

Reconstruction and Recovery of Towns after war damage in the different part of the world. Theory, methodology, practice.

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Kaliningrad (Former Königsberg) Reconstruction Practices from Postwar Period to the Present Day

Königsberg, the capital of East Prussia, and nearby territories were transferred to the Soviet Union according to Potsdam Conference resolution. The reconstruction and development of the assigned territory started in 1946 and this process is still ongoing – the recovery of the land that was foreign to the new settlers and later became their home. I will consider 4 periods of the town recovery that reflect the change of approaches to the reconstruction under different external conditions.

1st period. Necessity. The Triumph of Soviet Representation. 1946-1955



Picture 1. Destroyed Koenigsberg after the bombing in August 1944 [1].

On the night of August the 30th, 1944 41% of buildings in the city were damaged. According to British intelligence service about 134 thousand of people lost their homes. The historical centre was almost totally ruined. Almost 5 thousand of people died. From the 6th to 9th of April, 1945, when the town was assaulted by the Soviet army it was badly damaged by the Soviet air forces bombing. As a result, by 1946 75% of the housing and 90% of the historical part of the town were demolished.

In 1946 the new settlers came, and Koenigsberg was renamed after lately deceased head of RSFSR Mikhail Kalinin. From 1946 to 1950 about 4 hundred thousand of new residents moved from the Soviet Union. A new life began and first they needed to

restore housing and infrastructure. There was no new construction in the first years because all efforts were focused on demounting the collapsed buildings. The only image of the town in the first residents' memories was 'dreadful carcasses and ruins with no shelter'.

In the atmosphere of total hunger and growing criminality, the first steps to regulate restoration works were undertaken. The inventory bureau was founded to understand which buildings could be restored, four project organizations were established and finally, in 1948, the position of the Master Architect of the city was established. Dmitry Navalihin was the first to take up the post and he kept it until 1958. Further we will see that people of marked personalities often played very important role in the formation of a new image of the city at that period. Navalihin had a perfect education. Being a graduate of two high schools of Leningrad, he had learned architecture from the great masters of the progressive schools, such as VKHUTEMAS and Constructivists. Nevertheless, Kaliningrad press in 1940s often published articles with such words of the architect: "We build a new soviet Kaliningrad city on the remains of Koenigsberg and we cannot - we don't want to replicate blindly the old and alien image of the city. The hateful Prussian spirit, which is still found in some quarters, will be wiped out".

In 1948 the project of the reconstruction of Stalingradsky Avenue was designed by Navalikhin and his team.



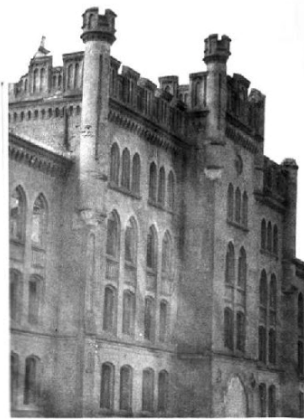
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Picture 2. The project of the reconstruction of Stalingradsky Avenue by Navalihin and his team, 1948 (1) and the building before reconstruction (2) [2].

In 1949 "Kaliningradskaya pravda", the main city paper, proclaimed: "The time of adaptation is gone, now is the time to construct new buildings to fit decently the new socialistic era". A picture of a skyscraper on Kotel'nicheskaya Embankment in Moscow exemplified an ideal of a new architecture, which looked like a bad joke, taking into account the limited possibilities that Kaliningrad architects and constructors had.

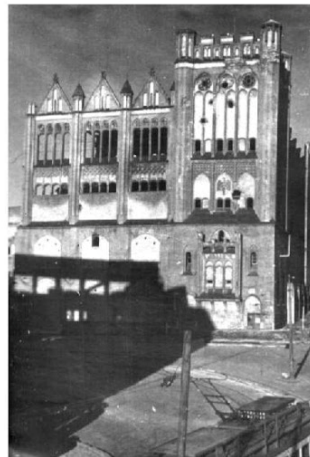
In late 1930s the representatives of the "new soviet" architectural style often had reversed arguments against the principles of the recent past and described "the bright future" of new architecture on contrast with that of the past. They proclaimed "alien" elements and styles - steep mansard roofs, facade's brick and stone facing - Navalihin named them "false gothic". Functionalists' architecture was taken as "grey sad barracks". In Navalihin's dissertation we can find notes where he mentions that traditional German buildings were most hard to reconstruct with the principles of the Soviet architecture.



