# PLEASURES *and* PAINS *of a* CHANGING *city:*

HOUSING CHOICES
AND SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE
IN CENTRAL VILNIUS

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Pleasures and pains of a changing city:
Housing choices and symbolic violence in central Vilnius

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Besikeičiančio miesto malonumai ir skausmai:
būsto pasirinkimai ir simbolinė prievarta centriniame Vilniuje

For my father,
the first one to teach me
how to read a city

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Picture 1.
A street wall in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 1996

1.

INTRODUCTION

Life in cities has inspired the imaginations of sociologists for many years. This interest can be traced right back to the beginnings of the discipline, which from its outset aimed to understand the forces of modernisation fuelling the growth of urban forms. Such interest in cities, as a specific object of enquiry, remains very strong even now, when more than half of world's human population lives in cities – now, when almost any social phenomenon is inseparable from urban life. The academic interest of sociologists in cities remains active despite previous doubts that the urban form as such does not pose any unique sociological problem (Castells, 1977). Despite the fact that a significant share of the debate in urban studies revolves around specific types of spaces such as *gated communities*, *urban ghettoes* or *gentrifying* neighbourhoods.

This trend can be puzzling, however. Does it show that sociologists are trying to rewind the history of social research and to prove that a social theory of urban space is actually possible? By answering this question directly, one would instantly classify oneself as a researcher of urbanity working according to the rules of a very specific domain of social research. Rather than making such direct claims, I think it is worth questioning the different categories used across the borderlines of the academic domains that are interested in cities. A constructive starting point in any study of city spaces is to admit that despite anything, they continue to fuel the sociological imagination just as they did at the dawn of the discipline of sociology.

1.1. Following the Bourdieusian turn in urban studies

With this work, I am following the invitation of Mike Savage for a turn towards Bourdieusian urban studies (Savage, 2011). Since this invitation for discussion about the possible Bourdieusian lines of argument on urbanity, this direction has become more and more appealing – addition English translations of Bourdieu's work have been made available, as well as extensive reviews to assist in this endeavour. We now have guides to Bourdieu's oeuvre, which specifically help us to think of him as a spatial thinker – a conception of him that makes any contribution in this direction much more productive (e.g. Fogle, 2011). Pierre Bourdieu's research practice teaches us how to reconcile subjectivist and objectivist views towards social reality. This is one of the many divisions in European social thought that has for too long ripped apart urban studies due to debates between opposing camps, the debate on gentrification being one of them. This is why I will be using this debate to discuss exactly what this turn towards the sociological ideas of Pierre Bourdieu could bring to urban studies. The **main goal** I set for myself with this study is:

> *"To show the symbolic violence present in what could be called one of 'gentrifying' areas of central Vilnius."*

The discussion about possible Bourdieusian lines of argument on urbanity is a relatively new and, I believe, also a productive turn in urban sociology. This being said, there is still a lot of theoretical work to be done to reconstruct what might have been Bourdieu's lines of argument in the contemporary debates of urban studies. This starts with the main concept of *social space*, which he explained as the objective structure of positions, which are described by the volume and type (e.g. economic or cultural) of capital possessed by agents that occupy positions within this space. For *Bourdieu*, this space is relational one, because the structure and the volume of the capital possessed by an agent at any given moment depends on the overall structure of the distribution of capital within the social space (Bourdieu, 2020). In other words, one's position in the social space can only be described in relation to other positions or to the structure of the capital that is possessed there. As we can see, this concept – despite having spatial reference – is first and foremost an abstract concept. And unlike the understanding of *space* across most of urban studies, this space is not directly related to the materiality of physical space.

This issue does not, however, make Bourdieu's work irrelevant to the contemporary debates in urban studies. Quite the opposite. In his answer to an invitation to look for the "lost sociology of Pierre Bourdieu", Loïc Wacquant shows how the early and late writings of Pierre Bourdieu reverberate with the core agendas of classic and contemporary urban sociology (Wacquant, 2018). He sees it as possible to reconstruct from these works what would be the Bourdieusian view on questions of urban sociology, showing how social and mental structures have their equivalents in *physical* space, expressing social power through the language of distance and proximity. What makes consistent analysis of urbanity particularly challenging is that the *physical space*, the usual subject of interest in urban studies, is also mutually interlinked with *symbolic* space. Thus, while reconstructing Bourdieu's thinking of cities we have to add *symbolic space* to achieve a triad of *social*, *symbolic* and *physical* spaces. This triad would constitute Bourdieu's *"topological mode of reasoning"* about cities (Wacquant, 2018). Such efforts to establish an approach towards the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu as being one of a spatial thinker are sufficiently persuasive. And at the present time, almost any effort to contribute to this direction would deserve the badge of **academic novelty**. For urban sociologists taking this direction, such as me, the **problem** is to find ways to bridge the *social* and *physical space* in our thinking about cities. Wacquant invites us to use one of Bourdieu's lectures, which he gave towards the end of his life, as a short summary of his ideas on how we should cope with this challenge (Bourdieu, 2018b). This is also the main starting lead that I will follow in this work.

1.2. Dwelling on the doubts of an established academic debate

From the hermetic enclaves of *gated communities* to the involuntary 'locking-in' of people into the misery of *urban ghettoes*, within this palette of urban spaces one is exposed to somewhat different impulses towards the sociological imagination. *Gentrifying* neighbourhoods are very particular in this respect, as they enable both observation and direct experience of key contradictions in our societies. Few people remain apathetic to

the effects of these spaces. Here, severe poverty is often close to performative affluence. For some, these places hold the promise of a peaceful and caring coexistence of social difference. For others, they simply once again confirm the existence of enduring social conflicts and strengthen their disappointments with the injustices of our societies. These spaces continue to fuel the imaginations of policy makers, journalists, business people and the general public, including ordinary citizens and occasional urban *flaneurs*. But this type of space is also one of the hottest topics among urban researchers. In the circles of urban studies, there is a well-established debate on *gentrification*. Previous attempts have been made to use Bourdieu's ideas in this debate. These were mostly inspired by his work *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1982; Ley, 2003; Butler, 2003; Bridge, 2001b). In this work, however, I argue that these attempts were neither sufficiently consistent, nor did they make use of the overall framework of Bourdieu's analytical concepts. And despite many good reasons to embrace Bourdieu's thought in order to overcome the epistemological doubts of the debate on gentrification, many of these possibilities remain suspiciously overlooked.

Moments of doubt in the research on gentrification

At the turn of previous decade, we could observe intense efforts to systematically analyse the academic discussion on the subject of gentrification. Compilations and textbook-style research overviews provided a certain sense of 'order' in what was otherwise a very chaotic interdisciplinary field of research, covering a wide range of social issues and empirical questions (Lees et al. 2008; Brown-Saracino, 2010). The debate pictured in this literature anxiously gravitates towards one or other of the classical divisions of social theory – those of structure and agency, or the arguments of the so-called 'production' and 'consumption' camps of researchers. While the 'production' camp saw gentrification as a phenomenon defined by the movement of capital to specific areas of cities, the 'consumption' camp emphasises the role in gentrification processes of the actors and their cultural, aesthetic and lifestyle choices (Smith, 1979; Ley, 1996). It should come as no surprise that the structural Marxist line of arguments of the 'production' camp have attracted criticism for being deterministic and dismissing the agency of individuals. On the other hand, the 'consumption' camp fell into the trap of over-emphasising the agency of certain fractions of social class. Over the years, a significant share of energy in this academic debate, largely dominated by human geographers, has been channelled into a discussion between these two irreconcilable lines of argument, neither of which can function fully without the other.

At almost the same time as the debate appeared to reach a state of calm maturity, one short but widely referenced essay by Tom Slater also diagnosed the eviction of critical perspectives from gentrification research (Slater, 2006). He observed that in the context of the rise in literature concerning middle-class experiences of gentrification processes, little qualitative inquiry was being made into the experiences of displaced working-class residents. He claimed that by drowning in theoretical and ideological quarrels, the debate had lost its

grip on social realities. He also stated that the debate is no longer capable of explaining how social forces drive gentrification, which he saw as the result of neoliberal urban policies bringing social struggles to cities. Slater made a grave diagnosis of the debate, which from the outset had been concerned with social inequality. This diagnosis was one of the key moments of doubt in the debate; however, it was not the last. A decade later, Slater admitted to the limitations of the theoretical grounds of the debate (Slater, 2017). But in spite of these, he called for the further development of the debate, rather than dropping it all together due merely to its overuse and exhaustion of intellectual inspiration. His suggestion was to approach the imperfections in the debate's structural axis, and to supplement it with the phenomenology of displacement, which was always an implicit, but never an explicit, concern of structural Marxist accounts of gentrification.

Another dividing opposition in the debate was between those who held differing opinions on the global application of its analytical instruments outside of the Anglo-Saxon contexts in which they were developed. One side claimed that the phenomenon had an indisputably global reach. They advocated for new global case studies, both for the sake of understanding the phenomenon, but also as a way to further develop analytical instruments (Lees et. al. 2015). The other side invited people to consider the idea that the portability of the middle-range theories developed in the debate might very well be limited, as different cities around the world have their own histories of development (Maloutas, 2012; Maloutas, 2018). This side suggested that trying to view every case through the same middle-range lenses of the debate, which were developed on the basis of the histories of Anglo-Saxon cities, might contribute more to the worldwide dissemination of this phenomenon, rather than to any meaningful social critique of it. The debate on gentrification has experienced yet another moment of doubt. If the critics are right, its methodological outlook on "a new urban colonialism" of gentrification (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005) could very well be nothing more than a product of colonial knowledge production itself (Willy, 2017). Thus, the problem with the debate is not a technical one, as previously suggested by Slater, concerning what empirical cases we should produce. Rather, it is an epistemological one, concerning what knowledge there is in these particular urban locations. It is also a question of how this particular debate appropriates this knowledge, or how it exposes or conceals the social forces and social laws that produce the phenomenon.

Buzzing around the honey trap of an established academic debate

At first glance, the gentrification debate suggests classical tokens of research relevance – a range of unsolved theoretical riddles, with the opportunity to contribute both to our understanding of the social world, but also to enrichment of public discourses, which among other rewards could hopefully lead to more humane social policies. But following such leads of social relevance also comes with the risk of being misguided by popular notions of the

social world. In the end, one can find oneself in an academic 'honey trap' in which one tries to speak about social reality using concepts that devoid us of the ability to understand it. Finding out and dismantling such honey traps is thus in itself an academically relevant endeavour. Given that this is my stance, a reader might find my choice of studying an empirical case of a *gentrifying* central location of Vilnius somewhat of a contradiction. On the one hand I argue that we should drop the framing of city spaces proposed by 'orthodox' theories of gentrification. On the other hand, my choice of an empirical case appears to follow the suggestions of this research field. It adds yet another case of gentrification from the outside of the Anglo-Saxon world. This is **a problem of empirical research** that is not uncommon among researchers with an interest in such empirical locations. It does not take long to see how organising such interests along the lines of the debate on gentrification ends up with the involuntary confirmation of undeniable global relevance of its postulates, rather than creation of new knowledge about social life in cities.

One of many reasons I am writing this work in English, rather than in my mother tongue, is to avoid the translation of this problematic academic discourse. As you can see, I am choosing to study a central location of Vilnius in the vicinity of railway station not in order to describe yet another global case of gentrification, but for other reasons, that I will later explain in more detail. With these hints at a problem with post-colonial knowledge production in the field of urban studies I should have achieved a dramatic pause. Rather than continuing to look at it so dramatically, I invite the reader to approach the problem in a more flexible way. Researching 'gentrifying' urban areas in social contexts in which the public, political and academic spheres do not yet actively use the concept of *gentrification*, offers some sense of freedom. Most importantly the minds and the voices of research participants are not yet contaminated by the structuring effects of the discourses relating to the term. This provides an opportunity to benefit from the inspirations that are generated by experiencing the intensity and character of these specific urban spaces. Feeling intuitively that such an approach towards these urban locations is both far more productive and more pleasurable than a continuation of painful discussions as to the relevance of debates over gentrification, I set the following three objectives for my work:

I: *To reveal the potential of Pierre Bourdieu's notions of field, habitus and symbolic violence in understanding social life in gentrifying locations.*

II: *To demonstrate how historical knowledge of a case can empower sociological analysis, the depth of which is not accessible to middle-range urban theories.*

III: *To share insights from an ethnographic study of social life in central Vilnius, reflecting on the social mechanics of social domination in urban space from a Bourdieusian perspective.*

From the perspective of gentrification debate it is the fact that this research concerns an empirical case study of Vilnius – a city in an Eastern European country that is not yet particularly visible in the debate on gentrification – that constitutes the biggest reason to hope for new and original research results. Instead, what I hope makes this contribution different from the bulk of other literature on gentrification is my approach to Bourdieu's ideas about symbolic power in the analysis of the urban form. Global trends in urban development and housing policy have not passed Lithuania by. The language of the gentrification debate, which was developed largely on the basis of the history of other metropolitan cities, can thus very well be used to describe what is happening in Vilnius. The principles of Pierre Bourdieu's reflexive sociology, however, provides an opportunity to create depictions of city life that are much more sensitive to the realities of the people living them. To achieve this sensitivity, I would suggest to refuse the terms we currently use to refer to certain spatial modalities within our cities. Gentrification is thus not the real object of this research. The main object of research is the symbolic violence observed around housing practices in central locations of Vilnius.

1.3. Structure and content: or, how to take the greatest pleasure and avoid pains while reading this work

To the extent that is possible within the genre of academic theses, I have aimed to write this work in a manner that will be both fruitful for the further development of the academic debate, but also relevant and attractive to wider audiences. Funding for academic work is becoming more and more scarce, and there may even never be another chance to present my thoughts in a format that is more accessible to lay audiences. I therefore find it necessary to present the fruits of my work in a format that is adaptable and accessible to as many readers as possible. Given the information overload of present-day life, I very well understand that even the most interested readers might be hesitant to commit to reading it in its entirety. To make the experience of such selective reading less slippery, I recommend paying special attention to the beginnings of chapters and subchapters, where I usually reveal the forthcoming content. Reading this chapter may also be of help. I will begin here with the main statements that I will defend throughout the course of this work. As well as being obligatory in the genre of the academic thesis, these are also useful for to reader. Later

on, I will provide a guide for readers from various audiences that briefly describes some of the ways in which this text may be approached. I hope it will help readers to take the greatest possible pleasure among those who commit to reading it – whether this decision is based on academic interests, or lay curiosity.

The main theses of this work

The placement of my main statements at the very beginning of this work might give the false impression that these were shining down upon my chosen objects of inquiry all the way through my path in researching them. Quite the opposite: in the manner usual to qualitative inquiries into the social world, and in particular in ethnographic research, these statements are more the product of going back and forth between observations of social reality and reflections on how it should be theorised and interpreted, which I undertook throughout the couple of years of this study. As a result, I came to feel the borderlines of my own discipline as a sociologist. I found myself walking the perimeters of various other disciplines – in particular, human geography and history, but also anthropology and social research into social policy and political economy. These are the disciplines that demarcate the borders of urban studies. What were in the interim phases of my research a dozen theses, I pared down to the following:

I: *To regain its critical relevance and explanatory power, the debate on gentrification should move towards an analysis of the field of housing;*

II: *Concentrating on 'rational' choices of dwelling fails to recognise the symbolic aspects of housing and urban locations;*

III: *Claims to social distinction are naturalised through the use of the historically grounded, symbolic meanings of urban space;*

IV: *To understand the social nature of the pleasures and pains of urban life, we should approach people with different housing histories;*

V: *A person's position in the social space defines their chances of maintaining a home in a particular neighbourhood;*

VI: *The symbolic violence of the city reveals itself through on- going struggles of classificating city spaces and people living in them, in which the former become both an object of and a reward for these struggles.*

By following these theses, I invite to the reader on a journey that traces my way towards to a new understanding of Vilnius. Such a linear logic of presentation has little to do with the actual path taken in thinking about the city, which often curves back and forth between theory and social reality. My observations of social reality, which were often taken to the depth of sensing it with my own body, were my initial guidance in this work. And the beginnings of this journey are marked in my own personal history, a decade of I myself spent in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station. Later on, it progressed to becoming acquainted with the main postulates of the Anglo- Saxon debate on gentrification. With my critique of this debate, I do not wish to deny the contribution that this tradition has made to our understanding of cities. Quite the opposite – it is the examples of brave theorising, or simply the remarkable workmanship of the empirical research – that makes them a worthy stepping stone to further discussions about cities. In the pages that follow, I will lead the reader through my own path towards discussing these ideas. And even if there were some slips along the way, I find this attempt worth the risk. It not only shows what contemporary social theories have to offer for the production of critically reflexive knowledge on urban life, but is also meaningful in the way it invites us to think about the social forces that affecting our everyday lives in cities.

Advice for readers and thanks to supporters

This structure of this work follows the rather strict linear logic required by the genre of the academic thesis, whereby the first chapter presents the theoretical discussion; this is followed in the second chapter with a presentation of my approach towards the research case; and in the third chapter, I share my insights from the fieldwork. Over the next few paragraphs, I will briefly present the content of these chapters, which should help you to choose your own reading strategy. It is also here that I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has helped me in the endeavour of creating this work. These people have been my silent and most treasured donors of knowledge and moral support. So too were the academic community at the Institute of the *Sociology and Social Work at Vilnius University, Faculty of Philosophy*. At a time when academic freedom is subject to greater and greater pressure from the heavy weight of market forces and bureaucracy, this community has managed to maintain the spirit of free academic thought, which I value and from which I have greatly benefitted.

From the outset, the reader may feel that the text which begins with the next chapter is only ambiguously related to the linear logic of the theses presented in this introduction. This is because the structure of the text is not simply linear, but also circular. It rolls around three of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts – *field, habitus* and *symbolic violence* – which are further explained in the theoretical discussion of **Chapter II**. The goal of this chapter is not, however, to go into an in-depth explanation of these concepts or to look for the origins of these concepts in the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Instead, I discuss how these or similar concepts have been used – or, quite often, misused – in one of the debates of urban studies; namely, the debate on gentrification. Through this example, I intend to demonstrate the potential benefits of embracing the analytical power of these concepts in urban studies. In addition, I aim to

show how such concepts can improve our understanding of the social realities in cities. The particular debates and arguments to which I refer are also reflected in the list of literature provided in **Annex I**. As usual, this should serve as the best shortcut to understanding which specific theoretical ideas (and applications thereof) I engage with. In particular, I would like to extend my thanks to professor *Arūnas Poviliūnas*, who has given me valuable advice on how to approach the immensely rich heritage of Pierre Bourdieu's work. His provocative reading of my early drafts is also what has made this process more adventurous and enjoyable. For that, I am very grateful. In a sense, **Chapter II** is a continuation of the debate that I have already opened up in this **introduction**. Chapter II is also the part that contains the heaviest academic language and arguments, and in which I have not always succeeded in sparing readers the pains of grasping the meanings of academic texts. Thus, this chapter is primarily addressed towards academic audiences. First and foremost, it is addressed to those colleagues who are working in the cornfields of urban studies and are specifically interested in the application of Pierre Bourdieu's thinking to our understanding of cities. This chapter may, however, also be instructive to others who do not fit this imagined ideal of the 'perfect' reader. I hope that there are more such readers who will still benefit from my explications of ideas and concepts, as well as my own arguments that are provided in the chapter, as these are also employed across the remaining parts of this work.

For occasional lay readers, I would suggest beginning this work with **Chapter III** or **Chapter IV,** and to follow through to the end of **Conclusions**. In **Chapter IV,** you will find my interpretations of the social realities of the central areas of Vilnius. Although this text is written in English, those readers who can read Lithuanian will also be able to access interviews in the original language by clicking on an interview quote. This is a compromise in a thesis that is based on fieldwork in which the native language is different from the one in which work itself is written. The quotes, with all the sharpness and authenticity of the original language, can all be found in **Annex III**. By clicking these, you will return to the part of the text in which they are used. **Chapter IV** presents my interpretations of the stories of people living in the vicinity of the Vilnius train station – the neighbourhood that served as the case for my fieldwork. These are intended to provoke thoughts as to how the everyday conflicts of neighbours, as well as symbolic changes in the neighbourhood, are a reflection of wider classificatory struggles over the maintenance of the symbolic façade of central Vilnius. I would like to thank my students *Augustė Uzielaitė* and *Greta Kuzmauskaitė* for sharing my interest in the social life of the central neighbourhoods of Vilnius, and for their contribution to this fieldwork. Furthermore, I am especially grateful to *all of the participants in this study*. This work would not have been possible without their willingness to share their life stories. I extend their hope that these stories will help to dismantle stereotypical views of life in this area, and will inspire discussions regarding changes to current housing and urban development policies, which are long overdue.

The objectives of this work could not have been achieved without the efforts of many people working in the field of urban studies. These people, whom I mostly know through their texts, and with whom I have discussed, argued or disagreed, are like a community of my imaginary friends. And I would like to thank each and every colleague for the hard work they have put in so we might know more about the social forces that mould our urban lives. This work is also written in the belief that one cannot understand city without knowing its historical context, which is one of the primary lines of content in **Chapter III**. Thus, for foreign audiences **Chapter III** may provide necessary background material. This chapter serves as sort of introduction to the history and social realities of Vilnius, which should help the reader to better understand my analysis of the fieldwork. This chapter is also of a relevance to Lithuanian academic audiences, as it provides certain diagnoses of the present state of urban studies of Vilnius, which are also presented in a separate publication written in Lithuanian (Šarūnas, 2019). This publication or Chapter III may also be of relevance to occasional lay readers with a more serious interest in Lithuanian urban studies. Among the references for that chapter, such audiences might find some further reading material that might feed this specific interest. Among the authors of such materials are *Dalia Čiupailaitė-Wiszniewska* and *Apolonijus Žilys*. I am particularly thankful to these colleagues, whose remarks and suggestions were particularly helpful in improving the communication of my research results and methodology. A brief summary of the methods used in this study can be found at the end of **Chapter III,** and a related explication of the methodology is provided in **Annex II**.

Lastly, I would like to thank several people who have helped me the most during the preparation of this work. First, I would like to extend my thanks to my academic supervisor, Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, *Rūta Žiliukaitė*. An insightful sociologist and a gifted pedagogue, she has been an exceptional support throughout this journey. One of her most astonishing qualities is her patience – something she needed a lot of when working with someone who is often of undecided mind. For this patience, and for the relationship of mutual understanding and respect that has accompanied me throughout these years, I am especially thankful. Others who have been remarkably patient include my family. It is they, who had to face the psychological wreckage of overwork, which often comes with untold ambitions of academic work. Therefore, I would like to extend my greatest thanks to my partner and the dearest soulmate, *Živilė Etevičiūtė*. During the most difficult episodes of this work, not only she has been the first to help, but also to remind me that as well as being difficult work, sociological observation of the social world is also a certain privilege. I would also like to thank our son, *Kasparas*. His timely questions, *"What is it about?"* or *"When it will be finished?"* helped me not to forget the practical side of it all. I hope that you will appreciate this work as my modest contribution to knowledge about Vilnius and cities at large.

Picture 2.
A street wall in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 1996

2.

IN SEARCH OF A BOURDIEUSIAN APPROACH TO GENTRIFICATION

More than fifty years after Ruth Glass first introduced the term gentrification in 1964 (Glass, 1964), a wide range of researchers have contributed to the debate on this subject. These include, in particular, human geographers, but also sociologists, anthropologists and academics from other fields. Since then, gentrification has become a very popular and widely used term of which there are many variations in meaning, selective emphases on particular elements, or even total re-interpretations. In practical and political discussions, the term is often stretched to such an extent that in academic discussions, its use poses the risk of any analysis becoming diluted and incapable of explaining the term, let alone understanding social reality.

'Gentrifying' urban spaces have a certain power to fuel the sociological imagination. Such spaces can thus serve a purpose other than simply keeping an eternal fire of academic debate smouldering around them. Among other things, this debate touches upon issues of knowledge production – in this case, interactions between popular notions of city spaces, and the discourses of urban policy and urban studies. Discussions on these interactions will hardly cease to be socially relevant. In this chapter, I will dismantle the concept of gentrification and question its academic relevance using several of the key notions in the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu.

The concept of gentrification and the reasons for its continuing social relevance

Glass suggested the term gentrification rather light-heartedly as a result of her reflective observations regarding what was going on in at that time certain London neighbourhoods. Although she was only observing a phenomenon, without aiming to theorise upon it, her observations ignited a discussion that soon became one of the most active debates in urban studies. Over time, many attempts have been made to define the phenomenon and frame it academically. The term has since become a popular and political term, defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as:

> *"the process of repairing and rebuilding homes and businesses in a deteriorating area (such as an urban neighbourhood) accompanied by an influx of middle-class or affluent people and that often results in the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents."*[1]

This definition contains all of the most consistently occurring elements used to describe the phenomenon during the decades of the debate on the subject. First, it has a material basis – deprivation of housing and built structures. Another important aspect is its territoriality – the cumulative effects of the phenomenon are observed in specific urban spaces or neighbourhoods. Finally, there is a specific emphasis on social class. The word itself suggests that it is the 'gentry' – a specific fraction of the middle class – that is most active in the process that leads to the displacement of the lower classes. Gentrification is also seen as a process of change. The term thus encompasses numerous elements relevant to sociological analysis. But gentrification has also long since become a popularly discussed phenomenon, attracting frequent references in discussions on urban politics. In the summary a collection of her most influential writings on gentrification, Japonica Brown-Saracino provided a beautifully simple description of how the subject's power to stimulate discussion manifests

[2] Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "gentrification", accessed May 19, 2021, https://www.merriam-web- ster.com/dictionary/gentrification.

itself in circles that are not limited to the minds of researchers professionally involved in this debate:

> *"As anyone who studies gentrification knows, many welcome the opportunity to talk about gentrification." And as a reason for that she argues, that "<...> gentrification encompasses two conflicts of concern to many: social class conflict, as well as a common internal debate about how to react or respond to change. <...> In short, gentrification is a symptom and a symbol of something much broader than itself, and sometimes we use gentrification to debate the vast transformations that shape our lives." (Brown-Saracino, 2010, p. 357)*

This is an elegant reflection on why the subject leaves few people indifferent – at least at the table of political small talk. If it is seen as symbol of processes of change taking place in our societies, almost any case of gentrification is also likely to be seen having sufficient social relevance to warrant its analysis. The real power of the subject is that it stimulates interest among wide audiences, and thus provides us with opportunities to speak, at a lower level of abstraction, about complex social processes that influence people's lives. These qualities of the empirical subject are very much relevant in making the case for a public sociology. But it also has its dangers.

Questioning the orthodoxy of the debate on gentrification

Given how the discourse on gentrification has flourished over the last half-century of urban studies, I do not aim to present here an extensive overview of the ideas in this debate, which has already been achieved in the literature mentioned above. At this time, it is clear that the core statements of the debate are based on highly questionable methodological grounds, which should be reflected upon and interrogated.

As Kirsten Paton suggests, the real way forward with this debate is to drop its "orthodox" theories, rather than trying to further amend their suggested preconceptions of the social world to better fit social reality (Paton, 2014). I largely agree with this diagnosis, and follow her invitation to look for completely new theoretical approaches that can enhance our understanding of what the curious happenings in these very specific urban spaces can actually tell us about our social world. In this chapter – which is a compulsory opening in the academic genre of thesis – I will look at some attempts to theorise gentrification through the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, posing to myself the following questions:

> — What *field* is at stake in the debate on gentrification, and how does it conceptualise the values of its *capital*?

—   What stand does the debate take on the *rational actor,* and how does it
     approach the notion of *social class*?

—   How can the notion of *symbolic violence* further our understanding of
     symbolic domination in cities?

These questions should help to rethink orthodox conceptualisations of the phenomenon of gentrification proposed in urban studies. Unlike Paton, I do not think that the flaws in previous conceptualisations make them intrinsically irrelevant to further discussion. Quite the opposite, in fact: I believe they can serve as an important reflection on the mechanisms of our thinking about cities, which we should have an ambition to reveal and enhance. As such, previous statements in the gentrification debate may still be used – carefully, but productively – as a stepping stone for methodological discussion. Instead of providing yet another scrupulous overview of the debate on gentrification, however, I will be very selective and concentrate on several key figures that have paved the way for the main thesis of the debate. In my analysis, I will also address some sporadic attempts to use the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu in this academic context. In doing so, I will introduce the reader to the general methodological approach used in this work.
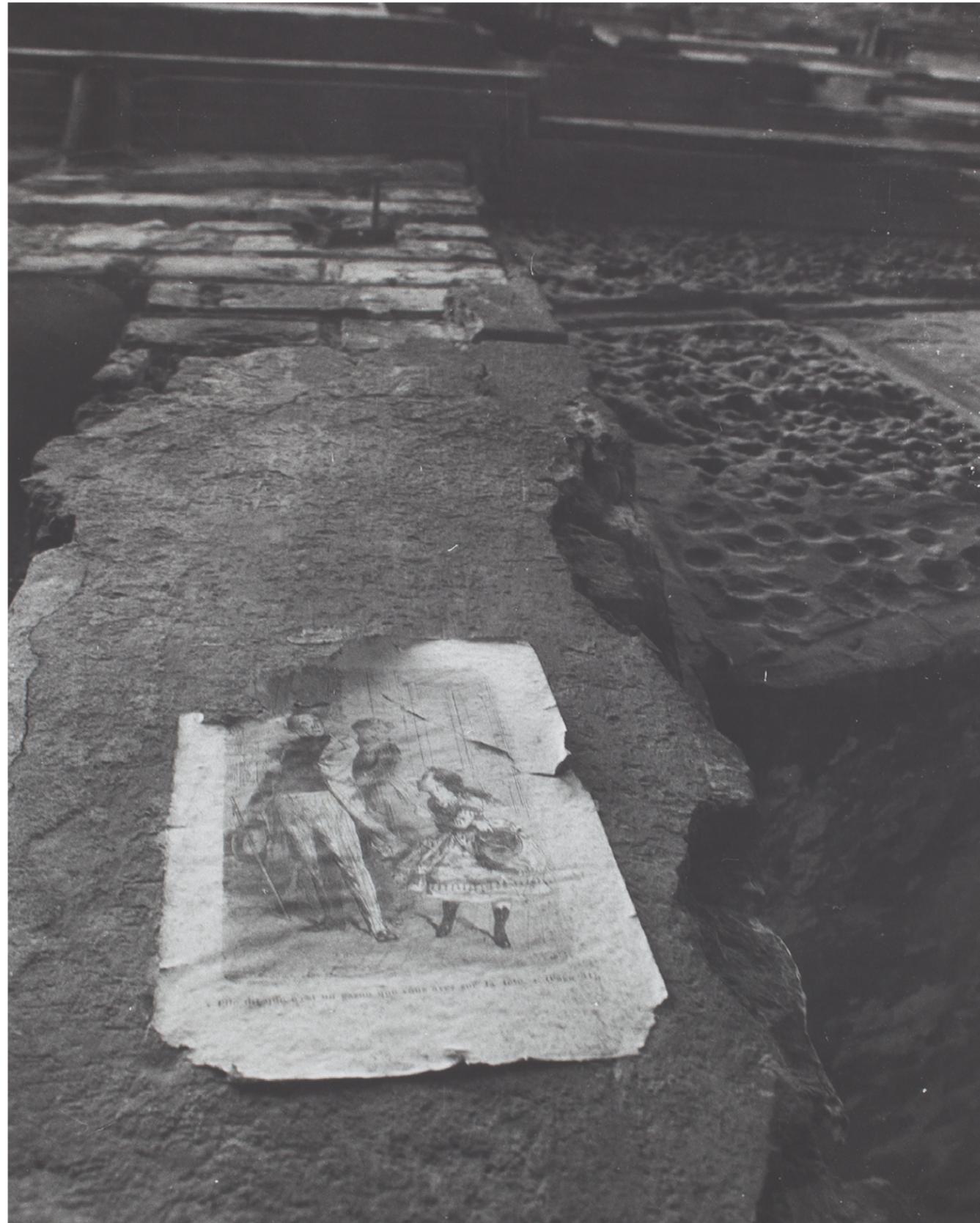
2.1. Sticking to the core field in the analysis of gentrification

To embrace a Bourdieusian approach to gentrification, or to social life at large, we should begin by thinking of society as consisting of a range of autonomous fields of social life. This immediately raises the question of what field or fields are at stake when we talk about the processes of gentrification? Bourdieu avoided giving formal, textbook-like style descriptions of his concepts, often hesitating to separate them from the specific historical cases he had researched. Bearing this in mind, I will cautiously begin with the following summary he offers of this notion:

> *"...the field appears to be a relatively autonomous space of possible forces that affect everyone who enters it - the structure of the field being no more than the structure of distribution of the specific kind of power at work in the field in question, with a position in the field being defined by the position held in this structure. As a field of possible forces, the field is also a field of possible actions and, in particular, a field of struggles aiming to preserve or transform the field of forces."* (Bourdieu, 2020, p.347)

In line with his pivotal interest in domination, Bourdieu was largely interested in struggles and competition in the field. He saw a correspondence between structures of social space at large and the principles of "vision and division" that agents apply in various fields of the social world (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Thus, studying a field is a way to study overall struggles in the social space. In light of this, I will explore what field we should consider in the analysis of the gentrification processes.

2.1.1. The need for a more nuanced look at housing capital

When explaining his conceptual apparatus, Bourdieu himself often preferred to explain fields through the metaphor of a game. He cautiously invited the reader to imagine a field as the arena for a certain game, in which agents meet, act and interact to gain specific rewards (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Their common belief in the value of the game and the value of its specific capital is not only a reason for competition; it is also the source of a certain solidarity among the players (Savage and

Silva, 2013). Thus, the question of what is a field in the debate on gentrification can also be turned into a question as to what stakes are at hand in this game?

The most straightforward answer to this question from the debate on gentrification is "rent gaps" (Smith, 1979). The thesis concerning "rent gaps", by American human geographer Neil Smith, constitutes a structural pillar of the debate. Smith's thesis was the first to invite a more serious theorisation of gentrification. Unlike previous analyses, which were sporadic and somewhat descriptive, Smith's thesis dug deeper towards the causes of the phenomenon. I will make use of this research legacy to further develop my own argument as to the benefits of looking at the gentrification debate through the field analysis of Pierre Bourdieu.

The limitations of Neil Smith's "rent gap" thesis

Neil Smith's article 'Toward a Theory of Gentrification: A Back to the City Movement by Capital, not People', which describes his thesis of "rent gaps", was written at a moment when the US was experiencing growth in the development of housing in inner cities, compared with suburbs (Smith, 1979). Neoclassical economists saw this process as a cumulative effect, the total sum of the individual decisions of households to change their preferences with regard to buying housing in the inner cities. According to economists, such choices depend solely on a household's ability to pay for the proffered space. Households thus locate themselves in different areas of the city according to their "willingness to pay", which neoclassical economists regard as the main factor filtering different social groups into different areas of a city (Lees et. al. 2008; Smith, 1979). Counter to these economic explanations are arguments that it was a change in culture – the shifting values of a new generation – that caused the "back to the city" movement. These values influenced lifestyle choices that were simply more compatible with life in the inner cities rather than the suburbs. Furthermore, this cultural change was celebrated as one that was expected to bring diversity and increased civility to the cities (Sennett, 1970). In this context, Neil Smith was attempting to open up discussion surrounding the structural aspects of these developments. He famously claimed that it was a movement of capital, motivated by the possibility of receiving higher returns from investments in built structures, rather than a movement of people, that defined this process.

Smith's article proposed a single and a rather simple suggestion as to how to think of capital, which lies at the centre of the struggles relating to gentrification. He took a materialist stand, arguing that housing capital was at the centre of gentrification – but also noted that what makes housing different from capital investments in the land on which it stands, is that housing deteriorates over time. A sufficient amount of labour and materials needs to be invested in housing to maintain its value. However, in the middle of the cycle of deterioration, housing property can still secure a sufficient level of rent without the need for renovations. Under such circumstances, renovation or improvements to property are not a sensible investment, because any additional increase in the rent will not cover the investment expenses. For Smith, this difference between the rent that one *can* receive in the market, and the rent one *could* achieve after necessary capital investments, was the most meaningful one to understand the processes of gentrification. And this *rent gap* is highest in the case of the most run-down housing. According to Smith, this is exactly why neighbourhoods containing such housing in inner cities in the US attracted the most attention from property developers in the 1960s. This is a rough wrap-up of the core of Smith's thesis, which he develops by following the discussions of classical political economists around the concepts of *house value*, *sale price*, *(capitalised) ground rent* and *potential ground rent.* [2]

Before going any further, it is worth questioning whether or not "rent gaps" really exist as a social fact. Human geographer Eric Clark performed probably the most scrupulous – and, given the popularity of the concept –a surprisingly rare empirical analysis of "rent gaps". His historical analysis of land use data provided sufficient evidence that the "rent gaps" actually do exist (Clark, 1988). But Clark's contribution did not end there – and this is why it was exceptional. He followed it up with an analysis of previous attempts to develop concepts corresponding to "rent gaps". This analysis was far more extensively elaborated, then that of Neil Smith, stretching as far as the writings of Thünen and Engels. It showed that "rent gaps" could actually be interpreted both from the positions of structural Marxism, and of neoclassical economy. Both lines of argument would see "rent gaps" as playing an equally important role in urban development. Each would follow a different path of interpretation, however, and arrive at very different conclusions.

To better understand the context of Smith's ideas, it is also worth mentioning that he was following an intellectual path paved by his supervisor David Harvey. Both men pictured urban changes as a result of uneven global flows of capital (Harvey, 1973; Smith, 1982). In general, Harvey advocated a Marxist rethinking of human geography, and imported ideas from French sociologist Henri Lefebvre into the American intellectual tradition. In the process of translation, however, Harvey – and consequently also Smith – both lost the Continental, phenomenological touch of Lefebvre's' sociology (Lefebvre, 1991). Herein also lies the biggest weakness of the *"rent gap"* thesis. Although its proponent took a strongly humane political stand with regard to the housing rights of the poor, he paid surprisingly little attention to the actual experiences of people in his theorisation.

Many assumptions underpin the apparent simplicity of the *"rent gap"*. Critics of Smith's argument were quick to pick up on these assumptions, developing a range of adjustments or constructing their own counter-arguments. I will not engage in an in-depth analysis of this discussion, as it has already been summed up in a number of reviews of gentrification debate (e.g. Lees et. al. 2008). I would nevertheless like to mention some of the approximations involved in the *"rent gap"* thesis, which I regard as important in the context of the goals of this study. In his analysis, Smith follows the path of classical political economists and approaches the price of housing through the labour theory of value. According to Smith, actors investing in housing under capitalist conditions are driven by their desire to receive the highest possible

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[2] A comprehensive summary of the debate on rent gaps is provided in Lees L., Slater T., Wyly E.K. (2008). Gentrification. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, pages 55- 73. Context and impact of Neil Smith's work is also discussed in Slater, 2017.

return from their investments. The price of such a commodity is, however, largely determined by the socially necessary labour power needed to produce housing or to perform necessary renovations to depreciated housing. Although Smith mentions at least a couple of times that to explain gentrification, one needs to understand the mechanism by which housing prices are socially constructed, he himself chooses to see gentrification as mostly determined by "natural" forces of depreciation. For him, maintaining the price of housing requires material investment equivalent to that of the depreciation.

As with the arguments of neoclassical economists, Smith's argument also largely stops short of a social analysis of the housing market. The market is seen as a sphere in which prices are influenced by the natural laws of depreciation, and calculated by rationally acting individuals. But the social institutions that facilitate exchanges of goods – and markets for housing and real estate in particular – do not function like some sort of automaton that exists outside of social relationships. To understand urban phenomena such as gentrification, one needs to take into account the social conditions under which institutions such as housing market operate. The major differences between his thinking and the thoughts of neoclassical economists are that Smith introduces the question of *depreciation*. He also considers both unequal *access to* and unequal *return from* capital. He claims that this interception of natural forces and the logic of capital governed the movement of people into cities and drove gentrification. However, neither the neoclassical economists nor Smith, who opposed them, involved themselves in the reconstruction of the social bases of these market forces.

A more nuanced look at housing capital

The catchy simplicity of the *"rent gap"* was probably what made Smith's contribution one of the core axes around which a very polarised debate on gentrification revolves. The materialist approximation within his thesis helped him to build his argument against those of neoclassical economists – namely, Smith argues, that it is the motivations of capital investors, and not the preferences of consumers, that is the motive force behind gentrification. While at the same time making his thesis open to criticism, these approximations are also what have sustained the vigorous debate regarding his thesis over the years. To overcome such polarising effects of a purely structural argument, we should address the material, symbolic and social values of housing – all the stakes that exist in the field of housing. This is where Bourdieu's conceptualisation of different types of capital comes in handy, as he does not limit himself to considering economic capital, but also the power that derives from *cultural* and also *social* capital. Acknowledging these types of capital enables a more nuanced look at the social world, which before Bourdieu appeared inaccessible to sociological observation. More specifically, Bourdieu also described three types of rewards for taking up a specific location in physical space (Bourdieu, 2018b). These rewards are:

— *of occupation*: gaining control over the occupied space against unwanted intrusions;

— *of situation*: this reward becomes higher, the closer one's location gets to desirable goods or persons. Conversely, the closer one's location gets to undesirables, the lower the reward;

— *of position or rank*: namely, symbolic gains from having exclusive access to a distinguished location.

Since location is at the core of housing practices, such conceptualisation of the spatial rewards is also relevant to the analysis of housing. For example, the profits of occupation refer directly to the economic properties of the built structures that constitute housing, but also of the plot of land on which it is constructed. Such control is enabled not only by the material properties of built structures, but also by institutionalised rights of ownership. The rewards of this situation hint at Bourdieu's *relational* thinking – the value of the situation comes not from the object itself, but from its distance from or proximity to other valued objects. In the field of housing, this may be most straightforwardly interpreted as being a certain quality of the land plot: its location on the map, where various infrastructural nodes, cultural signifiers or signs of urban decay are important determinants of the situational value of housing. But we should keep our imaginations open, as distance concerns not only objects, but also agents. Bourdieu emphasised the effect of the totality of the capital possessed by individuals, which also influences the situational value of the locations taken up by particular subjects. There is also a dimension of *social* capital to this, because in the long run, locations also provide opportunities to generate capital through active and prolonged exchanges with other occupants sharing the same location (Bourdieu, 2018b).

In his own analysis of housing, Bourdieu emphasised the *symbolic* rewards of housing. In line with his interest in the role of taste in reproduction of domination, Bourdieu directed attention to the exclusive nature of certain locations. But housing units themselves can also be exclusive in terms of the materiality of their interiors and exteriors. Buildings with cultural heritage, or exceptionally showy architecture could be a relevant example here. The material differences of housing enable one to position oneself within the symbolic space of cultural meanings. To the extent that this materiality is exclusive, it can also denote ranks of higher or lower significance. Bourdieu concludes that housing cannot be fully understood if it is only regarded as the subject of purely economic exchange, because:

> *"...this form of property expresses or betrays, in a more decisive way than many other goods, the social being of its owners, the extent of their 'means', as we say; but it also reveals their taste, the classification system they deploy in their acts of appropriation and which, in assuming objective form in visible goods, provides a purchase for the symbolic appropriations of others, who are thereby enabled to situate the owners in social space by situating them within the space of tastes."*
> *(Bourdieu, 2005; p. 19)*

Thus, housing is a good with a very expressed symbolic element, exclusivity of which manifests the position or rank of its bearers. Of course we can further discuss whether such exclusivity is provided by housing itself, or might also be an attribute of the land plot, which can thus also bring symbolic rewards in other practices of land use. This distinction is unimportant for the purposes of this discussion, however, because this conceptualisation of spatial rewards should already help us to understand how the preoccupation of the "rent gap" thesis with gains made through the manipulation of the economic value of housing, limits our sociological imagination. This does not make the "rent gap" thesis irrelevant or wrong – quite the opposite, in fact; it invites an important contemplation of the structural aspects of housing value. But Bourdieu invites a yet more nuanced look at the economic and symbolic benefits of housing, which cannot be fully understood if we look at them as being separable by concentrating on "rent gaps" alone. Bourdieu himself never pursued the project of a further reconstruction of spatial capital, and this is exactly the spot in which he left us in the social analysis of city space (Bourdieu, 2005). He suggested that the system of these three spatial rewards is just an initial sketch, and invited us to continue its development through further research.

2.1.2. Housing as a core field of gentrification debate

To understand exactly where we could go from the point at which Bourdieu left us in his sociological analysis of urban space, we need to look back at the origins of these ideas in his earlier works. If we follow Bourdieu's later thinking, when he had already proposed a rigid methodological procedure for performing field analysis, we should start such an analysis by mapping an *"objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions"* in the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.105). In the case of analysing an urban space, however, choosing a relevant field and matter.

As mentioned previously, Bourdieu very much avoided separating the conceptualisation of a field from the analysis of an actual case at hand. And there is a delicate duality to be aware of, which is often marked by subtle red lines. We should observe fields as being governed by common principles, which give us the promise of general theory. But at the same time, fields in different societies also have their own histories and variations in their logic (Bourdieu, 1993). To maintain sensitivity to these red lines, we should reconstruct both the structure and history of the field – a principle that is hard to uphold within the confines of this theoretical introduction, when I have not yet presented the analysis of my own empirical case. To make my amends, I will continue this contemplation by using several exemplary cases of research on gentrification.

The field in the making of gentrification

Looking for inspiration from Bourdieu on how to fix the limitations of structural arguments in the debate surrounding gentrification brings us back again to the question of the field in the making of gentrification. Current academic (and also popular) discourses on gentrification suggest that we should treat gentrification as a multifaceted process that manifests itself in very different domains of social life. Yet this has not always been the case. At the outset of theoretically oriented debate on gentrification, such discussions were clearly concerned with the social domain of housing. If we continue from this starting point, we do not need to start from the scratch by mapping the institutional actors in the making of gentrification. For example, we could follow the thesis of the urban growth machine. This thesis has already become a classical piece of urban sociology, and proposes a consistent narrative as to how actors such as local politicians, developers and even journalists participate in the game of real estate development (Molotch and Logan, 1987). Looking at the practices of "middle wo/men" in the field of housing– developers, builders, real estate agents, architects, interior designers and bank clerks selling mortgages could indeed be a viable research strategy also confirming the benefits of choosing housing as the core field of analysis in cases of gentrification.

Sharon Zukin is one of the few researchers who have provided a diligent analysis of the strategies taken by a chain of various actors in the process of real estate re-development. Her widely acclaimed research into the wave of transformation in 1970s New York that turned lofts into living apartments, introduced the question of aesthetics into the debate of urban studies (Zukin, 1989). Zukin's analysis followed in the footsteps of David Harvey's understanding of how urban spaces were developed in capitalist societies as a certain form of accumulation of capital. She also coined the concept of the "artistic mode of production", which aimed to summarise the logic of such urban renewal, starting with a description of its changing economic base. Following the economic restructuring of the 1970s, New York was no longer a favourable location for small-scale production and artisanship. At that time, the economy of New York was already turning its focus towards financial services, and small industry such as this was not able to withstand price pressures, yet alone to invest in production capacity or competitive wages. Production lofts – a large proportion of which were built at the turn of the 20th century or earlier – were in a poor condition and their "rent gaps" made them ripe for profitable redevelopment. These historic buildings were at risk of demolition, but at the same time the historical preservation movement raised political and economic costs of such a move. Zukin showed how artists, a profession that was being established at exactly that time, with its legal and economic base being developed by public and private investments, helped developers to overcome the risks and to make use of this urban land for more nuanced real estate developments.

There are clear neo-Weberian traits in Zukin's work as she meticulously mapped the actors who benefitted in this making of the "artistic mode of production", in a manner similar to that of her colleagues Molotch and Logan. But rather than mapping actors on the basis of

purely assumed interests in the game, Zukin's analysis was based on a comprehensive historical analysis of what had actually been happening in New York over several decades. This is another distinctively neo-Weberian feature of her work, which is also very much in line with Bourdieusian analysis of the *field*. But contrary to what we might wrongly assume, at that time Zukin had not yet been influenced by the thinking of Bourdieu, whose *Distinction* gained prominence at almost the same time, making it almost compulsory to mention Bourdieu's name in any sociological analysis relating to aesthetics. And although David Harvey does just that – mentioning Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital – in the preface to Zukin's book, Zukin herself had not yet read Bourdieu. Indeed, Zukin even claims that if she had read Bourdieu at this stage, it might have led her to arrive at much more puzzling and less elegant conclusions. Zukin's work can be seen as the historical reconstruction of two fields – the field of real estate development and the field of artistic production, both of which at that time had a specific relationship to the field of power. The primary difference between Zukin's work and a Bourdieusian reconstruction of the field, however, is that instead of picturing structures of relations *within* these fields, Zukin concentrates on relations *between* these fields. She was following the economic logic of supply and demand, and therefore concentrated on the collisions between these fields rather than the internal structure of their spaces and their logic of operation.

I will return again to the work of Sharon Zukin, but given its status and influence in the debate, I felt it necessary to emphasise here this cross over in time of Bourdieu's and Zukin's ideas. It is important to note here that with the rise of cultural explanations of gentrification, housing was already not the only domain of interest for researchers of the phenomenon. Researchers began to emphasise the particular agency of the agents involved in gentrifying urban spaces, and the ways in which these spaces empower them to make choices about how to lead their urban lives (Lees et al., 2008). This line of argument has also diluted the connection of gentrification with housing, which from the outset was the core social domain or *field* of the debate. Sharon Zukin's *Loft living* was probably the closest that the debate came to an analysis of the *field*. This being said, many attempts were made to incorporate Bourdieu's notion of the field into the debate, some of which are problematic. A good example of where one ends up if there is no clarity as to the field chosen for specific analysis, is one study of gentrification processes in London (Butler, 2003). The author of this study chose to structure his analysis in relation to *housing, employment, consumption* and *education*. These provide a good summary of the ever-growing mix of social domains that are of interest to the gentrification debate. But taking these four domains of social life as the basis for field analysis makes it almost impossible to cover the historical development, structure and the logic of every *field*, not to mention drawing links from these *fields* to the *field of power*. Needless to say, the author of the study did not even attempt to do so. Rather than performing such an analysis, the author simply mapped the neighbourhoods of the fieldwork with some details regarding their historical development. In this case, *field* was simply substituted with a particular urban space.

This and other works by human geographers have already been criticised, albeit indirectly, as examples of making rhetorical use of Bourdieu's concepts, without showing any deeper regard for their analytical capacity (Wacquant, 2018). In this work, I want to emphasise that such works also create the false impression that in the debate on gentrification, the leads left by Bourdieu's work for the analysis of cities have already been pursued. This is not the case. Unlike the human geographers who have taken this path, I suggest that gentrification is not a field in itself, but rather a term of substitution. I argue that by using this term, we point our attention at certain *structural homologies of social space* – repetitive projections of certain fractions of its structure, which under certain circumstances and through certain social *fields*, tend to appear in particular locations in the urban fabric of cities. To reconstruct the social laws defining how such projections are produced, we would need a historical and relational analysis of the *field*. We also need an understanding of how a specific *field* places a value on the *physical* and *symbolic* structures of a city. Otherwise, we will keep on producing descriptive depictions of the spatial results of struggles within the social space. In the best-case scenario, such depictions will be of limited explanatory power; at worst, they will do nothing but contribute to a reproduction of the relations of power. Thus, from now on, I invite the reader to approach "gentrification" as such a term of substitution.

The changing relations between the field of power and the field of housing

As a somewhat controversial example of research in terms of its methodological consistency, Butler's study is still relevant here, because it exemplifies the most general mistake made in gentrification research – equating "gentrifying" areas, or a certain modality of urban fabric, with the *field*. I do not think we can sustain the rigour that Bourdieu required in his analysis of *field* – that is, describing the historical development of the *field* and reconstructing its logic – if we look at gentrification as a composite outcome of the different fields currently on the radar of gentrification research. Bourdieu himself did not believe in the existence of any "*trans historic laws of the relation between fields*", and saw such relational analysis of fields as being overly complicated (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.109). Thus, such unnecessary complication of the analysis also appears barely justifiable in this debate – at least, if we assume that the goal of any research attempt is to better understand social reality and not simply to provide an explicit description of the case as seen by a "practical mind". We cannot further pursue this multifaceted approach to spaces undergoing gentrification and expect to arrive at the possibility of a common programme of research. At least, this is one way of reading the recurring crises in which participants in the debate on gentrification find themselves. Ill-equipped, without any of the theoretical or conceptual arsenal necessary to manage the complexity brought by their own choice of looking at social reality, they end up looking at it solely through a specific physical space.

My position is that if the debate on gentrification is to regain its critical relevance, those involved should return to its beginnings, placing differential access to housing back at its very centre. For those with an interest in using Bourdieu's concepts for the analysis of the

social production of 'gentrifying' spaces, there is a strong argument for keeping housing as the core field for the debate. One of the most consistent reconstructions of a field – and of its relationship with the field of power – that Bourdieu himself achieved, was that of the field of housing in *The Social Structures of the Economy* (Bourdieu, 2005). As can be seen from its title, the main objective of the book was to identify the social preconditions for the functioning of the market. Here, Bourdieu challenged the relevance of *homo economicus* constructed by classical economic theories. In doing so, he chose the same opponent as Neil Smith did in his take on the "rent gaps". The subject of Bourdieu's empirical interest was the demand for a specific type of housing among the Parisian *petit bourgeoisie*. Unlike Sharon Zukin, with her interest in artsy lofts, Bourdieu chose to analyse demand for a more common type of housing – a detached house. One might say that this is a sort of ideal type of single-family housing unit, which was also at the centre of a real estate rush in suburban Paris in the 1980s. These thematic interlinks with key names in the debate on gentrification make this an important stepping stone in thinking about the differences in Bourdieu's take on *'gentrifying'* urban spaces.

