

# Issues of Aesthetics in the New Architecture of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Lithuania

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## Introduction

Each architectural object that emerges in a protected area requires unconventional solutions, professional understanding, and a sense of architectural, sociocultural, and historical context, as well as quality realisation. There are four UNESCO World Heritage sites in Lithuania. In the Vilnius Historic Centre and the Curonian Spit construction is permissible and regulated. Due to its archaeological and historical value the third UNESCO World Heritage site Kernavė Archaeological Site (Cultural Reserve of Kernavė) has the highest protection status, and no new construction is planned in the territory. The fourth site, Struve Geodetic Arc, is a chain of survey triangulations used for measuring the meridian, and it only has station points as objects.<sup>1</sup>

Even though construction in the Vilnius Historic Centre and the Curonian Spit is permitted, there are numerous requirements not only for constructors and architects, but also for lawyers and experts of heritage protection. Both sites have cultural and nature-related value and are protected on a global scale. Since national heritage protection and the World Heritage Convention regulations are applied in these territories, the sites are gaining significance in the context of Lithuanian heritage. The Vilnius Historic Centre was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1994, followed by the Curonian Spit in 2000; however, the criteria for

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1 F. G. W. Struve's research (1816–1855) helped to establish the exact size and shape of the planet. It was an important step in the development of geoscience and topographical cartography. Lithuanian national commission for UNESCO, <https://www.unesco.lt/tangible-cultural-heritage/struve-geodetic-arc> (access: 10 September 2019).

including the sites on the list were different from those currently applied to similar sites.

Since the addition of these cultural sites to the World Heritage List many new buildings have been constructed and even more buildings have been reconstructed. Through the analysis of architectural objects in Vilnius and the Curonian Spit, the article will provide a brief review of the major aesthetic tendencies of new architecture, human scale, and site identity.

### **The diversity of Vilnius**

If we try to understand the real cultural and nature-related identity and the specificity of the protected area from a contemporary perspective, we cannot deny the fact that the Vilnius Historic Centre is more than just a territory with medieval characteristics. Its urban structure has changed considerably. It has gained architecturally significant modern inserts, some of which are included in the national Register of Cultural Property and protected as archaeological or architectural objects. Buildings with such features of the late modern period have a sense of urban contextuality. They are incorporated into the surroundings by creating the spacial-volumetric composition that takes into account, among others, the nearby buildings, visual angles, or staying within the lines of the perimeter block,<sup>2</sup> all of which are incorporated harmoniously into the whole. These are several exceptional examples that became landmarks in their own right, blending into the context: Contemporary Art Centre (arch. V. E. Čekanauskas), the building of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania (arch. J. Šeibokas), the building of the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania (arch. E. N. Bučiūtė).

One of the main requirements for new architectural objects is unity with the surroundings, the sense of *genius loci*.<sup>3</sup> And if we look at the protected historical city centre from a broader point of view, fulfilling this requirement becomes a challenge when navigating and searching for the best spot for a new architectural object. “Vilniaus miesto centro nekilnojamojo kultūros vertybių registro pasiūlymų sąrašo ekspertizės

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2 Martynas Mankus, *Postmodernizmo idėjų raiška xxa. pab. – XXI a. pr. Lietuvos architektūroje* [doctoral dissertation] Vilnius 2018, p. 57.

3 Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, New York 1979.

brėžinys” [The blueprint of Vilnius city centre cultural real estate register proposal list expertise]<sup>4</sup> reveals that buildings of the mid-20th century and later periods strongly influence the entire territory. Thus, late modernist buildings and even buildings with hints of the postmodernist period located in the Old Town gain prominence in the landscape and considerably influence developments in this territory.

One example could be the quarter in front of the Church of St Nicholas, which is one of the oldest churches in Vilnius. The aesthetic expression of the office building which is being completed in the intersection of Lydos Street and St Mikalojaus Street echoes the existing diverse context. Pale plaster with rough texture pays tribute to the nearby kindergarten Krivulė, which was built in the Soviet times, or to the apartment building further down in St Mikalojaus Street with its postmodern manifestations and its “abundance of various elements of historical imitation: triangular bay window, a niche below it, various pediments above the cornice, base decorated with rustic masonry, etc.”<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the new building, which completes the intersection draft, reacts to the previous architecture. The volume of the building is accentuated and visually divided with horizontal lines of sparse rustic masonry, as if trying to conform to the qualities of historical buildings. As the philosopher Roger Scruton claims, every period has to convey its identification message, its form of expression; therefore, the expression of contemporary architecture conveys a cultural message.<sup>6</sup> One can consider architecture not only in its economical or practical sense. Rather, the implied historical, social, nature-related, etc. layers pose certain obstacles to architects.

