic is indicative of person’s experiences. So, without analysing

the parts of interview where conversation is not directly related to town, I nevertheless note an overarching theme of the interview and incorporate it into the analysis.

3.3.3. Approach to interview analysis

Twenty two unstructured interviews conducted with twenty one informants were recorded. The interviews were transcribed according to the common conventions for transcribing verbatim text (Manzo 1996, in Bernard 2006: 487-93). At the start of a project I did not have a hypothesis to be tested and have decided to let both the locality and the people to direct the research. During the interviews, two broad themes were addressed: local people's life history and their relationship to town. In the latter, I normally addressed the questions how they perceive city's and what are their everyday practices related to life in Visaginas.

Given that informants were free in developing their ideas, the vast amount of interview data seemed apparently unrelated to the main topic of study. While thinking of how to process this data, I had decided to use *discourse analysis* as described in Russell Bernard's (2006) textbook *Research Methods in Anthropology*. On the one hand, I was looking for local inhabitants' comments of how they perceive the general transformation of Visaginas as a collective place. On the other, given that by this stage I had already developed the map of spaces of transformations in Visaginas, I was looking specifically at how people talked about the places I had identified for the map and how they positioned themselves in relation to these spaces. The list of themes and their discussion is presented in the empirical part of the thesis.

3.4. Participant observation

During my fieldwork, I resided in Visaginas for the overall period of two month. Since the main question of the study is the relationship between people and material environment of the city, the very fact of living in town can be considered as *participating* in local life and experiencing it from within. During this time, I had attempted to participate in as many local events or ordinary routines of local people as possible. Making friends with local young people was very helpful in exploring various spaces of town and natural areas surrounding it where I would not have gone by myself.

With regards to more formal participant observation, I had participated in the activities or have been present on several occasions in three of the local organizations: Visaginas Centre for Social Support, quarters of the *House of Creativity*, and the *Ethnic Minorities Centre* (part of Centre of Culture) where *Builders' Club* and Art Club *Paletė* are based. As well as that, I had several times visited the *Centre of Culture* where I was holding some of my interviews and especially for the purpose of examining old photos of Visaginas that are collected to establish the museum. Also, I had visited the public facilities, like libraries, and had made some observation on these spaces too.

While conducting participant observation, I did not have any exhaustive approach to it and instead have tried to be present at different spaces of town whenever the opportunity arises. I aimed at collecting as much as possible little details about the place, record who was present at the location, etc. All of these are recorded in my fieldwork diary.

Despite the short period of time and my inexperience in conducting participant observation, it nevertheless produced a corpus of data useful for this study. The observations helped me, on the one hand, to consider the relationship between humans and town environment I did not think about prior to conducting research. For example, having been present in two youth organizations in town, I noted that one of them attracted many more participants than the other and questioned why this was the case. On the other hand, the findings attained by participant observation provided an independent set of data against which the mapping and interviews could be tested. This,

indeed, produced some ‘negative cases’ (Bernard 2006: 500) in the sense that information obtained from interviews not always corresponded with my observations. Thinking about these discrepancies not only forced a more reflexive approach, but also has slightly re-moulded the conclusions made by the study.

3.5. Summary

The present chapter provided an overview of the methodological choices made in this study. First of all, I describe fieldwork conducted while visiting Visaginas in the period 13th February to 29th July, 2014. The section also provides some reflections on my position as researcher in town and the ethical challenges I have faced.

Thereafter, I outline three main strategic methods employed by this study – ‘undisciplined cartography’, unstructured interviews and participant observation. Although I had aimed at independent collection of data by each approach in order to produce independent set of data, methods at times were tightly woven together. For example, when walking with an informant in town and taking an interview on the go, I noted some places that might be useful for the map while conducting the unstructured interview and making personal observations. Therefore, a constellation of these methods was mutually constitutive while at the same time proving useful in keeping validity of research in check, as some of the negative cases were identified by comparing findings produced by different approaches.

CHAPTER 4: MAPPINGS

The present chapter presents the textual findings of the research project that are visually organized as the empirical spots on the map. In order to discover how the urban landscape of Visaginas has changed since its initial building stage in the mid-1980's, I had collected large number of data through mixed sources (see §3.2. *Cartography undisciplined*). Some of the places were shortlisted and organized into five categories. These five categories of places are represented on the map by fifteen case studies (see Table 1). Whereas the empirical spots were chosen according to frequency with which the same spot was mentioned across informants or whether it was identified by some informants as an important place, the categorization of places was accomplished by myself while thinking through what processes of town transformation. The map and the present chapter are supplementary, and should, therefore, be read together.

Table 1: Map of places of town transformations, Visaginas

CATEGORY	NUMBER ON THE MAP
STRUCTURING THE PLAYING FIELD	1) Visaginas City Council
	2) Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant
	3) <i>Domino</i> shopping centre
VISUALITY AND VISIBILITY	4) Telephoning station
	5) Building next to hotel <i>Aukštaitija</i> on Sedulinos alley
	6) Festivalio Street blocks
	7) <i>Triangle</i>
WHERE HAVE ALL THE PREGNANT WOMEN GONE?	8) Centre of Culture
	9) Ethnic Minorities Centre
	10) Youth Centre
UNREALIZED PLANS	11) Non-existing 'wings'
	12) The wasteland
	13) The Communist Party centre
THE POLITICS OF LOCATION	14) Catholic church
	15) Orthodox church

When categorizing these places, I had several questions in mind. First of all, the category ‘Structuring the Playing Field’ involved places that influence life in Visaginas and exemplify the transition from socialism to post-socialism and various structural challenges that the city had faced. The second category, ‘Visuality and Visibility’, addresses how the material environment of the city becomes the object of people’s interpretation about the past and the present state of town. People’s interpretations can vary, but the third category, ‘Where Have All the Pregnant Women Gone?’ addresses the very tangible dynamics of closure of schools and kindergartens and their re-moulding into various cultural institutions. As such, it also addresses the issue of Soviet (over-)planning, and the following category ‘Unrealized Plans’ elaborates on this discussion, albeit from a different angle. The places included here focus on how the unrealized plans of the Soviet project are translated into the physical environment of town, and ask whether they create ‘voids’ in the urban fabrique. As one of my informants has put:

‘From my point of view, every city has a face, like a person. The kind of life that person lives is reflected on his face: if the person was kind, he will have one kind of face, if was lazy – another. But Visaginas still does not have its face; it is like a baby, like a newborn’ (Matas, March 2014, Visaginas).

Although I agree with this statement, it is also possible to note that Visaginas is slowly developing new features. Some of the more recent urban developments of town since 1990’s, for example, comprise the construction of two new religious buildings in town. Not only do these places confirm the popularity of religion in post-socialism that had been also noted in relation to other locales (Balzer 2005; Rogers 2005), but also because of politics of location that they embody. Thus, the fifth category of places is called ‘The Politics of Location’. Other, and more mundane, developments of Visaginas included various infrastructural works, such as mending pavements or upgrading the town beach, but these are not included in the map.

These particular categories were selected because they help to understand what environment local inhabitants have lived through and how this environment has been changing; starting from the bright socialist idea(l)s of the *atomgorodok* and celebrating the meetings of the Party Committee to witnessing how the new churches are erected. Certainly, not all of the inhabitants of Visaginas have lived through all of these

transformations. It is worth noting that some of my younger informants, for example, draw on the experience of their parents, thus reproducing social memory and transferring culture.



STRUCTURING THE PLAYING FIELD

- 1 Visaginas City Council
- 2 Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant
- 3 Domino shopping centre

VISUALITY AND VISIBILITY

- 4 Telephoning station
- 5 Building next to hotel *Aukštaitija* on Sedulinos Alley
- 6 Festivalio Street blocks
- 7 Triangle

WHERE HAVE ALL THE PREGNANT WOMEN GONE?

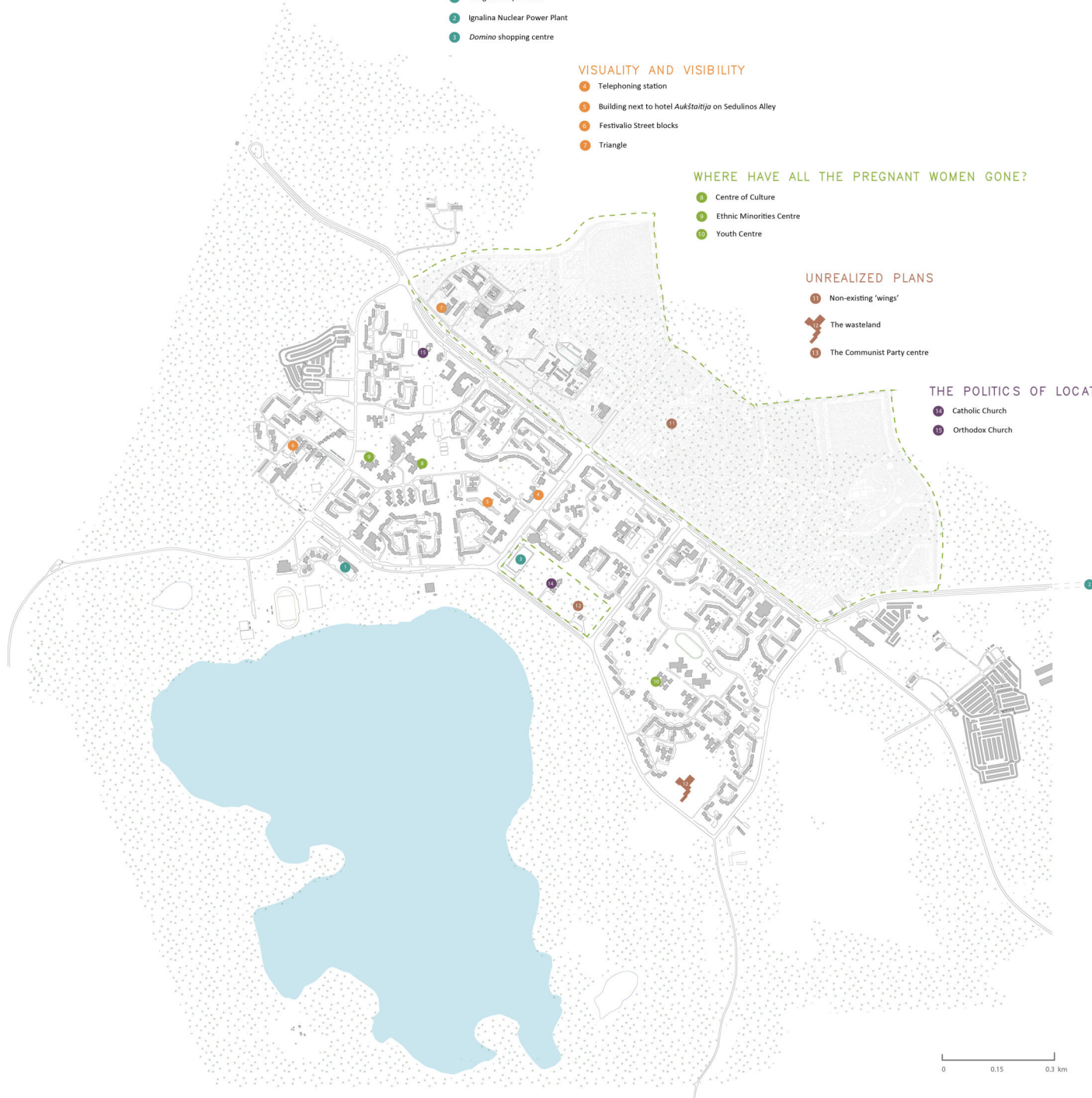
- 8 Centre of Culture
- 9 Ethnic Minorities Centre
- 10 Youth Centre

UNREALIZED PLANS

- 11 Non-existing 'wings'
- 12 The wasteland
- 13 The Communist Party centre

THE POLITICS OF LOCATION

- 14 Catholic Church
- 15 Orthodox Church



THE MAP OF TRANSFORMATIONS OF VISAGINAS

Photographs 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14 and 15 made by P. Marozas. Photograph 8 made by V. Čiupačenko, courtesy of the Visaginas Centre of Culture. Photograph 2 of the INPP sourced from Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant Station website, 2014. Graphical development of the map by J. Juženas.

