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Deconstruction of binary opposition as a base of hypothesis of urban survival : project of Samara Strategy and project of reconstruction of a block in the historical part

2012

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Modern civilization is practically totally of urban character. All cultural, political, social denotations are produced by the urban community. The city is capable of creating this kind of product due to the special way of living here, which is actually our civilization's highest achievement. It may be described as freedom of choice, anonymity and speed of communication, which provide for intensive creative processes. This creative component is in the final analysis of the essence of city culture, and of civilization as well. But the city in itself is a source of many problems. Within the framework of this article, let's name such important ones as imbalance between culture in the capital and in provinces, imbalance inside different social groups, degrading environment, estrangement of citizens from one another and from managing their environment, which leads to degradation of public life and of the city in itself as a denotation. These problems often bring to naught advantages of life in the city, and identification of such kind of settlement as the city becomes problematic (the only undoubted parameter, according to which such identification takes place, is size). And instead of rich, meaningful and inspired living, people have to live a miserable life, it being hard to survive intellectually, morally and physically inside such a formation. Being deprived of advantages of life in the country and close to nature, separated from the inexhaustible denotation and energy resource given to us by nature, put under such circumstances as the necessity to constantly react to impulses coming from the consumption machine, which the modern city actually is, to simulacrums viciously and endlessly produced by this machine,

modern city dwellers find themselves inside a dramatic mental space which Ken Wilber described as "cosmos deprived of qualities, a flat and faded universe, without sense, depth, interpretation, beauty, perfection, dignity, having nothing elevated in it". Culture has not yet provided most people with examples of how to cope with such challenges. As a result the city dweller loses subjective qualities, which is undoubtedly the most important current time tragedy. This leads to the state of total disorientation and pessimism, characterized by Hanna Arendt as "conformism, behaviorism and automatism", typical for modern city dwellers.

It is possible to study all denoted problems with the example of provenance Russian city, where the author lives. It is Samara. In words of official reference books Samara region used to be described as follows.

Samara Region is one of the leaders in Russian Federation and Volga Federal District in industrial production sphere, in terms of gross regional product amount and dynamics and retail turnover. In the centre of Samara Region there exists two-nuclear Samara-Togliatti agglomeration, the third in population in Russian Federation.

Samara is one of economic development poles in the region, it occupies the sixth place in Russian Federation in gross regional product overall cost. Samara region is one of the best areas for business in Russian Federation. According to "Forbes Magazine" rating of "Best Areas for Business—2011", Samara region occupies the fifth place among Russian Federation regions in total rating after Republic of Tatarstan, Sverdlovsk Region, Krasnodarsky Krai and Tyumen Region. The biggest investors into Samara region industry are oil-processing companies of "Rosneft" Holding, branch office of OJSC "FSK EES"—"Main Power Transmission Lines of Volga Area", OJSC "Volga Territorial Generating Company", which is part of "KES Holding", branch office of OJSC "Rushydro"—"Zhigulevskaya Hydro-Electric Power Station". One of the biggest investment projects due to start in 2012 is "Kurumoch" airport modernization. The region's strategically important investor is Renault Nissan Concern, which has formed an alliance with OJSC "AUTOVAZ". Amount of investments into the region's economy, according to plans of preparation for Mundial 2018, will grow several times within the next 6 years, due to all kinds of sources: federal and local budgets, as well as private investors' money. Minimum amount of investments into Samara's infrastructure, into main objects to be built for the Cup will be nearly 100 bln rubles within the next 6 years. Samara is Russian Federation's sixth—largest city with a population of 1 169 000 people. Taking into account commuting from the nearest suburb, Samara's population is 1 550 000 people.

The share of economically active population in Samara is 63,4%. Average monthly salary in Samara reached 22 000 rubles ($ 9000 a year) in 2012.Within structure of people's expenses we may note cutting down expenses for food and growth of expenses for services, first of all for transport. At the same time consumer demand level on the whole remains stable, nominal and real salary of the population keep going up throughout post-crisis period, while people's savings are restored.