1. Здание, трудно поддающееся реконструкции – решено в ложной готике / в кирпиче /



2. Здание, трудно поддающееся реконструкции – решено в ложной готике / в кирпиче /



3. Здание, трудно поддающееся реконструкции – решено в ложной готике / в кирпиче /



4. Здание, трудно поддающееся реконструкции / облицовано кирпичом /



5. Здание, трудно поддающееся реконструкции / Детали выложены из облицовочного кирпича /

Picture 3. Buildings reluctant to reconstruction (from Navalichin's dissertation) [2]

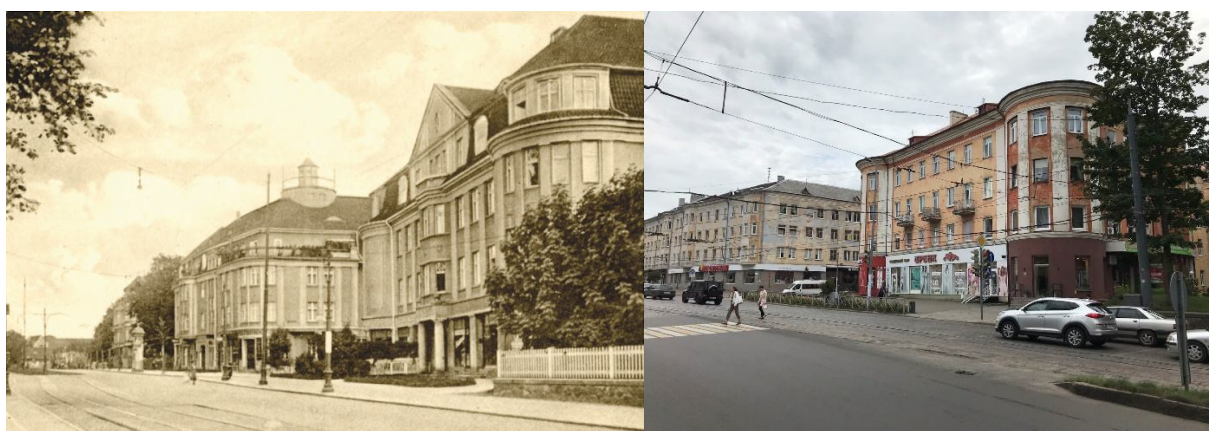
As an alternative, the renovated German buildings were supposed to accord with the right architectural image of the new Soviet epoch: thus, they were to express “joy and cheerfulness” and fit the “architectonics of a cheerful, healthy and well-built person”.

The renovation projects of Stalingradsky Avenue include all sorts of classic elements of the Soviet architecture of Stalin epoch, such as open balconies and loggias, all forms of colonnades like galleries, pilasters, porticos, rusticated facades, balustrades, massive cornices, obelisks, sculpture and fretworks.



Picture 4. Apartment house #33/35 on Stalingradsky avenue (now #33-37 Mira avenue) after reconstruction [2]

In fact, total deficit of materials, mechanisms and professionals made it practically impossible to reach the effect of 'monumental new architecture'. So the renovation was reduced to less decor, no mansard roofs, no sculpture, even no facade's compositions. Almost all the housing in the present Mira avenue provides an example of such changes.