4.1. Structuring the Playing Field

The three places that are included in this category stand to exemplify forces structuring life in the city. The governing authority is embodied by the City Council, the main employer (prior to its closure) and source of place identity by the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, and transition from state-governed to liberalized economy by the *Domino* shopping centre. The transformations that these places channel have a direct influence on the physical fabric of town and everyday life of local inhabitants.

Among these three, the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant was mentioned most often as the pre-requisite of the construction of town and, thus, the forming feature of Visaginas. For example, one informant stressed that it was because of the plant that different people from across the Soviet Union arrived to Visaginas, resulting in such rich mixture of ethnic groups in the city (Alisa, Visaginas, February 2014). The direct connection between the city and the INPP had been discussed above (see § 1.2. *The perfect atomgorodok and what was after*) and noted by the previous researchers of Visaginas who even called the whole population of the city the community of the *atomschiki* (Šliavaitė 2003). The fact that many locals knew each other because of the work at the plant was evident when I was conducting one of the mobile interviews with the ex-worker of the plant, who was constantly greeting other by-passers and at times sharing with me some information on who these people were.

Various topics had been discussed in relation to the INPP, but all of them were primarily connected either to the issue of building or the closure of the plant. In relation to the first, such themes as why the plant had been built on the Lithuanian and not Belarusian side of the lake Drūkščiai had been raised, also the issue of whether Lithuanian authorities approved of such decision, and how the fact that nuclear energy was supervised by the *Minsredmash* influenced that mainly people from Soviet ‘closed towns’ arrived to Lithuania to construct and service the plant.

For example, one of the informants argued that the plant was neither needed nor wanted in Lithuania, and that people who arrived to Sniečkus brought their own culture and

customs with them. By and large, according to the informant, these traditions were foreign to the local context, and created the lasting antagonism between Russians who arrived here and the native Lithuanians. Such situation was described by the informant as ‘building our city not on our land’ (Konstantin, Visaginas, February 2014). During the time of the construction, these antagonisms were solved by one of the chief builder of town who knew that preservation of nature would be positively valued by local inhabitants, and thus had prohibited the cutting of trees inside the city (ibid.). Bringing this comment to the present day context, the informant stressed that although the workers of the INPP are highly educated and intelligent; their technical skills are not directly translatable into the diplomatic skills that are needed to find a compromise between the Russian inhabitants and Lithuanian authorities.

The closure of the plant was also the prominent theme of conversations, and the topics ranged from the raised prices of heating after the closed hot water circuit from the plant has been disconnected (Oleg, Visaginas, February 2014), to the question of unemployment and the need to re-define the identity of Visaginas that had previously been based upon sole association with the INPP. Most of the informants did not understand why the decision to decommission the plant had been taken, and were dissatisfied with it, listing the range of negative effects it had for the inhabitants of Visaginas.

For example, the consequences of closure for the local young people were addressed by one informant. According to him, when the plant was operational, young people saw working at the plant as a desirable career opportunity, and many of them were passing the physics and mathematics exams much better than the rest of Lithuania in order to be accepted to nuclear physics courses in Obninsk, Russia. So, while young people are leaving Visaginas to acquire higher education as they did before, the motivation for coming back after the closure of the INPP is lower since there are very few employment opportunities in Visaginas (Vasiliy, Visaginas, March 2014).

The responsibility of solving the problems resulting from the closure of Ignalina plant was perceived by most of my informants as lying on the shoulders of the Visaginas City Council as the official institution governing the city. However, it is discussed here not in relation to how well it is coping with this this task, but rather how it was perceived by

the town inhabitants more generally. Here, the change of authority upon the collapse of Soviet Union and the establishment of the Lithuanian authority appeared to be the main topic of interest as the Council was seen as the direct mirror of such change of power.

To a certain extent, the perceived divide between ‘the Russian city’ and ‘the Lithuanian authorities’ often implicit in the discussion of the closure of INPP was reinforced during the conversations about the City Council much more explicitly. For example, Anastasiya had arrived to the city in 1976 and had been the employee of the City Council for a number of years. Talking about the work at the Council in the early days of the town construction, she pointed out that there was such a big workload that she even brought the typewriter home to be able to continue working in the evenings. Because of such hard work, almost no spare time was left which, according to Anastasiya, had influenced the fact that she never had any time to learn Lithuanian language. After the independence, the knowledge of Lithuanian language became one of the main requirements for continuing work, and she was thus made redundant (Anastasiya, Visaginas, March 2014).

Also, because of the very little percentage of Lithuanians who resided in Visaginas in early 1990’s and were suitable for the work at the Council, many employees were drawn from the neighbouring cities. Nowadays, such trend continues, and several informants referred to the fact that some of the workers of the Council are Lithuanians who are not inhabitants of Visaginas and come from the nearby towns of Zarasai, Utena, Ukmergė, Ignalina. This fact, according to some informants, influences the relationships between the city and its authorities. For example, Vasilij who is in his 30’s and is the patriot of the city, argued that because the Council’s authorities are not locally based; they are not very enthusiastic about promoting the development in the city and ‘fighting for it’ after the closure of INPP (Vasilij, Visaginas, March 2014). Whereas the informant acknowledged that various infrastructural projects are smoothly run, what lacked in Council’s activity was the plan for ‘mental development’ of town (ibid.).

Another informant had drawn on the similar logic albeit in relation to the house insulation projects currently running in the city. According to Konstantin, these projects were mismanaged on behalf of authorities and had forced people to take up bank credits

and sign contracts with private companies that could lay claims on people's flats was the debt not paid on time (Konstantin, Visaginas, February 2014). This way, the person not only expressed dissatisfaction with local authorities, but also blamed them for drawing people into the vicious circle of capitalist market. The fact that people who had lived through state-governed economy are suspicious of liberal market comes as no surprise. However, the root of such complaints seems to lie not in the quality of work of the employees of the Council but in the question of who has the authority over the city.

The discussion of the market relations, however, brings us to the third spot within this category – *Domino* shopping centre. Whereas 'the shop', and by extension the shopping centre, is not the only place that can exemplify the market economy, arguably it is one of the most pervasive elements of this logic in people's everyday life. The shopping mall discussed here is located in the geographical centre of town.

What is interesting in relation to *Domino* is that there is a big car park in front of it. Whereas Visaginas was initially planned as a walkable city, many small shops were located on the first floors of the residential buildings along the Sedulinos alley. Given that nowadays people often use cars to go shopping, many of these small shops have been shut as there is no direct access to them by car. Contrary to that, *Domino* is clearly enjoying popularity. Inside the *Domino*, there is a big food supermarket, a number of small shops selling clothes, books, household items, etc. During the fieldwork, I visited the shopping centre many times, and had noted that it is a very popular place not only to do shopping, but also to socialize. Especially, younger people like to sit around benches located in the corridor of the mall, or to visit the restaurant and pool/bowling bar on the second floor of the building.

Across the road from the centre, the newly reconstructed continuation of the Sedulinos alley joins with the previously existing opening in front of the Hotel *Aukštaitija*, thus forming the public square with benches (see Picture 4). The bus stops for people travelling from/ to Vilnius, the bank and the outdoors summer café are also situated nearby, thus contributing to the overall lively atmosphere in the place. Also, during past couple of years it became the important gathering place during the holidays. For example, the city Christmas Tree had been relocated here from the Santarvės square and during my stay in town, for example, the Beer Festival was also held here. So,

according to the words of one of my informants, the place is intentionally being popularized (Vasiliy, Visaginas, July 2014).



Picture 4: The Hotel *Aukštaitija* with the bus stop opposite it, the outdoors summer café in the right and the Sedulinos alley in the left corners of the photographs
(Photo by P.Marozas)

The centrality of the *Domino* can be conceptualized as not only influencing the shopping habits of the inhabitants of Visaginas, but also structuring the movement of people around town. This point is also important in relation to the discussion of where the centre of Visaginas is located, that is further elaborated in the following sections.

4.2. Visuality and Visibility

Whereas the first category of places discussed above can be perceived as structuring the environment of the city, the present section discusses how the issue of town transformations has been addressed on the ground by town inhabitants. As other researchers noted, narratives of decline are evident among the town inhabitants

(Šliavaitė 2010, see § 1.2.2. *A Site of Soviet Industrial Heritage?*). Very often, such narratives were channelled by invoking the visual imagery of the abandoned buildings of town.

Two of the first spots in this category are located in the geographical centre of town and along the main walking routes of town very close to the *Domino* shopping centre - Veteranų street and Sedulinos alley. Thus, they are very visible. One of them, under the address of 11 Veteranų street was planned to be used for the telephone station. However, not all of the informants were aware of what it was supposed to be. The other building, located next to hotel *Aukštaitija* on Sedulinos alley, was supposed to be similar in design as the building opposite it with small shops on the ground floor and flats above them. The building is edging the square discussed above and is situated along the reconstructed pedestrian alley. Prior to reconstruction, the street was partially fenced off and was of poor quality.

Now, when it had been modernized, the empty carcass of the building stands in stark contrast to the street. Both buildings are of red brick, and because they do not have windows, the wind, rain and snow had significantly eroded their surface. Thus, renovating them is pointless but the demolition is very costly and nobody takes up this task. So, the building on Sedulinos alley, for example, just bears the brief note in Lithuanian and Russian languages reading 'For Sale. Not expensive. Phone number XXX'.