This description is given from the viewpoint of investments, but there also exist languages of medicine, tourism and other official languages. The position of some architects, including the author of this article, is that the city may be described the following way.

In all honesty the state of life in Samara is that we do not have the city itself, that is, there is no creative space, creative society (community) and creative sense. Professionals are pushed away from decision-making and work in narrow professional boundaries. The city is becoming a loose unstructured mass, losing identity and fragments of integrated environment, including the priceless historical background buildings; demographically decreasing and spreading within, not using the capacity to compaction, which leads to drawing off scarce financial means to the construction of the new communications in peripheral areas, aggravating the transport and engineering workload. City chokes in transport problems due to the mismatch between the current road network capacity and modern transport migrations. Instead of increasing the frequency of the grid of streets it is attempted to resolve the extensive problems with the construction of expensive road junctions, destroying a large part of the urban fabric. Housing and utilities have a high degree of depreciation. We are in a loss of river frontage facades and facades along major highways. Eco environment is catastrophically deteriorating. Paradoxically, the professional designers do not have a job, and that leads to the degradation of professional worksphere, related to the lack of a transparent system of distribution of orders, the lack of professional competitions and need for the high professional knowledge and solutions as well as a decrease in the number of beginners and young professionals who have to look for work outside Samara. In Samara, as in many other cities around the world, there is a serious problem with private ownership on the land—in our case, where the metropolitan area and the state run into the property as an obstacle to the implementation of major infrastructure projects—networks, communications, public spaces. Today in Samara there is no organization, making a holistic assessment of the state of the city and connected space, and accordingly—no understanding of the consequences that may result from a discrete implementation of the „disciplinary projects" and discrete commercial initiatives. There is no picture of the environment as an integral spatial and socio-cultural establishment, and accordingly—no practice of effective decision-making in order to preserve the territorial integrity of the environment and its core values.

These two descriptions show that existence of several types of languages creates different "reality tunnels"[1]. Here two contrasting (close to direct opposition) ways of constructing the picture of city reality are shown deliberately, as they influence taking decisions about fate of the city and its inhabitants dramatically. In bureaucratic reporting reality looks glamorous and uniform, which creates the atmosphere of vulgar (i.e. false) positive, and this is in dramatic contrast with evidently depressing spirit of the environment. Statistic parameters, based on average numbers principle, exclude the unique, the single, and this leads to excluding the subjective. Not getting into intentions of this sort of speech (good, or, on the opposite, evil), we may confirm in good faith that its consequences turn out to be catastrophic, because it's based on the spirit of Cartesian dualism idea which is standard for traditional culture and which has given rise to preferences and repressions mechanism. The big represses the small, the main—the secondary, the strong—the weak, the universal—the specific. This mechanism was analyzed in quite a lot of detail by postmodernist critics. «The main thing (about postmodernism) is problematisation and breaking up the cultural

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[1]   R.A. Wilson, *Quantum Psychology*, Moscow, 2005.

habit of thinking using binary oppositions, which is old and difficult to overcome: that is when one member is privileged compared to the other: the good opposed to the evil, the sacral to the exoteric, the word to the body, mine to somebody else's, finally—myself to «the other one»[2]. This analysis of binary oppositions, in process of which relations inside pairs of opposites are shifted or reconstructed, is called deconstruction method. Postmodernism is searching for complex relations between these opposition members, because it understands how dangerous any simplification is from ethical viewpoint. In our opinion, except for ideological background of the mechanism of repressing one binary pair member, the basis of it is primitive instrumentalist (functionalistic) practicability: monologue approach is much simpler, because, leaving out all deep, subjective, oppositional, nuance, undetermined values, it leads to achieving the result quicker. But the problem of speed is vital exclusively for progress civilization. The catastrophe, to which progress world view had lead our civilization, was described by us in the article "Catastrophe of Progress and Nature of Innovations"[3]. If instrumentalist approach to the above-mentioned mechanism is amended by philosophical dimension, then destroying repressions mechanism becomes vital survival strategy for the community, the individual, the environment. Unfortunately, the logic of authorities, of politics is always based, as Mark Lipovetsky notes, on binary oppositions' logic. The basis of this binarism is essentialism, i.e. the idea of eternal and permanent truths and categories, of fixed values. Postmodernism has demonstrated many times, using problematisation method, that parts of each binary pair are determined by each other and responsible for each other. Including the oppositions "myself"—"the other one" and "mine"—"somebody else's", the elements of which are thought of as interpenetrating and mutually reversible.

