

# Re-Tooling Knowledge Infrastructures in a Nuclear Town

edited by  
Siarhei Liubimau & Benjamin Cope



VISA GINS

**Re-Tooling Knowledge Infrastructures  
in a Nuclear Town**

Siarhei Liubimau and Benjamin Cope (eds)

Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 2021

Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 2021

[www.leidykla.vda.lt](http://www.leidykla.vda.lt)

**Project**

Laboratory of Critical Urbanism

**Layout design**

Anna Vasina

**Typeface**

Playfair Display

Din Pro

**Reviewers**

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**Printed by**

UAB BALTO print

Utenos g. 41B,

Vilnius LT-08217

Lithuania

**Language editing**

Benjamin Cope

**Supported by**

Center for Research Publishing, European  
Humanities University



ISBN 978-609-447-356-2

# **Re-Tooling Knowledge Infrastructures in a Nuclear Town**

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# Reprogramming the Library in Visaginas: A Multifunctional Public Institution For A Nuclear Town

## Introduction

This chapter summarizes and reflects on the Laboratory of Critical Urbanism's applied work on the functional re-programming of Visaginas public library, and also presents the results of this work. This re-programming is disciplined by our research into the town's context: both of the conditions after nuclear energy and the path determined by the town's initial nuclear specialization. The key components of this context are the temporal dimension of nuclear de-industrialization, the meaning of the nuclear industry for the Lithuanian national narrative and the potential of this Soviet nuclear town's exclusive welfare legacy. The main value orientations of our work on the library re-programming are the need to increase the library's social inclusivity and functional diversity in comparison to the status quo, as well as the need to embrace the tendency of digitalization (and, more broadly, of a diversification of the ways in which knowledge is produced and consumed). The presented functional re-programming is anchored to the current library building. In particular, the material condition for the reprogramming scenario is to preserve the building's current modernist form. This re-programming is developed for a single building, yet it is also co-articulated with an urban scale planning scenario. The spatial concept for this co-articulation is the Knowledge Park: a framework for the integrated development of Visaginas cultural and knowledge sectors. Hence, our aim is to create a spatial scenario for the library as a strategic institution and infrastructure within configurations of the production, archiving and distribution of knowledge in and around Visaginas.

The argument of this chapter consists of four steps. First, we discuss how the specifically nuclear legacy of Visaginas challenges urbanist work. Second, we contextualize the work of the Laboratory of Critical

Urbanism in Visaginas in the stream of the growing popularity of the urban living labs approach to studying and designing cities. Third, we discuss the research decisions we took to better understand the status quo and the potential of the Visaginas public library's main building. And, fourth, we present the design decisions regarding the reprogramming of the library in the broader context of the development and planning of the town's cultural and knowledge sectors.

## Embracing Visaginas's 'Nuclear' Path in Applied Urbanist Work

Visaginas is a small formerly mono-functional town in a process of gradual disconnection from its core enterprise: the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant. In comparison to the majority of industrial facilities, the shutdown of a nuclear power plant is a decades long intellectually intensive and technologically challenging process. It generates a large amount of qualified well-paid jobs, enjoys support and close attention from international organizations and is prioritized in the national economy and security<sup>116</sup> (see the chapters by Siarhei Liubimau and by Andrei Stsiapanau in this volume). Moreover, like many other nuclear towns, Visaginas will accommodate and service nuclear waste, some types of which require professional management for thousands of years into the future. Hence, thinking about the temporal dimension of nuclear towns is sobering in the face of hegemonic representations of the main challenges and options for urban development and planning now. For, on the one hand, the three decades of INPP decommissioning stand in stark contrast to the innovation and growth cycles of other industries (such

<sup>116</sup> The latter is especially relevant for the geopolitically sensitive case of Visaginas.

as telecommunications or transportation), where three decades could contain several technological, managerial and lifestyle revolutions. On the other hand, the nuclear waste timeframe oversteps any reasonable human capacity for economic and social planning. While development agendas for states, nations and the world hardly exceed two-three decades ahead, we know that one of Visaginas's key specializations for centuries will be servicing containers with radioactive materials. This requires a sensitivity of the town's cultural and knowledge sectors to the types of expertise and identity thus determined.

In the light of this temporality, reappraising Visaginas's urbanization processes requires a systematic estrangement from the notions of urban futures that predominate on our intellectual horizons. It does not mean that notions like "sustainability", "participatory processes", or "knowledge society"<sup>117</sup> do not make any sense or that they are not operational. However, in relation to Visaginas, they need to be relativized and to be left deliberately unfinished vis-à-vis the nuclear factor with its exceptional temporality. Approaching the knowledge and cultural sectors of a 'nuclear' town in view of how they should respond to this temporal incommensurability of intersecting urban processes is revealing. It adds more awareness about the constraints for Visaginas to just combine and follow mainstream urban development agendas. The key to this awareness is grounding the globally available set of meanings of a "good city" in a path dependency defined by nuclear energy production, the construction and dismantling of (post-)nuclear

<sup>117</sup> Such notions as "sustainability", "participatory processes", or "knowledge society" both function as the dominant watchwords of contemporary urban development, and are frequently subjected to critique for what they occlude or presume about social change.

facilities, the related exceptional disciplinary regime and exclusive nuclear welfare.

When confronting the prevalent culture of cities with the assets and constraints specific to the Visaginas path, the focus on two issues is especially promising. The first is the issue of re-tooling Visaginas identity as a result of the process of marginalization of the energy sector as the town's initial sole specialization. This marginalization involves a process of scaling down the town's economic and social capital and their integration into the region of north-east Lithuania. For the first decade and a half since the decision about the INPP decommissioning in 1999, this largely played itself out on the symbolic level as a conflict between narrating the history of Visaginas in the context of Soviet large-scale energy infrastructures and that of trying to reposition the town as part of the ethnographic region of Aukštaitija. The public prioritizing of the latter, as the nuclear energy element in Visaginas history was linked with the history of Soviet occupation of Lithuania, was mirrored by discussions on the town's identity among town dwellers being clearly centred on issues of shock, disorientation and nostalgia. However, from the middle of the 2010s Visaginas became one of the peripheral towns most attended by various storytellers and artists in Lithuania. This has given rise to a range of intellectual and creative responses to the meaning and purpose of the town in the independent Lithuanian Republic. By addressing a wide audience outside Visaginas, documentary theatre, film, urbanist workshops and summer schools, architectural competitions and photography have all contributed to the creation of a semiotic field in which Visaginas is not anymore reduced to a rupture which happened once and forever, but is presented as a curious puzzle of possible future moves. In the course of this process, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the end of nuclear energy production does not mean the end of



Fig. 1. Pavilion for public consultations, Summer School 2019. Photo: Giliam Ganzvels.





nuclear expertise, as this will continue through the further development of nuclear safety measures, the decommissioning of nuclear facilities, nuclear waste storage, etc. These processes now allow a much broader participation of local Lithuanian specialists than was the case in the Soviet period. The current discussions in town about the integration in the future Visaginas museum of both ethnographic history and the history of energy technologies show that there is potential for combining both local ethnographic and externally imposed industrial elements in the town's identity. The challenge however is how to design a material and symbolic scaffolding which would make it possible to creatively work with both narratives in a long-term perspective, in a non-exclusionary manner and for the sake of the common good.

The second issue is the preservation and development of the knowledge and cultural sectors in the period when Visaginas can still rely on rich external funding targeted at the closure and the dismantling of the INPP. One of the legacies of Visaginas as a Ministry of Medium Machine Building town is exceptionally well invested welfare infrastructures. The general quality of buildings in Visaginas was higher than average in Soviet Lithuania (Cinis et al. 2008), with schooling and sports infrastructure being one of the main public sites of privilege of nuclear energy workers (together with the compact urban structure itself and its smooth integration into the natural environment). School and kindergarten buildings not only had exclusive facilities such as swimming pools, they also were run by very well-trained pedagogues – usually spouses of nuclear sector employees, with a record of previously working in other nuclear towns – forming a high-quality human infrastructure for learning and socialization. In the period after the independence of Lithuania, the Visaginas educational offer is still one of the town's positive distinguishing features, and is one of the main explanations of

return offered in stories of young parents coming back to Visaginas after labour or education migration experience abroad (see the chapter by Pentenrieder and Cope in this volume). Almost 100 percent of school aged children in Visaginas are engaged in extracurricular activities, while one of the most tangible developments in town since Lithuanian independence is the re-use of schooling infrastructures for new experimental modes of welfare: such as for courses, workshops or studios. This structure of extracurricular education nurtures new generations of pedagogues, often with international experience in the 1990s-2010s. It also provokes valuable alternatives in terms of aesthetic and lifestyle principles of extracurricular education proposed by outsiders to this process (see the story of *The Tochka* below). As we know from other contexts, participation in extracurricular activities is one of the crucial factors of upward social mobility (Scherger and Savage 2010), and it is especially vital for a town in a process of long-term gradual dis-embedding from the field of exceptional state agencies and integration into conditions of competitive markets and civic participation. The challenge in this process is how to institutionally fuse Visaginas's assets in education, public culture and the labour market in order to make full use of the town's path dependency in developing its role within the EU and global society.