The marks that time has imprinted on architecture, both outward and inward, together with what came to be the protected historical environment, is regarded as heritage – which, to some extent, is then identify as authentic, according to the broad definition included in the Nara Document on Authenticity. In order to comprehend the cultural messages of the earlier times through buildings and the entire protected territory, which becomes a seamless heritage object, a detailed historical

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4 *Vilniaus miesto centro nekilnojamojo kultūros vertybių registro pasiūlymų sąrašo ekspertizės brėžinys*, 2003.

5 “Daugiabutis namas Šv. Mikalojaus g.,” [in:] *Vilniaus Architektūros gidas*, Marija Drėmaitė et al. (eds.), Vilnius 2016, p. 202.

6 Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, Princeton 1979, p. 13.



Building at the intersection of Lydos Street and St. Mikalojaus Street, Vilnius. © Dalia Traškinaitė

and sociocultural familiarity is required. Heritage is a phenomenon or an object that has three characteristics: realistic duality (the ability to refer to a different reality, for example, the past), social relevancy, and reality (authenticity).<sup>7</sup>

When we look at the historical centre of Vilnius, we observe it from today's point of view; therefore, the image of the past is inevitably distorted. We do not have the opportunity to see it any other way, and because of that we cannot fully achieve *pure* or *primordial* authenticity when restoring buildings. Instead, we can manage to preserve only a certain visual form. In terms of multilayered structure, all objects that carry the cultural message of their time become truly essential. Scientific validity based on sources becomes an important dimension in the work related to heritage objects when restoring, repurposing, or reconstructing. It is crucial for any change to mark its time of modification.

The hotel Pacai, situated in one of the busiest streets of the Old Town (Didžioji Street), is an excellent example of function attribution.

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<sup>7</sup> Salvijus Kulevičius, "Kultūros paveldo autentiškumo beiėškant," [in:] *Pažangi architektūros paveldo apsauga: misija (ne)įmanoma?* (2017), p. 16 (15-26).

Extensive architectural and archaeological research was carried out prior to reconstruction. The former volume of the structure was re-established using modern materials, which suggests the building's new presence in the architectural composition. This approach of coordinating and demonstrating both sides in a controlled and harmless way, taken by the architectural studio Forma in 2018, was positively received by the local professional community. A different approach was chosen for the reconstruction of Pliaterių rūmai [Pliateriai palace], undertaken by architectural studio Archivoltas. Site research revealed the previous location and foundations of the palace; however, the sources were insufficient and lacked accuracy. The architects had no choice but to guess what the palace could have looked like. The approach towards the reconstruction simplifies the choice and hints at imitation. Although historical representation and its authenticity are becoming equally important in contemporary heritage protection (The Nara Document on Authenticity came into effect, and the significance of heritage-related issues shifted from professional opinion towards public needs [The Faro Convention]), source-based authenticity retains its significance.<sup>8</sup> More than 10 years before the completion of the aforementioned complex, the architects Henrikas Štaudė and Jurgis Leskevičius restored the historical artisan neighbourhood of three houses downhill from the complex. In this case the urban structure was maintained, and architectural expression reflects contemporary architecture. Still, some time needs to pass in order to determine whether the project was an interpretation or a reconstruction of the neighbourhood.

An ethical architect understands the influence his or her building has on the well-being of the community as well as on the cultural identity and memory. They become more socially involved in the local community and try to respond to its needs. This enables architects to convey a specific cultural message. Unfortunately, sometimes the message is left unfulfilled.