Unfortunately, in modern Russian provincial city life, on everyday practice level, none of these ideas finds its embodiment. The authorities (the administration) is a repressive, force, external, weighing instrument, not oriented towards the subject (targeted), and under no conditions showing itself as a subject (in person). Citizens are thinking about themselves as "negative identities", which is described by Mark Lipovetsky the following way: "Soviet identity crisis made negative self-identification mechanism more active—when positive basis for identity fell to pieces or became problematic, individual and group identities started to build up basing on the opposite, on the figure of the enemy. But, unlike Soviet times when the figure of the enemy was centralized, in post-Soviet world it is created basing on current situation and often changes—today it's one enemy, tomorrow—another. The main thing is I am not the same as he: not a Caucasian, not an American, not a Tajik, not a gay—the list is endless." Recognizing this sort of separation and opposition as fictive, illusionary, false, or—last but not least—dangerous from the viewpoint of self-preservation—may strongly influence life conditions in the city. The habit to inevitably overcome hardships connected with thinking in oppositions and to rehabilitate any repressed denotations is not more difficult to acquire than any other hygienic habit, but it may lead to important humanitarian

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[2] M. Lipovetsky, "What Is Postmodernism?", http://os.colta.ru/literature/events/details/ 36830/?attempt=1.
[3] E. Repina, "Cataclasm of the Progress and Nature of Innovations", All-Russian Scientific Conference "Innovative Methods and Technologies in the High Architectural Education", Russia, Samara, 2008.

consequences, and it may become a natural social strategy, if there's certain political will. These consequences seem evident to us. Let's try to demonstrate this using several projects carried out in Samara as examples. First, in spring 2012 a strategy of the city's development was worked out. The author was part of a group the task of which was spatial development (the second name of the group is "creative city"). This group consisted from the teachers of Samara state university of architecture and civil engineering: professor Malakhov, assistant professors—Malisheva, Khramov and the author of this article. An attempt was made to include several categories and approaches that answer the above-described paradigm into its denotation structure.

The key idea is that all citizens are equal in settling questions related to their fate. Such kind of people become professional citizens or subjects of city's life, i.e. they deal with self-organization and influence the image of the environment, which is no longer a recipient of individual will. It becomes capable of self-organization. Problems connected with concrete areas (localities) become a matter for discussion. The main parties of this dialogue are authorities, professionals and citizens. The basis for such approach is the idea of demystification of any opponent or enemy, recognizing part of yourself in "him", and part of him in yourself, which may lead to constructive arrangement of city living, based on "win-win" policy, i.e. when all parties win. Undoubtedly, the city is a space inside which interests of multiple parties collide. For example, interests of a locality contradict general outline project, different owners have disputes about borders, interests of developers contradict interests of local inhabitants, proposals made by representatives of different professions responsible for taking decisions about the area contradict each other. Each point in city space is a center of conflict, and this state is absolutely natural, though traditionally conflict is considered to be a negative situation, which consequently needs to be avoided, i.e. repressed. Such repression, as psychoanalysis has brilliantly proved, gives birth to monsters, which live in the collective subconscious and inevitably escape into objective space. Actually, the nightmare of modern life in cities is a proof of this thesis in itself. The suggested strategy speaks about a conflict situation as a positive opportunity, introducing the procedure of "conflict between parties" as the main decision-taking instrument. Answer or solution result from dialogue, they are multilayered, and thus more stable. From the viewpoint of professional architectural methodology this approach is described as "environmental", as opposed to objective, fragmental approach to design. Ideally this approach has to take into account infinite number of objective and subjective connections of any object (building, area). If we use the same logic, value of different areas turns out to be equal, in spite of their size and position on the map.