When conducting an interview with Konstantin on the go, we had stopped by this building. Konstantin is in his late 1960's, and upon the arrival to Visaginas had been working as an electrician and later at the INPP, until his retirement couple of years ago. During the previous meetings, we were discussing the proposition of the introduction of the car tax that would be collected from car owners and money thus released would be re-distributed to 'top up' the pension to retired people. Konstantin was very unhappy about this law, because he is a pensioner himself and owns two cars, which means that he would be paying car tax to himself. On the online forum of this discussion, one of the local pensioners from this discussion group has jokingly suggested to make a present to the politician who proposed the tax in the form of the photograph of their old cars in front of some abandoned building as a symbolic refusal to such tax; meaning that they

would symbolically donate their old cars to the politician and that politician, and not them, would have to pay for their pension.

As the interview was conducted while walking in town, by the time I had asked the informant why the photo was suggested to be taken on the background of some abandoned building, we were standing in front of this empty building on Sedulinos alley. So, in answering to my question, Konstantin explained that he has put a lot of efforts into construction of town, and that material wealth thus created was supposed to sustain his own life in the form of retirement pension. However, as it is in the state of decline, all that is left are such absurd propositions as the car tax. Therefore, the taking of the picture on the background of the abandoned building could signify such aberration in the cycle of material wealth. I quote here:

‘The things that... I didn’t just participate, I did not put bricks, but I participated as an electrician by wiring the buildings... I mean, it appears people here... I had put a grain of my labour in it. And it is ruined now. Do you understand?’ (Konstantin, Visaginas, February 2014)

Konstantin was pointing to the building on Sedulinos alley, a gesture that was supposed to confirm his words. The visual appearance of the buildings played a crucial role in such confirmations. In order to demonstrate the importance of visibility, I have excluded the photos of these two buildings from the map in order to demonstrate that it is very hard to judge about the place without seeing it.

In comparison to these two building, however, some of the other places of town were even more semantically saturated for the inhabitants of Visaginas even though they are located on the outskirts of town, are less visible. One such place is represented by the Festivalio street blocks. Festivalio street blocks are located in the first microregion on the edge of town and are separated from the main body of town by the Kosmoso street. They are comprised of several communal living buildings⁷, summer dance pool, the open air market, restaurant *Troika*, musical school, club *Orbita* and the only professional education institution in town.

⁷ lit., bendrabučiai; rus., общежития

This is an area where the majority of town inhabitants had lived upon their arrival to Visaginas during the construction of town. Nowadays, some of the communal living blocks had been shut, and stand without windows, as if no one had even lived in them. Looking at these houses, it is difficult to believe that at some point all of the local life of town was concentrated in this place – the summer dance pool was a meeting place of young people, goods were sold at the market, the construction authorities were also situated here, various Communist Party meetings were celebrated by strolling on the Kosmoso street. The living conditions were not luxurious, but the spirit and optimism associated with building of town downplayed the poor housing conditions (Anastasiya, Visaginas, March 2014).

Gradually, people were leaving this area as they received their own private flats in the newly built houses; and the area degraded. According to one informant, those who remained living here were unsuccessful in obtaining their own living area. In addition to this, a firm running the blocks started selling the flats to people with low social status. For example, people were selling their flats in Vilnius, and buying flats here, while spending the money got from difference in price for drinking (Konstantin, Visaginas, February 2014). Eventually, the firm went bankrupt, and some of the buildings were shut, contributing to the imagery of abandonment and decay. Some other prejudices related to this part of town relate to drug use and gypsies who are supposedly selling drugs. Overall, the opinion was that visiting this part of town during the night would be unwise, as you could also meet here drunk people who come to the locally (in)famous restaurant *Troika*, or even be robbed (Vasiliy, Visaginas, July 2014).

So, the connection between this part of town and the first inhabitants' memories of building the town is very close and are often invoked by the emotionally moving stories of the passed youth. Therefore, it is often considered as a 'place which Visaginas started from, and [given the present state of it], the place from which it is starting to die' (Konstantin, Visaginas, February 2014). The aesthetics of place played a crucial role in the perception of the Festivalio street blocks as being bad and even dangerous place.

However, what can also be noted is that symbolically vacated Festival street blocks also represent the passing of time for those who lived here, as these were the prominent places of their youth. One of such places located in the forest near the blocks is the

summer dance pool which, according to one of the female informants, was a place where many families were made (Anastasiya, Visaginas, March 2014). During my summer visit to Visaginas, somebody had decided to revive the dance pool and had started to hold weekly dancing evenings for older people. So, the residents who were visiting the dance pool when they were young could come back here now. However, according to another female informant, Aleksandra who is in her late 1960's, it is very sad to visit the dance pool and that is why she is not going there, because 'seeing these people now, you remember how they used to look when they were young, and you just see how old everybody had become' (Aleksandra, Visaginas, July 2014).



Picture 5: Building of the Festivalio street blocks, 1977 (Photo by V. Čiupačenko. Courtesy of the Visaginas Centre of Culture)

In contrast to the first two spots that are located in the geographical centre of Visaginas, the Festivalio street blocks are thought of as the semantic 'heart' of Visaginas despite their location on the outskirts. Such observation underlies, in the words of one of my informant that 'Visaginas does not have a proper centre' (Matas, Visaginas, July 2014), which is seen as problematic.

Whereas the abandoned buildings of town are viewed with sorrow by the first inhabitants of town who have participated in the construction works, they might acquire

totally different meaning among the younger generation. One such example is the building that is colloquially called *Triangle*⁸ for a triangular construction on the roof of the building. *Triangle* is situated on the other side of Taikos prospektas near the hospital complex, i.e. also outside the main body of town, and appears to be ‘empty’. Some of the older informants had difficulties understanding which building I was asking them about, whereas at other times it seemed that they know each centimetre of town. Thus, it is possible to say that this building is to a certain extent ‘invisible’.

What is not seen from the street is the fact that this building had been and continues to be one of the most attractive places for youngsters from different sub-cultures.

According to one of my informant:

‘There is no such place in Visaginas about which there are so many legends as the *Triangle*. It always used to be a meeting place for informal groupings, punks, metallists, goths, and also drug addicts. Legendary place, it will always attract and scare young people at the same time. But older people, they do not know what is going on there, they just pass by’ (Vasily, Visaginas, July 2014).

During the fieldwork, a group of friends have invited me to join them while they were painting graffiti on the roof of the building. When we entered the place, one could distinguish the stage on the ground floor, pointing to the fact that it was supposed to be some kind of cultural institution, such as cinema. Also, I was shocked of the amount of graffiti on the inside walls of the building. According to my informants, this was a sign that it is a ‘place of freedom’ (Albert, Visaginas, March 2014) as normally painting on city walls is strictly prohibited in the city and penalized by law. The *Triangle*, on the other hand, provided an opportunity for a calm and uninterrupted painting of graffiti. Thus, this is the place of ‘anti’-culture place, and ‘no man’s land’ appropriated by some of the underground groups while appearing ‘empty’ to anyone who is not part of this group.

⁸ rus., *треугольник*

4.3. Where Have All the Pregnant Women Gone?

The question of how socialist heritage had been and is being incorporated into the contextually new environment of the city is very interesting. In Visaginas, one of the characteristic trends in this respect is the closure of some schools and kindergartens and their re-moulding into cultural, social or educational institutions.

At the moment, there are five schools in Visaginas (three with Russian and two with Lithuanian language of instruction) whereas previously there were seven schools (two Russian schools had been shut). With regards to pre-school education, overall there were fourteen buildings designed as kindergartens. However, two of these buildings were from the start occupied by institutions unrelated to education, another four were re-moulded from kindergartens into various socio-cultural institutions at a later stage, and another three were kindergartens were shut down and are not in use at the moment. So, there are five functioning kindergartens in Visaginas now.

The fact that schools and kindergartens are being closed is due to two facts. On the one hand, it is due to Soviet (over)-planning, as the city was supposed to be expanded towards the other side of Taikos prospektas, but the main residential area was supposed to be located at the present part of town. So, all of the kindergartens were concentrated here. On the other hand, when the first inhabitants arrived, they were mostly in their late 20's and early 30's, and had new families with young children. Nowadays, the residents of Visaginas are aging, and thus the need for so many kindergartens had vanished.

So, overall, I had made a note of two schools that have been shut (one reopened as Centre of Culture), and five kindergartens (four reopened as other institutions). In the words of Matas who had resided in Visaginas since 1976:

‘When I first arrived, I could see only pregnant women and women with young children on the streets. Where have all the pregnant women gone now?’ (Matas, Visaginas, March 2014).

The first spot discussed here in relation to such dynamics is the Centre of Culture. The centre is located in the building of the first school opened in Visaginas. The opening of the school on the 1 September 1977 was a big event for the city, and it was opened just a day after the building and decoration works of ‘construction storm’ were completed

(Anastasiya, Visaginas, March 2014). On the photographs of these days, one can note the overall chaotic yet festive atmosphere (see Picture 6 and Picture 7). Given that not many buildings were built around the school at the time, and the school was practically situated in the forest, the informant who used to work in the school remembers that one day when she was having a lesson the deer came and looked inside the classroom window (Aleksandra, Visaginas, July 2014).



Picture 6 (above) and 7 (below): The ‘construction storm’ on the eve of the opening of the first school, and the official opening the following day, 1977 (*Photo by V. Čiupačenko. Courtesy of the Visaginas Centre of Culture*)

The Centre of Culture moved into the building of the school recently, but the diplomas of the schoolchildren, for example, are still exhibited in the glass case on the second floor of the building. On one occasion, I had visited the Centre of Culture with one informant who had previously studied there, and he commented that it was very strange to see how the school is being transformed (Albert, Visaginas, May 2014).

It is also interesting to see how various spaces inside the building are incorporated into the new function of the building. For example, on the ground floor there are various workshop rooms for ceramics, silk painting, doll theatre, etc. The large class rooms are well suited for the new function. Also, the performance hall is well suited for various ethnic singing and dancing communities who come here to rehearse. However, on the second floor of the building, along the 'French Street' (corridor decorated to recreate the atmosphere of France), the offices of the centre's administration are located in what also used to be class rooms. During one of the visits to the centre, I held an interview in such an office, and it became clear that being surrounded by three other people in the room dooms any possibility of private talk impossible.

The organization itself is comprised of three departments whose main responsibility is the curating various ethnic art collectives, such as singing or dancing collectives who are representing their particular cultural traditions. The centre also runs an array of small clubs and workshops, organizes various educational programs and festivals both for children and adults, and is linked to the Saturday school called 'Native School' where children come to learn their native language and culture. When I asked how the organization was created, Alisa, the employee of the centre, commented that the collectives have a long tradition since many of them were formed by representatives of various nationalities upon the arrival to the city 'in order to preserve their cultural roots' (Alisa, Visaginas, February 2014).