### The Urban Living Labs' Approach to Visaginas

This chapter argues that the library as both institution and infrastructure is a relevant starting point for Visaginas to initiate and publicly control the process of re-programming itself in conditions 'after nuclear power', however with critical awareness of its 'nuclear' path-dependency. It summarizes the agenda of the urbanist summer schools organized four years in a row (from 2016 to 2019) by the Laboratory



Fig. 2. Pavilion for public consultations, Summer School 2019. Photo: Giliam Ganzvles.



Fig. 3. Pavilion for public consultations, Summer School 2019. Photo: Giliam Ganzvles.

of Critical Urbanism (European Humanities University) in broad collaboration with other academic institutions, funding bodies, urbanist organizations, local governance and activists, etc.<sup>118</sup> Each of these summer schools had as its major horizon an exploration of the functioning of the library and lasted for a duration of 12-14 days. The goal of these explorations was to better discipline developmental visions and design solutions for the library building and institution through an awareness of Visaginas's particular mode of urbanization and of digitalization's effects on knowledge. In 2016, the key question was how to preserve a modernist architectural heritage when diversifying the library's functions and turning it into a multi-functional building/institution. In 2017, the main effort was to identify the 'nuclear' factor of Visaginas modernism and modernity, as well as to propose the ways this factor should be publicly represented and memorialized. In 2018, the School was focused on the Visaginas landscape of knowledge transcending a distinct library building (further developing the agenda set in 2016). And in 2019 the main horizon was an exploration of the participatory research methods needed for the spatial programming of the library.

The 2019 Summer School had the most obvious features of an urban living lab (Bulkeley et al. 2019), as one of its central results was a pavilion for public consultations, including a survey, two focus group interviews, participatory mapping, an engagement tool to address Visaginas diaspora abroad and a soundscape installation. The pavilion was focused on Visaginas dwellers' expectations for the new public

library institution/building. Moreover, it provided tools for residents to be part of the programming and design process (Fig. 1, 2, 3). However, the whole course of the summer schools starting from 2016 largely involved experimentation in embedded and embodied methods of research data gathering, conceptual argument generation and triangulation; as well as in generating a platform to cultivate the legitimacy of the new urban project of a public library. As a rule, urban living labs are considered as the continuation of scientific laboratory principles at the scale of city planning and living. Laboratories in this sense are a "passage point between society and the working of science and technology" (Bulkeley et al. 2019, 320). They give a space for scientists to experiment with innovations before they are scaled up within society at large. By bringing together the elements that are not yet assembled in social milieu and by observing them, laboratories generate phenomena and tendencies which do not yet exist per se. Laboratories in general, and urban living labs specifically, are most often concerned with fixing and testing a particular artefact. However, cities are not only sets of organized artefacts, but also political and social systems. Thus, urban living laboratories should generate and observe not only purely technological innovations, but also possible and desirable new modes of relations between state, society and space.

In contrast to most urban living laboratories, which usually immediately simulate a specific situation (relating to dwelling, transportation technology, urban furniture, etc.), the LCU Summer Schools from 2016 to 2019 sought to gather, reflect on and experiment with already processed information (not information generated in laboratory conditions). These included studies of the library's current and potential users, and current and potential stakeholders, as well as potential openings and obstructions in the town's assemblages of civic participation and power. Over

<sup>118</sup> The LCU work in Visaginas prior to 2016 was documented in Ackermann, Felix, Benjamin Cope and Siarhei Liubimau. 2016. *Mapping Visaginas. Sources of Urbanity in a Former Mono-functional Town*. Vilnius: Vilnius Academy of Arts Press.

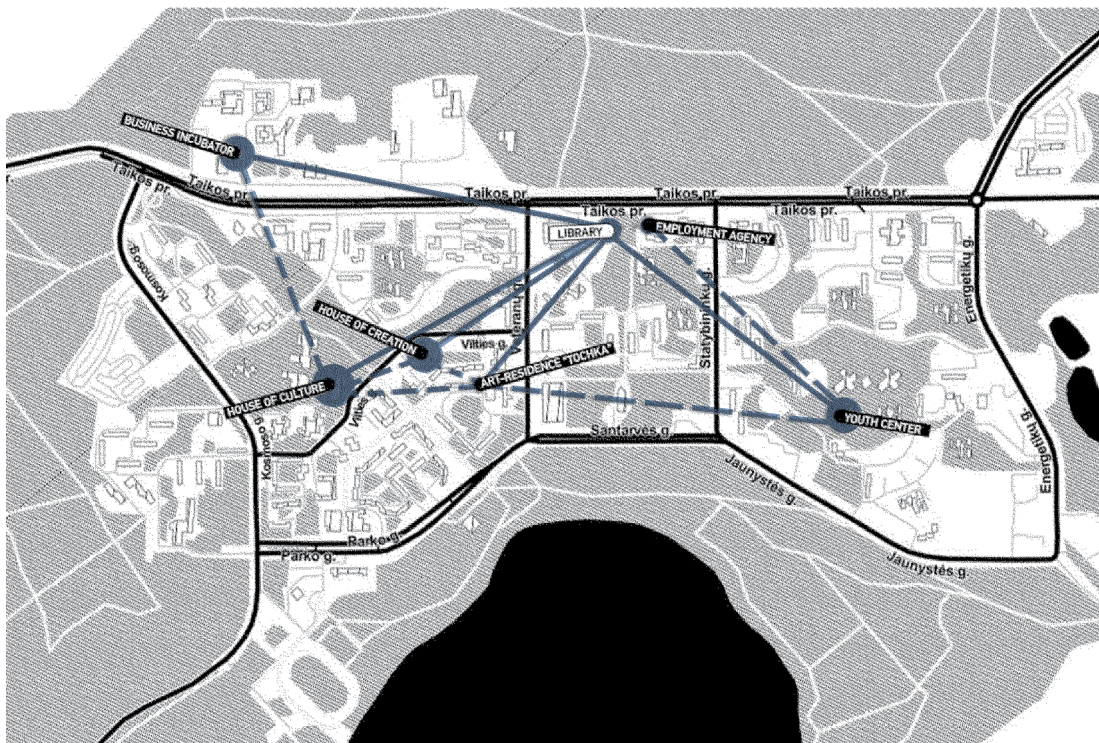


Fig. 4. Library Network.

these years, the LCU research activities can be characterized as a civic, research and educational platform for explorations of how effects of Visaginas's simultaneous de-industrialization and transformation of ecologies of knowledge due to digitalization should be faced by urban development and planning. Thus, those explorations were anchored in three nodes of urban practices simultaneously – first, to the ongoing research conceptualizations of de-industrialization, socialist modernism, 'nuclear' towns, knowledge infrastructures and participatory urbanism; second, to the engagement of summer school participants in applied urbanist work as a mode of education; and third, to the expectations of social partners in Visaginas for innovative urbanist solutions developed by 'unbiased outsiders'.

An initial outcome generated by the tension resulting between these three nodes of practices is a series of proposals for the town's public library as a central knowledge infrastructure in the course of the disconnection between Visaginas and the INPP. This centrality was defined both by the need for a scaffolding to marry conflicting ethnographic and industrial narratives of the town; and by the need of an urban tissue connecting and nurturing the human capital retained by the town, yet disconnected and atomized in the course of manifold transformations after 1990. By summer 2020, there is already a consensus among Visaginas policy makers and cultural sector representatives that the town's public library needs a new building; but there is also a realization that there is no institutional solution yet in place of how to make the new building up to date in terms of the functions to be hosted. In meetings with the town's decision makers, activists, entrepreneurs and cultural and knowledge sector representatives, etc., the requirement for the future building to be multi-functional was systematically articulated. The functions of 'museum', 'social centre', 'information hub'

and 'centre of cognition' were used to approximately describe what would be a desirable solution for this multifunctionality.

In the text below, we discuss both the research and design process of our proposal for Visaginas public library as a connecting tissue for diverse responses to ending the town's monofunctionality and as a proposition for the town's economic, social and cultural re-tooling. Its starting point was an identification of the main stakeholders of Visaginas knowledge infrastructures (institutions, communities and projects proactively participating in the cultural, educational and knowledge sectors of the town), as well as of the groups using and not using the library. We continued with the process of a delineation of the functional spatial program of the current library: as a dynamic deliberate move from the socialist modernist spatial form of a distinct building to a networked ecology of knowledge production, archiving and transmission (Fig. 4). In terms of both research and design, the process was guided by two pragmatic aims: to identify the types of uses which need to be implemented in a reprogrammed library; as well as to link the functional reprogramming of the library to emerging forces which drive the long-term re-programming of the entire town. The conceptual umbrella for these two aims is the "Knowledge Park" as a scenario for Visaginas development, in which the library is an activating node in a process of renovation of the town's second and third micro-districts in the 2020s.