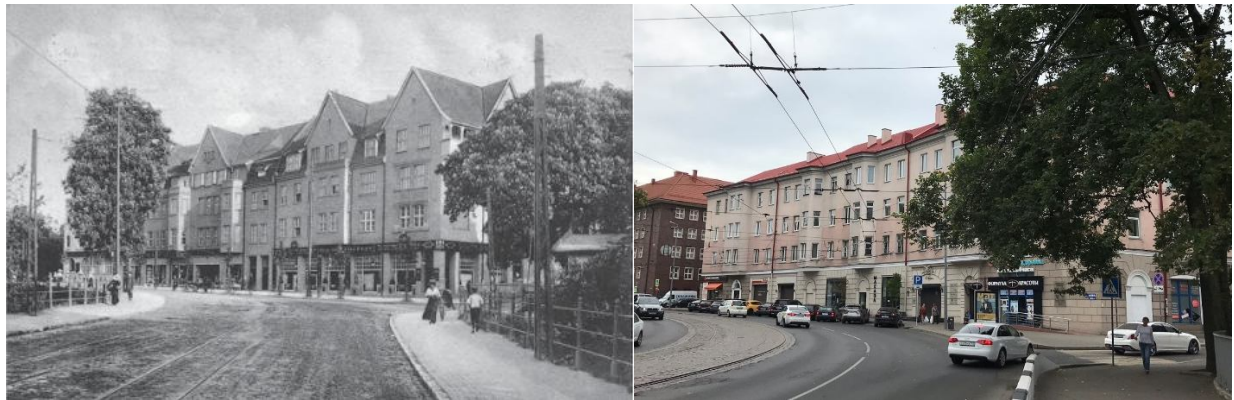


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Picture 5. Apartment houses #53-55 in Mira avenue (former Ostbank building), 1 - before 1945 [1]; 2 – present day (author's photo).

That's how Navalichin described the renovated houses in Stalingradsky avenue in 1949: " Most of the facades are neither stuccoed nor painted. The yards are not improved and greenery isn't planted". Sometimes the houses where people took their residence had no sewerage, there were broken window panes, and a lot of construction debris.



1

2

Picture 6. Apartment house #23-27 in Mira avenue lost its pediments and complex roof shape, and the mansard turned into the full height storey; 1 - before 1945 [1]; 2 – today (author's photo)..

The project of the renovation of Stalingradsky avenue demonstrates contradiction between the architects' goals and the real results of the reconstruction works. Even more conflicts were revealed in the new city centre design plan.

1947-53 the general plan of Kaliningrad. Continuity and rejection.

All reconstruction plans for Soviet towns damaged after war, and Kaliningrad as well, were designed by specialists from Moscow project institute "Gyprogor". Mikhail Naumov, the author of Kaliningrad masterplan, described his goals as follows: "The city centre had been built up by Germans without a plan, barbarously, which is general characteristic of capitalistic cities. We have to straighten the streets, widen them and create new spacious roads. We should increase green areas. The reconstruction of the city centre should be done by deminution of a certain number of the buildings and the renovation of the intact housing. We should use bricks and breakstone from the ruined buildings to construct the new ones. The main city axis will go through the city centre, connecting the right and the left banks of the river. At the city centre we are planning the construction of the great House of Soviets. It will possibly be constructed in the territory occupied by the present fortress with a tower and a big square sloping down the river".



Условное обозначение: красным кругом на схеме выделены кирхи.

1



2

Picture 7. (1) General plan of Kaliningrad, 1950s (based on “Gyprogor” materials) [2] and (2) the plan of Koenigsberg reconstruction developed in 1938.

Summarizing his words, Naumov made an obviously contradictory conclusion: “Despite of the fact that many old buildings will be restored and the ceramic tiles will be used for the roofing of all the buildings, including the new ones, the whole architectural image of the new city of Kaliningrad should match the style of our Soviet socialist cities”.

Meanwhile, the deeds didn’t agree with the words: for example, materials taken from the ruins, instead of use in Kaliningrad, were actually brought out to other parts of the country, like the Leningrad region, which was badly damaged after war, and also to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

An interesting fact is that, despite total ideological control of the Communist party over the design methods, the architects used the materials from the reconstruction concept of Koenigsberg that had been developed in 1938 by German specialists. In fact, we can see a lot of similar ideas and methods in these two projects – e.g. the route from the Southern station to the new centre on the north-west is seen as the main crosstown road.

