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УДК 711.01

TRANSFORMING MINSK: AN ACADEMIC APPROACH

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This paper presents the results of the workshop held at the University of Alicante focused on the transformation of Minsk central area. It should be taken into consideration the difficulties of the work as it was not possible to adapt the projects to the real situation of the city. The proposals try to offer an approach from a different culture and without profoundly knowing the precise conditions of Belarusian urbanism. Nevertheless the eleven proposals described introduce a general reflection on how to deal with the urban problems of a city with the characteristics of Minsk. In other words how to deal with the reconsideration of housing density, the transformation of plentiful open spaces, the specialization of several parts of the city, the mixture of land uses and the reuse of industrial areas, among others.

Introduction. The workshop was developed at the subject Urban Design (Urbanismo 6) which is in the last academic year of the Degree in Architecture. The five previous urbanism subjects are distributed from second year and have specific topics: urban history, public urban design, residential urban design, landscape and planning.

The sixth urbanism subject is focused on urban interventions and projects. A first

wierzenia miejscowego planu zagospodarowania przestrzennego terenu w rejonie ul. Polnej, Piłsudskiego, Wyszyńskiego, Parkowej, Sosnowej, Leśnej, Świdorskiej i Ogrodowej

**PROTECTION OF CULTURAL VALUES IN
RESORT TOWNS OF
WARSAW SUBURBAN ZONE**
Majewska Anna, Denis Malgorzata

In the second half of the nineteenth century, resort towns were built on divided land estates around Warsaw. Initially, they were inhabited by wealthier population of the capital, who was coming here for rest. Gradually these towns transformed into independent housing units, which still play a significant role in the structure of the settlement of Warsaw. Residential buildings are characteristic of these towns. Now they slowly degrade and is not always sufficiently protected by urban planning, while they could be an evidence of the identity of these settlements.

Поступила в редакцию 12.01.2015 г.

short part of the semester was devoted to analyse some projects according to the classification that professor Joan Busquets offered in his book *Cities X lines* [1]. Ten approaches of urbanistic projects are defined in his dissertation: key buildings with urban synergies; large urban artefacts; minimalist projects; urban space, landscape within the city; urban projects; the revival approach; large-scale landscape projects, decentralization; urban revitalization, historic centres and/or old fabrics; the urban master plan; and experimental projects, new urban concepts.

The second part of the semester was dedicated to a studio, the workshop on the central area of Minsk (Liahovka) whose results are shown in this paper. Each group has developed a proposal attached to one of the ten approaches of urbanistic projects defined by Busquets. Although there were several difficulties in the access to the information that the students have used, three important val-

uses in the development of the studio should be mentioned: the study of Minsk made by Anna Kravec [2], the helpful information provided by Yandex maps [3] and the remote but irreplaceable guidance of Prof. Vera Sysoyeva.

Another interesting aspect of the experience has been for the Spanish students to work in a totally different context. Mediterranean cities are compact and dense cities with an important mixture of activities and few open spaces. On the contrary the urban pattern of Minsk belongs to the Modern Movement urbanism which is characterized by considering the territory as an entire open and public space where buildings are situated [4]. Furthermore, the city has a lack of mixture of activities and maintains in its central area old industrial spaces.

The main part. The results of the Studio Workshop. As it has been mentioned each one of the eleven proposals made by a group of three or four students had to be attached to one of the ten urbanistic project approaches. The five selected lines have been: key buildings with urban synergies; large urban artefacts; urban space, landscape within the city; urban master plan; and urban projects.

Approach 1 - *key buildings* (Fig. 1-3). A proposal by Juan Carlos Canales Requena, Esther Fernández Nieto and Javier Gozábez Casanova is related to strategic projects and, specifically, belongs to the group of key buildings with urban strategies. In this case a new construction is proposed near the river Svislach at the end of the boulevard that connects the spit of land with the city centre.