The analysis of the buildings constructed in the historical centre of Vilnius after its inclusion in the UNESCO Heritage List revealed several clear tendencies. The majority of the buildings are residential, and they

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8 World Heritage Centre, *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, 2005-02-02, WHC. 05/2, a. 79–86, <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide05-en.pdf>. (access: 6 September 2019).

all vary in terms of architectural composition and the way they reflect the context can be categorised into two prevalent groups: buildings that imitate and buildings that interpret earlier historical architecture. In the case of imitation, the objective of the buildings that are woven into the historical-urban context is to replicate a former decayed building. Often there are not enough reliable sources to perform accurate restoration. In some cases, there is the same intention to imitate a historical building, but with the common lapse of enlarging the windows. Usually the buildings that belong to this group fit into the surrounding context in terms of their scale and volume. Pranciškonų parkas (built in 2018), located near the previously mentioned office building, exemplifies this group of buildings. It forms a perimeter block and lies next to the former Franciscan monastery and the Tiškevičiai palace complex, as if completing the former quarter. When observed from Kėdainių Street and Lydos Street, the building exhibits the metre of the composition consisting of large window apertures, laconic and simple façade composition. On the other hand, the overwhelming abundance of details and materials in the courtyard distracts the eye, impedes comprehension of the whole, and prevents the viewer from seeing the consistency of the composition.

The other group of residential buildings interprets historical architecture. These buildings are characterised by clear elements of composition, especially by the use of contrasting materials. The elements emphasise the epoch of contemporary architecture as well as the established features of the natural surroundings, such as articulated façades and the compositions of repeated elements. They echo historical architecture not through imitation, but rather through the retrieval of typical elements. The apartment building Subačiaus namai, designed by the architectural studio A4architektai, displays a clear pattern of apertures. The depth of the apertures as well as the materials themselves emphasise its rhythm. The building is located in Subačius Street, near the bastion of the Vilnius defensive wall and a much talked about architectural object Misionierių sodai (architectural studio DO ARCHITECTS), which is still under construction. The architect Alvidas Songaila (2020) took a different approach toward the interpretation of the residential building at 18 Vilnius Street. The reconstruction of the former bank building with postmodern features relied on the vivid rhythmic composition of the windows. This time, however, the examination of the façade reveals the domination of densely packed window apertures. In order to visually de-emphasise their prominence on the façade, the windows are split into



Building at the intersection of Lydos Street and St Mikalojaus Street, Vilnius. © Dalia Traškinaitė

smaller sections. However, this makes the façade of the building overly detailed, thus the composition becomes incoherent. The building suffers from the surplus of details, such as small elements next to the cornices and pediments above bay windows. In fact, bay windows can be seen in the neighbouring buildings as well, but there they are handled more professionally. The building replaced a postmodernist object and completely abandoned the characteristics of postmodern architecture.

During the analysed period, besides the already discussed residential buildings, two museum projects were also completed in Vilnius: *mo*, the museum of modern art, and the Lithuanian art centre *TARTLE*. The latter consists of two historical blocks joined by a contemporary one, whereas *mo* does not adjoin any historical buildings. Because the purpose of a museum requires a proper scale, finding harmony with the environment becomes a much greater challenge than in the case of residential buildings. Even though the total area taken up by each of the museums is rather small, the spectator experiences their sense of scale differently. The texture of plaster, the interpretation of the rustic, and the way the building adheres to the line of the perimeter block do not make up for the scale of *mo* and its sense of rigid volume. The white colour used for minimalist purposes only emphasises the monolithic quality of the museum,

which is rather unusual for the architecture of Vilnius Historic Centre.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, TARTLE is more susceptible to the context, and its scale does not conflict with the surroundings. By maintaining distance from other buildings, MO exhibits its idiosyncrasy and emphasises Daniel Libeskind's signature style rather than adheres to the context of the historical surroundings. This raises the question whether this type of architectural object was designed according to the features of its surroundings. Famous architects often create buildings that make people want to see them for themselves. Those buildings stand out and even become iconic in terms of their surroundings, but the designs rarely "add any unity and harmonious interaction between buildings in particular urban area."<sup>10</sup> A new museum in Rome designed by Richard Meier raised similar questions – the discussion about the controversial nature of the museum is still ongoing and it will probably continue in the future.