The first point over which Bourdieu's book attacks the work of economists is the ahistorical universality of their claims. Bourdieu emphasises that every economic practice is rooted in its social circumstances. By removing cases from the historical contexts in which they operate, economists' theories ratify the "apparent self-evidence" of the social conditions in which agents operate. In contrast, Bourdieu provides a historical reconstruction of the field of housing in French metropolises which reveals a particular turning point in the history of its relation to the bureaucratic field, which occurred in the 1970s. This was the point in time at which the creation of a housing subsidy scheme changed the rules of the game in the field of housing, which later on simply became "self-evident". It is in this line of historicism that Bourdieu most clearly shows his allegiance to Weberian thinking. And it is following on from this that he performs his sociological, rather than "logical" analysis of how the French housing market functioned. As previously mentioned, its historical analysis of "Loft living" is what puts Zukin's analysis close to that of Bourdieu. And although in her later work, Zukin's historical analysis is not always as thorough, she always maintains at least some emphasis on the reconstruction of historical preconditions. Historical reconstruction of the field, however, involves far more than a simple description of locational histories, which are also present in some of the works of human geographers I reviewed previously.

The ultimate aim of Bourdieu's analysis of housing was to show the interlinks between the *field* at hand with the *field of power* constituted by the economic and political spheres of social life. And it is in this book that Bourdieu provides one of his most complex and consistent analyses of such interlinks (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu showed the space of housing developers, with or without ties to mortgage credit institutions. Furthermore, he drew links between high-ranking bank clerks and bureaucrats, revealing objective analogies between their positions in the social space. As a result, he was able to demonstrate that what is perceived by economists as being a self-evident meeting point between supply and demand was in fact the product of the *housing policy*, which was a specific national variant that applied *neo-liberal* ideology to the field of housing. Zukin's narrative in *Loft living* places a similar emphasis on a similar historical turning point in economic restructuring, but her mapping of the makers of this change in the housing market is more vague. Although she does refer to key figures in the development of such processes in New York City, rather than showing them as occupying a space of their own with specific power struggles, she refers to them briefly as a class of patrician elites who, in the face of economic restructuring, were simply rational followers of their *interests*.

This is not the only dividing difference between these two exceptional pieces of sociology. Despite the endpoint of Bourdieu's narrative culminating in structural questions of reproduction of market power through the state apparatus, in this book he remains true to his commitment to ethnographic observations of the phenomena he researched. He begins his narrative with observations on what such an exceptional piece of commodity as housing means to the making of the household. He also provides an explicit mapping of the various positions of consumers of housing, pointing out the growing stratum of households who were not waiting to inherit housing, but were buying it in the market. This last observation brought him to the specific segment of the detached single-family house. Zukin's narrative differed significantly; her attention was directed towards what are now regarded as the 'prime suspects' fuelling gentrification: the artists converting the lofts, which at the time were not even considered spaces suitable for living. Whereas Bourdieu was reconstructing the links between the *housing field* and the *field of power*, Zukin was interested more than anything else in the links between the housing market and the field of the arts. She was put much more effort into reconstructing the making of space for the latter, thus leaving a lot of room for rhetoric regarding the self evident economic laws that put everything into place following the economic restructuring.

At this point, we should see that *field* analysis can meaningfully extend our understanding of 'gentrifying' urban spaces. In *The social structures of the economy*, Bourdieu's main goal was simply to show the social preconditions for the markets; he left a lot of other unused possibilities as to how one can speak about the social space by approaching choices or practices relating to housing. There are no particular reasons why, in our attempts to follow Bourdieu in the study of housing, we should limit ourselves to the walls of the detached house or the act of becoming an owner. A closer analysis of practices relating to housing would probably show that the functioning of the *field of housing* does not end with the private space or the moment of acquisition. The gravity of this field is likely to spill over into the close vicinity of the stairwell, the street or the neighbourhood. Interactions with one's closest neighbours regarding the common use of general facilities and public spaces may also be seen in the light of this gravity. A significant challenge, however, for those taking this Bourdieusian approach to urban studies is to admit that it is something other than *rational choices* in a quest to pursue their own *interests* that so smoothly coordinates the actions of the many actors in the growth machine. This remains the most dominant assumption in most contributions to urban studies, and one that Sharon Zukin herself had some doubts about in the conclusions of *Loft living* – doubts that she tried to address in her later work.

A bioenergotherapist practising in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, from the series "Own place", 2004.

2.2. Social bodies in the struggle for gentrification

If human agency is not governed by rational choice, then there is a need to find other explanations for the social principles governing the everyday actions of individuals. Bourdieu suggested looking at agents as following the immanent logic of the field, and being *reasonable* rather than *rational*. Agents take their lead with regard to certain social practices from a given set of possibilities governed by the functioning of their *habitus*. *Habitus* can only be fully grasped in relation to a *field*, and is defined as:

> *"the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations... a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks." (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.18).*

The notion of *habitus* brings what Wacquant calls a "radical historicist and agonistic" approach to human agency, strongly connecting Bourdieu's thought with that of Max Weber (Wacquant, 2018). By following this approach, we accept that social structures are embodied through the course of personal histories. And this embodiment is precisely what secures the immense durability of social structures. Thus, to understand a city we also need to understand the way in which these internalised social structures interact with urban spaces.

2.2.1. Rational choices or intuitive leanings in the choice of urban spaces?

Like most of Bourdieu's other concepts, *habitus* is a relational category that loses its explanatory power if used separately from others. In his call for a quest in search of the "lost" urban sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, Mike Savage claims that the central arguments used in current pieces of in Bourdieusian urban sociology focus too much on the concept of *habitus* (Savage, 2011). This statement could, however, also be seen as an exaggeration of the extent to which the notion of *habitus* was actually being productively exploited to answer questions of urban sociology.

This is in particularly true in relation to certain examples of the debate on gentrification, in which the authors' preoccupation with the mapping of various *"habituses"* causes them to

use the concept in a way that diminishes its overall explanatory power (Wacquant, 2018). Although Wacquant sees no clear reasons why the authors of these pieces look at the notion of *habitus* in isolation from the other conceptual instruments of Bourdieu's sociology, one can start to see such reasons in the logic of the debate itself.

Multiple actors rationalising the pleasures and pains of urban life

The allegiance of Bourdieu's sociology to the ideas of Max Weber might suggest that it could be easily connected and reinforce neo-Weberian arguments in the debate on gentrification. This is not the case, as there are also important disagreements between these thinkers. Chief among these is the rationality of agents. Bourdieu has criticised the very idea that in such situations of choice, agents search for solutions that minimise their pains and maximise their pleasures – in other words, they look for the solution that best meets their interest (Bourdieu, 2020). For Bourdieu, agents cannot be reduced to this utilitarian principle, which is essential to functioning of economic theory. In his critique of such a *homo economicus*, he shows how this theoretical construct for explaining human action is not only detached from social reality, but is also normative and falsely imposes the view of the observer on those being observed. Bourdieu argues that to understand economic choices, one has to take account of the historical development of the economic conditions for these choices. Certain conditions also exist for the making of 'rational' calculations of actions. Once this is done, the very notion of rational choice and decision can be understood as anthropological myth.

The moment of high tension for those involved in the field of housing– the moment at which housing is chosen – was also of interest for Bourdieu in *The Social Structure of the Economy*. But to arrive at an anthropological observation of housing acquisition, he began with reconstruction of the field. This process began with the mapping of the positions of producers of housing, the structure of which coincided with the structure of the space of purchasers and the space of the main aesthetic inclinations then present in the French housing market. He also showed interconnections between the field of housing and *the field of power* that defined the then-current *housing policy* (Bourdieu, 2005). Only within these objective structures defining the choice of housing was he able to describe his observation of decision making. In such decisions of the game in the field, agents are followed by many actors in specific professions – mostly property agents and bank clerks selling mortgage loans, but also architects or interior designers. Their *habitus* is mostly aligned with the workings of the *field of housing*, as the suitable and properly embodied strategy-generating principles of such a *habitus* will define their success in the game. Studying their professional habitus in relation to the structures of their own internal fields, such as firms or certain sub-markets of services, can teach us more about how certain decisions in the field are socially produced.

The very thought of the absence of *rationality* during the acquisition of housing – a high point in the game of housing, when there are high stakes at hand and players are highly

mobilised – might seem somewhat controversial for most researchers participating in the debate on gentrification. For them, Bourdieu also has something to offer: he invites them to think of the *rationalisation* observed during the act of acquisition. *Rationalisation* of housing acquisition, for example, is generated by the habitus of particular professional groups involved in the field of housing. Probably the purest process of rationalisation is the calculation of the possibilities of taking out a mortgage loan, the goal of which is first and foremost the protection of the bank. But this rationalisation also reinforces a sense of *reasonable* action in those taking the loan, making the client to see reason in what the bank proposes (Bourdieu, 2005). The mortgage loan is a particularly interesting instance of rationalisation in the field of housing. Due to the length of commitments involved, it is based on a number of assumptions that make it problematic to qualify as a well-informed and calculated act of rationalisation. There is, however, a social logic to this procedure. Calculation of the likelihood of the credit being repaid is based on the fact that an agent (in this case, the purchaser of housing) has a career to follow. A career is itself an expression of social capital, which is perceived as socially meaningful and is expressed in contractual obligations with the employer. Thus, credit is a procedure of exchanging social capital into economic capital (Bourdieu, 2020).

Economic and social capital are not the only qualities of an agent structure the possible moves in the situation of housing acquisition. The structural nature of a *habitus* will make some moves in the housing field appear more reasonable than others to the agent, and thus more likely to be taken. Bourdieu invites us to look at *habitus* as highly economical principle of action – not in the sense of the economic efficiency of the 'decisions' that it generates, but due to the savings in terms of the effort and time that would be needed to make "rational calculations" (Bourdieu, 2005). At the lowest level of analysis, we thus observe individuals bringing into the game of housing the structures of their own *habitus*, which have been moulded throughout their personal histories in many fields. Bourdieu invites the reader to look at the family or household as one such *field*. Given the symbolic and practical meaning housing has for the reproduction of the family, it is also this field, rather than the field of housing alone, within which decisions on housing acquisitions are made.

Such intersections of the power of different fields with the logics of the field of housing offer the promise of a much deeper insight into the role of housing in social reproduction than any rule of rational action could ever suggest. It is the workings of the *habitus* of individuals in these fields that stand behind their leanings towards certain *reasonable* choices. Given how many different actors depend on housing capital, and how many different fields are involved in the production of it – from the housing markets at large, to firms offering specialised services – there are also many possible ways to approach questions of urban sociology through the study of these fields. The spatial modes of thinking proposed by those contributions to the debate on gentrification that put physical space above social space, whose arguments are held together by a pure belief in the rational actor, often force us to refuse quite prematurely many interesting pathways of analysis. They also suggest that it is possible to think of a particular type of space as being connected to a particular social class, without taking into account their relations to the whole social space. This leads us into certain traps of naturalisation of the social world.

Use and misuse of habitus in the gentrification debate

A relevant question to ask here would be: what can examples of the use of the concept of *habitus* tell us about the debate on gentrification? The attempt of British human geographer Gary Bridge to introduce Bourdieusian thinking to the debate on gentrification is particularly important for my argument. Unlike most other contributors at the time, Bridge did not end up exploring what was then a prime subject in the debate – the aesthetic choices in housing of a certain new fraction of the middle class (Bridge, 2001b). Bridge analysed the situations in which deals were struck on properties in 'gentrifying' neighbourhoods of Sydney, Australia. He raised the question of the rationality of the actors involved in this process (Bridge, 2001a). In particular, Bridge was interested in the role of property agents in bringing together buyers and sellers from different social classes. Unlike Butler or many other participants in the debate, Bridge was not interested in the middle classes alone, but instead addressed the interesting situation of different social classes meeting, with property agents working as intermediates or 'translators' of the values of housing. According to Bridge, in gentrifying areas we observe intense processes of class making or the constitution of new fractions of the middle class. Because such processes involve a lot of new situations, which are not recognised by the actors participating in these processes, they are thus accompanied by intense rationalisation – and the strategy-generating principles of *habitus* thus have far less of an effect on their actions.

Reflecting on the suitability of Bourdieu's conceptual apparatus to understand the circumstances of gentrification, Bridge claimed that Bourdieu's framework suggests an overly socialised and passive view of the human agency. As a result, Bridge claims that theories of rational action are of particular relevance here. They not only explain certain choices, but also illuminate what kinds of dispositions result from these choices to form what he claims to be a newly-forming *habitus*. These are interesting arguments, yet they are built on a not particularly precise reading of Bourdieu's conceptual apparatus. First, this argument is made without proper attention to the way in which Bourdieu conceptualises the relations of the *field* and *habitus*. Bridge made his analysis without identifying the *field*, the forces of which should enabled an understanding of the strategy-generating principles that make up the property agents' habitus. He makes the same mistake as Butler, equating *gentrification* with the *field*. Without proper identification of the field and its genealogy, Bridge was able to sense and observe the functioning of the habitus manifesting in his chosen empirical situations – but he could not analyse them. He made interesting observations concerning the specific *rationalisations* of the decisions being made. Without reflecting on the gravity of the field that produced the social circumstances of these decisions, however, he was not able to take the next step forward.

Bridge's work could be seen as an interesting attempt to destabilise the epistemological position on the theory of fields, and to identify its limits. But his consideration of the possible relevance of rational choice theories to understand the processes of gentrification, while at the same time flirting with the notion of *habitus*, casts doubt on the extent to which he was sincerely open to the epistemological positions on the theory of fields in the first place. In this work, Bridge also failed to provide any analysis of the general changes in social space, or to substantiate his claims that these are situations in which we can observe social change or a "new habitus" in the making. The work also lacks relational analysis as to why these processes manifested in the particular geographical spaces of his interest. Critics from the structural side of the debate could easily argue that the changes observed by Bridge are primarily material ones, driven by natural forces of depreciation and not by changes in the social space or changes in the logic of a specific field that he did not identify.

Gary Bridge's interpretation – namely, that agents within the field of housing, and in particular at the moment of housing acquisition – somehow combine the inclinations proposed by generative schemes of *habitus* with the idea of their rationality. Such an interpretation, while not particularly methodologically precise, is interesting for other reasons, as it shows how a particular social theory can be misappropriated in the debate. This misuse of theory also reveals the logic of the debate and the roots of its *doxic* thinking. One could say that Bridge's analysis was narrowed down by his purely geographical interest in specific type of urban space. The physical space in this work, as in the work of most human geographers, is more important than the social space it contains. Bridge offers another example of how, without clarity as to the *field* (which in this case was once again simply replaced with the notion of "gentrification"), it is difficult to make use of other concepts within Bourdieu's apparatus. And without proper activation of the notion of habitus, individual households will appear to make their housing decisions purely as rational calculators, as there are no social preconditions upon which such decisions are being formed. This intentionality or crude rationality of the agent is an important aspect of arguments in the gentrification debate. Questioning this general assumption thus brings us to a critique of its key statements.

2.2.2. Understanding the bodily tensions of "gentrification"

The term 'gentrification' implies that one particular social class is important in the making of the phenomenon. From the word itself, we should assume that it is the *gentry* who are driving the segregation of urban spaces. The word is actually a nickname, which on the cultural map of the British social classes stands for a particular fraction of the middle classes with lower levels of economic capital. Taking such a suggestion for granted narrows down possible observations regarding the agency of agents from other social classes, and also leads to normative relationships towards the observed phenomenon – not to mention the fact that the debate itself is already substantially politically polarised.

For Bourdieu, such a relationship to any notion of *social class* was one of the core problems in the creation of sociological knowledge. Unlike natural sciences, in the social sciences researchers use classifications, which in turn also classify themselves. Thus, the problem that Bourdieu perceived in many epistemological choices (in particular those of various modes of Marxism) is that using them eventually becomes a political choice (Bourdieu, 2018a). Here, I will discuss how a debate on gentrification could use Bourdieu's

ideas to refute such a contested relationship with social class. Such a relationship results in the unnecessarily politicisation of what should be an object of scientific observation.

The city as a garment of clothing for the new middle class

Of all Bourdieu's works, it is *Distinction* that has most influenced those who have attempted to introduce elements of his sociology into the debate on gentrification. In this critical sociological analysis of taste, attitudes on interiors were among the very many other cultural preferences that Bourdieu showed as revealing positions in the social space (Bourdieu, 1984). Not long after *Distinction* was translated into English, a range of works in literature of urban studies had made direct allegiances with Bourdieu's work and terminologies. One such example was the work of Canadian human geographer David Ley. Ley is particularly important here as a flag-waver for the "consumption" or the "cultural" camp of the gentrification debate, which was disillusioned with the lack of human agency in the arguments that followed Neil Smith's rent gap thesis. This camp of researchers wanted to show how the cultural preferences and locational choices of the "new middle classes" were the key drivers of gentrification (Lees et. al., 2008). This being said, the primary sociological influence for the cultural camp of the debate on gentrification was not that of Pierre Bourdieu, but of Daniel Bell's post-industrial thesis, which emphasised the effects on urban spaces of shifts towards service-based activities or technologically advanced production. Ley claimed that such economical restructuring had an impact on occupational structure and was ultimately also reflected in changing consumer patterns and the use of urban space.

Bourdieu's *Distinction* was a relevant inspiration, as it touched upon the role of cultural distinction in the reproduction of social inequalities. Geographers moved these arguments into urban space and began to look at gentrification as a spatial strategy of a certain fraction of the highly educated middle classes that lacked economic capital. According to this interpretation, in choosing housing in such areas these classes substitute their lack of economic capital with their cultural ability to recognise the social meanings in derelict historic buildings (Bridge, 2001b). Followers of the consumption camp also tried to draw attention to the locational dichotomies used in explanations of gentrification and how gentrifying locations are understood as having a certain oppositional character, as sites of *difference* (Ley, 1996). Thus, later on, and not without the influence of Sharon Zukin's work, significant attention was placed on the creative professions, which through localisation of their creative practices could put meanings of *difference* on locations – even on those that were totally devoid of any social value (Ley, 2003). Attention in the debate thus shifts from structural material drivers to agents who are able to use urban spaces and create distinctions. This is just another angle from which to look at a corpus of work in urban studies that started to lean on Bourdieu's work by equating gentrification itself with a *field* (Ley, 2003).

There are a couple of points at which such appropriations of Bourdieu's work clash with the very essence of his ideas. The researchers who appropriated these ideas kept on following a belief in explanatory value of the post-industrial thesis, believing that the practices of the new middle classes would shed further light on what is happening in these urban locations. However, no particular class is of the utmost importance in understanding the social space as a whole. The principles of embodiment into *habitus* are the same no matter what the agents' position is in the social space, their place in the occupational division of labour, or depending on what field is at stake. But it is through the historical reconstruction of *field* and *habitus* that one can start to understand their relational logic. The historical genealogy of the *field* enables us to perceive the strategy- generating principles of different agents, including those who were far less favourably affected by the processes of economic restructuring. Within the gentrification debate it is, however, a very rare gesture to take a serious look at the history of the *field* and of the *social space* in the case of a specific city or neighbourhood. If we look at these attempts to use the ideas of *Distinction* in the context of how the debate has unfolded, these examples look rather like a quick audition for concepts and ideas to cover up the most obvious gaps in the post-industrial narrative on this phenomenon, rather than being precise or even sincere attempts to follow a Bourdieusian path in the analysis of *social space.*

Contributions to the 'cultural' arm of the debate do, however, shed some light on the role of cultural capital in the making of urban space, and also on the phenomenological experiences of urban spaces undergoing gentrification. The biggest deficiency of these contributions is not that such findings are irrelevant to our understanding of the social realities in cities. The main drawback of such contributions is that they appear to criticise the epistemological positions of the structural arm of the debate, but in fact do not engage with such a critique, even though Bourdieu's approach to the notion of *social class* would be a productive starting point for it. A more consistent use of the notion of *habitus* would also enable the debate to be connected with the unbelievably rich phenomenological tradition of social theory. This could lead to more elaborated observations as to how the *lifeworlds* forming and dissolving in gentrifying areas illustrate the role of *space* and of *time* in the embodiment of social structures (Atkinson, 2010; Atkinson, 2019). This could of course be regarded more strictly as an epistemological borderline with the theory of fields. But the most productive stand would be to continue looking for ways in which both traditions could feed each other. For example, approaching the *social type* of a hipster is a good example of how the phenomenological tradition helped to describe this very specific actor in gentrification, recognisable not only in London, but also in other cities around the world (le Grand, 2018; le Grand, 2019). At the same time, looking at such a *social type* in the light of the Bourdieusian notion of *classificatory struggles* washed away at least some of the non- structural naiveté characteristic of the phenomenological outlook.

Multiple histories in the making of urban segregation

As we can now see, we cannot reconstruct the Bourdieusian position on the empirical situations in what we now call 'gentrifying' urban areas without touching upon his understanding of social class. Some aspects of this understanding would be problematic for most researchers in urban studies – in particular, those following the Marxist line of argument on urban segregation. For Bourdieu, rather than being a direct representation of social reality, social classes – taking in occupation, education and other factors, such as they are used in the social research – are more like bureaucratic notions created during the process of classification that is sanctioned and carried out by institutions of power (Bourdieu, 2018a). By speaking of classes, we only indirectly refer to the qualities of positions in the social space. Since these positions are defined through the amount of capital accumulated by agents occupying these positions, and because they can only be described in relation to the amount and character of the capital accumulated in other positions, any one-dimensional attempt to classify agents will lead to a distorted understanding of the social reality. Social *fields* contribute to these distortions, as they create a distorted view of the social space, inviting us to look at it through the specific economic or cultural value they generate. By entering the *field* and acquiring these specific types of capital, social agents take up specific positions in *the space of positions* of a specific *field*, but that is just a fraction of what constitutes their position in the *social space* at large.

Bourdieu's suggestion of how to break through these prismatic effects of the field was to study *practical classes*. In their daily practices, agents perform practical classification. These classifications, generated by the *habitus* of their social class, provide a way to grasp this internalised division of principles between classes. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu exemplified the relationship between the *theoretical classes* used by social researchers and *practical classes*. He analysed taste as a very specific marker of social class, which also classifies those who use these classifiers to distinguish themselves from other positions in the *social space*. As I have already mentioned, *Distinction* cites differences in apartment interiors as one of many manifestations of such practical classifications, which create latent solidarity between fractions of social classes bearing similar dispositions of taste (Bourdieu, 1984). Thus, in a study of gentrification, we should not limit ourselves to the mapping of the space of institutional actors in the *field* of housing. Almost every actor in the social space participates at least to some extent in the field of housing. Rather than speaking about *gentry* or the *new middle class* as the main drivers of phenomenon, and the shrinking *labour classes* as those suffering from it, we should map the space of material dispositions of housing and look for the relation of these dispositions to the social space at large. Such a move would help us to move away from preconceived notions of class and help us better understand the actual role of *housing* capital in the struggle for domination in a city.

In addition to general preconceived notions of social classes, each field has its own *theoretical classes*, offering their own preconceived notions of the social world. The fact that access to housing can be achieved either through inheritance or through direct acquisition, or temporarily through a rental agreement, suggests a variety of structured tactics and strategies that actors can employ in the field of housing. These different ways to access housing mark the type and intensity of commitments or "investments" that actors have to undertake in order to access housing capital. As Bourdieu notes, these investments are far from being purely *economic*; they are also *affective*. Bearing in mind the role that housing plays in the lasting reproduction of a household or family, these investments also have a strong *symbolic* component (Bourdieu, 2005). Categories of the tenure types analysed in housing studies, such as *renters* or *owner-occupiers* with or without *mortgage*, are the theoretical classes that mark a certain outcome of the agent's involvement in the field. These classes are important in the objective mapping of the positions that agents take in the *field* of housing. In the debate on gentrification, however, whose turn towards cultural matters has resulted in it being largely preoccupied with occupational classes, the role of tenure types in the making of segregated urban spaces has largely faded away.

At this point, one might very well raise the question as to how relevant research into gentrifying spaces is to the accumulation of knowledge on specific social classes and their struggles. In his writings, Bourdieu shed a lot of light on the specificities of the position of *petite bourgeoisie*. Owning little of economic capital, but having accumulated significant amounts of cultural capital, this class fraction is closest to that of the popular British notion of *gentry*, occupying a very specific area of the social space. One of the characteristics that Bourdieu observed about this class is that it is very likely to enter into relations with the social world in a way that strengthens the structural circumstances of the social world, which this social class nevertheless tries to rebel and protest against (Bourdieu, 2020). Such a tendency coincides very well with the trajectories of many gentrifying spaces, which at the outset of their transition are seen as transgressive spaces of freedom and possibility for *urban pioneers* but end up being just another building block in the making of a segregated city. The propensity of the *petite bourgeoisie* to raise the issues they oppose, and even – based on their continual confrontation with the social world – to anticipate them coming, may explain the specific role that these agents play in the making of urban segregation. And although the debate on gentrification has long seen them as employing the thought-out strategies of those with more power in gentrification processes, these are more likely to be a result of the pre-conscious strategy-generating principles of their *habitus*. This being said, the *habitus* of those having different social histories than *gentries* or *the new middle classes* also operates within these empirical situations. And despite the lower social power of those devoid of both economic *and* cultural capital, their *habitus* has a no less important classificatory role to play in the making of segregated urban spaces.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 1996.

2.3. Symbolic violence and the city

The cultural turn in social sciences is also reflected in the debate on gentrification. But without any fluent incorporation of cultural arguments into the structural arm of this debate, this turn has also brought about a polarisation of discussion. This situation reveals the need for a theorisation of how symbolic aspects of domination in a city can be analysed in relation to social structures. Bourdieu's hints at how to work with this problem, as he himself saw the city as one of the important sites in which symbolic power is reproduced, saying that:

> *"Appropriated space <of cities> is one of the sites where power is asserted and wielded, and no doubt under the most invisible form, that of symbolic violence as unperceived violence." (Bourdieu, 2018b, p. 108)*

With this quote, Bourdieu invites us to look at built structures in a similar way as he invited us to look at dominant discourses, in which one can reconstruct the symbolic violence or *"the violence, which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity"* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The problem (or rather, the task for urban studies) is thus to investigate how this notion, which Bourdieu applied to language, can help us to better understand cities.

2.3.1. Uncovering the symbolic dimensions of the struggles surrounding "gentrification"

Although the symbolic meanings of city spaces and the ways in which they play out in urban conflicts are not of a primary interest of the debate on gentrification, there are plenty of scattered discussions about urban politics of 'gentrification'. After all, 'gentrifying' neighbourhoods are peculiar spaces for sociological analysis, because they are often perceived as spaces of urban conflict. And the discursive practices are where one can spot conflicted visions of city well before they take urban forms materialised in concrete, brick, steel or glass. Applying Bourdieu's concepts here offers us the promise of recognising symbolic acts of domination.

In his analysis of symbolic power, Bourdieu aims to show that in most situations of social life, social power is exercised not as a brutal social force, but is rather implemented through symbolic acts, which are socially legitimated and often taken for granted even by those who are dominated (Bourdieu, 1991). This symbolic dimension is very important in Bourdieu's understanding of social power, and he sees it employed in almost every power struggle. Such symbolic acts also ought to be present in the struggles taking place

in gentrifying areas, where power is not necessarily limited to such directly violent acts of domination as the displacement of previous residents.

Revanchist urbanism or cultural hegemony?

Cultural arguments in the debate on gentrification, such as those developed by David Ley, were provoked by the limitations of the materialist stance taken by Neil Smith. One could easily assume Smith's position would attract criticism as being insensitive to human agency and blindly connecting the workings of capital with the actions of the affluent social classes. As a reaction to this, Smith further elaborated his thesis – or rather, used the opportunities provided to respond to his critics with a range of adjustments. Immediately after coining his "rent gap" thesis, Smith made an attempt to link "gentrification" processes with global trends of uneven development (Smith, 1982). He emphasised that capital investments do not only fix the capital in built structures, but also accelerates the devaluation of housing in other locations. One could say that here he started to consider the value of urban spaces *relationally* – as defined within the overall systems of locations within a given city. Nevertheless, he still saw these processes as primarily being in line with the needs of capital accumulation. For Smith, gentrification was just a mirror image of previous waves of suburbanisation – another cycle in uneven urban development. According to Smith, capital would land on the plots with the highest rent gaps, at any social cost – even if it led to evictions and the displacement of the urban poor. Such statements are powerful but also inherently simplistic, as they do not take into account any historical or regional differences in the logics of the *fields* acting in the social distribution of housing. It is, however, worth taking a further look at Smith's later work. Almost two decades after his initial contribution to the debate, and given the insurmountable pressure of arguments from the cultural camp regarding agency and the cultural priorities of agents involved in gentrification, Smith developed a new thesis, which is useful to the development of my argument.

With his new thesis of the "*revanchist city*", Smith turned to the symbolic aspects of the fight for control and domination of urban space. He invited the reader to regard gentrification processes as being a clash between opposing social classes, or a spatial expression of the massive punishment of the urban poor (Smith, 1996). One of the more interesting aspects of this contribution was Smith's attempt to historicise this phenomenon. Smith compared the conservative political rhetoric that fuelled the gentrification processes in 1990s New York to the *revanchist* movement of the bourgeois in the Paris of the 1890s. In doing so, he equated gentrification with what Friedrich Engels called the "Haussmannisation" of capitalist cities, under which the "scandalous" districts of the labouring classes and the urban poor were successively pushed from one part of the city to another, followed by "*self-praise from the bourgeoisie on account of this tremendous success*" (Engels, "*The Housing Question*", 1872, p. 70). This observation by Engels resonating with what was happening in New York well enough for Smith to quote this passage, suggesting that gentrification is not a new

phenomenon, but simply one of the reappearing chapters in the rulebook of the capitalist cities. Smith also emphasised the role of the media in this process. It was the media, he said, that pictured urban spaces as being ripe for gentrification, as places of social disorder and urban malaise. Thus, it enabled their existing inhabitants to be pushed out to make way for new urban developments. Using the metaphor of the "*urban frontier*" – a kind of demarcation line in urban space, marking a clash point between the interests of opposing social classes – Smith introduced the language of warfare into the debate.

Smith's revanchist thesis resonated with the debate on gentrification and inspired further discussions regarding the nature and causes of gentrification (Lees et al., 2008). But in a debate that was already ideologically polarised, the normative claims of Smith brought little clarity as to how to move forward with analysis of the phenomenon. In contrast to his "*rent gaps*", Smith did not support researchers joining the search for "*urban frontiers*" or "*revanchist city*" with any significant new theoretical elaboration. The theoretical ambitions of his introduction of cultural Marxism to the debate were far more modest than those Smith had previously achieved. Overall, his book sounded more like the work of an activist aiming to mobilise followers than a researcher trying to explain social reality. Similar failures in the debate are probably one of the reasons why Kirsten Paton, in her book *Gentrification: a labour class perspective*, was quick to denounce the middle-range theories of the debate. Calling such ideas "orthodox", she takes the reader on an intense journey in search of an alternative theorisation of gentrification (Paton, 2014). In this quest for methodological solutions, one could say that Paton made some peculiar choices, such as combining the somewhat disparate thoughts of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci. But her suggestion that cultural Marxist approaches to questions of gentrification might be melted down into a new theoretical 'silver bullet' to nail the phenomenon is worth considering precisely in this context.

Based on her observations of gentrifying working-class neighbourhoods in Glasgow, Paton claimed that gentrification is achieved not only through the simple material claiming of space, but also through new cultural practices that are brought to these spaces. Through particular patterns of consumption, as well as other behaviours and practices, incoming middle-class residents disseminate new values that align with the new neoliberal – economic order. Such cultural practices mean that the process of gentrification is followed by silent consent – absent of any revanchist urban frontiers, as Smith would suggest. This is why Paton ultimately takes Gramsci's notion of *cultural hegemony* as her key explanatory concept, which she claims is helpful in understanding the current processes involved in the neoliberal restructuring of cities. Paton shows that the notion of *cultural hegemony* can help to build a less contested, but nevertheless deeper and more nuanced narrative about gentrification. Gramsci explains *cultural hegemonies* as consisting of common-sense beliefs about the capitalist system, which are like a curtain covering its injustices. As such, they are never stable and must be amended all the time to maintain the image of the assumed neutrality of the capitalist system (Gramsci, 2013; Jessop, 2005). Furthermore, *cultural hegemony* is not simply oppressive, but also both coercive and consensual. People are coerced into accepting and identifying with *hegemonic projects* and, as Paton suggests, may even take some pleasure

from such involvement. If urban projects leading to gentrification are to be seen as such coercive hegemonic projects, we may observe little or nothing in the way of clashes along the *urban frontiers.* Some of those dominated may even oddly be found taking pleasure in their involvement in domination over themselves (Paton, 2014).

Paton's attempt to bring cultural arguments to the Marxist pillar of the debate, which for so long had been based on orthodox materialist analysis, is a new and persuasive attempt to push the gentrification debate forward beyond its deadlock. But this attempt also goes beyond analytical reflection and tries to engage the audience in critical political reflection about the current mode of capitalism, the changing constitution of class and how all of this lands in gentrifying urban areas. I find Paton's approach to be more productive than Smith's, as it stands on a more developed ground of cultural Marxism, and invites the reader to notice and recognise violence well before it reaches the stage of clashes of force. The coercive and consensual nature of hegemony suggests that many forms of symbolically violent acts may occur in gentrifying neighbourhoods, taking forms other than just brutal evictions. Such acts may even be performed with the agreement of the dominated subjects. Another advantage of cultural hegemony is that it holds a liberating message left there by Gramsci, who foresaw the possibility of forming *counter hegemonies.* Such cultural practices aim to reveal the underlying inconsistencies and oppressive nature of the capitalist system, thus helping to mobilise change. If we put these thoughts into urban action, they could allow us to look for traits of resistance or rays of hope in otherwise a very gloomy picture of neo-liberal urban restructuring. All this being said, *cultural hegemony* remains more of a political term, suitable for the mobilisation of action, rather than a theoretical concept to be used for purely analytical purposes.

Symbolic violence in cities

In her work, Paton also briefly considers the possibility of a Bourdieusian approach. After a short critique, however, she dismisses this as inadequate for analysing social change. Paton claims that such an approach leads to depictions of the working class as a monolithic group with deficient cultural and social capital. Furthermore, she argues, the static nature of Bourdieu's *habitus* leads to depictions of a working class with a fixed position in the social structure. On the other hand, cultural accounts of distinction in the city legitimise the values of dominant culture, and help to fetishise middle-class attachment to place. Instead of further marginalising working class culture through such accounts, Paton calls for a look at what is often seen as "nostalgia" for a working-class past as a culture that has specific historical material basis that is being dismantled through the process of urban restructuring. She claims that a Bourdieusian approach to social class and place-making in the city undermines such material bases for the constitution of class. Paton's critique was not, however, based on her own analysis of Bourdieu's texts, but on the examples of urban studies – some of which have already been reviewed here. Paton's position can be seen as yet another warning of what can go wrong

when concepts of social theory are used without proper regard to their analytical content, or are simply appropriated and misused. I also interpret her stand against Bourdieu not only as result of the previous mistakes of urban studies, but of her political leaning towards Marxism.

Bearing in mind that Bourdieu's notion of *symbolic violence* was actually developed in dialogue with Gramsci's *cultural hegemony,* Paton's rejection of Bourdieu's conceptual framework might be seen as somewhat premature. Bourdieu debated the writings of Antonio Gramsci mostly in his work on politics, language and domination (Bourdieu, 1991). Applying this notion to the analysis of urban space is not a straightforward task – and yet Bourdieu invites us to pursue it and to look at built structures in a similar way to that in which one might look at dominant discourses. As Bourdieu wrote:

> *"The structure of social space manifests itself, in the most diverse contexts,*
> *in the form of spatial oppositions, inhabited (or appropriated) space functioning as*
> *a sort of spontaneous metaphor of social space." (Bourdieu, 2018, p. 106)*

Through Bourdieu's eyes, urban spaces can be seen as simply the imperfect and distorted reflection of different fractions of the social space. Physical spaces contain social divisions inscribed within them, which with time become subjective mental structures or even certain categories that facilitate our perceptions of the 'real' world and of everyday life in the city. Urban space is thus not only a materiality that we can own or inhabit, and which is affected by natural forces of depreciation, but also a signifier of positions in the social world. Interpreting how Bourdieu's theoretical legacy can help us to cope with any of the distortions that observation of urban spaces brings to our understanding of cities, Wacquant invites us to think about a triad of *physical space, social space and symbolic space* (Wacquant, 2018). By doing so, we should be able to separate the physical shapes of the built structures from the social space they contain, and even more so from the discursive practices that might aim to change or sustain the relation of one or another in the *symbolic space.*

This is exactly what Bourdieu achieved in his analysis of the *stigmatisation* of French social housing districts in his group monograph *The weight of the world* (Bourdieu and Accardo, 2000). Here, he explains how the principles of news production, which prioritise spectacular events, contribute to the further symbolic deprivation of these neighbourhoods through overly negative coverage of life there. Even if at the moment of news report, residents are given a voice to speak about their lives, they tend to speak about them through the dominant discourses that are valued by the media. Wacquant has performed similar analysis on black 'ghetto' areas of US metropolises, and has further developed these insights into the notion of *territorial stigmatisation.* (Wacquant, 2007). He sees the fate of these areas as being a long-term result of government policies, which have led to a fragmentation of the working class and restraints on social protection measures. Although government policies in the US and France produce inequalities in rather different ways, in both of these countries it is *territorial stigmatisation* that leads to the public belief that these are the areas in which these social problems are actually produced. Wacquant's analysis showed that

the social effect of these policies – which is to 'lock in' deviant behaviours within specific urban areas, away from the eyes of the wider public – is in fact part of the overall policy.

Bourdieu's deconstruction of the symbolic mechanisms of *stigmatisation* is just one of steps towards a deeper analysis of *social suffering* in the Parisian neighbourhoods covered in the *Weight of the world*. This was the ultimate goal of the work – to show how bringing together people who have nothing in common except for their disadvantaged position in the social space leads to mutual ignorance at best, and at worst spurs direct violence, which is accelerated by the feeling of being stuck in a situation in which the real sources of suffering will always remain hidden. The fact that this position in the social space actually finds spatial expression in the map of the city only exacerbates the feeling of the inevitability of the situation. However, the urban poor are not the only group to experience *social suffering* induced by symbolic violence of urban forms. Bourdieu looked in a similar way at the Parisian petite bourgeoisie, who by buying detached housing,

> *"... find themselves drawn to live beyond their means, on credit, they discover the rigours of economic necessity almost as painfully as did the industrial workers of a different era, particularly through the sanctions imposed on them by the banks, to which they had looked to work miracles on their behalf." (Bourdieu, 2005, p.186)*

Bourdieu shows that the same logic of symbolic violence can be used to deconstruct the reasons for the petit bourgeois sufferings experienced by this somewhat different fraction of the social space. Lacking sufficient economic capital to lead the lifestyle of the bourgeoisie, under the given housing policy they can employ their social capital to gain credit in order to pursue their cultural aspirations and dreams. This becomes a type of trap not only economically, but also symbolically, as their group aspirations are soon recognised by social critics either as manifestations of consumerism and embourgeoisement or as lifestyles of insufficient cultural sophistication.

Although Bourdieu himself did not approach any case of gentrification directly, we can see that his previous works provide sufficiently clear guidance as to how one should approach the analysis of this or any other case of urban segregation. It connects the triad of physical space, social space and symbolic space, and allows us to look beyond the surface changes to the deeper causes of the sufferings they bring. This is the direction that should also be taken by the debate on gentrification, and urban studies at large. Indeed, many recent examples, including Paton's attempt to look for symbolic aspects of domination in gentrifying areas, could be seen as an intuitive invitation to step in this direction. Other recent explorations of the possibilities of combining the analysis of symbolic aspects of domination with the phenomenology of displacement suggest that further analysis of gentrification could productively incorporate Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence (Atkinson, 2015). However, taking this step does not appear a simple endeavour. In the wider circles of urban studies, we may only just be in the process of articulating how to do it methodically.

2.3.2. The classificatory logic of urban locations

We can now see that to understand urban locations in Bourdieusian terms, we also need to examine the social production of the meanings of urban spaces. Analysis of the *territorial stigmatisation* produced in urban ghettoes is an important inspiration here. But just as urban ghettoes are not the only types of urban spaces in which the symbolic violence of the city is veiled, *stigmatisation*, which can be performed and experienced anywhere within a city, might not be the only strategy for spatial domination.

The symbolic values of urban locations have material preconditions. But there are also social histories as to how these values were established and began to mark social differences in a specific city. One way to go about analysing symbolic violence in cities is to look at urban space as one of the many resources employed in classification struggles. The symbolic meanings of locations are likely to be the least stable element in the social definition of the location's value. And those living in a location can manipulate this element to strengthen a symbolic base of their social power.

Touching upon the distinctions of urban locations

The intriguing opening up of linkages between the field of the arts and the field of real estate development was not the point at which Sharon Zukin ended her relevant cultural analysis of cities. And in the context of the present discussion, these later works are of particular relevance. Following *Loft living*, she extended her attention from the role of cultural strategies in the making of exclusive housing towards the re-making of neighbourhoods or even whole cities. Her main statement was that after the economic reconstruction of the 1970s, cities in the US no longer had sufficient means for the usual urban planning and development policies. They thus turned to cultural strategies, manipulating the symbolic meanings of city spaces to create distinctive images of neighbourhoods or cities (Zukin, 1995). Just as in *Loft living*, city elites were for Zukin the driving force behind various branding projects analysed in her *The cultures of cities*. And just like the camp of human geographers describing 'consumption' arguments of gentrification, the rationale behind such strategies was the assumed expectations for cities from the growing base of the new middle classes employed in the financial and service sectors. The new 'symbolic economy' of the cities was aimed at attracting these professional strata, indispensable to the future economic success of the city. In order to be economically viable, the city had to offer unique locations for cultural consumption and safe access to cultural diversity.

Sharon Zukin's insights hint at Bourdieu's ideas about symbolic power in a number of ways. Firstly, Zukin observes the same coincidence between the symbolic and physical spaces of the city, noting that *"every effort to rearrange space in the city is also an attempt at visual re-presentation"* (Zukin, 1993; p. 24). She sees the production of urban space and the production of symbols as closely intertwined actions. Furthermore, in a number of her cases

she also establishes relations between these matters and the multicultural social spaces of American cities, showing how cultural ethnic communities are both a resource in the making of 'diverse' city, but also are usually the first to suffer from the effects of symbolic re-imagining of their neighbourhoods. Zukin's analysis shows how the symbolic changes made to neighbourhoods not only increase the risk of direct displacement through rent rises, but also impose a certain "symbolic displacement" through the loss of signs important to local identity. Constructing her analysis using a number of cases, Zukin weaves together the histories of different American cities and neighbourhoods into a single narrative describing how urban life has been affected by economic restructuring. Such a strategy appealed to wide audiences, making *The cultures of cities* one of her most popular books. The downside of this research strategy is that Zukin could no longer sustain a consistent analysis of the historical genealogies and structures of the many fields she touches upon in her narrative. At the very least, this analysis is not as diligent as in her previous works.

It is in her analysis of fine dining that Zukin diverts towards a direct application of Bourdieu's ideas of the social production of taste, providing a reconstruction of a *field* (Zukin, 1995). Her analysis of the *field* of the restaurant business is followed by an explicit description of employment in this sector, where internal divisions of labour follow the lines of cultural capital among employees. In 1990s New York, these divisions were also manifested spatially. The 'front-desk' jobs of hosts and waiters were occupied by employees with sufficient cultural capital to establish a fluent relationship with clientele – a common job among artists and other professionals in the 'creative economy'. Meanwhile, 'backstage' jobs were taken by ethnic minorities. These groups often worked under very precarious conditions. Zukin also observed that once restaurants establish a certain image for their taste, they start to mark a specific area of the city, rewarding it with their symbolic capital. In her later writings, Zukin continues to pursue her interest in how "high" taste consumption changes the meaning of its location (Zukin and Kosta, 2004). But it is in the book *Naked City* that she summarises these research efforts by using *authenticity* as a key notion (Zukin, 2010). This notion helps Zukin to explain how specific, historically grounded urban forms are being appropriated by agents with an irresistible urge for *difference*. These urban forms – which may be either material, or those maintained by human practices, but often have the qualities of both – eventually end up being destroyed by the same irresistible urge.

This is an important research example here, firstly because it indirectly follows Bourdieu's ideas of symbolic domination in everyday life through the social production of taste. But Zukin also finds her own way to get around the problem of the multiplicity of *fields* and *habituses* that forming urban spaces and experiences. She no longer devotes herself to full reconstructions of histories or objective structures, but instead allows herself to 'browse' through different appropriations of *authentic* urban places in New York City. The cultural practices observed by Zukin are now popularly understood as a part of the 'critical infrastructure' in the making of gentrifying spaces. But by turning from questions of housing to those of consumption and leisure, Zukin lost some of the critical weight present in her previous work. None of the social practices analysed – cultural consumption, fashion or leisure – have the spatial gravity and critical influence on the organisation of everyday life as

do practices of housing. Thus, by moving towards an analysis of them we are much more likely to fall into the trap of *naturalisation* – in other words, that the physical space of the location has a certain logic of its own, and not the logic of the social space manifesting through the material and symbolic forms of the city, which we need to observe.

In her later works, Zukin's histories of how different city locations took their material, symbolic and social form appear more like a free-floating narrative, poetically accompanying sociological analysis. And although they provide inspiring examples to follow, the historical analysis of locations does not necessarily have to take such a form. One way to go about a historical reconstruction of how locations are produced is to look at the phenomenon in the wider context of the urban planning of a particular city. Bearing in mind how rare any historical analysis of specific cases is in urban studies, it may be hard to imagine a zealous historical reconstruction of the field of planning in the largest historical urban metropolises. But just such an analysis of Tel Aviv, along the lines of Bourdieu's ideas on *social*, *physical* and *symbolic* space, was proposed by Nathan Marom (Marom, 2014a; Marom, 2014b). Marom observes that despite the changing ideologies and resulting methods of urban planning, it is the production of spatial divisions that remains at the centre of this practice. He relates this tendency of urban planning with the *principles of vision and division* that Bourdieu used to explain classification struggles and social differentiation. Unlike Zukin, and indeed unlike many other urban researchers, Marom focuses not on the histories of one particular location of a city, but on the history of planning in the city as a whole. This approach is very important, as it is through this history that the dispositions of locations are created as part of an enduring, intertwined system, in which the qualities of locations can be judged relationally.

To summarise the overall effects of the strategies of spatial differentiation he observed in the history of Tel Aviv over the course of a century, Marom coined the term *spatial distinction*. The contested history of Tel Aviv, with its many layers of the *social space*, enables him to emphasise the historical production of such distinctions. His historical reconstruction starts at the beginning of 20th century, when ethnic divisions were at the core of spatial organisation in the city. From this point, Marom moves on to descriptions of urban planning practices and different modes of housing provision which, following different waves of immigration, have shaped existing social hierarchies and created new ones. He emphasises the sharpest oppositions present at each wave of urban planning and housing development. Because these were inscribed in the material fabric of the city, they still function both as a material and a symbolic structure dividing the city. Rather than looking at one particular case of segregation or gentrification, Marom suggests regarding every case within the larger picture of the spatial development of the city. None of the existing spatial structures or the meanings that they convey are fixed, and they are under constant negotiation. But the very fact that producing new spatial divisions requires lengthy investments makes them relatively stable. This also makes it worthwhile to look at the history of their construction. Marom's *spatial distinction* is thus an interpretative framework indicating how to approach a specific case of segregation in the light of the overall spatial development of the city, while at the same time connecting it with sociology of Pierre Bourdieu.

Location as an object and the reward in the struggle of classification

Manipulations of the physical spaces of cities and the positioning of bodies within them are difficult and power-intensive endeavours. For this very reason, once such changes are achieved, they start to reify certain fragments and certain configurations of the *social space* that were present there at the moment of their making. The built form of the city has its own symbolic weight, and plays a part in the way in which understandings of the social world are structured, and how we take social divisions for granted. Once again, this *effect of naturalisation*, in which differences arising from the logic of the social space, inscribed in various cultural forms, are seen as 'natural' and are taken as being in "*the nature of things*", is highly relevant to urban spaces (Bourdieu, 2018b). But to recognise the *symbolic violence* of the urban form, we need to understand the historically developed dispositions built into the urban forms of different locations in the city. Bourdieu suggests that ethnographic observations of social life within these structures should allow us to grasp how these structures make an impact on individuals (Bourdieu, 1996). He anticipated that this impact would come through the control of bodily movements and senses, which over the time would leave their mark on the *habitus* of subjects.

Bourdieu did not, however, provide any research example to show exactly how one should research such a 'sinking in' of urban space into the *habitus* of the subject. In his earlier work, one can find some methodological inspirations that provide a hint as to how such analysis might be performed (Wacquant, 2018). One such work is his anthropological essay on the Kabyle house, in which Bourdieu shows how spaces within the home are divided into a system of socially meaningful oppositional dispositions:

> "*Not only does the division of labour between the sexes (based on the same principle of division as the organization of space) give the woman responsibility for most of the objects belonging to the dark part of the house, the carrying of water, wood, manure, for instance; but the opposition between the upper part and the lower part reproduces, within the internal space of the house, the opposition between the inside and the outside, between female space the house and its garden and male space.*" (Bourdieu, 1990; p.274)

This social organisation of space does not, however, result only in the gendered division of space, which is related to the main uses of the space and the main members of the household responsible for different functions. The spaces inside the house could be treated as being in opposition to the outside world, but they also reflect Kabyle people's understanding of its cosmic order:

> "*So it is both true and false to say that the external world is opposed to the house as the male to the female, day to night, fire to water, etc., since the second term in each of oppositions splits, each time, into itself and its opposite.*

> "*The house, a microcosm organized by the same oppositions and homologies that order the whole universe, stands in a relation of homology to the rest of the universe.*" (Bourdieu, 1990; p.276).

In this essay, Bourdieu invites us to look at home as it if were a microcosm of mirror reflections, homologous to the outside world. The daily routines in such a home are connected to the main elements of cosmic existence. Its connection with oppositions such as day and night, light and dark, dry and wet, summer and winter and the like, orchestrate the movements of the inhabitants of house to such an extent that over time, they sink into the *habitus* of the inhabitants, making every move and every placement of an object within the space a self-evident practice. In turn, such a house can ultimately only be inhabited by someone with the *proper habitus* (Bourdieu, 2020). Of course, modern homes are much more diverse and the social arrangements of their spaces less obvious, as they not necessarily rely solely on the gendered division of labour or ethnic mythologies of the cosmic world. By following this poetic lead, we should not necessarily expect the manifestation of the same oppositions – but we may instead expect this most intimate and private space be organised according to a certain mythology of the world, which by itself should have social origins.

We can, however, read such symbolic dispositions and oppositions employed in the making of the interior according to Bourdieu's later work in *Distinction*. Such a reading could allow us to reconstruct unreflected-upon principles in the structuring of modern interiors. We could expect the related choices to be homologous to agents' positions in the social space. All of the details of the surrounding personal space, which agents adjust to most comfortably fit their feeling of self and their everyday lives, could be read as revealing certain dispositions of their *habitus*. The very same principles could also be applied to reading symbolic values of plots of land. For this purpose, we need to identify specific markers to denote divisions and oppositions – of which we can identify many in the city space. They are usually inscribed in the physical space of the city, significantly clearly, so we can use them in our daily life to orientate and make sense of ourselves in the city. But they can also be inscribed in the symbolic space – appearing in the names of streets or neighbourhoods. Bourdieu draws our attention to such divisions of a city with the example of Paris, where the river Seine appears to separate the bourgeoisie of the city into those with the most of economic capital and those with the most cultural capital – a principal division in his proposed understanding of the structure of the social space (Bourdieu, 1996). But just as not every city has a river, not every city will take the same historical path as to how symbolic structures are inscribed into its physical space, the natural markers of which may also be very different. There is also no single way in which the meanings of the natural or human-made structures of a particular city may have been inscribed in the minds of its citizens. Thus, to study how such symbolic structures are produced, we need to approach every city individually.

As humans, we are social beings participating in various fields. We may take up very different physical positions during a course of a day in our life world. At the same time,

bodies can only occupy a single, specific physical space at a time; therefore the address of one's housing remains a primary spatial expression of position in the social space (Bourdieu, 2018b). The location, which takes its meaning from classification, is one of the primary stakes at hand in the constantly ongoing classification struggles of the city. Thinking about housing as a main practice defining one's position in urban space, rather than as a form of capital ready to exchange, cultivates our imaginations and opens up the possibility of looking at how structural forces far beyond our individual control influence our everyday lives. Although the "gentrification" debate has long spread much beyond its primary domain of interest, housing is unlike any other domain of social life. It possesses a spatial gravity that derives from the way it serves the basic necessities of our physical bodies. The locational value of housing ultimately enables us to classify those who live in it. Sociological analysis of housing in cities should therefore also aim to reconstruct the social value of a location.