After a study of the uses and activities around the city through the website <http://maps.yandex.ru>, it is revealed the lack of leisure and tourist activities. Thus, it is taken the decision to devote this land to this uses. The proposed building situated in this area is a project design by BIG (Bjarke Ingels Group) activity, the Amager Resource Center that besides the inside uses, includes a ski slope on the roof [5].

The new building not only offers the ski slope, but affords a superb view of the river and the city. The interior includes several sport and leisure facilities.

Also, the boulevard that connects to the city centre is design including more sportive and leisure areas mixed with commercial spaces and housing.

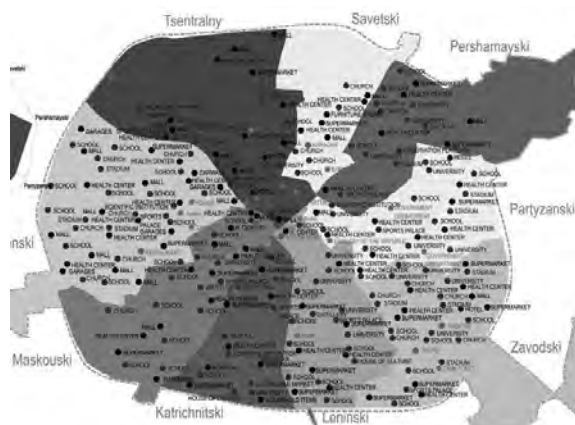


Fig. 1. Analysis of activities in Minsk

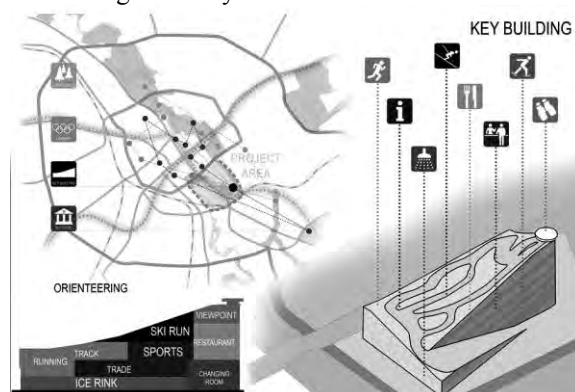


Fig. 2. New building proposed following BIG project



Fig. 3. New river façade

Approach 2 – *large urban artefacts* (Fig. 4-6). A proposal by Pablo Tomás Castelló, Carlos Lidón García and Alberto Navarro Sánchez is done under the guiding principle of creating an urban artefact in order to generate intermodal systems and actions on infrastructures.

In this case a new railway station and a platform bridge near the previous one is proposed with the following intentions. At a large scale two aims: on one hand to link the new station to the ring motorways of Minsk,

and on the other hand to provide a new connection through a transformed boulevard to the downtown. At a district scale the objective is to establish new relations between both neighbourhoods at both sides of the river.