The landmark of the centre's life is 2009 when various organizations were restructured, and 'brought under one roof' of the Centre of Culture. Given that various traditional art collectives are thus brought together, the centre, according to the informant, provides an opportunity for the participants to communicate with people of other ethnic origin, thus contributing to fostering of mutual respect among representatives of different cultures.

The restructuring of the Centre of Culture brought together four different buildings – the school and the Ethnic Minorities Centre (located in what used to be a kindergarten), the performance halls of *Banga* and *Orbita*. Thus, it is possible to claim that the centre is a very successful organization: it has broad membership, wins big grants, and has close links with Visaginas City Council. However, some situations during the fieldwork demonstrated that the role of the Centre of Culture is perceived by local inhabitants equivocally.

For example, at the moment the Centre of Culture is in the process of creating a museum that would be located in the building. The discussion of what kind of museum this should be is a difficult task. On the one hand, the official authorities insisted on creating the ethnography museum focused on rural lifestyle of the region surrounding Visaginas. On the other hand, such a vision seemed pointless to some of the inhabitants and first builders of town, because they viewed the creation of museum as an opportunity to commemorate the city which they had created. In the words of one of my informant, the ethnographic museum would be out of place in Visaginas, as ‘there was nothing prior to the construction of town’ (Sofia, Visaginas, March 2014).

The diverging points of view are further polarized as the creation of museum is very slow and costly process. Given that several local inhabitants have already commissioned some of their personal possessions, such as photographs, to the establishers of museum, they perceive the delays in creation of the museum as a neglect of their efforts to help the enterprise. Communicating with different parties of this discussion was also one of the most challenging tasks during the fieldwork, as the views were polarized, and I had to be careful not to hurt my informants’ feelings. However, it was also useful in shedding some light into how the place is appropriated by different ethnic groups and how ‘ownership’ of place is defined in Visaginas.

The ‘Native School’ mentioned above is located in the Ethnic Minorities Centre which is the second empirical spot in this category. Alongside Native School, there are such grassroots organizations as *Builders’ Club*, art club *Paletè*, *Chernobyl* society, oncological society, sewing workroom, and others. All of these organizations are located in what used to be the third kindergarten of Visaginas which is across the road from the Festivalio street blocks and minutes’ walk from the headquarters of the Centre

of Culture. I have visited this place on several occasions when holding meetings with the representatives of the first two organizations. The *Builders' Club*, for example, was one of the main sources from which the information about the construction of city was drawn, as it serves as the meeting place for the *first builders*⁹ of town. Many of the members of the organization are of retirement age now. However, they are surprisingly active, and some of the ladies are involved in the activity of several dancing, singing, drawing or sewing societies simultaneously. The *Builders' Club* was created in 2001, and in 2002 the book *Memory of the Heart: Memories of the First Builders*, containing the memoirs and short stories of the first settlers, was issued.

The discourse of town transformation expressed by this organization was very similar to that described in relation to the Festivalio street blocks; and the narratives of town construction were at times reminiscent of sacred foundation myths. Thus, the stone that marks the official foundation of the city, the organization of construction works and general life in the city 'back then' were the prominent themes of conversations. Also, the fact that one of the now deceased local photographers scrupulously led the 'chronicle of Visaginas' confirms the importance of the beginnings. In fact, some of these black and white photos made by Vasilij Čiupačenko are courtesy provided by the Centre of Culture, and are incorporated into present research.

The second organization which I attended is the art club *Paletė* that also represents an interesting case for the examination of some of the dynamics of town transformations. The club was initially formed as the youth drawing club called *Hoby Line* by one of the resourceful residents of Visaginas, but couple of years later changed its name. Previously, *Paletė* had been occupying some rooms at another kindergarten, and later Pensioners' Club situated in what used to be the Maternity Hospital. The reason why the club was assigned the present rooms in the Ethnic Minorities Centre is because the leader of the club has a collection of large quantity of various folk Slavic items, such as *samovars*, *matryoshkas*, dishes adorned with ethnic motives, etc. These items are placed in the first (of three) rooms of the club which is named the 'Ethnic Room'.

The fact that *Paletė* has finally received their own, permanent, and light rooms was very positively evaluated. I quote here:

⁹ rus., *первостроители*

‘It is not that people do not like to paint at home, but the club is very convenient place to meet. You know, we paint with oil paint, and it has the very strong smell, and the white spirit also. And then there is not so much space in the flats, you cannot organize drawing tools properly. Where are you going to put your drawing tools there? Here we have shelves, and individual boxes, so there is no need to carry everything every time home and back. It has been a long road to get this studio’ (Aleksandra, Visaginas, July 2014).

Similarly to the *Builders’ Club*, the studio was formed in the early 2000’s. The membership, with the exception of one young boy, consists of women of over forty years old who have either been made redundant, have lost their husbands, or are retired. During the visits to the club and also from the conversations with its members it became clear that the role of organization stretches beyond the task of learning how to do academic drawings, and that it provides an opportunity for socialization and support net to its members: sometimes celebrating birthdays together, organizing plain air sessions, jointly holding exhibitions at the art gallery in the first microregion. Since the time of club’s foundation, over 30 exhibitions were organized.

According to the words of the leader of the club, the mastery of drawing has significantly improved since then, because she not only provides the physical space where women can to come to draw, but always corrects their work (Aleksandra, Visaginas, July 2014). Thus, she compares *Paletė* to the other drawing club in Visaginas where ‘they just collect pieces that people draw at home’, and points that it does not improve their quality of work (ibid.). Thus, the physical environment of the ex-kindergarten plays an important role in life of club members, both in the sense of being a social meeting point and also because of its convenient physical setting.

The third spot on the map is represented by Youth Centre that, similarly to Ethnic Minorities Centre, is located in what used to be a kindergarten, and later the quarters of the Lithuanian school. The centre is located in the third microregion of town and is the quarters of the *House of Creativity*, another public organization of Visaginas. However, in contrast to *Builders’ Club* or *Paletė*, the target auditory of the majority of the organizations hosted here comprise of children. Thus, it is possible to say that the transformation of the physical and social environment of the kindergarten has not been so contrast as in the case of other two spots.

Inside, the Youth Centre's walls are painted by some of the members and friends of the *Art Laboratory 'Tochka'*. There is a studio where various exercises or dance classes can take place; small rooms of particular themes, such as rock music or jeans lounge; class where there is a projector and films are sometimes shown; DIY book corridor; etc. During the fieldwork, I had mainly participated in the activities of the *Role Games Club*, which arguable represented one of the liveliest places in the centre.

The *Role Games Club* consists of two large workshop rooms crowded with different things necessary for organizing role games and sewing the costumes. Officially, there are only 12 children of 10 – 17 years old registered with the club, but on several occasions when I was doing participant observation more than 20 people were present. Also, not all of them were children, and some were the friends of the organizer who came in just to hang around. At the time, the club was preparing for the games that were to be held in two weeks' time, and the place was truly buzzing: children were sewing their costumes for the games, were constantly moving inside the rooms to find a suitable fabric for the costume, asking advice on sewing, doing the measurements, etc. Those who were not involved in this activity were playing guitar in the corridor, conversing in the room, drinking tea or coffee, etc. The atmosphere was very friendly and very informal.

One of the informant has underlined that both the *Role Games Club* and *Art Laboratory 'Tochka'* are not just an ordinary places of entertainment, but are promoting the informal education of children and the development of their creative and leadership skills through informal pedagogy of friendship and mutual respect. Thus, it is also aimed at bringing together the group of active children who could 'in the future contribute to the development of the city of Visaginas as a creative hub' (Vasiliy, Visaginas, March 2014). Vasiliy had noted that Visaginas is a perfect place for young children and for retired people. However, when children finish schools they tend to leave the city because it provides neither good education nor good employment opportunities.

Being a patriot of the city, he constantly thinks how the dynamics of town development (related to the closure of INPP) could be reversed. One of such propositions is the development of art tourism in the city. For example, according to his propositions,

Visaginas could be made into the ‘city-museum of 1000 graffities’ to which *Tochka* team could contribute. The inside walls of the building have already been painted, and when the opportunity will arise, they would like to paint the nearby houses, gradually expanding the paint to cover the whole city. Thus, the development of creative skills in children is seen as the essential component of the development of city through literally applying paint onto the physical fabric of town.

Overall, the Centre of Culture, Ethnic Minorities Centre and the Youth Centre all represent different aspects of how the educational institutions built during the socialist times have been incorporated into the present context of the city. In some cases, the function and the ‘content’ of the new institutions remained almost unchanged; whereas in others it resulted in seemingly paradoxical situations of ex-kindergartens being occupied by the people of retirement age. However, as the example of the art club *Paletè* shows, it need not to be seen as contradictory, as the rooms are well suited for the new function. What also appeared interesting is the question of gender in relation to all three places, but unfortunately, further elaboration of this theme has to be addressed elsewhere for the lack of (writing) space.

4.4. Unrealized Plans

Whereas the previous section focused on how the places designed for educational institutions had been re-moulded during post-socialist times, the present section raises the question of to what extent the unrealized architectural and urban projects of town are reflected on the ground. Partially, this discussion also draws on the issue of visibility and visuality discussed above. Three empirical spots have been chosen as representative case studies here. The first marks the additional microregions of Visaginas that were planned to be built on the other side of Taikos prospektas. The second refers to ‘the wasteland’ located on the edge of the third microregion and close to the Youth Centre, and the third refers to the Communist Party centre that was planned to be built where the Catholic Church and the *Domino* shopping centre are located nowadays.

Out of the three, the most explicit ‘void’ in the fabric of the city is the wasteland that covers a large plot of land reclaimed by bushes and grass on the edge of the third microregion of Visaginas. People come here to walk their dogs, and there are numerous shortcut paths across the plot. In order to understand the explicit ‘emptiness’ of this space, one has to set it against the background of the rest of the city. The area clearly stands out from the surrounding densely planned urban features for which, in fact, Visaginas is prized (Matas, Visaginas, March 2014). Thus, on the background of carefully planned and managed socialist town, spaces such as this scream of something missing, and can be conceptualized as representing the rupture.

Later during research, I found out that it was planned to build a school on the spot of ‘the wasteland’. However, as the third microregion was the last to be constructed, the project was not completed. During the more recent times, there was an attempt to develop this plot of land by building the market place in the shape of large hangar; but there were some technical problems with the building, and it was built but never opened to the public. So the hangar stands in one of the corners of the wasteland with large letters reading ‘The Farmers’ Market’ on it. When asking the casual by-passers what was supposed to be located there, nobody actually knew and were just commenting that ‘the wasteland was always here’.