One of the most obvious illustrations of the self-contradictions in project approach were two versions of developing the central part of Kaliningrad, worked out by Navalikhin in 1949 and in 1954. The first version was quite radical and provided Castle’s ruins demolition and the construction of the House of Soviets that would be 150 metres high. Nearby some central objects were supposed to be constructed, like the World War II museum and art gallery. From the north a great half radial square with 3 rays of highways was planned. And in the south the spacious green Square of Peace would slope down the river and the green island.



Условное обозначение: красным кругом на схеме выделены кирхи.

Picture 8. General plan of Kaliningrad by Dmitry Navalichin, 1956 [2]

In the 2nd version Navalikhin abandoned the idea of the Castle's deconstruction and suggested including it to the city centre composition. He reduced the House of Soviets height to 50to70 metres, perhaps because the main Castle's tower had been already demolished to that time and had not dominate the area. Navalikhin preserved some of the German buildings and referred to them as principal buildings. According to Navalikhin's notes, the contrast between the soviet constructions and the Koenigsberg heritage would obviously enrich the ideological and architectural image of the future city.

So we can see how the realistic point of view and wishes to save the damaged city and the aggressive rejection of any German cultural or architectural tradition both existed in architects statements at that period.

2nd period. The "New" against the "Old" 1956-1990



Picture 9. Soviet period buildings in Kaliningrad [1]

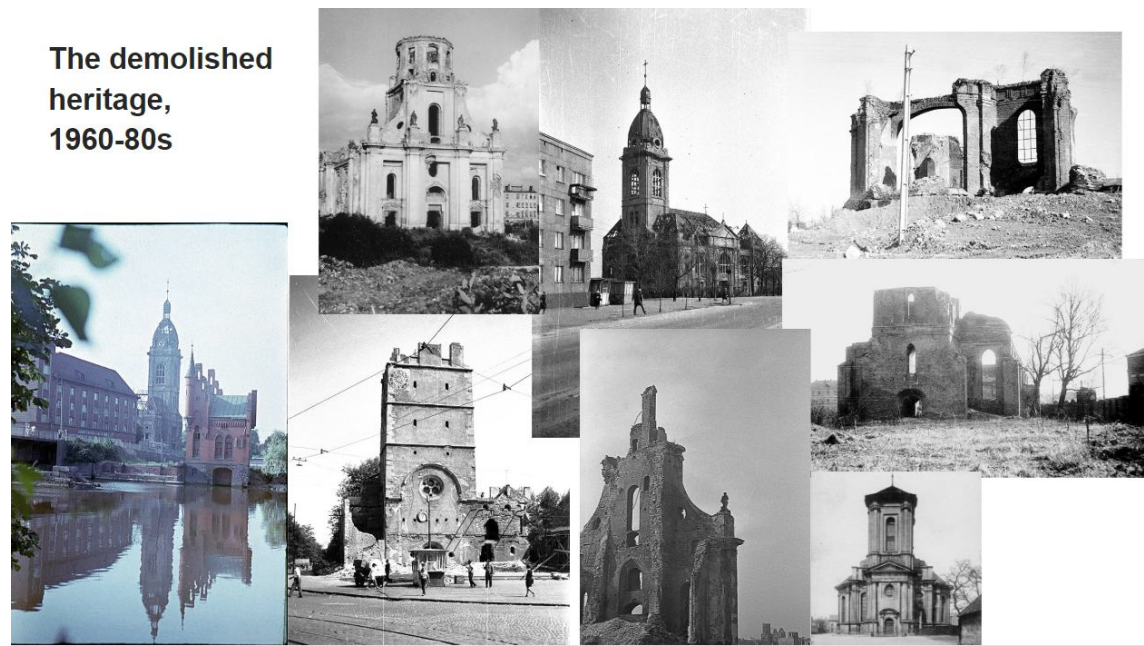
The 2nd period is characterized by a fierce struggle between “the new” and “the old” in the city map. Finally the construction of new houses began - 5-storey panel houses, so called “chrushevka”, and bigger 9-storey panel houses. A lot of such houses were built right in the city centre. Stalin cult was debunked and projects of huge architectural ensembles were put aside after that. The city territories were built up with less impressive but cheap buildings.