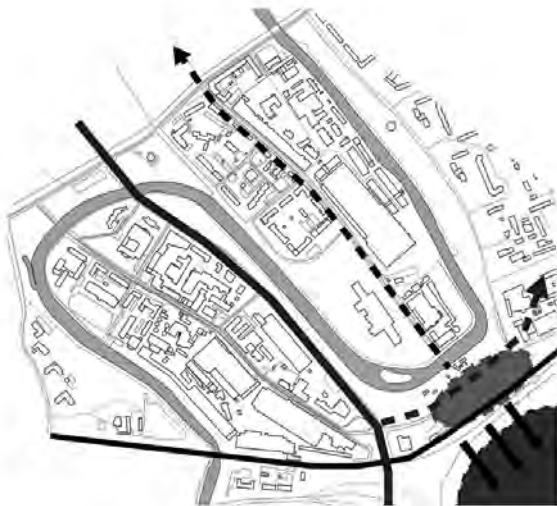


Fig. 4. Sketch of the position of the new railway station

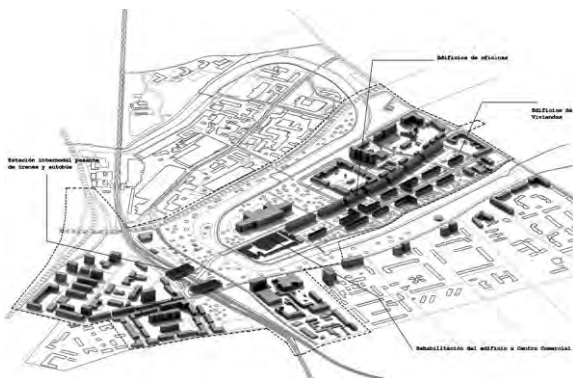


Fig. 5. Aerial view of the proposal

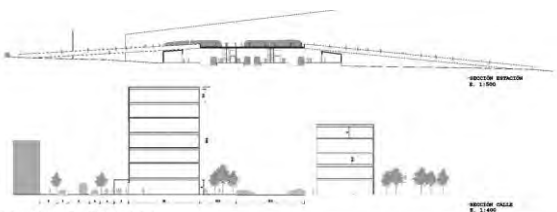


Fig. 6. Section of the platform over the railway

The intermodal condition of the new buildings and platform is to exchange motor traffic, the underground network, the tramway and buses lines, bicycle and pedestrian paths.

The last issue tackled is the transformation of the street that connects the new artefact to the city centre through a redesign

boulevard that includes not only residential housing but also commercial areas, offices and tertiary activities surface.

Approach 3 - *urban space, landscape within the city* (Fig. 7-9).

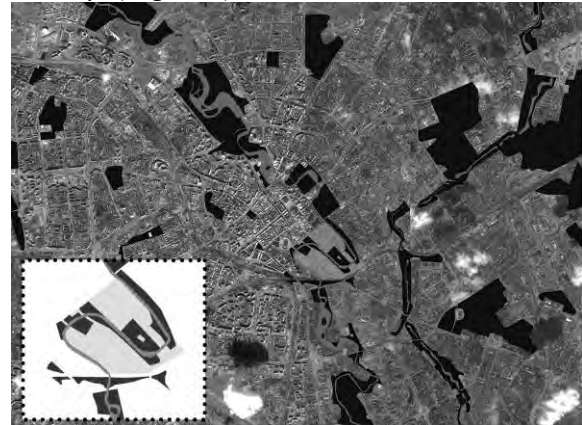


Fig. 7. Green areas and river Svislach in Minsk



Fig. 8. Green areas and river Svislach in central Minsk

A proposal by Enrique Climent Carlos, Rebeca F erez Alarc on and Vicent Ibi Pascual is set on the greenery areas and landscape of the Svislach river bank, crossing Minsk from north to south.

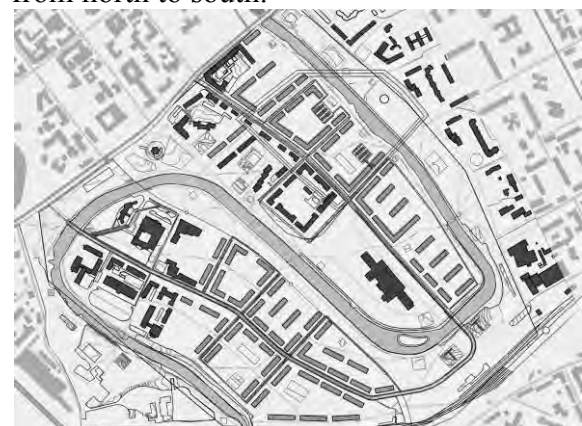


Fig. 9. Proposal for the central area of Minsk

Although along its course the river is provided with considerable green areas on both sides, the specific land in the central area has some discontinuities of the greenery.