### **Everlasting reconstruction in the Curonian Spit**

The Curonian Spit has an exceptional cultural and nature-related identity; therefore, it is important to understand its urban structure throughout time. The Curonian Spit is a sand dune peninsula separating the Baltic Sea from the Curonian Lagoon. The northern portion of the Curonian Spit belongs to Lithuania, and its nature and four remaining fishing settlements are protected by the Kursiu Nerija National Park. The Curonian Spit is an outstanding example of cultural and natural landscape "that is under constant threat from natural forces (wind and tide). After disastrous human interventions that menaced its survival the Spit was reclaimed by massive protection and stabilization works begun in the 19th century and still continuing to the present day."<sup>11</sup> According to the WHC Nomination Documentation, the expressive panoramic views and the settlements along the coast of the Curonian Lagoon are also amongst the most valuable features of the Curonian Spit. Due to the fact that the territory is protected by the Kursiu Nerija National Park, recommendations for new construction as well as reconstruction apply. The recommendations

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9 Almantas Samalavičius, "The Ambiguities of Iconic Design: Mo Modern Art Museum by Daniel Libeskind," [in:] *Journal of Architectural Design and Urbanism*, vol 2 no. 1 (2019), p. 18 (13–21).

10 Ibidem, p. 19.

11 UNESCO, *UNESCO World Heritage Nomination, Curonian Spit*, 1999, p. 4.

on shapes, proportions, materials, colours, etc. are characteristic of a fisherman's house; therefore, the architecture is expected to allude to its prototype, which is associated with an ethnographic house. At this point architects as well as researches face a multifaceted problem: which ethnographic house prototype of a certain time period should be selected and used as the reference point for future developments in the area?

Currently Kursiu Nerija National Park provides guidelines for ethnographic house prototype from the second half of the 19th century due to the largest amount of available information on the latest architecture. Most of the inhabitants of the peninsula used to be fishermen; however, due to the fact that throughout the history the peninsula was governed by different countries, the people's lifestyle, population size, and politics changed. The research conducted by Vasilijus Safronovas<sup>12</sup> indicates that during the World War II the locals were evacuated to Germany, and after the war, in the years 1945–1948, only 13% of the former inhabitants returned to their homes; due to an agreement of 1958 between the USSR and FRG the number decreased even more. The Curonian Spit became a part of the coastal boarder with restricted access. The territory was packed with soldiers, and the majority of new inhabitants were industrial fishing workers, such as fishermen and mechanics. The territory was scarcely populated and hard to access; therefore, it was considered more as a farm rather than a potential summer vacation destination.

The recreational potential was identified in the 1950s when the concept and the project for recreational exploitation were created.<sup>13</sup> Even before that, in the 19th century, Nida and Juodkrantė already had resort status.<sup>14</sup> In the 19th century the establishment of amber excavation company promoted the expansion in Juodkrantė and eventually turned it into a health resort. Numerous holiday villas emerged right next to the factory; today, that flock of villas still remains in the northern part of the town. As a result, new buildings engage with the context of the villas. Also, the recommendations by the national park specify that the new

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12 Vasilijus Safronovas, *Migrantai ir pabėgėliai Kuršių nerijoje XX amžiaus viduryje*, Vilnius 2018, p. 65.

13 Marija Drėmaitė, "Nuo žvejų kolūkių iki prestižinio kurorto," [in:] *NERINGA: Architektūros gidas*, Vilnius 2019, p. 96.

14 Rimas Adomaitis, "Rekomendacijos pastatų tvarkymui, projektinių pasiūlymų rengimui," [in:] *Kuršių nerijos tradicinė architektūra*, Kęstutis Demereckas (ed.), Klaipėda 2011, p. 532 (526–549).

buildings may reflect the old villas in urbanised territories beyond the borders of cultural reserves.<sup>15</sup> Thus, an interpretation of a fisherman's house is simply unimaginable. One of the most striking examples of the new buildings in Juodkrantė is the reconstructed villa "Jūra. Smėlis. Vėjas," built in 2008. The scale and the silhouette of the object as well as its loftiness allow it to merge with its urban environment rather harmoniously. Its architectural elements, especially the original façade carvings by Marius Jonutis, present a contemporary link with the location as well as leave an imprint of this age in the architectural expression.

Nida and Juodkrantė are the largest settlements in the Curonian Spit, thus their urban structures (mixed and linear plan) are more complex than those of Pervalka and Preila, both of which have architectural objects of divergent functions, volume, and scale. Juodkrantė is possibly the best example of a village that gradually evolved into a resort characterised by a variety of wooden villas with architectural compositions that should be taken into account when designing new buildings. The architecture of the settlements witnessed a major change after 1960 with the appearance of buildings other than permanent residencies, making the territory a place of resort settlements with many larger objects. At first, former fishermen's houses in Neringa Municipality settlements and forests were repurposed into small recreational houses capable of accommodating several families. At the same time began the reconstructions that expanded those houses in order to fulfil newly emerging needs. During the time between 1961–1967 attention was also drawn to architectural quality. It was decided that every new structure should be individual and distinct, while remaining subtle, reserved, and harmonious with the landscape.<sup>16</sup> With the increasing number of visitors and their growing needs, larger resort complexes were being developed. Some of them were constructed further from towns in order to minimise the distance from the accommodation to the sea. At the same time, besides new modernist buildings, several ethnographic objects were renovated and preserved. If we look at the vicinity as a whole, a dual nature of the territory, i.e. new, modernist, recreational, and old, ethnographic, can be recognised. The passing time has transformed the