Picture 10. Ruins in Kaliningrad in 1960s-1970s [1]

Despite many houses were constructed (about 1 million square metres of housing was planned to be built) there were still ruins between new high-rise houses, grosseries, restaurants and thus the special and unique architectural landscape of soviet Kaliningrad was formed. Presence of the ruins, of course, influenced the perception of the urban space and formed the special request for a new type of architecture among citizens.

In fact, the postwar ruins were totally cleared only at the end of 1960s, including highly valued pieces of heritage of periods of Middle ages and Renaissance.



Picture 11. The demolished heritage, 1950-80s, collage, [1]

The most notable ruin was that of the Royal castle, which was still on the top of the former King's Mountain in the very centre of the soviet city.

The Royal castle's demolition in 1967-1969.



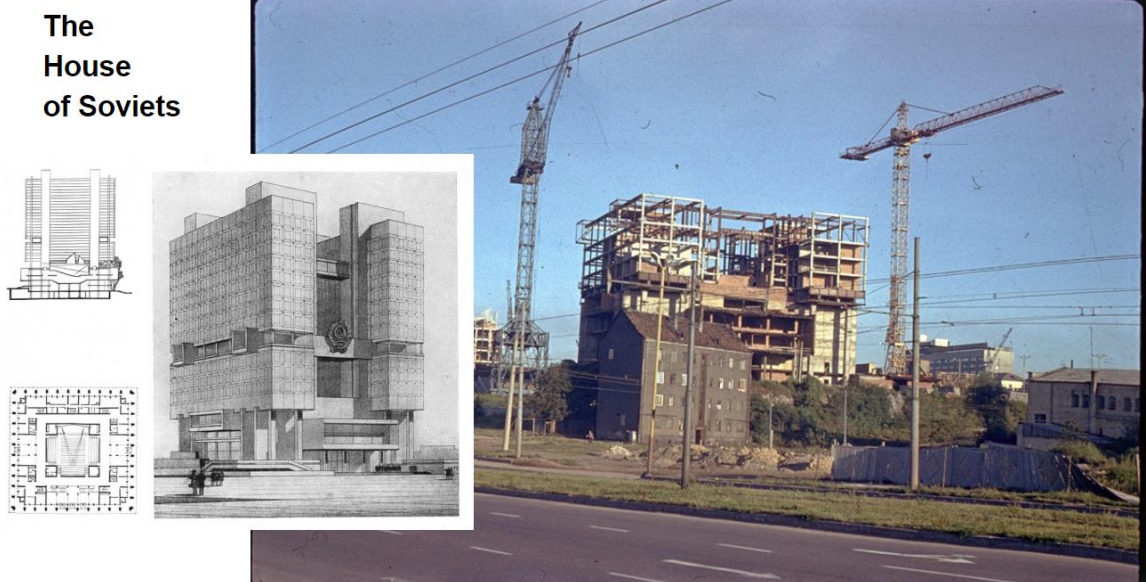
Picture 12. The Royal castle's demolition, 1967-1969 [1].

Many people believe that the Royal castle demolition was the point of no return, because not only the monumental historical and cultural object of great value was lost, but

the government confirmed the policy of total destruction of german culture and architectural tradition in the city. After studying the materials that document 5 years of discussions of the problem of demolition I can say that there could be another outcome of that struggle.

A Decision about the Royal castle fate came at the times of Khrushchev's Thaw, when people became more relaxed and confident in their future than at first postwar years. A big Castle preservation campaign was organized by the citizens: architects, historians, museum workers, journalists. An expertise was conducted, which proved historical and cultural value of the ruins and possibility of the reconstruction. Kaliningrad specialists cooperated with people from Ministry of Culture of the RSFSR, and Union of Architects of the USSR and all of them confirmed absolute value of the Castle. As a result 6 of 7 projects of the city centre plan which were discussed in 1965 included the renovation or conservation of the medieval fortress. It was a really modern approach - to include the historical building into the modern environment as a witness of events of 1945. This approach was accepted by the citizens, whose opinions were published in papers. It is hard to realize that nowadays we are coming back to this point of view, but we can't return the authentic Castle.