The symbolic structure of the cities is never fixed. When looking at city spaces, it is by far the most dynamic and site-specific dimension in the triad of social-physical-symbolic space. Examining the *symbolic structures* of cities allows us to see how the dominant discourses land in the *narratives about* the cities, to stone-carve the existing social structures into the physical space. Following Bourdieu's framework allows us to go beyond the frames of analysis that currently exist within urban studies – and which are overly concerned with certain modalities of urban spaces, be they urban ghettoes, gated communities or transitional modes of gentrifying spaces, brutishly flattening the differences between specific cases. Stepping outside this thinking helps us to become more sensitive to the specifics of the particular case, which are a result of unique histories within which constant attempts are made to remember and forget the existing meanings of city spaces, to reimagine existing spaces or to imagine the new ones – establishing *social space* through imagination in urban projects (Löw, 2016). By taking this route, we will see that acts of symbolic reward or acts of *stigmatisation* towards particular spaces and the people living there, are part of overall classificatory struggles. At the present time, these are often driven by policies of urban renewal, the aim of which often is to reload symbolic meanings of urban locations, changing the whole equilibrium of the symbolic meanings of a city.

Interim remarks: leaving behind gentrification, but not the 'gentrifying' locations

At this point, I risk being somewhat predictable by simply inviting the reader to embrace Bourdieusian thinking in the debate on gentrification. But we also might very well ask why it is that despite many good reasons for the debate on gentrification to embrace Pierre Bourdieu's ideas of a reflexive sociology, they remain largely overlooked. Furthermore, when such ideas have been used, they are awkwardly employed to sustain the debate's *scholarly doxa*, which proposes its' own disciplinary take on how one should look at the social life of cities. Without questioning and dismantling these *scholarly doxas* – which are often wrapped up in technical jargon and numerous rituals required for the production of scientific discourse – such debates do nothing other than maintain 'common sense' views on the social world being "as it is" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). On the surface, the methodological instruments of the debate on gentrification appear to be suitable for digging down to the causes of "gentrification". In practice, however, they leave one in a continually deepening pit of *doxic* acceptance of the social forces that produce gentrification. This is itself a rather exquisite way of reproducing *symbolic violence*, or an uncontested *doxic* acceptance of our daily lifeworlds in cities.

To move forward from this point, we need to question the logic of the debate itself and look for an alternative epistemological position. Following the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, we should question whether it is even worth placing a 'gentrifying' location, or indeed any type of location in a city, at the centre of analysis. Various types of urban locations simply serve as a protective screen behind which to hide or to divert our attention from the very many forces that affect the ongoing constellations of *physical*, *social* and *symbolic* space. A consistent use of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts would require us to refuse the term 'gentrification' itself. Despite all the benefits that such a refusal might bring to our understanding of such urban spaces, there are reasons why such a move is easier to imagine than to carry out in practice. Researching urban areas according to the lines of Bourdieu's *oeuvre* requires both difficult theoretical work and additional efforts to combine knowledge currently dispersed in very different academic disciplines of urban studies. Participating in the debate on gentrification along the lines of its orthodox theories gives researchers easy access to an established discourse about a phenomenon of unfading public relevance. Thus, flirting with this discourse – and in a way this thesis is also doing just that – provides quick and obvious academic benefits in terms of being quoted, financed and published.

I find it unlikely that such an invitation to leave the epistemological grounds of the debate on gentrification (which is a kind of field of play of its own working, like a sub-field of urban studies) would attract many followers. Some would argue that such a move requires the researcher to refuse a lot without offering anything concrete or clearly valuable in return. But there is a place of debate within the overall hierarchy of the social sciences – on the verges of human geography, anthropology and sociology that can explicate this reasoning.
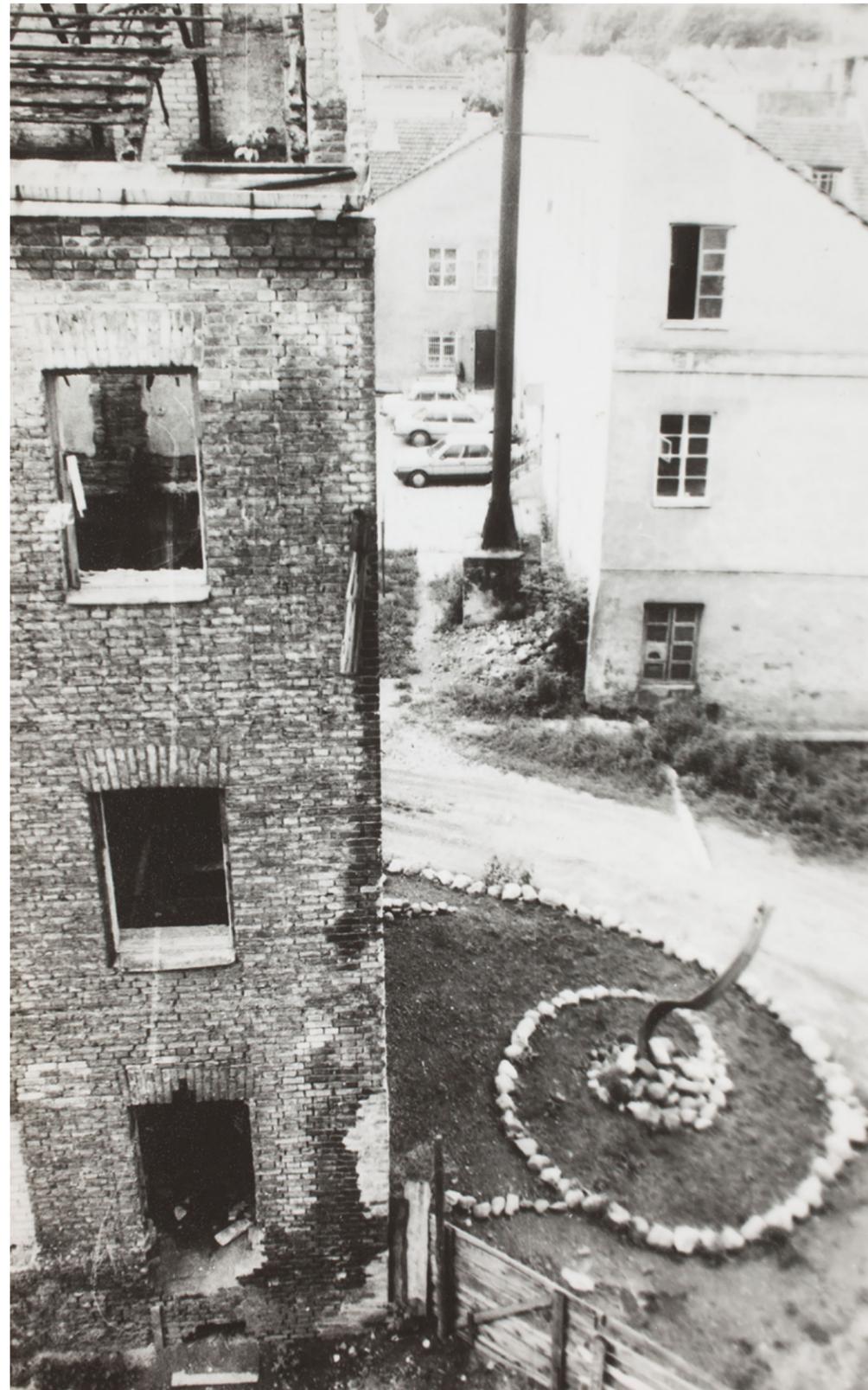
Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 1996.

A methodologically thorough use of the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu would require us to leave a mode of thinking that is framed by looking at *physical space* as the primary source of explanations for urban realities. Such a move is far too counter-intuitive for researchers in urban studies positioned at the intersection of human geography, anthropology and urban sociology. Yet we can also look at it in a less dramatic way. Despite of all that has been said about the debate on 'gentrification', we should also admit that 'gentrifying' urban spaces are very specific empirical situations, which inspire the sociological imagination. They are urban areas where agents from very different positions in the social space meet up. In these spaces, we can observe agents with very different social histories, embodying *habituses* with inconsistent if not opposing *trajectories* in their interactions not only with the same urban space, but also with each other. Leaving behind epistemological positions in the debate on gentrification does not mean that we have to leave the opportunities that 'gentrifying' locations provide for the study of social life in cities.

Accordingly, I here leave behind the epistemological positions in the debate on gentrification for those arising from the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. Choosing a 'gentrifying' urban location is simply a valid decision for an empirical research design. Such decisions usually have their own, inevitable personal logic, to which I will return in the next chapter. But they also have their logic of research economy. Loic Wacquant highlighted two possible ways in which these decisions can be made without disturbing the integrity of Pierre Bourdieu's sociological perspective (Wacquant, 2018). According to these, the analysis should be performed:

— Either through reconstruction *of the field* in the making of the specific
  phenomena of our interest;

— Or through a selective use of *other concepts*, which should however be used
  with the regard to an overall system of conceptual apparatus.

Given my lengthy critique of false identification of the *field* within the debate on gentrification, one might expect me to take the former path. I would like to do so – but the problem with such a decision is a relatively high workload of historical deconstruction and empirical analysis. Such a workload is rarely manageable given the economy of undergraduate research, which is limited to one researcher just entering the academic game and usually working on her/his own. In fact, Bourdieu himself developed and explicitly described his methodology of *field* analysis only during the second half of his career, when he himself was an established social scientist working on research programmes within wide collaborations.

Without issuing a spoiler alert for the forthcoming chapter, I will mention here that at this stage of urban research regarding Vilnius, my attempts could not be a part of research programme reconstructing the *field* in the making of the urban forms of this city. Therefore, I am taking *symbolic violence* as my core concept from Pierre Bourdieu. Current epistemological positions in urban studies often leave us in a situation where we all gaze at the immense

power of social forces that determine our everyday lives, deprived of any feeling of human agency. Most sincere attempts to escape this deadlock suggest that the concept of *symbolic violence* can be helpful in achieving this. This concept should help in capturing sensitive accounts of how changing relationships of power are reproduced on the ground, changing our everyday lives in cities. To achieve such a level of sensitivity, I intend to analyse *symbolic violence* with reference to the *field of housing.* Many possible arguments exist as to why it is worth working with such a relationship. But what fascinates me about housing is that it is a common human practice, and one of the few so directly related to the basic necessities of our physical bodies. Housing is unlike any other domain of social life whose spatial gravity derives from the way it serves the basic necessities of our physical bodies. People of all social statuses, even the homeless people covering themselves with carton boxes to protect them from the wind and cold during a night on the street, are *doing housing.* Thus, an observation of relationships to housing gives us unique ways to speak about the ways in which the social forces around us influence the lives of those taking up very different positions in the *social space.*

Relational analysis of neighbours within gentrifying urban areas, of agents holding different positions in the *social space* and different positions in the field of housing, allow us to go beyond *post-factum* statements on *displacement.* This opportunity to observe direct interactions or bodily tensions between actors taking different positions in the social space is precisely an attribute of these urban spaces. These material structures of cities, which are a result of human agency, of a struggle against surrounding forces – both natural and social – are at the same time distant collective representations of an individual "sense of place". At the same time, the *habitus* of an individual is as an internalised and embodied "sense of place" of its own in the world – both a perception of social space and of one's own position in it (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Therefore, *habitus* is another concept of particular importance to this study. Despite the many misuses of this concept, we must keep striving for its proper interpretation in urban sociology. By taking this path of interpreting social reality without deconstruction of *the field*, I also run the risk of slipping towards certain poetic interpretations of everyday life. But I feel that precisely this choice is a valid one – both within the current state of the literature with which I am debating, but also within my own professional history.

Picture 7.
Plan for the urban development of Vilnius, 1817.

3.

THE CASE FOR A CASE STUDY OF CENTRAL VILNIUS

Within the genre of academic writing, at this point I am expected to lean on the various aspects of scientific relevance of my chosen empirical case. Whether these consist of the structural particularities of the specific country or city I am researching, or the unique qualities of certain neighbourhood I have chosen for my study – I need to shoot them here. This salvo should convince the reader of the unquestionable relevance of the case. Nevertheless, the requirements of the genre usually lead to fairly predictable literature reviews and descriptions of the most important or visible urban developments. Only in rare cases are they accompanied by short descriptions of the history of a city or neighbourhood. The contents of these descriptions are usually kept deliberately brief as a sort of 'teaser' to hook the reader's interest, ready for the 'main course' of the fieldwork analysis itself.

I will begin this chapter in exactly the same way – with a short introduction to the case. But by the end of it, I will arrive at three questions, the answering of which will help me to extract more from the existing knowledge about Vilnius to aid in the analysis of my chosen neighbourhood. What you will read here is thus an initial description of the case of the neighbourhood, in what is also an extended reflection on the case of Vilnius.

Current urban frontiers of segregation in Vilnius

Over recent decades, Lithuanian researchers in the field of urban studies have invested significant energy in describing the changing urban forms of Lithuanian cities. As always, the city is a common object of inquiry for researchers of urban planning and architecture. Recently, however, human geographers have also invested tremendous efforts into mapping the spatial developments of Lithuanian cities. These works provide sufficient knowledge to back up formal arguments as to why Vilnius, among other cities in Lithuania or the world, is a relevant case for research into urban segregation. But also, why this is a good case to show how sociology of Pierre Bourdieu can enrish this field of research. The commonest and most acute spatial development in Lithuania's largest cities – namely, Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda – throughout the last decades has been extensive suburbanisation (Burneika et al., 2017). These cities sprawl into the surrounding rural areas, often beyond their official administrative borders (Uberavičienė et. al., 2011). At the same time, the populations of the districts of these cities containing Soviet blocks of flats are aging, and losing inhabitants of the highest socioeconomic status. Despite this, these districts still remain the most socially diverse neighbourhoods of these cities (Burneika et al., 2017). All three cities even contain similar geographical locations in which residents of higher socioeconomic status tend to concentrate. Either due to the mere accident of the historical development of these urban areas, or through the influence of some unidentified social laws, residents of higher socioeconomic status have tended to concentrate in the northern suburbs of each of these three major cities (Burneika et al., 2017.

Despite these similarities in terms of general trends, geographical accounts suggest a number of qualities that make Vilnius stand out from the other large cities of Lithuania. During times of unprecedented flows of emigration from Lithuania, Vilnius is the only city that sustained its population figures. The scale of internal migration to Vilnius from other parts of Lithuania has been significant enough to avoid urban shrinkage. These qualities make Vilnius a fertile social context for conspicuous cases of neighbourhood gentrification. Vilnius is also surrounded by some of the most poorest municipalities in Lithuania (Burneika and Uberavičienė, 2016), making it the most socially polarised region in the country. In 2011, the percentages of residents from different districts of Vilnius who shared a particular socioeconomic status could vary as much as tenfold (Burneika et al., 2017). Vilnius is also the urban region of Lithuania with the greatest ethnic diversity. On the map of Vilnius, categories of ethnicity align quite closely with categories of socioeconomic status – mostly along the same lines of a north-south divide. From around 2010 onwards, residents of higher socioeconomic status and of predominantly Lithuanian ethnicity began to settle in the previously rural areas mostly inhabited by Polish minorities in the north of the city. The southern part of Vilnius beyond the strip of the major railway line was not the initial destination for such suburbanisation, and thus contained a significantly higher share of ethnic minorities (Burneika and Uberavičienė, 2016). Yet over the last decade, this part of the city has become of the focus for the intensive development of detached housing units. At least some changes in the social composition of this part of the city are likely to be observed in the analysis of the next census.

These sharp contrasts in the spatial distributions of residents of different socioeconomic status and ethnicity provide an approximate picture of how the social space is currently divided on the map of Vilnius. The existence of social contrasts, as well as sufficient scope within Lithuania for internal migration to maintain the population growth of Vilnius, are reasons to regard Vilnius among other Lithuanian cities as the case that best fits the socio- spatial requirements to attract the interest of those involved in the debate on gentrification. Although the levels of segregation in Vilnius are significantly lower than those in other European capitals, Vilnius appears to follow recognisable patterns of suburbanisation (Uberavičienė, 2017; Valatka et. al., 2016). Gentrification is not as acute a phenomenon in Vilnius as suburbanisation, but this process is nevertheless conspicuous – residents of lower socioeconomic status are abandoning the inner city (Uberavičienė et. al., 2015). This includes not only manual workers, who used to inhabit certain industrial pockets of the inner city; workers in the service sector – the most numerous and most evenly distributed socioeconomic group – were also leaving the inner city. The maps of urban segregation produced by local geographers could be used to pinpoint a number of neighbourhoods that would be possible locations to study the social life of a gentrifying area. One could, for example, take the historic district of *Užupis*, which has many of the qualities of a gentrifying neighbourhood. However, this is a fairly mature case, with among the highest housing prices in the city for almost two decades now. The majority of housing in Vilnius belongs to owner-occupiers, and displacement can rarely occur without a decision to sell. Even under these circumstances, however, the processes of gentrification in *Užupis* are somewhat advanced.

No matter how many arguments regarding its scientific relevance I could provide here – whether formal or more nuanced ones – it is important to remain open to the fact that my choice of this and not another part of central Vilnius, was of a personal nature. This slice of urban land is where I spent more than a decade of my young adulthood. In this work, of my own academic initiation, there are some benefits to finding myself as a sociologist through my study of this strip of urban land, because my own relationship to this place is somewhat settled and clear. Conducting an ethnographic study in such circumstances has its own benefits. At a point in time when the new census data has not yet arrived, and the last data are now almost nine years old – just about as old as they can get – taking a strictly qualitative approach to this analysis seems like the only feasible decision. On the other hand, these and other gaps make Vilnius a not especially friendly case for research that is so closely related to questions of social class. There are currently no quick ways to contextualise this case in relation to quantitative depictions of the social class structure of Vilnius or of Lithuania. In such circumstances, any ethnographic depictions of urban life risk being questioned as qualitatively interesting but scientifically irrelevant, on the grounds of the missing link with the bigger picture of structuration in society. My response to such potential criticisms is that it is precisely this type of ethnography that helps us to question the very categories we use in our quantitative descriptions of societies. And with the better opportunities for such quantitative analysis arriving soon, now is a good time to immerse ourselves in the qualitative wealth of insights provided by locations such as the vicinity of Vilnius railway station.

To dequately portray the symbolic domination of urban space, a less advanced case was needed. A case in which one can still observe the contestation of these processes, rather than just staring at the final result with some memory of the controversies involved in its making. Pinpointing such a case using somewhat outdated census data may not necessarily give an impression of the choice being an entirely objective, scientific procedure. But there was no particular reason to pursue such an approach, because my personal interest and specific access to the research case were the most compelling arguments in favour of choosing the vicinity of Vilnius railway station for the fieldwork in this study. The lines of the urban frontiers of segregation that were mapped in the same works by local human geographers would, however, suggest that studying Naujamiestis[3] or certain parts of Old Town towards the railway station could indeed be another match for the analysis of gentrification. But the increasingly enthusiastic mentions of this district in public discourses on urban renewal were another important indication of the relevance of this case. Well before I began my fieldwork, such discourses hinted that the processes of gentrification here might be far more advanced than was suggested by the analysis of census data, which occurs at a fairly slow pace.

Vilnius railway station.

[3] Lithuanian for 'New Town', a district largely developed at the turn of the 20th century.

The case for a case study of central Vilnius

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

The vicinity of Vilnius railway station: a neighbourhood of many borderlines

Looking at a bird's-eye view of the location, we see the fairly diverse morphology and architectural forms of this neighbourhood. There are, however, several distinct borderlines that separate the neighbourhood from other parts of the city. The railway is the sharpest of these, cutting off the location on its south-east side from the historic industrial and working-class district of Naujininkai. This part of the territory is visually dominated by the building of the railway station, which is an example of Stalinist architecture. In front of this building is a small square, in which a statue of Stalin himself was erected and stood for a short period during the 1960s (see Picture 18 in Section 3.2). Being close to the station, this area is also a location for intense flows of people arriving from outside the city by train or by bus, walking on foot from Naujininkai or from other near by districts, taking public transport, or simply passing through along the main streets of the neighbourhood. The station hub feeds the surrounding streets with flows of people that follow the recognisable day-time rhythms of the economic heartbeat deep inside the body of the city. The territory around the station is also home to a large number of economy-class hotels. The triangle of Seinų, Sodų/Gėlių and Pylimo streets are also an active spot for street prostitution. This also contributes to the flows of passers-by in this neighbourhood. The municipality now plans to redevelop the square and the territory around the railway station into a new public space. This forms part of wider plans for urban renewal in this area, a significant part of which is the so-called 'Vilnius Connect' project, implemented by national railway company. This aims to redevelop both public and private land around the territory, and to put it to different use.

Another important borderline of this territory is what used to be the line of the historic wall of the city. The neighbourhood stands just outside the former Rūdninkai gate and the line of the historic city wall, which is now marked by Pylimo street – an active artery of public transport. The neighbourhood is one of several territories of historic suburbs that surround the historic core of the city. These territories still retain their distinctive urbanistic qualities, such as their characteristic networks of streets and links with the historic core. Other specifics of such historic suburbs are certain common morphological types and the natural characteristics of the location (Dijokienė, 2009). These qualities also are the historically created material preconditions for the feel of the neighbourhood. It is worth mentioning that this location was not part of the initial urban renewal programme for Senamiestis ('Old Town') that took place in the 1990s. The streets of this neighbourhood are the first streets one encounters beyond the territory of this urban renewal project. Around the time this programme began to produce widely visible results, the administrative borderlines of Senamiestis were expanded to include this neighbourhood, which up until then had been part of Naujamiestis. This change was made in the hope of spreading the symbolic gains of the Senamiestis renewal to this decaying neighbourhood. At around the same time, the sculpture of the Egg was bought at auction and moved from *Užupis*[4] to a new location just off Pylimo street. Moving this symbol from a location of already advanced urban renewal can be seen as marking a promise of further urban renewal with regard to this territory.

This neighbourhood was also one of the areas of industrial development in Vilnius. Industrialisation followed a certain pre-existing spatial pattern, very much dependent on the natural conditions of Vilnius. Historically, this neighbourhood layed at the south-western corner, situated outside the city wall, in a location that was most distant from the banks and confluences of the rivers Neris and Vilnelė. Without access to water, this territory was not suitable for major manufacturing activities. Thus, the closest territory within the walls of the city – between Aušros and Rūdninkų streets – was historically mostly used for trade with those outside the city. With the arrival of the industrial revolution, this trading place was described as one of the most polluted areas of the city, with a high risk of spreading diseases such as cholera. Once this area had been 'belted' from the south by the railway line, and the railway station was built at its vicinity, it became an attractive new location for industries (Ambrulevičiūtė, 2018). The railway line became a distinctive marker for the new areas of the city. The southern slope of the railway was largely used for industrial purposes, and housed the working class. At the same time, the 'dirty' spots between the remains of the largely demolished city wall and the railway were used for the development of new housing units for various social classes.

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[4] This sculpture was a temporary model that was erected during the initial waves of renewal in the historic suburb of Užupis. Once sufficient funds had been raised, the egg was substituted with a permanent sculpture of an angel – one of public projects that gave a certain symbolic reload to the area. Užupis is the Vilnius neighbourhood most widely known for the use of artistic practices in its urban renewal strategies. Artists had already been active in the neighbourhood before Independence, making the area famous for avant-garde art happenings such as the 'Armada' festival of avantgarde fashion. Many of the artists who were behind these initial initiatives were unable to sustain their place in the neighbourhood in the long term.
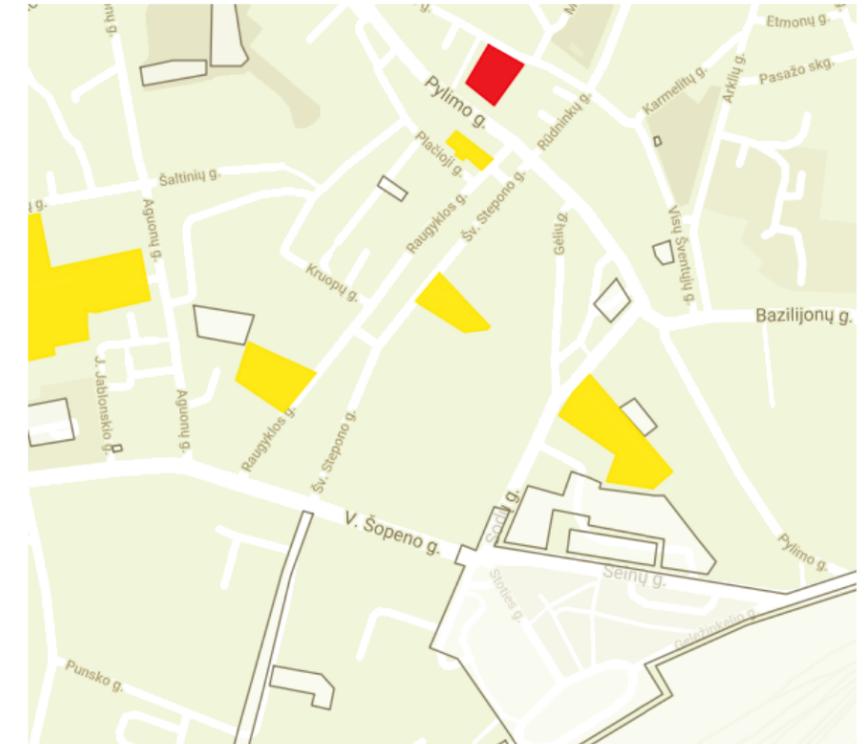
Source:
The public platform of information on city development citify.eu (map downloaded on 2020-02-12). Ongoing housing developments are marked in yellow;
the ongoing development of a commercial building (a hotel) is marked in red.
Transparent shapes mark the areas of planned future developments with various functions including housing estates and public spaces.

During the Soviet period, this neighbourhood and the territories around it gained a newnickname: *Petachok*. This name indirectly refers to the industrial history of the neighbourhood; in particular, to a classified military factory without an official name, known only as *Post Box 555* [5]. This factory was developed from the premises of Elektrit, a manufacturer of radio receivers that was the largest company in interwar Vilnius. Although this factory was situated slightly to the north of the neighbourhood, it was among the most important employers for its residents, hence giving rise to the nickname *Petachok*. This nickname is vanishing from the memory of current residents, just as the factory buildings have vanished from the neighbourhood. The previous locations of the area's factories are now plots of land for active real-estate developments. The map above shows the plots of land in which real-estate projects were under development, or were planned at the time the fieldwork was carried out.

While I will not provide any systematised history concerning the use of housing in this neighbourhood, the built forms themselves mark certain distinctive patterns of spatial organisation. This area is still dominated by the buildings that are more than a century old. More modest historic housing is densely mixed with apartments, that would have been affordable to the more affluent – such a social mix would have been present in this neighbourhood at the beginning of 20th. century. The façades of many of these buildings have exceptional decor. Most of this historic housing is, however, in a dilapidated condition, and in a need of renovation. Like much of the historic centre of Vilnius, the area is dotted

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[5] "Пять" [Pet] or "Пятачок" [Petachok], meaning "five" in Russian, a reference the address of the factory, Post Box 555.

with small pockets of empty land where buildings were severely damaged during the Second World War. Nicknamed the "knocked-out teeth" of the area by architects, these are frequently locations for on-going or prospective real-estate developments. These empty spaces are to some extent also specific to the morphology of this historic suburb. This morphology, together with the grid of streets, was planned and developed much earlier than the decisive events of the war. During the socialist-modernist period, the open spaces between houses were used for the development of housing estates and office buildings, some of which are also present in the area. As a result, this neighbourhood boasts substantial architectural variety.

The neighbourhood in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station of is currently a place of specific commercial practices – a circumstance that may be described as usual in gentrifying locations. *Halės* market now hosts new businesses such as delicatessens. But this is not the only place in the neighbourhood that provides opportunities for authentic consumption. The surrounding streets have also become a location for new shops and bars. *Šv. Stepono* street contains a number of fashion shops and boutiques. The streets around *Halės* market are filled with bars, food places and hairdressers, some of which attempt to exploit the area's transgressive image as a 'red-light district' in their marketing efforts. At the end of *Pylimo* street stands the open-air section of the railway museum, housing the cultural venue '*Platforma*', including the music club '*Triukšmas*' [6] where electronic music events are organised. These publicly celebrated qualities of the neighbourhood might be regarded as sufficient enough to portray the area as an "interesting", "exceptional" or "socially relevant" case. These initial descriptions of "hot" cases that I have so far provided, are very usual in qualitative studies of the lifeworlds of gentrifying urban areas. But I would like to take a couple of steps forward from this by asking myself the following questions:

— *What unused possibilities for talking about the social realities of Vilnius are concealed behind the frequent use of geopolitical or natural metaphors?*

— *What symbolic dispositions and oppositions in Vilnius are hidden behind the geopolitical categories of a 'Soviet' or 'post-Soviet' city?*

— *How can the history of Vilnius stimulate our sociological imaginations concerning the relationships between the physical, symbolic and social spaces of the city?*

In considering these questions, I will make use of the knowledge in recent urban studies of Lithuanian cities without necessarily succumbing to the current thinking about Vilnius. This knowledge will enable me to treat my chosen neighbourhood relationally – as part of the larger whole of the city. It will also help to relate my contribution to the larger context of urban studies of Vilnius (Šarūnas, 2019). I will conclude this chapter by explaining how my observations of the social world in this particular neighbourhood can inform our understanding of this city. In particular, I will outline the methodical choices I have made in my ethnographic research into the social life in the vicinity of a railway station of Vilnius.

[6] Lithuanian for "noise".

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

3.1. Vilnius as a result of political and economic restructuring

To start seeing the social forces moulding the social life in this neighbourhood, we should set our gaze aside from these urban forms. One way to achieve this is to start looking at the logic of the various social institutions that participate in the making of the city, and to consider the role they play in different experiences of the city. A wide array of researchers, working around disciplinary boundaries between different social sciences, touch upon these social forces involved in the making of the city of Vilnius. In this short review of their efforts, I would like to emphasise:

— The changing circumstances of housing and urban planning brought about by the restructuring that began three decades ago. And;

— The unexplored possibilities to speak about the relationships between the social space and social fields that create different experiences of Vilnius.

This review will serve as contextual information to better understand my ethnographic analysis, which should be most useful to foreign readers of this work. But what I aim to achieve here is not some summary of the status quo in Lithuanian urban studies. Rather, my aim is to discuss the extent to which current urban studies informs us about the genealogy of the social fields that mould the urban fabric of Vilnius. The state of such research also defines the possible methodological strategies for empirical research.

A freshly instituted housing market in a 'post-Soviet' city

A relevant question to start with when writing a genealogical review of the housing sector is: where should we begin with such a genealogy? There should be a historic moment, from which the socio-economic conditions of the present housing sector began to be developed. For Vilnius, the year 1990 would seem the most natural point at which to start. The declaration of independence from the Soviet Union was one of the last major historical milestones, and also marks the beginning of the economic and political restructuring of the state. From this date onwards, Lithuania took an extreme U-turn across a variety of public policies – *housing policy* being one of them. Adopting this date as the starting point for our genealogy, however, falls into a tendency to regard Vilnius as *'post-Soviet, 'post-*

communist' or *'post-socialist'* city. It seems unnecessary to point out the large differences between cities in the various countries that, during the second half of the previous century, were part of the Soviet Union or of the Warsaw Pact, and might thus be included in such categories. Hence, these are only really descriptive categories, marking a certain geopolitical affiliation of the case during a certain historical period. In this short review, I would like to show how these categories keep popping up in the discourses of Lithuanian urban studies. Frequently, they are used as if they hold some analytical capacity to reveal certain problems about the current state of our thinking about Vilnius (Šarūnas, 2019).

During the first years after declaration of independence, the housing market or credit market, as we know it today, was largely non-existent in Lithuania. Private ownership of housing was largely implemented through a process of privatisation or, in rarer cases, of restitution. Residents did not possess sufficient means to 'buy out' their housing; thus, housing units were privatised using a voucher system, coupled with relatively small monetary contributions from residents. As a result, by 1995 almost 94% of the public housing stock was held by owner-occupiers (Brazienė, 2018). This high share of privately owned housing remains one of the peculiarities of Lithuanian housing regime to the present day. Privatisation also changed the balance between the roles of the state and the private sector in the upkeep of housing. The maintenance and care of houses became a shared responsibility for the owners of housing units. Material flaws and heating inefficiencies in these properties were 'privatised' together with the houses themselves. At the time, there were no established practices or institutions to deal with the shared responsibilities of residents in running housing units.

Transition from a planned economy to a market economy left a lot of local industry dysfunctional. It led to intense economic deprivation, and not all residents were capable of contributing to the upkeep of the housing stock. The market for maintenance and repair services, as well as practices regarding cooperation between owners, did not immediately catch up with the institution of property rights (Aidukaitė, 2014). Furthermore, a significant share of the housing stock was energy-inefficient, and rising energy prices affected the household economy. The influence of deindustrialisation on the overall urban landscape of Vilnius was no less pronounced (Cirtautas, 2013). Industrial facilities, some of which were in the historic industrial districts near to the very centre of Vilnius, were privatised. During this decade, many industrial complexes gradually ceased their economic activity or were relocated away from the urban centre. Deindustrialisation and the restructuring of the economy meant that there was a need for new commercial buildings suitable for a service-driven economy, such as shopping malls and office buildings.

The second decade of independence was different in terms of the maturity of the institutions of private property and the market. The restitution of land property rights had already enabled small residential constructions outside the cities, and high energy prices fuelled the movement of people towards the outskirts of the city or into the collective gardens, which had also been privatised during the same wave (Cirtautas, 2013). With

the economy recovering after the Russian Crisis[7], individual family houses were being developed in suburban areas. Foreign investors had entered the Lithuanian banking sector, and an increased supply of mortgage funding fuelled the development of new apartment buildings (Cirtautas, 2013). Real-estate developers were buying up spare land plots, industrial sites and public buildings, which were used for the spatially intensive development of housing stock to be sold at market prices. The majority of housing developments were of questionable architectural and construction quality, often interfering with the existing urban structures of the city (Čaikauskas, 2008). Thus, the renovation of Soviet apartment blocks began to be explored as an alternative to such new developments. Although the majority of housing stock developed during Soviet period was in need of renovation, such activities did not reach any significant scale (Leonavičius and Žilys, 2009).

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[7] The Russian financial crisis, which hit Russia in August 1998. The crisis had a severe impact on the economies of neighbouring countries, including Lithuania.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

Visually, most conspicuous urban forms created during first decades of independence were the concentration of high-rise business buildings on the right bank of Neris river, the so-called *'architectural hill'*. This development is a very visible result of urban planning policy. Vilnius municipality contributed to the rise of the hill not only through its planning decisions, but also through its own decision to build a new high-rise town hall there, housing all of the city's administration that was previously located in the historic Old Town. The raising of *architectural hill* was followed by an intense public debate prompted by widespread dissatisfaction with the way this urban complex dominated the city's skyline and interfered with the view of Vilnius Old Town, by then designated a UNESCO heritage site. Specialists in urban planning argued that if *architectural hill* were to be developed further without intensive planning and control, it would have a negative influence on the image of the city (Vyšniūnas, 2006; Motieka, 2009; Glemža, 2011). At the same time, it was also argued that greater attention should be given to other high-rise developments around the area, which competed to dominate the skyline, constructing a certain system of visual meanings of their own (Kajackaitė, 2011). The debate surrounding high-rise 'architectural hills' shows that individual locations do not function independently of the whole system of meanings within a city. *Architectural hill* was constructed with a certain symbolic disposition, contrary to that of the existing urban fabric – as a visual commentary on historic centre.

This growing abundance of new urban forms was the situation in Vilnius when the global financial crisis hit Lithuania. Massive speculation in housing was one of the core causes of the economic recession that hit the country in 2008 following the global financial crisis. Its result was an exceptionally deep recession that swallowed almost one-fifth of the economy[8]. This deep impact alone is enough to suggest how strongly the local economy depended on the housing sector, the mortgage markets, and the related global flows of capital. It also helps to explain why, during the decade following the crisis, we could observe a heightened interest on the part of researchers in questions of housing. The first to react to such demands for knowledge were economists. In their works, the exceptionally high explosions in housing prices in Lithuania and other Central European countries just before global financial crises were firstly interpreted as the result of overly optimistic consumer expectations (Azbainis and Rudzkienė, 2011; Rudzkienė and Azbainis, 2012). These authors also connected this heightened optimism with the process of joining the European Union, and blamed the "immature" and "transitional" nature of local market institutions for the especially deep effects of the crises (Rudzkienė and Azbainis 2012). Economists saw housing mostly as an object for fiscal and macroprudential policies. Among this research community, one could sense a certain concern regarding how the housing market – which is highly dependent on international credit markets, and is also an important creator of employment – influences the general health of the economy. Questions regarding general access to housing, its affordability and quality, were left untouched.

At almost the same time as these discussions on macroprudential policies relating to housing market, a group of social researchers took the first important steps in putting the case

[8] According to official statistics on GDP provided by the Lithuanian Department for Statistics: osp.stat.gov.lt/nacionalines-saskaitos

of Lithuania into the landscape of institutional housing studies. According to the taxonomies of housing regimes coined within this discipline, the Lithuanian model appeared to show the clear patterns of a *liberal* housing model, characterised by the limited role of the state in the regulation and supply of housing, with the institution of the market becoming the main provider (Lipnevič, 2012). However, deeper inquiries revealed a much more complex picture. Lithuania's economic transition has resulted in a peculiar dual housing situation. While the market is an important housing provider and the social housing sector is small, only a very limited share of the population can benefit from the provisions of the market. Family remains an important institution for securing housing. The processes of privatisation and liberalisation have created significant generational differences in terms of access to housing (Indriliūnaitė and Žilys, 2018). Faced with the necessity to buy or rent housing at market prices, Lithuania's youth often depend on support from their families. For this reason, rather than closely resembling classic examples of the liberal model, Lithuania's housing regime can also be seen as being similar to those in Southern European countries (Aidukaitė et al., 2014).

Lithuania's housing regime is thus not an easy fit for the existing taxonomies of 'ideal' types of housing policy regimes proposed by institutional housing studies (Kemeny, 2006). Based on similarities between the paths taken by other Central and Eastern European countries to restructure their housing sectors, local housing researchers suggest that Lithuania's housing regime should be categorised as *"post-communist"* (Aidukaitė, 2014). At the same time, however, it is converging towards the *liberal* model. This suggestion strikes a certain chord of *déjà vu*. In a similar manner to the way it appears in the writings of human geographers and researchers in urban planning, it represents yet another example of the category 'post-communist'. On a positive note, these housing researchers admitted that this 'post communist' categorisation can only be justified as an interim stop before more sufficient knowledge on Lithuania's housing regime is acquired. At the same time, such categorisation imposes a certain geopolitical lead on the way in which we think about social reality, limiting our sociological imaginations. In local interdisciplinary fields of urban studies, researchers who follow very different epistemological traditions in their disciplines, often work on common cases. It seems that the category of post-Soviet or post-communist city is currently being used as a shaky skeleton to maintain an interdisciplinary narrative concerning developments in Lithuanian cities.

These categories are, however, both problematic and time-bound. Residential buildings – *"Soviet blocks of flats"*, as they are often called – constructed between 1968 and 1987, do indeed constitute the majority of the housing stock of Vilnius. But although the category of *"Soviet blocks of flats"* marks a concrete material reality – that is, buildings of a specific period and quality – it is not particularly clear what these categories should signify when they are used to speak about the city as a whole. This use somehow suggests that there is something in common between different 'post-Soviet' cities. But even within a single country, cities that are marked with these categories can exhibit significant differences. Take the examples of the mono-industrial town of Visaginas, next-door to the closed-down nuclear power plant of Ignalina, and Vilnius – a capital city with a historic centre designated by UNESCO as a world heritage site. Both could be tagged as *'post-Soviet'* cities. But each of them has a very specific historical genealogy. The economic and political restructuring of Lithuania brought

to these cities somewhat different social consequences, affecting the everyday life of their residents. What these cities do have in common is that they both provided the backdrop to the now-famous HBO series *Chernobyl*, which is now feeding the imaginations of international audiences as to what constituted a *'Soviet city'*.

Experiences of the city in the changing landscape of Vilnius

The social researchers who have introduced institutional housing studies to Lithuania are taking first important steps towards a better understanding of the social life of Vilnius. Overall, the current state of urban studies with regard to Vilnius still provides little in the way of an easy start for the analysis of the social fields – such as housing or urban developments – that produce urban forms. Too little has yet been done to map the actors in this field, or to describe the genealogies of their relationships, in order that these structures could become open for sociological field analysis. Most social research into the power relationships within urban life has focused on discursive practices reflecting the experiences of the various actors facing the changing landscape of the city. These studies compensate for some of the deficiencies in our knowledge about the specificities of social experiences in Vilnius. There are also a sufficient number of critical perspectives on the current developments in the city. For example, in her cultural analysis, Trilupaitytė explores how local politicians and related interest groups employed the arguments of cultural regeneration to push through plans for a subsidiary of the Guggenheim museum in Vilnius (Trilupaitytė, 2008). In her clearly critical and political stand, she calls this project *"a case of cultural post-colonialism"*. In doing so, she also provides an explicit analysis of the neoliberal rhetoric lurking behind this and other, similar projects. In her analysis of the discourses on architecture and architects, Čiupailaitė also identifies shades of neoliberal ideology (Čiupailaitė, 2014). This is a rare example of local urban research in which the analysis is concerned with the role of a specific professional group – architects – which is inseparable from the production of urban forms. This analysis offers a wide array of insights into the profession's lack of empowerment and struggles for social status. A similar storyline in terms of lack of empowerment can also be seen in research on the mobilisations of local urban communities. At first, this research emphasised a lack of social capital within such groups and a lack of success in dealing with local authorities (Aidukaitė, 2013). More recent accounts, however, show that while these mobilisations may be short-lived, they are actually effective in controlling unfavourable developments in the local urban environment (Aidukaitė; 2016; Aidukaitė; 2018).

Not all the debates have taken such a critical stand, however. One case in point is the analysis of the effects of housing revitalisation in Vilnius Old Town. This revitalisation was probably the first urban renewal project in the history of independent Lithuania. The process mirrored the commercial developments of high-rise buildings on the right bank of the river Neris. As one of the first steps in this process, the historic centre of Vilnius was

listed as a UNESCO world heritage site. Subsequently, in 1998, a specialised agency for the renewal of Vilnius Old Town was launched. This agency took over the administration of national and municipal funding for the renewal programme. These policy measures initiated "gentrification" processes in Vilnius Old Town and in the neighbouring historic district of Užupis. Early research into these processes by human geographers suggested that they could be interpreted like any other classic case of state-driven "gentrification" (Standl and Krupickaitė , 2004). In line with the then-current academic debate in human geography, this case was described along the lines of "general phases" of "gentrification", with the inclusion of some notes on the specificities of the cases. Yet this account of "gentrification" did not problematise any impact of social structures on the opportunities for less affluent residents to remain in the centre of the city. The great symbolic weight of historic parts of Vilnius in the wake of independence, as well as the presence of middle classes with the capacity to recognise and appreciate these cultural forms, must have been an important precondition for the gentrification of these areas. Despite this, these aspects of the way urban renewal changes people's experience of the city were not covered.

Plenty of ethnographic accounts show how the residents of other urban locations in Vilnius related to the urban changes that surrounded them. For example, participatory research in Šnipiškės, a historic district of wooden houses situated at the foot of the skyscrapers making up the new business heart of the city, suggested how various community art initiatives could be used to develop local social capital, and possibly also employed for neighbourhood regeneration (Lavrinec, 2014). Research into this neighbourhood also provides plenty of insights into how the urban restructuring of this historic area of Vilnius aroused among residents opposing feelings of being at the same time empowered and overlooked, yet largely having lost the feeling of local community, and being unsure about their futures (Aglinskas, 2014). Analysis of the experiences of residents in completely different districts of newly developed housing estates in Vilnius suggests growing aspirations towards 'privateness'. In addition, there is a strong need to feel in control of one's immediate living environment. Although occurring in a very different urban space, this coincides in some ways with the feelings of disempowerment and loss of control mentioned above (Čiupailaitė, 2012). This research suggests that these new developments of housing estates are constructed to represent an inversion of the experiences of Soviet blocks of flats - by emphases individual privacy rather than commonality. At the same time, the present residents of the neighbourhoods of Soviet blocks feel a deepening sense that they cannot influence local decisions affecting life in their neighbourhood (Tereškinas and Žilys, 2013).

Within the research, certain knowledge can be found regarding contemporary city life in Vilnius that is unrelated to questions of housing or urban planning, but which nevertheless yields deep descriptions of urban experiences. For example, in a Foucauldian mapping of the practices of social control, Marija Šupa offers a glimpse into disciplinary and bio-political practices in the historic district surrounding Lukiškės prison (Šupa, 2015). Although this analysis is in no way related to housing or urban planning, it concerns various legal and social mechanisms that control the movements of bodies in a specific area of the city, and shows how bodies do or do not comply with this control.

It also reminds us that the specific *'feel'* of a neighbourhood is socially constructed not only by the bodies contained in the housing of the area, but also by the flows of passers-by from outside the area, who can either obey or resist the local mechanisms of control. One can also resist these mechanisms of control through practices that question the dominant symbolic meanings of the city, as do the graffiti artists in Vilnius. In her exploration of their practices, Veronika Urbonaitė-Barkauskienė argues that the intensity of these practices is related to existing spatial developments of the city (Urbonaitė-Barkauskienė, 2014). By marking urban spaces with signs that speak either to this subculture alone or to outside audiences, graffiti artists are creating contra-spaces of their own.

All of the above examples are a favourable addition to our knowledge about the ways in which different actors participate in producing urban forms. However, local communities or even the professional guild of architects are not the actors who possess the most significant power in the field to influence the specific 'feel' of the place. The role of other actors in the growth machine – land owners, real-estate developers and brokers, local politicians and the media – are frequently overlooked. In general, the current analysis of Lithuanian cities tends to revolve around questions of social class or the political economy. Restructuring towards a post-industrial economy has significantly changed the class structure of Lithuania (Norkus 2015). Yet this 'post-industrial renaissance' has come with its own heavy price. Phenomenological observations, presented above, do inform the starting point for our sociological analysis of the effects of these changes on people's experiences of Vilnius. The growing pile of such examples shows that one can indeed – more or less elegantly, and with greater or lesser success – tell meaningful stories about differential experiences of contemporary city life. Such research has already become a common strategy when speaking about cities. But unless it ceases to overlook or avoid classical questions with regard to social structures, this field of research is unlikely to move forward.

The roles of land owners and real-estate developers, local politicians, the media and other actors in the growth machines of Lithuanian cities is by far the biggest blind spot in Lithuanian urban studies. Research into such actors in the Lithuanian housing sector has been literally abandoned by economists, another disciplinary group usually engaged in the interdisciplinary field of urban studies. To gain a clearer picture of how urban experiences are produced, we require much more fully elaborated knowledge as to the general motivations of actors in real estate sector. We also need to know more about the circumstances in which the vital micro-level decisions on housing rent and acquisition are made. Understanding the sources of social power of those acting at various levels in the urban growth machine is of particular public importance. Such power enables them to have the final say in the creation of new positions and dispositions of the urban fabric of Vilnius. Newly created spaces not only affect the practices and experiences within that particular space; they create differential opportunities to pursue everyday life in different spaces, and thus influence the emotional relationships of citizens to the city. Simply tagging these experiences with the label *'post-Soviet'* or *'post-communist'* does not stimulate a critical relationship with the research object. These categories naturalise the effects of the structural forces that produce these experiences, inviting us to accept them as a 'self-evident' result of history.

3.2.Dismantling the symbolic structures of 'post-Soviet' Vilnius

'*Post-Soviet*' or '*post-communist*' city are problematic geopolitical categories. Nevertheless, they are so prevalent within the majority of writings on Vilnius that it is difficult to describe the current state of urban research into the city without referring to them. They are as widely used as other problematic biological metaphors of the core and the periphery. One way to allow oneself a critical distance from these geopolitical and natural categories is to take a look back at the historical genealogy of urban forms. Therefore, I intend here to discuss:

— The material and stylistic dispositions of architecture from the *socialist-modernist* period (1955-1990).

— How such architecture was built as a certain opposition to the *Stalinist* or *socialist-realist* style (1945-1954).

The consensus among historians is that the period of Soviet occupation of Lithuania between 1945 and 1990 left us with architecture that is far from homogeneous. Even the lengthy period of socialist modernism itself yielded certain variations in urban structure and the built form (Drėmaitė, 2012). These material forms have remained in use in Vilnius until present day, and have very clear dispositions. Historical analysis of them allows us to recognise certain symbolic meanings in various buildings and the locations within Vilnius in which they predominate. Such dispositions and oppositions are a product of a certain relational dialogue that has been maintained throughout the long history of the city.

The building of the socialist-modernist dream in Vilnius

At this point, I will begin a short presentation of the historic genealogy of urban forms in Vilnius. I will be winding the timeline backwards, as such a strategy will help to show how the housing and material urban forms of various historical periods were often created as a certain opposition to the existing urban fabric of the city. When reflecting on the *Soviet* architecture of Vilnius, it is relevant to begin such a backwards genealogy with *socialist-modernist* housing. The unique stylistic and material qualities of this period constitute the majority of the present housing stock of Vilnius, now popularly categorised as the districts of Soviet blocks. These urban areas are a direct outcome of the housing policy

of the Soviet Union. At the beginning of the 1960s, Nikita Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Communist Party, announced his new welfare policies. Among these was a promise that each family would have its own apartment. This was followed by years of intensive construction of economical housing across the whole Soviet Union, including the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (Drémaité, 2011). To overcome a massive shortage of housing within a minimal timespan, which was the goal of this housing policy, housing development was industrialised. To that end, French technologies of pre-fabricated concrete panel building were imported into the country (Drémaité 2012; Lakačauskaité-Kaminskienė, 2018). Thus, this is the second point at which we might question how pure the category of *'Soviet housing blocks'* actually is. Due to the importing of building technologies, the *socialist modernism* of Vilnius indeed shares a lot of similarities with its international counterparts.

The planning decisions that shaped the face of socialist-modernist Vilnius followed very strict regulatory patterns of dividing and developing urban areas according to their planned population. This process was centralised across the Soviet Union (Leonavičius and Žilys, 2009), although some variations can be seen where the practices of planning deviated from centralised policies. Vilnius is an interesting example of how the planning practices of the socialist-modernist period were influenced by urban planning ideas imported from abroad (Drémaité, 2011). Even during periods of the strictest border control behind the so-called 'Iron Curtain', local architects were given permission for professional trips to Sweden, Finland and other countries, including the communist countries of Eastern Europe, to document architectural innovations and bring them into local practice (Drémaité, 2011). Such importing of ideas led to the development of the most successful local examples of urban planning, in particular bringing sensitivity into the landscape of the building plot and the nature that surrounded it. This was the background to the development of *Lazdynai*, a district of Vilnius which was later awarded the Lenin Prize as an exemplary achievement across the entire Soviet Union. The urban planning ideas employed in the development of *Lazdynai* were taken from specific districts of Stockholm and Helsinki. Some of the most elegant buildings of the *Lithuanian school of architecture* are also related to this importing of ideas. These historical facts are another point at which we can easily question the imagined vision imposed by the category of *'post-communist'* or *'post-Soviet'* city.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

The majority of Vilnius citizens currently live in socialist-modernist districts. These were developed in accordance with the modernist ideas that spread across Europe and around the World during the latter half of the 20th century. Housing developments of that time left sharp borderlines across the city, along which mass-produced apartment blocks rose abruptly beside the forests or meadows of what previously had previously been rural areas. These developments surrounding the inner city like a thick belt, largely from the north-west side (Cirtautas, 2013). The material, technological and economic limitations of the time also meant that this variant of modernism was different from original inspirations – both in terms of building quality, but also in the development of social infrastructure. Due to a lack of resources, the development of social infrastructure, which ought to support new housing districts, often lagged behind the initial plans or their original Nordic examples (Drémaité, 2012; Urbonaité 2013). Public functions thus remained concentrated in the city centre. And although a modern transport system connected these 'micro-districts' to the inner city in order to secure access to social services - we can see that current concentration of social services in the city centre has its roots in *socialist modernist* period.

Building quality and underdeveloped social infrastructure are not the only characteristics of the local version of modernism. Another is the duration over which modernist principles of architecture and planning were in play. Despite attempts to critically reproach socialist-modernist building principles during the middle of this period, as well as attempts to search for possibilities of diversity under the given material and planning restrictions, Lithuania did not experience any of the extreme turn in architectural thought that was seen outside the Soviet bloc in the 1980s (Drėmaitė, 2012). The end of socialist modernism in Lithuania is thus identified with the collapse of the Soviet regime in the 1990s.

The House of Composers and surrounding living accommodation in Žvėrynas, Vilnius.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

One of the historic legacies of this prolonged period is the industrial development of housing with an almost total eradication of private initiative, with comparatively little diversity in the housing units provided. The majority of the population, whatever their occupational differences or place within the overall societal structure, lived in standardised housing units of a very similar kind (Aidukaitė, 2014). This being said, even in these circumstances some differences did occur in the way housing units were allocated – in particular, the housing

dedicated specifically for the Soviet ruling classes. The "House of Composers" and living accommodation surrounding it is one example of exceptional housing units from this period (Drėmaitė, 2011). In this particular case, the professional Composers' Union managed to use its privileged status within the Soviet cultural elite to develop a non-standard block of flats. In the context of the development of industrialised and strictly standardised housing, artists' unions managed to negotiate larger floor areas, claiming that artist require additional space for a studio or work room (Drėmaitė, 2011). On this basis, the housing cooperative that was established to build the 'House of Composers' managed to obtain permission for individual architectural solutions that resulted in an exceptional example of *socialist modernism*. This level of quality was achieved at a time when the building of detached housing was prohibited, and all apartment blocks had to be developed according to obligatory, standardised plans.