Much stronger meaning is ascribed to the microregions that were supposed to be built on the other side of Taikos prospektas. Many informants were aware of this plan partially because of the fact that the shape of town was supposed to represent the wings of the butterfly, and the microregions are the upper parts of the wings that were not completed (Konstantin, Visaginas, February 2014). Also, the building of these microregions is associated with the plans of building the additional units of the INPP that went bust after the Chernobyl disaster. So, these non-existing wings symbolize unrealized plans of socialism. During one interview, the informant has ironically noted that the local cemetery, and not these microregions, is the fourth microregion of Visaginas (Konstantin, Visaginas, February 2014).

Nowadays, apart from the hospital complex, Lithuanian school, and several other buildings, the area set for the microregions is covered with the forest and fields, there are some farmsteads located there. What is very paradoxical about these not built

microregions is the fact that when the city of Visaginas was planned, two sides of Taikos prospektas were in fact located in the different administrative territories – the southern and inhabited area of Visaginas belonged to Ignalina region, and the northern and not built area belonged to Zarasai region (Matas, Visaginas, March 2014). Later, the administrative borders of the city were expanded to incorporate northern side of Taikos prospektas into Ignalina region. Although this can be seen as a mere coincidence, I would like to argue that such location at the borderlands has a wider significance for the city – the theme developed in the following chapter.

In contrast to the first two sites, the third spot had been extensively developed in the post-socialist times, which is probably due to its central location. According to the General Development Plan 1989[1985] of the city, the area was supposed to include Communist Party centre, post office, court of justice, savings bank¹⁰, restaurant, and some cultural sites. However, due to the priority of building housing over administrative buildings, the plans were postponed (Matas, Visaginas, 2014). Thus, what can be seen as the planned but not built during the initial phase of town construction ‘centre’ of town had been developed in the post-socialist times. Presently, the *Domino* shopping centre and Catholic Church surrounded by the forested areas are located here. During my visit to Visaginas in July, the building works for the construction of new playground between the *Domino* and the church has been started. Thus, it can be argued that the area is acquiring more ‘semantic centrality’ in the city. So, in some respect this place is similar to ‘the wasteland’, as it did not manage to acquire some meaning prior to present development, and the present day transformation of this area appears to be seamless, albeit not unproblematic.

4.5. The Politics of Location

The two religious institutions depicted in this category represent the few new buildings that have been constructed in Visaginas after the independence. The proliferation of

¹⁰ rus., *сберкасса*

religion is the characteristic trend of post-socialist (Rogers 2005), and Visaginas is not an exception in this respect. For example, the Visaginas Scout Organization carries the explicitly religious character (Olga, Visaginas, March 2014); some of the social support institutions are tightly linked with the church (Anna, Visaginas, March 2014). The present churches have not been built 'on the empty ground' though – the smaller Orthodox church previously existed in the third microregion of town, and the Catholic believers could attend the specially dedicated area in the building of the City Council. However, what is interesting in relation to these particular buildings is how they reflect the politics of location in relation to two religious communities that in some respects are akin to the religious competition in Siberia and the question of 'whose steeple is higher' (Balzer 2005). Here, the competition is translated into the question of 'whose position is more central'.

The Catholic church is situated in the geographical centre of town not far away from the *Domino* shopping centre in the middle of the territory that was planned to be used for the construction of the Communist Party centre. Thus, it is surrounded by patches of forest on two sides and seems to be somewhat 'hidden'. The building was constructed between 1995 and 2001, as after the independence the number of Lithuanians arriving to the city increased, revealing the need for the Catholic temple. According to one of my informants, when the spot for the future construction of church had been debated, some architects were proposing to build one Orthodox and one Catholic church in the two 'corners' of this area so that both religious communities 'would have had it equally' (Matas, Visaginas, March 2014). This way, the middle could have been left for the future developments. Despite such propositions, it was decided to build the Catholic church in the middle of the area.

Such a decision, and the geographical centrality of Catholic church had been interpreted by some of my informants as the symbolic political statement of establishing a sign of Lithuanian authority in the predominantly Russian-speaking town immediately after the independence. Also, the rapid construction of the church, according to one informant, showed that it has most probably received a good financial support from the state (Vasiliy, Visaginas, March 2014). At another occasion, I had asked one Russian-speaking informant about the church, but he just briefly looked at it, said 'Ah, this one',

and did not say anything else; clearly showing dissatisfaction even with the fact that it stands there. On the other hand, more knowledgeable informants explained that the church would not be constructed without the work of the first, very charismatic and energetic Catholic priest who put a lot of effort in its construction (Aleksandra, Visaginas, July 2014).

When it was decided to build a new Orthodox church in Visaginas, several locations were selected. According to the proposition of the of the city's architects, it was decided to construct new church in the first microregion of town upon the foundation that was laid for one of the two 16-storey building. It is where the church is located nowadays, on Taikos prospektas and right at the entrance to town from the direction of the railway station. Whereas the geographical position is perceived by local inhabitants as somewhat disadvantaged, the location has certain benefits as the church is surrounded by open space of road from one side, and stadium from another side. It is visible even when walking further away, especially because of the bright blue colour of the top of the building.

The construction of the church started in the early 2000's, and the process of building is very slow as it is being built mainly by the donations of believers and the voluntary work of some residents, such as the marble engraving of the altar accomplished by one of the local artists. The works were also occasionally financially supported by the town officials, such as during the recent acquisition of the two stained glass windows (Aleksandra, Visaginas, March 2014). However, it is possible to argue that not the financial support but the location of the two temples play a crucial role in how these are perceived by town inhabitants, as it echoes some of the sentiments expressed by the local Russian-speaking community in relation to the Visaginas City Council and the question of 'who owns the place'.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS

One of the inspirations for this research came from Trell *et al* (2012) who had examined key places of belonging and the everyday practices and experiences associated with these places among the rural youth of Järva-Jaani. Initially, I wanted to follow the suit and research various micro-geographies of meaning among the inhabitants of Visaginas. To a certain extent, the discussion of some places such as art club *Paletė* or the *Art Laboratory 'Tochka'* could be expanded to achieve such an aim. However, what became clear during the course of the research is that the meaning attached to the city as a collective place has an unparalleled importance for the town inhabitants.

Thus, I decided to sacrifice to a certain extent the zooming into each individual place by focusing in this analysis at the city at large. Thus, three central themes were identified. The first is concerned with discourse of town building among the first settlers of Visaginas which is examined here within the phenomenological perspective on the connection between people and place. Drawing on the first theme, I later discuss the question of appropriation and ownership of place across two ethnic communities as one of the pervasive themes among the town inhabitants. The third, and final, question raised by the present work considers whether Visaginas can be conceptualized as the city located at the geographical, chronological, and ethnic borders.

5.1. The city and the self

The importance of the discourse of building the city had been noted in the previous chapter (see § 4.2 *Visuality and Visibility* and § 4.3 *Where are all the pregnant women gone?*) and noted by previous researchers of Visaginas (Šliavaitė 2010). Given that many local people are the builders of town, their descendants or eye-witnesses of the construction works, it is possible to argue that they have a direct and intimate experience of the space of town. According to Yi-Fu Tuan, 'to build is a religious act,

the establishment of a world in the midst of primeval disorder' (2003 [1977]: 104), thus transforming the abstract space into the meaningful place through the direct engagement. In this respect, the phenomenological framework can be applied to Visaginas rather smoothly.

Particularly, I would like to argue that the construction of town should not be understood narrowly as laying bricks, assembling pre-fabricated blocks and making walls in order to put together buildings, but as a *process of building* in which people invest their agency and through which they acquire the corporeal experience of place. In this respect, the present study is to a certain extent similar to the Dalakoglou's (2010) approach to how transnational Albanian migrants 'make' their homes.

So, when local inhabitants employ the diachronical framework of reference when talking about the city, and constantly compare the times when the city was built and how it is nowadays; it can be understood as more than just nostalgia. By stressing the spatial over the chronological perspective, I partially disagree with the previous researchers of Visaginas who argue that it is because of no history of town prior to 1973 that the local community is 'stuck' with focusing on time when the town was constructed (Baločkaitė 2012: 52; Šliavaitė 2010).

The social memory certainly plays an important element in defining local inhabitants' present day identity. However, I would like to put forward claim compatible with this statement and stress the connection between (the body of) the builders and (the physical fabric of) town. Such a connection has very strong semantic and corporeal connotations among the builders and first inhabitants of Visaginas and, from my point of view, it is this connection that fosters the semi-religious character with which the construction of town is talked about.

In relation to this point, however, it is necessary to underline that while applying the phenomenological framework to the case study of Visaginas, I had one conceptual consideration still not solved. Many researchers who worked in this academic field were examining the connection between the people and their material environment in the ethnographic present (Dalakoglou 2010, Gray 2003). What the present research attempts to do is the application of some postulates of phenomenology retrospectively. However,

in order to support the validity of such approach, I would like to argue that the connection between built environment of the city and the first builders does not disappear. It can be re-interpreted by the inhabitants themselves, but is not erased.

Two examples from the empirical case studies are due. The first refers to the situation when during the mobile interview an informant was talking about the present state of some of the abandoned buildings almost equating their state with his own self. Although such claims, from my point of view, carried a load of political meaning too, that will be discussed in the following section; such statements are nevertheless very important in understanding how the city and its builders relate. In fact, during another occasion the same informant had noted that he perceives the decommissioning of the INPP almost as self-destruction (Konstantin, Visaginas, February 2014). What I also would like to note in relation to this discussion is the emotional nature of such statements that could, following Askins's (2009) work on the significance of emotions, constitute a fruitful area of future research in Visaginas.

Another example could be brought in the connection to summer dance pool on which on the informant has elaborated. When I asked Anastasiya whether she is going to attend the dancing evening organized at the same dancing pool as during her youth, she replied that is not going to do so, because 'seeing these people now, you remember how they used to look when they were young, and you just see how old everybody had become' (Aleksandra, Visaginas, July 2014). In light of this analysis, the connection between the dance pool, the passage of time, and the aging of the body of self and of the body of the city should not be seen as a mere beautiful metaphor, but as close and parallel association of these two 'bodies'. In both of these examples, the twists and turns of post-socialism and resultant urban transformations come to signify for local inhabitants not only the passing of time and aging of the fabrique of town, but also their own aging and the unrealized ideals that they held while constructing the perfect socialist town of future.