In this context the aim of this project has a two-fold objective: first, is to assure the continuity of bank river greenery and, second, is to establish new relations between new residential areas and the river bank. The design of green open areas between the new housing buildings grades from open public spaces by the river to collective spaces and finally to private green areas related to ground floor houses or apartments.

Approach 4 - *the urban master plan* (Fig. 10-13). A proposal by Belén Aguilar Quesada, María Cabañero Ferriz and Andrea Montoya Galiana addresses the global scale of the city and not the central area that has been the object of the previous projects.



Fig. 10. Industrial areas which activity is changed

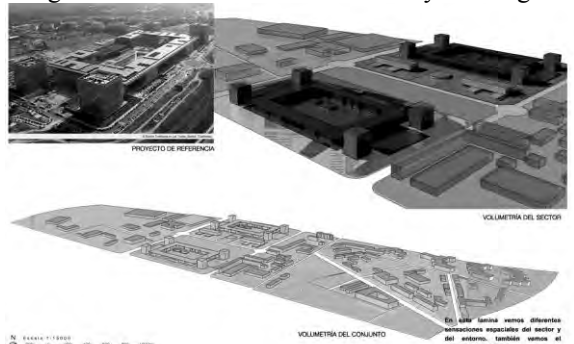


Fig. 11. Proposed design for the Business District

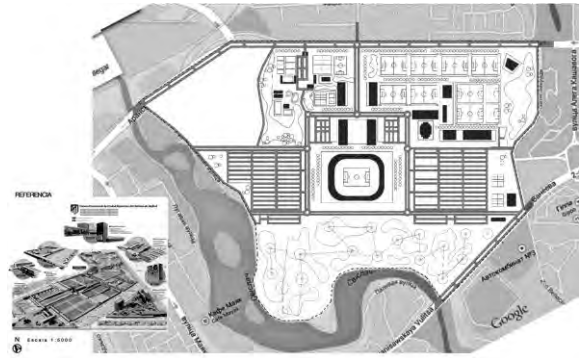


Fig. 12. Proposed design for the Sport City

After the first analysis about the predominant uses of land in each district of Minsk, several industrial areas have been selected as areas of new developments. Three different areas have been selected in order to try these changes out. The new activities and uses foreseen are a business district, a low density residential area and a sports city.

The reference for the business and financial district is the Telefonica Telecommunications City in Madrid [6] and it is situated near the ring roads that connect the main road network.



Fig. 13. Proposed design for the new Housing District

The other two sites, the sport and low density (detached and semidetached houses) areas are situated also well linked with the rest of the city and also near important green areas.

Approach 5 - *urban projects*. After the conversations with Prof. Vera Sysoyeva the authors of this paper thought that maybe the focus should be placed on this specific approach with different proposals that show different ways of increasing the urban density (housing, commercial activity, public fa-

cilities...) in the central area of the city. Here 7 different proposals for Liahovka area which can be classified as urban projects are represented.

The first one (5a) by José Díaz Molla, Luis Ortiz Martinez, Ignacio, Ramos Pinedo and Manuel Sempere Díaz (Fig. 14-16) tries to face the low density of the central area of Minsk, together with the abundance of open spaces without a clear use and position.