Despite the protests of the community the ruins of the Royal Castle were blown up in the years 1967 to 1969. The final decision was confirmed by secretary of the Kaliningrad Regional Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nicolay Konovalov, who always declared his perception of the Castle as a symbol of Enemy, which had to be destroyed as soon as possible. So the destroying of the main ruin of the soviet Kaliningrad became a sign of transition from transforming "their buildings" to creating "ours".



Picture 13. The House of Soviets "To Confirm the Power of the Soviets on the Royal King's Mountain" [1].

The next step would be the construction of a symbol of the new power - the House of Soviets, which was planned since 1950s. The huge construction was set up in 1970 ... and never finished. In 1990, the Soviet Union broke up and there was no need in such an expensive symbol. Since then the House of Soviets has been used only as an illegal viewpoint of the city. Besides, unfriendly and brutal appearance of the building generated many controversial remarks among the citizens.

It is no exaggeration to say that the House of Soviets is still in the centre of discussion and symbolises not only disability of the soviet paradigm but a chance to say their word for today's government and professional community.

At the same time there were people in the government who understood the historical spirit of the city. By city head Victor Denisov's initiative a number of historical buildings were restored.

3rd period. First steps in reconciling restoration. 1991-2005

At the difficult time, since 1991, when the Soviet Union broke up and political system totally changed, first steps to restore historical monuments of German period were initiated in Kaliningrad. Some renovations were timed to the celebration of 750 years anniversary of Kaliningrad, and the date itself shows that the pre-war past was accepted.

The renovation of the Cathedral in 1994-2005



1

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Picture 14. The Cathedral in 1981 (1) and today (2) [1]

Today the renovated Cathedral on the Kant Island is the symbol of the city for the most of Kaliningrad people and the most popular attraction. It is worth noting that in 1967 the Cathedral was in the same danger as the Royal Castle, but thanks to the defence campaign which citizens ran it survived. After complex research the Cathedral was conserved in 1993 and the restoration began in 1994. Igor Odintsov led these works for many years and made a lot for the success. He invited German specialists to help with difficult decisions – for instance, how to rebuild the lost roof and vaults. The steeple was rebuilt, a new clock and 4 bells installed. An orthodox and lutheran chapels were opened in the Cathedral as well as a museum. An organ was installed. The Cathedral had become a centre of cultural and intellectual life of the city.

There was also a need in a modern symbol of settled Russian culture in Kaliningrad. By 2006 the orthodox Cathedral designed by Oleg Kopylov was constructed in the city centre, which had completed a new city centre formation after 60 years of working on that.

2005 – 750 anniversary of Koenigsberg-Kaliningrad.



1



2

Picture 15. The Sculptures of Ottokar II, Friedrich I, duke Albrecht before (1) [1] and after restoration in 2005 (2).

In 2005 important steps for integration into European cultural community were taken - for example, the State University was named after Immanuel Kant and some monuments were restored. The Royal gates was among them. 3 sculptures, which stayed on the facade headless, were replaced there. 3 kings - Ottakar, duke Albrecht and Friedrich the 1st - were there again with the crowns on their heads.