### The Research Process

The starting point for our research was the observation of a contrast between the underuse of the Visaginas public library and the existence in the town of a large amount of formal and informal cultural

institutions, offering diverse activities for a wide range of groups. These institutions target their activities not only at people of different ages, interests and cultural preferences, but also at a rich array of different ethnic cultures. We read the social groups who both do and do not use the library as the main reference point for a roadmap to redevelop it as both infrastructure and institution. The goal of this roadmap is to develop a spatial program shared by different interest groups, age groups, ethnic groups and people with different cultural preferences that currently tend to be isolated from one another. In this vein, Visaginas public library is regarded primarily as an unused potential to act as a node connecting different groups, communities and institutions in town. This conception of the library as node interweaves with the contemporary discussion on the role of libraries in the conditions of digitalization. Their formerly monofunctional role as a place for storing and lending literature to users-recipients (particularly in the case of Soviet planning and design) is now being significantly broadened (see the chapter by Bogdan Kapatsila in this volume). Ideally, a public library is expected to serve as a place of knowledge transfer and getting together, of sharing activities and resources that are meaningful for many users and stakeholders.

In order to ground our suggestions, we analysed the functions of specific institutions in Visaginas, the public library's place in town and the library's users and non-users. The investigation period consisted of the timeframe of four Summer Schools, allowing a possibility for information collection, triangulation and discussion of interim conclusions with research partners. Most of the information gathered derives from observations (including ethnographic interviews), expert interviews, and the analysis of documents by the Schools' participants during their stays and the discussion of these observations

with tutors and peers in the process of designing proposals. The fourth school made a pavilion for public consultations on the library's functions with potential users and stakeholders. Fieldwork, expert meetings and workshops which were aimed at introducing mapping methodologies, all created a deeper understanding of the socio-spatial structure of the town and of the library itself. Furthermore, the web presence of the library and the municipality has also been analysed. Fieldwork was based on qualitative methodology, namely interviews with local governance representatives, representatives of cultural institutions and with socially active inhabitants in town, including alternative youth. The field research had two entry points to the research settings, in addition to the two library branches themselves. The first entry point was the Art Residency *The Tochka*, a physical space where young people strive to become an informal node for Visaginas culture. Largely, this is a fluid community of those seeking alternative forms of leisure. The second entry point was the "House of Creation": an institution providing extracurricular activities to school children in diverse fields from ship building and radio engineering to dancing and visual design. This establishment is highly popular among Visaginas dwellers: each school year around 2000 children's entries to its workshops and circles are registered.

The first library in Visaginas was opened in 1982 on the pedestrian axis of the town, Sedulinos alėja. Today, this space is considered to be a smaller branch, intended rather for events such as exhibitions or meetings with guests. The library's main branch on Taikos Street was opened in 1988. As Visaginas was conceived to be twice its current size, the street that was projected to be its central axis – Taikos – has today become a ring street. Hence the library's main branch is now placed in an area not as densely used as planned: functionally, it is a space for transit, re-

tail and living, and thus not the best location in town in terms of mixed use potential. In particular, this makes it rather problematic to connect a library visit to other activities. This is a geographical aspect to the Visaginas public library being in a rather marginal position in the town's life. A second aspect of the library's marginalization is functional. Nowadays, the Internet supplies a great amount of information resources, in formats such as eBooks, movies, games and music; and thus, encourages libraries to enhance their role beyond just book lending. Not all libraries fully respond to this (as is the case of the Visaginas library too). In addition to the digitalization effects, it is noticeable that Visaginas Public Library does not possess any technical literature vital for the large number of engineers, technicians and researchers currently working at the INPP. The result is that Visaginas today is a town with an underused public library. At the same time, town inhabitants originally were prevalently well-educated people, doing engineers' and managers' jobs. One can imagine that they would own personal libraries at home and keenly exchange books with workmates and friends, forming the town's organic community bound to a sole industrial project.<sup>119</sup>

The diversity of Visaginas's social and ethnic groups is one of the most notable features of the town, however at the same time it is one of the most complex to grasp. In contrast to the monofunctional purpose of Visaginas, the state-controlled composition of the town's population was characterized by cultural and ethnic diversity. These were engineers and workers from different parts of the Soviet Union,

<sup>119</sup> One of *The Tochka* activists is collecting books from flats whose owners have passed away or left town, and is sharing his fascination with the thematic and linguistic diversity of the home libraries accumulated already in the Soviet period.

who came to build and service the nuclear power plant in the 1970s and 1980s. "The main aspect that influenced the structure of the social processes and development of the town was active migration processes (mainly from outside Lithuania until 1993), which have formed the unique national (Lithuanians constituted only 14% in 1997) [...] structure of the city" (Baubinas and Burneika 2001, 70). Around 55 percent of inhabitants are ethnic Russians, and in addition there are Belarusians, Poles, Ukrainians, Latvians and Tatars, to name just a few. Hence, one can say that the origin of Visaginas's social structure has caused extraordinary ethnic diversity. Today, the groups and their activities, as well as the interaction between them, are sometimes characterized by ethnically defined barriers, such as different language, heritage and sense of belonging. The Russian language is still dominant in everyday life (making Visaginas the only municipality in Lithuania with a primarily Russian-speaking population). At the same time, Lithuanian as the official language is used in public institutions, such as in the two buildings where the Visaginas library currently offers its services. According to the website, available only in Lithuanian and English, there are 127,800 books and documents available for the public, in both Russian and Lithuanian, but new books are acquired primarily in Lithuanian.<sup>120</sup> For example, in August 2016 the library obtained 162 books in the Lithuanian language and 103 books in Russian. According to the library website, weekly and monthly magazines are also available in both languages with a similar share in each.

The library staff consists of 20 people: two heads of branches, two librarians lending books, one archiver, one ethnographer, two librarians responsible for the children's section, two librarians responsible for the adults' section, one responsible for the gallery,

<sup>120</sup> <http://biblioteka.visaginas.lt/> (accessed February 5, 2020).

one communications specialist, one IT specialist, one technician responsible for infrastructure, one accountant, two cleaners, a director, deputy director and a director's secretary. Dedicated areas for children with suitable literature, board games and activity spaces are available in the main branch. Apart from this, both branches offer computers for use and free Wi-Fi. Around 8-10 events are offered a month, including such formats as lectures, nationally organized initiatives that have to be implemented by all regional libraries, exhibitions of local artists, and activities for school pupils (poem competitions, small exhibitions or book readings). However, the vast majority of events are aimed at small children visiting together with their parents. Most events hosted are frontal: they do not seek to activate their participants, with the only exception being workshops for younger children. Librarians themselves acknowledge that they attract mainly 'traditional' users. As one of their employees said in a research interview, in their view the library is a space for quiet introverts. This does not suggest that the library is aiming at a systematic broadening of its users to include teenagers and younger adults.

Accordingly, a programming of this space to activate and diversify its users is currently lacking. The arrangement of books is rather inconvenient, which makes it hard to find literature about a specific topic. There is a catalogue, but search functions are not very well organized. This is all the more disappointing as the library in fact possesses an impressive collection of books of antiquarian value, which could be presented as a separate section.<sup>121</sup> The largest area available for users is the reading room of the

<sup>121</sup> The collection includes several books that are more than one hundred years old, more than a hundred books from before 1960 and several hundred books from the 1970s.

main branch, tightly filled with worn bookshelves. As the storage space for books is very limited, a large number of books must be kept inside the reading room itself, making the browsing of books inconvenient and not leaving much room for reading arrangements. The basement area (originally intended to be used for events) is now humid and is therefore used neither for gatherings, nor for storing books. In addition, there are no complementary functions on offer, such as gastronomic services (a café), spaces for socializing and working together, or outside spaces in which to spend time.

Three major groups of the most intensive and systematic library users crystallized during the observations and research made in summer 2016 (including interviews with the library director and staff). The two groups that made up the largest part of the regular library users were children and the unemployed. These groups were recognizable both in terms of their regularity and types of usage. Children, as the most prominent group in the library's functioning, use the main branch's facilities for leisure activities, primarily after school. Despite the fact that the multimedia room possesses only 5-6 PCs, they are used actively by children to play video games or to browse the Internet. This area of the library is currently the most attractive and is used on a regular basis. However, it is also important to note that these users do not follow the functional plan of the building: i.e. school children spend their time in the newer multimedia room, and not in the reading room designed specifically for children. The second group regularly using the library's services identified during fieldwork are the unemployed. The statistics for 2016 showed that 11.7 percent of people are unemployed in Visaginas (Lietuvos darbo birža 2016). The number of unemployed people in town is highest in the 55+ age group. It was also possible to observe the dominance of this age group among the unemployed



using the library. In the same way as for children, for the unemployed access to computers and the Internet seems to be the most important part of the library services offered. The crucial role of the library as a public, free to use institution, is clearly recognizable in this case. Often isolated and not accepted in society, unemployed people can have problems sustaining their social life and cultural involvement. The third group currently using the library are the elderly. Based on our observations, we can suggest that elderly people are the only group intensively using the reading rooms and the offer of books, although they also make use of computers. They are equally quite well socialized within other institutions in town, such as the “Third Age University” within the “House of Culture”. Still, it is obvious that the classic mode of the library with quiet, analogue, book-centred and book-filled reading areas appeals only to the elderly, while other groups pay much more attention to digital and interactive infrastructures.