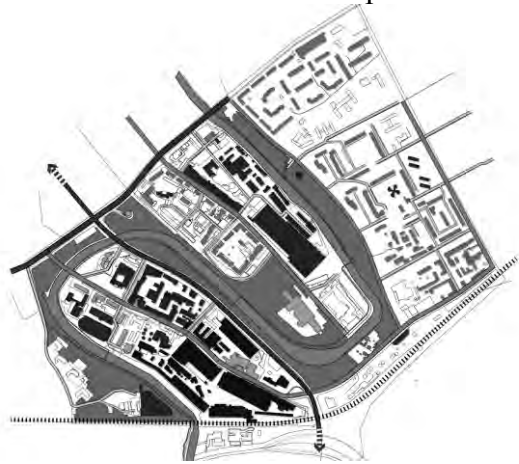


Fig. 14. The neighbourhoods and their relations

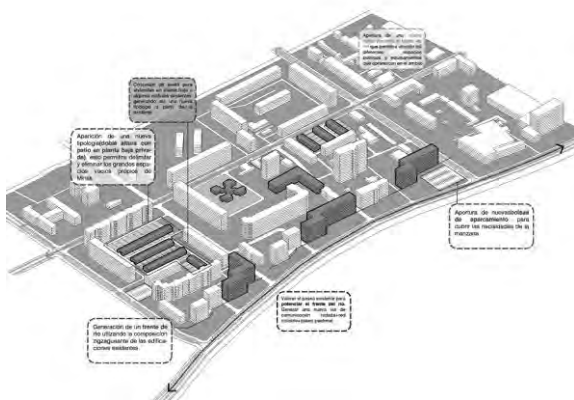


Fig. 15. New residential buildings proposed

The proposed way of raising density is not by inserting new high buildings as some of the existing residential blocks are multi-storey buildings of more than 10 floors, but to raise the density and reduce open public spaces in order to leave the ones that can offer recognised open areas with an objective in the open spaces network.

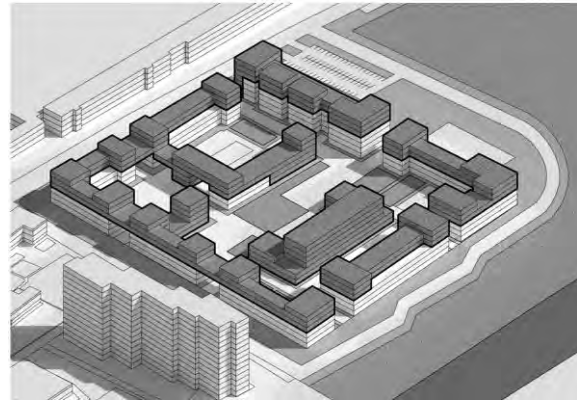


Fig. 16. Green areas and river Svislach in central Minsk

Two examples developed in this area are:

- The occupation of several previous open spaces and privatisation others for first floor houses and leaving the rest of open spaces to become an organised network of defined spaces around the city. In this example that belongs to the front part of the river, the occupation tries to offer a façade to the river and clarify which are the entrances to the city from the riverside.

- The second example of transformation of a block is based in traditional city centre increase of constructions surface, raising existent buildings and occupying empty inner spaces, including new housing typologies.

Other considerations related to this proposal are: the reuse of old industrial areas; mixture of uses in the new transformed blocks; and new pedestrian relations among the residential districts through a new bridge that crosses river Svislach offering a cross-connection.

Next proposals work on both loops of the river and try to change clearly the character of the area by introducing new urban typologies, trying to maintain the existing industrial heritage when possible, and empowering the presence of the “green diameter” of Minsk.

The proposal by Soledad Andreu Medina, Irene Cortizo Jiménez y Cristina Sotos Solano (5b) creates a new urban grid which tries to increase the links between the adjacent areas by revisiting the idea of mat building (Fig. 17-19).

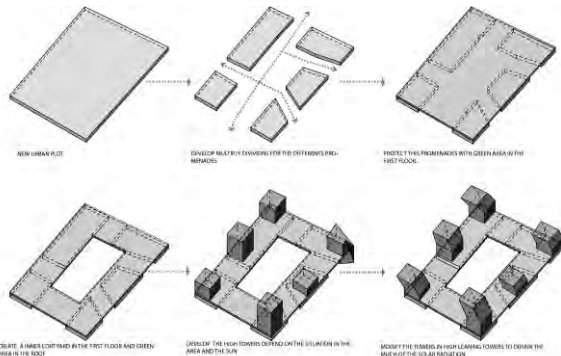


Fig. 17. Diverse new urban plots for the area

These “new” typologies are placed in plots that at the same time re-create the image of “corridor” street, lost in the outskirts of the city but still present in the central areas. The new urban structure provides also a protected pedestrian itinerary in the ground floor to preserve the activity on the streets during winter time.