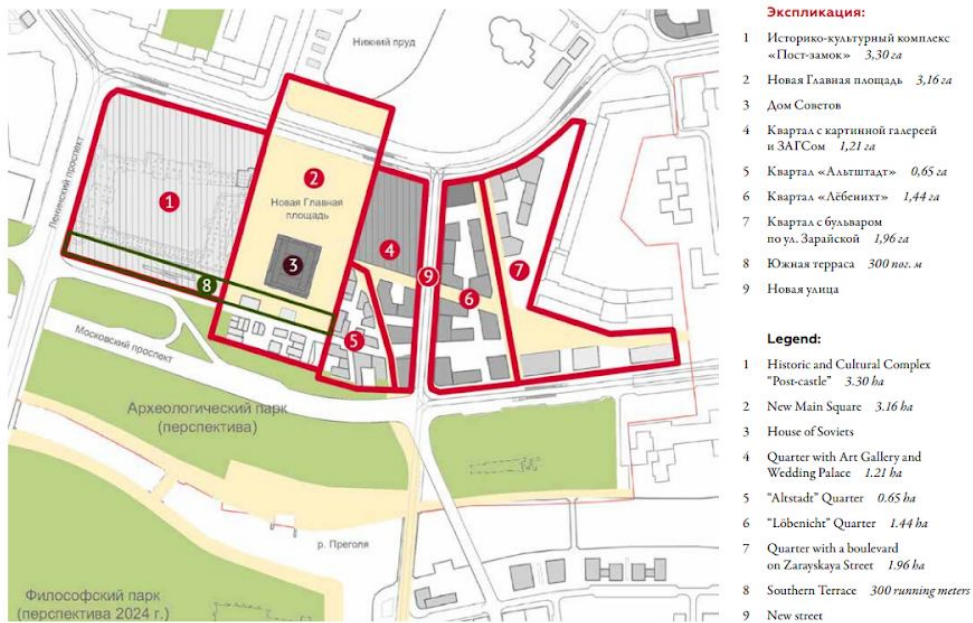
4th period. A conception of renovation and development. 2005-nowadays.

I want to particularly distinguish the period of the recent time, from 2005 till present day because at this period some attempts were taken to analyse the urban situation of Kaliningrad, especially the city centre. In 2005 the international symposium "Kaliningrad: the images of future. Urban development of the city central part" took place where both russian and german specialists participated. In 2007 the international workshop "The conception of Kaliningrad centre development" gathered participants from Russia, Poland, Germany, Netherlands and Finland.

2013-2016 - a nonprofit partnership "The Heart of the City" activity.

Видение на ближайшую перспективу, рабочая схема по результатам Консолидированной планировочной концепции развития территорий проекта «Сердце города», июнь 2015 г.

Vision for the nearest future, working plan based on the Consolidated planning concept of the development of the "Heart of the City" project area, June 2015



Picture 16. Vision for the nearest future [3].

The most impressive results were reached by the work of the nonprofit partnership “The Heart of the City” that organized 2 international competitions on the city centre planning from 2013 to 2016.

The participants of the 1st competition named “King’s Mountain and Its Surroundings” had to create a design of a masterplan of the central part of the city that would include Castle’s ruins and the House of Soviets. 39 participants from 15 countries including Russia, Great Britain, Germany, France, Spain, Poland, Lithuania, Portugal and Italy suggested their ideas. The professional part of the jury consisted of 10 specialists from Russia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Germany. As a result of the competition, the urban planning documentation was prepared for the development of the central area of the city.

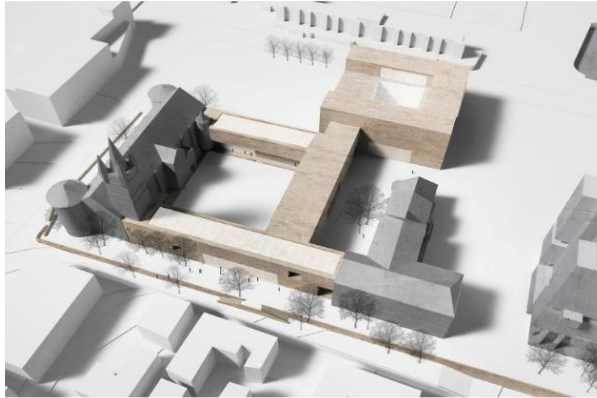
In 2015 the work was going on and the 2nd contest “Post-castle” was held. The goal was to design the Historic and Cultural Complex on the Grounds of the Former Order Castle Königsberg in Kaliningrad, and the task didn’t suppose the House of Soviets demolition. So the participants were given difficult and interesting task - to create architectural design based on the connection of the past and modernity.

100 requests were received from architects and architectural bureaus from 27 countries. The prize fund was 4 million 1 hundred thousand roubles. The professional jury included specialists who had an experience in synthesis of the modern architectural forms and the historical heritage, such as Hans Stimmann, the former main architect of Berlin. The political part of the jury consisted of the city and regional authorities.