Although children form the group of the most intensive users of library services, their parents do not find suitable offerings in the current building. A large part of the missing visitors of the public library right now is middle-aged people. The multimedia equipment in the library is limited to Internet browsing and computer games: it therefore does not offer any added value for those who can do this freely at home or on mobile devices. Additionally, contrary to the children’s activities, there is no space offered for adults to spend a longer time in the building, like a café, sections with professional literature (for example, technical literature specifically for current INPP workers) or simply places to sit and read. And in general, a considerable part of the stock of books is rather old (with many dating from Soviet times) and not clearly catalogued. Attracting families in all their diversity could create connections between each other and hence between different social groups.

Reprogramming the library to appeal to different generations of a family could be a key element in both intensifying diversity of uses and social interaction among library visitors. Knowledge infrastructures then should be recognized as a key component in evolutions of families, and both notions should be open enough to allow experimentation and transformation over time.

Teenagers are not attracted to the library either. Generally, teenagers constitute a quite active part of Visaginas society at large. Perhaps the most important among the groups not using the library, while still considerably contributing to the town’s cultural life, is that of a creative subculture of young people. Currently, this group is mainly gathered around the Art Residence *The Tochka*: a spot for informal culture in this totally planned monofunctional town. *The Tochka* is located in a four storey late modernist red brick building, which used to host the “Soviet House of Creativity”. The building was provided by the municipality for free, while the community pays the utility costs of up to 5000 euros a year. *The Tochka*’s founder, Alex Urazov, used to be a pedagogue in informal education (working in the Youth Engagement Centre), hence initially the target group was young people in their late teens. However, by spring 2020 *The Tochka* also attracted young adults for craftsmanship, poetry evenings, screenings, table games, music making, costume making, roleplays, cosplays, chilling, etc. The place also functions as an informal hostel, hence those Visaginas visitors who embrace alternative culture and are used to ‘spartan conditions’, usually end up there.

*The Tochka* also provides an example of how overlapping spheres of physical place and virtual space can function as an alternative public institution. While as a physical place, it only exists since summer 2016, *The Tochka* has actually been connecting people



Fig. 5. *The Tochka*. Photo: Adrian Pedrazas Profumo.

with informal culture related interests into a loosely organized group since much earlier. *The Tochka* as a physical place became the agenda for this group after its leader Alex could no longer utilize the space of the Youth Engagement Centre, where he was employed as an extra-curricular pedagogue, according to his original vision. Now the redesign, upkeep and use of its physical place has become a key part of the collective's activities. There are opportunities to use workspaces and chillout areas, all designed with little budget and conveying a particular atmosphere through self-built furniture, dreamcatchers, background music and different forms of art displayed. Although this aura certainly cannot really appeal to every social group in town, it does encourage different forms of taking part in cultural life, be it through reading, creating or playing games. But equally, *The Tochka* is one of the virtual platforms for Visaginians living abroad to connect on Facebook. By targeting primarily alternative youth, *The Tochka* has significant potential for activating cultural life in town and is one of the key elements in the current process of the town's identity re-tooling (Fig. 5).

Alongside workshops, concerts and gatherings on different floors, *The Tochka* houses an extensive collection of books that are on display everywhere in the facilities. *The Tochka*'s founder believes that the casual display of books among other activities can make reading more attractive even to those who have not considered it before. These books are curated mostly by visitors themselves and therefore express their reading preferences. Hence, this bottom-up library offers an informal alternative to the mode of reading proposed by the town's public library. It also provides a space to be appropriated by its users: i.e. it not only allows, but encourages users to be active and creative. Whereas the public library's spaces and activities suggest rather pre-defined passive modes of usage, *The Tochka* not

only replaces functions of the library with regard to reading (at least for informal culture youth), but also offers an alternative events program. *The Tochka* can be seen as a striking counter-example to the programming of the Visaginas Public Library and, therefore, as evidence for why culturally engaged youth tend to stay away. Should we look at the phenomenon that more young people use *The Tochka* than the library itself as an act of exclusion, or rather as one of self-exclusion? In the end, it should be evaluated as a mixture of both. The community of the Art Residency pointed out that they do feel excluded from formal institutions, simply because official youth centres and the library do not have much to offer that fits their interests. In addition, the need to pay for services at such workshop-oriented institutions as the House of Creation is another aspect of exclusion.

However, the mode in which *The Tochka* functions creates a situation of self-encapsulation in a parallel informal structure. This is not necessarily meant here as a negative feature: it rather indicates that the concept of *The Tochka* is attractive only for certain types of users. Although its community members mentioned that they are open to welcome everyone for their workshops and gatherings, it is difficult to imagine a lot of people who do not belong to the group of subcultural teenagers or young adults being attracted to the environment. We gathered from talks with young people in Visaginas that many feel excluded by *The Tochka*'s strong alternative identity as a place based primarily on communal belonging. In contradistinction to this, the library is a place where one can spend time without a strong commitment to the community. Thus, *The Tochka* might be described as a place of strong ties, whereas the library is a place of weak ties. It has been argued that "libraries are vital to today's teens in order for them to achieve a successful transition from

childhood to adulthood” (YALSA 2012, 3) and that it is crucial to signal to young people that they are a valued and welcome social group, especially within the formalized sociocultural landscape (Velásquez 2016). *The Tochka* offers an alternative view of this transition, but its excluded status questions whether young people are indeed welcome in wider society. However, the existence of both structures, the formal and informal, clearly offers potential for sharing functions and thus for achieving a vital productive social mix.

Several other formal and informal institutions and initiatives are attractors for teenagers and young adults, providing them with activities and places to spend time. One of the groups of young people present in town and not currently using the public library are the students of the “Visagino Technologijos Ir Verslo Profesinio Mokymo Centras” (TVPMC), a Vocational Training Centre located on the edge of the town. The students of this institution are barely integrated into the everyday life and cultural activities of Visaginas, and their activities are mostly restricted to the school’s own facilities. One of the key aims of the re-programming of the Visaginas public library was seen by us as that of creating an opportunity to start turning Visaginas into a student town with fast rhythms of population change and attracting incoming migration from the region. High quality public functions and the integration of students into the town’s cultural life are crucial for this goal. In this vein, one of the aims of our proposal for the new library’s program is to become a public connecting tissue between the Vocational Training Centre and Visaginas cultural and knowledge sectors. The TVPMC is already the strongest player in Visaginas urban development scenarios (see the chapter by Sjarhei Liubimau in this volume). In particular, it is the major institution in Visaginas (except for the still being dismantled INPP) attracting resources to the

town: people, knowledge and expertise, technology, workplaces, etc.

From the results of the analysis of social groups using and not using the library, insights can be drawn for potential hard and soft measures for the library. Institutions that attract a bigger audience often provide paid services, to which not everyone can have unlimited access. This is so not just because of the fee itself, but also because the services are strictly defined, so the purpose of spending time there is also rather limited. Currently, the public library is more accessible and affordable for a wider spectrum of social groups than other institutions of the cultural and knowledge sector in Visaginas. We see this in the two groups, children and the unemployed, who currently frequent the library on a regular basis and are attracted by it as an institution with free resources. These two groups’ at least partial deprivation from Internet use suggests that digitalization is not an even process. Constantly available mobile digital devices have changed the reading habits of most of the population, as today vast resources are available without the constraint of one’s location. Yet, although many books (and much information generally) are today digitalized, not all people have access to e-readers and most e-books are not free of charge. Not all people are as yet adapted to this technology. Moreover, some may not choose reading as a leisure activity. In the particular Visaginas case, the division between the Russian and Lithuanian languages may also play a role. The current version of Visaginas public library serves a predominantly monofunctional purpose: that of a place for reading and lending literature. Only free computers with the Internet, as well as events for young children, make it more diverse. Such a situation makes problematic the library’s appeal to most parts of the town’s population.

Parents of young children, young adults (especially freelancers and INPP employees), teenagers and students are key missing groups identified during the analysis. Our resulting presupposition was that these user groups will be attracted through a more integrative, easy-to-use and comfortable spatial program, as well as through better integration of the library into the broader Visaginas cultural landscape. The explanation for the poor usage of the library is not simply that people today read digital books, but also because the space is not welcoming and books that might attract potential readers are missing. Multiplying the library's functions, matching them to the existing needs of the population and mapping the library vis-à-vis the rest of the Visaginas cultural and knowledge sectors should make its environment a space for intergenerational encounter. The young creative people in Visaginas as a key missing group must be highlighted when discussing the future programming of the town's library. What comes quickly into sight when analyzing the structures of Visaginas society is that there is a gap between the town's subculture, mainly materialized through *The Tochka*, and the town's manifestation of culture and knowledge transmission in formal institutions. A connection between the formal cultural and knowledge sectors, the youth in town generally (students and young adults) and the subcultural community is needed in order to include more groups into public life. The library is a chance to establish such a bond: however, this can only be achieved through understanding the way these three fields can be related to each other via a single building's spatial program.