Looking back into history gives us a better understanding of the these dispositions of architecture, which can still be recognised in the urban fabric of Vilnius. But rather than looking at them solely in terms of the material qualities of specific buildings, I would suggest think about them relationally. If we look at the rationalised ascetic homogeneity of the socialist-modernist blocks in the northern parts of Vilnius, we can see that stylistically they stand against the splendour of the urban forms of the historic city in the southern part, or the one on left bank of the river Neris. The plan for the *'architectural hill'*, which was imagined in the 1970s and was supposed to be built on the right river bank of the Neris, serves as a good illustration of what could have been the ultimate local vision of the modernist city. However, this project was only partly realised over the remainder of the *socialist-modernist* period. But such historically created oppositions to the *old* are carved in stone and concrete across the whole city. One can also find *Soviet modernist* buildings in the historic core of the city. These buildings are largely of a public nature – cultural institutions or government buildings, which were mainly built to support the public functions of a Soviet capital city. Here, socialist-modernist buildings are distinctive through their sheer size and modernist architectural form. They were built to dominate their historic surroundings (Vilkončius, 2017). This guides us to towards the conclusion, that this opposition of larger or smaller volumes of built structures from different periods, is primarily an opposition of symbolic space rather than physical space. As a symbolic form, *socialist-modernist* architecture does not exist in isolation from the older historic buildings, or even from present urban forms, which all together constitute a certain symbolic system of the city.

The skyscrapers built in the plot of *architectural hill* since the early 2000s can be interpreted as a certain continuation of this project. This is an interesting example of how visions of the city can possess a certain enduring logic, even as we place different meanings upon them. While it was during the *socialist modernist* period that the idea of situating a new, modern city centre set in opposition against the left bank of the river Neris was originally conceived, this centre is now understood as the city's most direct opposition to *socialist modernism* or, rather, to the *Soviet* period in general. In Vilnius, the qualities of *socialist-modernist* architecture serve as a specific reference to the history of the 20th Century, with which Lithuanian society has a somewhat contentious relationship (Petrulis, 2008; Muliuolytė, 2013). This relationship often manifests itself in controversial discussions about the architectural heritage of this period, which is often seen as an alien intrusion brought to the city by a foreign force, an interruption to the development of the local modernism. Such meanings conveyed to us by architecture are likely to have social significance, and thus we cannot look at housing estates and districts of the *socialist-modernist* period solely in terms of the concentration of a certain economic capital, or as buildings of certain material quality. If we want to create knowledge about *symbolic* domination in a particular city, it is precisely such particularities of the case that we need to consider.

The initial plan for "architectural hill" on the right bank of the Neris, 1963.　　　Picture 17.

The case for a case study of central Vilnius
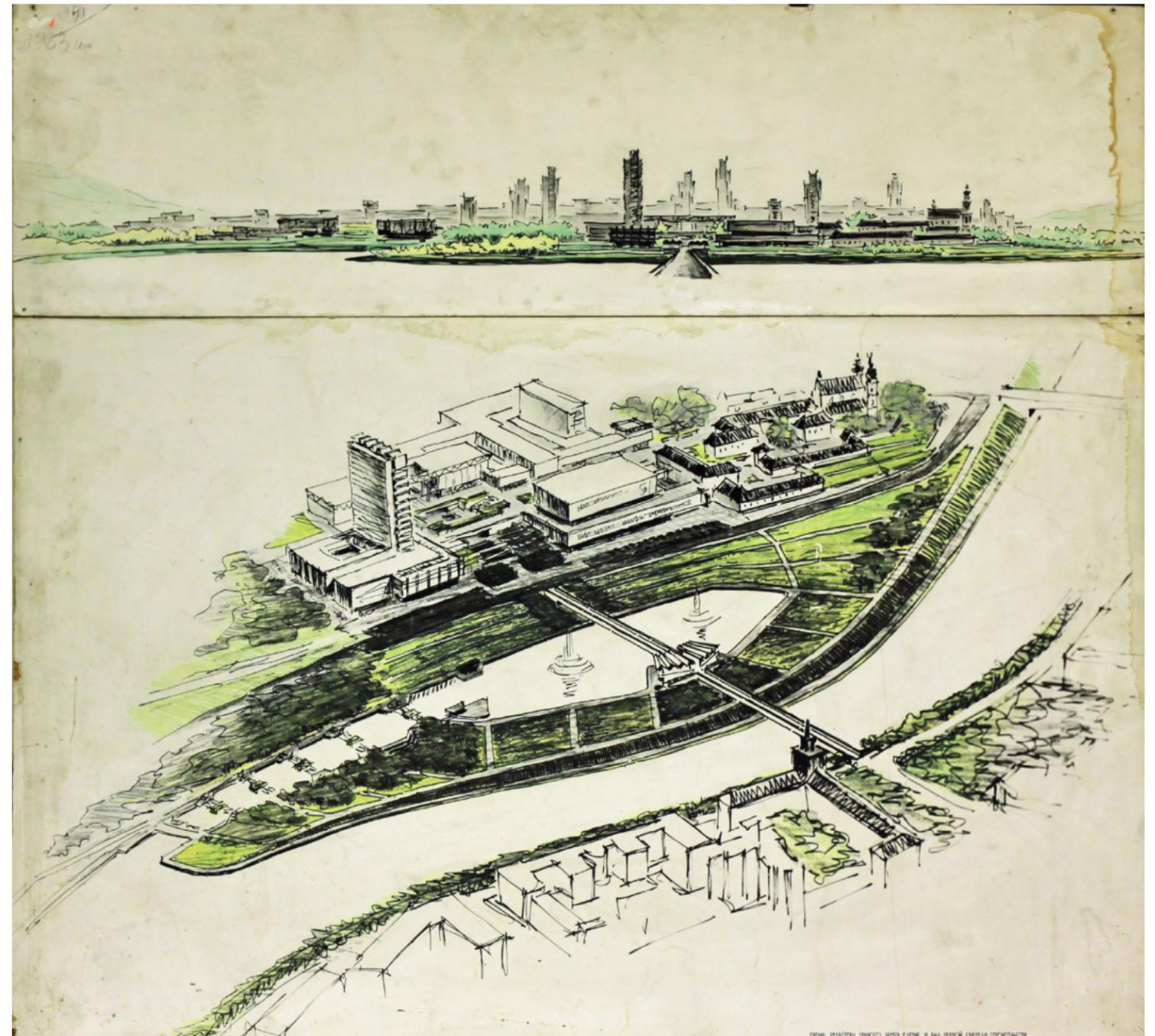
Day of mourning after Stalin's death in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station.

Photo by Ilja Fisher, 1949.

Building the Soviet capital in Vilnius

Socialist-modernist forms in Vilnius did not appear in a material vacuum. Following the modernist ideals of denying the past, they were relationally positioned against aesthetics of all previous historical periods, but in particular the heavy volumes and historical mannerisms of buildings of the *Stalinist period*. It comes as no surprise, then, that a large concentration of the most renowned *Stalinist* buildings stands on the plot of land just on the opposite side of the river Neris from where *'architectural hill'* was intended to stand (Tornau, 2014a). The example of *architectural hill* shows how specific dispositions in certain elements of the urban fabric make them symbolically viable over the history of the city. It also reveals how these meanings can be re-appropriated in the making of the new symbolic space of the city. In Vilnius, it is nevertheless the *Stalinist period*, which provides us with the most persuasive examples of such appropriation. This architectural style was brought to Vilnius during the occupation that followed the Second World War. At that time, the *Stalinist style* was already well developed, having taken shape during decades of city building across the USSR (Tornau, 2014a). In fact, Vilnius was relatively little affected by this architectural style, due in part to the fairly short period during which this architectural style predominated. But there were other reasons too, to which we will now turn.

During the first years that followed the war, the bulk of the new regime's energy was invested in cleaning up the wreckage and reanimating such basic infrastructure as the power supply or repairing bridges. Even before the war, Vilnius was underdeveloped and entire districts were without basic utilities (Tornau, 2014b). Thus, the city required a great deal of investment. Despite infrastructural deficiencies and an extreme shortage of housing, it was a symbolic remake of the city's public spaces that became one of the first immediate goals for the restoration works (Antanavičiūtė, 2009). This remake began with less costly steps such as the marking of central streets and their surroundings with Soviet paraphernalia – especially flags or posters bearing slogans (Antanavičiūtė, 2009). During the next steps, streets were renamed. churches were shut down and their buildings repurposed for different functions. Later on during this period, the remains of the Old Synagogue were pulled down, and historic cemeteries were closed and gradually transformed into parks or squares. Such was the local policy of "urban renewal", much of which was aimed at forgetting the multicultural past of Vilnius. This was followed by the creation of new sculptural signs: statues to Stalin, Lenin, General Chernyakhovsky and other monuments were erected.

The functions and meanings of public spaces were also transformed through changes in their use or the redirection of pedestrian traffic. Public spaces were often appropriated for ideological festivities (Urbonaitė, 2013). Yet despite the impressive scale of the official plans for such symbolic actions, the actual symbolic reload of the city lagged significantly behind. Many initial ideas were not implemented due to a simple lack of resources[9] and the generally low political significance of the city within the Soviet Union (Antanavičiūtė, 2009). Nevertheless, this limited yet still grotesque facelift of the city was still effective – Vilnius received the necessary features of the capital city of a Soviet republic, which were achieved without any radical rearrangement of city space.

These changes related not only to the destruction reaped by war, as well as to the occupation, but also to the city's new role. Vilnius, a fairly small border city, previously only the regional centre of the Wilno Voivodeship in the pre-war Republic of Poland, was to become the 'Soviet capital' of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. But it lacked buildings befitting its new public function as a Soviet capital. Government institutions responsible for urban planning and building were established in Vilnius according an institutional model set down by Moscow, from where they were also supervised. Foreign architects from St. Petersburg and Moscow were entrusted with jumpstarting the implementation of Soviet urban planning policies in Vilnius (Tornau, 2014a). This transformation was implemented according to the ideas contained in the Master Plan for Moscow of 1935, which itself was based on then-widespread ideas originally implemented in the city planning of Rome and Berlin (Antanavičiūtė, 2009; Tornau, 2014a). The greatest volume of new developments were proposed for the district of Lukiškės, previously a mixed-use neighbourhood, which Soviet planners dramatically described as an "urban wasteland" reminiscent of the landscape of rural areas, but not of a modern Soviet capital (Tornau, 2014a; Drėmaitė, 2012). This location – situated directly off the city's central boulevard, recently renamed after Stalin[10], which leads towards the remains of the castle and the city's Cathedral Square – also offered symbolic potential. It was precisely the point in the physical space of Vilnius to mark a symbolic opposition against the historic past of clerics and nobles. This history shows that the creation of symbolic oppositions was not specific only to the *socialist-modernist* period, but is part of the symbolic logic followed by all those striving to dominate the city.

Opposition between the new (on the left) and the historic (on the right) city centre in the urban development plan for central Vilnius, 1949.

Picture 20.

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[9] Resources were so scarce that materials from ideologically inappropriate demolished monuments were re-used to build new monuments. Even gravestones from historic cemeteries were used for this purpose, as well as for the renewal of public spaces. A comprehensive account of such grotesque uses of monuments was presented in an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art and in its catalogue (E. Mikalajūnė and R. Antanavičiūtė 'Vilnius Monuments: a Story of Change', VDA leidykla, Vilnius, 2012)   .

[10] Now known as Gediminas Avenue, this street has during its history also borne the names of St. George, Mickiewicz, Adolf Hitler and Lenin.

The Soviet government also had to deal with very practical issues of city life, however. After the Second World War, the citizens of Vilnius experienced similar difficulties to those occurring across the rest of war-torn Europe. Although the city had not been completely destroyed, a much of it was left in ruins. A housing shortage became one of the most pressing issues in Vilnius. Half of the housing stock had been destroyed, and a significant share of what remained was in a poor condition. Residents struggled to find proper living spaces, and the norm for floor-space at the time was just 6.2 sq. metres per person (Tornau, 2014b). At the same time, demand for housing was rising due to the influx of civil servants for the Soviet bureaucratic apparatus that followed regime change. A 'housing densification' policy was introduced to provide these newcomers with appropriate housing, which provoked tensions between the newcomers and existing residents (Stravinskienė, 2014). Housing allocation was rearranged, starting with a universal nationalisation of housing units. The distribution of housing was henceforth taken over by the state. A good case analysis to illustrate this process is the 'House of Scientists', an architectural and rhetorical expression of the new political order, signifying the particular role that science should take in the making of society (Tornau, 2014b). The house was planned to be of exceptional splendour, with the layout of apartments being around 30 times bigger than the average floor-space norm and the craftsmanship of interiors following the *art deco* style. In war-ravaged Vilnius, such housing units were an important piece of economic and symbolic capital to encourage scientists or bureaucrats to join the newly forming Soviet *nomenklatūra* – the peculiar '*new middle classes*' of the time.

Cases such as the '*House of Scientists*' reveal how, during the Soviet period, architecture – and urban planning as a whole – were used for propaganda purposes. New buildings were used as a metaphor for the building of a new, Soviet society. These projects enjoyed intense attention from the politically controlled local press, which interpreted the meanings of the new buildings, laying out the ideological narratives of the new city for its inhabitants (Tornau, 2014b). This architecture also served as the scenography for the mass processions that took place through the new district. But the use of architecture for propaganda purposes also meant that plans for urban development and housing were overly optimistic, often surpassing the actual economic capacity of the country. Thus, such plans were rarely actually implemented – at least not to their full extent (Drėmaitė, 2012; Tornau, 2014a). Actual housing practices in the newly built housing units strongly diverged from what might be imagined from utopian propagandist visions of Soviet life (Tornau, 2014b). In the '*House of Scientists*', most individual units were divided into smaller communal apartments immediately after the finalisation of the building. The living conditions of households mirrored the professional achievements or ideological compliance of their members. Standards of living in such buildings still contrasted starkly with the prevailing rustic lifestyles of surrounding districts, where one could even see cattle being kept close to home in order combat the food shortages of the post-war turmoil (Tornau, 2014a). Such contrasts only increased the symbolic value of this new housing as being in opposition to the dirty and meagre conditions of the past.

The history of *Stalinist* urban developments in Vilnius further illustrates certain social laws that function in the making of a city. Architectural styles and urban planning ideas are socially constructed in a process of *imagining* the future of the city. Such symbolic actions, as an expression of domination, are made in relationship to – and often in opposition to – signs of the past. *Stalinist* urban developments were created at the cost of the complete eradication of historical signs contradicting the narrative of the new order. In some cases, it was enough simply to twist the focus of memory marked by these historical signs. Such symbolic actions are the prerogative of those who have the means to perform costly acts of construction. These acts are also required to develop symbolic meanings, making us believe in this '*newly imagined world*'. An additional social aspect we observe when looking at this period of history is that the symbolic meanings of the city are also at the centre of the reproduction of the social order. They were used to immerse the '*new middle classes*' in the new Soviet society. Their bodies, filling these new urban locations, unequivocally strengthened these intended dispositions.

When presenting these thoughts about the symbolic logic of the city in the context of *Stalinist* history, it might be hard for some to accept these generalisations. It may invoke a false impression of these symbolic remakes being no more than the historical results of the beginning of Soviet occupation. Looking at this period in a relation to the beginnings of the *socialist-modernist* period, we can understand that the principles behind symbolic domination do not really change with the passage of time. Furthermore, such a juxtaposition also enables us to think about the role of the *fields* of housing and urban planning in the production of symbolic domination. At the turn of the 1960s, Vilnius already possessed a well established local class of architects and urban planners. This was the time at which this group began to compete with Soviet technocrats of city planning that were imported into Lithuania after the war. An interesting clash occurred between these two professional fractions of architects and planners, each competing to set a dominant vision for the historic centre of the city (Janušauskaitė, 2013). In this struggle, one group – among them the authors of the *architectural hill* – gained the power to decide the symbolic and material re-use of the historic centre of Vilnius. Their plan helped to avoid the large-scale demolition of historic buildings. Yet it also represented a very selective vision of what was to be remembered, or what could or should be forgotten in the city. Some of these ideas continue to be viable in the present-day context of a 'post-Soviet' city. Thus, rather than using such problematic geopolitical categories, we should speak of symbolic dispositions and oppositions in the city fabric, and of the way these are appropriated in the struggles to dominate urban space today.


Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

Plan for the urban development of Vilnius, 1875.
Note: red circle marks an approximate area of the fieldwork.
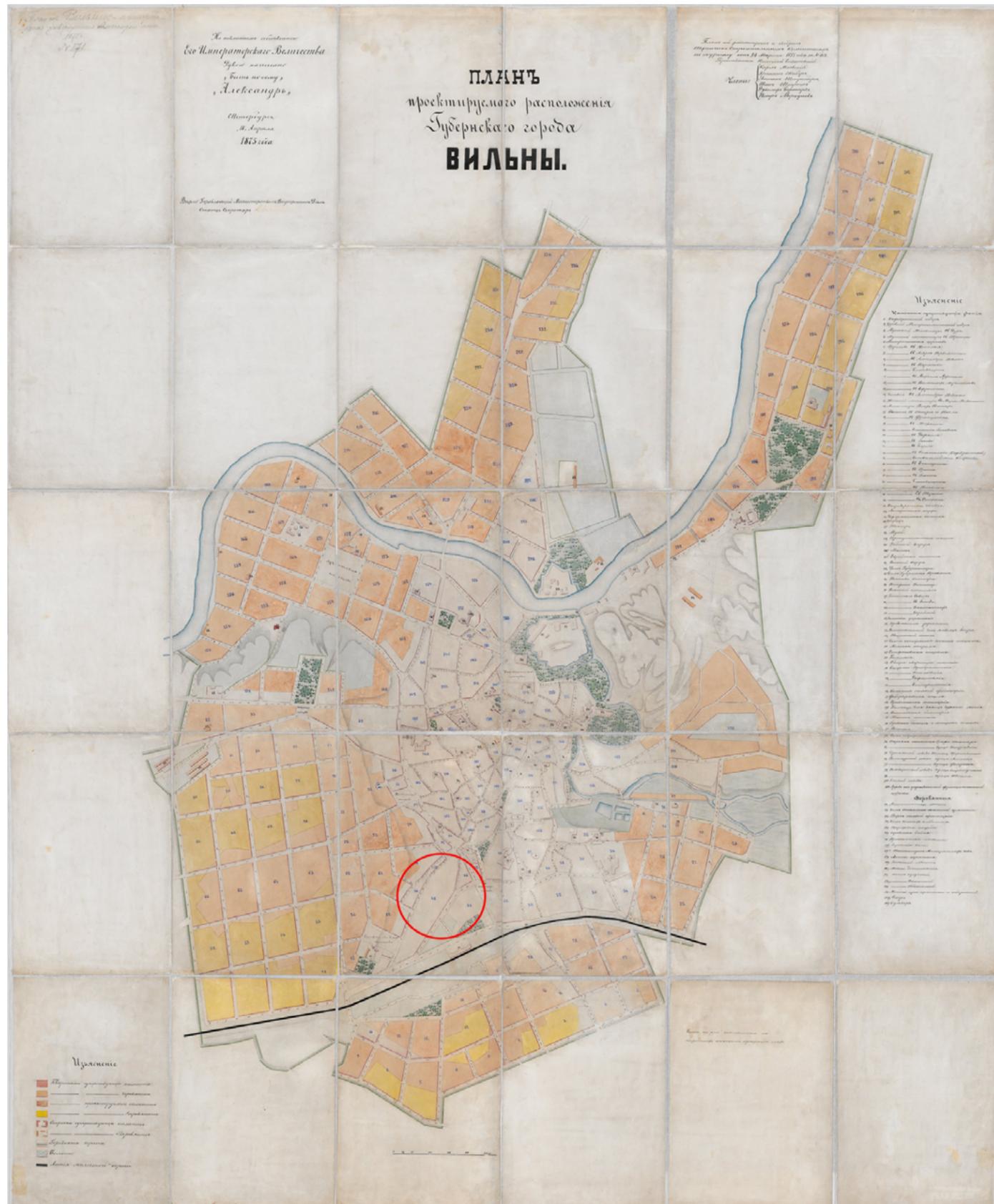
3.3. Possible points for the beginnings and ends of history

The work of historians concerning developments in Vilnius enables us to look critically at the categories of the *post-communist* or *post-Soviet* city. Nevertheless, we have to accept the idea that such categories actively circulate in social use. Thus, we should also look more closely at how to handle the effects of such categorisations, which naturalise the social forces moulding our cities. One of the most toxic effects of these categories is that they presume a certain 'locking-in' at the end of the history that is defined by a very specific historical period. But there is no need to limit ourselves to any particular starting point in the imaginary genealogical timeline of the city. If there are social laws that govern the way in which urban fabric is constituted, then these were present well before that particular period. Therefore, I will now go on to discuss:

— *How different periods of history can be used to stimulate our sociological imaginations of life in Vilnius.*

— *What possibilities exist to connect this knowledge about material and symbolic spaces with the genealogy of the social space of the city.*

There is currently a steady flow of new historical research about Vilnius. But as yet, there is insufficient knowledge to deconstruct the historical genealogy of the fields that have shaped the urban forms of Vilnius immediately before and after the economic restructuring of the 1990s. Some research on related topics is already in the pipeline of knowledge production, and thus I hope that we shall soon be able to use it for the further sociological analysis of Vilnius. Until then, I propose to turn our gaze from the historic genealogy of the physical space and to think instead about its distorted relationship to the social space. On its own, looking further back at how the social space was projected on to the map of Vilnius through different periods of history will not help us to come up with a clearer picture of present-day Vilnius, but it will spur our sociological imaginations.

The power of nature and industrialisation in the making of Vilnius

Such short summaries of different periods of urban development – both their starting points and their end results – are sufficient to start seeing the symbolic space of the city as being a fluid structure that accumulates different meanings throughout the different periods of its history. This structure is, however, also a result of the constant classification struggles in which the dispositions of different urban spaces and buildings are used and re-used, forgotten and brought back from the past. The further back in history one goes with such historical reconstructions of the social circumstances under which specific urban structures were created, the more blurred they become – both in the common memory of citizens, and in the documented evidence. As a result, it becomes increasingly difficult to claim the relevance of such reconstructions to our objective understanding of the social reality of the present day. Despite this, I will take one more step back to the period when the first echoes of the industrial revolution reached Wilno[11], as it is exactly during this period that the area that is the object of my fieldwork took its most characteristic shapes.

In the middle of 19th Century, Vilnius was part of the Russian Empire. The governance of cities under imperial rule was characterised by relatively narrow autonomy. This interfered with their economic development, and is likely to have been one of the reasons for the moderate economic growth of Vilnius (Tornau, 2016). Nevertheless, with abolition of serfdom in 1861 and the opening up of the railway line between Saint Petersburg and Warsaw in 1862, which passed the south of the city wall of Vilnius, the city became an attractive location for industrial development. The railway rearranged the possible uses of the city's land. Before the mid-19th Century, industry was heavily dependent on power from the flow of water, and was thus situated next to rivers and land routes (Ambrulevičiūtė, 2018). But with the laying of the railway line and the new possibilities enabled by steam and, later, electrical power, new industrial locations could be established and the structure of Vilnius city locations changed.

This moment of industrialisation is particularly useful in emphasising the role of nature, or the landscape in which the city is situated, to the material and symbolic values of the city. During the years before industrialisation, production – particularly that of leather and fur – significantly affected the quality of the city's air and water. Thus, locations next to its rivers – the natural sources of power – were also the city's most 'unclean' spaces. The specific qualities of the landscape of Vilnius – the valleys that enclose its rivers and roads – has been the most defining factor in the categorisation of physical space in the city into 'clean' and 'dirty'. Documented claims by citizens about the pollution in Vilnius at the end of the 19th century serve as testimonies as to how the material qualities of land became the basis for the symbolic meanings of locations. This began with the relocation of leather manufacturing from the district of Paupys to Lukiškės, in an attempt to improve the quality the air, and especially of the water,

Photo by Jan Bulhak

downstream of this district. After this relocation, the owners of housing in Paupys also requested that the municipality rename the streets of the neighbourhood to ones that were no longer related to the production of leather (Ambrulevičiūtė, 2018). The owners claimed that such names negatively influenced rent prices – even though the industry had largely gone, the symbolic mark as a 'dirty' spot in the city remained. This claim by landlords can be seen as one of many historic attempts to reload the symbolic meanings of place. If we stretch this a little further, it could even be interpreted as the first documented evidence of attempts to fuel 'gentrification' in a 'post-industrial' district. Unlike later examples of the symbolic reloading of city spaces, however, this example reminds us that the natural framework of the city's landscape also defines the material values of city land.

Industrialisation also fuelled a kind of housing bubble in Vilnius, which brought about new territories of distinction. The new bourgeoisie were at the forefront of developing housing blocks for rent – a widespread practice across the Russian Empire at the end of the 19th century (Žiemelis and Ambrulevičiūtė 2018). This bourgeoisie settled in the newly

[11] Polish for Vilnius.

developed streets and districts around the city's historic core. While run-down, the more exclusive apartments at the historic core of the city centre, which had previously belonged to noble families, still retained a certain level of distinctive value and were occupied by middle-class renters. However, new flats were seen as much more attractive, being equipped with modern sewage systems and electricity, and having spacious layouts. Houses containing such flats were built not only in 'clean' locations away from the city's industrial developments, but also in open plots of land in close proximity to these industrial areas and to the railway. Developer Józef Montwiłł also developed housing for the middle class in the form of colonies of detached housing. These provided inhabitants with more space and a garden, probably to compensate for their proximity to the noise and dirt of industry or the railway (Ambrulevičiūtė, 2015; Ambrulevičiūtė, 2018). The north-western parts of the new city, which were not in such immediate contact with pollution, were considered the most prestigious locations.

The history of industrialisation in Vilnius shows us how economic restructuring– in this case, brought about by new sources of energy, and enacted by the new industrial bourgeoisie – can affect the uses of urban land. Such developments also bring with them related changes to the symbolic meanings of city spaces and buildings. The social space of Vilnius at the time was rearranged on the map of the city. Interpreting these changes through a model of concentric rings does little for our understanding of Vilnius. This model leads us nowhere other than to the conclusion that even during the most intense period of industrialisation at the turn of 20th Century, Vilnius did not precisely follow such patterns of development. It never took on the 'perfect' shapes of American industrial cities required by this model (Žiemelis and Ambrulevičiūtė, 2018). A more interesting insight from these works by historians is the recognition of a variety of urban forms that used to mark 'clean' and 'dirty', 'safe' and 'dangerous', physically 'high' and 'low', and other symbolic oppositions within the city fabric of Vilnius. The most precise way to read Vilnius is to see it as a totality of these oppositions; a historical product created by people in their struggles against nature and with each other for a more comfortable everyday life. Any attempts to read these oppositions in the history of the city are meaningful, because they can help us recognise those which still exist today, and those that have been selectively remembered or forgotten.

Photo by Jan Bulhak

Picture 27.

Plan of Vilnius from the atlas of Braun and Hogenberg, 1581
Note: red circle marks an approximate area of the fieldwork.

We could take such historical interpretations of city spaces and reconstructions of housing practices right back to the times when pre-historic people settled in the dense forests surrounding the territory that would later become Vilnius. We could go still further, taking in the natural history of the ice age, which formed the unique landscape of the confluence of the rivers *Neris* and *Vilnelė*. This particularity of the landscape is one of the reasons that Vilnius unfolded in this location. It is healthy for the upkeep of our imaginations to ask ourselves what were the forces that attracted pre-historic people to this spot, visualising their everyday lives, battling the forces of nature and creating relationships among themselves. But as nature has become substituted by culture, different social groups have acquired varying power over the creation of representations of the city. The history of developments in Vilnius is full of contentious moments, and the historic sources are thus full of traps that lead us towards distorted interpretations. The oldest currently known schematic representation of Vilnius – a plan of the city from the atlas of Braun and Hogenberg, *Civitates orbis terrarium*,

published in 1581 – serves as a good example of such a distortion. In this plan of the city, which stood at what was then seen as the frontier of Catholic-Christian civilisation, there is only one Orthodox church (Rekevičius, 2010). From other sources, we know that by that time, Vilnius housed an unusually high number and variety of Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Jewish and Muslim houses of prayer. In the eyes of the authors of this plan, Vilnius was as predominantly Catholic city – or at least, that was how they chose to represent it. And despite the centuries that separate Braun and Hogenberg's plan from contemporary maps drawn by human geographers today, they both have one thing in common. The social space here is represented by taking *physical space* as the basis for a description of social categories, which are not of a material nature. Avoiding this mistake of making assumptions about the *social* life of the city based on representations of its physical forms remains just as relevant today.

Vilnius as an object and a result of classificatory struggles

From the 16th-century map of Vilnius to the contemporary maps of segregation indices drawn by human geographers – all of these have a common limitation, an inherent flaw, which is at the core of the practice of mapping. Mapping shows us a certain representation of the physical space of a city. Although maps often tend to mark social categories, they do not provide explanations of the rules by which a city is filled with human bodies, and specifically how the social space lands on the physical space of the city. Thus, it does not matter what level of methodological sophistication we achieve in the process of mapping, the resulting picture will thus always contain this inherent distortion of showing social differences through physical space. And with mapping being an expensive practice, this distortion is often affected by the gravity of the field of power. Historical analysis of the architectural and urban forms of Vilnius allows us to touch upon certain examples of this gravity as it acts upon the built structures of this particular city. Such analysis is useful in attempting to understand how the historically created material structures and symbolic meanings of the city are used in the power relationships of today. These structures, however, are simply the physical remains of the struggles of people against nature and between themselves. To know the rules of their making, we need to start looking at the social space as the primary object of our analysis. Thus, it is time for us to wind our historical timeline forward to examine the historical transformations of the social space that have moulding the city into the particular form in which residents of Vilnius now live.

To account for the human flesh that fills the physical shapes of the city, we depend on the historical documentation of census practices. Just like the solid and straight lines of the railway, these practices became more solid, accurate and also more common during the time of industrialisation. The abolition of serfdom and industrialisation were the reasons for the rapid population growth of Vilnius. According to estimates by Michał Baliński in the 1830s, Vilnius was a relatively small town of between 35,000 and 50,000 inhabitants (Weeks, 2008). The first

census of the Russian Empire in 1897 counted around 155,000 inhabitants. Industrialisation brought one of the fastest population booms in the history of the city. Population growth of at least threefold over the course of half a century also coincided with the housing boom observed at the turn of the 20th century. The population of the city had slumped after the First World War, but later gradually recovered. At the beginning of the Second World War, it numbered around 195,000 inhabitants (Stravinskienė, 2015). But the arithmetic of population growth or slump represents only the size of the social space, and not a full picture of its nature. It does not account for objective relationships, or the social structures, within this population.

The practice of the census is based on classification. Thus, it provides some hint of the structure of the social space at a given time. In Vilnius, two strongly intertwined categories – those of *ethnicity* and *religious denomination* – were the most stable categories used across censuses of the last two centuries. In the 1830s, almost two-thirds of the city's inhabitants were Jews. Such a concentration has a long history, beginning with the regulations of the Grand Duchy of Lithuanian in the 16th century, which allowed Jews to buy property and remain within a specific plot in Vilnius. This continued under the regulations of Russian Empire, which prohibited the free movement of Jews across the country and caused their segregation in the western cities of the Russian Empire. In the 1830s, the non-Jewish minorities of Vilnius were also highly diverse – two-thirds were Catholic and one-third belonged to other Christian denominations or other religions (Weeks, 2008). Official data from 1939 census claimed that the population of Vilnius comprised approximately: 128,000 Poles; 54,000 Jews; 7,000 Russians; 1,500 each of Belarusians and Lithuanians; as well as a hundred Tatars; two hundred Karaites; and 2,400 from other groups. These statistics are, however, highly contested. A number of researchers emphasise that the census methodologies were biased to over-represent the Polish majority. They claim that the smallest minorities were underrepresented by up to fourfold in the official count, and that there were up to 60,000 Jews in the city (Stravinskienė , 2014). Nevertheless, these numbers represent historical trends. The growth of the Polish population was in line with an ethnically motivated migration policy that controlled the immigration or repatriation of non-Polish minorities to Vilnius (Stravinskienė, 2017). This policy was implemented in the context of strained relationships with Lithuania, which laid claim to Vilnius as its own city and the country's historic capital.

Portraits of Vilnius residents made during the census of 1916. A couple of them lived in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station.

Note: In an order of appearance Rachmel Šlosberg (34 yeras old, jewish, lived in Šopeno str.); Bronislava Baliukevič (28, polish, Gurių str.); Elka Musnicka (31, jewish, Lydos str.); Motiejus Čepulionis (67, lithuanian, šv. Jono str.); Marija Roemer, (69, polish, Antakalnio str.); Grigorij Matvejev (48, russsian, Vladimiro str.); Olga Marija Moenke (10, german, Bokšto st.); Jan Narkevič (34, polish, Aušros Vartų str.).

The case for a case study of central Vilnius

At this point, it is worth giving a brief mention to the turbulent history of Vilnius becoming the capital city of a nation state, which adds to specificities of this case. After the First World War, under the terms of the Suwałki Agreement of 1920 between the new republics of Lithuania and Poland, Vilnius was supposed to be part of Lithuanian territory and to become the capital of the First Lithuanian Republic. This agreement was not followed by Polish side, which supported a local uprising, pushing out Lithuanian troops from Vilnius and later accepting Vilnius and the surrounding region as an autonomous territory within the Polish Republic. Over the ensuing two decades, the so-called 'Vilnius question' was a major issue that sustained tensions between the two nation states. During that time, Lithuania cultivated aspirations to regain Vilnius, which took the form of frozen diplomatic relationships with Poland, and support for the 'Union to liberate Vilnius'. At the time when ethnic Lithuanians represented no more than a couple per cent of the city's population, this government-supported movement propagated images of Vilnius as being exclusively ethnically Lithuanian (Mačiulis, 2009). Thus, as a symbolic structure, Vilnius occupied a very special place in the imagination of the Lithuanian nation state. This field of power had a very specific relationship with the city, which happened to play a significant role in mobilising a primarily rural population of Lithuanians into a nation state.

Despite what these struggles between nation states might suggest, the categories of ethnicity were not as important in the organization of city space as the categories of religious affiliation. It was the attitude towards the divine – or the attitude towards the meaning of human struggle against natural forces – that for a long time was of the most significant importance in the spatial organisation of the city. This can still be recognised in mediaeval parts of the city, with the strict borderlines that mark the Jewish ghetto and residential islands surrounding the churches of various religious congregations. The development of these locations can be traced back to the early days of the city, and reflects the historical transformations of the social space. But these archaic spatial structures of the city were also important during modernisation. During that time, the historic city centre was the most densely populated area, mainly inhabited by Jews, who constituted around two-thirds of the population of the Old Town (Stravinskienė, 2015). This location was regarded as being of particular cultural value. As a result, the general urban plan of 1936 introduced certain zoning, which declared the Old Town a 'no-build' zone. This regulation was laid down to protect not only individual monumental buildings, but also to maintain the historic structure of the territory as a whole (Jakaitis, 2005; Janušauskaitė, 2013). Before the war, however, this structure no longer coincided as strictly with the structure of the social space as it had in medieval Vilnius. A significant share of the Jewish population, in particular those who could afford newly developed housing, was also present in Naujamiestis, where it constituted up to one-third of the population, the rest being predominantly Polish. Such historical interlinks between symbolic and social spaces would make Vilnius an atypically clear case for the analysis of the symbolic domination of a city. Note that this is a capital city of a rather small size – and the relationships between its symbolic structures and social structures can be reconstructed much more easily than in the cases of other capital cities.

One of the pits in Paneriai forest where the victims of the Holocaust from Vilnius and the neighbouring areas were buried and later cremated.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

But the Second World War and its political aftermath changed the social space of Vilnius out of all recognition. The Holocaust took the lives of the majority of Jews and Roma from Vilnius, most of whom were killed in Paneriai forest. This, however, was not the end of the ethnic cleansing of Vilnius. During the autumn of 1944, after Vilnius was taken by the Red Army, the authorities began the ethnic homogenisation of the population. Most of the Polish population and the remaining Jews were to be substituted with ethnic Lithuanians from Poland. At the same time, significant numbers of residents were imprisoned or deported to Siberia. Over a period of several years, between 90,000 and 95,000, or around 80% of survivors of the war were forced to leave Vilnius (Stravinskienė, 2017). The historic turning point of the Second World War makes Vilnius a very specific kind of city. If one could slow down this moment in the history of Vilnius, the housing and other built structures that had survived the war, but were emptied through the waves of ethnic cleansing, could be imagined as the gigantic shell of some ancient arthropod or fossil, the material remains of what used to be a lively but no longer existent social space. Soon after the war, it was filled with a new social space, the fields of which appropriated it and kept on moulding as it were made of clay,

according to the trajectories of the local relationships of power. The city and its symbolic meanings – all of these had to be reimagined.

Repatriates from the eastern polish theritories traveling to their destination points, 1946.

Photo by Stanislaw Urbanowicz, 1946.

This metaphor of a 'refilled fossil' might be relevant in relation to the statistical changes of population, but it bears little relevance to the relationships that particular individuals have with the city of Vilnius. If we were to accept this metaphor, we would be accepting a very ethnocentric position on Vilnius. Even given the atrocities of the war, there were those who survived and chose or found ways to remain and go on with their lives in Vilnius. These people were a part of a newly forming social space that maintained their historical relation to the city. The fossil metaphor does, however, stimulate the sociological imagination and show how Vilnius contributes to our understanding of a city as a historically created material and symbolic structure. It is the people, their accumulated social power and their struggles within the social space, that have moulded the city's material and the symbolic shapes. But throughout history, these urban shapes have also been used as a tool in the struggles to separate one class from another within the territory of the city. This historical specificity of the case of Vilnius allows us to show very clearly how the choices as to what memories marked by symbolic urban forms ought to be remembered, and which should be forgotten, lies at the centre of the constant classificatory struggles in the city. By using references to such historical genealogies rather than to the dominant architectural forms of the Soviet period, we see that Vilnius has much more to offer than simply the exotics of the *post-Soviet* past.

At this point, I should use existing knowledge on the current changes in social class structure as a stepping stone towards an immersive sociological analysis of my case. Yet in Lithuania, the analysis of social class analysis is fairly abandoned field of social research. We know that with Lithuania's economic restructuring towards a post-industrial economy, the percentage of the population who were working class has shrunk significantly, while the share of those working in service industries increased (Norkus, 2015). There have also been attempts to describe what could be our 'middle' classes of Lithuania or how we should conceptualise the 'creative' classes (Taljūnaitė and Sviklas, 2018; Černevičiūtė 2006). And although we do have an inspiring example of neo-Weberian social class analysis – namely, by Zenonas Norkus and Vaidas Morkevičius – to discuss Lithuania's class structure from other theoretical perspectives has not, as yet, received any significant response (Morkevičius and Norkus, 2012). At this moment, we know very little about differential access to various types of capital – economic, cultural and social – and how the differences in such access define the structuration of our society. We also do not yet know how Lithuania's current class structure was constituted during the period of transition, or how this process was influenced by the informal economy of the soviet period and by privatisation (Norkus, 2013). This signals a contested relationship with the notion of social class in local community engaged in social research, which can hardly be justified by professional fatigue or even by the trauma of the forced use of Marxist-Leninist approaches during the Soviet period. It is about time we reflected on the circumstances and social forces of the present day, which are to blame for the fact that numerous other opportunities for the analysis of social class currently remain underexplored. This is by far the biggest debt that the Lithuanian sociological guild owes to the field of urban studies. This underdevelopment should not, however, distract us from the observation of classificatory struggles in Vilnius, since such observations provide sensible illustrations of how social classes – both practical and theoretical – are explained, used and experienced in everyday life.

Interim remarks: My starting point for the Bourdieusian analysis of Vilnius

These descriptions of Vilnius bring us to the starting point of my own fieldwork. Here, I should describe the technical aspects of it and provide my final judgement as to why this case, and not that of another neighbourhood in Vilnius, is most suitable for a Bourdieusian analysis of social domination in the urban space. But I would like to mix these compulsory parts of this academic genre with some reflective notes. This reflection is important, if we wish to understand how seemingly technical choices relating to fieldwork are made within a certain gravity of social forces. As I have already mentioned, my interest in the neighbourhood in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station was largely driven by my own personal experience of living there. I moved to the neighbourhood in the mid-2000s, and lived there for almost two decades. My curiosity about the social forces behind the rising social contestations in this part of the city are what motivated me to perform this research – and were also among my motivations to become a sociologist. It was only some years after the beginning of my PhD studies that I began to follow my intuition, which suggested it was worthwhile taking an empirical interest in this location, to which my personal trajectory had taken me during my life in Vilnius. Even if there was the risk of viewing the social life in this location through the eyes of a native – or, rather, a middle-class newcomer – the benefits of being able to use my access to informants in the area to gain in-depth stories about their experiences in this small slice of urban land, seemed to clearly outweigh these risks. Thus, in the early spring of the year 2015, I decided to pursue my ethnographic research into this neighbourhood.

The process of the fieldwork contained most of the standard elements of ethnographic research, chief among which was my own immersion in the field as a covert observer. My observations of daily life in the neighbourhood provided me with a range of possible topics relating to everyday life, which could be brought up in individual interviews. They also were a source for information about people in the neighbourhood and the daily issues they face in running a house or living in the area. These observations were followed by programme of interviews with neighbourhood residents, which were the main source of data. From the outset, the interviews and observations were organised in parallel, and at various times they coincided in a number of ways. The interview programme was implemented in two phases – an *exploratory phase*, which took place during the springtime in the years 2015 and 2016, and a *main phase*, which took place between December 2019 and March 2020, until the COVID-19 epidemic hit Lithuania. The final data set contains unstructured interviews with 24 informants. Observation of the field lasted until August 2017, when I ceased living in the neighbourhood. Moving away from the neighbourhood – and also from the country – provided a unique opportunity to establish a certain reflective distance from the location. This is about as much of the technicalities of the fieldwork as I will describe here. To spare occasional lay readers from this important, but yet very technical information, I have moved further descriptions of the fieldwork to **Annex II**. At this point, I suggest that all readers of the text

with a professional interest in this work, should return to read the rest of this section once they have read the annex containing my methodological notes on the field work. There, I also discuss the challenges involved in implementing such localised ethnographic research. I also present an overall picture of the agents who were the participants of this research.

There is, however, one agent who is not described there, but who was nevertheless very important throughout this study. That agent is me. My position as a middle-class person of a particular kind, followed by my social status as a housing owner and my specific cultural background, were always a potential threat to the precision of my proposed interpretations of the social life of the area. These factors could have imposed certain trajectories on my methodical choices, leading to specific distortions and interpretations. Bourdieu's remarks about the need for personal reflexivity in the course of research were particularly helpful in this constant fight with the *practical me*. His reflections on interview methods provided in *The Weight of the World* were particularly helpful in the moments when this *practical me* was about to take over a still-fragile *epistemological me* (Bourdieu and Accardo, 2000). These reflections invited me to constantly be aware of, and to reflect upon, the effects that my own *habitus*, my own social body, the body of a Lithuanian-speaking male with a particular social history, had on my relationship to the informants. These aspects definitely made certain situations in the fieldwork easier than others.

During the lengthy course of implementing the fieldwork and writing this work, I reflected on my own social history as the main source of possible flaws and errors, which I had either made or might be going to make. This also helped to pinpoint my relationship to this particular neighbourhood and its social fabric. Some of the illustrations of related areas of Vilnius used in this text are also part of this reflection. Not only do they provide visual material to 'warm up' the imaginations of readers not acquainted with vicinity of Vilnius railway station; they also remind me of my first moments in getting to know the neighbourhood and independently discovering Vilnius. My personal trajectory from a working-class district in the city of Kaunas, from a household of two parents with an educational background in architecture, into the gentrifying areas of central Vilnius, is not accidental to my choice to study this area. Some of the arguments I have constructed in this work are, in a way, a continuation of childhood talks with my father, who passed away during the preparation of this work, and to whom I write my dedication with love. Certain shifts in my analysis which occurred after this personal event were just another source of reflexive thoughts on how our social trajectories, and thus our thinking, are affected by personal relationships – especially those with our closest authority figures. As researchers, we are still social bodies functioning in relation to others.

These kinds of reflections are frequently missing from the debate on gentrification. Researchers' social positions can affect their research strategies. As we can see from my own case, my position affected what kind of research strategy was most accessible to me. As a researcher working on a PhD, such opportunities are usually those which one grabs first. Like most social researchers working on the subject, I belong to a fraction of the middle class that is more advantaged in terms of cultural rather than economic capital – precisely one of those

social types, that most often fit the portrait of first-wave 'gentry' or 'urban pioneer'. Rather than being of any other ideal type, we thus arguably occupy a certain dominant position and have some stakes at hand in our own object of enquiry (Allen, 2008; Schlichtman and Patch, 2014). An urban environment that is personally close is often among the first inspirations for urban researchers. For example, while starting his research career, Neil Smith himself lived in 'gentrifying' working-class neighbourhoods. The neighbourhood in which Loïc Wacquant lived was also one of the inspirations for his *'Urban outcasts'* (Slater, 2017; Wacquant, 2007). When engaging with such empirical situations as researchers, we not only have the ability, but also an obligation, to reflect on the extent to which our embodied social histories influence our understanding of the phenomenon through the analytical categories and methods we lean towards using in our work (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). In the circles of 'gentrification' research, however, undertaking such a process of *epistemic reflexivity* is largely overlooked. This must be one of the reasons why the debate on gentrification – particularly its cultural arm – took a turn, after which it is accused of being driven by a willingness to research those with more social power in 'gentrification' processes, rather than gaining a more nuanced knowledge of the struggles in these urban areas (Slater, 2006).

In this further analysis, I identified at least several reflective moments when confrontation with an informant opened me up to the unavoidable and dazzling presence of social forces. But probably the most important turning point in this study was a striking coincidence between the housing history of *Kęstas*, whom you will get to know through the text, and my own housing history. His story began with a depiction of the complicated start that *Kęstas* had in one of his rental apartments, which finally became the place where he felt most at home during his several-decades-long housing history in Vilnius. After listening to an animated description of the feeling of home that *Kęstas* experienced while living in this place, it felt very similar to a place I knew. After some exchanges, I understood that *Kęstas* was speaking about the exact house in which – with a similar note of enthusiasm – I myself anticipated acquiring an apartment. For me, this was a moment of recognising the habitus of a certain similar fraction of the social space, to which not only *Kęstas*, but also I, belong. This was one of those reflective moments when I, as a researcher involved in ethnographic work, understood myself as a social body – which is at the same time the main and, in this particular study, also the only instrument of my research. While being such an instrument, this same body is also the means by which one takes one's own position in the social space. This makes the observations of social researchers prone to very specific distortions, and requires specific work of reflexivity. This moment of reflexivity enabled me to think about the social laws governing how these two subjects of somewhat similar position in the social space, felt a special aspiration towards one among thousands of housing units, in one among hundreds of locations in Vilnius. Rather than mere chance, I see this as the result of the constant classificatory struggles in the city. There is a certain social logic according to which these social laws work, like a giant sieve sorting out the social space into the physical space of the city. It is these social laws that I invite you to reflect upon in the next chapter of this work.

4.

PLEASURES AND PAINS OF A CHANGING CITY

Here, I will present bits and pieces from two dozen personal histories of people who lived, or are still living, in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station. Much of the analysis that will be presented here is organised by showing the oppositions or overlaps in the histories and experiences of 'old-timers' and 'newcomers' to this neighbourhood. The overall structure of the text will resemble the interviews, which mostly included the following guiding topics:

— The use and the feeling of home and of the neighbourhood

— Relationships with neighbours

— Attitudes towards changes in the neighbourhood

Picture 31.
Interior fragments of a house in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

Tensions or struggles between 'newcomers' and 'old-timers' to define the 'right' use of space are a fairly common finding in urban ethnographies. It does not take long for such categories to reappear in public discourses about what constitutes a 'good' life in the city, or what makes a 'good' neighbourhood or a 'good' neighbour, which I will not discuss here. What I have sought to achieve with this analysis is to invite the reader to reflect on the common social forces that produce these notions and related experiences of the city.

Picture 32.   Historic housing in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

4.1. Housing as an extension of our social bodies

It is still very common to explain certain social transformations of city neighbourhoods as the cumulative effect of the housing choices made by rational individuals acting within the housing market. How sufficient it is to place this emphasis on the moment of acquisition, and on a belief in the actor's rationality at that particular moment, is what I seek to question through my observations of housing choices in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station. Rather than making an incomplete critique of economics using the notion of "rent gaps", I invite the reader to listen to the voices of people speaking about their housing histories. In doing so, I raise the following questions:

— How *rational*, in fact, are the housing choices observed within this neighbourhood?
— What *personal freedoms* and *structural limits* are involved in making such choices?

For a home to become a secure space in which one can experience a particular sense of agency and empowerment, one needs more than just rational calculation. The most accurate summary of all the interviewees' reflections on what it takes to turn one's housing into a home, came from *Natalya*. Recalling the difficulties she experienced in settling into a small, one-room apartment with a dim light, she put it directly: she felt that she needed to turn it into an extension of her own body:

> "*It was very difficult for me to live there at first, I couldn't 'domesticise' it, but then one of my lecturers told me something very good. She said, 'You know what?' She said: 'try to make it an extension of you.' And I really thought that I have to do everything I enjoy there. And so somehow, over time, that feeling of affection settled in there.*" (Natalya, a middle-aged cultural professional)

It was the calmness created by the feeling of the space being close to *Natalya's* self that made her certain it was worth pursuing this project, despite the foreseeable pains and risks. At that time, *Natalya's* choice did not look particularly rational. Neither was it completely an expression of her agency. Such *practical choices* are worth our attention, because they tell us more about housing practices than we could ever expect from the mechanical simplicity of a *rational actor*.

4.1.1. Housing as a material source for claims of difference

There is no emotion like the excitement of a person who has just settled into the first home of their own. No matter what policy regime governed the field of housing at the time, for most of the informants this emotional weight was strong enough to be remembered for the rest of their lives. This excitement usually outweighs their sense of fatigue due to all the worries that also accompany such a transition to the state of being a lawful and proud homeowner. Ownership of housing is one of the most important economic decisions of a person's life. But by concentrating on the mechanics of *rational argumentation* in such decision, we risk underestimating the role of the following factors:

— The intuitive leanings of *habitus*, or of the social structures that are internalised in our bodies, which function in the making of such decisions;

— How such decisions are supported by the social mythologies that constitute the *symbolic space* of the outside world.

The choice of housing is a point in one's personal history that can be used as a specific reference point to position oneself within the social world. And all of the material substances within and around housing are intuitively used for that purpose. Far from being simply a matter of emotions or personal psychological preferences, aesthetic aspirations also show a person's claims to a position in the *social space*. Making such claims through housing also means dealing with the history of a place, and finding ways of re-imagining it that can relate oneself to a desired position in the outside world.

Building 'trash' into 'treasure': intuitive leanings behind the rationalisations of choosing derelict housing

Materialist approaches to housing choice would suggest, that the difference in value before and after renovation is the main structural reason that explains why people choose housing in such areas as vicinity of Vilnius railway station. But such assumptions of rational choice fail to explain, at the very least, several important social aspects of the decision to own a specific apartment. A lower price that comes together with a building's deteriorated condition, or the accumulated fatigue and economic loss from the uncertainties of renting are by themselves insufficient to explain what has pushed people towards the difficult decision to acquire derelict housing in this neighbourhood. Testimonies with regard to people's housing

choices in these areas show that rent gaps do indeed play some role in such a choice. But interviewees also hint at other social drivers explaining why they acquire housing in such a derelict condition. It is not the low price of dilapidated housing alone, but the possibilities of changing such housing through renovation to bring it closer to one's fantasy of home, that motivates them. After continuous questions about the role of price and the role of the house's condition in her choice of apartment, Agnė firmly – almost angrily – repeats herself:

Interviewer: "You mentioned that the house needed repairs. Did that put you off?"