And in this case, the only reasonable method of conflict resolution is self-organized territories. Projects, based on counterpart funding (population + state) and dialogue, can give a much more flexible and innovative solutions—including infrastructure (when the local utilities and roads are repaired or built by the residents themselves) than single-process design, single-financing and single-impact of different kinds, but mostly—on principle from "top down".

It is evident that such ideology needs special institution, which supports the idea of self-organization of society within the spatial locality, and building on the identity of the locality

to include the decision-making system for interdisciplinary environmental design work of experts, representing the interests of the parties in the dialogue to help resolve territorial issues. Combining idea of city as a spatial, natural and cultural identity with the idea of self-development of the territory will result in creation of a sensible and natural economic and social environment model. Such institution can be called "Institute of the City" and become a special room for making any difficult decisions in the interests of the state and localities. In the locality of any size, up or down the scale of the system, they will form their own "institute of the city" where it is provided for the decision making on the basis of a multilateral dialogue with local media forum and the center of monitoring and modeling. This is a collective creative center of locality, which, being broadcasted down as a principle of self-organization and management of the environment, can form "micro-institutes"—areas of decision-making across the block, and even a neighborhood.

Institute of the City can synergistically realize interests of all agents of urban life:

Interests of state:
1. Positive image in the eyes of the people—a wise, just and prudent management, interested in the needs of the citizens and promoting the human right to be heard and to live with dignity. Eternal glory in the eyes of posterity. Positive attitude towards elections.
2. Unique political brand—the new form of government / self-organized territories.
3. Effective management and economic tool—instead of unsuccessful distribution, spreading scarce budgetary resources in a large city—finding hidden powerful resource to restore order in the city through the involvement of citizens and assigning them to the status of "professionals". That is, citizens are enabled to make decisions about the organization of their lives on a certain territory, and also to implement them on their own by investing their own money and effort.
4. Reducing social tensions due to the productive use of the energy of traditional discontent with the actions of government and create a favorable climate for self-and mutual respect.
5. Intensification of cultural communities.

Interests of professionals:
1. Output of specific professional framework into space of inter-professional communication.
2. Testing of a new type of spatial decision-making and monitoring results.
3. Possibility of a productive dialogue with the government.
4. A significant increase in employment.
5. The transition to environmental projects that include all the elements of the environment.
6. Creation of objective conditions for the development of innovative concepts.
7. Combining of the actual reality with professional imagination.
8. Humanization of the profession, including the client (social integration and neighbourliness), decision-making methods (dialogue, advocacy, respect of individual values and traditions, values of spontaneous and "other" collective solutions, continuing education in life), creative competition rather than financial competition.

Interests of citizens:
1. Legitimation of rights to the territory of residence.
2. Continuity of cultural and ancestral settlement.
3. Development of participation in self-government on a real basis.
4. Additional income revenues through commercial activities of Condominium Associations.
5. The increase in real estate prices as a result of the renovation.
6. Strengthening individual creativity, and the appearance of additional incentives and life prospects.

The next way to approximate to realization of described philosophy became a project of reconstruction of a block in the historical part of the city of Samara, created at summer of 2012.

The core of the project is so called advocative, social or participational design, which was born in UK and Europe in 70's. It is based on the responsibility of architects and authority to people and a procedure of a dialogue[4].

Fig. 1. Block # 79 in the historical part of the city of Samara

The closest project purpose was an experiment connected with architectural-infrastructural and socio-cultural restoration of Block #79 in the city of Samara, using "conflict-free restoration method" (i.e. preserving maximum number of parameters—borders of sites, inhabitants, number of stories, architectural language), based on inhabitants' and all other interested parties' involvement in public, business and investment activity, the result of which should be restoration of historical environment's ability to develop itself, and increase of the area's attractiveness for living, visiting and doing business. The next purpose was to apply the experience of this experiment will be used in future total restoration of

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[4]   N. Wates, *Community Architecture. How People Are Creating their Own Environment*, London, 1987.

Samara's historical center—the city's key brand, when we face hosting World Football Championship in 2018.