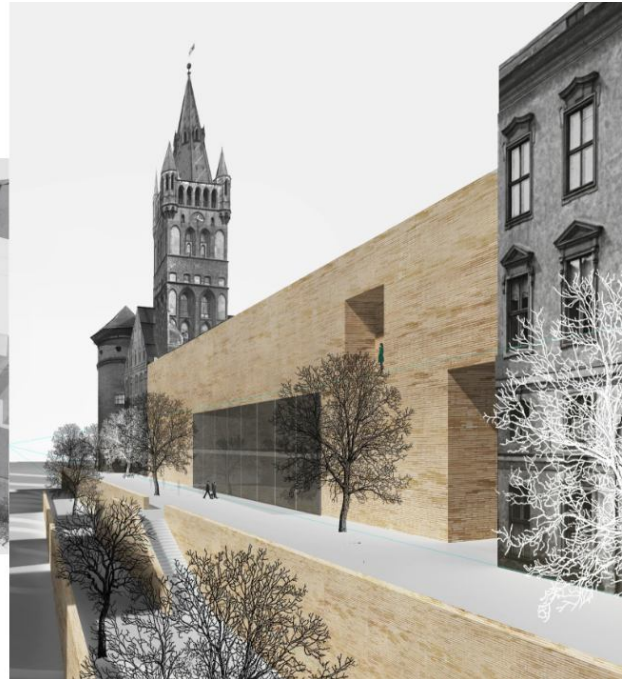
Many interesting projects, not only from architectural point of view but from the point of view of culture and philosophy, were published. Very different approaches to the cultures connection were demonstrated, such as the contrast between the modern and the historical architecture, the total “archaeological” approach to the Castle ruins, the Castle rebuilding in a ghost-like manner with the light frame constructions, even modern glass and metal buildings in the place of the Castle.

“The other Koenigsberg”

by Anton Sagal. The southern terrace



Upper view.



Picture 17. “The other Koenigsberg” by Anton Sagal. The southern terrace. Upper view [3].

Russian architect from Milan Anton Sagal became the winner with his project named “The Other Koenigsberg”. His conception was to partly rebuild the Castle in its historical shape exactly as it was and combine it with the modern architecture. The new structure would be different from the historical structures and would integrate 2 rebuilt constructions, that would create new urban spaces and associate the complex to its setting. The main idea was to separate clearly history and modernity which wouldn’t exclude the harmonious dialogue between them.

According to the jury member, architect Sergey Skuratov, “The winner project answers many questions and it is the project of reconciliation and reunion, because it unifies different hopes and visions on what the city central spaces should be like. He adds, ‘We think that this kind of project of cultural consolidation is exactly what Russia and this place need’.



Picture 18. "The New Löbenicht" by Pictorica Ltd. The picture provided by Max Popov.

Of course such impressive results couldn't be reached without the involvement of the political power, and without the wish to introduce to the world and to ourselves a symbol of new values. Today the situation changed - the focus of the government is again on the House of Soviets like it was 30 years ago, and the fate of the historical centre, the Heart of the City, is still unknown.

In fine, the good education and perhaps the experience of architectural design didn't allow the architects of the postwar period to act according to the party testaments and totally destroy the historical urban structure of the city. Possibly the fact that The regional government wasn't strictly controlled by the party allowed some parts of the city structure to survive to our days. And we can say with certainty that the lack of financing saved the remains of heritage for our generation. All these facts give us much food for thought about the possible future of our city. We can say that there is still a chance for the Heart of the City, which is waiting for its time to be rebuild.

The sources of illustrations:

1. The private collection of "The City of Königsberg Museum", <http://museum-koenigsberg.ru>.
2. Manyuk E. S. Soviet urban planning in former East Prussia (Kaliningrad and Klaipeda in 1945-1950s). The dissertation for the degree of Ph.D. in historical sciences.
3. The final report of the nonprofit partnership "The Heart of the City" activity, 2015.