Here, the visual aspects of some types of places become crucial in negotiating one's identity as, for instance, when locals talk about the Festival street blocks 'from which the city started and from which it is starting to die'. Whereas on the one hand, such narratives are to underline the huge gap between the status and condition of the city at

different times, it also points to how the first settlers' understand their own position in wider Lithuanian context nowadays. During the Soviet times, Visaginas was considered as a prestigious place to live due to superb provisioning of town, new apartments, and excellent infrastructure. Also, the first settlers enjoyed a privileged economic and political status due to employment in nuclear industry supervised by the *Minsredmash* that embodied Soviet authority over the Lithuanian government. Nowadays, such privileges had vanished and the metaphor of abandonment and being unwanted permeate the narratives of town and of self. I would like to suggest that such narratives have a strong connection to how the 'ownership' of the city is perceived, a theme developed in the following section.

5.2. 'Our city on foreign land': appropriation and ownership of place

The intimate connection between the city and the first settlers has been discussed above. However, it is necessary to understand how alternative groups, such as next generations or new arrivals to the city form their attachment to place. While examining this question, the empirical examples will be drawn from all of the categories discussed on the map. Ironically, while trying to understand how the place attachment and sense of belonging is created among the residents of Visaginas, the reverse question of who the Visaginas belongs to appeared to be important.

The reminder of town demographical dynamics is necessary here. The first inhabitants were mainly drawn from the 'closed towns' supervised by *Minsredmash*, and there was the implicit order not to employ the local Lithuanians because it would supposedly destroy the local agriculture. Thus, according to the census of 1979, over 60 per cent of the new arrivals were Russians; many other arrivals from other Union's Republics used Russian language as the *lingua franca*. Lithuanians constituted around 6 per cent of the local population at the time. Over the years, the number of Russian-speaking people in

Visaginas was decreasing, whereas more Lithuanians arrived. According to the census of 2011, nearly 20 per cent of Lithuanians resided in Visaginas. I could confirm that such dynamics were evident on the ground, as the majority of my Lithuanian informants had arrived, or were born, in Visaginas post 1991.

The reason why year 1991 is significant here is because it was the time when the Lithuania re-gained its independence, and Visaginas, albeit after 18 months of 'statelessness' (Baločkaitė 2010), became fully incorporated into the republic's structures. Some of the dynamics of the change of power have been discussed in relation to the Visaginas City Council. Particularly interesting in this respect are the claims of some informants that majority of the employees at the Council are not residents of the city. Such statement raises the question of whether belonging involves the physical being in the place. In light of this question, what I would like to suggest is that whereas the space of Visaginas had been *appropriated* by the first settlers (mainly Russian-speakers) through the process of building, and so was also re-produced by the next generations of the town; the Lithuanians' perception of this town is different. Thus, the expression 'our city' and the use of the personal pronoun 'our' by the Russian-speakers implies very short distance from self, i.e. closeness.

Contrary to that, on one occasion the Lithuanian informant, Gerda, a woman in her 40's who arrived to Visaginas in 1990's explained:

'I come from Varena. And you know, every time that I call home to talk to my family, I send greetings to Lithuania. This town is not Lithuania, it is stuck in time' (Gerda, Visaginas, March 2014).

Here, the city is portrayed as geographically and mentally distant. However, when talking about other Lithuanian towns, for example, it became evident that the Russian-speaking informants were less knowledgeable about the country, and did not show such signs of affection as expressed in relation to 'their' town. So, what such experience of the same city may indicate is the fact that Russian-speaking and Lithuanian inhabitants are situated at different points along the Relph's continuum of 'insideness' and 'outsideness' of place (1976: 49-55).

When I had raised the similar question of the place of Visaginas in the wider context of the country to Lithuanian informants and particularly to those who have been residing in

Visaginas for a longer period of time, their position on the question was much firmer. One informant, for example, perceived Visaginas as located on the Lithuanian soil and that it had been 'de-Lithuanized' by the Soviet authorities. Thus, when elaborating on the story of how he came to Visaginas and why had decided to stay, Simonas explained to me that he perceived 'Lithuanization' of Visaginas as his patriotic task (Simonas, Visaginas, March 2014).

So, what appeared different across these two ethnic communities residing in town is how the city itself was perceived. This point can be elaborated in relation to the different visions of how the museum of Visaginas should look like. Whereas the Russian-speaking community perceived the town as the locus of their life, the Lithuanians perceived it as representing the socialist heritage and the 'unwanted past' of Soviet times. Other researchers of Visaginas had noted similar dynamics (Baločkaitė 2010; Cinis et al, 2008). What I like to argue is that such different visions are not abstract conceptions, but are also translated into the physical fabric of town. The politics of location discussed in relation to the Catholic and Orthodox religious institutions can be brought as the example of such 'translations'.

The topic of ethnicity in Visaginas is very interesting, and could be researched in relation, for example, to how ethnicity is understood in such places as the Visaginas Centre of Culture, Ethnic Minorities Centre, or Visaginas City Council. I would like to suggest that each of these institutions channels slightly different understanding of ethnicity defined as either political power or the source of cultural identity.

Unfortunately, a further elaboration of this theme is beyond the scope of this research. In relations to the propositions for the future research, a more nuanced approach is needed even to the theme I discuss here, and could include, for example, the discussion of the contact situations between members of different ethnic communities in Visaginas, or the semiotic research on the linguistic landscape in the city.

5.3. Visaginas as the city of borderlands

Overall, during the course of this research I came to understand Visaginas as the city of borderlands in at least in three respects: geographical, chronological and semantic. In relation to the latter, what first comes to mind are the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ of different ethnic groups as one of the organizing feature of identity across two communities residing in town. Certainly, any place where people of different ethnic origin reside can be conceptualized as located on the borderlands. However, in relation to Visaginas this question is especially interesting because of the distinct ways of appropriating the city discussed above.

As illustrated by various empirical spots, the chronological divide between socialism and post-socialism is one of the central axis around which constellations of meanings and objects are gathered. At times, such meanings are physically intangible, as the three case studies discussed in relation to the unrealized plans of socialism illustrate. However, as I have attempted to demonstrate, some of them can be more tangible than others and can be felt in the fabric of town in the form ‘voids’.

In relation to the geographical borders, some of the more detailed semiotic examination is needed in order to understand how such features of urban design as the strict encirclement of city by the wide roads influences how the places located ‘outside’ of the main body of town are perceived. For example, during the fieldwork, I noted that four of the most notorious and ‘dangerous’ places of Visaginas are located outside of this divide. These places are: Festivalio street blocks, *Triangle*, building on Taikos prospektas 88, and *Ant House*¹¹ located next to the City Council (see Picture 8). Such observation also begs a question of whether, and to what extent, the fact that the City Council is located outside of the main body of town influences the role it plays in the life of the city.

¹¹ lit., skruzdelynas; rus., муравейник



Picture 8: The building colloquially called Ant House (*Photo by P.Marozas*)

Moreover, what appeared as an interesting finding during the research is the fact that one of the most important roads of town, Taikos prospektas, used to be the dividing between two Lithuanian regions of Ignalina and Zarasai. Hypothetically, were the additional microregions-‘wings’ built and the administrative border not redrawn, the two parts of the city would be located in different regions. Although the borders are mental constructs, they are not neutral and often have ‘a history with a tail’. Thus, I would like to argue that the question of where does Visaginas belong, both semantically and geographically, is of vital importance not only for the present but also for the future development of town. So, more attention has to be paid to this question in future research.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

The present study is focused on the socialist mono-industrial town of Visaginas that had been built in 1975 as a satellite settlement for the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant. The particular features of the city are the geographical remoteness from other cities in Lithuania, narrow specification of industry, and specific town demographics, as the majority of town inhabitants are Russian-speakers who have arrived here to work at the INPP. The closure of the plant in 2009 posed not only a question of how future development of town should be accomplished, but also how the local community perceives these changes.

Conceptually, the dissertation explores the relationship between the material environment of the city and the local inhabitants in Visaginas. There are two central research questions in the study. On the one hand, the study addresses the question of how the post-socialist transformations are reflected in the fabric of town in order to understand how the material environment of the city has been changing form the time of its inception until nowadays. On the other hand, it questions what role the spatial environment of town and the changes that it embodies plays in how local inhabitants configure their sense of attachment to the place. Thus, the theoretical framework of phenomenology has been chosen as a suitable tool to frame these questions, and particularly the concept of *dwelling* and the distinction between space and place embedded in the disciplines of human geography and anthropology.

In order to answer the set research question, the two-month ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in Visaginas over the period from 13th February to 29th July, 2014. During the course of fieldwork, various strategic research methods were employed, such as mapping, participant observation, and unstructured interviews, twenty two of which had been recorded. The central axis of dissertation is the map produced by combining these methods. The map does not fit within the format of conventional cartography as it combines the graphical representation of places important for the study on the map, and the elaboration on them in the textual form as one of the chapters of the dissertation.

So, the empirical findings of this research consist of the discussion of the fifteen empirical spots organized on the map into five categories. The categories were chosen

to represent some central dynamics of town transformation and focus on the issues of how structural forces organizing the life in the city have changed; how the vocally socialist material environment of the city is perceived by the town inhabitants as well as whether the unrealized projects of building a perfect socialist town are evident on the ground; some more tangible changes in town dynamics represented by the closure of schools and kindergartens; and the question of how the present day environment of town reflects the politics of place through the examination of two religious institutions in Visaginas. The interpretation of these places derived mainly through analysing interviews with local inhabitants.

What the present research has shown is that spatial environment of town is conceptualized differently among the two communities residing in Visaginas. Whereas for Lithuanian informants wider regional context in which the city is located is meaningful, the city itself is considered as the clear embodiment of socialist times, or the 'unwanted past'. Thus, the distance between to city and its Lithuanian residents is bigger than between the city and its Russian-speaking inhabitants. This is primarily due to the fact that many of the present day residents have either participated or eye-witnessed the construction of town.

Applying the Heidegger's terminology, it is through the building of the city that they appropriated the space and transformed it into meaningful places, thus creating a sense of attachment to the city, or *dwelling* in it. Given such 'distribution of meaning' across two communities to the 'outside' and 'inside' of the city, and also elaborating on other spatial characteristics of town, I propose that Visaginas could be considered as the city of borderlands.

Throughout the study, I have identified several themes that, from my point of view, could become fruitful avenues for the future research on Visaginas. Among these themes is the examination of the 'emotional landscapes' or town, research into the how ethnicity is understood through various cultural institutions, semiotic analysis of the urban planning, as well as others. I hope that such suggestions could provide a starting point for the future research on Visaginas.