The authors of the project were magistrands and graduate students of Samara State University of Architecture and Civil Engineering, under the supervision of PhD in Architecture, Professor S.A. Malakhov, PhD in Architecture, Dean E.A. Repina, City Chief Architect, PhD in Architecture V.E. Stadnikov, Public Relation Expert O.E. Kuranda.

At present the city's historical center is blocks of orderly development (250x125 mm) dating back to Catherine's times. There are about 170 blocks like this in our city. Most of them consist of yards, divided by lengthwise and lateral firewalls (parcels), the streets' front is occupied by 2–3 storied brick or wooden houses built in the end of the 19th century, and deep in the yards there is mostly dilapidated housing stock and/or uncontrolled settlements. Before the revolution each house was an independent estate. After the revolution these yards turned into public space, which was the reason of their degradation. In spite of ruined look and low quality of infrastructure, "Samara yard" is a source of a certain architectural code and way of living. But this fact was ignored in spontaneous capitalism époque: most blocks received traumas in the form of multi-storied infill constructions of low architectural quality. In spite of the fact that the city's historical center is highly attractive for citizens and tourists, Samara risks losing a greater part of these buildings, because there's no strategy of preserving and using them. At present any attempts to preserve Samara's historical and cultural heritage, to reanimate the process of historical center's full-blooded functioning either result in failure, or they are substituted by endless restorations of single monuments, or by crude investment projects which lead to valuable environment's destruction. Spontaneous development of the area with high level of cultural heritage monuments' concentration leads to environment's degradation, to indigenous citizens being driven into peripheral districts under the pretext of dilapidated buildings' reconstruction. The reasons of failure of initiatives aimed at restoring historical environment are:

1. No dialogue with people inhibiting the area, ignoring natural method of environment's restoration and development, based on economic activity and small business within borders of backyards (parcels), which is the basis of Samara historical blocks' life.
2. High level of housing stock and engineering networks' amortization.
3. Absence of clear rules governing investments into city areas' development.
4. Absence of socially oriented building programs and mechanisms of state subsidies for disadvantaged population.
5. Absence of public spaces system development concept.

An important problem is how to revive identity of social groups (communities), which is closely connected to citizens' self-identification within context of certain areas (localities) inside the city. Except "sense of place", most citizens have lost connection to their neighbors due to serious social stratification, which has already been fixed in territorial identification too: the city is unofficially divided into "districts": "elite", "bandit", "bedroom", etc. Territorial public self-government bodies are still formal structures at the moment, and managing the city still takes place "from up to down", inhabitants' potential for self-organization being ignored. Citizens have lost the skills of self-government and of taking personal responsibility for state of environment. These blocks are inhibited by people with low motivation level (we-

akly expressed life strategies), and with an income which is not enough for them to preserve their environment in required state. At the same time the "old city", due to its "atmosphere", already is an educational and attractive space, it possesses the highest potential for creative city development, i.e. public and cultural life development, though it's still "a blind spot" for most citizens and guests. It's a place for potential dozens of post-industrial type projects—museums, tourism, exhibitions, theatres, etc. Territories with such small-scale type of environment and high historical-cultural-touristic-mythological resource possess a potential for development of innovative types of small business, which is capable of increasing both their inhabitants' income and contributions to state budget due to taxes paid and to the area becoming more important for the public. Samara's historical blocks, being the most evident resource for the city's self-identification as a brand, are in fact on the verge of dying out, in spite of the fact that they are capable of bringing considerable profit to the city. Profitability of this area should inevitably lead to improving environment's quality, and this, in its turn, should increase its attractiveness, and—again—profitability.

The experiment in block #79 should be an experimental launching ground for working out a highly efficient program of historical center restoration, which will be amended by all-federal initiatives for total restoration of the city's infrastructure, when Russia and Samara face hosting World Football Championship 2018.