Agnė: "No, on the contrary. The price was good. Plus, I'm telling you, just as soon as I saw it, I started to imagine what it should look like. Indeed, you know, realistically, we probably wouldn't have found a house like I imagined anywhere ready to buy – fully equipped. <Long pause> It would be something like when you think you want a dress of a certain kind and you go to the shop to look for it, and you don't find anything like it, but then everything else looks ugly too (laughs). <...> It turned out to be a very good investment, we haven't overpaid, and we've still managed to arrange it as we wanted, and now we're very happy with it." (Agnė, skilled female professional)

In the choice of housing recounted in this testimony, the assumed difference in value before and after renovation goes hand-in-hand with the sense of meaning that the transformation of housing can give to inhabitant. The metaphor of a dress reveals the sense of pleasure that comes from '*wearing*' housing closest to your social skin. It shows, how the decision to buy went hand in hand with the pre-conscious and deeply internalised leanings of *Agnė*'s *habitus*, of the social structures internalised in her *habitus*. *Agnė* used everything in her new apartment - including an old mirror, which she had noticed already when browsing real-estate advertisements - to mould it so it would best fit with her social body. Summarising the final result of this work, she states:

"Indeed, it's all so royal. Weeeell <Long pause> I don't know if it's royal, but it's like when they show an old high society house somewhere, well, I mean, something like a gentlewoman's place. <...> I've furnished it, I've restored it to what it could have been. Even the mirror, well, erm, I didn't toss it, I only restored it. Now it's so white, so neat, <looking at it> in the morning I feel like a princess (laughs)." (Agnė, skilled female professional)

This private moment of looking at one's own body in the mirror is a helpful metaphor to understand housing as being an extension of our social bodies. This mirror is a part of one's own home, which ought to be an optical reflection, a perfect continuation of one's body. The endeavours of renovation, which are undertaken to achieve such a reflection of one's inner self in a home, can be painful – both economically and psychologically. But the final result is also a source of immense pleasure. The pleasure of making a home that most closely

fits your social skin. For *Agnė*, this purchase also proved to be a good economic investment, which she feels even more happy about.

To newcomers, the shabby walls and corners of historic housing also stimulate a certain imagination of the past. Even without having any personal history locally, *Agnė* felt the possibility of relating to people who had lived in the neighbourhood. Such a reading of the basic meanings and of specific qualities of this housing requires cultural capital. Not surprisingly, a lot of newcomers who lean towards the aesthetic qualities of historic housing are interior designers, architects or those who have other education in the humanities. It is their professional knowledge that enables them to appropriate the available symbolic meanings and reinterpret them in the process of renovation. But their aesthetic aspirations also cannot be minimised as being a strict following of the latest trends and fashions in interior design. Even for them, trying to explain unconscious leaning towards the specific aesthetic qualities of housing is a difficult task, and one that does not appear close to being the result of cold rationalisation:

> *"Well, this apartment where we live now has something like that, it has some weight, so to speak. Erm, I don't know. It's very difficult to explain... <...> It seems that <Pause> even the walls have something, they hide something, some kind of past, or what should I call it? Erm, I don't know." (Agnė, skilled female professional)*

In their decisions, the new settlers are strongly led by a specific feeling concerning the spaces of the apartments. The spacious rooms of historic buildings are among the defining qualities that attract new settlers to this neighbourhood. In such historic buildings, they feel "free" – not oppressed by close walls and ceilings. *Rūta* even describes a specific sense of creative inspiration that such space gives to her:

> *"Well, for me, you know, big and aesthetic spaces like this make me feel more creative, and <Pause> I actually feel better in a big space. I don't like those tiny little rooms full of stuff where you don't even have a place to turn around. <...> I just feel better in a space like that. There isn't that kind of constraint, for example, that you can have in a small room that's loaded with lots of stuff. Still, you <Pause> don't/ can't feel constrained by things. I like that." (Rūta, skilled female professional)*

The professional skills and cultural capital possessed by the likes of *Agnė*, *Rūta* or *Julius*, whom you will soon encounter, allow them to create "fashion for themselves". But the feeling they have for these particular types of spaces is not random. This feeling corresponds in certain ways with their position in *social space*, where such dispositions of *habitus* are more likely than in the positions of others. Far from being the result of some purely psychological inclinations, these dispositions have social roots. They are one of many indications that the embodied structuring principles of the surrounding world are at work. The moment when economic possibilities enable them to purchase housing that suits this inner feeling with

regard to space is a pleasurable one – a moment of feeling empowered, feeling free to make one's own home.

Brick wall in a historic building uncovered after the removal of plaster.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

These aesthetic aspirations also have a relationship to the symbolic space. The manual craftsmanship felt in the wooden or metal details of historic houses; the hand-made walls and plastering, the old roofs and windows of unexpected shape or placement, the clay bricks – all of these elements that resonate the taste of new settlers also have their place in the overall space of aesthetic possibilities. The symbolic oppositions against which such elements stand enable us to read the symbolic meanings they carry. In the case of Vilnius, the most prevalent opposition is against the monotonous uniformity of newly developed housing or the material asceticism of the socialist-modernist panel concrete blocks of flats. In conversations with newcomers, this opposition may not manifest directly – and is usually hiding behind initial rationalisations of their choice of housing in this neighbourhood. But it does not take long for them to begin to compare their choice with the materiality of socialist-modernist architecture as being a "grey monolith" of "concrete blocks", or new developments being simple and standard, mass-produced concrete blocks – not something that feels close

to their own skin. These leanings towards historic housing also show in the difficulties these new settlers have in identifying with the local version of the modernist project; a version that is dominant in the housing stock of Vilnius, and one of which their eyes are tired – or even afraid. Opposition to these symbolic positions is sometimes reinforced by removing plaster from the walls, so that the pattern of hand-made clay bricks can be both visible and admired.

Even this narrow analysis of aesthetic aspirations towards housing in one small area of the city offers some important hints towards the leading oppositions in the overall aesthetic map of Vilnius. The act of choosing to go through the painful endeavour of renovation is an act of claiming difference against the '*new*' or '*modern*'. The story of *Julius* is a particularly salient example of the efforts required to find and appropriate such rare oppositions. *Julius* and his friends moved into a rental space, which had previously been used for countless other purposes (including, but not limited to, a brothel and a taxi company). As part of their rental contract, they were obliged to renovate it. They took this seemingly unpretentious task of economic investment as an opportunity for a trip as explorers into the unknown of the urban past:

> "*When we moved in it was like, eh, actually there was a feeling, you... I don't know, there are, there are shows like that where... I don't know... not a show, but 'trash to treasure', where you buy some abandoned thing and then you start messing around with it and there's treasure! [both laugh]. So, there was a bit of that effect, because we started cleaning the place and all sorts of ornaments came out, you know, the ceiling there is beautiful. <...> And we scraped one ceiling, and saw the ornaments, and the other one too! Everything was covered up, and we peeled off all the Armstrongs [a type of suspended ceiling grid used in commercial premises] and automatically the height of the ceiling went up a lot. <...> So, it was precisely in that big, the big room that we opened it up and found a very beautiful ceiling, and then the dilemma was whether to cover it, or to clean it and restore it somehow, because restoration is obviously a very expensive thing. But we decided to uncover it and... to clean it and just have the missing parts made. So... my father's acquaintance is a very good restorer, so he made the missing parts of that plaster for free. Anyway... [laughs] it's just, I don't know why, maybe because he's a friend or... So, we installed it, and we got a very nice result.*" (Julius, young creative professional)

Given how much financial investment, as well as psychological energy and the use of specific social capital such renovations require from those who undertake the challenge of moving into historic housing, explanations of such individuals as 'rational actors' fall somewhat short. A strictly rational calculation of all of the economic and labour costs of appropriating such a historical interior would probably deem such an undertaking to be unreasonable. As medium-term renters, *Julius* and his friends did not even benefit from all of the energy they have invested. The signs of fatigue in his voice when recounting this story reveal that it is the owner of the apartment who is the biggest beneficiary of these endeavours.

After *Julius* and his friends moved out, the landlord received the fruits of these efforts to renovate this elaborate historic housing.

But *Julius* does not regret the experience. He feels a sense of respect and solidarity with the other people taking the arduous path of renovation. For him, this project acted as a training ground for future attempts to appropriate dilapidated housing. His next project finally proved to be worth the hassle, and secured his present stable housing conditions in a location that he would not otherwise have been able to afford. Far from being unaware of the risks, those who undertake such a path are motivated by a particular sense of meaning. The arduous practice of the restoration of the 'old' enables them to claim such spaces, to make a statement about their position in the social space. Choosing to renovate the '*old*' – even if it comes with obvious practical disadvantages – provides unique opportunities to claim difference. The qualities of such housing, once renovation is complete and contemporary facilities are made available, become qualities that place the owner in rather different position on the aesthetic map, compared with contemporary or socialist-modernist aesthetics. But this path is not accessible to everyone. It requires cultural capital, of which *Julius* had plenty of and could mobilise yet more from within his social circles. The result of such tedious renovation is also an opposition to so-called '*euro-repair*' – the practice of imitating exclusiveness through the use of cheap materials and using the least labour-intensive methods of building and repair. What was achieved by Julius cannot be imitated. For that, one needs a rare combination of both economic capacity and a *habitus* with specific aspirations of taste.

Home as an inversion of the outside world

Those who have lived in their home for a longer period speak of their relationship with home-space and their housing histories in a less agitated tone than newcomers. For them, housing is no longer a direct claim to difference or a personal statement. Rather than being based on an imagining of oneself, with time it becomes more and more a dusty scenography of one's lifeworld, filled with personal artefacts. Housing is among the most private spaces in which people are most free to practise their aesthetic aspirations and live their personal histories. Through the course of their personal life histories, people create a perfect plaster imprint of their social selves. For most people, this precisely represents their ideal home: a place of freedom where one can have a sense of total control, away from the outside world. Particular in the stories of people who have lived in their homes for a longer period, one can sense how the lifeworld of their homes are organised against the outerworld.

Thus *Natalya's* story, which began this chapter, is not simply about the trials of decorating her home's interior. Her efforts to inhabit her apartment also reflect her quest for a harmonious relationship with the outside world. She creates this relationship by managing the oppositions of light and dark, loud and calm, closed and open – incorporating these into her everyday life. There are sufficient coincidences to suggest that the divisions of interior spaces are organised around a certain social mythology of life, as Bourdieu observed in his

early poetic anthropology of the Kabyle house (Bourdieu, 1990). At this point, I would hesitate to draw homologies between the feelings towards housing among residents of central Vilnius and the contemporary mythologies of their everyday lives. In fact, I even doubt that there would be a way to read the material manifestations of one's social self in the intimate space as a complete and meaningful text, written in a certain social language of space. But trying to imagine such a possibility, in a similar way to that in which Bourdieu did in his early work on the Kabyle house, helps to spur our sociological imagination. This exercise should begin with a search for the borderlines that separate the inside from the outside. The 'thicker' borderlines of the nature of the neighbourhood, the urban infrastructure and the walls of apartment block are ones that one cannot change. But there are enough other borderlines separating the inside from the outside world, and these can be more easily played around with.

The organisation of one's life around these 'thinner' borderlines can be recognised in the most minute arrangements within the walls of the apartment. By opening up a soundproof window to one of the liveliest streets in the neighbourhood, *Paulius* says he is *"letting in some city"* to his apartment. It brings in the noises made by the trolleys used by market workers, or the chats between prostitutes and their pimps and clients. The spaces of the apartment are divided accordingly. The 'productive' space – the spacious work studio – is directed towards the side of the busy street. The spaces for rest and dining are directed towards the tranquility of a rural-like courtyard. The motif of the home as an inversion of the outside world also comes up in a less direct manner, when interviewees speak about the struggles of their contemporary professional lives. Working in the international development of highly specialised IT products, *Viltė* is haunted by a strong feeling of the meaninglessness of her profession. In these circumstances, her rental apartment becomes a true shelter from these miseries:

> *"When I go on a business trip now, it's a nightmare; it just seems like, 'Go home, go home!' [laughs]. If you are just travelling, everything is fine, but when you are on a business trip, it's – I wanna go home, only home, only home. When you come back, there's such niceness embracing you. <...> And, in a word, then I long to go home. Well, at the beginning, the spirit of the explorer still affected me, that anyway it's fascinating to go somewhere, even after work, to see something, to have some fun, but somehow the emotional side, the meaningless side, erm, it's so torturous, you want to go home, not to pretend to be doing something." (Viltė, young skilled professional)*

All the uncertainties of this outside world have an indirect effect on the experience of home, which is a distant reflection of one's wavering relationship to the structural forces lurking beyond the walls of home. The more unsettling and ambiguous her situation at work, the more meaning *Viltė* finds at home – which is something solid, something grounded; an opportunity for stability and safety. A stray cat is a first living being that *Viltė* talks to before coming back home from an exhausting business trip. The cat is waiting for her next

to the door of her stairwell, where it is fed by elderly ladies of the house. This is just one example of how all of the living beings nearby, animals and plants – nature – provide a special meaning to life in the city. Again, the notions of symbolic and economic capital or field fall short in explaining the power that nature has in one's experience of the city.

Picture 34.   The verge of city and nature in the neighbourhood.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

If there is anything at all 'natural' about people's housing practices, it is the inevitable practice of protecting ourselves from the precarious conditions of nature. People from all possible housing classes and in all housing situations are 'doing' housing. It is not that we choose to do it; housing is part of our everyday human struggle against the forces of nature, in the face of which we are all equal. In the inverted world of housing, nature is the ultimate outside world from which we are protecting ourselves. The same natural forces also make housing a peculiar type of capital, which is in constant need of upkeep. It takes time for the natural forces of depreciation to overtake such efforts and deplete its material qualities. This was the case with the social housing apartment in which *Fanya* lived. The municipality continually refused to invest in the apartment. Her monotonous efforts to heat up an apartment whose walls were full of holes reminds of this basic human condition of struggle against the forces of nature:

> *"We got tired of living like that, too, that's all. Of course, it was a pity to leave that house, but I was tired of running that stove. <...> this huge gap, and you have to burn and burn and burn the wood, because it's always cold, the wind blows everywhere. And the children say, 'Mum, we've put in a lot of money' and we had to repair it anyway, because the ceiling is crumbling to the point where they say, 'It can't be helped, it has to be replaced.... Of course, it was hard for me, I said: 'I'm not going anywhere, I'm going to stand here like that oak tree for a hundred years! Noooo, noooo, only after I've died – then you can do whatever you want'. But then I thought, yeah..., it's cold now, you go to pour fuel briquettes; your grandson comes to stay: 'Oh, I'm coooold, I'm coooold'; you take a bath and you can't do anything, because it's draughty everywhere." (Fanya, middle-aged service worker)*

One can look at housing as a having a material memory of its own – a memory of the power of the owners needed not only to build, but also to constantly maintain it. In the case of long-term decline, extreme depreciation can be a leading cause of one leaving one's home. Being economically unable to privatise and renovate this complicated housing unit, *Fanya* agreed to be moved to another social housing unit. This one was away from the city centre in a socialist-modernist block of flats. Its central heating rescued *Fanya* from her previous pre-modern household worries. In this situation, moving was not a question of aesthetic preference. It was not even a real question of choice. It was simply a clear moment in the history of her family when there was no more energy and resources to sustain their home. They had to leave.

The housing unit, which for Fanya was a source constant worries, but was also her 'true' home, saturated with signs of personal history, was privatised and after initial renovation will probably reach the housing market. This move was made by someone who could mobilise economic resources. The housing unit is likely to sell as a piece of historic real estate, ready to be transformed for 'authentic' living. Such stories of indirect displacement are important, because they are not uncommon. They also allow us to identify a line that divides the moment at which housing ceases to be used solely for its protective functions, and also becomes a material means to claim social difference. The decay, which was a source of hardships for its

previous occupants, in the eyes of new settlers can become mysterious signs of history to be 'rediscovered'. This simple matter of economic capacity – of whether one is able or not able to maintain the condition of housing – can begin to become falsely interpreted as the cultural capacity of being able or not to recognise the aesthetic qualities of one's own housing, and be ready to put them to 'proper' use. These subjective attitudes towards old-timers, or simple stereotypes, are common among newcomers to the neighbourhood.

Through the course of one's life, not only does housing become layered with very specific meanings, but also the borderlines between the outside and inside become settled. Such combinations can be easily acquired in the housing market. Memories of childhood, such as the games one used to play with friends in the courtyard, or defining moments in one's personal life that took place at home, strengthen the sense of ownership of the space. So too do the memories of important happenings in the near vicinity – such as, for example, remembering the explosion of military shells during the war, which was strong enough to rip the roof off the house. All of these memories give older inhabitants a certain unique and irreplaceable sense of entitlement to claim this space as their own. Giving away such meanings by selling one's house is usually the result of an important turning point in one's life. But while one person remembers such personal histories as their own, others can choose to forget them. And not only because they are simply unknown, but also because they do not always fit with that person's narrative of themselves in any meaningful way. An extreme of such a case is *Paulius's* story about an unexpected visitor who was lurking in the courtyard just outside his windows. After asking to be invited inside, this previous resident, who had recently been released from prison, shared some macabre stories about things that had happened in *Paulius's* house and apartment. The stories connected the place to the rough times of 1990s, when the criminal gang known as the 'Vilnius Brigade' was active in the neighbourhood:

> *"He started to tell us a little bit about who lived where, who died where, in which room. It's like, mmmm, I didn't want to know that... [laughs]. <...> So, I said to this guest of mine that it's better not to say what it used to be, where things happened, yeah, and... Then, yeah, no one will haunt you (laughs). <...> What was here? Did anyone die here? Maybe someone is buried in the cellar [laughs].*
>
> *A: But can it be like that?*
>
> *I: It can. Yeah, it's better not to..., it's better not to know something, I guess. That way, you can make your own story. Well, in the sense of a different, a completely different kind of story." (Paulius, middle age, skilled professional – entrepreneur)*

Photo by Vytautas Michelkevičius, 2021.

The selective memory, forgetfulness and imaginings of the space are among the strategies used to place symbolic meanings upon the place of one's dwelling. In historic housing, unexpected memories of the space are always lurking behind the scenes, and can be employed in attempts to classify spaces and ultimately the people who inhabit them. Once again, strictly materialist approaches to housing would dismiss these reflections as irrelevant to the social analysis of housing choices. They would instead look for a rational actor seeking to make the best decision possible in the market. But there is much more involved in creating a feeling of home than economic rationales. Symbolic meanings are also important, and they possess their own social logic, because they mark a person's position in the social space.

Natalya is now stuck in the transition between her old apartment, which is too small for her growing household, and a new house, which she is having difficulties in renovating. This is how she reflects upon the social suffering that the mismatch between the current space of her home and the intuitive leanings of her *habitus* can cause:

"And I thought I didn't want to suffer any more. I want to have a home that makes me feel good. <...> So that's it. But anyway, it's about investment and everything. Like, what to do and how to do it, so that it's rational on the one hand, but on the other hand brings you some joy. I want joy too [laughs]." (Natalya, middle-aged cultural worker)

In line with the seriousness of the economic decision taken at the moment of housing acquisition, she starts with the rituals of developing a rational argument. But what she craves is the realisation of a certain fantasy of home. Those looking for home in the market are likely to make a deal when at least some aspects of this imagined home can be realised at a price one can afford. Under such circumstances, an offer becomes a *"practical option"*. Finding housing at a price that is *"reasonable"* rather than *"astronomical"* is an absolute precondition for making a deal. This *reasonability* of the price depends a lot on the socially preconditioned capacity of person to mobilise economic resources. And yet this is not the point at which social forces cease to function. The content of what is *reasonable* also very much depends on what this act of acquisition *will* tell or *has* to tell about one's social self. These leanings toward *symbolic* claims are also socially preconditioned, and the related choices are made within the space of possibilities accessible to a particular individual. But rather than being the result of scrupulous rational calculations, they are more a result of the commandments of taste, which have their own social logic.

4.1.2. Inevitability and choice in the practice of housing

The very emphasis on the moment of choice in housing is the thing that can distort our understandings in a very particular way. It invites us to think of housing as *matter of choice*, rather than as a continuous practice of human beings in their struggles against nature. If we look at housing as a practice of protecting ourselves from nature, we should start to see it much less as a choice and more as a necessity. The moment of choice encourages us to look only at the market of housing for sale or rent, and to emphasise the agency of those who make such a choice. Not only does such an approach force us to accept the blinding logic of rational choice, it also forces us to underestimate:

— The *symbolic* role that housing plays in the making of a household, and of relations in the *family field*, which in turn affecting one's practical choices of housing;

— The *gravity of the field of housing*, which affects agents while they are making individual housing choices or pursuing housing practices.

By looking at how individuals' housing choices fit into their overall histories, we can gain a more complete picture of the social preconditions for such choices. The social nature of these preconditions becomes especially visible during moments of economic and political restructuring. Such events tend to shuffle the interplay of the various social institutions involved in the provision of housing. The very different steps that people living in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station have taken during their own personal histories show that these actions were more a part of inevitable struggles against forces – social and natural – rather than pure acts of choice.

The symbolic role of social ties in the game of housing

The feeling of correspondence between the self and the outside world is more easily recognised in the homes of one-person households. This feeling is very easily disturbed by changes in personal life. The moving-in and of a partner and the process of settling in together make housing a common project. In some cases, this is characterised by the strictly gendered division of labour; in others, it is implemented as a process of more collaborative exchanges in the search for mutual harmony. In any case, the project of making a home, which is an important project in creating a representation of a social self, can also become an important project of learning and aligning with a partner's understanding of self. The space of home places some material limits on such a project. These limits manifest themselves most vividly in the event of expecting a child. At such a point, maintaining a similar feeling of home requires the rearrangement the space or the acquisition of more space. It is in this

light that housing choices start to look more like a necessity brought about by defining events in one's life, rather than the result merely of 'rational' or 'irrational' decisions. The early years in an individual's housing history are particularly illustrative of the role that social ties play in the making of housing. Remembering his experiences as a lodger during his years as a student, Kęstas recalls how he became almost a member of the host family. His first experiences as a lodger are tainted by an uncomfortable closeness to others with whom he had little in common:

> *"I lived there, I don't know, for about a week or something. And I had to leave this place because the family was living quite hard, so poorly. <...> Even though I lived for a short time, I remember quite well that when I bought some food and ate it, there were moments when those children looked at me like... well, it's very, erm, I mean, how do I swallow that bite then...? And then somehow, someone there stole some money... It wasn't much, but it felt kind of like I didn't succeed in living there, just too, too... So, I just... I...I... <Pause> I left the place." (Kęstas, middle-aged skilled professional)*

Later on, *Kęstas* found another family with whom he could more comfortably spend part of the formative years of his youth. This experience does, however, provide a vivid example of the subtle lines of the family group, which are usually materialised within the walls of a house or apartment. In the relationship between a lodger and a host family, these lines are less obvious and a need of constant negotiation. But speaking overall, housing is an important material base used to classify a social group such as a household or a family.

Family is also not the only social group that can be a source of the social capital employed in the game of housing. The material difficulties of living in student dormitories, as well as shared formative experiences when entering a profession, often pay out with a unique sense of solidarity. These common experiences bind people together, and this social capital is used not only to acquire employment, but also to secure housing. During the phases of life before or immediately after finishing studies, it can be used to assemble a collective of shared living, which saves on the resources necessary for rent. Unorthodox social groupings can also result in unorthodox housing practices. This was precisely the case in the example of *Julius* and his friends. Being a religious group, they managed to get around the mainstream housing market and rented a dilapidated house in the vicinity of Vilnius train station, enabling their community to secure housing for its members. Acting almost like a clan or a family, the solidarity of which was built through common religious practices and tested through ongoing rounds of shared activities, the group secured housing that would otherwise have been difficult to afford.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

In the regime of housing policy, which is based on the institutions of family and the housing market, social ties have a strong influence on housing practices and experiences of home. The family – or other groups with a similar sense of solidarity – are likely to play a decisive role in housing histories. But to understand the value of these ties in the making of housing, we also need to think of personal costs. This requires us to look beyond the idealistic image of home as place of peace and tranquility. The home is also container for the power relationships within the family, which can be both empowering and violent. For *Natalya*, establishing her own home was important, because it was a way to escape the tense relations with her parents, which dominated the atmosphere of her childhood home:

"There was such a totally complicated relationship. And maybe that's why I really wanted to leave. When I got the chance to leave, I was very happy that I had moved; that I didn't have to go back, and that I didn't have to mess around in all of that relationship. Because it really wasn't very cool. But that doesn't mean at all, it

doesn't mean at all that I don't like the apartment block because of that relationship [laughs]." *(Natalya, middle-aged cultural professional)*

After making this claim about *socialist-modernist* blocks of flats, *Natalya* immediately starts to doubt herself. She makes a number of statements that reveal her family history – lived in a socialist modernist house – is among the powerful, latent reasons for her leaning towards historic housing. Not only moving away from her hometown, but also choosing a type of housing, the material qualities of which are as far removed from socialist modernism as it gets in the housing stock of Vilnius, was her way of claiming opposition against her family history. Even if investing her family inheritance into socialist-modernist housing of the same price might have secured objectively better housing conditions, she chose to follow her feeling for difference.

In *Natalya's* story, we see how the social capital of a family is intertwined with the specific symbolic moves of positioning oneself in the symbolic map of the city. *Natalya's* decisions not only mark her claimed position, but also her claims to a trajectory in the social space. She acts in a similar manner to the younger sons in Bourdieu's observations of the Kabyle household economy (Bourdieu, 1990). The oppositional strategies of those leaving the household appear less rebellious when one starts to understand them as one of a few common strategies involved in rites of passage. The content of the action, although oppositional, is still defined by the position of the parents, against which the rebellious action is being made. Furthermore, it also strengthens the position of the family, as the oppositional trajectories diversify the types of capital within the family group. *Natalya's* story is in a way typical, in the sense that the choice of an apartment in this neighbourhood is often deemed by close relatives to be impractical, risky or even ill-considered, but is nevertheless supported. For *Natalya*, it not only brought the satisfaction and pleasure of self-definition against the position of her parents, but also proved to be a successful economic investment.

Reflecting upon one's own aesthetic and spatial leanings towards a particular type of house is something that people find particularly difficult, almost impossible. The most frequent intuitive reaction after such a request to explain one's aesthetic leanings towards specific housing is to dive deep into childhood memories of the home of one's parents. Such reflections are usually puzzling and difficult to follow. They give rise to more questions than answers as to why seemingly very different personal histories and trajectories might produce very similar housing aspirations. These stories remind us rather beautifully, however, that it is not only the walls, but also the human bodies within them, that are essential to housing practices, to the making of household or home. The walls are just a shell; a material container for power relations within the family, changes in which will also change the meaning of the shell and relationships to it. Looking at these aesthetic aspirations through the workings of the field would probably give us a much clearer view. But under the given conditions of the local housing regime, the institutions of market and family are the ones that secure the supply of housing. In this context, it is worth considering that it is not only the economic stability secured by one's profession, but also the social capital one accumulates in one's

family, that secure one's chances of entering and playing in the field of housing. We can also turn this object of enquiry around and think about how the overall equilibrium of family power struggles – in which housing is an important form of capital – will influence the space of possibilities and trajectories for its members, and how it all plays out in the transfer of social positions.

Equals against the forces of nature; unequal in the face of economic and political restructuring

If we want to understand the objective preconditions for the aforementioned divisions between different attitudes towards the same housing units, we need to think about the differing positions in which people found themselves during the economic and political restructuring that struck Lithuania in the 1990s. People's housing histories before and after the years of restructuring illustrate the depth of the changes that this period brought to people's lives and to their social trajectories. In the neighbourhood surrounding Vilnius train station, however, these histories often begin long before the 1990s – often with memories of moving into the empty homes of residents who had died in the Holocaust or during World War II, or who had fled Vilnius in the immediate aftermath. In the vicinity of the railway station, gold and other valuables belonging to Jewish families could still be found many years after the war – hidden in the walls of apartments as uncomfortable reminders of history. After the war, more spacious pre-war apartments were often divided into smaller, densely inhabited communal units. Such modest standards of living were still an improvement for most residents, who were escaping the hardships of life amid the rubble of post-war Vilnius. According to the memories of residents, housing in this neighbourhood was populated by railway workers, or workers from the surrounding factories, but also occasionally by civil servants or people working in cultural or education institutions.

During Soviet times, housing was the property of the state and during these years it proved very difficult to secure its renovation. In the wake of the socialist-modernist housing development boom, most of the state's resources were directed at the industrial development of new socialist- modernist districts, which took place on a mass scale. Without a private market for building services, and suffering a deficit of building materials, even the basic upkeep of such old houses was a difficult task. *Nina* remembers all the fruitless attempts made to get the housing authorities to renovate their house. All of these requests ended with one excuse after another:

"Yeah, then all those Olympics, then the Spitak in Armenia – the earthquake. So, in a word, we didn't get the money, even though we wrote to Moscow, we wrote elsewhere – no money. Then (a paper) came that your house has been restored! And

we understood that nothing would happen. That's the way it all stayed..." (Nina, middle-aged education specialist)

Many years after the war, a large proportion of flats were still heated manually, and also lacked such basic facilities such as toilets, showers, and in some cases even running water. Under such circumstances, moving into socialist concrete-panel buildings, with all of the modern facilities they entailed, was a dream for many of the residents. Some residents did, however, managed to secure the capital renovation of their houses. What proved to be difficult for *Nina's* neighbours was achieved by residents of a neighbouring house. *Nina's* memories of this achievement are, however, tainted by a sense of social injustice caused by the corruption within institutions at that time. Either though some shady links to those who were closer to decision-making process, or in some other way, the residents of the neighbouring house acquired all the modern facilities – including central heating and sewerage – that *Nina's* neighbours could not enjoy.

These memories of renovation attempts are often accompanied by a certain sense of powerlessness. But not all the aspects of the upkeep of housing were this problematic. Some state-controlled communal services are remembered as providing a sense of order that is no longer present now. *Ania* remembers the courtyard always being clean and taken care of by the local janitor. Remembering this, she quickly slips into a general reflection concerning the sense of order in her life at that time:

"I don't know. Personally, to me, it was better back then. There was some kind of future, that, erm, you finished school, you went somewhere, you had a job, you could have a career somewhere. Well of course, careers are what they are – maybe there were downsides too. If you joined the Party, you could achieve something. Well, erm, somehow it didn't bother me, these Komsomol guys. No, no, no, they didn't do anything bad to me personally (laughs)." (Anya, middle-aged service worker)

No matter what attitudes people held towards the then-incumbent regime, the fall of the Soviet Union and the economic restructuring that followed disturbed the lives of most. The residents of this neighbourhood were hit particularly hard. The surrounding factories, which were important providers of work for its residents, soon couldn't pay salaries for half a year or even longer. All were on the verge on bankruptcy. *Ania* remembers this period as a *"a time when life stopped"*. Massive unemployment followed soon after privatisation and the closure of these factories. Contacts with family members who farmed outside the city suddenly became an important way to avoid food shortages. People had to seek employment in different lines of work, many of them turning to commerce. This change was difficult, particularly for those who did not speak Lithuanian or who lacked the skills that were in demand in the newly forming labour market. *Fanya*, who at that time was in her twenties and starting a family, remembers herself striving stubbornly for life:

"There were all kinds of things, and some very difficult moments, too. Salaries were low; it was really very hard. But somehow, I don't know, we survived. I remember that it was, but we didn't pay attention to that, to the fact that it was difficult. We thought that we had to live. Yeah, the others were either crying or drinking, 'It's hard to live...', Well, get on with it – it's hard for everyone!" (Fanya, middle-aged service worker)

If any moment of change in recent history that caused a complete upheaval of the lifeworld of this neighbourhood, it is this moment of economic and political restructuring. Looking at this moment, all subsequent changes in the neighbourhood seem like attempts to inhabit the emptiness that opened up after this moment. This change in the outside world turned the lives of many households upside-down. In the house neighbouring *Nina's*, which had secured renovation during the years before independence, the joys of central heating were soon to become a painful burden for its inhabitants. *Barbara* remembers, that

"There was a year or two when you had to think about whether you eat, or you pay for heating and water, and not get them turned off. I remember when my Mum got the money, she would immediately run to pay for the heating, and what was a tragedy it was that the heating prices were terribly high because of the blockade[12]. <...> so, you can imagine, a person would earn maybe five hundred euros, ah, sorry, litas, and had to pay six hundred euros for heating!" (Barbara, middle-aged woman of undisclosed occupation)

Not everyone was mentally and intellectually prepared to deal with the changes to the social order and the hardships they brought. *Barbara* remembers how her mother juggled what little resources she had to pay at least something towards the utilities, so as not to be the first in line to have a bailiff knocking on the door. A lot of *Barbara's* neighbours did not manage to cover the skyrocketing costs of heating an old and energy-inefficient house. Some of the neighbours struggled with alcohol addiction and were evicted; others moved away to live in cottages with collective gardens on the outskirts of the city. Things were less tough for the residents of houses that were still not connected to the central heating. Overall, however, economic restructuring had a disastrous social impact on the neighbourhood. It was precisely at this time that the activities of criminal gangs increased – the mysterious visitor to *Paulius' s* apartment described previously was a reminder of that time. *Barbara* remembers gang members, some of whom were her neighbours, demonstrating their power with luxurious cars and excessive consumption. Splashing around such signs of wealth in the context of devastating poverty and the everyday struggles of the neighbourhood contributed to a huge sense of social injustice. It was also around this time that the first new wave of emigration

started, which a lot of the younger residents of the neighbourhood, including *Barbara*, also joined.

Not all of them returned. *Roman* always found it hard to make ends meet as a market stevedore. Rising prices after the introduction of euro did not make things easier for him. *Roman* used to hang around with street prostitutes, and later started to assist them with their work. It wasn't long before he fell into drug addiction. None of his former co-workers know what has happened to *Roman*, who sold his apartment and later fled abroad. His girlfriend, an ex-street prostitute *Sabrina*, has also disappeared. Even if they are still alive, it is unlikely they will return to the neighbourhood. Neither will *Sasha*, who passed away some years ago. *Sasha* used to live in social housing with his mother, who appears to have been the only person able to cope with his mental issues. After his mother died, *Sasha* could no longer manage keep up his home, and became homeless. For some time, he was taken care of by the local Krishna Consciousness community, but later passed away. There is a mixture of compassion and frustration in *Eglė's* voice when she speaks about him as a neighbour. One morning, she woke up in a cloud of smoke that *Sasha* had created by trying to warm himself up with an open fire on the floor of his former apartment. In this surreal scene observed by *Eglė*, in which *Sasha* made something almost resembling a tribal fire in the centre of his former home, trying to warm himself, we can indeed see housing for what it is: a fundamental and inevitable human practice.

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[12] The Soviet economic blockade of Lithuania imposed by the Soviet Union on Lithuania between 18 April and 29 June 1990. It began soon after Lithuania declared restoration of its independence on 11 March 1990.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

The stories of *Sasha* and *Roman* reveal how the voices of those residents of the neighbourhood who were hit hardest by economic restructuring, are also the most difficult to hear. For those who survived these struggles, ownership of dilapidated housing in the centre of the city received through voucher-based privatisation was the only 'prize' for making it through this economic transition. During privatisation, a certain share of housing ownership was given to long-term residents according to their participation in the socio-economic system before the transition. In the vicinity of Vilnius train station, any sense of freedom and control related to the rights of ownership was, however, mixed with worries about owning extremely dilapidated property. The social conditions necessary to enter into ownership, or to fully engage in the field of housing, are different for those who are making this step under the current housing regime. A significant share of those entering the housing field at this time are doing so by taking out a mortgage. Housing is made available to them on the basis of their economic capacity to make a down-payment, and on the assumption that their economic capacity will not cease during the long, unforeseeable future towards the age of retirement. The economic transition has thus created another class of homeowners that was not previously present.

Although, according to their socio-economic status, these newcomers are often part of a stratum of society that is better-off than most long-term residents, the sources of their sufferings are very similar. Buying into a projection of the future through a loan brings with it many hidden uncertainties to the lives of new settlers. The loan is a mechanism of empowerment, which is seen as a way of solving many of their sufferings. But it also introduces them to new ones. For *Martynas*, buying an apartment using a loan was a way to transform his currently stable social status into an investment, to provide a cushion for an uncertain future:

> "For me, I mean, security is important in all senses, both physical security that someone is not going to come and evict you from your home; and financial security, so that you feel that if something happens to you, you still have a cushion there or something; you know what you will do. And yeah, well, the flat itself is an investment, it's for security, because you could go without making some investments or without doing some things, you could just go for a couple of months for a holiday, in Southeast Asia, but you don't go, you make other decisions." (Martynas, young male of undisclosed profession)

The new possibilities opened up by the mortgage market, which enable people to buy an apartment using a loan, cultivate a different type of thinking about housing – it is no longer a place to make a home, it is an investment. Leanings towards such thinking are stronger, the better a person's chances are of accessing financial capital or of making money by renting the property out. Whereas the survivors of economic restructuring lack the means or access to credit to enable them to fix up their dilapidated housing, these others suffer due to the uncertainties that their financial commitments bring to them. In a way, the social bases behind the very different types of social suffering that these groups experience, are reflection of the rules of *the field of housing*, which sort people into 'productive' and 'unproductive' bodies. Each of these labels is, in its own way, symbolically violent.

The Marxist-inspired approaches of urban studies would encourage us to look for a character or a type who would embark on a quest to cash-in on the highest rent value possible from dilapidated housing in the 'promising' location in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station. In reality, none of my informants of higher social status were even close to fitting such an erroneous cliché of a capitalist, driven only by their willingness to seize surplus value. A lot of newcomers to the neighbourhood who have taken the step of securing a mortgage, are escaping what would otherwise be the very precarious position of renting. What in the eyes of Marxist-inspired urban studies ought to be a fight between opposing classes for urban space in such locations, in this neighbourhood appears more like a game within the field, which one enters by accepting its rules. *Linas*, whose economic status was recently strengthened by his improved work situation, giving him a larger and more stable income, contemplates it precisely as a game:

"And the point is that if I managed to get that loan, in other words, I would be paying the same or less than what I pay for rent, wouldn't I? So, in that sense, it's logical, it's just...erm, isn't it...? And then you can play the game of capitalism – whether or not to sell it, that flat, can't you? <...>

Interviewer: And what do you mean by the 'game of capitalism'?

Linas: Sorry, I've made a joke here, maybe out of place...

Interviewer: No, no, it's okay, I think it's a good metaphor.

Linas: Well, I mean that, you know, we can hate on the system of the world, but it's, you know, 'If you can't beat them, join them', right? [both laugh] Well, I mean that when you have a flat, you can sell it, you know, you can get something new, you can go live somewhere else, you can rent it out at the same market prices..." (Linas, young creative professional)

Linas' carefulness about making a joke of it shows his discomfort at being seen as a source of the displacement of long-time residents, but it also betrays how reflective he is of the social unacceptability of criticising the capitalist workings of the current housing regime. In spite of all the moral dilemmas projected on him by the normatively charged academic discourses, such as those produced by the debate on gentrification, he is contemplating the benefits of entering the housing field through the right of ownership. This act doesn't look like the result of a scrupulous calculation of rational moves in relation to one's future (which, for the youth of today is hard to predict and even harder to feel secure about). It is instead a *practical* decision that comes from fatigue at being a renter in unstable rent markets – to stop *"throwing money into the air"* and to *"to settle down"*. It is a decision to accept the inevitable gravity of the field, a game of a very contentious nature. Entering this game is a practical decision made out of necessity rather than a purely rational choice.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

4.2. Making a place of one's own in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station

Dropping the assumption of the rational actor enables us to see that housing choice is neither particularly rational, nor it is simply a matter of choice. A similar approach can also be applied to a person's choice of location. Taking this step enables us to turn from simple observations about everyday life to observation of the city as a container of social struggles. A person's choice of location is far from being just a continuation of their aesthetic inclinations towards certain material qualities of housing, which are usually concentrated in specific locations within the city. The act of situating oneself within the city raises some specific questions:

— How do the *material* and *symbolic structures of the city* structure one's choice as to where to place oneself in the city?

— What is the role of different types of *capital* in relation to unanticipated solidarities between people living in this neighbourhood?

Living in the apartments that most closely fit one's social 'skin' is not the only source of urban pleasures. Newcomers to this area all agree that in this neighbourhood of Vilnius, one can really feel that one is "living in the city". No less important than the material qualities of the surrounding architecture is one's closeness to the diversity of the human bodies that fill this neighbourhood. For some, this offers a promise of adventure, an opportunity to be surprised and to experience one's social self from very different angles of social life:

"The very sort of energy of the place is unforgettable, the vibe that there is no other place in Vilnius like this one. It's just very active, there are a lot of unpredictable things, but there are also a lot of predictable things [laughs]. Well, because there is a lot of traffic, you don't know what kind of person is going to walk through the door, if you're in a bar, you know, they could be from another part of the world, or it could be some homeless person from this part of the world, or it could be a normal person."
(Julius, young creative professional)

This amalgamation of built structures as well as collections and flows of human bodies, constitutes what people often call the unique 'aura' of the neighbourhood. The stories of those living the neighbourhood show it to be a constant source of pleasures, but also of the pains and conflicts characteristic of living in a city. Such situations in the social margins also offer us the opportunity to learn something new about social life.

4.2.1. In streets of the neighbourhood: the bodily feeling of the space, and the reading of historical signs

The aesthetic qualities of housing are not the only definite material drivers that explain why people are drawn to central locations in Vilnius. One can relate to the particular urban forms of the neighbourhood that one observes in the streets, just as one relates to the private space of one's housing. When rationalising their decisions to move or stay within the vicinity of the railway station, residents of the neighbourhood often mention the neighbourhood's central location as a primary factor. But on closer inspection, there is much more to such a choice than simple convenience. It is also based on:

— The intuitive leanings of *habitus*, which manifests through a *bodily feeling* of the urban forms of the neighbourhood.

— *Historical* signs visible in this part of the city, which can become relevant in relating oneself to social mythologies of place.

Housing histories are particularly informative about the ways in which different urban locations are used to position oneself within the social world. Here is where one can grasp how a person begins to relate to the larger symbolic structures of the city. These structures are, to a certain extent, unique to each city, which is a product of its own history. The symbolic structures of Vilnius have their own material basis in the natural landscape, in architecture and in urban infrastructure. Reading these through the habitus of people living in one particular location of the city helps one to understand the social laws that function in the making of a city.

The bodily feeling of the neighbourhood, of its borderlines and oppositions

Observations about urban spaces are perceived both through socially constructed symbolic structures, but also through the same intuitive leanings generated by the social structures internalised within one's own body. For *Kęstas* – as for many other newcomers to Vilnius – intensive promenades were a way to learn about the city. Such walks are not only a simple way of spending free time in the most beautiful spaces of the various neighbourhoods of Vilnius – they are moments of intense learning about oneself in the city by measuring it against one's own body. These promenades during his first years as a student were also *Kęstas'* way to deal with loneliness:

> *"I was walking then, I did lots, lots of walking. I was kind of curious to find out what the city was like. What was it like, how could I navigate it? Because until then, it's like, you come to the capital – there's the cathedral, there's Gediminas' castle. Well, here I've kind of appropriated it. Especially, I don't know why, Markučiai and that district attracted me, I would just go there. I would spend a lot of time there, but I was alone too. That's why the years of loneliness. For me, yes. Aah <pause>, I remember that very well, the time when I was walking and, as I called it, 'exploring', I was trying to domesticise Vilnius in such a way that it somehow became my own city and not just this capital or something. That's the kind of city Vilnius is. Lithuanian. Erm, no, where am I supposed to be in this place, to recognise areas, to find my own areas where I feel comfortable, where I like it." (Kęstas, middle-aged skilled professional)*

It is not so often that conversations about such promenades approach such a clear reflection of being an attempt to place oneself within the urban fabric of the city. This primary motive or longing is usually hidden behind more obvious needs such as walking a dog, clearing one's head after work or scouting for a new housing space. It is the morphology of historic neighbourhoods, with their narrow and bending streets, changing textures of the walls and comfortable scale, that provides a great deal of pleasure and attracts people to the historic city centre of Vilnius and the neighbourhood in the vicinity of its railway station.

New settlers in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station can enjoy the space of this neighbourhood in the same way as they enjoy the space within their new housing. The transitional nature of this historic district and its abundance of borderlines is what creates its particular character. These are the historically created material preconditions for the feel of the neighbourhood, which is also a material base of its *difference*. The decorative façades of these buildings do not go unnoticed. Looking at them through the urban dust and dirt, as well as through the frequent signs of decay, new settlers enjoy the sense of discovering an unknown city. Having lived a very colourful housing history, much of it in the socialist-

modernist districts of Vilnius, Julius contrasts the feel of the neighbourhood with the discomfort he felt in one of the city's socialist-modernist districts:

> *"The landscape of Pašilaičiai used to shock me. Because you wake up, you look out of the window and you don't know if you're in the city or if you're seeing a (computer) motherboard [both laugh]. I'm thinking, have I awoken inside a computer here? [both laugh out loud] So, you know, erm, it's all quite cramped in there and, well, erm, I don't know. For real, to me, Pašilaičiai was the most horrible neighbourhood. Well, you see. It's not that it's scary or something, but it's horrible in that way, like, everything seems like it's all tidy and like everybody is okay. Even though it's not okay, I mean. I don't know, maybe I'm insane, you know, for me that area is not okay."* (Julius, young creative professional)

Picture 39.   View from a window in the district of Pašilaičiai.

Photo by Luka Va, 2003.

The mentioning of this opposition to the historical fabric of the neighbourhood illustrates a very common trend among residents, particularly newcomers. People living there tend to situate the neighbourhood – and themselves – in opposition to the rest of the urban fabric, both to the Soviet modernist districts, and to the suburbia. The ascetic aesthetics of socialist-modernist buildings, when compared with the buildings of historic inner city, create the most active symbolic oppositions that guide the situating of oneself in the map of Vilnius. After his formative years, spent in the socialist-modernist districts, *Julius* moved out of those districts. He finally gave in to what he calls the *gravity of the city centre.* Having substantial social networks meant he could get a place by co-housing in the historic centre – he rented large apartments and shared the rent with his friends. Such a mobilisation and sharing of costs enabled them to access housing units that were less in demand in the market, and thus to a centrally located lifestyle that would otherwise not have been affordable.

Due to such symbolic oppositions in the urban fabric, one's choice of location also becomes a claim about oneself, an intuitive commentary on one's opposition towards the socialist-modernist project. One's opportunity to make such claims are, however, structurally predetermined: they depend on the limited availability of certain types of urban landscape. *Julius'* housing history illustrates not only this dominant opposition, but also the limitations of the categories that are used to demarcate them. Even within the general category of *'soviet blocks'*, for example, one can identify socially meaningful differences. What is, for some new settlers in the historic centre, a monolithic category of the *"districts of soviet blocks"*, for *Julius* is a space of his own, which contains substantial variety. For *Julius*, one such area, *Lazdynai*, stands in clear opposition to other socialist-modernist districts – whether due to the area's celebrated qualities of urban planning in relation to the local landscape, or to *Julius'* personal childhood history there. The category of *'soviet blocks'*, as it is currently used, fails to encapsulate such differences. Rather then marking the specific material and aesthetic qualities of the locations, it has become a marker for their current social status. Such a categorisation is of particular symbolic violence – it marks a specific relationship to this urban fabric and to life there. To see beyond the social logic of such symbolic classifications, we need to look deeper into the intuitive leanings of people towards very particular spaces before these leanings become rationalised. Urban spaces have a tender gravity. The human body is the initial instrument used to perceive what kind of place this space is, in order to make sense of oneself within it.

The material borderlines of urban infrastructure – streets, buildings or transport nodes – are the first to be felt by this socialised body. The railway lines, which have only a couple of places where pedestrians can cross, provide one of the most defining borderlines of this neighbourhood. The historic city wall of Vilnius and the routes of transportation that follow its line, are another important physical borderline marking what constitutes the 'neighbourhood' for the purposes of this study. This space has little in common with the official administrative classification of Vilnius neighbourhoods. While the personal feeling of what constitutes the borders of 'my neighbourhood' varies somewhat between interview subjects, and can even shrink or expand over time, the basis of these borders remains anchored by these material markers. As we have already seen, however, the feel of neighbourhood is meaningfully affected not by only such prominent pieces of infrastructure, but also by smaller glimpses of nature. Such natural elements also play a role in the delineation of a neighbourhood. The large segments of landscape that create natural borderlines and restrict bodily movement within the city are no less defining for one's understanding of the city as a whole, than are those structures built by humans. In the case of Vilnius, it is the Neris – the second largest river in the country – that provides probably the most defining natural borderline. Even in this neighbourhood, which is relatively far from the river, the Neris acts upon one's feeling of the relationship of one's neighbourhood to the city. *Linas* always takes public transport when he needs to reach an address on the other bank – the right bank – of the river, even if the distance is shorter than to a place he usually travels to on foot if the latter destination is on his side – the left side – of the river. It is the symbolic distance, which relates to a different lifeworld of the city on the other bank, which dictates his choice of public transport.body, with its structures internalised through the course of one's personal history, which is the instrument used to understand the surrounding reality and to act upon it. Placing oneself within the fabric of the city is one such action.

Personal housing histories can be instructive when reading subjects' decisions to place themselves within the borders of a certain neighbourhood. One vivid childhood memory of *Viltė*, who grew up in a socialist-modernist block of flats in a district on the edge of the city, was of playing in nature, which stretched from right outside her house on the edge of the city. All of this was "forbidden territory" – a place where, according to her parents, she was not allowed to go alone. This territory included wide meadows with a small lake that attracted her so much that she often secretly broke the rules.

Such memories reveal another common borderline that constitutes a neighbourhood – the borderline between urban and natural, which still guides *Viltė's* choice of housing. When he visits her, *Viltė's* father looks through the window to a green hill that climbs up from her rural-like courtyard and makes a friendly joke that even though she moved to the city centre, she still finds herself in a village. This meeting of urban and rural, or rather urban and natural, coincides with *Viltė's* embodied feeling of home, which lends an almost mythological gravity to such place, where her current home – a rental apartment – stands on the verge of a borderline with nature. Thus, it is the socialised body, with its structures internalised

through the course of one's personal history, which is the instrument used to understand the surrounding reality and to act upon it. Placing oneself within the fabric of the city is one such action.

The edge of city and nature in the neighbourhood.　　　　　　Picture 40.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

History of the place in the claims about oneself

Just as an apartment, with the flow of time, becomes a scenography of one's lifeworld, so too does urban location. It becomes an extension of this scenography; a shared landscape of personal histories. The symbolic meanings of a neighbourhood are read differently, depending on the length of time that one has spent there. Locations which, for newcomers, are urban locations with unique opportunities to make sense of one's life in the city, are for those already living there, containers for their personal memories. And their specific symbolic values are difficult or impossible to exchange in the property market. Even if *Renata* struggles to keep up with the rising prices of groceries and other necessary goods in the neighbourhood, moving out from this neighbourhood is unthinkable for her, because it is only here that:

> "*You remember, perhaps, your first date or something, perhaps you remember where you would play, you remember some of your best hiding places, some particular backyard where your best girlfriend lived. <...> You know, I can't even imagine myself in another place. I think if I could move somewhere, well, yeah <Pause> I don't know, if I win a million, and now I can move to some new place in another neighbourhood, you know, I probably wouldn't even want to..." (Renata, middle-aged worker)*

To understand the differences in the symbolic relationships with this neighbourhood among the newcomers and long-term residents, one still needs to reflect on the fairly recent industrial history of the area. During the fieldwork for this research, this part of Vilnius was full of holes where new housing developments were being built on sites of former factory buildings. Two decades ago, this small strip of urban land was home to several fully-functioning factories. A factory making machinery, *Komunaras*[13], in the northern part of this area, was among the first to be demolished. Its location was redeveloped into a new housing estate called *Šaltinių namai* more than a decade before this fieldwork had commenced. *Komunaras* was just one of the many industrial complexes that spread north-east of this territory. The next significant object of such post-industrial conversion was the building of the former Felix Dzerzhinski carton factory[14] on the eastern edge of this territory. The factory was built in 1920s, and until the 1970s housed the tobacco manufacturing company *Zefyras*. The buildings of this factory were among the last signs of the industrial landscape in this area of Vilnius.

Alina finds it as an absolutely crazy idea to build housing on these old factory plots. Remembering the "dirt" of their former industries, she feels sure that it is or will surely be the cause of illnesses among their inhabitants. Rather than being a true indication of her knowledge about the safety conditions of these plots of land, *Alina's* opinion is more an example of how durable the meanings of such locations are, which have certain historical

[13] Lithuanian for "member of the commune"; also a word used as a synonym for a communist.
[14] Felix Dzerzhinski was a historical Bolshevik figure active in Vilnius. Giving such ideologised names to factory facilities was standard practice during Soviet occupation.

grounds. For her and some of other long-term residents, this feels like a wrongful use of urban land, which in their minds still constitutes a "dirty" part of the city that is simply not suitable for human habitation. Frequent objections to new developments in such areas also relate to personal histories, which cause such locations to be read differently.