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LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Picture 1 (page 13): General view of the INPP as of 30 May 1983 (Photo by V. Čiupačenko. Courtesy of the Visaginas Centre of Culture)

Picture 2 (page 14): The pioneers' base in Dukštas where the new arrivals for the construction work were settled, 1977 (Photo by V. Čiupačenko. Courtesy of the Visaginas Centre of Culture)

Picture 3 (page 14): Picture 4 The living quarters of the arrivals from OSMU – 4 and Chelyabinsk, 1977 (Photo by V. Čiupačenko. Courtesy of the Visaginas Centre of Culture)

Picture 4 (page 57): The Hotel Aukštaitija with the bus stop opposite it, the outdoors summer café in the right and the Sedulinos alley in the left corners of the photographs (Photo by P.Marozas)

Picture 5 (page 61): Building of the Festivalio street blocks, 1977 (Photo by V. Čiupačenko. Courtesy of the Visaginas Centre of Culture)

Picture 6 (above) and **picture 7** (below) (page 64): The 'construction storm' on the eve of the opening of the first school, and the official opening the following day, 1977 (Photo by V. Čiupačenko. Courtesy of the Visaginas Centre of Culture)

Picture 8 (page 82): The building colloquially called Ant House (Photo by P.Marozas)

Figure 1 (page 13): Visaginas inhabitants according to their nationality in percentage as of years 1979, 1989, 2001, 2011. Elaboration on data of Lithuanian Official Statistics Portal and Kavaliauskas 2003 (for year 2001)

Figure 2 (page 17): Figure 2: Average gross monthly earnings in the region of Visaginas* and the surrounding regions in the year 2004, 2009, and 2012 respectively (LTL). Lithuania's Official Statistics Portal, 2013a

Table 1 (page 49): Table 2: Map of places of town transformations, Visaginas

APPENDIX 1a: Plain Language Statement in English



UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
TARTU ÜLIKOOL



Visaginas Project Plain Language Statement

1. Study title and Researcher Details

Study title: ‘Anthropological investigation of the socio-physical space of Visaginas and sense of belonging to the city’, September 2013 – May 2014. **Researcher:** Inga Freimane, International Master in Russian, Central and East European Studies student at the University of Glasgow, contact at 2048726F@glasgow.ac.uk or muspri.i@gmail.com by phone +370(0)67365274 or +44(0)7542212892. I am currently studying at our partner University of Tartu in Estonia, Centre for Baltic Studies.

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

This research is to find out what are the key places where the inhabitants of Visaginas spend their time (café, culture house, library, etc.) and what meaning these places have for the inhabitants. Through uncovering this meaning, I hope to understand how the social and physical reality of the city impacts people’s lives.

4. Why have I been chosen?

Your participation will be appreciated, because it will provide an insight into what role physical environment of the city plays in people’s lives.

5. Do I have to take part?

Participation in research is completely voluntary, and does not entail any monetary or other reward. You are free to withdraw from project at any time.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

There are several ways you can participate. First is to participate in interview, which is 40 – 60 minutes long and requires answering of around 15 questions. Given that you will need some time to read information about the research and might have some questions regarding it, up to another 30 minutes will be required from you. Overall, the time required from you would be around one hour and a half. According to your choice, the interview will be/won’t be recorded by dictaphone. It will be at the time and place convenient to you, and can be conducted over coffee, while walking through the city, or at your home. The interview questions are very simple and are based around your life in Visaginas. You can also participate in informal conversations about the city and show me around town.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your personal information will not be disclosed to anyone at any time. However, the research might get published as a journal article, conference paper, or a book. Where it will occur, your name will be concealed by pseudonym. This will be done for each interview, and it will be kept on a separate USB stick and protected by password. However, the direct extracts from our conversation might be included and for ethical reasons, your signature will be required to prove to agree to participate.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The final version is going to be my dissertation, and I can provide a copy of it upon request.

9. Who is funding the research?

The research is not funded by any external bodies. All of the expenses are covered from the scholarship I receive at my study program.

10. Who has reviewed the study?

The study is reviewed School of Social and Political Sciences Ethics Forum at the University of Glasgow.

11. Contact for Further Information

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research, or feel that your personal information has been handled inappropriately, you can contact the School of Social and Political Sciences Ethics Forum chaired by Doctor Mo Hume at, Mo.Hume@glasgow.ac.uk.

APPENDIX 1b: Plain Language Statement in Lithuanian



Kvietimas Dalyvauti Tyrime Visagine

1. Projekto pavadinimas ir tyrinėtojas

Projekto pavadinimas: 'Antropologinis Visagino socio-fizinės erdvės ir priklausomumo pajautos miestui tyrimas', Rugsėjis 2013 - Gegužė 2014. **Tyrinėtojas:** Inga Freimane, šiuo metu atliekanti Rusijos, Centrinės ir Vakarų Europos Studijų magistro programą Glazgo Universitete. Su manimi galite susisiekti elektroniniu paštu 2048726F@gla.ac.uk arba muspri.i@gmail.com, arba telefonu +370(0)67365274; +44(0)7542212892. Šiuo metu rašau magistrinį darbą Tartu Universitete, kuris yra mūsų studijų partneris.

2. Kvietimas dalyvauti tyrime

Kviečiu Jus dalyvauti šiame tyrime. Pateikiama informacija yra skiriama Jūsų susipažinimui su darbo tikslu ir turiniu, kuris padės nuspręsti, ar norite dalyvauti tyrime. Atidžiai perskaitykite informaciją, ir jeigu norite, aptarkite ją su kitais. Jeigu Jums reikalinga išsamesnė informacija ar kyla klausimų, neaiškumų, galite juos man pateikti. Neskubėkite ir apgalvokite, ar norite dalyvauti tyrime. Ačiū už Jūsų dėmesį ir laiką.

3. Koks šio tyrimo tikslas?

Šis tyrimas skiriamas išsiaiškinti, kokios yra svarbiausios socio-fizinės erdvės Visagine, kur gyventojai leidžia savo laisvalaikį (kavinės, kultūros namai, biblioteka, ir t.t.), bei kokią reikšmę šios erdvės turi gyventojams. Atskleidžiant tokių erdvių svarbą, aš siekiu išsiaiškinti, kaip socialinė ir fizinė miesto aplinka įtakoja žmonių kasdienybę bei gyvenimus.

4. Kodėl esu kviečiamas dalyvauti tyrime?

Jūsų dalyvavimas yra svarbus, nes tai duotų įnašą į mokslinius tyrimus, skirtus žmonių ir jų materialinės aplinkos sąveikos Visagino kontekste supratimui.

5. Ar privalau dalyvauti?

Jūs nebūtinai turite dalyvauti projekte - dalyvavimas yra savanoriškas ir neapmokamas. Jūs galite nutraukti savo dalyvavimą bet kurio metu.

6. Kaip aš galiu dalyvauti tyrime?

Jūs galite prisidėti skirtingai. Vienas iš pagrindinių būdų - duoti interviu, kuris truks 40 - 60 minučių, ir kurio eigoje Jums reikės atsakyti į 15 klausimų. Informacijai apie tyrimą perskaityti, klausimams užduoti, jums užtruks apie 30 minučių. Bendrai, dalyvavimas projekte gali užtrukti apie pusantros valandos. Priklausomai nuo Jūsų pageidavimo, interviu bus arba nebus įrašytas į diktofoną. Galėsite pasirinkti Jums patogų laiką ir vietą pokalbiui, pavyzdžiui, kavinėje, pasivaikščiojant po miestą, arba pas Jus namuose. Klausimai yra labai paprasti ir susiję su Jūsų gyvenimu Visagine. Jeigu norėsite, Jūs taip pat galėsite aprodyti bei papasakoti apie miestą.

7. Ar mano dalyvavimas konfidencialus?

Jūsų asmeninė informacija nebus atskleidžiama. Vis dėlto tyrimas gali būti išleistas mokslinio straipsnio ar knygos pavidalu, pristatytas konferencijoje. Tokiu atveju Jūsų vardas bus nurodytas pseudonimo pavidalu. Visi interviu įrašai bus talpinami tam skirtoje atminties kortelėje, apsaugotoje slaptažodžiu, visgi tam tikros tiesioginės interviu iškarpos gali būti įtrauktos į darbo tekstą. Dėl etikos sumetimų, savo dalyvavimą turėsite patvirtinti parašu.

8. Kas bus su tyrinėjimų rezultatais?

Galutinių tyrinėjimų rezultatas bus mano magistrinis darbas, ir galiu pateikti jums pagal jūsų pageidavimą (magistrinis bus išleistas anglų kalba).

9. Kas remia tyrinėjimą?

Šito tyrinėjimo niekas neremia, ir visos išlaidos padengiu aš magistro programos stipendija.

10. Kas sekia tyrinėjimą?

Glazgo Universiteto Socialinių ir Politikos Mokslų Mokyklos Etikos Forumas sekia šį tyrinėjimą.

11. Papildoma informacija

Jeigu jūs susirupinote dėl kažko, susijusio su tyrinėjimu, arba jeigu jums atrodo, kad jūsų asmeninė informacija buvo apdorota neatitinkamai, jūs galite susisiekti su Socialinių ir Politinių Mokslų Mokyklos Etikos Forumo viršininku Mo Hume elektroniniu paštu Mo.Hume@glasgow.ac.uk.

APPENDIX 1c: Plain Language Statement in Russian



UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
TARTU ÜLIKOOL



Описание Исследования в Висагинасе

1. Название исследования и информация об исследователе

Название исследования: 'Антропологическое исследование социо-физического пространства Висагинаса и чувства принадлежности к городу', Сентябрь 2013 - Май 2014. **Исследователь:** Инга Фреймане, я учусь на магистра по программе Россия, Центральная и Восточная Европа в Университете Глазго. Вы можете связаться со мной по электронной почте 2048726F@glg.ac.uk или muspri.i@gmail.com, а также по телефону +370(0)67365274 или +44(0)7542212892. В данный момент я прохожу второй курс обучения в университете Тарту - партнере нашей программы.

2. Приглашение к участию в исследовании

Приглашаю вас к участию в исследовании. До того, как вы решите, хотите ли участвовать, важно, чтобы вы понимали, почему я провожу это исследование и что требуется от вас. Прочитайте внимательно информацию, предоставленную вам, и если хотите, обсудите её с другими людьми. Вы можете задать мне вопросы, если вам что-то неясно или вы хотите узнать больше. Не спешите, у вас есть время решить, хотите ли вы участвовать в исследовании. Спасибо за ваше время.

3. Какова цель исследования?

Это исследование направлено на то, чтобы выявить ключевые общественно-материальные места города, в которых жители Висагинаса проводят своё время (кафе, дом культуры, библиотека, и т.д.), а также смысл этих места несут. Пытаясь найти значение этих ключевых мест, я хочу понять какое влияние материальность города имеет на людей.

4. Почему выбрали меня?

Ваше участие важно, потому что оно внесёт вклад в научные исследования взаимодействие людей и материальной среды, в которой они живут в контексте Висагинаса.

5. Должен (-на) ли я участвовать?