### The Design Process

Throughout their history, libraries have been constantly changing in relation to media, demographics and the reading practices of users. Today, there is an

argument that a library's programming should be viewed and evaluated first of all from the perspective of how multifunctional and diverse it is (Hacker 2005, 288). According to Sibel Ulucan, libraries are hybrid, because information supply is provided both in traditional material ways and in digital forms (Ulucan 2012, 87). However, the term "hybrid" can also be used to describe the cultural diversity of a multi-ethnic society, whose members use a library and thus make it a space for encounters with difference. In this light, an inspiring example for the LCU summer schools was that of the "Maunula House" in Helsinki, which had diversity and democracy as the main elements of its planning process. Functionally, this institution resembles a community centre, combining the functions of a library, workshop spaces, media rooms, a cafeteria, theatre stage, etc. In this infrastructure, diverse activities are organized by Helsinki City Library, Culture and Leisure, the Youth Department, and the Finnish Adult Education Centre in collaboration with Maunula House users.<sup>122</sup> The participation of future user groups in the planning process even before the first line was drawn, as well as participatory budgeting after the library was launched were essential parts of planning in this case.

Such a participatory approach was the first reference point and key principle for re-programming the Visaginas public library and for finding ways of establishing a synergy with other Visaginas institutions and communities. The design process was guided by the understanding that the re-programming of one particular building should be compatible with the development agenda for the entire town. Hence, two parallel spatial concepts were developed. On one hand, we proposed a restructuring of the library's modernist building by diversifying and expanding its functions, but at the same time retaining its mod-

<sup>122</sup> [https://maunulatalo.fi/?page\\_id=43](https://maunulatalo.fi/?page_id=43) (accessed June 19, 2020).



Fig. 6. Library main entrance.



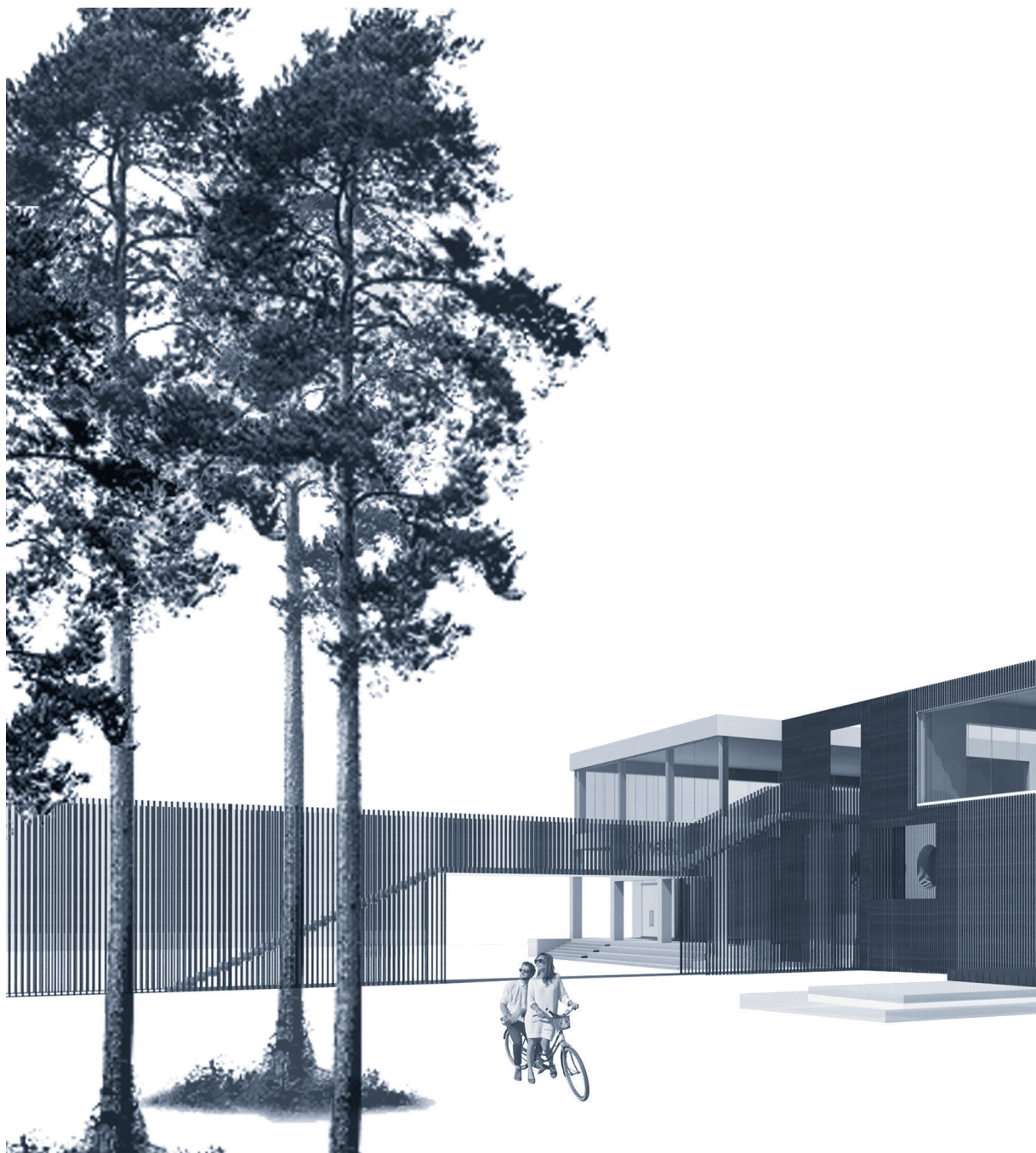
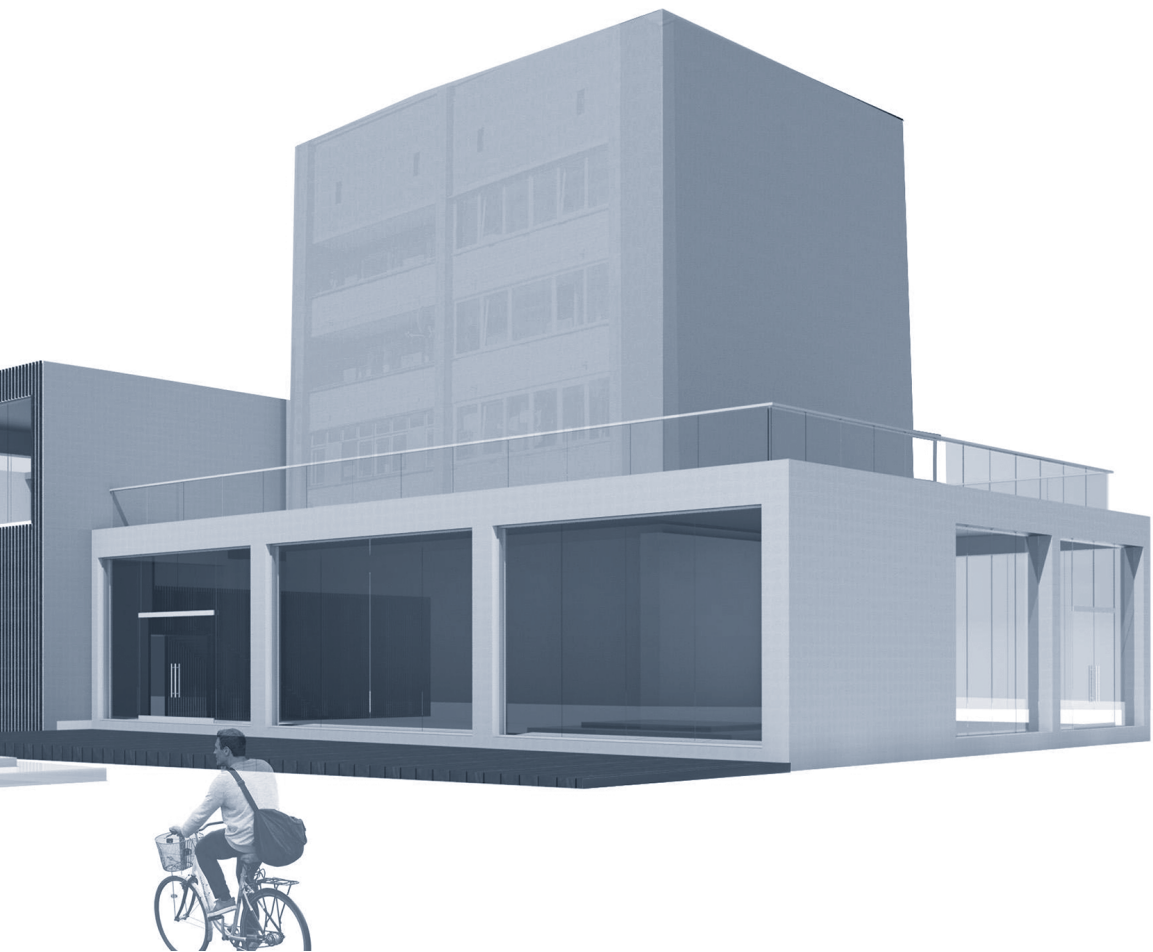


Fig. 7. Library view from Taikos street.