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15 *Kuršių nerijos nacionalinio parko tvarkymo planas*, Teisės aktų registras 2012 (redakcija 2019), p. 2.

16 Marija Drėmaitė, "Nuo žvejų kolūkių...", op. cit., p. 106.

place from the former fishermen settlements into resorts. Consequently, the direction of development in the Curonian Spit became a subject of debate, which could also be felt in the project of Nida's cultural, commercial, and administrative centre by the architect Liuda Mažeikienė (1963). The town centre was divided into zones, one of which was indicated as ethnographic. The approach towards the old homesteads and their protection was superficial; nonetheless, there has been some considerations of modernist as well as ethnographic directions.<sup>17</sup> The challenges brought by the everchanging identity have undoubtable influence on present-day architectural changes; and musings on these approaches remain relevant.

The wave of regionalism that swept over the Curonian Spit after 1967 started numerous attempts of designing new buildings with ethnographic elements, resulting in obvious overdoing. For example, in order to emphasise the original character and ethnography of the place, buildings were overly decorated with uncharacteristic details. Around 1980–1990 modernist buildings were undergoing a new phase of reconstruction, which aimed to *regionalise* them. Gable roofs and extra floors were added to apartment buildings in Taikos Street in Nida. In the last decade of the 20th century the same buildings underwent another reconstruction. Unfortunately, it did not elevate the aesthetics of the structures but rather left them chaotic in terms of their composition, colours, and apertures.

This reconstruction trend, which was supposed to fix the mistakes of the previous reconstructions, was mostly visible in the two biggest towns of the Curonian Spit, namely Nida and Juodkrantė. Some of the larger complexes were changed according to regionalism ideas, often more than once. The examples in Nida include the resorts of Nidus, Linėja, and Auksinės kopos. There are several homesteads that truly resemble the primordial identity; however, they are outnumbered by modernist town elements. Not all modernist buildings blend into the urban and natural landscape. To add to that, during the Soviet times the sand dunes and the landscape framework in Nida became endangered due to construction works in the pine forests. Once the pines that protected the sand dunes were removed, the possibility of sand being blown off increased; therefore, the current national park regulations do not allow new construction

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17 Ibidem, pp. 102–103.

to threaten the pine forests.<sup>18</sup> Further away from the villas, in the southern part of Juodkrantė, right next to a Lutheran church stands a massive relaxation resort Ažuolynas (built in 1984). From the urbanistic point of view, the three blocks set perpendicularly to the street connect the complex with the urban structure of the location and at the same time visually reduce its size if observed from the street. The remaining part of the complex lies behind the three blocks. In the last 30 years the volume of these blocks grew immensely due to reconstruction; the façades with features of regionalism were changed, the roof inclinations were altered, and an attic was added. The aforementioned elements distorted the balance of the composition, and consequently the structure lost its original form. Today its dominance is determined by its great volume and uncontrollable architectural forms.

Garage reconstruction is another independently evolving tendency that should not be overlooked. Unfortunately, the resorts did not escape this phenomenon that became especially popular during the Soviet times. It seems that this relic should have disappeared from a place with such an important status, especially since in Lithuania these garage parks are gradually vanishing. In 1980 a garage park was built next to the Hill of Witches (est. 1979). Today the garages are still being transformed into residential boxes with garages on the ground floor and living spaces above them. Nida even has an entire quarter of such garages, which are being reconstructed into apartment blocks. In the early years of Lithuanian independence attempts were made for the reconstructed garages to incorporate motif of ethnographic fisherman homesteads. In current conversions there are more attempts to use local materials and abstract details, integrate vertical and horizontal elements in order to visually divide and minimise massive façades, as well as to provide an orderly and clear-cut compositional structure. Not all garages have been reconstructed, although more reconstructions are planned.