Вы не обязаны принимать участие в проекте - участие добровольно и не несёт никакой денежной или другой оплаты. Вы можете прервать своё участие в любой момент.

6. Как я могу принять участие?

Вы можете принять участие по-разному. Одно из самых важных способов участия - дать интервью, которое будет длиться 40 - 60 минут и на протяжении которого вам нужно будет ответить примерно на 15 вопросов. Дополнительно, вы потратите примерно 30 минут на прочтение этой информации, так что в сумме от вас потребуется около полутора часа. В зависимости от вашего желания, интервью будет/ не будет записано на диктофон. Интервью будет проходить в удобном для вас месте - в кафе, прогуливаясь по городу, или у вас дома. Вопросы интервью очень простые и связаны с вашей жизнью в Висагинасе. Также вы можете участвовать в более неформальной обстановке, рассказать или показать мне город.

7. Будет ли моё участие конфиденциально?

Ваша личная информация не будет раскрыта никому и ни при каких обстоятельствах. Однако, исследование может быть опубликовано в качестве научной статьи, конференционной работы, или книги. В таком случае ваше имя будет скрыто псевдонимом. Все записи интервью будут храниться на отдельной карте памяти,

охраняемой паролем. Но прямые выдержки из разговоров могут быть включены в текст. По этическим причинам, нужна будет ваша подпись, чтобы подтвердить ваше согласие на участие.

Что будет с результатами исследований?

Конечной версией исследований будет моя магистерская работа, и я могу предоставить вам ее по желанию (она будет опубликована на английском языке).

Кто спонсирует исследование?

Данное исследование не спонсируется третьими лицами. Все издержки покрываются стипендией, которую я получаю от своей программы.

Кто следит за исследованием?

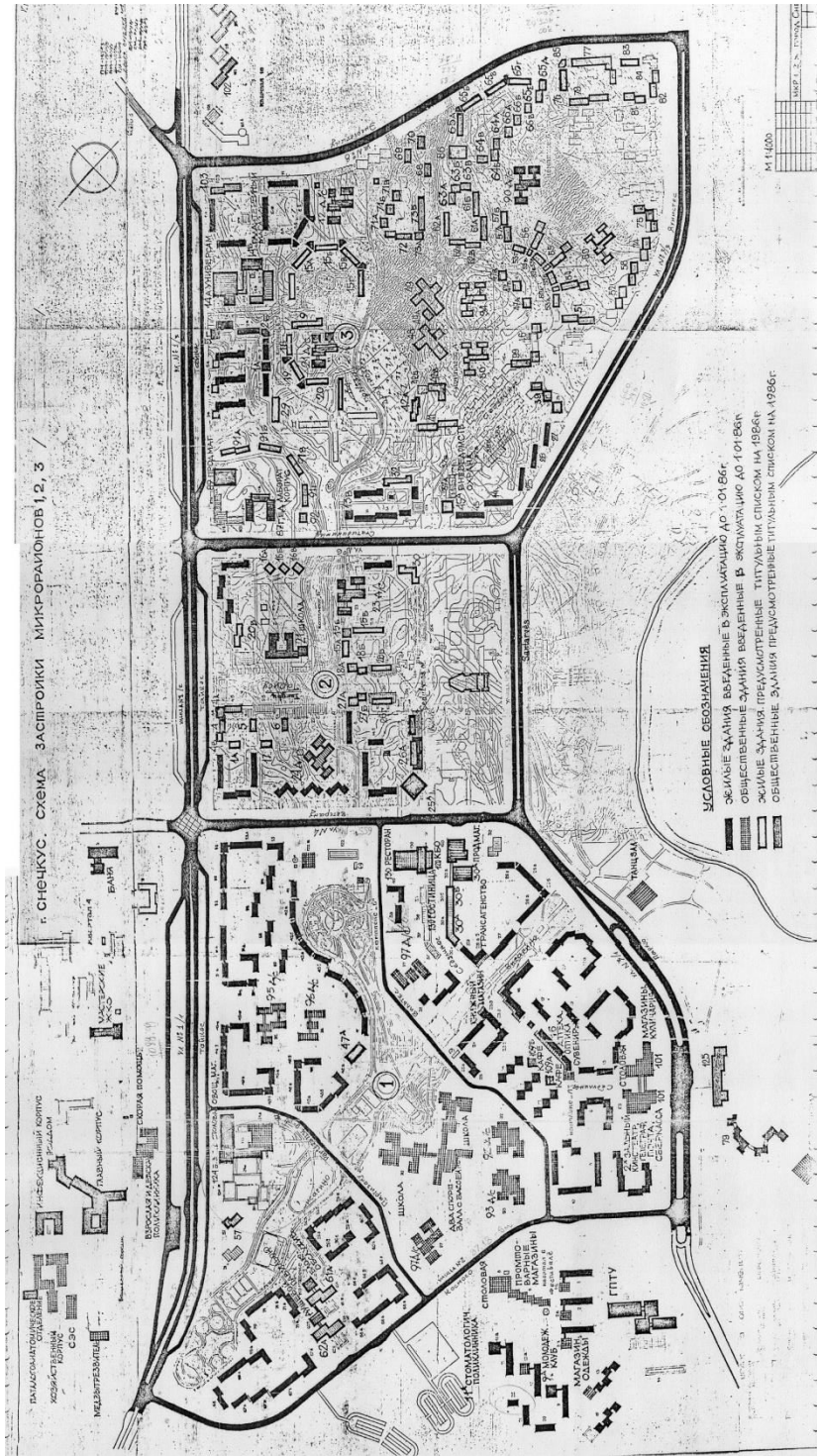
За исследованием следит Этический Форум Школы Социальных и Политических Наук Университета Глазго.

Дополнительная информация

Если вас тревожит что-либо, относящиеся к тому, как выполняется исследование или если вам кажется, что с вашей информацией поступают не соответствующе, вы можете связаться с главой Этического Форума Школы Социальных и Политических Наук Доктором Мо Хьюм по Mo.Hume@glasgow.ac.uk.

APPENDIX 2b: Maps of Visaginas used in the desk study

The map of urban planning of Visaginas, 1986. Obtained from the informational portal on Lithuanian cities www.miestai.lt. [Accessed 20 March 2014]



APPENDIX 3: Profiles of informants

Informant 1 (male): Konstantin is 68 years old and has been living in Visaginas for 35 years. He came to Visaginas from Russia. While the city was under construction, Konstantin worked as an electrician, and later became an employee at the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant. He left INPP upon his retirement 5 years ago.

Informant 2 (female): Alisa is in her 30s. She is an employee of one of the cultural organizations of the Visaginas.

Informant 3 (male): Oleg is 50 years old. He arrived to Visaginas in 1992, and prior to that had lived in Vilnius for 11 years. Originally, Oleg comes from the Republic of Belarus. He is a driver, but has been unemployed for a number of years.

Informant 4 (male): Albert is 31 years old. He was born in Visaginas to Russian parents who were working at the INPP. He is currently unemployed and is a street artist.

Informant 5 (male): Andrey is 29 years old. His parents arrived to Visaginas from Russia. Andrey has recently finished university in Vilnius and is frequently travelling between the two cities.

Informant 6 (male): Roman is in his late 20s. He was born in Visaginas but currently resides in Vilnius where he works as a graphic designer. His mother-tongue is Russian language.

Informant 7 (male): Petr is in his late 20s and was born in Visaginas. He is currently unemployed. His mother-tongue is Russian language.

Informant 8 (female): Gerda is in her 40s. She has arrived to Visaginas in 1990's with her family. Gerda is working at one of the cultural institutions in town. Gerda is Lithuanian.

Informant 9 (male): Tomas is in his late 60's. When we met, Tomas was working at one of the cultural institutions of Visaginas but has left this position by my next visit to town. Tomas comes from Zarasai and is Lithuanian.

Informant 10 (male): Vasiliy is in his early 30s. He was born in Visaginas and his native language is Russian. Vasiliy is working in one of the cultural institutions of town.

Informant 11 (male): Nikita is in his late 20s. He was born in Visaginas. Nikita's mother tongue is Russian language. Currently, he works in one of the cultural institutions of town and is actively participating in religious community of Visaginas.

Informant 12 (female): Laima is in her 40s. She is native Lithuanian and is working in one of the cultural institutions of Visaginas.

Informant 13 (female): Anna is in her 50s and has arrived to Visaginas from Russia. She has previously been employed at one of the kindergartens discussed in this work. Presently, Anna is working at one of the social support organizations of town.

Informant 14 (female): Marta is Lithuanian and is in her 20s. She was born in Visaginas and is currently working at one of the cultural organizations of town.

Informant 15 (female): Laura is in her 20s and is of Lithuanian-Russian parentage. She was born in Visaginas and works at one of the social support organizations of town.

Informant 16 (female): Sofia is in her late 60s and has arrived to Visaginas from Central Asia. She is retired and is a member of one of the grassroots organizations discussed in this dissertation.

Informant 17 (female): Anastasya is in her late 60s and came to Visaginas from Russia. She was previously working at the Visaginas City Council. Anastasya is retired.

Informant 18 (female): Elena is in her early 40s and originally come from the Republic of Belarus. She is working at one of the educational institutions of Visaginas. Elena is a member of one of the semi-religious organizations of Visaginas.

Informant 19 (male): Gediminas is in his 40s. He arrived to Visaginas in 1990's and is presently working at one of the official institutions of Visaginas. He is Lithuanian.

Informant 20 (male): Jonas is in his early 60s and came to Visaginas from Vilnius. Jonas is Lithuanian and works in one of the official institutions of town.

Informant 21 (male): Matas is over 60 years old. Matas arrived to Visaginas in 1976 from Vilnius and was working in one of the official institutions of town. Matas is Lithuanian. He is retired but still works as a self-employed.

Informant 22 (male): Simonas is over 60 years old. He is Lithuanian and had been working in one of the official institutions of Visaginas upon his retirement several years ago.

Informant 23 (male): Dmitrij is 40 years old. Dmitrij came to Visaginas from Russia when he was little with his parents who were working at the INPP. Dmitrij is currently working as freelance photographer.

Informant 24 (female): Lina is in her mid-20s. She was born in Visaginas to Lithuanian parents. Currently, Lina lives in United Kingdom and occasionally visits the town.

Informant 25 (female): Erika is in her mid-20s. Erika was born in Visaginas and is Lithuanian. Currently, she works in the field of sports.

Informant 26 (male): Mindaugas is in his early 60s. He arrived to Visaginas in 1990s from the nearby town. Mindaugas is Lithuanian. Currently, he works at one of the cultural institutions of Visaginas.

Informant 27 (female): Jekaterina is in her late 50s. She does not live in Visaginas but often travels to the city as parts of her family reside in town. She is of mixed parentage but speaks Russian language.