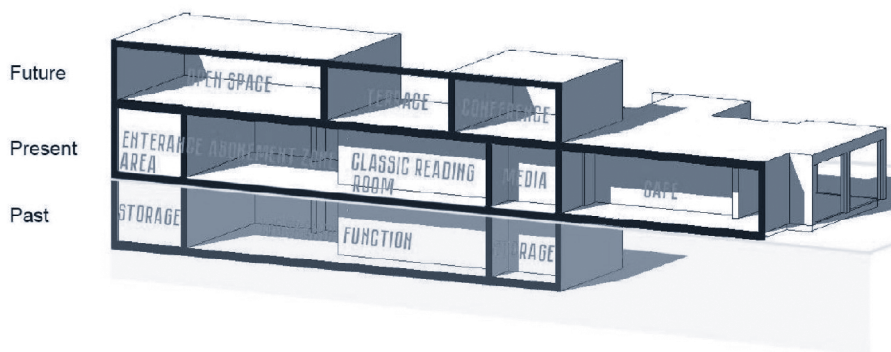


Fig. 8. Library zoning.

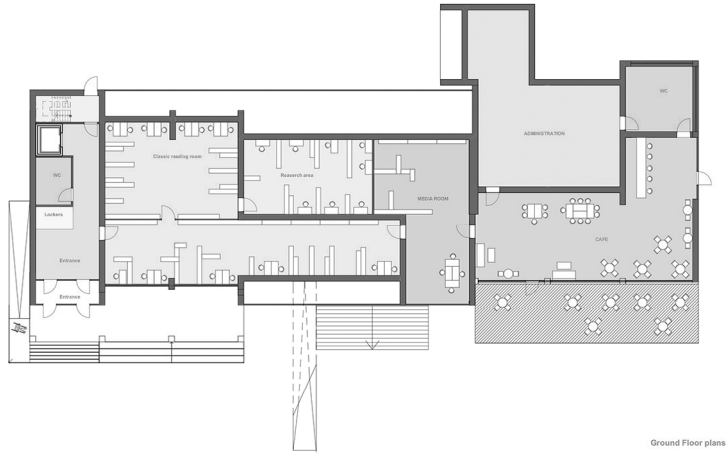
ernist spatial form; and the other, we also created a proposal for a “Knowledge Park”, a holistic and integrative frame for the knowledge and cultural offerings in Visaginas, which enables the public library’s main branch to function as a node within the wider sphere of cultural and knowledge producing activities in the town. The aim of the reprogramming of the library and the “Knowledge Park” is thus to densify the currently ambivalent relations within the already existing network of Visaginas institutions and communities, and thus generate new synergies.

The second reference point was embracing an up-to-date material-technological base for participatory processes: in other words, of integrating new types of media, new types of services, new management systems, organizational models for new offers and new ways to store and distribute information and knowledge (Ulucan 2012, 87). As pointed out in the description of the research process, one key problem that the library has is a lack of services attracting students, active subcultural youth and young adults (especially parents of young children). This was addressed by a focus group interview with Visaginas freelancers and part-time cultural sector workers during the 2019 Summer School. This discussion demonstrated that publicly subsidized spaces for individual and collaborative work as a distinct functional typology are lacking in town. Moreover, it indicated that the existence of such spaces would make the town more attractive for potential incoming migrants doing distance jobs. It was also clear that currently Visaginas freelancers remain rather atomized. Thus, by introducing different co-working spaces as connecting points, the library is projected to become a meeting point for people pursuing diverse goals. New facilities are supposed to be not just tools, but also meeting spaces and interaction multipliers.

In 2016, the participants of the summer school developed a framework for a functional programming of the expanded building of the library’s main branch. The decision was taken to leave the library in its present location as a homage to and continuation of the modernist plans for the town.<sup>123</sup> One dimension of this programming is about hard measures: about physical changes we propose to the library building, and sections which we propose need to be constructed to add purpose and functional identity to the existing building (Fig. 6, 7). Our vision involves adding an extra-floor and a staircase connecting this floor directly to the path area adjacent to the library, as well as redesigning and reprogramming each of the floors. These design solutions were conditioned by the current spatial context (the library being part of a residential building) and its construction limitations. The second dimension is soft programming: changing the building’s functions through non-constructed and non-material tools. In bringing these two dimensions together, we envisaged the three storeys of the library in a temporal framework: the ground floor for the present, the basement for the past and the first floor for the future (Fig. 8).

In the remainder of this text, the Summer School’s proposed programming is described and explained both on the level of spatial design and on a functional level. The different rooms of the expanded library building are intended to facilitate the library’s multifunctionality and to better integrate it with the

<sup>123</sup> Already in the previous work of the Laboratory of Critical Urbanism in Visaginas a question was articulated about what could be considered modernist heritage in Visaginas and under what conditions. See: Indre Ruseckaitė, “Visaginas – a Zoo of Soviet Architecture? An Interview with Marija Drėmaitė,” in Ackermann, Cope and Liubimau 2016, 35-39.



Ground Floor plans

Fig. 9. Ground level plan.

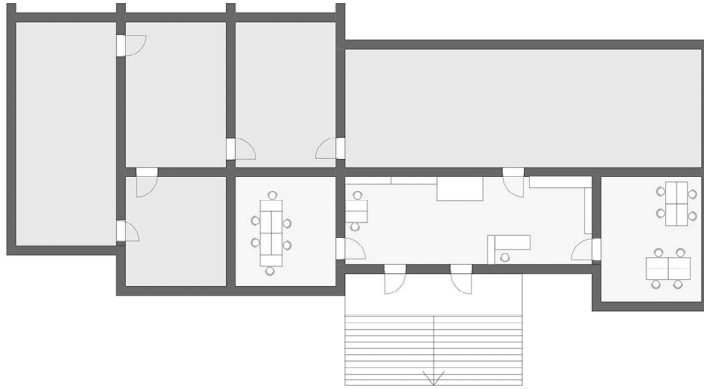


Fig. 10. Basement plan.



Fig. 11. First floor plan.

town's other institutions and communities. These all have different points of focus and offer specific types of media to attract currently underrepresented user groups. Moreover, the project also took into account the space of the town around the library, both in terms of the library's immediate surroundings and in envisaging the library as the institution functioning as the curator of a knowledge park to extend out into the 2nd and 3rd micro-districts. The aim in so doing is to make manifest a connection between the space of the town and the institution of the library, to posit knowledge as a key element of Visaginas identity past, present and future (albeit in different forms) and to suggest that the reprogramming of the library can play an active part in the reconfiguring of Visaginas identity in the light of the waning of the domination of the nuclear element. The goal was to suggest principles for the creation of a user-friendly space, which would trigger interest in what the library has to offer. Information panels, a public bookshelf curated by library personnel and a cultural program of screenings were discussed as components to achieve these goals. The café with its open side facing the street is intended to propose a seamless transition from the outside to the inner part of the library, offering an inviting, relaxing space for anyone walking by.

The main entrance area displays the library's offer through a changing, curated shelf and information about events and media. The large classic reading room is located right after the entrance, offering contemporary books and current press. It is in this room that lending is organized, so as to make it an easy and fast process for those who just want to borrow books and leave. In this reading room, a special focus is placed on literature about Visaginas, including books and booklets related to the TVPMC, to the House of Culture, to the library itself and to the municipality. This design of the reading room is light, as shelves

are replaced by work places and computers. Service counters enable communication if help is needed. This design makes the reading room attractive and usable for students wanting to do research on specific scientific topics and for current users of the library looking for a conventional reading space with stationary computers. Such a design aims to appeal to the needs of both TVPMC students as well as Visaginas working adults requiring scientific literature.

The ground level includes a new media room, which serves as an interactive mixed-use space between the café and the reading room, attracting people of all ages, especially younger ones with the newest communication, knowledge sharing and playing devices. E-books and audiobooks are accompanied by computer work and gaming places, movies and CDs. The room is used for the multimedia courses and workshops organized by the library in partnership with the other partners: from long established entities like "House of Creation" to individual skilled creators of music, film, web, animation, etc. (Fig. 9).

The reprogrammed basement of the building is intended to house various media archives, including the main publicly available archive for the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (this needs to be moved from the NPP in the light of dismantling). Besides, the basement houses a printing workshop, intended for all kinds of artisan practices related to paper books. This space does not just allow the process of printing a book from beginning to end, including binding and designing. It is also a space for experiments to produce all kinds of material forms of written texts in an era of the virtual circulation of information: from engraving texts to temporary tattoos and stencils. This space is co-curated together with representatives of other institutions who already accommodate these kinds of practices in workshop form: *The Tochka* and The House of Culture. The spaces marked on the

basement floor plan in light brown are intended to be used as storage areas, connected to the ground floor by a small elevator specifically to move books (Fig. 10).