Similar reconstructions have also taken place in military objects by the sea. Nida Art Colony is one of the most notable examples. The Vilnius Academy of Art initiated the project and reconstructed a former warehouse into a meeting space, whose exterior elevates the surrounding landscape. This object can be functionally tied with Nida's past as a favourite destination of artists who used to come to Nida in the first half of

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18 Jurgis Bučas, *Kuršių nerijos nacionalinis parkas*, Vilnius 2001, p. 32.

the 20th century.<sup>19</sup> The building's volume is massive, yet its expression is minimalistic. Its striped galleries, both opened and closed, create a sense of a new type of quality in a former utility zone. The nearby buildings are also under reconstruction in an attempt to visually divide the volume of the former warehouses. This is achieved with gable roof rhythm and minimalistic wooden plank décor that maintain compositional balance and steer away from kitsch. This shows how Nida Art Colony set the bar for future conversions.

Interpretations as well as straightforward imitations of fishermen homesteads are also prevalent in the new and reconstructed buildings of the Curonian Spit settlements. Fishermen houses are also being reconstructed, some of which are simply rebuilt on old foundations. Two residential houses/villas, named "Smēlis ir Jūra" and "Pilēja" (architects: Gintaras Prikockis, Asta Prikockienė), are amongst the most expressive and meticulous objects in Preila. The buildings combine contemporary and ethnic architectural features by matching the scale of the buildings with the context, although the scale is still a little larger than that of a former fisherman's house. The Soviet era buildings expanded the human scale of all the buildings in Preila; therefore, the size of the aforementioned villas does not get in the way. On the other side of the spectrum there are a few instances of architecture of imitation, and the social housing complex in Nida (built in 2015) is one of such examples. The volume of the complex is larger than that of a fisherman's house, but its aesthetic expression reiterates the ethnographic uniqueness of the Curonians, colour combinations being the only major difference. The example presents one of the possibilities suggested by the State Service for Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment. The organisation provides catalogues for each ethnographic region.<sup>20</sup> In this case, the publication *Kaimo statyba: Mažoji Lietuva* [Developments in the countryside: Lithuania Minor] presents traditional buildings and typical elements, as if proposing a specific aesthetic expression.

If we keep in mind the currently established identity and *genius loci*, every time a new project and its fit in the overall structure are considered we cannot avoid the following question: is the singular image of a fisherman's house still relevant to the overall aesthetics of the territory? In

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19 Roberta Mizgeraitė, "Nidos meno kolonija," [in:] *Archiforma*, no. 3–4 (2011), pp. 14–21.

20 Martynas Mankus, *Postmodernizmo...*, op. cit., pp. 100–101.



Social housing quarter in Nida. © Dalia Traškinaitė

this protected area there are buildings from different time periods, and some of those objects are rather new; therefore, due to the changes in the historical context the imitation of historical image without modern-day interpretation seems rather suspicious. If we look at the new buildings in the Curonian Spit, we can easily notice that the majority of these objects reiterate the volumetric composition of a fisherman's house and thus fit into the overall context. Recreational complexes from the Soviet times as well as other larger apartment buildings usually undergo reconstruction that involve the change of a flat roof into a gable roof, but the changes of aesthetic elements in façades provide more details that divide the volume of the building. Consequently, the aesthetic object is more comprehensible because the observer can more easily grasp its human scale, which is associated with the human themselves. The overview of the changes in recreational buildings, apartment buildings, and hotels in a rather short time also indicates shifts in the point of view and the attempts to reflect them in older buildings with the help of more than one reconstruction. Unfortunately, often the overall balance of the composition is lost. In order to improve the quality of architecture the territory is constantly undergoing reconstruction. Fortunately, more and more successful projects emerge.

## **Conclusion**

The structures that were built after the Vilnius Historic Centre and the Curonian Spit were added to the World Heritage List are mostly new buildings that imitate historical images. Despite the fact that the buildings are located in different places, similar tendencies can be observed. They reiterate historical forms and volumes rather than interpret historical-architectural structure. In terms of their human scale, new buildings usually blend better into the overall urban and natural context when this approach is taken. In order to find the best solutions for a new design, certain crucial elements from the previously mentioned aesthetic features should be taken into account. Both of the protected sites have features not only of the earlier times but also of the later, modern period. However, the influence of the diverse nature of heritage sites and the way they are perceived when designing new objects remains open for discussion.