The majority of industrial buildings in this area have been removed without hesitation as unwelcome reminders of the "*Soviet*" past. The gate of the *Zefyras* factory, left intact during demolition, is an exception. The removal of such material signs that mark the neighbourhood's industrial past does not leave *Inga* indifferent. The territories of the factories that used to stand in the neighbourhood were also places where Inga went snooping around and playing hide-and-seek as a little girl. All of the industrial buildings that were swept away during the last wave of post-industrial urban redevelopment were important symbols to her, which she used to link herself to the neighbourhood and to her family background:

> "*Now you go about, you see something new, you remember what it used to be, what you experienced. You remember when people were leaving work, when shifts were changing. And now I think, what has left of them, what's left is Sparta, I guess... Now there are even apartments in a lot of places where before there were a lot of ramshackle, demolished and changed ones. Maybe it's good in a way, if you don't look at it selfishly." (Inga, female worker of undisclosed age)*

Gate of the former Zefyras factory and new housing developments.   Picture 41.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

Beneath her hesitant praise for the results of this "post-industrial renaissance" visible in the neighbourhood lies the truth of Inga's precarious financial and housing situation. *Inga* lives in a flat belonging to her family, and hardly manages to make ends meet after she has paid for amenities. Understanding that such a description of her situation goes against the popular narrative of the "renewal of the neighbourhood", she still hesitantly defends her "selfishness" in longing for local signs of the area's industrial past:

> *"Speaking generally, it's great to see a place growing like this. And I may be selfish now, I think, but I'd rather pass by the old factory that was there when I was a kid, or where my father used to work <Pause> than some kind of renovated building. Maybe for others it's unpleasant memories, and they are glad it's gone. Maybe if I had been working there, maybe now I wouldn't want even to hear that it used to be there – it must have been hard for people, they would get tired. But it's part of me."* (Inga, female worker of undisclosed age)

Far from simply being a matter of nostalgic feelings, her inclination towards the disappearing urban forms of the industrial past go hand in hand with a fearful understanding that the "new world" of the neighbourhood might not be intended for her. She remains optimistic and hopes that this 'renaissance' will not outrun people of her social status; she hopes that she will have opportunities to work and be integrated into this "new world", and thus manage to live in her childhood neighbourhood right up until old age. The wave of urban renewal is, however, merciless in relation to signs of the industrial past, marking a time when Inga's family "earned a living" there – an economic base around which her family's lifeworld was organised.

The industrial past rarely forms part of the mythologies of place used by newcomers. They usually adopt another set of symbolic elements relating to the past, which help them to identify with the city and influence their decision to stay in the neighbourhood. For Eglė, a couple of symbolic layers are important in her understanding of the neighborhood, to which she moved almost two decades ago:

> *"Our neighbourhood has this historical aspect to it. And I like the architecture. Of course, some of it is this horrible Soviet thing, but it's still basically not a block of flats. Plus, there is the Jewish history, which adds this aspect of a different culture and a kind of tragedy. <...> So, so, in a word, for me, this street has that kind of uniqueness, that kind of local history – to me, it's quite likeable."* (Eglė, middle age skilled professional)

Although *Eglė* lists a couple of historical layers that she remembers in her imagination of this place, the most important layer for her at the time she moved in, was an imagined one. The performances of the artist group Miraklis contributed to the making of the mythology of the place, which Eglė took as her own. This group organised theatre performances, which took place in the debris of housing that had been standing in the neighbourhood since as

Photo by Milda Junknevičiūtė, 1995.
Documentation of the performance can also be watched on YouTube.

long ago as the end of the Second World War. Such mythologies of place, created through temporary artistic rituals or permanent artistic objects, help to remake the meaning of the place by re-imagining it. This is now a common part of strategy used in urban renewal, to reload the symbolic meaning of a plot of land. Back then, it was more the spontaneous initiative of artists. But as in many other cases, artists in Vilnius played a role in the steps towards urban renewal. For the likes of Eglė, living close to such areas becomes a way to claim one's social difference, an opportunity to make a place of one's own in this somewhat abandoned part of Vilnius. A decade after these performances by *Miraklis*, a new apartment building was built on the ruins of the house where they used to take place.

Memory, carried on through the material signs of history, is thus not the only way to make meaning of one's place in the city. Such personal meanings of a place are sustained not only by signs relating to workplace. There remain many architectural markers of other spheres of this industrial lifeworld than just the factories that feature in the memories of the long-term residents. Social and cultural infrastructure, or even corners of random buildings, can become unexpected witnesses to personal history. Many of these signs have long since lost their socially readable form, having been demolished, or ceased their previous function or style. But some remain meaningful – especially to those who were the actors in this urban scenography at the peak of its social use. One such sign is the Stalinist-style club *Kablys*, which was built to house a cultural centre for railway workers. Although the building was privatised with the aim of redeveloping it, the building's new owners have not managed to change its function for over a decade now, and it is still being run as an alternative cultural centre. Plans for its redevelopment are, however, still being pursued and are an object of hot debate between the municipality, the owner and wider public. Nina, whom we will get to know later, remembers when this place was full of cultural life open to the wider public. This public mostly consisted of workers' families living in the vicinity, who were visitors to the library, concert performances, the circus and other groups for children. While Nina is not very fond either of the current alternative cultural programme, or of the sculpture '*the Hook*' that adorns the front of the building (and from which it gets its name), she is content that at least this reminder of her youth has not yet been demolished and retains a public function.

The club 'Kablys' [16] and the centre for social services.   Picture 43.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

[16] In Lithuanian, 'kablys' means 'hook'. This façade of the building is decorated with the sculpture "The Hook" by Mindaugas Navakas. The sculpture was installed after the regaining of independence, when this cultural centre of railway workers was appropriated by the local alternative music and art scene, and became an active centre for alternative culture.

Walking in this neighbourhood together with Ania draws me even deeper into the history of the area, and opens up unexpected signs of war. She points out several spots under which lie the remains of the deceased, some of them military, some civilians, who perished beneath the wreck of home that was bombed nearby. For Ania, this dissonates somewhat with the current use of this space. It is now the site of a children's playground, and a beloved spot for nearby residents who can take a rest among the trees or walk their dogs. Retaining such a green space with a public function is a constant struggle for local residents in the overheated property market of Vilnius. Ania is too young for the memories of war to be her own. Thus, she brings me to her neighbour Andrey - a somewhat grumpy elderly man, who is almost like an encyclopaedia of local memories of the war.

It is not linguistic barriers that are the cause of our strained communication. I speak Russian as well as he might speak Lithuanian, but I receive answers to my questions only when *Ania* repeats them. While telling his story, *Andrey* keeps looking me up and down suspiciously He moved to Vilnius during the war, and his perception of the city is marked by a mixture of pre-war and post-war symbolic signs. Ethnicity – or, rather, religious denominations – are the main categories that define the urban map of Vilnius for *Andrey*. Soldiers Complaining of his deteriorating health, he clutches his nephrostomy bag with one hand while with long strokes of the other, he draws his map of Vilnius. His neighbourhood is still Polish and Jewish. The city beyond the railway line is for him, not simply "Russian", but also contains a clear strip belonging to the starovery [16], a denomination of the Eastern Orthodox Christian church

[17] Russian for Old Believers or Old Ritualists.

Photo by S.M.Gurarij, 1944.

Painful memories of war also mark the map of Vilnius, and recollections can be uncomfortable. For *Andrey*, one of the main streets near where he lives is still the "street of tankmen". Until independence, this was the name officially used for this street, in memory of several tankmen who were killed in street fighting during the last weeks of the Nazi occupation of Vilnius. *Andrey* begins to speak with a certain sadness, and even horror, about his first year in the city before the final battle for Vilnius. He remembers times when, close to the northern marketplace, one could be caught by the Nazis, who were filling trucks with people to take with them to Germany as a workforce. Recovering his stubborn demeanour, *Andrey* adds that no one could catch him. Looking at me suspiciously once again, he adds that I would probably have been caught and taken to Germany. *Andrey* also presents a category of so-called "*frontline men*" – a term that no one in the neighbourhood uses any longer. He refers to the returning soldiers who were given empty housing in post-war Vilnius. Such housing was provided almost as a share of war booty to *Andrey's* Kazakh, Russian and also Lithuanian neighbours, who had no previous history in the city, but received a permanent place to stay. The personal price tag for making such claims to the city was the survival of war. It feels as if *Andrey* sees a need to defend these claims against me, even though none of these soldiers live here any more. *Nina's* mother, *Maya*, is also old enough to remember the war. Her voice also starts to tremble as she shares her memories of the war, which "made savages of humans". But most of her childhood memories in 1930s Vilnius she shares with a warm tranquility, however. Back then, her father, a handicapped veteran of the Tsar's army, told her stories of war as they sat together in front of the fireplace in the spacious basement apartment in which they used to live. *Maya's* stories also reveal the former diversity of Vilnius' Old Town, where black-clothed Jewish men were off to one of the many nearby synagogues and doing, as she puts it, "their own things". A lot of what features in her childhood memories has been destroyed. She lets me go only when I promise her that I will write here that we need to do anything to avoid another war.

At the same time as signs of the recent industrial history of the neighbourhood are being washed away, those left by the Jewish inhabitants of Vilnius are being rediscovered and reinterpreted. For Andrey, Jews were among his neighbours, survivors of the Holocaust, who lived in the same courtyard. He shared his lifeworld with this small community of survivors for a couple of decades before they emigrated to Israel. The ambiguities of Jewish memory in this place bring a certain inconvenience to Linas. Through his professional experience, he is particularly knowledgeable about the Jewish history of neighbourhood, which – unlike for Andrey, stops with the Holocaust. Linas cannot buy into the current balance of memory and oblivion when it comes to remembering the Jewish history of Vilnius, and is sensitive to the load that it brings to place in which he lives:

"But it feels like you are a person replacing someone here. And I feel that, I don't know. Maybe there's nothing in that flat, maybe no Jews even lived in that apartment, I don't know, and there's a good chance maybe there's nobody...a displacement of that street... Well, of course there was, because, I mean, there are no Jews in Lithuania any more, but of course that, well, that question remains, I don't

know. It's the same as, I don't know, a grandmother dies and you move into her flat to live, and it would feel strange too, even though you had nothing to do with it, and so on. That's it." (Linas, young creative professional)

These examples show how readings of the historic meanings of place are never stable. Without personal experience of historical events, alternative remembrances are always lurking behind and may influence the meaning of a space and ones' personal attitudes towards its symbolic value. Even where such personal experiences exist, attitudes towards symbolic values change alongside changes in the dominant historical narratives. Among other the important social effects of historical memory, it also has an influence on the way people perceive the symbolic values of urban locations. Linas, who is now a renter, feels he would prefer to know more about this place in order to accept it, to settle in as an owner and continue his own life history there. But the parts of Old Town adjacent to this neighbourhood contain an abundance of other historical signs, which make this location relatable to newcomers of the neighbourhood. Historic monuments of public significance are important for those situating themselves in the city who have come to live there from other parts of the country or the world. The variety of interpretations that a rich historic fabric such as Vilnius old town possesses, provides opportunities for a diverse range of people to relate to a new place and to make meaning out of living in it. The personal use of such publicly available signs is reflected in Rimas' walks home from kindergarten with his five-year-old son:

Somehow, we try to walk from the kindergarten past the Barbican, through Philharmonic Square, then past [the statue of] Basanavičius [17]. There, I put him into context a little bit – who he was. We just go through the more cultured, historical part sometimes. The Barbican is a sacred thing for him, because he has seen the Basilisk[18] there several times. He hasn't even seen it – he just knows it's there. I never managed to get him to see it. I said: "It's round the corner" – I said "Let's go, I'll show you!" "No, no, no, no, no, stop it! I can't do it! I'm scared!" At one point, he went to see it maybe three times. His grandmother came, so he went with his grandmother twice. And she, my mother, well, whatever the grandson says, that's what you have to do, to put it briefly. He went in good faith and paid his tickets, twice, two days in a row – because the Basilisk is important to him." (Rimas, middle-aged creative professional)

[18] Like the legends from other European bestiaries, the Vilnius Basilisk is a legendary creature – a reptile that who could cause death with a single glance and could only be destroyed if lured into looking at its own image in the mirror. According to legends, the location of the creature's lair was at the intersection of Bokšto, Subačiaus and Bastėjos streets, near the Subačius Gate where the bastion of the city wall – currently a department of the Lithuanian National Museum – is located.

This playful story is not only a reflection of a father's relationship with his five-year-old son. It also shows how certain places are being marked in *Ernis'* memory, which are likely to become his future reference points to make sense of the city. For those with sufficient cultural capacity, such mythologies can open up opportunities to build up meaning about a place and thus a relationship with a new city. This symbolic mythology relates to the specific material structures of the city, such as the historic remains of the city wall. These objects are material signs of history – and those that can be linked to the timeline of history are a limited resource. Incorporating such signs as a part of one's daily lifeworld is only available to the inhabitants of the surrounding neighbourhoods. In this particular case, the symbolic values that the place has for *Ernis* are not circumstantial. They are a product of a very targeted policy of the institution of historical memory.

The meanings of urban spaces are social constructs. To become 'real', they need to be sustained by constant remembering. And there is more to sustaining the symbolic meanings of urban locations than simply having material signs. The dominant historical narratives are important in the 'place- making' of such historically loaded neighbourhoods as the vicinity of Vilnius railway station.

But personal memories do not always align with socially accepted norms of remembering. *Alina's* understanding of the locations of new housing developments as being "dirty", or *Andrey's* memories of men from the frontline earning their place to live in cities, are just a couple of readings of the historical past of this location that have been overtaken either by imagination or by the simple forgetfulness of the present. After all, the leading historical narratives are always just a limited and selective interpretation, suggesting what 'ought' to be remembered about a place – and what should be forgotten. They often come into conflict with personal histories. A sense of this conflict between personal memories and current socially acceptable historical narratives provides an opportunity to think about how defining events in history can drastically change one's position in the *social space*, as well as one's chances of survival following them. Certain locations in the city can become particularly important signifiers of such historic events. For *Julius*, for instance, the neighbourhood around the railway station is not in the 'centre' of Vilnius. His memories of the independence movement, which occurred when he was just a small boy, are what feeds his sense of meaning about the neighbourhood of *Lazdynai*:

"And, in general, since I lived in Lazdynai, I feel I have destroyed the Soviet Union! Because the events of 13 January at the TV tower took place in front of our windows. Yeah, I woke up from those explosions, you know, from the tank shells. And of course, my parents said, 'Let's go to the other room, because the bullets might hit here.' So, but still I watched what was going on – the wounded were being carried down from the hill, and some people with sticks were going up to defend themselves. And of course, well, of course, when there were these public rallies, you know, meetings, those gatherings were very nice, you know, erm, people coming from different places, we were there carrying all kinds of sandwiches for them and so on. And of course, we would eat them ourselves too [both laugh]. I learned very quickly how to climb over that fence, which is quite high, near the tower. Yeah, and then, of course, the collaborators were the hit squad. They left and then the locals came, those who were just sitting around that tower in armoured personnel carriers and thrumming around. That very period of life was fascinating, you're sort of living, you know, you're sitting there and there are armour-clads buzzing outside the window and you know, if you walk around, you're sometimes being watched by that tank, you know, through the ocular..." (Julius, young creative professional)

A tank in residential district of Viršuliškės during the events of January 1991.   Picture 45.

Photo by Paulius Lileikis, 1991.

This is one of many experiences that have contributed to *Julius'* feeling of having 'roots' in *Lazdynai*, making this neighbourhood more meaningful to him than any other socialist-modernist district of Vilnius. At the present point in his life, these memories alone might not be enough to keep him in that neighbourhood. But this story is relevant here, as it marks a point of historic political change, which would soon result in economic restructuring. These were the beginnings of what are now very noticeable changes in the social fabric of the inner city in Vilnius. The political basis for *Andrey's* claims about the spatial organisation of inner Vilnius, which following pre-war and post-war signifiers, weakened with the changes in the field of power in Moscow that followed soon after the vital events of the independence movement remembered by *Julius*. That basis was the same one on which were based the economic activities of the industries active in the inner city, which during the painful years of economic restructuring ceased to provide a livelihood for the residents of the neighbourhood. *Julius* several decades after these events, chose to live in the same neighbourhood as *Andrey* – and both of them are interpreting the history of that neighbourhood from very different social positions. Their relationships to these urban spaces reflect both these historical turns, and the personal costs they brought.

4.2.2. Being together, being apart

The physical space that constitutes its special morphology – the cold built structures of the city that mark the memories of the past – is not the only aspect of this neighbourhood that creates its authenticity. The same built structures are filled with and surrounded by human bodies, which are no less powerful a determinant in the positioning of one's self than built forms. In this regard, the neighbourhood in the vicinities of the railway station is particularly unique:

— It brings together people with *diverse* social histories taking very different, if not opposing, *positions* and *trajectories* in *the social space.*

— This *physical proximity* of social difference is what constitutes the very specific social capital of this area.

It is thus not only about urban morphology, but also about social and cultural capital of various sorts, that we need to think when trying to understand the workings of urban space. Concentrations of such capital in one proximity is what creates the particular experience of the neighbourhood. It can explain the enthusiastic senses of solidarity or of loss felt among residents with very different social histories.

Discovering the pleasures of the 'urban village'

A smaller and more humane scale in one's surrounding buildings supports more intimate social interactions, and provides opportunities for latent relationships between people living on a street, which are expressed through daily greetings, small chit-chats or occasionally waving to one another while crossing the street. These daily rituals expressing closeness are important for mobilising the social capital of the locality. For *Rimas*, this urban setting is closer to the setting of his small hometown in central Lithuania. It makes him feel more 'at home' here:

> *"Somehow that street is like, as I call it, my own little village, people know each other, more or less, erm, even the homeless people are all acquaintances. We say hello to them, so I find the street kind of cosy in a way, really. Yeah... Neighbours change, but somehow, I don't know, we seem to make friends somehow [laughs]." (Rimas, middle-aged creative professional)*

Rimas contrasts the feeling of this neighbourhood against his experience of the anonymity of living in a socialist-modernist neighbourhood, where even the nearest neighbours barely spoke to each other. Here, social contact with his closest neighbours is more active, but still does not equal that which *Rimas* had in his hometown, where he remembers a strong sense of trust between neighbours and a sense of neighbourhood that stretched far beyond the walls of one's home. The feel of safety and belonging is thus not really a matter of urban morphology, but rather of the people filling it. For *Rimas*, this feeling of community is supported by the fact that a lot of work-related acquaintances from the music industry and field of the performing arts happen to live in the surrounding neighbourhood. It is the pleasure of being among people you can relate to, with whom you can share a meaningful lifeworld, that also defines the value of a place. In her emotional outburst about the meaning of people surrounding her, *Dalia* summarises why they might even be more important than her network of closest friends and acquaintances:

> *"These people are always around me, or are already meant for me by God or I don't know what power. Amm... Well, I think it's very important to have a normal human relationship... It's a quality of life, because... Well, if you don't trust your neighbour there, if, you know, you can't go out on the street and feel normal, then what quality of life can there be...? You live in fear, in stress, everybody around you is a sucker or, like, erm... You create that unhealthy environment around you. That's what is very important. So that, well, if you react normally to the environment, then*

you create a normal environment, because, well... There are also different social statuses. So yes, in our house there are very different people in terms of income and in terms of education and in terms of age, all social contexts... But because there is a normal relationship based on mutual respect and saying 'hello' to the street cleaner and to everybody... This is it." (Dalia, Young skilled professional)

Creating what *Dalia* calls a "normal" relationship in central Vilnius means dealing with the wide palette of social diversity that is present in these parts of the city. It is more than mere coincidence that those working in the precarious conditions of the creative sector – the likes of *Rimas* and his colleagues – are attracted to this neighbourhood. Living in the neighbourhood requires both social skills to deal with difference and a commitment to work on oneself. Cultural capital also becomes an important asset when it comes to accepting the diversity of the neighbourhood. As *Dalia* explains, there is a certain criterion that sorts out newcomers to this neighbourhood:

> *"It is important to be very open in your relationship with yourself. To set safe boundaries. But when you are open to a relationship, then people are usually open too, because, well... I haven't met a person yet who doesn't want to, you know... Who would be totally against neighbourly communication? Everybody wants it, basically, it's usually just a matter of getting over your closed nature, or something like that... Well, to extend your social boundaries. If you're open to it, everything very much works out. On the other hand, the people who move here and live here, they are, I would say, a certain type. They move here and they are looking for this."* (Dalia, young skilled professional)

The additional efforts made to settle into this neighbourhood have been rewarded with the opportunity to live in the city centre, very close to its cultural infrastructure. This benefit comes with a few pains and struggles of everyday life, when coming into contact with difference creates uncertainties and conflict. Living in such a neighbourhood requires a certain level of readiness for situations on the social fringes, readiness to manage closeness or distance with the 'others' present in the neighbourhood. After a while, distances between neighbours of different social status become carefully negotiated. Newcomers experience the pleasure of a neighbourhood with the unique feeling of living close to people one can relate to. This social diversity of the neighbourhood is, however, brought into question by the prospect of an influx of residents soon coming to live in newly developed housing. *Viltė* expresses her repulsion towards the social homogeneity she imagines this newly developed housing will bring to the neighbourhood:

> *"Now they're building a new project next door, in other words, new houses, and even the smell is new to me, yeah, everything is repugnant to me. In newly built houses, all the inhabitants change at the same time, the young, the new, more or less similar people move in. Here, I like the diversity of the inhabitants, too. It's closer*

to real life than, I don't know... some kind of test tube laboratory [laughs]. I mean, seriously – now they build around these new housing estates or sort of cottages, they arrange the environment according to the run-of-the-mill and then they fence it in, so it appears like a ghetto. They go sort of, we are in safe environment over there, and so on. What appears here, it's a little bit more real, a more natural life" (Viltė, young skilled professional)

It is this longing for 'authenticity' and the 'realness' of life, so often mentioned in the literature on gentrifying neighbourhoods, that holds *Viltė* to this neighbourhood. But looking at this sense of longing through the lens of *Viltė's* personal history, we can see more than just simple attraction to the qualities of the neighbourhood itself. It is also *Viltė's* specific 'edgy' situation in the social space that creates such a relationship. Her position in the social space is sufficiently strong if you consider just her cultural capital and a flow of economic capital through income. This is somewhat less if you take her fixed economic capital, which is reflected in her status as a renter. With what little savings she currently has, rising property prices mean she will not be able to own her own apartment any time soon. Such a position is fairly common among newcomers to the neighbourhood. It enables them to identify with these parallel social worlds and enjoy all the pleasures of acting within them. Renting an apartment in this neighbourhood at a price that one can afford enables them to enjoy the authentic life of the place. At the same time, living next to the pains of those who are in less favourable position also offers a certain pleasurable effect of confirming that, however slowly, their social trajectory is upward.

"Before, life was a little more interesting here ..."

This intimate feeling of the area's social life that is being discovered by newcomers to this 'urban village' is not new to this neighbourhood. Earlier social relationships are remembered by the older residents with a hint of nostalgia. These testimonies suggest that social ties used to be much stronger there, that life used to be "more interesting", and that interactions between neighbours resembled the intensity of an "Italian family". *Fanya* remembers these times with a long, wistful sigh:

> *"Oh, I loved those times so much. Really, erm, it was like one big family – nobody locked the door, everybody would come in like this (waving her hand back and forth), whether to babysit, or for pancakes – the whole yard would come running together. Yeah, so, it was so much fun. Then things started to change... We used to share firewood, cucumbers, apples – whoever came from the countryside, from the collective garden. Yeah, so, just like that – they would put down a big basket and shout: 'Anyone want these?! Neighbours, come and get them! Children, come help yourselves!'. Yeah, it was fun, it was joyful somehow."* (Fanya, middle-aged service worker)

Shared spaces such as courtyards used to be places for household work, but also served as a space for interactions between neighbours. Here was where the common lifeworld, which was very much based on the rhythms of working life in the surrounding factories, continued to be shared. Taking part in common rituals, festivities or sharing food in moments of shortage was a common norm of being together. Yet not everyone remembers these times with this rosy tint of nostalgia. Such a level of solidarity and common life was also achieved at the cost of social control, with little respect being given to privacy. For *Barbara*, this is something she does not miss:

> *"It was a tragedy, the neighbours were interfering in your life, watching you... They would sit on a bench and gossip. There's a lot to tell you, but just have a look at those Russian films about a small village, a small town, how the neighbours know everything about everything, how they spread rumours – it was the same. There were dramas where one man would go from one house to another woman's place, so to speak, and then those women would meet in the street and they would tear each other's eyes out... Now, we are becoming more Western. The young people there don't care how you live, as long as you don't enforce your things on them. Of course, the older generation knows everything about everybody there, so to speak, and reads them a lesson."* (Barbara, middle-age female of undisclosed profession)

Picture 46.   Kids playing in a courtyard in šv. Stepono street.

Photo by Gregory Talas, around 1984.

One could say that such differing attitudes in terms of nostalgia for the past are simply a matter of personal psychological qualities or lifestyle preferences, and hardly an object for sociological interpretations. That would be true, if the different understandings of privacy among neighbours did not coincide with different socio-economic status. While the advantages of the new norm of protected private lives is widely appreciated, one can also sense a lurking willingness to know more about the private lives of others. This willingness feels like a silent longing to regain the social control over the surrounding world that one felt before. It is among neighbours of similar social status that such practices in building a common lifeworld continue to be nurtured. *Martynas* observed a certain tipping point in his relationship to the neighbourhood after the majority of his neighbours become new settlers:

> *"Since I bought that apartment three years ago, almost half of the residents have changed. That's how that sort of community came about. It's already our, erm, company, I still go to the neighbours there to watch some basketball, have a beer,*

just to chat. So, on All Souls' Day, we all went to the cemetery together. So that's, that's, and all – the other ones, the third ones have moved in, everyone, I mean, we do clean-up events in the yard, we clean up, we sort out all kinds of other things. So that's the kind of community that has emerged there, and it's mainly from those who moved in later. I don't want to say that those who have lived here longer are somehow inferior or something, but it's just the way it happened..." (Martynas, young male of undisclosed profession)

After such a tipping point, simple contacts between neighbours can be transformed into a widely felt neighbourhood solidarity, which can later be turned into mobilised action. *Martynas* and his neighbourhood friends maintain a far more intense relationship than those that the majority of newcomers regard as "normal" or even "desirable" between neighbours. Starting with chats about common interests such as a similar workplace or hobby, raising a child or owning a dog, at some point these social ties can turn into a group. This solidarity is further cultivated by common imaginings of what could be changed around the house or in the neighbourhood. These turn into small projects to improve the common well-being, which, once realised, are followed by a sense of common achievement that further feeds this sense of 'embeddedness'.

But the friendship achieved by Martynas and the group of his closest neighbours is an exceptional one. People usually follow somewhat different path of neighbourliness, featuring less intense relationships with neighbours. According to such principles, relationships should be friendly, but also discreetly distant. It is the social status of *Martynas* and his neighbourhood friends, and their close proximity to one another, that explains such solidarity. For older residents, the effects of this 'tipping point' are often the opposite. Even if they were able to sustain the housing they live in, the surrounding social world that was once meaningful to them, is slowly closing down and disappearing. This situation is described as certain loss of 'life' – that which was, but is no more. There is a silent acceptance that the lifeworlds of others is so different, so unrecognisable, so hard to relate to, that the social contact that was previously the norm is barely possible and hardly imaginable now:

"Well, how shall I put it... erm...erm, a bit... it's every man for himself. There is no such thing as friendship any more. Everybody, of course, has their own family, everybody, everybody lives their own life, everybody has their own troubles, everybody works their own job, there's no time to socialise, there's no... this sort of, when we used to celebrate the holidays together. And now they don't even say hello. I do, I always say 'Happy holidays!' or 'Happy festive season! Happy New Year!' – if I see someone. Well, somehow their reaction is cold. Well, maybe there are more troubles, more problems, maybe people are angrier [laughs]. Not really, maybe they're afraid of coronavirus, I don't know... [both laugh]" (Nina, middle-aged education specialist)

While some celebrate the rise of community, others feel a growing social distance, with a strengthening of the borderlines of the household, immersion into family life and a dissolving sense of community. And the joke about the virus, which just a couple of days later would become a reason for closing the borders of Lithuania, disconnecting it from the outside world, for *Nina* serves as a metaphor to describe the resulting culture of privatism penetrating her surrounding world and invoking social distancing. The changes to this former industrial neighbourhood brought about by economic restructuring are not the only ones to have changed residents' experiences of living in it. The changing social fabric of the neighbourhood brings with it a sense of the loss of a common understanding among the people living in the nearby surroundings. These are the urban spaces in which one can observe people with very different social trajectories – people who are coming together or moving apart – in their most vivid forms. To understand such closeness and distancing, we have to admit that it is not just a matter of culture, but a matter of the gravity of social forces within the social space that bring people together or push them apart. Our own positions in the social space, both as residents of a city, but also as social researchers, add certain distortion to the way we see the 'cultures of certain people' going on with their lives in a city. Rather than continuing to be blinded by those very social forces that produce urban forms, we should start looking into the symbolic violence of our arguments.

Photo by Andrej Vasilenko, 2021.

4.3. Symbolic violence in central Vilnius

To understand the social roots of everyday urban conflicts, one needs to speak about the symbolic structures of the city and the way they are appropriated into everyday life. In their daily worries and struggles, people lean on existing symbolic and social categories, which make their claims to urban space a part of larger classificatory struggles. The practical categories that they coin in the context of such struggles are different from those used in the scientific observation of the social world. To understand these categories, we need to ask:

— *How do the material and symbolic markers of city relate to positions within its social space?*

— *What social differences are naturalised through the symbolic forms of the city?*

When situating themselves against the backdrop of these material and symbolic structures of the city, people follow the social dispositions and oppositions of their *habitus*. These principles, which make various practices so easy to perform, also make those same practices difficult to study. In this exceptionally reflective recollection, *Kęstas* puts this bodily sense into words:

> *"Every time I came home by bike or on foot from some invisible boundary, I felt, as they say, this bad aura: 'Yeah, ohhh, there I go again'. Although I liked the apartment itself –, I felt good there – but that very neighbourhood kind of weighed on me a lot. As I said, it's probably because of my life as a whole, my relationships, my well-being and so on. But maybe it was also because there were a lot of, like, tall buildings around. And there were, like, definitely 'Soviet' people living there. And their concentration was so massive, they were so undiluted. It was really like that, there was a vibe, and that was a bit oppressive for me." (Kęstas, middle-aged skilled professional)*

What *Kęstas* performs here is the act of classification – the classification of people and places. This is something that is performed by every human being living in a city. Different residents of a neighbourhood might experience and explain the aura and borderlines of the same neighbourhood in very different ways. It is not the different descriptions, but rather the common tendencies in the way people make meaning out of their urban experiences using ready-made social classifications, that informs us about the social construction of the urban space. These acts of classification have a common material and symbolic grounding. In addition, the daily misrecognition of these layers should allow us to recognise and speak about the symbolic violence of urban forms.

4.3.1. People and spaces in the classification struggles of central Vilnius

Neighbourhoods of more intense social difference are known for their urban conflicts in everyday life. To see the social roots of these conflicts, one needs to speak about the classifications people carry out in order to cope with the world that surrounds them. In their everyday lives, people both remember and forget the past as well as imagining and projecting the future of the city spaces they use. They also classify people based on the social experiences that they have. In the vicinity of the railway station, these distinct acts are subtly related:

— The material decay of buildings is used as a ground for classifying urban spaces, relating them to the history of violence in this neighbourhood;

— In return, attitudes towards dealing with this decay are also used to classify the people living there.

Struggles between newcomers and 'old-timers' to define the 'right' use of space are a fairly common finding in urban ethnographies. But these categories are not simply about the length of time spent in the neighbourhood. Instead, they are indirect markers of personal possibilities, which tend to coincide with the categories of 'newcomer' and 'old-timer'. These are the basis for the *symbolic violence* of these categories, as using them naturalises the structural conditions that define the unequal social power of their bearers.

The lasting legacies of danger and the social decay of Petachok

Street prostitution and the occasional presence of drug addicts still result in the vicinity of railway station being seen by some as an area to avoid, by paying a little extra to rent elsewhere. Yet residents with a longer history in the neighbourhood remember a time when the neighbourhood more deserving of its infamous reputation for social decay and high crime rate. Back then, moving in here was brave choice.

"*Natalya: Well, you see, when I moved up here, there was this so-called 'Petachok'.*

Interviewer: Patachok?

Natalya: Petachok. When I moved here, I was told that I was crazy, because there were a lot of those people here, for example, that used to make samagon[19] here. It

was such a completely criminal area. In front of where the new house is now, there were thieves living, there was a big rubbish dump." (Natalya, middle-aged cultural worker)

Lacking the economic capital to choose a safer area, one could gamble on one's cultural capital and social skills to help deal with the uncertainties of living in such a neighbourhood. But becoming a part of this neighbourhood was no simple matter. Moving in to such an area might be economically cheap, but requires an intense psychological investment and a social body that is fit for such an endeavour. For *Natalya*, who was among the first wave of newcomers to buy a flat in the area, it took several rounds of offences against her to gain acceptance:

"*Oh, my flat was once burglarised twice in a week. They broke down the door, and then the second time they took sandwiches out of my fridge. Then I put a poster on the door: 'Ring and ask for bread — I'll give you sandwiches'. But anyway, it was actually two incidents in one week, but then somehow maybe they realised that there was nothing so special to steal there. After that, nobody, nobody really attempted it on my small property. So there you are." (Natalya, middle-aged cultural worker)*

Natalya and other residents arriving in the area more than a decade ago can still remember the last years of *Petachok* through the eyes of a newcomer. For them, the main grounds for the emerging 'cosiness' of the neighbourhood is more about the ability to feel safe than about the neatness or attractiveness of the urban environment. After being robbed and attacked by a local drunk armed with a knife, it took some time before *Natalya* felt safe enough to return to her home. But *Petachok* was not equally unsafe for everyone. *Ania* is still haunted by memories of her youth, in which neighbours were silent witnesses to all the misdeeds of criminals:

"*Our neighbourhood was so thuggish that, well, if they saw that someone was a local, they wouldn't touch them, because they were our neighbours. But it was scary — us kids, teenagers, we used to stand around and watch them stealing. For example, a woman was walking along wearing a necklace — a guy was hugging her so nicely, and you see that he's already holding the necklace in his hand. Or there used to be these fox fur hats — they would take them off a woman just like that, and she would walk on — she didn't even realise that they had taken her hat off. In a word, they stole in front of our eyes. We could see it, and what could we do? We couldn't say a thing, or we'd have got the same ourselves." (Anya, middle-aged service worker)*

Neighbours who played the role of silent accomplices could be part of *Petachok* and feel

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[19] A type of home made vodka.

safer than outsiders. *Petachok* was far more than just a label for the place; to its inhabitants, it meant certain rights to its streets. Now these are just memories of a dangerous past. Placing oneself into such a neighbourhood still involves learning the unwritten rules of the place. These rules are set down as invisible borderlines drawn in the physical space. *Viltė* recounts the beginnings of this learning process for her:

> *"...one small incident, where a neighbouring woman threatened to cut a washing line and then cut it.*
>
> *Interviewer: Why? Viltė: Well, she was angry [laughs]. Well, she said that she was allergic to all the detergents, and that the smell was coming, in a word, into her house, right through the open window. So she said don't hang it up here, because I'm going to cut it, and then she cut it." (Viltė, young skilled professional)*

An almost identical situation concerning a clothes line took place in a completely different house, while *Kęstas* was patiently becoming accustomed to all of the odd expectations that came with using common spaces. Later on, this became just an expression of a desire to keep a comfortable distance:

> *"For a while it was like: what is it like here? What is it like here? What is it like here? What are these neighbours like? What's it going to be like here? And then, at some, like, hard-to-define moment, they accepted that, 'Ah, it's that one, he's going to live here.' Well, I mean, 'Okay', he's not so relaxed here, but that's what he is like, this resident. Soooo [smiles] from that moment on, I started to communicate more. I then bought a motorbike and kept it in the garage. And through that motorbike, I got to know the other neighbours." (Kęstas, middle-aged skilled professional)*

In the course of such endeavours to make a place for themselves, these newcomers are following the intuitive feelings of their socially moulded bodies. These feelings guide them in their exploration of the new place and in their interactions with others. But these newcomers are also classifying the space and the people. At the same time, they are being classified by others who live there. These situations of recognising each other and acknowledging the physical borderlines of their territories are the most primal acts of constituting urban space.

There is also a symbolic aspect to the qualities of the physical structures that marks social borderlines. Material decay, which is still present in the neighbourhood, can invoke feelings of danger and act as a marker for social decay. In stories of the neighbourhood's difficult past, narratives of danger do indeed go hand in hand with an explicit portrayal of material deterioration – buildings and streets falling apart, standing piles of rubbish and rats running around. And although crime rates are now sharply reduced in comparison with the times of *Petachok*, the image of the neighbourhood as being dangerous has not yet entirely disappeared. Deteriorating housing and street corners are reminders of unpleasant

histories that contribute to the contested image of this neighbourhood. But *Martynas*, who is a newcomer to this neighbourhood, does not take this image of the neighbourhood at face value:

> *"Martynas: All these stories were mostly because of people imagining, not knowing very much, and going by something they heard somewhere, something they were told, and not, erm, really knowing very much. The image that the district had was so much worse than it actually is, than it actually was. Anyway, wherever you go, wherever you want to go, you'll find rubbish, if you look for rubbish all over the place, or a person sitting on a bench somewhere and falling asleep there..." (Martynas, young male of undisclosed profession)*

Harbouring doubts about these links between deterioration and danger is almost a necessary prerequisite for newcomers to this neighbourhood. For *Martynas*, such doubts come from his personal history. He moved to Vilnius from a neighbourhood in another Lithuanian city that underwent similar social turmoil to *Petachok* during the economic restructuring of the 1990s. Coming from an urban space that shares a certain structural homology to his new neighbourhood, he had the necessary disposition to regard this neighbourhood as 'home'. Not all newcomers to this neighbourhood have such a disposition, however. Some of them learn the specific spaces – and sometimes even specific time slots during the day – that they have to circumvent in order to avoid feeling anxious and out of place. For the majority of newcomers, dealing with material deterioration, which dissonates with their sense of their own social status, becomes one of the primary motives in their life in the neighbourhood.

'Newcomers' and 'old-timers' in the troubles of everyday life

The influx of newcomers to the neighbourhood has increased the social variety of the area. Gates separating inner courtyards from the street, which used to be a common feature of houses at the beginning of the 20th. century, are once again becoming relevant. They are a necessary accessory to handle social differences in the neighbourhood. Installing such gates is often the first common project in renewal, implemented after a certain critical amount of newcomers has moved into the house. The erecting of a gate is usually followed by some negotiations with neighbours who are opposed to such project. In the house of *Mantas*, these neighbours were running some points of illegal trade. For them, the gate was an obstruction to their usual flow of clientele:

> *"In the first year, in the early days when the gates were erected, they were being damaged. It was a kind of – how shall I put it? – maybe not malicious defacement,*

but a kind of visible defacement, that something was being done there. So, we did an interesting thing: we had a meeting, well, and we invited as many neighbours as possible and just, well, showed that we cared about it and then we even asked the residents of those particular two spots if there were any reasons why having gates would not work. They told us that there were no reasons. There have been no such malicious defacements since then.“ (Mantas, young skilled professional)

The gates now separate the life of the house from the flows of bodies in the street – two different lifeworlds, which during the years of *Petachok* were more like parts of the same one. Gates allow a certain level of control over what happens within the territory of the courtyard, and what does not. This new order is not equally appreciated by all local residents. Most of them enjoy the increased sense of control and order that comes with the enclosure of the courtyard. But the more accustomed residents are to the social surroundings of the neighbourhood, the less likely they are to feel the need to separate themselves from it by such means. And the longer they have lived in the area, the more likely they are to miss having unlimited access to the hidden network of inner courtyards, which has facilitated spontaneous social encounters in the neighbourhood.

"Nowadays, in the Old Town, many people are closing their courtyards, and here too, nearly the whole street is closed. Back then, it was still possible, for example, to pass through the various courtyards. And we used to have a routine where we would start our walk by going up the hill, and we would finish by going down through the adjacent courtyard and coming out into the next street. And it was very interesting, a little amusement we found in the Old Town.“ (Natalya, middle-aged cultural worker)

Natalya feels that by losing this 'walkability', the neighbourhood is also losing part of the authenticity that has distinguished it from other historic districts of the city. What she enjoyed as unique piece of urban morphology is remembered by some inhabitants as providing the perfect hiding place for those involved in petty crime and other deviant activities. Control over this space, which used to be practised through elaborate self-surveillance, is now achieved through technical means, demanding less social involvement. Rather than being simply material barriers, gates are also indicators of sharper social divides between the people living in the neighbourhood.

A common language used among newcomers to articulate these social borderlines is the language of 'civic behaviour' or 'civility'. No matter how flexible one's personal limits may be in terms of social acceptance, those who are prone to socially deviant behaviour – people with alcohol or drug addictions, be they neighbours or simply homeless passers-by – if are not openly intended to be totally eliminated from the neighbourhood, are expected at least to be kept at a safe distance. The proximity of subjects to different, if not opposing, positions in the social space, makes this area a place of tensions and minor territorial conflicts, the focal point of which becomes managing one's proximity to or distance from others in the neighbourhood. And gates help to handle street life by separating it from home. But they do not define the relationships or borderlines between the nearest neighbours. Newcomers to the neighbourhood most often crave a "civil" neighbour – one who is actively exercising their agency to transform their life and its nearest surroundings. Such 'ideal' neighbours are seen as the people most worthy of staking a claim to this urban space:

> *"Some of the neighbours who live in my neighbourhood are people I respect and people I just like. They may not be my best friends, but it's just that their values are somehow close to mine, and those values are somehow related to the environment we live in. Well, for instance, these include striving for change, striving to make the environment better, and so on." (Mantas, young skilled professional)*

This description of the ideal inhabitant of the urban village still carries a sense of unspoken social borderlines separating the people living in the neighbourhood. It reminds us of another group of neighbours; those who are less of a match for this description of the ideal. In the process of attuning themselves to each other, neighbours are also actively classifying one another. The categories they employ practical ones that incorporate their previous learnings from various situations in their social life. These are melted by a practical mind into intuitive notions of the 'newcomer' and the 'old-timer', naturalising social differences between neighbours. These categories are practical categories. They help one to act in everyday life, and to recognise people with whom one can enjoy an unanticipated sense of solidarity.

Small disagreements regarding the new borderlines between the public and private are part of everyday life. But tensions might become more serious as attempts are made to renovate common infrastructure or the façade of a house. A lot of housing in this area is in a deteriorated condition, but renovations here are not only about fixing the unavoidable. Just as in the case of renovating the interiors of one's personal space, the renewal of common spaces can also become an attempt to reload meaning into the space, to bring it closer to one's social skin. Opening up of the brick texture in the wall – a fashionable interior practice presented in a previous chapter – was a source of annoyance for *Roman*, who saw this practice as "complete bollocks", and refused to pay for it. Pushing through the renovation of a house whose occupants have very different economic capacities and tastes can be difficult:

> *"...decisions need to be made using different arguments. Different arguments work differently, you know... For one, money is very important, because he doesn't have much, you know... So, he doesn't want that change either, because for this, he'll have to put in some money. For another person, it's more about security, about protecting the property, because, well... It doesn't cost him 30 euros or half his pension. That's the tricky part, because you have to deal with those different arguments sometimes... It seems that sometimes it's a very exciting idea, that's all, but you can't do it because other people just can't afford it. So, then you have to make a decision, maybe you can cover some of the costs for those other people. It's complicated, but there are these procedural things." (Dalia, young skilled professional)*

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

Sometimes it is only through such delicate negotiations, which take into account the very different positions of occupants, that the renovation of housing becomes possible at all. The least well-defined position in such situations is that of renters. Even if they may be economically capable and even interested in participating in renewal, they will never be a real part of this game. For newcomers and old-timers alike, they are more like bodies, temporarily filling someone's property. They are devoid of the agency that is characteristic of an owner – to initiate or to make final decisions with regard to their property. Decisions over renovations also manifest the taste of the decision makers. Such decisions may not be equally appreciated, or regarded equally by everyone as being practical. After having spent some time in the neighbourhood, *Kęstas* admits that renovation initiatives are not always as necessary as they may seem at first glance:

> *"When I moved in, my neighbour and I, for example, painted the gateway, because we were new and we wanted, like, well, to do something, too. But in the long run, when you go through the same place 50 times, you see it with new eyes, you see what is annoying, what you don't like, what is dirty, things like that. But then it's like... I think most of the people who are annoyed at us new people moving in and wanting to change things, they've just lived with it for a long time and they've all got it like, okay, you can change it if you want to change it, as for us, we don't care about it." (Kęstas, middle-aged skilled professional)*

People coming to enjoy the pleasures of the urban village also bring with them their own visions of the neighbourhood. Not everyone can be equally economically capable of participating in these, and this can lead to displacement of long-term residents. But even having difficulty relating to a common imagination of neighbourhood's future can result in displacement. *Alina* is among those old-timers with a stable income and rights of ownership. She could very well sustain her position in the neighbourhood. But constant conflicts with her neighbours over questions of renovation and the upkeep of the house led to her feeling that she was losing her previous control over her immediate surroundings. *Alina* also speaks about the loss of meaning of the place, which followed on from the social fabric of the neighbourhood starting to change. At some point, she saw no point in trying to sustain her position in the neighbourhood she grew up in:

> *"I still say – get out, get away... Yeah, a lot of my friends ask me – how did you, a city girl, get away from the city, from this kind of city, from the centre, to the countryside? I say, I'm tired of the city, I'm tired of the centre. It used to be very fascinating, but now, now I don't give a damn any more. I'm tired of this Hare Krishna – they've been going about for so many years, always banging on doors: 'Bang bang bang. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna'. I say, I am tired of this too. I am tired of all these cars. I say, why do they say, why are people so nervous now? Earlier, there was nothing like all of this. (Alina, middle-aged service worker)*

Even if old-timers' sense of connection to the neighbourhood is grounded in their personal memories, these claims to the space still need to be defended against re-imaginings of neighbourhood's future. When the surrounding social world changes, memories and visible signs of the past may not always be sufficient to sustain a meaningful relationship with the neighbourhood. For *Alina*, these constant efforts to adapt to changes in the neighbourhood of her own childhood became tiresome, and she finally decided to flee. With rents rising in central Vilnius, there was also an economic incentive to do so. Renting out her apartment proved to be a lucrative source of additional income. With the possibility of financing relocation with a loan, *Alina's* family moved to the suburbs. For *Alina*, changes in the surrounding social world were no less a powerful driver to move out than the rational weighing of the opportunity to 'cash in' on the rent. These arguments worked in tandem, compensating for each other. Many residents of the neighbourhood, however, live at constant risk of real and involuntary rather than just *symbolic* (and thus semi-voluntary) displacement. Social benefits, assistance from extended family, the possibility of heating their homes using wood or to receive a heating allowance from state are often the thin threads that enable such people to remain attached to the neighbourhood.

4.3.2. The violence of the emerging urban forms of central Vilnius

The histories we have heard so far reflect how the restructuring of the economy and the housing sector after a historic change in the field of power affected the positions of those who, in urban studies, are often seen bluntly as the *working class*, the *gentry,* or as representatives of other social classes. The accounts of *Julius, Andrey, Kęstas, Natalya* and others show how limiting such views can be. The chances of survival of these people, at various points in their personal histories, were dictated by a mixture of their *occupational status, housing class, ethnicity, age* and also *social ties* to the city, built up a long time living in a neighbourhood. Their reflections on everyday conflicts between neighbours can be seen on a wider urban scale as part of ongoing classificatory struggles. Thus, they can help us to recognise the ways in which:

— Urban forms, which are both *physical* and *symbolic*, mark positions in the *social space*.

— Remembrance or attempts to forget, but also imagination and taste-driven practices around these urban forms, establish *symbolic domination*.

Classificatory struggles similar to those observed with regard to the courtyards of historic buildings in the neighbourhood, can thus also be observed in the abundance of recent public conflicts over the design and use of public spaces. In central locations of the city, seemingly unrelated quarrels over the politics of historical remembrance and decisions relating to urban development, become very much related. These developments are not innocent attempts to renew city spaces. They are symbolic reloads of urban forms, which result in naturalising of growing social differences. Rather than taking the discourses surrounding such developments for granted, we should see them in relation to the social space that these contested urban spaces ought to contain.

Eating a real tomato, living a real life

Reflections about the 'character' of neighbourhood and the way it contributes to one's sense of living a fulfilling life, is a good point at which to pause before diving into the re-imagining of the future of a city. These reflections on 'character' are often organised around preferences for certain tastes. And the area in the vicinity of the railway station now caters to a certain taste for difference. This difference is also marked by the physical structures of the city, which performed this role long before the recent hype concerning the neighbourhood. If there is one establishment, other than the railway station, that defines the feel of this neighbourhood, then it is the market. This is also a supreme provider of tastes. Living next to the bustle of the market and the flows of people it attracts is among the particular sources of meaning for newcomers to this neighbourhood. For *Viltė*, having *Halės market* nearby is a big advantage that adds a specific quality to her life:

> *"This is not the Old Town, nor the station, I would say, but the market district. And here, too, I think that the market traders are also a kind of caste. Not only the traders, but also the buyers, I would include them in these 'market people'. So, I am one of those market people too. So, well, it's very convenient there, for example, erm, I don't know, home-grown eggs there, home-grown vegetables, but you don't always buy home-grown ones, because in Maxima chainstores, everything is very much cheaper. But talking about biscuits, or cakes – I don't buy these from Maxima – never, only from the bakery, because they make them with real butter, and so on. I know these are very, I don't know, down-to-earth arguments, but it's just about the habits we develop. I say about the eggs over there, that it's only the stamp on them that is homemade, to put it briefly, because then, oh, with other ones I'll poison myself I guess [both laugh]." (Viltė, young skilled professional)*

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

Shopping and bargaining with the local peddlers, some of whom she can recognise with her eyes closed and with whom she exchanges greetings when meeting in the street, makes her feel grounded in this neighbourhood and adds to her feeling of being in a place of her own. Most newcomers to the neighbourhood enjoy the present symbiosis of the new and old in the market, which offers a sense of 'edginess', similar to that felt in the street. They enjoy this sensation of the different tastes that the market provides. Just next to a food stall that caters to the new tastes – or rather, for the pockets of more affluent buyers – one can still find *"a granny selling side of pork looking as if she has stepped out of the '90s"*. While trying to articulate the particular value of these offerings, *Marija* employs practical consumer arguments, where the variety of choice is an apparent virtue:

> *"Those people who are independent, they often grow very interesting things for themselves, or something like that. And there's a surplus there, and some grandmothers supplement their pensions like that. So, they have less chance of doing that, but as a buyer I like to be able to choose. Sometimes, I like that grandmother very much, and that tomato might be very tasty [laughs]; it's a 'real' one. You can't really tell if it's real there, but...*

Interviewer: And what is a 'real' tomato like?

Marija: It's really real – it corresponds to my childhood taste of something. It's not plastic, or it's not something that's grown using some kind of hydroponics." (Marija, middle-aged cultural worker)

Beginning firmly with these practical arguments, *Marija* gradually gravitates towards more nostalgic reflections that reveal her longing for 'real' life. *Marija* does not fit the portrait of an urban pioneer anxiously hunting for authenticity and surprise. Her longing seems to be based more on her personal history – her experiences of spending childhood summers in the village. These tastes help her to situate herself in the city. Finding familiar tastes and similar daily experiences help her to make sense of herself in these new surroundings. Her partner, *Kęstas*, who also enjoys these offerings from the market, fears that it is just a matter of time before such traders will be completely gone. Although he thinks of it as the unavoidable "passage of time", he still feels that *something* that is somewhat hard for him to articulate, will be eventually lost with that flow.

That *something* could be interpreted as a certain map of food tastes, on which *Marija* and *Kęstas* can recognise themselves. But at the same time as the current diversity of this taste map is being enjoyed, there is a growing concern that old-time sellers are now being pushed to the further corners of the market. There is also a sense of understanding that as such traders lose their place in the market, the neighbourhood will not only lose its sense of authenticity, but will also no longer be affordable to everyone. A brief chat with *Zosė*, who sells her home-made horseradish sauce beside the entrance to the market, brings some perspective to these fears. Having worked in the retail sector for her entire working life, *Zosė* links the changes in the market with the restructuring of the sector that followed the 1990s:

> *"The market has changed as a result of this, in that there are now fewer people. Yeah, yeah, yeah... there used to be so many people. You're young, you have no idea how many people used to be here – you bring it out, you make horseradish like this [points to her horseradish placed on the pavement], well maybe an hour [of standing] and it's gone. And I haven't brought many now – 10 little jars like this and four like this. And that's it, I've only sold three of the jars. And you know what? I'll tell you what, because there's a lot open now. In the past, there were no shops or centres, you had to queue up everywhere, that's it. And now every place is full of everything, but there is little money." (Zosė, retired, elderly)*

There is no regret in her voice as she speaks about changes in the neighbourhood, which she feels is becoming cleaner and more orderly. Selling a couple of jars of horseradish enables her to top up her pension, which would otherwise be too small for her to occasional treat her great- grand children to candies or small toys. But *Alina*, whose livelihood depends on the market, is less content with these changes. She is particularly frustrated with the retail regulations that affect the market culture. *Alina* is also worried that rising rents for the stalls

will make them affordable only to niche services – specialised food shops and bars, or even a night club – rather than for sellers of affordable food products. Both *Alina* and *Zosė* nostalgically remember the times when market was full of people. For them, "the market was a real market" back then. These were times when one could chat with a seller – to negotiate the price, or simply to share some news. With stricter accounting practices and self-employed sellers leaving the market, this is now becoming less common practice, although not yet fully extinct.