The newly added upstairs area consists of two spaces. The first is an open space, which offers facilities for individual and group work: tables, relaxation areas with sofas and multifunctional furniture. The atmosphere of this room is enhanced by panoramic views to the adjacent park area and a cosy lighting solution made for both working and leisure. The second space is the conference room, separated from the open space by a terrace. It is used as a room for library staff meetings, and is available for town communities to host their events. Connections between the library and educational institutions in town are strengthened through the possibility of using the conference room for presentations, events and group working. In this configuration, the terrace with a direct entrance by stairs from the public park-like space in front of the library is functionally a 'bridge' space, open for the public (both library users and non-users) during working hours (Fig. 11).

Our proposal for the public library is as a flagship transformation: both a research grounded amplification of Visaginas as a small town with intensively developing cultural and knowledge sectors; and a principle for programming public space, adequate to this newly forming identity. The hard and soft measures proposed to the public library building's main branch are conceptually extended through the "Knowledge Park": an agenda of fostering and curating networks in the cultural and knowledge sectors, and of re-shaping the public space in the second and third micro-districts. Both micro-districts are intended for renovation with the use of structural funds in the 2020s, just as the older first micro-district was extensively renovated in the sec-

ond half of the 2010s. The "Knowledge Park" is thus a holistic integration of the new developments of the public library into urban scale processes. In terms of outdoor public space, it is projected as a path through the second and third micro-districts, with the main branch of the library as its central node. It consists of five different zones with the goal of turning unused or underused spaces into resources for cooperation between identified stakeholders, as well as between different identified user groups. In addition, this concept makes active use of the idea of recycling blocks of the panel housing, which today stand unused or unfinished in the districts (Fig. 12).

Zone 1 is formed by the space surrounding the library's main branch. Just in front of the building a sound installation enables a confrontation with the multilingual diversity of Visaginas inhabitants. Technically, this is projected as a space inside a circular structure formed out of eight blocks recycled from panel housing, each with its own speaker. Each speaker transmits a news stream in a particular language spoken by one of the ethnic groups to be found amongst town inhabitants. When standing in the centre, one would hear a disordered mixture of sounds, but on approaching one of the panels one can hear information more distinctly in a particular language (Fig. 13). In such a way, this installation constitutes a place for a hyper-intensive experience of multilingual and multicultural encounter. Besides, Zone I, being the closest to the library building, includes space designated for various sharing systems. The already existing book-sharing systems with small "book houses" are projected to be developed as a model for sharing toys for children and sports equipment. As a result, children gain more space to explore the city and to learn a more responsible use of resources.

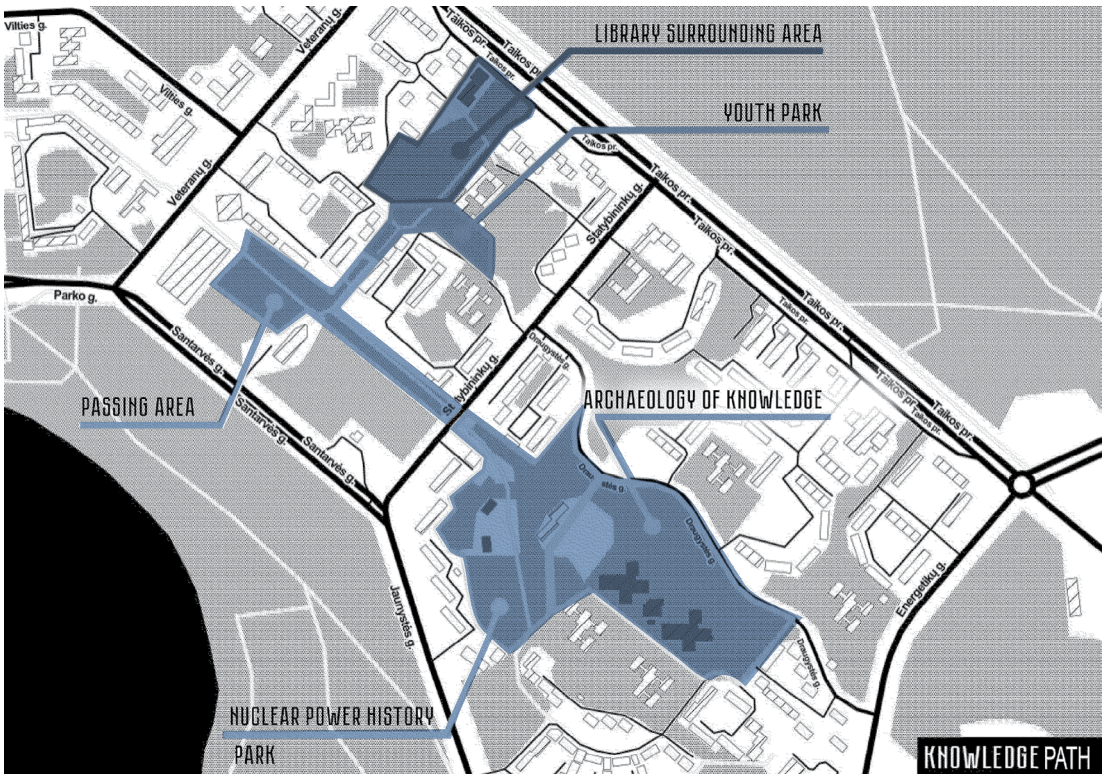


Fig. 12. Knowledge park zoning.

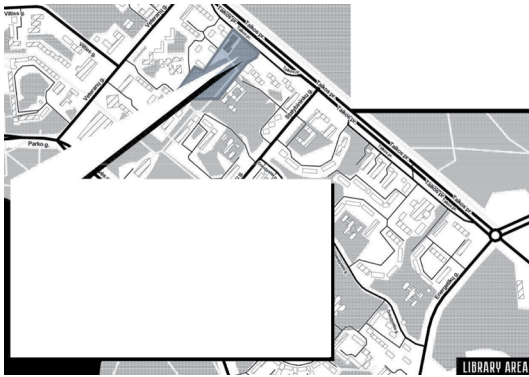


Fig. 13. Sound Installation "Knowledge Through Language".

Sound Installation "Knowledge Through Language"

Location: Library in micro-district 2

Typology: Media/information

Description: Sound installation

Cooperation: Library, artists in residence.

Zone 2, which encompasses a school area, a currently unused former sports arena and a sitting area in the form of a small amphitheatre, is functionally conceived as a Youth Park (Fig. 14). Here, pre-fabricated building blocks are again recombined, this time to form a scenography for children and young people to engage in activities that shape public space. The first of these projects reconfigures panel blocks to form a landscape for gardening. In this instance, it should be added that tenants domesticating the space adjacent to a residential building is a widely used approach to gardening in the context of post-socialist Lithuanian cities. Knowledge Park Zone 2 applies this practice to the realm of public institutions, whereby teachers would encourage and advise children in cultivating their own green spaces. Considering the merits of what kinds of plants would be valuable and could grow in these contexts is expected to encourage children to develop ideas about the ecological functions of urban greenery (Fig. 15).

Another use of transformed building blocks in this section is envisaged as enabling the display of literary graffiti. Through cooperation between teachers and artists, school children could use panels to experiment with street art as a way of expressing their responses to literature. This area forms an extension of activities by the school, the library and other informal learning institutions, such as *The Tochka*, and envisages them working together to take part in defining public space. Moreover, this area forms an extension of school learning activities and allows children to start understanding public space and experimenting with their potential to critically shape it. Finally, minor interventions and redesigning are envisaged to reprogram the amphitheatre and sports arena in this zone for leisure and sports activities, for instance by using panels to create a shelter for relaxing and meeting people.

Zone 3 is a passing area which aims to enhance the function of Sedulinos alėja as a pedestrian axis through the town. The idea for this transitional and public space is to make it the scene of an alternating "migrant of the month" exhibition documenting and presenting the migration story of a particular inhabitant. Labour migration is a crucial aspect of the town's history and current condition, however there is a lack of a public presence of this issue. Possible concepts for the town's multifunctionality should be critically aware of the diversity of migration and ethnic backgrounds of initial inhabitants and of their children today. There are institutions representing and cultivating this diversity, yet they are not in conversation with each other (see the chapter by Pentenrieder and Cope in this volume). On a series of panels, each month an individual migration story will be told through a diverse range of portraits, objects, stories, sounds and text. The aim is not only to convey an insight into the diversity of knowledge created through the experience of migration, but also to empower representatives of ethnic cultures and migrants as public space makers. The aim here is to nuance the ethnographic narratives, both those which place Visaginas as part of the Aukštaitija regional scale, but also those which highlight the diversity of ethnicities and migration backgrounds among the town's initial and current populations. In addition, this location is specifically intended for use by children. We propose to extend the existing recently constructed playground by including Soviet playground architecture and elements made from the concrete structures of abandoned buildings to create a possibility to playfully engage with the history and composition of the city.