The method of conflict-free renovation were proposed. It is based on the accomplishment of the following goals:

1. To prepare and realize the experiment connected with socio-cultural and town-building transformation of Block #79 in the city of Samara.
2. To work out methods of new approach **to restoration based on conflict-free interaction** between the block's inhabitants and participating investors.
3. To achieve using innovative methods of **environmental design** based on advanced technologies and **interdisciplinary co-operation.**
4. To work out innovative methods of taking design decisions based on principles of participation, of legitimizing "conflict" between parties' interests; to create the first experimental laboratory of future CI (Institute of the City).
5. To achieve efficient dialogue between all interested parties, and to develop, using this block as an example, **a pragmatic (realistic) business-plan** which will take into account inhabitants' interests, investors' abilities, degree of the city's interest and the concept of restoring historical center as a total **monument and brand**.
6. To develop **a method of participation** of the block's inhabitants in restoring existing buildings.
7. To achieve using methods of compact development based on local transformations of existent housing stock, and **to make development more compact by building new houses of low-storied type.**
8. To achieve revival of active life inside the block, **rehabilitation of neighborhood relations** and development of **small business**, which should be oriented towards serving interests of the block's inhabitants, tourists and citizens.
9. To make the block's status higher as a new phenomenon in Samara's history, to create **a source of cultural attraction and a tourist centre** in the block.

10. To work out **a method of restoring and functional animation of monuments**, on the basis of co-financing and orientation towards tourism.
11. To apply **rational ecological and engineering-infrastructure technologies,** adequate to step-by-step reconstruction method.
12. To create an environment, safe for all social groups and for people with different physical abilities.
13. To create **educational grounds** for training in the sphere of alternative local studies and city design for people of different age and occupations.

Block #79 is located in the historical part of the city of Samara, in Leninsky District. The block is located between Leninsky, Bratiev Korostelevyh, Krasnoarmeiskaya, Leo Tolstoy streets, it is a rectangle 250 x 125 m. In that block the front of the streets is occupied by 2–3-storied brick or wooden houses built in the end of the 19th century, and deep in the yards there are mostly dilapidated and/or self-constructed buildings. Total number of yards is 28. There are 6 historical and cultural monuments of regional importance on the block. According to preliminary estimation, total population is 300 people. In the block there is an unfinished 7-storied apartment block with administrative extension, which is in abandoned state (it has been under construction for 15 years). Large percentage of the area is municipal property. According to preliminary estimation of building state general forecast about how to make it more compact has been made.

In spite of the fact that there's a common project, each yard is essentially an independent object for renovation, which is accompanied by creation of a separate individual project. Principal project solution for each yard implies creating a spatial enclave, "house-yard", divided in-depth into several autonomous micro-yards with different types of apartments, which cost different accordingly. The whole project program for separate yard ("house-yard", "parcel") is ranked from restoration and refurbishment of the ancient house located on the street's red line, substitution of barns and courtyard houses for new 2–3-storied apartment blocks up to construction of an elite complex with different

Fig. 2. A game for the inhabitants "Build the City for Yourselves". Passports of yards

kinds of apartments, including its own road for cars access, commercial space, studios and social premises.

Stages of the project:

1. June 2012—Preliminary research of buildings' state and general forecast of how the development can be made more compact were made.
2. July 2012—communication with the block's inhabitants was established.

Sociological research was carried out (personal interviews, questionnaires, polling according to a matrix).

A game was arranged for the inhabitants "Build the City for Yourselves".

Basing on the received results, passports of yards were filled in ("yards' archives")—3D models with detailed explications reflecting social, legal, infrastructural pictures of reality. The passports also include records of collective and personal myths of the inhabitants, peculiarities of their lifestyle, moderators' notes related to state of environment.

Feasibility and preliminary design study of the block was created as a result of "conflict" between projects of yards made by architects of yards and project of block made by architects of block in expositional format.

August 2012—legal analysis of source documents for land in block # 79 (acts of land allotment, lease agreements, information from state sources on sites provided earlier, information from Federal State Registration, Land Cadastre and Cartography Service for Samara Region). The aim is to develop the mechanism of obtaining documentation for land within borders of the block's parcels.

Initial feasibility study of the project was received, based on preliminary design of building the block.

Fig. 3. A project of the Block # 79 in the historical part of the city of Samara

The future of these projects are still uncertain, but we hope that their realisation can bring about so important cultural and social shift.

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