Picture 51. A bar in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

More than a dozen new boutiques, bars, restaurants and other businesses have been attracted to the vicinity of the market. The initial motivation for this may have been the relatively low rents for commercial premises just a few blocks away from the prestigious locations of Old Town. Now, however, the location is accepted by urban consumers as a 'trendy' neighbourhood. The urban decay of the areas beyond the city wall, which was not subject to the urban renewal programme that took place in the Old Town during the 1990s, now has a new meaning. It marks a place of fashionable consumption. Rather than being an obstacle to development, the deterioration of the buildings is being used in the development of an 'authentic' style. It helps newcomers to see the 'potential' of the neighbourhood – no

longer an urban jungle, but a 'trendy' and 'vibrant' place. The symbolic line of the historic wall, which used to separate very different groups of city residents, now divides different styles of consumption. Reflecting on the existence of the already non-existent historic city wall of Vilnius, *Julius* sees it as precisely and invisibly separating the "settled", "popular" or even "posh" lifestyle offered by the inner Old Town from the "edgy vibe" of the new bars and businesses just beyond the 'wall'. But *Julius* is a constant explorer of "edgy" new places, and for him this symbolic divide does not last long. After just a couple of years, the distinctive hype regarding 'authentic' places he sees as shrinking or disappearing. *Julius* claims that the two sides of the 'wall' are no longer complete oppositions. They are becoming more alike – two playgrounds for urban consumption by the middle classes of somewhat different economic capacities, but with similar tastes.

The remains of the historic city wall.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

Not everyone is as hungry for 'authentic' urban experiences as *Julius*, however. One can distinguish between those who simply live in the neighbourhood, and those who come to it for leisure or consumption. Here, one starts to see that as much as these practices can be pleasurable, they also have a destructive power. What satisfies one person's desire for *authenticity,* can become painful for others. With the opening of every new store or restaurant, those who cannot afford these new offerings feel more and more clearly that the neighbourhood no longer caters to them. One can still manage to get more affordable goods, if not in the near vicinity of one's house, then at least in another easily reachable part of the neighbourhood. But the place is haunted by a feeling that this neighbourhood is no longer for everyone. It is also changing the overall feel of the city:

> *"You know, I've always liked Vilnius because it has always been very democratic. I used to tell all my friends that I lived in a city where no matter how much money you had, you never felt bad, no matter how much you got, you could always go to a café and have a coffee. In some places, that's now becoming complicated, you know? Also, public spaces are being appropriated for very wealthy people, with luxury*

houses being built on what should otherwise be accessible to everyone. And that is the sad thing, because then you do not feel like a full member of that city." (Natalya, middle-aged cultural worker)

As a newcomer to the neighbourhood, *Linas* feels the moral dilemma of indirectly contributing to displacement in the neighbourhood. With a positive change in his social status since returning to his home country, he settled in this neighbourhood as a renter. For him, this place is similar to the other 'gentrifying' neighbourhoods in which he lived in several European cities during the long years of his emigration. *Linas* was been himself evicted a couple of times in another European city famous for its aggressive waves of gentrification. He is the only informant of this study who actively uses the term '*gentrification*'. And his claims about the present and imagined future of the neighbourhood are influenced by the debate around this notion in Anglo-Saxon countries:

> *"Those boutiques and so on, they will expand, or they seem to be expanding, and it will become a kind of 'boutique street'. Then it's clear – prices will go up all around, because it will become trendy. Because the barrier between Steponas Street and the Old Town is very small – that is to say, it is just a crossroads – in this case, Steponas Street will definitely be penetrated by the Old Town boundary sooner or later, I think. What will happen then? The neighbourhood will grow more beautiful, and I think rents will go up brutally, brutally. <...> You can see from the government, which is also reacting to market forces, which are starting to say, 'So, you know what? Let's do the next one, a third one.' And then everybody says, 'Oh, they've tidied up the slums! OK, so what happened to those bums?'" (Linas, young creative professional)*

Linas' story came as an unexpected illustration of how the theories in the gentrification debate can act in everyday lives. The stage models of gentrification seem to hide from *Linas* the structural bases of the sufferings brought by changes in this neighbourhood. For him, those who are potentially being displaced represent a voiceless and anonymous group. They are neither the personalised figures of his neighbours, nor a specific fraction of the social space – just like they are accounted for in the stage models of gentrification. *Linas* is taking moral responsibility for the way in which social forces outside his control affect the neighbourhood. This is the only clear consequence of the stage model thinking coming from gentrification debate. While he feels this moral dilemma, *Linas* does not intend, as he says, "*to ride on the high horse of moral superiority*" by refusing to live there. To avoid repeating his past painful experiences of constantly being pushed away, he now feels ready to buy his own place. His knowledge of gentrification does nothing to the making of this self-fulfilling promise, but impose a certain dose of social suffering.

Twisting memory and imagination in the making of a new Vilnius

On the surface, one could argue that the social borderlines between different types of consumers coincide and are almost homologous with those which in the field of housing are marked by the practical categories of 'newcomer' and 'old-timer'. In the vicinity of Vilnius railway station, however, one should not neglect the distinction between those who live in the neighbourhood and those who only come into it for urban play. The hype of the 'trendy' neighbourhood has brought to this place the aesthetics of gentrification, which can be recognised throughout cities globally. New boutiques and barber shops, food stores and restaurants, as well as bars and clubs with events for alternative music lovers – all of them "like they have in New York, London and other big cities" further confirm edgy vibe of the neighbourhood. But such arrivals bring with them practical matters relating to the shared use of urban spaces – new noises and smells in the neighbourhood – which can lead to the conflicts between the local residents and those who earn from the people who come to enjoy city in this neighbourhood. One such conflict unfolded around the categories of 'party goers' and 'foodies', and the 'bours' – whether of low or medium income – who simply live there. This conflict ended up with the involvement of police and a lot of media attention. While the residents defended their right to enjoy peaceful rest without being troubled, people such as *Julius* claim that such peace and quiet is not exactly the function of this neighbourhood:

> *"I think that people those who live in such places, they have to somehow be aware that this is not a quiet place and that there will be action in that place. When they try to somehow silence it or to prevent noise there – to me, that's somehow out of place. I mean, I don't know, there should be some kind of rights, I don't know, perhaps a purpose should be set down for the place, that maybe we're allowed to make noise and that's it, you know, then. I don't know, I don't know how to solve it here, but I'm still more on the side of fun, not sitting quietly and listening to the little fishes eat, you know [laughs]." (Julius, young creative professional)*

It wasn't long before the social decay of neighbourhood's past started to be used as an argument against the people living there. Residents of the neighbourhood were left surprised at the way the category of 'neighbours' was publicly seen as a homogeneous group with defunct social capital. And their claims to a comfortable life were portrayed as stubborn opposition to unavoidable changes and the "urban renaissance" of the neighbourhood. The closer people lived to the epicentre of this conflict, the more likely they were to identify with the worries of their neighbours. And they took this position no matter what their social status was, which in this neighbourhood may still be very diverse. Such situations of common worries are likely to mobilise residents of a neighbourhood into to a 'community'. A defunct recycling system, a pothole in the road or a club that makes too much noise are likely to mobilise people into action and to realise the virtues of their common social capital, despite their social differences.

The conflict between neighbours and party establishments.
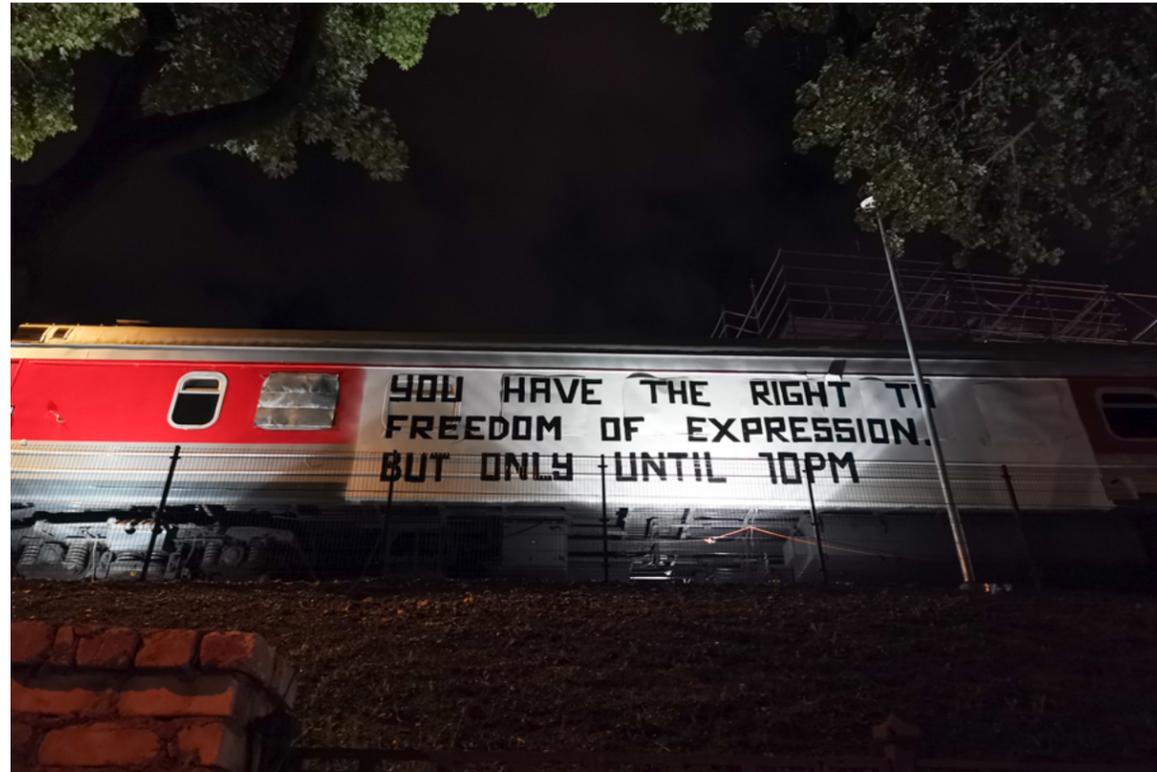
Photo by Ramūnas Danisevičius, 2019.

The conflict between neighbours and party establishments.

Photo by Ramūnas Danisevičius, 2019.

Taking positions in such conflicts is less overt among the young, who are not yet rooted in the neighbourhood. For them, such places are also attractive because of the opportunities to celebrate life through constant partying. Such happenings generate the imagining of another city – one that holds the promise of a space in the city for them; a space of their own, which they do not yet have. The hype surrounding the making of this new place is followed by an invitation to become a part of a "community" – a fairly common feature of the marketing of urban spaces. For *Kęstas*, however, this promise is very irritating. He sees it as completely oblivious to the real people who simply want to lead their lives in the neighbourhood:

"Nobody ever asks those neighbours – that is, the residents. They organise something and then they look at it – whether you react or not, whether you are angry or whatever, but they are making a 'community'. And that's what can be annoying. I mean, c'mon people, what kind of community? And has anyone consulted us? Actually, we live here! So, what kind of community are you? Well, OK, is this your sort of community, this community of bakers? [laughs] So that was the moment when it became kind of rude to me." (Kęstas, middle-aged skilled professional)

The point at which claims of a "neighbourhood community" came hand-in-hand with these invasive practices was exactly the moment when locals started to sense that the actual community feeling of the urban village was being exploited – not for the good of the people, but for the purposes of urban marketing. *Martynas* is irritated by claims that the neighbourhood is being "civilised" by bringing "urban culture" into it:

"And there, when people bring the message to us that we are here to bring culture to the city, and you don't understand a thing. Well, maybe we don't understand, but maybe I don't need that culture of yours. Maybe I feel fine with my own culture. I mean, if there are, I don't know, people who are taking part and enjoying it, then hooray. But, erm, the other thing: it's also about finding that balance where you don't bother other people. The fact is that there will always be somebody who you will disturb, but you work it out." (Martynas, young male of undisclosed profession)

Bearing in mind that the immediate vicinity of the railway station is going to be redeveloped, with a massive change to the use of land, this conflict seems to be more than just a mundane conflict between two groups who use the neighbourhood. This is a conflict between different imagined versions of the space. Delivering one of these would change the existing meaning of place, securing higher profits from investments in urban land. The aesthetics of the new urban forms that accompany such intentions is a very sensitive issue for the residents of this neighbourhood. A resident's level of repulsion towards the aesthetics of these new urban forms often coincides with the number of years they have spent in the neighbourhood. What may seem to be innocent questions of taste are indeed questions of symbolic power. In her reflection on the aesthetics of a bar that opened up nearby, *Nina* becomes really emotional:

"There was such a beautiful fence, made in an ancient way, it was inlaid with something, and painted nicely. And now I see that it's all been torn down and some nonsense has been made there. Well, erm, I understand, it's modern – it could be art, ermmmm, it could be beautiful, it could be understandable to us, too. But what they have done there, you know, it's not art, it's neither good for relaxing, nor is it comfortable. Yeah, it's such a mess. Listen, this is the first time I've seen such things. It's, erm, what's there is a nightmare. Well, somehow the authorities don't look at such things, either. So much for the Old Town, see? You see, it's a double standard here, so to speak. They won't let us fix up our house because it's considered the Old Town –you can't fix anything up, you can't change the look of the house by law – we don't want to do that, we just want to smarten up the edges and that's it. They wouldn't allow it. And here, next to us, they've made this outrageous mess, and it's been allowed all right"? (Nina, middle-aged education specialist)

A partial cultural analysis of such a reading of the new urban forms might suggest regarding the likes of *Nina* as simply having insufficient or even defunct cultural capital, and thus being unable to enjoy these new urban forms. But when we examine it through the lens of her personal history, this reaction becomes a counterstrike against hidden intentions to dominate public urban spaces through cultural forms. Not all neighbours react to the edgy aesthetics of the trendy establishments in a similar way to *Nina*. Some of them are more forgiving. And even in the cases when they are clearly in favour of them, they are not necessarily active consumers of their services. Instead, they rationalise it from position of being homeowners who are aware that the hype surrounding this neighbourhood that has been brought by these businesses will contribute to a growth in the value of their housing.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

Vilnius is filled with signs of history, which can stand in a way of certain re-imaginings of urban spaces. Signs with the distinctive aesthetics of the Soviet period are the object of hot public debate. Discussions continue as to whether they should remain as they are, be renovated to give them a new aesthetic form, or even be completely removed. This public discourse revolves around the category of things *Soviet*. It is already a familiar category, which often stands as a symbolic opposition to the dominant imaginings of the future. The staunchest proponents of urban renewal claim that the remaining signs of all things *Soviet* ought to be evicted with the renovation of public spaces. *Natalya* reacts very sensitively to suggestions that these signs of history should be eliminated:

> "*Soon we will soon be left virtually without the Soviet layers of history, which is a pity because it is part of history. You may like or dislike an event, but it happened and it has to be remembered. And you will not erase it – if you erase it, you will instead get a hole, and that hole will be more painful than if it were real history. And that absolute denial, for example, you know, myth- making, you know, everything was so bad, so bad there... Well, I lived through the Soviet years. Of course we didn't live through those completely 'crocodile years'[20], when people were deported to Siberia, where you could shoot a person for nothing. But my youth, for example, it didn't leave any negative memories*" (Natalya, middle aged cultural professional)

The motivations that lie behind the attempts to eradicate all possible signs of the Soviet past contradict the personal histories of people such as *Natalya*. No matter how painful, she sees this period of history as part of herself. Even if such relics of the Soviet era lie outside the neighbourhood in which she lives, they strengthen her feeling of belonging in the city. Removing such signs weakens the claims of people like *Natalya* to the centre of city. There are, however, a substantial portion of citizens who take an opposing opinion in this polarising debate, and eradicating the last signs of the Soviet past is now becoming a city policy. Ironically, this policy bears a striking similarity to the one that was implemented during the first decade of Soviet occupation. These were the beginnings of the period against which this new policy makes a symbolic claim. Rather than being simple irony, this is another example how *social space* functions in the making of the city.

The political arguments concerning the urgency of renewing 'Soviet' public spaces do not always sustain this solid façade. For *Viltė*, the cracks in these arguments began to appear when she became involved in the activities of the urban social movement negotiating changes to the renewal plan for Reformatų park. The planned renovation involved cutting down the old trees in the area of a former cemetery and removing the remains of a monument in the socialist-modernist style. The municipality's plan of a complete refurbishment of the space gave rise to a wave of protest, in which *Viltė* took part. For her, this was an opportunity to express her general dissatisfaction with the aesthetic qualities of new developments in

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[20] A metaphor for the brutal exercise of power during Stalinist period.

Vilnius. She claims that the discrepancies between the aesthetics of the new and historic buildings are so huge that they can be felt in a very intuitive way – even by people who do not have the professional credentials to articulate them. Despite this, she finds it particularly difficult to argue with anyone who, in the course of discussions about urban development, follows the current dominating discourse:

> *"Sure enough, I hear from other people, too, those who live in the Old Town, that it's very ugly. It's unpopular to be bristling up and so anti-everything, to be so against everything, but, well, it all seems to be being done in a hurry, and it's really just for the sake of greater profit. Nothing else, but this is the highest priority and the others are either completely side-lined or much, much lower in priority." (Viltė, young skilled professional)*

Viltė is not the only one to speak about the *"breath of money"* that is felt in the developments within and around her neighbourhood. Most neighbours feel that urban redevelopment – at least in the way it is currently being implemented – is being pursued very crudely, destroying the existing meanings of the urban fabric. This affects their relationship to the neighbourhood. For the old-timers, this loss is more personal, as they have an abundance of personal memories that relate to the vanishing urban forms around them. But others are also accompanied by the uncomfortable, nostalgic feeling of living next to a container of memories and meanings that will inevitably be lost. Among the arguments over the renovation of *Reformatų* park, which raised *Viltė's* suspicion and exhausted patience, was that the existing forms of the park should be reshaped precisely because they represented *Soviet* aesthetics. In the efforts of city authorities to push through the renovation of the park, she saw a lack of freedom of expression, an unwillingness on the part of the authorities to hear out the voices of city residents, and the fierce promotion of ideology – exactly the qualities that she herself associates with *"Soviet"* governance.

> *"Nowadays it sometimes seems scarier than the real Soviet era, when you knew what you were fighting against, erm, the enemy was clear. But now everything is wrapped in pretty paper and there seems to be nothing to fight against, so, erm, if you don't agree with it, maybe you are being difficult or somehow out of context. What's not to like? See, it's all for the better here, we're improving conditions! The value seems to be in redoing things, and no thought is given to preserving and improving the existing thing. Well, that's also the – I don't know what – the time- honoured technique of bulldozing everything down to the ground and then redoing it. Well, that reminds me a lot of Soviet-era methods, too, but I don't know how some people here do not see that." (Viltė, young skilled professional)*

Picture 56.

Protest in Reformatų park.

Photo by Andrej Vasilenko, 2018.

Reformatų park after renovation.

Picture 57.

Photo by Tadas Šarūnas, 2021.

In *Viltė*'s reflection, one can recognise the patterns being built up of dealing with a new cultural hegemony. Although she speaks a lot about the preservation of cultural signs, she also mentions the capitalist interests of real-estate developers, who have just built a luxury apartment block in the plot of land next to the park. Despite this, *Viltė* does not strike one as a clear oppositional figure. She is neither one of the strictly conservative activists of preservationism in the inner town, nor is she one of the usual figures of the anticapitalist movement. Taking a stronger stand on the conflictual questions of urban development is not a comfortable position at all. What mobilised her to join the protests was not the construction or renovation of public spaces *perse*, which in general she sees as an unavoidable and often welcome necessity. What mobilised her were the controversies that open up during such renovation projects. The imaginings contained in such projects reveal the *symbolically violent* nature of the urban fabric, which covers over and naturalises inequalities in the social space.

Eradicating the signs of the Soviet past – which are not limited to the obvious cases of soviet monuments, but also include public or industrial buildings, and even the public spaces designed at the time – emphasises the symbolic opposition between the historic centre of Vilnius on the left bank of the river Neris, and the socialist-modernist districts. These remaining signs of the Soviet past dilute the dichotomy between the 'Soviet' and its oppositions. Thus, the act of removing these signs marks a shift in the overall symbolic map of the city. It creates new symbolic meaning in this urban habitat. And it will also require the *habitus* of a specific position in social space. *Viltė*, like many other young professionals in Lithuania, do not yet hold that position. In spite of her professional status, which should allow her to enter the game of housing and secure her position in the urban space, she has not yet amassed sufficient economic capital in form of savings to enter the game. Being single, and thus unable to pool economic capital with a partner, also sets a few steps back in terms of her chances of securing her place in the neighbourhood. *Viltė* is concerned about the forgetting of the symbolic meanings of the locations, which could very well be maintained. She is also worried about diminishing access to public spaces and public infrastructure. But all these worries also coincide with her social suffering and distress at being unable to secure a place of her own in the vicinity of the railway station – a place so attuned to her *habitus*, and a neighbourhood she has learned to love. She will still need to fight and defend her place in this new world of central Vilnius.

Interim remarks: establishing a link between urban pains and pleasures, and the workings of the field

These stories from residents of Vilnius show us how, by following the steps taken in the reflexive sociology of Pierre Bourdieu and his concepts of *habitus* and *symbolic violence*, we can understand the pleasures and the pains of living in the surroundings of Vilnius railway station. However, interpretating ethnographic observations is difficult without a reconstruction of the field. Thus, this is as far as I have been able to go without major issues. Beneath all these small worries of daily life, there is also a political economy of land and housing value. A consistent analysis of the *field of housing* would probably give rise to the possibility of much bolder statements. It would also make it much easier to interpret the occurrences of these social forces in everyday life. Learning more about the relationships of the *field of housing* with the *field of power* would enable us to see exactly how these experiences of city life are a result of local variations in *housing policy*. The previous economic crisis once again showed how central the housing market is to the organisation of the social order (Desmond, 2018). Thus, understanding the social basis for this is also an important prerequisite for understanding our society.

Establishing a link between the everyday struggles of people living in the city of Vilnius with the workings of social structures was not what I set out to do – at least not in this work. But I believe that this work provides a solid foundation for further research on the social production of the value that is placed on urban locations in Vilnius. What is unique to the surroundings of Vilnius railway station is that it teaches us to recognise the *symbolically violent* nature of urban forms. The existing social order and the symbolic meanings of this neighbourhood, as they are read by the newcomers such as *Julius* or *Viltė*, no longer correspond to the meanings that these neighbourhoods hold for older residents such as *Andrey* or *Nina*. The borderlines that separate different lifeworlds within this city space continue to be renegotiated. Right now, these neighbours can still occupy their lifeworlds in their own distinctive ways. But there are others who have had to flee. Why did *Sasha* become homeless in the neighbourhood in which he grew up? What caused *Alina's* quarrels with neighbours, and motivated her to flee? What makes *Martynas* regard his apartment as an investment that secures a feeling of safety, rather than as a place in which to feel safe? These are among the many different reflections of the same social forces projecting into the histories of individuals through the field of housing. These forces, which bring suffering for some, to others can be a source of empowerment. In the vicinity of Vilnius railway station, one can observe both. The area is thus a very specific playground for what are the constant struggles for urban space. It is therefore also a perfect place in which to question the categories we currently employ in the analysis of cities.

Humans, with their urge to dominate, are not the only ones making a place of their own in the city, however. So too do all other living things – animals and plants. These, as well as the landscape, give a special sense of meaning to life in the city. *Julius* calls the city's trees

"the best counterweight to the concrete". For some, the loss of some lonely maple tree from a courtyard can become one of the reasons for leaving one's neighbourhood. That same craving for greenery can motivate some neighbours to "get their hands dirty" in the soil. Through their window, *Kęstas* and *Marija* hesitantly observe a neighbour planting flowers in their courtyard. He does so without any kind of agreement with his neighbours, almost like some kind of 'guerrilla gardening' practice. And despite nicknaming him *"the gardener"*, *Kęstas* and *Marija* look forward to seeing the results of his work unfold before their eyes. Wildlife adds an even stronger dimension to life in the city. *Alina*, who became tired of her disputes with neighbours and moved to suburbia, now observes hares and deer through her window. She is also waiting for a visit from "her" squirrel, to whom she serves nuts under a tree. A lonely tree, a flower, a bird, a wild animal, or even a stray cat, can play a big role in dealing with social struggles, or what *Alina* calls the "energetic stress" experienced in our urban lives. Notions of *symbolic* and *economic* capital or *field* fall short of explaining the power that the nature has in our experiences of the city. I look upon all these signs of *nature* as an unexpected opposition to the *urban*, which itself unfolds within a natural environment. A person's relationship with nature is important for their wellbeing and social functioning. It often helps them to put up with the struggles of modern urban life by providing at least a temporary shelter or a sigh of relief. Thus, we would also benefit from a more nuanced theorisation of this important relationship.

The vicinity of Vilnius railway station will soon become a building site for the city's next major urban renewal project. At the moment, the place is marked by globally circulating aesthetics that remind us of other gentrifying locations in the world. These surface appearances of similarity might tempt us into using established middle-range theories developed on the basis of the examples of Anglo-Saxon cities, to understand what's going on. We could view the conflicts in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station as the inevitable result of economic restructuring and urban renewal policies. Thinking about this place along such lines of urban studies gives us the promise of a glimpse at social change in the making. It can, however, result in the researchers who take this path becoming a tool in the remaking of a city. The results of the current remaking of Vilnius have left many people frustrated and worried about the city's future. In the words of *Natalya*:

> *"There is now a strong sense of trying to change the city. And you see what's the point – well, how should I put it? – the city is not the same any more, the city becomes different. And then you realise, if you look at things more deeply, that when you change the city, you are trying to change a worldview. You are trying to change history. You are trying to change it to something else. And the question is, what are you going to do with that, then? What kind of city are you going to live in? What kind of ideas are you going to live with there?"* (Natalya, middle aged cultural professional)

What *Natalya* reflects upon here are often presented in public discourses as inevitable signs of social change, or even social progress. But changes of such a seemingly subjective nature as the 'aura' of neighbourhood depend not only on material changes, but also on symbolic changes to the urban fabric. For some, such changes can give rise to the promise of a place of one's own in the city, bringing a sense of pleasure and empowerment. For others, they can lead to total displacement, bringing about a sense of pain and social suffering. The task for urban studies is to provide a language for such intuitive observations as *Natalya's*. Its ambition should be to show how and when seemingly random conflicts and annoyances that arise between people living in a city are the result of the present policy of housing and urban development. This is an important task to achieve; at present, residents of city are left alone to solve these inherent conflicts. It is these individuals who, in their everyday life, are paying the unanticipated price of this policy.

Picture 58.
DJs playing music in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station.

Photo by Vytautas Michelkevičius, 2021.

5.

CONCLUSIONS: RECOGNISING THE SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE OF URBAN FORMS

It is now time for me to come to some more general conclusions concerning what all of these curious happenings in a tiny slip of central Vilnius tell us about our social world.

These conclusions could also be seen as another step towards a reconstruction of the urban sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. Three statements can be seen as structuring these conclusions as a whole, and to an extent, each conclusion individually. By looking at the surroundings of Vilnius railway station, we:

— Observe *symbolic domination* through urban forms, as well as intense *classificatory struggles* to redefine the city space and the people living there;

— Experience the benefits to the sociological analysis of a city of paying *attention to the history* of the urban forms and the people who live in city;

— Witness what kind of payback sincere attempts to *turn towards the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu* might offer to the study of cities.

In these conclusions, I return to the theses I presented in the introductory chapter of this study. Each of the conclusions summarises the insights provided to us by this study of social life in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station. In doing so, I will be present these insights 'backwards' – that is, starting from the theses that were closest to my last interim remarks on the observations from the study. I will be finishing with those that relate more closely to the theoretical debates within urban studies. At that point, I will also make my point as to how these could be further developed.

5.1. Looking at symbolic domination through urban forms

Neighbourhoods such as the vicinity of Vilnius railway are highly specific urban environments in which the correspondence between *physical, symbolic* and *social spaces* is disturbed. The *material* conditions of these physical spaces do not match the highest possible *symbolic* value that could currently be attributed to the architecture of these locations. The same historic changes that brought up this symbolic re-evaluation has also significantly affected the configuration of the social space. It has resulted in a downward social trajectory for a significant share of the inhabitants. For these people, life in the neighbourhood is often accompanied by the pain of social suffering, and in extreme cases ends up with physical displacement. But the daily struggles in these spaces of Vilnius are not simply struggles about who has access to a particular *physical* location in the city. The *symbolic* structures of a city, to which one can relate while living in a neighbourhood, become another aspect of daily struggles. For residents with upward social trajectories, this unused *symbolic* potential of the place leads to social discomfort or petit-bourgeois social suffering. All of this leads to the renegotiation and rearrangement of the *symbolic* forms of the neighbourhood. With changes to the *social space*, not everyone has an equal standing in making their claims to space. To conclude:

VI: In classification struggles to define these urban spaces, the symbolic violence of the urban forms of Vilnius becomes visible

The spaces of Vilnius in the vicinity of the railway station do not play their full part in naturalising social differences. They are not covering up the related misdeeds of social life. For the same reason, life is more 'real' here. Such cracks in the symbolic façade of the city open up space for freedom, and provide the hope of a different life. The death of illustrator Agnė Každailytė, murdered by a drug-addicted man hired to renovate her apartment, reminds us that it does not take long for the tensions of difference to turn into spurs towards violence. Although this place offers the promise of peaceful coexistence with difference, it is at the same time a place where city life is also *violent*. The least economically affluent people are being *physically displaced* from this neighbourhood – if not by their landlords, then by simple and blunt poverty.

This neighbourhood, however, remains a destination for people with an upward social trajectory looking for a place of their own in the city. And spurs towards violence are much more often just *symbolic*, rather than *physical*. In daily life, with their selective memories and with sense of taste, people classifying individuals and spaces in the neighbourhood. In this way, they push forward their own imagined future for the neighbourhood. At the moment, this imagining can make residents with a downward social trajectory start to lose their sense of place. Even those among them who are able to sustain their housing in the area may start to be *symbolically displaced*. This process will continue until those in a position to dominate the space achieve a seamless correspondence between the *physical, social* and *symbolic* spaces marked by this piece of urban land.

V: Success in making a home in a neighbourhood depends not on economic capital alone, but also on cultural and social capacities

The pains and pleasures experienced by neighbours with different social positions are socially structured. But rather then speaking about specific social classes in relation to such sufferings, it is important to recognise how people's positions within the social space define their chances of survival in the neighbourhood. Experiences of living in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station are not affected by economic capacity alone. Type of housing tenure, ethnicity, and even the length of time spent in the neighbourhood, can play an unexpected part. Which claims to urban space become a social reality thus depends on the extent to which these claims are based on the *economic, cultural, symbolic* and also *social capital* of the claimant. The specific amount and structure of this capital, which defines a person's position in *social space*, will also define their chances of survival and of feeling at home in this neighbourhood.

An emphasis on one particular social class – be it *gentry* or *working class* – distorts in a specific way our understanding of what is going on in these particular urban spaces. Such a perspective does not recognise those moments when living side-by-side with contested social diversity becomes a mutually enriching experience, and the source of a certain pleasure. No matter how fragile these moments may be, looking at the very sources of people's various social sufferings, rather than at the agency of one or other specific class, is more likely to nurture solidarity between people with very different social positions. Thinking of a city as an inherently violent structure – as *symbolically violent* for all –brings much more hope of solidarity between different people, than can be seen in most of the current critical narratives in urban studies.

5.2. The virtues of historicism in the analysis of cities

The physical spaces of cities are created over decades or even centuries of history. If we want to arrive at sensitive depictions of everyday life, we need to separate these products of history from the general social forces that govern the making of our daily lives. Vilnius, with a colourful and often painful history that is not unusual in cities on the border between East and West in Europe, proves to be an interesting case in demonstrating the merits of such historical analysis. The magnitude of the *material* and *symbolic* schisms left by previous economic and political upheavals are visible in the face of the city, right up to the present day. And these schisms are employed in the making of current social divisions. The vicinity of Vilnius railway station is where such divisions are visible in a particularly sharp manner. Such urban spaces are often interpreted as being places where one can observe social change in the making. What gives such an impression is that we can observe there the lives of people who have very different social histories. What we observe in such neighbourhoods is not social change, but rather certain 'surface' changes – the adaptations of material structures, urban routines and practices to structural changes that have already occurred.

IV: Residents' differential experiences of the city coincide with the social trajectories they took after political and economic restructuring

There is little new in simply saying that the 'post-industrial renaissance' came to Lithuania with its own socially heavy price. The 'post-industrial' urban wastelands in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station are among the few urban spaces where we can observe people of very different *habitus*, who were affected by the events of the economic and political restructuring in very different ways. People who are affected differently by major historical shifts will take different trajectories. By looking at how people with very different social histories, and whose gravitational *trajectories* are inconsistent if not opposite, pass each other by in this urban space, we can observe the distant echoes of the historic events of restructuring already significantly distanced in time.

The relationships of these different *habituses* to the same urban environment and similar housing can help us to better understand the social nature of the city. Analysing social life in one small urban area, or even in one house, enables us to see how different approaches to the same urban space are grounded in personal histories. Throughout the course of people's histories, changing structural circumstances affect their opportunities to make pleasurable claims to urban space. Listening to people's stories about the *tsunami* of social misdeeds that followed the closure of the surrounding industries, or the amount of effort it takes for people to settle in an unknown city, many of the preconceptions offered by urban studies shatter into pieces. These are the benefits of very localised ethnographic research.

III: In Vilnius, the 'Soviet blocks' and 'historic centre' are among the most active symbolic oppositions upon which claims of social distinction are based

Different neighbourhoods of the city hold their own *symbolic* meanings in relation to the rest of the urban fabric. We should thus see a neighbourhood as being a chunk of the city's larger historical whole. By moving into the vicinity of the railway station, newcomers (whose cultural affluence is often greater than their material situation) make specific claims concerning their difference and their social status. Symbolic oppositions, marked by historic architecture and urban morphology, enable them to make such claims to social distinction. In Vilnius, the 'Soviet blocks' and historic centre are the material references to the most active symbolic oppositions in the city. Knowing the history of these urban locations helps us to avoid the naturalisation of social differences that are currently concealed by these spatial categories.

Historical analysis is inevitable if we want to avoid the mistakes of using historically constructed *geopolitical* or even *natural* metaphors in what should be a *social* analysis of a city – an analysis that should aim to separate nature and history from the functioning of *social* laws. Sociological analysis of Vilnius would benefit from further historical reconstructions of the *field of housing*. Among many other new circumstances, the economic and political restructuring of the 1990s led to a new regime in housing policy and the construction of new housing classes. Through voucher-based privatisation, the possibility of housing ownership was made accessible to the absolute majority of Lithuanian residents. This is an important specificity in the cases of Vilnius and other Lithuanian cities. A more scrupulous historical genealogy of the way in which the bureaucracy and industry of Soviet housing provision was transformed into a housing market would enable us to better understand the more general social transformations of independent Lithuania.

5.3. The practical mind in future urban studies debates

If we want to understand the social forces that govern our life in the city, we should not place "gentrifying" urban spaces, or indeed any type of space in a city, at the centre of attention. Without historical and relational analysis, such types of urban spaces will simply serve as protective screens that conceal from us the very many forces that affect the constellations of *physical*, *social* and *symbolic* space in a city. Far too often, the 'practical' minds of urban researchers are motivated by the public or political relevance of a particular case, rather than willingness to understand what it adds to our understanding of social life in cities. Choosing a specific location can, however, still be a valid decision – as long as it is motivated by the opportunities this gives us to speak about and understand the social forces involved in the

making of our cities. To make use of these opportunities, we should not only recognise our own practical minds as researchers – we need to start thinking about the practical minds of residents, and how the workings of the field of housing influence their practices. This could help us to go beyond the propositions of *scholarly doxas* that have settled in urban studies. The benefits of this would not be limited simply to the improvement of knowledge; such a change could also nurture our imagination towards a freer and more just city.

II: The choice of housing and its location is preconscious and intuitive, governed by habitus and enabled by the diverse capitals that people possess

People aim to choose housing that most closely fits their social skin – in line with their position, and also their trajectory in the social space. The choice of housing involves an intuitive positioning of oneself in relation to the outside world. It is an act of physically marking one's place within the social space. People measure the urban fabric against the social dispositions and oppositions internalised within their socialised bodies. This ability allows them to intuitively position and orientate themselves within the urban space without what would otherwise be an enormous task of rationalising the abundance of fixed and changing parts of urban life. When we observe moments such as the moment of housing acquisition, we are also observing people's relationships to urban space. And there we can grasp the workings of their *habitus* – the workings of the social structures internalised within the body of the subject.

The choice of housing and location are thus not purely a result of the rationalisation of aesthetic and economic qualities. Furthermore, there is little choice in the practice of housing, which is firstly is a continuous practice of necessity. Thus, concentrating on the moment of acquisition alone can lead to certain distortions. Throughout the other moments of this practice, people also act as *practical*, as opposed to *rational*, agents. They are choosing from the field of possibilities available to them at a given moment in their personal histories. What we observe in the contested spaces of central Vilnius is the structuring of the social space that is made visible through the ways in which subjects of different socio-economic status are appropriating housing. Agents are making related decisions along the lines of the economic, cultural and social capital available to them. Far from being examples of pure acts of economic rationalisation, these decisions also depend on symbolic meanings.

I: Analysis of the field of housing and of its relationship with field of power would enable us to look more deeply at the social forces involved in the making of cities

To understand cities, we must set our gaze aside from their spatial forms and start to look at the social forces that mould them. Throughout this work, we can observe how the gravity of the *field of housing* has affected people's decisions over the course of their housing histories. Various 'rationalisations' of what is a good or a bad choice in one's daily life in the city are not purely a matter of personal preferences. They have been affected by the gravity of *the field of housing*. And learning more about the relationships between the *field of housing* and the *field of power* would enable us to see exactly how one's current experience of the city is, among other influences, a result of local variations in *housing policy*. But much more needs to be done to really understand the laws of this gravity, or the logic by which this field acts upon Vilnius. Such enquiries could become an exciting object of research and an important building block in what could become a new research programme in Lithuanian urban studies.

I would strongly encourage anyone who is considering *field analysis* of housing to pursue this path of research. There are many different entry points to this debate that could lead to inspiring research. There is a need for a more critical outlook on the ways in which the institutions of family and the housing market interact with each other, or whether the market is reinforcing the normative family structures. A somewhat related research object is unconventional practices of cohabitating, as these quite often question the leading role of the nuclear family in the provision of housing. Looking more deeply at such practices could strengthen our reflections about human agency in the city. Such lines of enquiry are very much needed in the debates of urban studies, where the predominant thinking revolves around structural forces. At the same time, there is a need to reflect on what social circumstances would be necessary for such freedom in housing practices to be accessible to the many, rather than just a few. This would enable us to imagine a different life in the city, to cultivate hope, and take steps towards a freer and more just city.

Another step towards a reconstruction of Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of cities

I believe I have provided sufficient arguments as to why following the steps taken in the reflexive sociology of Pierre Bourdieu could be productive for urban studies. Ideas from his research legacy could help in questioning and dismantling the scientific *doxas* of urban studies. They help to show how the debates of urban studies, such as the debate on gentrification, could move forward. But the analysis of housing practices in relation to the field of housing can also inspire other fields of research. These include housing studies, which is currently also experiencing similar challenges in developing its thinking (Aalbers, 2018). As we can see, Bourdieu's thinking does not align itself to any disciplinary borderlines. This is particularly relevant feature with regard to the field of urban studies. Researchers often look at the research results of colleagues from other fields of study with a certain epistemological suspiciousness at best, and at worst – with a lack of any real interest. In our quest for a social science of cities, we need to take the results of the neighbouring disciplines in social research much more seriously. As has already been proven, Bourdieu's thought is particularly effective at inspiring and facilitating such interdisciplinary thinking. Of course, following his thinking also requires us to return to the question of whether there is such a thing as an *urban sociology* that promises a certain social theory of urban space. But rather than sinking into such classificatory struggles to define disciplinary boundaries, it is much more pleasurable to simply enjoy the freedom of thought that this thinking affords us.

Like any other social theory, Bourdieu's thought has its own limitations. One that became apparent of the course of this study is that it provides little room for the interpretation of the relationships between humans and nature. But it also attracts more standard critiques. Typical remarks are about it being famously geared towards structure and unable to explain agency or the reasons behind structural social change. My answer to such criticism is that these are rather minor issues compared to the ones we currently face in urban studies. In fact, the 'structural leaning' of Bourdieu's thinking makes it an even more natural fit for the current *status quo* of debates in urban studies. After all, debates that do not focus on a certain action, but instead take a physical space of the city as their immediate marker of academic interest, appear precisely to be structurally inclined debates. Thus, employing a 'structurally inclined' social theory that is sufficiently well developed that it can still integrate structure and agency, would be a real step forward. At this point, we may thus have few practical alternatives than to follow the lead of a Bourdieusian turn in urban studies. Otherwise, we risk shifting backwards and forth through the history of social theory, finding ourselves again and again in Chicagoan modes of thinking about the city, as if a century of intellectual work on social theory had never happened.

ANNEX I:
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ANNEX II: some methodological notes

My interest in the neighbourhood in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station is largely driven by my own personal experience of living there. I moved to the neighbourhood in the mid-2000s, and lived there for almost two decades. My curiosity about the social forces behind the rising social contestations in this part of the city are what motivated me to perform this research – and were also among my motivations to become a sociologist. It was only some years after the beginning of my PhD studies that I began to follow my intuition, which suggested it was worthwhile taking an empirical interest in this location, to which my personal trajectory had taken me during my life in Vilnius. Even if there was the risk of viewing the social life in this location through the eyes of a native – or, rather, a middle-class newcomer – the benefits of being able to use my access to informants in the area to gain in-depth stories about their experiences in this small slice of urban land, seemed to clearly outweigh these risks. Thus, in the early spring of the year 2015, I decided to pursue my ethnographic research into this neighbourhood.

II.1 Research process

The process of the fieldwork contained most of the standard elements of ethnographic research, chief among which was my own immersion in the field as a covert observer. My observations of daily life in the neighbourhood provided me with a range of possible topics relating to everyday life, which could be brought up in individual interviews. They also were a source for information about people in the neighbourhood and the daily issues they face in running a house or living in the area. These observations were followed by programme of interviews with neighbourhood residents, which were the main source of data. From the outset, the interviews and observations were organised in parallel, and at various times they coincided in a number of ways.

Time and space: research phases and locations

The research began with an *exploratory phase,* during which I pursued my observations in the neighbourhood, and two undergraduate students performed 17 interviews with residents of *Naujamiestis* and *Senamiestis.* These were carried out in two waves, which took place during the springtime in the years 2015 and 2016. Each wave of the exploratory

study took a distinct approach to interviews. During the first wave, we chose to interview residents in *Šv. Stepono* street – a part of the *Old Town* district bordering the neighbourhood of *Naujamiestis.* This exploratory step quickly uncovered the risks and benefits of space-bound strategies for qualitative research. Looking at a very concrete location, such as this one particular street, enabled us to speak about the material, symbolic and social textures present in that particular location. During this part of the exploratory phase, we chose to interview our research participants about manifestations of 'community practices' in their neighbourhood. However, concentrating on 'community' mobilisations ended up creating the problem of us gazing at the agency of new middle-class settlers to the area. At least on the surface, these individuals showed more agency in such mobilisations than did other residents of the neighbourhood. The snowball technique did not prove to be effective in gaining access to informants with a wider variety of socio- economic statuses. As a result, we quickly found ourselves sinking into the kind of one-sided stories of class-based experiences of the city, that were so clearly problematised in Tom Slater's call for a critical reload of gentrification research (Slater, 2006). Only two interviews from the first wave of the exploratory phase ended up being usable in the final data set. Although the rest of these early interviews could not be interpreted within the final theoretical framework, they did suggest certain interviewing strategies, which helped me to provide with more consistent narratives that were open to sociological interpretation.

The next wave of interviews in the exploratory phase didn't quite follow Slater's call to produce more research cases of working-class experiences of life in gentrifying areas. To avoid taking another position that might once again draw us towards a one-sided picture of class-based experiences in the neighbourhood, we used target sampling of our informants. The sample for this wave more or less equally represented *'newcomers'* and *'old-timers'.* These two classifications clearly stood out during the first wave of interviews as being socially important in relationships between neighbours. During this phase, we also no longer concerned ourselves as much with the exact spot in which the informants lived. As a result, we chose informants from across the district of *Naujamiestis* and the neighbouring areas. Our focus thus also had to move away from community mobilisations, as almost none of these new informants were actually involved in such mobilisations. We moved our attention towards experiences of housing and the organisation of life in the district, as well as relationships with one's closest neighbours. These topics proved to cover a fairly solid and stable part of the lifeworlds of informants, enabling us to look for answers about the social forces lurking behind these experiences. These topics remained the most important ones throughout the rest of the fieldwork. In the next subchapters, I will describe the problems with the given approach, which were the reason why only half of the interviews from this wave could be used in the final data set.

During the *main phase* of the research, I settled on a final location bunded roughly by the streets of *Aguonų, Šopeno* and *Pylimo*, in particular south of the crossroads between the streets of *Šv. Stepono* and *Pylimo*. This small piece of *Old Town*, which borders the district of *Naujamiestis*, was approximately what all informants interviewed during this phase described as "their neighbourhood". It was a territory in which I had a number of personal contacts to follow up in an interview programme covering a wide social spectrum. It was also here that I felt I had the highest reflexivity as to how my own position in the social space influenced my perceptions of the surrounding social world. I carried out interviews between December 2019 and March 2020, until the COVID-19 epidemic hit Lithuania. Another important circumstance was that from August 2017 onwards, I no longer lived in the neighbourhood. Moving away from the neighbourhood – and also from the country – provided a unique opportunity to establish a certain reflective distance from the location.

Picture   Final location for the fieldwork.

The people: the sample for the interview programme

Learning from the difficulties of the previous phases of research, I decided to localise my research in a very narrowly defined area. This proved to be a successful approach that solved many issues on which I will reflect in a later section of this Annex. Spatial localisation basically means that I ended up speaking to informants from a variety of social classes, all of whom lived in just three houses. All of my chosen houses were very similar. Built around the turn of the 20th century they share in common certain distinctive qualities of the buildings built for rent at that particular time. As is usual for buildings of that period, they contain a moderate number of apartments – approximately six to ten per stairwell – while the ground floors are occupied by businesses not owned by the residents. These are brick buildings with two floors above the ground floor and plastered facades without any significant decor. Only one of the houses has centralised heating. Until several decades ago, the apartments in the other houses used to be heated using coal and wood, but this was gradually replaced by autonomous heating systems in each flat, using gas or electricity. One of these houses is in somewhat better general condition than the others. The condition of others, especially of their roofs, stairwells and general facilities, is deteriorating and in a need of renovation. The approximate locations of the houses are marked by the circles and numbers in the picture above. None of these houses were exceptional architectural examples; nor did they contain large spaces what might attract high-income dwellers. Nevertheless, these houses are home to social variety, which represents some very different social trajectories.

The choice of research participants was informed by the difficulties faced during the exploratory phase. During exploratory phase, informants were scouted through the personal networks of the interviewers, taking the residence area as the main requirement for being a participant. Table 1 provides a summary of the social characteristics of all 24 informants, 17 of whom were interviewed during this main phase. During the exploratory phase, we chose to concentrate on interviewing people of different occupations. This indicator from census data is the one that local human geographers usually use to describe changes in the social composition of neighbourhoods. Wherever it was possible to do so while maintaining confidentiality, I have indicated certain further information about the informant's occupational status. This usually relates to the attention that the debate on gentrification gives to people working in culture-related fields. Another important criterion for choosing informants was how long people had been living in the neighbourhood. From the very outset, similar categories were visible in the way people described their neighbours. We had already begun to use these categories for sampling during the second wave of the exploratory phase. For the final wave of interviews, I chose a sample that equally represented the perspectives of people who had lived in the area for almost all their lives, or had even been born there (these informants were marked as living there for more than 15 years); as well as 'older' newcomers (living there for up to 15 years) and 'newer' newcomers (living there up to five years). These timespans represent certain tendencies reflected in the analysis, but are
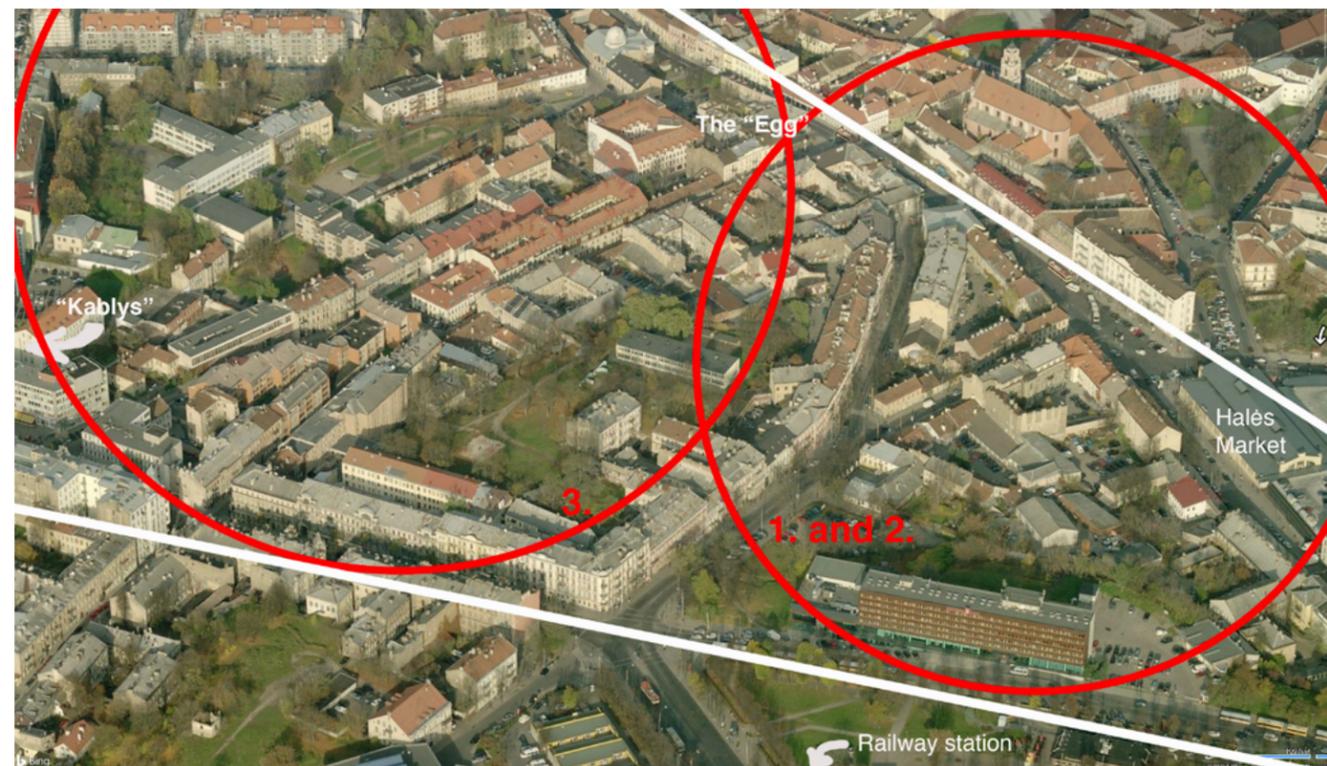
also the most detailed one can provide without unnecessarily compromising the informants' confidentiality.

It was only during the main phase of research that I identified *tenure type* as being an important category influencing the positions of the informants. Owner-occupiers, either with or without mortgages, and renters at either reduced or market rates were the main categories used to describe tenure type. However, reacting to the current debate about the lack of knowledge concerning phenomenological experiences of displacement, I did not limit myself to those still living in the apartments of these houses (Slater, 2006). I tracked three households who had for various reasons moved out from these housing estates during the previous five years. Thus, these houses were for me just fixed references to the physical space, whereas the positions and trajectories in the social space of those who had lived or were still living in them were constantly changing. During this phase, I also recognised that the category of ethnicity also acts in the way the informant interprets urban space.

Table 1:
Informants of the study.

Note: Informants marked darker co-participated in an interview at least once. In these cases, the upper individual is the 'lead informant'.

NAME	TENURE TYPE	LENGTH		ETHNICITY	GENDER AND AGE
Informants from the exploratory phase					
Mantas	—	Up to 5 years	Skilled professional	—	Young male
Dalia	—	Up to 5 years	Skilled professional	—	Young female
Agnė	—	Up to 5 years	Skilled professional	—	Female of undisclosed age
Inga	—	More than 15 years	Worker	—	Female of undisclosed age
Renata	—	More than 15 years	Worker	—	Middleaged female
Rūta	—	Up to 5 years	Skilled professional	—	Female of undisclosed age
Julius	—	Up to 5 years	Creative professional	—	Young male
Informants from the main phase					
Viltė	Renter	Up to 5 years	Skilled professional	Lithuanian	Young female
Ania	Owner	More than 15 years	Service worker	Polish	Middleaged female
Natalya	Owner	Up to 15 years	Cultural professional	Russian	Middleaged female
Martynas	Owner with mortgage	Up to 5 years	Undisclosed	Lithuanian	Young male
Kęstas	—	Up to 5 years	Skilled professional	Lithuanian	Middleaged male
Marija	Owner	Up to 15 years	Cultural professional	Lithuanian	Middleaged female
Alina	Owner without mortgage	More than 15 years	Service worker	—	Middleaged female
Linas	Renter	Up to 5 years	Creative professional	Lithuanian	Young male
Nina	Owner	More than 15 years	Education specialist	Russian	Middleaged female
Maya	Owner	More than 15 years	Retired	Russian	Elderly female
Paulius	Owner	Up to 15 years	Skilled professional	Lithuanian	Middleaged male
Fanya	Renter at a reduced rate	More than 15 years	Service worker	Russian	Middleaged female
Barbara	Owner	More than 15 years	Undisclosed	Polish	Middleaged female
Rimas	Renter at market rate	Up to 15 years	Creative professional	Lithuanian	Middleaged male
Eglė	Owner	Up to 15 years	Skilled professional	Lithuanian	Middleaged female
Andrey	Owner	More than 15 years	Retired	—	Elderly male
Zosė	Owner	More than 15 years	Retired	—	Elderly female

I began by interviewing several people with different social characteristics with whom I had the closest connection, and thus could establish the basic level of trust required for such interviews. Starting with these informants, I followed with further snowball sampling, which I hoped could lead me to as much difference in the relevant categories – occupational status, tenure type, age, ethnicity and gender – as was possible in these particular houses. My personal contacts and even pure luck were the most definite determinants of how closely the final sample represents the actual variety of people living there. I invested substantial energy in reaching informants from those social classes that were different from my own, and I did not know a substantial share of informants before the study. Securing such social variety among the informants was, however, not the greatest challenge I faced.