Zone 4 is "The Nuclear History Park", devoted to nuclear science and engineering as the foundational cause of the town, and hence to the nuclear energy narrative of Visaginas. An open air history park



Fig. 14. Youth Park Sport Arena. Photo: Siarhei Liubimau.



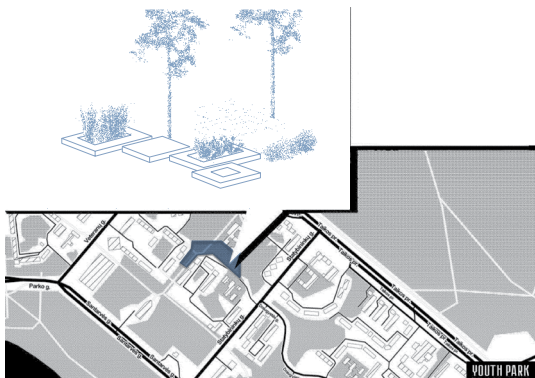


Fig. 15. Youth Park Gardening.

"Knowledge Through Cultivation"

Location: Library in micro-district 2

Typology: Experimental Gardening

Description: Children's Painting

Cooperation: Schools/Municipality

and its deliberately easily re-assembled structure equally address the temporal dimension of nuclear decommissioning: exhibitions are intended to change depending on the stage of the dismantling of the INPP and on the challenges related to the specific phase of servicing nuclear infrastructure (Fig. 16). Visitors can learn about the history, present and future of nuclear power, as well as about how it is discussed in various political contexts and dealt with in an everyday perspective. In terms of design, the prefabricated blocks left over on the site from two adjacent empty buildings are projected to be used to create a pavilion to house a periodically updated exhibition. This is based on the archive of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant to be stored in the library. Different aspects of nuclear history are told here in a form accessible to everyone. Pragmatically, Zone 4 addresses the aim of attracting bigger amounts of potential students and to turn Visaginas into an empirical field to research and learn about handling a nuclear power plant decommissioning process: both from a perspective of conversion of skills and infrastructures, and in terms of dealing with the socio-economic outcomes of de-industrialization. In addition, here it will also be possible to study the history of planned monofunctional Soviet towns and the history of Soviet nuclear power.

A monument of shrinking is the core idea of Zone 5: The Archaeology of Knowledge. The central objects of this zone are an abandoned school building and its surrounding amphitheatres. The aim is to symbolically transform the meaning of this abandoned site, filling it with temporary significance prior to possible future transformations. The monument is projected as an interactive information board about Visaginas and other cases of shrinking cities worldwide. It displays different causes and outcomes of urban shrinking, as well as different approaches to deal with this phenomenon. It also historicizes

shrinking as a feature of urban experience, and discusses attempts to project urban futures beyond the paradigm of growth (such as the wilding or de-growth movements). Zones 4 and 5 create a network of curating institutions and communities. These will be drawn from active groups connected to the town's history, such as the Chernobyl disaster liquidators (see the chapter by Germanavičius and Karalius in this volume), the Visaginas Builders Club, retired and current INPP workers and the currently most socially active town inhabitants. This is not only an infrastructural, but also an institutional innovation (this is the case for all the Knowledge Park zones, but it is most strongly articulated in the case of Zone 5). By operating a shared budget provided by the municipality, these active groups get the opportunity to discuss and contest, dialogically present and process, their own histories as well as the history of Visaginas in general. By meeting and leading the tours, elder citizens become an active part of the exhibitions and thus make history vivid.

## Conclusion

Our intention was to respond to a real need in Visaginas: that of developing a project for the revitalization of the town's public library. In this process, we were aware of two strategic issues determined by the town's wider structural context. The first strategic issue was how to marry Lithuanian national and external nuclear aspects in visions of Visaginas development and planning in a long-term perspective. The second strategic issue was how to retain and to further develop the exclusive material and human welfare infrastructures inherited by Visaginas from its active nuclear historical phase. The library was projected by us to become the material scaffolding for applied urbanist work on both strategic issues. Our starting point was that we should examine both



Fig. 16. History Park.



the infrastructure of the library and the place of the institution within configurations of the production, archiving and distribution of knowledge in and around the town after the INPP. Our aim was both that the library should respond to the diversification of the modes of knowledge production that are a marker of our times and that it should function as a public agora: understood both as an institution that is open to all social groups, including those excluded from other institutions, and as an institution whose main function is to bind the production of knowledge to the town.

We explored possibilities for Visaginas public library's hybridization institutionally and infrastructurally. A range of conclusions was made from our research. Firstly, the hybridity expected from current libraries – connecting paper books and associated reading practices with digital media – is not present in Visaginas public library. This leads to several social groups being barely or not at all attracted by the services provided. This concerns mainly teenagers, students, young adults, parents of young children and active members of ethnic communities existing in the town. Secondly, there are no links and cooperation contexts with the wide variety of other formal and informal institutions and communities. This atomizes the loose units of Visaginas cultural and knowledge sectors and hinders their integrated development. Thirdly, the physical space of the library is not diversified functionally. This deepens the problem of access to the library's resources and reduces the potential for social mixing and vital cross-cultural cross-generational encounter. Those conclusions were followed by the development of a range of design proposals.

In particular, we envisaged the reprogramming of the library as maintaining its modernist form within a holistic town plan, but instilling this with a

multi-functionality that suggests different levels of engagement with and use of the library, and new modes of the production, storing and sharing of ideas and information, including both new media and artisanal book-making. In programming multi-functional uses, we sought to provide features for those groups who currently are not attracted to the library, mainly teenagers, students, young adults, parents of young children, and active members of ethnic communities, as well as maintain the institution's openness to those groups, such as the unemployed, children and the elderly, who do currently use the space and who are at risk of social exclusion. In addition, in redesigning the library building we also envisage opportunities to accentuate cooperation with the wide variety of other formal and informal institutions and communities existing in town.

It was with this in mind that we developed the concept of the Knowledge Park as a frame for the integrated development of Visaginas cultural and knowledge sectors, as well as a principle of cooperation among communities and formal institutions related to knowledge production. In so doing, we intended to accentuate the role of the library as an institution bringing together the activities of other knowledge producing institutions in Visaginas in the process of the de-hermetization of relations between the town and the INPP. Thus, the Visaginas public library's main goal is to create new synergies and to bring a new constellation of actors into play in constructing the town's public sphere after the INPP has ceased to be the core knowledge infrastructure. Additionally, the Knowledge Park suggests a vision for public space development of the 2nd and 3rd micro-districts (up to now recent investment in Visaginas has prioritized the 1st micro-district). It is a frame for co-curating specific outdoor library zones together with other town institutions and individuals. It thereby creates an assertive intervention into

Visaginas society and establishes new links between the town's history, urban structure, ethnic and professional compositions and the developmental decisions already taken after the INPP decommissioning.

This intervention is specific enough in terms of the main stakeholders, users and goals to be achieved, yet is open enough in terms of pace and sequence of its realization. We accept that these plans are open for a variety of scenarios and that there can be drawbacks to their realization. However, these grounded in research visions have turned out to be specific enough to already stimulate active discussion among Visaginas dwellers and institutions about the future role of the town's public library. Based on our several years of research in Visaginas, we assert that knowledge production can serve as a key axis of determining the town's future development path.

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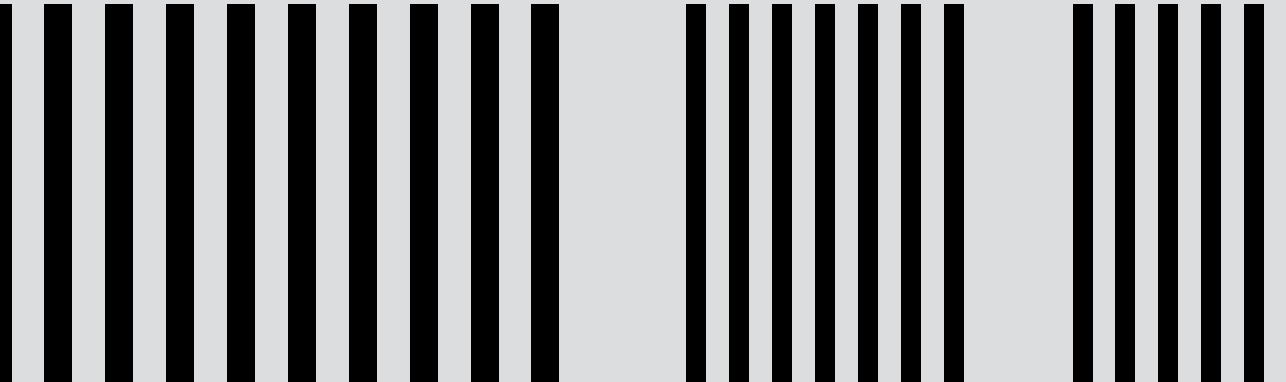
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