II.2 Challenges with the fieldwork

As I have already mentioned, coming up with the design of the interview programme was not a straightforward task. Insights gathered during the *exploratory phase* of this study made it clear that stories about the lifeworlds of different social classes living in one *administrative neighbourhood* had very little in common, and did not lead to each other in any meaningful way. Even a relatively small territory such as *Naujamiestis* offers a remarkable variety of ways for the subjects to organise their lifeworlds. As a result, I reached my final decision to localise the interviews. The stories of neighbourhood experiences collected in this way proved to be more informative, due to the possibility of maintaining a narrative about different relationships to the city between different informants without losing connection with the common material and symbolic circumstances. This was the point at which I decided to narrow my analysis down to questions of *housing*, and to limit my fieldwork to three particular *houses*. Narrowing down the area of the fieldwork from what would have been an *administrative neighbourhood* enabled me to speak with informants whose subjective feeling of what was "their neighbourhood" overlapped. Choosing three houses at two close-by locations in this narrow territory provided a better opportunity to see how the common social and physical infrastructure, as well as the symbolic signs of the neighbourhood, act on the everyday lives of the informants. The mixture of people in this housing had changed significantly during the course of the preceding 15 years. This change could also be observed and, one could say, even accelerated during the period of the study, as during the course of the fieldwork, several households moved out. This was, however, not the primary challenge of the fieldwork.

Implementation of the interviews

The interviews carried out during the main phase of the research could be best defined as *unstructured interviews*, with the aim of hearing the *housing histories* of the informants. The experiences of the *exploratory* phase suggested several opening questions that were effective in starting such conversations. A couple of interviews were implemented not as *individual*, but as *group* interviews. One of informants in one group interview joined the interview accidentally, and the others were invited to join by me. The initial interviews showed how important family relationships can be in explaining housing histories. Thus in some cases, some of the topics could not even be fully covered without the participation of a partner of family member. Therefore, three of interviews were performed as group interviews involving a family member. Each of these did, however, involve a certain 'lead' storyteller – the person who was my initial contact. The event of moving into the selected home was used as a starting point for the interview. The rest of the topics could then be approached according to the flow chosen by the informants.

Whenever informants were comfortable with being interviewed at home, this was a priority choice. In three other cases, we met in public spaces – a café or a park, preferably as close to the home of the informant as possible, since these contextual circumstanced did slightly affect the narrative of the interview. In two instances, conversations continued over the course of a walk in the neighbourhood, and thus could be considered *walking interviews.* This wasn't an intentional choice, but rather a result of informants' personal circumstances. Nevertheless, walking interviews tended to differ from regular ones in terms of the detail of information that an informant revealed about the neighbourhood. Interviews usually lasted around one hour, but in several cases were much shorter. Informants whose social backgrounds were more different from my own (manual or service workers, different ethnicity, elderly) tended to be open to conversation a shorter time. It also usually took longer to establish initial contact with such informants. The beginning of the COVID-19 epidemic brought the interview programme to a premature end, cutting off four planned interviews. If these had taken place, the sample would have included two additional male respondents who had been displaced from the neighbourhood, one former resident who had left the neighbourhood during the wave of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union in the 1980s, and a homeless person living in the neighbourhood.

Although introducing wider social variety to the fieldwork did solve some important methodological problems, this move also created other methodical difficulties. The trajectories of the stories appeared to depend mostly on how much time had passed since the informant had moved into the house. It was therefore difficult to further structure the interview process. Unstructured interviewing resulted in a high volume of qualitative data. In some cases, probing questions did not work across all informants of different social status. Often, additional interviews had to be arranged in order to cover all the topics within the person's housing history. In such cases, the second interview was also used to clear up questions that had arisen during the coding of material from their first interview.

The localisation of interviews also raised concerns over confidentiality. Here, the choice of three houses helped solve some important issues. The interchange of narratives from different houses on overlapping issues helped to construct an analysis that covers the main issues without revealing sensitive information. Some material was, however, left unused to maintain confidentiality and avoid social friction. There were also a couple of instances in which, together with informant, we decided not to continue with the interview as this would have required them to remember painful personal events. Despite these difficulties, speaking with such a social mix of informants in an open format provided an opportunity to tell a sensitive and multi-sided story about the neighbourhood. The approach taken has helped me to understand how my own social position and experiences might affect how I frame the observed social reality, and how these influences could bend my interpretations of it.

ANNEX III: interview quotations in original language

Here those readers who can read Lithuanian can access interview quotes in the original language. By clicking on an interview quote you will be directed back to the section of Chapter IV where the quote is used.

Housing as an extension of our social bodies

"Man iš pradžių buvo labai sunku gyvent ten, aš niekaip negalėjau jį prijaukint, bet man po to pasakė labai gerai mano viena dėstytoja. Pasakė žinai ką, sako, pasistenk, kad jisai taptų tavo pratęsimu. Ir aš tikrai pagalvojau, kad aš turiu ten daryti viską, kas man miela. Ir taip kažkaip, su laiku tas, tas meilumo jausmas jisai ten apsigyveno." (Natalya, Middle age cultural professional)

Housing as a material source for claims of difference

Building "trash" into "treasure": racionalisations behind choice of derelict housing

"Intervewer: Minėjote, jog būstui reikėjo remonto, tas jūsų neatbaidė?

Agnė: Ne, priešingai. Kaina buvo gera. Plius sakau jau tik pamačius pradėjau įsivaizduoti kaip viskas turėtų atrodyt. Nuuu nu realiai, tai tokio būsto kaip aš įsivaizdavau turbūt jau nebūtumėm radę niekur pirkti įrengto ir paruošto. (6s) Gautųsi kažkas tokio kai susigalvoji, kad nori kokios nors tai suknelės ir eini į parduotuvę ieškot, nerandi nieko panašaus, bet tada ir visa kita būna negražu (juokiasi). <...> Gavosi labai gera investicija, nepermokėjom ir dar pagal save susitvarkėm, dabar esam dėl to labai laimingi." (Agnė, female skilled professional)

—

"Nu viskas taip karališka. Nuuuu <ilga pauzė> nežinau, ar karališka, bet kaip rodo, kur nors senovės aukštuomenės namus, nu, ta prasme, kažkas tokio kaip pas kokią karalaitę. <...> Įsirengiau, atkūriau tą būstą į tokį, koks kažkada galėjo būti. Net tą veidrodį nu nu aš jo neišmečiau, o restauravau tik. Dabar jis toks baltas, tvarkingas, <žiūrėdama į jį> rytais jaučiuosi kaip princesė (juokiasi)." (Agnė, female skilled professional)

—

"Nu va šitas butas, kur dabar mes gyvenam turi kažką tokio, turi kaip sakant kažkokį svorį. Nu nuuu nežinau. Labai sunku paaiškinti... <...> Atrodo, kad (4s) tos pačios sienos kažką turi, kažką slepia, kažkokią praeitį ar kaip tai pavadinti, nu nežinau." (Agnė, female skilled professional)

—

"Nu man mane, žinokit, tokios didelės ir estetines erdvės nuteikia kūrybiškiau, ir <Pauzė> pati aš geriau jaučiuosi tokioj didelėj erdvėj. Aš nemėgstu tų mažyčių kambariukų apkrautų daiktais, kur tu net neturi kur apsisukt. <...> Aš tiesiog geriau jaučiuosi tokioje erdvėje. Nėra to tokio susikaustymo, pavyzdžiui, tokio, koks gali būti tam mažam kambary apsikrovus daiktais. Vis tiek tu <Pauzė> nu ne/nesijauti suvaržytas daiktų. Man tas patinka." (Rūta, female skilled professional)

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"Kai mes įsikėlėm tai eee, realiai tai buvo toks jausmas, tu.. nežinau yra, būna šou tokie, kur.. nežinau.. ne šou, bet "trash to treasure". Kad nusiperki kažkokį tai apleistą dalyką ir ir paskui pradedi kažką krapštyt, o ten pasirodo lobiai! (abu susijuokia). Tai šiek tiek buvo tas efektas, nes nes pradėjom valyti tą vietą ir išlindo visokie ornamentai, žinai, ten lubos gražios. <...> Ir mes prakrapštom vienas lubas, žiūrim ten - ornamentai, kitas – irgi! Ir viskas buvo uždengta ir mes nulupom visus tuos armstrongus automatiškai lubų aukštis gerokai pakilo. <...> ir vat būtent toj didžiojoj, didžiajam kambary atidarėm, radom labai gražias lubas ir buvo tada dilema: ar jas uždengti, ar valyti ir kažkaip restauruoti, nes restauravimas aišku brangus dalykas labai. Bet mes nusprendėme jas atidengti ir... išvalyti ir trūkstamas dalis tiesiog pagaminti. Tai... mano mano tėvo pažįstamas yra restauratorius labai geras, tai jis nemokamai padarė trūkstamas dalis to gipso. Nu šiaip... (susijuokia) tiesiog, nežinau kodėl gal gal, kad draugas ar... Tai uždėjom, gavosi labai gražus rezultatas." (Julius, young creative professional)

Home as an inversion of the outside world

"Išvažiavus dabar į kokią komandiruotę tai siaubas, atrodo tik namo namo (susijuokia). Jeigu šiaip keliauji, tai viskas tvarkoj, bet kai komandiruotė - namo, tiktai namo, tiktai namo. Kai grįžti tai jau toks gerumas apgaubia. <...> Ir žodžiu tada namo traukia. Nu pradžioj dar ta tokia explorer'io dvasia veikdavo, kad įdomu vis tiek kažkur, kad ir po darbo kažką pažiūrėt, pamaklinėt, bet kažkaip ta emocinė pusė, ta beprasmybės pusė kažkaip tai, nu kankina, nu norisi namo, o ne kažką čia vaizduot." (Viltė, young skilled professional)

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"Mes irgi pavargom taip gyventi tai ir viskas. Aišku gaila buvo palikti tuos namus, bet jau pavargau tą krosnį kūrenti. <...> tas didžiulis plyšys ir ten jau reikia kurti ir kurti, nes visad šalta, visur pučia vėjai. Nu ir vaikai sako "Mama, labai daug įkišom pinigų" ir vistiek reikėjo dar remontuoti, nes ten byra lubos tiek, kad jie jau sako "Nieko nepadarysi, reikia keisti...". Aišku sunku buvo man, sakiau „Niekur aš čia neisiu, kaip tas ąžuolas šimtą metų stovėsiu! Neee, neee, tik po mirties - galit daryt, ką norit". Bet paskui pagalvojau, vis dėl to jo..., dabar šalta, eini ten brikus pilk, anūkas atvažiuoja „Oi šaltaaa, šaaalta", išsimaudai ir nedarai nieko, nes ten visur skersvėjai." (Fanya, middle age servce worker)

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"Jis čia pradėjo truputį pasakoti, kas čia kur gyveno, kas kur mirė, kokiam kambary. Tai tai mmmm, aš kažkaip nenorėjau to... (juokiasi). <...> Tai sakau, kaip mano tas svečias, kad geriau tegul nepasakoja, kas čia, kur buvo, joa, ir ir. Tada jo, nesivaidens niekas (juokiasi). <...> Kas čia buvo, ar čia mirė, gal rūsy kas nors yra užkastas (juokiasi).

A: Bet gali taip būti?

I: Gali. Jo, tai geriau ne..., geriau kažko nežinoti, matyt. Ir dėl to jau savo istoriją gali kurti. Nu ta prasme, kito, kitokio visai pobūdžio." (Paulius, middle age, skilled professional - entrepreneur)

—

"Ir aš galvojau, kad aš jau nebenoriu kentėt. Aš noriu turėt tokius namus, kad man būtų gerai. <...> Nu va. Bet vis vien, čia susiję ir su investicijom ir su viskuo. Tokiu, kad, pavyzdžiui, ką daryt ir kaip daryt, kad racionalu iš vienos pusės, bet,

kad iš kitos pusės neštų tau dar kažkokį džiaugsmą. Džiaugsmo irgi labai norisi (juokiasi)." (Natalya, middle age cultural worker)

Inevitability and choice in the practice of housing The symbolic role of social ties in the game of housing

"Aš ten gyvenau, nežinau, kokią savaitę, ar kiek. Ir aš turėjau iš ten išeiti, nes šeima gyveno pakankamai sunkiai, taip vargingai. <...> Nors gyvenau trumpai aš gana gerai prisimenu, kad kai nusipirkdavau kažkokio maisto ir valgydavau būdavo momentų, kai tie vaikai taip žiūrėdavo į mane... nu, toks jau labai nu, reiškia, kaip čia dabar praryt tą kąsnį ..? Ir po to kažkaip va taip, pinigų pavogė... Nors ir nedaug, bet toks kažkoks, nesigavo ten gyvent, tiesiog pernelyg, pernelyg... Nu ir tiesiog. Iii (3s) iš ten išėjau." (Kęstas, middle age skilled professional)

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"Ten buvo tokie visiškai komplikuoti santykiai. Ir gal ir dėl to aš labai norėjau išvažiuot. Ir kaip gavau tą galimybę išvažiuot, aš buvau labai laiminga, kad aš įstojau, kad man nereikia grįžt atgal. Ir, kad aš neturiu maltis visuose šituose santykiuose. Nes tai tikrai nebuvo labai faina. Bet tai visiškai nereiškia, tai visiškai nereiškia, kad būtent dėl tų santykių man nepatinka daugiabutis (juokiasi)." (Natalya, middle age cultural professional)

Equals against the forces of nature; unequal in the face of economic and political restructuring

"Jo, paskui visokie ten olimpiadai, paskui tas Spitakas Armėnijoj - tas žemės drebėjimas. Tai žodžiu mes negavom tų pinigų, nors rašėm į Maskvą, rašėm kitur - pinigų nėra. Paskui atėjo (raštas), kad jūsų namas jau restauruotas! Ir mes taip supratom, kad nieko nebus. Taip viskas ir liko." (Nina, middle age education specialist)

"Nežinau, man asmeniškai anksčiau geriau buvo. Buvo kažkokia ateitis, kad nu žmogus baigė mokyklą, tu įstoji kažkur tai, darbą turėjai, kažkur karjerą galėjai pasiekti. Nu aišku, karjera yra kokia yra, irgi galbūt savo minusai buvo. Ten jeigu tu į partiją įstojai tai jau jau kažką gali pasiekti. Nu, nu kažkaip netrukdė, ten šitie komjaunuoliai, ne ne ne, man jie asmeniškai nieko blogo nepadarė (nusijuokia)." (Ania, Middle age service worker)

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"Visko buvo, buvo ir labai sunkių momentų. Atlyginimai buvo maži, buvo tikrai labai sunkiai. Bet kažkaip, nežinau, išgyvenom. Vat prisimenu, kad buvo, bet mes vat nekreipėm dėmesio į tai, į tą, kad mum sunku, galvojom, kad mums reikia gyventi. Vat kiti tai arba verkdavo, arba gerdavo, "Sunku gyventi... Nu tai eik ir gyvenk - visiems sunku!" (Fanya, middle age service worker)

—

"Buvo metai ar du kai reikėjo galvot ar tu valgai, ar už šildymą ir vandenį moki, kad neatjungtų. Prisimenu, kai mama gaudavo pinigus iš karto nubėgdavo už šildymą mokėt, o kas buvo tragedija, kad šildymo kainos buvo žiauriai aukštos dėl blokados. <...> tai įsivaizduojat žmogus uždirba gal penkis šimtus eurų, uoj, šitų litų, o šešis šimtus turėjo už šildymą sumokėt!" (Barbara, middle age wmen of undisclosed occupation)

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"Man, ta prasme, saugumas visom prasmėm yra svarbus, tiek tas fizinis, kad nu kažkas tai neateis iškraustyt tavo namų, tiek tas finansinis saugumas, kad tu nu jautiesi, kad nu jei tau kažkas nutiks, kad tu dar turi pagalvę ten ar nu kažką tokio, kad tu žinai, ką tu darysi. Ir kaip, nu tas pats butas yra investicija, tai yra iš saugumo, nes nu galėtum nedaryt čia kažkokių investavimų ir čia kažkokių tai darymų, gali tiesiog išvažiuot porai mėnesių paatostogaut, po pietryčių Aziją, bet tu nevažiuoji, darai kitus sprendimus." (Martynas, young male of undisclosed profession)

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"Ir esmė tame, kad jei man pavyktų gauti tą paskolą, ta prasme aš mokėčiau tiek pat arba mažiau, negu moku už nuomą, ar ne. Tai ta prasme tai yra logiška, tai yra tiesiog nu, ar ne..? Ir paskui tu gali žaisti kapitalizmo žaidimą – parduot neparduot, ar ne, tą butą. <...>

Interviewer: O ką tu vadini kapitalizmo žaidimu?

Linas: Sorry, čia gal biški ne vietoj pajuokavau. Interviewer: Ne, ne, viskas gerai, man čia gera metafora.

Linas: Nu ta prasme, žinai, mes galim hate'int ant to pasaulio sistemos nu bet tai, žinai, "come, beat and join", ane? (abu nusijuokia) Jeigu negali nugalėt, tai prisijunk. Nu ta prasme, kai turi butą, gali jį parduot, žinai, gali kažką naujo, gali kažkur kitur išvažiuot gyvent, gali išnuomoti tom pačiom rinkos kainom..." (Linas, young creative professional)

Making a place of one's own in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station

"Pati, pati kažkokia vietos energija įsimintina, tas vibe'sas, kad nu nėra kitos Vilniaus vietos kaip šita. Tiesiog jinai yra labai aktyvi, joje yra daug nenuspėjamų dalykų, bet daug yra ir nuspėjamų dalykų (nusijuokia). Nu nes yra labai didelis žmonių srautas, tu nežinai kokio tipo žmogus praeis pro duris, jeigu tu esi bare, žinai, gali būt iš visai kito pasaulio krašto arba šiaip bomžas koks nors iš šio krašto, arba normalus žmogus." (Julius, young creative professional)

In streets of the neighbourhood: the bodily feeling of the space, and the reading of historical signs

The bodily feeling of the neighbourhood, of its borderlines and oppositions

"Aš tada vaikščiojau, labai labai daug vaikštinėjau. Man buvo kažkaip įdomu pažint, kaip čia tas miestas, kaip čia, kaip čia jame orientuotis? Nes iki tol, tai maždaug atvažiuoji į sostinę - ten Katedra, ten Gedimino pilis. Nu, čia aš taip pasisavinau jį. Ypač, nežinau, kodėl, vat Markučiai ir tas rajonas traukė, aš tiesiog vat eidavau ten. Daug praleisdavau laiko, bet vat irgi vienas. Todėl vienišumo metai. Man taip. Aa (4s), aš tą labai gerai prisimenu, kaip aš vaikščiodamas ir, kaip pavadinau, "eksplorindamas", aš stengiausi taip prisijaukinti Vilnių, kad jis taptų kažkaip mano miestu, o ne būtent va ta sostine ar nu ten kažkuo. Toks yra vat Vilnius toks vat miestas. Lietuvos. Nu ne, kur man čia būti, atpažinti vietas, susirasti savo kažkokias vietas, kur aš jaukiai jaučiuosi, kur man patinka." (Kęstas, middle age skilled professional)

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"Tas Pašilaičių kraštovaizdis mane šokiruodavo. Nes tu atsibundi, žiūri pro langą ir nesupranti ar esi mieste, ar matai tą (kompiuterio) motininę plokštę (abu nusijuokia). Galvoju ar nėra čia taip, kad aš čia kompo viduj atsibudau? (garsiai abu juokiasi) Tai žinai, nu ten viskas taip gan užspausta ir nu nu nežinau. Realiai man Pašilaičiai buvo baisiausias rajonas. Nu kaip. Baisus ne dėl to, kad ten baisu būtų ką, bet baisus tas toksai, nu tipo viskas atrodo kaip tarsi tvarkinga ir tarsi visiems viskas būtų okay. Nors nėra okay, nu ta prasme. Nu nežinau, gal aš nesveikas, man žinai, nu man ten nėra okay. " (Julius, young creative professional)

History of the place in the claims about oneself

"Prisimeni ten gal pirmą pasimatymą, prisimeni gal kur žaisdavai, prisimeni kažkokias geriausias savo slėpynių vietas, kažkokį tam tikrą kiemą, kur gyveno tavo draugė geriausia. <...> Aš žinokit net neįsivaizduoju savęs kitoj vietoj. Galvoju, jeigu kažkur galėčiau išsikelt, nu taip <Pauzė> nežinau, laimiu milijoną ir va dabar aš galiu išsikelt į kažkokį naują būstą kitam rajone, tai, žinokit, net turbūt nenorėčiau..." (Renata, middle age worker)

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"Dabar eini, matai kažką naujo, prisimeni, kas buvo, ką išgyvenai. Atsimeni kai žmonės eidavo iš darbų, kai pamainos keisdavosi. O dabar galvoju, kad nu kas iš jų likę, likus tik "Sparta" turbūt... Dabar tai net butai daug kur įrengti, kur anksčiau buvo daug kas apgriuvę, nugriauta, pasikeitę. Gal iš dalies gerai, jei taip nežiūrint savanaudiškai." (Inga, female worker of undisclosed age)

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"Jei šiaip kalbėt, tai smagu matyt, kad taip auga vieta. Ir čia gal savanaudiškai dabar taip pagalvosiu, bet man tai mieliau kartais būtų praeit pro tą seną gamyklą, kur kokia mano vaikystėj dar stovėjo ar kur tėvelis dirbdavo, (3s) nei kad pro atnaujintą pastatą kokį. Gal kitiems ne kokie atsiminimai, džiaugiasi, kad to nėra. Gal būčiau dirbus, gal nė girdėt nenorėčiau, kad čia jos buvo - nelengva žmonėm turbūt buvo, nuvargdavo. Bet tai dalis manęs." (Inga, female worker of undisclosed age)

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"Mūsų kaimynystė turi tokį savo istorinį aspektą. Ir architektūra patinka. Aišku, dalis jos yra tokios baisios sovietinės, bet iš esmės vis tiek - ne blokinių namų rajonas. Prie to dar yra žydiška istorija, priduoda tą tokį savo aspektą kitokios kultūros ir kažkokios tragedijos. <...> Tai, tai žodžiu, man tą kažkokį savitumą turi šita gatvė, tą tokią vietinę istoriją - jinai man yra visai patinkanti." (Eglė, middle age skilled professional)

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"Bet jaučiasi, kad tu esi čia kažką pakeičiantis asmuo. Ir aš jaučiu tą, nežinau. Gal tame bute nieko gal jokie žydai net negyveno, aš nežinau, ir yra didelė tikimybė, gal ten niekas displacement'as tos gatvės... Nu aišku buvo, nes nu ta prasme žydų nebėra Lietuvoj, bet aišku tas, nu jo, tas klausimas išlieka, nežinau. Čia tas pats, nežinau, nu nu miršta bobutė ir tu įsikeli į jos butą gyvent, irgi keistai jaustumeis, nors tu nieko neturėjai su tuom susijęs ir panašiai. Tai vat." (Linas, young creative professional)

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"Kažkaip stengiamės eiti iš darželio pro barbakaną, per filharmonijos aikštę, ten pro Basanavičių. Ten šiek tiek įvedu į kontekstą - kas jis toks buvo. Einam tiesiog kartais pro kultūringesnę, istorinę dalį. Barbakanas jam šventas dalykas, nes ten Baziliską kelis kartus matė. Net nematė - jis žino, kad jisai tenai yra. Taip ir nepriprašiau pasižiūrėti. Sakiau: "Jis ten už kampo" - sakau "Einam, parodysiu!". "Ne, ne, ne, ne, ne, baik tu, aš negaliu. Aš bijau!". Vienu metu jisai ėjo gal tris kartus jo pažiūrėti. Atvažiavo močiutė, tai su močiute jis ėjo du kartus. O jinai, mano mama, nu ką anūkas pasako, tą reikia daryti, žodžiu. Ėjo sąžiningai mokėjo bilietus, du kartus, dvi dienas iš eilės - nes jam svarbus Baziliskas." (Rimas, middle age creative professional)

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"Ir šiaip aš, kadangi gyvenau Lazdynuose, tai jaučiuosi sugriovęs Tarybų Sąjungą! Nes sausio tryliktos įvykiai prie bokšto vyko prieš mūsų langus. Nu tai aš atsibudau nuo tų sprogimų, ten žinai, nuo tankų šūvių. Ir aišku tėvai sako "Einam į kitą kambarį, nes čia kulkos gali pataikyt". Tai, bet vis tiek žiūrėjau, kas vyksta - nuo kalno gabeno sužeistuosius, o kai kurie žmonės su lazdom kaip tik ėjo į viršų ginti. Ir aišku, nu, aišku, kai buvo tie mitingai, žinai, nu susirinkimai, tai labai fainas buvo tas susitelkimas, žinai, kad žmonės atvažiuoja iš įvairių vietų, mes ten nešdavom buterbrodus visokius jiems ir taip toliau. Aišku ir patys valgydavom (abu susijuokia). Išmokau labai greitai tą tvorą perlipti gan aukštą prie bokšto esančią. Jo ir paskui aišku tie kolaborantai nu buvo tas smogiamasis būrys. Jie išvažiavo ir tada atvažiavo tie vietiniai, kurie tiesiog bateruose sėdėdavo aplink tą bokštą ir burzgindavo. Tai pats laikotarpis buvo įdomus gyvenimo, kad kaip ir gyveni, žinai, sėdi, o už lango šarvuočiai burzgia ir ten žinai, jeigu vaikštai, tave ten kartais su tuo tanku, žinai, seka per tą okuliarą..." (Julius, young creative professional)

Being together, being apart
Discovering the pleasures of the 'urban village'

"Kažkaip ta gatvė yra kaip, kaip aš vadinu, savas toks kaip mažas kaimelis, vieni kitus daugmaž pažįsta, ee net benamiai visi yra pažįstami, mes su jais sveikinamės, tai man kažkaip ta gatvė jauki šiaip iš tikrųjų. Vat... Kaimynai keičiasi, bet kažkaip, nežinau, mes susidraugaujam kažkaip atrodo (susijuokia)."
(Rimas, middle age creative professional)

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"Šitie žmonės yra nuolatos mano aplinkoj, čiau jau yra man dievo ar nežinau kokių jėgų skirta. Amm... Na, manau, kad tai yra labai svarbu, turėti normalų žmogišką santykį... Tai yra gyvenimo kokybė, nes... Nu jeigu tu ten nepasitiki kaimynu, jeigu tu žinai, ten, negali išeiti į gatvę ir jaustis normaliai, tai kokia čia gyvenimo kokybė... Gyveni baimėj, strese, visi aplinkui lochai arba, toks nu... Pats sukuri tą nesveiką aplinką aplink save. Tai tas va yra labai svarbu. Kad, nu, jeigu tu normaliai reaguoji į aplinką, tai tu ją ir susikuri normaliai, nes, kad ir... Ten yra ir socialinių, skirtingų statusų. Tai taip, mūsų name yra labai skirtingų žmonių ir pagal pajamas ir pagal išsilavinimą ir pagal amžių, socialinį visą turinį... Bet kadangi normalus yra santykis, pagrįstas pagarba abipuse ir "labas" pasakymu su kiemsargiu ir su visais... Tai vat." (Dalia, young skilled professional)

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"Svarbu pačiam būti labai atviram santyky. Nusistatyti, aišku turėti saugumo ribas. Bet nu kai pats esi atviras santykiui, tai žmonės irgi dažniausiai yra atviri, nes, nu... Aš dar nesutikau tokio žmogaus, kuris nenorėtų, žinai... Visiškai būtų prieš kaimynišką bendravimą. Visi iš principo to nori, dažniausiai tiktai reikia peržengti savo uždarumo, ar tokias... Nu, socialines ribas išplėsti ir tu esi atviras tam ir visas tas labai susiklosto. Kita vertus žmonės, kurie čia atsikelia ir kurie čia gyvena jie yra aš galiu pasakyti yra tam tikro tipo, jie čia atsikelia ir jie to ir ieško." (Dalia, young skilled professional)

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"Va dabar čia stato šalia naują projektą, žodžiu naujus namus, mane net tas kvapas naujas, nu mane viskas atstumia. Naujai įrengtuose visi gyventojai vienu metu pasikeičia, jauni, nauji, maždaug vienodi žmonės susikelia. O čia ta įvairovė gyventojų visi irgi patinka. Nu taip arčiau tikresnio gyvenimo negu, kad tokio nežinau... nuo kažkokio mėgintuvėlio laboratorijos kažkokios (susijuokia). Nu ta prasme rimtai - nu dabar susistato tuos naujų namų rajonus ar ten kokius kotedžus, susitvarko aplinką pagal štampuotę kokią ir ten apsitveria tvora, kaip koks getas išeina. Ten maždaug mes saugioj aplinkoj, ten ir taip toliau. O čia biški šiek tiek labiau realesnis, natūralesnis gyvenimas išeina." (Viltė, young skilled professional)

"Before, life was a little more interesting here ..."

"Oi, man taip patiko tie laikai. Tikrai nu, kaip viena didelė šeima – durų niekas nerakino, eina visi va taip va (mojuoja ranka pirmyn - atgal) ar vaikų pažiūrėti, ar kažkas kepa blynus - visas kiemas bėga. Nu vat labai taip linksmai buvo. Paskui viskas pradėjo keistis... Anksčiau ir malkomis dalindavomės, ir agurkais, obuoliais - kas atveždavo iš kaimo, iš sodų. Vat taip, tiesiog – pastatydavo didelį krepšį ir šaukdavo: „Kas noriii?! Kaimynai, ateikit, paimkit! Vaikai, eikit vaišinkitės!". Nu linksma, smagu buvo kažkaip tai. "(Fanya, middle age service worker)

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"Buvo tragedija, kaimynai kišdavosi į tavo gyvenimą, stebėdavo... Sėdėdavo ant kokio suoliuko ir apkalbinėdavo. Daug reiktų pasakoti, bet pažiūrėkit vat tuos rusų filmus apie kaimelį, apie miestelį, kaip kaimynai apie viską viską žino, kaip ten pletkavoja – buvo tas pats. Buvo ir tokių dramų, kad vienas vyras pereidavo iš vieno namo pas kitą moteriškę, kaip sakant, paskui gatvėje jos susitikdavo akis viena kitai išdraskydavo. ... Dabar labiau į vakarus einam. tai jaunimui ten nerūpi kaip tu gyveni, kol tu jiems negrūdi savo. Aišku, senos kartos gyventojai tai ten viską apie visus žino, kaip pasakyt, paauklėja. " (Barbara, middle-age female of undisclosed profession)

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"Nuo to laiko kai aš nusipirkau tą butą, kiek, prieš tris metus, pasikeitė nu vos ne pusė namo gyventojų. Ir taip ir ir atsirado ta tokia bendruomenė. Jau ten mūsų

eee kompanija, aš ir dabar einu ten pas kaimynus ten kokio krepšinio pažiūrėt, ten alaus atsigert, šiaip pabendraut. Tai per Vėlines visi kartu į kapus važiavom. Tai va toks toks ir visi vieni kiti treti įsikėlė, visi ta prasme, mes ten talkas kieme pasidarom, apsitvarkom, dar visokius dalykus sprendžiam. Nu tokia bendruomenė ten atsirado ir pagrinde iš tų, kas vėliau atsikėlė. Aš nenoriu sakyt, kad tie, kurie ilgiau gyvena ten yra kažkokie prastesni ar dar kas, nu tiesiog taip gavosi..." (Martynas, young male of undisclosed profession)

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"Nu kaip pasakyt, nu.. nu biški.. kiekvienas tik už save. Ir tokios kaip draugystės – nebėra. Kiekvienas, aišku, savo šeimą turi, kiekvienas, kiekvienas gyvena savo, savo bėdomis, savo darbą visi dirba, nėr kada pabendrauti, nėra to, kad kartais mes ir šventes švęsdavom kartu. O dabar net nepasveikina. Aš tai visada sveikinu, sakau "Su šventėm!" ten, "Su ateinančiom šventėm! Su Naujais metais!" - jeigu ką pamatau. Nu kažkaip tai šaltai priima. Nu gal tų bėdų daugiau, gal problemų daugiau, nu kažkokie tokie piktesni žmonės pasidarė (nusijuokia), nelabai, gal korona viruso bijo, nežinau... (abu susijuokia)" (Nina, middle age education specialist)

Symbolic violence in central Vilnius

"Ir aš kas kartą grįžinėdamas namo dviračiu ar pėsčiom nuo kažkokios, tokios nematomos ribos, pajausdavau kaip sako, tokią blogą aurą. "Nu ohhh, va, vėl aš į ten." Nors man patiko pats butas, aš gerai ten jaučiausi, bet va tas vat rajonas mane kažkaip labai vat slėgė. Kaip sakiau, veikiausiai, tai dėl mano bendro gyvenimo, santykių, savijautos ir taip toliau. Nors gal dar prisidėjo ir tai, kad aplink buvo tikrai daug, tų tokių daugiaaukščių, ir ten tokie, tokie konkrečiai sovietiniai žmonės gyveno. Bet taip masiškai, jie taip buvo nepraskiesti. Ir buvo tikrai taip, tvyrojo ir tas mane truputį slėgdavo."(Kęstas, middle age skilled professional)

People and spaces in the classification struggles of central Vilnius

The lasting legacies of danger and the social decay of Petachok

Natalya: "Nu supranti, kai aš čia kėliausi, tai čia buvo tas vadinamas Petačiokas. "

Iterviewer: "Patačiokas? "

Natalya: "Petačiokas. Kai kėliausi, man sakė, kad išvis aš išprotėjau, nes nu čia buvo daug visokių tokių buvo, pavyzdžiui samagoną čia varė. Čia buvo toks visiškai kriminalinis rajonas. Priešais, va ten, kur dabar naujas namas pastatytas, gyveno vagys, buvo toks didelis šiukšlynas." (Natalya, middle-age culture worker)

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"Oi, mano butą vieną kartą apšvarino du kartus per savaitę. Ir išlaužė duris, ir po to antrą kartą išnešė sumuštinių man iš šaldytuvo. Tada aš pakabinau plakatą ant durų: „Paskambinkit ir paprašykit duonos - aš jums duosiu sumuštinių." Bet šiaip va praktiškai buvo va tokie du įvykiai per vieną savaitę, bet po to kažkaip gal suprato, kad nieko tokio ypatingo nėra, ką ten galima pavogt. O labai po to nieks, nieks nesikėsino. Į mano nedidelį turtą. Nu vo." (Natalya, middle-age culture worker)

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"Mūsų rajonas buvo tokie banditai, kad nu, aha pamatė, kad čia savas žmogus – viskas, neliečia, nes čia mūsų kaimynai. Bet buvo baisu, mes vaikai, paaugliai stovėdavom ir matėm kaip vagia. Eina, pavyzdžiui, moteris su grandinėle - ją apkabina taip gražiai, ir žiūri, kad rankoje jau laiko grandinėlę. Arba anksčiau būdavo tokios lapinės kepurės - irgi taip nuėmė moteriai, o jinai kaip ėjo, taip ir nuėjo - ji nepajautė visiškai, kad nuėmė tą kepurę. Nu vienu žodžiu, vogė prieš mūsų akis, mes matom, o ką, mes nieko nepasakysim, pasakysim tai vat patys gausim." (Ania, middle-age service worker).

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"...vienas nedidelis incidentas, kai kaimynė ten šitą skalbinių virvę grąsino nukirpt ir paskui nukirpo (4s). Interviewer: Kodėl? Viltė: Nu, pikta (nusijuokia). Nu ji ten sakė, kad jai ten visokie skalbikliai kelia alergiją ir tiesiai per atidarytą langą, žodžiu, į namus eina tas kvapas ir sakė čia nekabinkit, nes nukirpsiu ir nukirpo paskui." (Viltė, young skilled professional)

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"Kurį laiką buvo toksai, kaip čia, kaip čia, kaip čia tokie kaimynai, kaip čia bus. Ir po to, nuo kažkokio, tokio sunkiai pagaunamo momento, jie priėmė, kad "Ai, čia šitas, kur gyvens". Nu ta prasme, „Okay" čia jis toks ne atsitiktinis, bet čia jau toks gyventojas. Tai iii (šypsosi) nuo to momento, aš pradėjau bendrauti daugiau. Aš tada nusipirkau motociklą ir jį laikiau garaže. Ir per tą motociklą susipažinau su kitais kaimynais." (Kęstas, middle age skilled professional).

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"Martynas: Tai tos visos istorijos dažniausiai būdavo iš to, kad žmonės nelabai įsivaizduoja, nelabai žino ir vadovaujasi kažkuom, kas kažkur girdėjo, pasakojo, o ne nu realiai nelabai žino. Ta tokia, kaip pasakyt.. tas įvaizdis, kurį tas rajonas turėjo, toks buvo daug prastesnis, negu realiai yra, negu realiai buvo. Tai va, o betkokiu atveju bet kur tu, kur tu norėsi, ten tu rasi ir tų šiukšlių rasi, jei ieškosi visur primėtytų ir ten, ar žmogų, kur nors sėdintį ant suoliuko ir ten užmigusį..." (Martynas, young male of undisclosed profession)

'Newcomers' and 'old-timers' in the troubles of everyday life

"Tai pirmaisiais, pirmosiom dienom, kai tie vartai buvo užtverti, tai jie buvo gadinami. Tai čia toks kaip pasakyt, gal ne piktybinis gadinimas, bet jis toks matėsi, kad ten kažkas yra daroma. Tai mes padarėm tokį įdomu dalyką, mes padarėm susirinkimą, nu ir sukvietėm maksimaliai daug kaimynų ir tiesiog, nu, pademonstravom, kad mums tas dalykas rūpi ir tada netgi mes paklausėm tų konkrečiai dviejų taškų gyventojų, kad ar yra kokios priežastys dėl ko tie vartai negali veikti. Tai mums atsakė, kad nėra priežasčių. Tokių piktybinių gadinimų po to laiko nebebuvo. (Mantas, young skilled professional) "

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"Dabar senamiesty daug kas uždaro kiemus ir pas mus irgi praktiškai visa gatvė yra uždaryta. O tada dar buvo galima, pavyzdžiui, migruot per įvairius kiemus. Ir pas mus buvo tokia rutina - pradėdavom pasivaikščiot eidami į kalniuką, o baigdavom nusileisdami per gretimą kiemą ir išeidami į kitą gatvę. Ir ten buvo labai įdomu, tai buvo toks mažas atrakcionas atrastas Senamiestyje." (Natalya, middle age cultural worker)

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"Tai dalis kaimynų, gyvenančių toj mano kaimynystėj yra žmonės kuriuos aš gerbiu ir žmonės kurie man tiesiog patinka. Tai galbūt nėra patys geriausi mano draugai, bet tiesiog jų vertybės yra kažkuo man artimos ir tos vertybės kažkaip yra susijusios su ta aplinka, kurioj mes gyvenam. Nu, tai yra pavyzdžiui siekis keistis, siekis daryt tą aplinką geresne ir panašiai." (Mantas, young skilled professional)

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"...reikia priimti sprendimus naudojant skirtingus argumentus. Skirtingi tie argumenetai veikia skirtingai, žinai... Vienam yra labai svarbu pinigai, nes jis tur nedaug, žinai... Tai jis nenori ir tų pokyčių, nes tenais reikės jau ir užsimesti kažkiek tai pingų. Kitam svarbiau jau yra saugumas, turto apsauga, nes nu... Jam nekainuoja trisdešimt eurų pusės jo pensijos. Tai vat tas yra sudėtinga, nes reikia kartais tuos skirtingus argumentus... Atrodo kartais labai veža idėja, viskas, bet tu negali jos padaryti nes kiti žmonės tiesiog to leist sau negali. Tai tada turi priimt sprendimą, gal gali padengti kažkokią tai išlaidų dalį už tuos kitus žmones.

Tai tai yra sudėtinga, bet tai yra tokie procesiniai dalykai." (Dalia, young skilled professional)

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"Aš kai atsikėliau, tai mes su kaimynu pavyzdžiui išdažėm bromą, nes mes buvom nauji tokie ir mums norėjosi irgi tokio, nu padaryti kažką. Bet ilgainiui gyvenant, kai eini penkiasdešimt kartų pro tą pačią vietą, tai nauja akis mato, pastebi, kas ten suerzino, kas nepatiko, kas nešvaru, kažkas ten tą, bet vėliau tai yra taip pasidaro... Tai aš manau dauguma žmonių, kurie mus, naujus žmones atsikraustančius erzina arba norima pakeisti, jie tiesiog seniai gyveno su tuo ir jiem visiem tai būna nu gerai maždaug, pakeiskit, jei norit, mums tai tas pats." (Kęstas, middle age skilled professional)

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"Vis tiek sakau - išeiti, pabėgti... Vat klausia manęs labai daug draugų – kaip tu miestietė pabėgai iš miesto, iš tokio miesto, iš centro į kaimą? Sakau, aš nuo to miesto, nuo to centro aš pavargau. Anksčiau būdavo labai įdomu, o dabar, o dabar nusišvilpt man. Aš jau pavargau nuo tos Hari Krišnos - jau tiek metų eina baladoja "Bala bala bala Hari Krišna, Hari Krišna". Sakau, ir nuo šito aš pavargau. Pavargau nuo šitų visų mašinų. Sakau, kodėl sako, kodėl žmonės dabar tokie nervuoti? Anksčiau tai nebuvo to viso. (Alina, middle age service worker)

The violence of the emerging urban forms of central Vilnius

Eating a real tomato, living a real life

"Tai čia sakyčiau ne senamiestis, ne stotis, o turgaus rajonas. Ir čia nu irgi turgaunininkai man atrodo irgi tokie yra savotiška kasta, tai ne tik, kad prekeiviai, bet ir pirkėjai prie tų turgauninkų priskirčiau. Tai va, tai aš irgi iš tų turgauninkių. Nu tai ką, labai patogu ten, pavyzdžiui ee naminiai kiaušiniai ten, nu ką žinau, naminės daržovės, nu ne visada tas namines ir perki, nes "Maximoj" tai tikrai pigiau viskas. Bet ten kokių sausainių, pyragų iš "Maximos" – niekada – tik iš kepyklėlės, nes čia su tikru sviestu ir panašiai. Nu tokie labai, ką žinau, žemiški argumentai, bet nu tiesiog įpročiai atsiranda. Sakau ten kiaušiniai tai tik tai žodžiu su tuo naminiu antspaudu, nes uoj jau tada kitais nusinuodysiu taip atrodo (abu susijuokia). " (Viltė, young skilled professional)

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"Tie žmonės, kurie pavieniui, jie dažnai augina sau labai įdomių ar tai kažkokių dalykų. Ir ten būna perteklius ir kokios kitos močiutės prie pensijos prisidūria taip. Tai jiems ir tokių šansų mažiau, bet aš kaip pirkėja norėčiau galėti pasirinkti. Ir man ta močiutė kartais labai simpatiška ir tas pomidoras gal ir skanus būna labai (nusijuokia), tikras kažkoks, negali tikrai žinot ar jis tikras ten, bet..."

Interviewer: O kas yra tikrai tikras pomidoras?

K1: Tikrai tikras - atitinkantis mano vaikystės skonį kažkokį arba tai neplastmasinis arba ne koks nors tai užaugintas kažkokiom tokiom hidroponikom." (Marija, middle age cultural worker)

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"Turgus dėl to pasikeitė pasikeitė tuo, kad dabar mažai žmonių dabar. Jo, jo, jo, anksčiau tiek daug žmonių būdavo. Jūs jaunas, jūs neįsivaizduojat, kiek čia buvo žmonių - išneši, va taip padarai krienus (rodo į savo krienus pastatytus ant šaligatvio), nu gal valanda laiko (pastovi) ir nėra. O dabar vat dabar daug nepaėmiau, dešimt bonkučių tokios ir keturios tokios. Ir viskas vat stoi, pardaviau

tik tris bonkutes. Ir žinokit, aš jums pasakysiu ką, todėl, kad dabar labai daug atidaryta. Anksčiau tiek nei prekybų, nei centrų nebūdavo, visur reikėjo eiles stovėti, viskas, o dabar visur pilna visko, tik pinigų mažai." (Zosė, retired, elderly)

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"Žinai, aš visą laiką mėgau Vilnių už tai, kad jis visą laiką buvo labai demokratiškas. Aš visiems draugams sakiau, kad gyvenu mieste, kuriame nesvarbu, kiek turi pinigų, tu niekada nesijautei blogai, visada, kiek tu begautum, galėdavai nueiti į kavinę ir išgert kavos. Kas dabar kai kuriose vietose darosi, jau žinai sudėtinga. Taip pat, pasisavinimos viešos erdvės labai pasiturintiem žmonėm, kai pastato prabangius namus grynai ant tos vietos, kur šiaip turėtų būt prieinama visiems. Ir va tas yra liūdna, nes tada tu nesijauti pilnaverčiu žmogum tame mieste." (Natalya, middle cultural worker)

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"Tie butykai ir panašiai, tai jie jie prasiplės arba atrodo, kad plečiasi ir tai taps kažkaip butykine gatve. Tai tada viskas aišku - aplinkui kainos kils, nes tai pasidarys trendy. Nes tas barjeras tarp Stepono gatvės ir senamiesčio yra labai mažas, tai yra, tiesiog pirikriostkė - šiuo atveju į Steponą tikrai įsiplės ta senamiesčio riba anksčiau ar vėliau, aš taip manau. Tai kas atsitiks? Toliau gražės tas rajonas ir manau žiauriai augs nuomos kainos, žiauriai, žiauriai. <...> Tu matai iš valdžios, kuri irgi reaguoja į market forces, kurie pradeda sakyt – gal žinai ką, gal darom kitą, trečią. Ir tada visi sako "O bomžyną sutvarkė!" Gerai, o tai kas tiems bomžams atsitiko? " (Linas, young creative professional)

Twisting memory and imagination in the making of a new Vilnius

"Aš manau, kad žmonės, tie, kurie gyvena tokiose vietose jie kažkaip turi būti nusiteikę, kad nu tai nėra kažkokia tai tyli vieta ir toj vietoj vyks veiksmas. Kai bandoma taip kažkaip užtildyti arba nu ten neleisti triukšmauti tai man tai be ryšio yra kažkaip nu, ta prasme, nežinau, turėtų būti tos teisės kažkokios, nu nežinau, paskirtis galbūt nustatyta vietos, kad čia mes galim triukšmaut ir viskas, žinai, tada. Nežinau, čia aš nežinau kaip tai išspręst, bet aš vis tiek esu labiau to fun'o pusėj, o ne kad sėdi ramiai ir klausai kaip žuvytės valgo, žinai (nusijuokia). " (Julius, young creative professional)

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ANNEX III: interview quotations in original language
ANNEX III: interview quotations in original language
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"Tų kaimynų, ta prasme, gyventojų, nu niekaip niekas niekad neklausia. Suorganizuoja kažkoką ir žiūri tada - nu reaguoji, ar ne, piktinies ar ką, bet tipo jie daro bendruomenę. Ir va tas tai gali erzint. Ta prasme, c'mon žmonės, nu kokia bendruomenė? O su mumis kas nors pasitarė? Mes čia šiaip gyvenam! Tai kokia jūs bendruomenė? Nu tai va, čia yra jūsų kažkokia bendruomenė, šitų kepėjų bendruomenė? (nusijuokia) Tai va tas momentas buvo, kur man biški jau negražu kažkaip buvo. "(Kęstas, middle age skilled professional)

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"Ir ten kai žmonės aiškina, kad mes čia atvežam kultūrą į miestą ir jūs čia nieko nesuprantat. Nu gal ir nesuprantam, bet gal nereikia man tos tavo kultūros, gal aš savo kultūroj puikiai jaučiuosi. Ta prasme, jeigu yra nu tas kažkoks tai, nežinau, žmonės, kurie tą seka ir džiaugiasi, tai valio. Bet nu tai kitas dalykas, tai irgi reikia atrasti tą balansą, kai tu netrukdai kitiem žmonėm. Faktas visada bus kam tu trukdysi, bet tu turi išlaviruot." (Martynas, young male of undisclosed profession)

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"Ten buvo tokia graži tvora, padaryta senoviškai, tokia inkrustuota kažkaip padažyta gražiai. Ir dabar žiūriu, kad viskas nugriauta ir nu nesąmonių pridaryta ten. Nu nu aš suprantu šiuolaikiška - gal būtų menas emm, nu jisai gali būt gražus, jisai gali būti ir mums suprantamas. Bet tai, ką ten padarė nu žinokit čia jau ne menas, nei atsipalaidavimui tinka, nei komfortas kažkoks tai. Nu tokia betvarkė, klausykit, aš pirmą kart matau. Ten nu, nu košmaras, kas ten buvo. Nu kažkaip ir valdžia nežiūri į tokius dalykus, va tau ir senamiestis. Vat suprantat, dvigubas standartas, kaip sakyt. Mums neleidžia sutvarkyt mūsų namo, kadangi čia senamiestis skaitosi, kad negalima nieko čia tvarkyt negalima nieko jau pagal įstatymą namo išvaizdą keisti - nieko mes nenorim tik norim taip apšildyt tuos kraštus ir viskas. Neleido. O čia vot šalia tokį bizabraziją padaryt tai viskas galima! "(Nina, middle age education specialist)

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"Mes dabar praktiškai greitai liksim be tarybinių istorijos sluoksnių ir tas yra gaila, nes tai yra dalis istorijos. Tau gali patikti ar nepatikti koks įvykis, bet jis buvo ir jis turi išlikt atminty. Ir tu jo neištrinsi, jei trinsi - tu gausi ten skylę ir ta skylė bus skaudžiau negu būtų tikra istorija. Ir va tas pavyzdžiui tas absoliutus neigimas, ten žinai mitų kūrimas, ten vat viskas buvo taip blogai, taip blogai... Nu aš dar

pagyvenau tarybiniais metais, aišku negyvenom tais visai krokodiliniais metais, kur ten žmones tremia į Sibirą, ten kur galima buvo sušaudyti žmogų už nieką. Bet pavyzdžiui mano jaunystė, jinai nepaliko kažkokių neigiamų prisiminimų." (Natalya, middle aged cultural professional)

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*"Aš aišku girdžiu ir iš kitų žmonių, kurie senamiesty gyvena, kad čia labai negražu, nepopuliaru būti tokiam prieš viską besišiaušiančiam, prieštaraujančiam, bet nu tiesą sakant atrodo, kad viskas daroma skubotai ir tikrai tik siekiant didesnio pelno. Daugiau nieko, nu tai yra aukščiausia vertybė ir kitos yra arba visai nustumiamos į šalį, arba daug daug žemesnio prioriteto. " (Viltė, young skilled professional)***

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"Dabar nu kartais atrodo nu baisiau negu tas va tikrasis sovietmetis, kai tu žinojai su kuo kovoji, nu priešas buvo aiškus, o dabar viskas yra įvyniota į gražų popieriuką ir nu kaip ir nėra prieš ką kovot, nu nepritardamas gal tu čia daraisi kažkoks nepopuliarus ar kažkaip iškritęs iš konteksto. Kas tau čia nepatinka? Taigi čia viskas į gerą, čia gerinam sąlygas! Atrodo vertybė yra viską iš naujo perdaryt, o nėra pagalvojama, kad galima išsaugoti ir pagerint tą esamą dalyką. Nu tai čia irgi nežinau kokių laikų metodika buldozeriu sulygint viską išlygint iki žemės, o tada iš naujo perdaryt. Nu tai man čia irgi labai sovietmečio metodus primena, tik nežinau kaip čia kai kuriem kitiems tai nesimato. " (Viltė, young skilled professional)

Interim remarks: establishing a link between urban pains and pleasures, and the workings of the field

"Dabar labai jaučias bandymai pakeisti tą miestą. Ir vat supranti, kaip yra, nu kaip pasakyt, miestas tampa nebe toks, miestas tampa kitoks. Ir tada nu supranti, jeigu žiūrėt į gilesnius dalykus, tai keičiant miestą bandoma pakeisti pasaulėžiūra, bandoma pakeisti istoriją, bandoma pakeisti dar kažkas. Ir klausimas, ką tu po to su tuo darysi, kokiam tu mieste gyvensi, su kokiom idėjom tu ten gyvensi?" (Natalya, middle aged cultural professional)

ANNEX IV: illustration sources table of pictures

Tadas Šarūnas is a researcher and visual artist based in Vilnius, Lithuania. In his creative and research practices he is analysing wider questions of space, moral panic, culture and social construction of taste.

"Pleasures and pains" is his entry into the field of sociology. Here he presents the results of his ethnographic observations of the contested social life in the vicinity of Vilnius railway station.