Coming from Mediterranean understanding of the city the urban characteristics of the former plots from the Stalin era were really interesting, as they could show an example for a possible hybrid in between our different approach to the city.

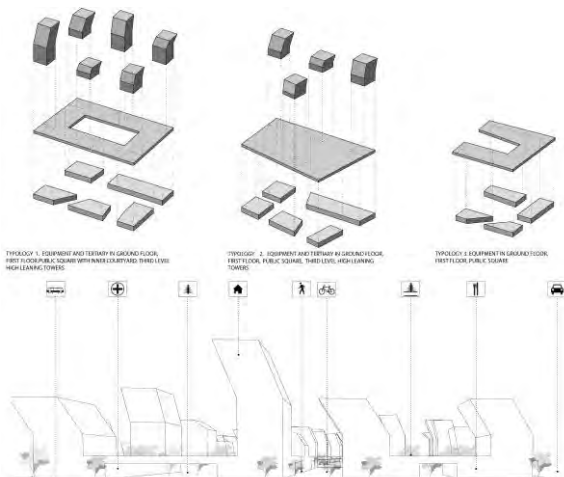


Fig. 18. Different typologies and new urban scale

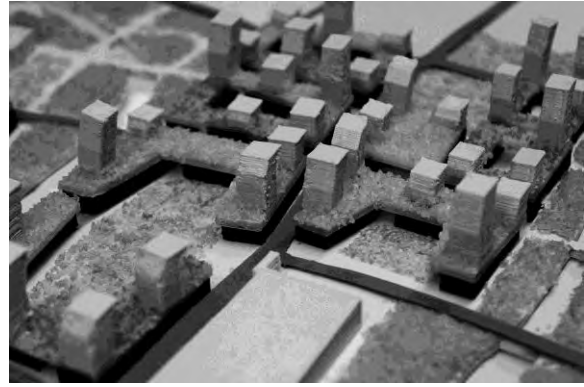


Fig. 19. Model of the proposal for the area

That is why four of student groups took them as a starting point for their work. Two of them try to create a new urban plot for the area while the other two propose modifications (extending, extruding, scaling or cutting) of the original ones.

To start with those who propose something “new” for the area, the proposal by Mercedes Muela Ripoll, Soledad Rico Vidal and Sonia Torres Galvañ (5c) brings the idea of trying to mix two of the urban patterns present in Minsk. The first is, once again, the street atmosphere from the city center. The second one is the presence of those “desire lines” (Fig. 20) in the city that can be found at grass or snow (human footprints).

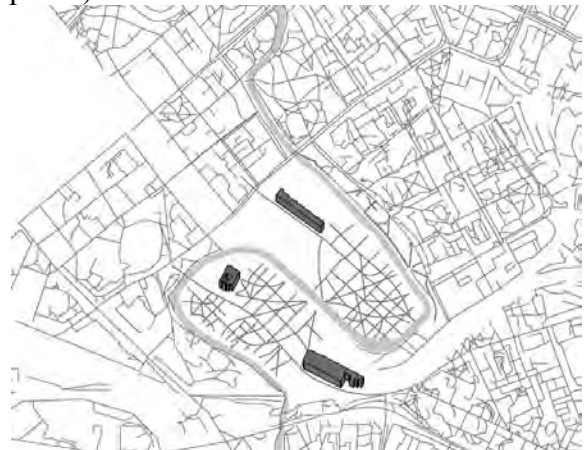


Fig. 20. Desire lines (existing and proposed)

The proposal contains two new urban typologies (patio and block) which solve a mixture in between an orthogonal grid and the free pedestrian movement created by the presence of the bridges and the urban facilities (existing and new ones). Using them they create a more dense area respecting

some of the former industrial heritage (Fig. 21,22).

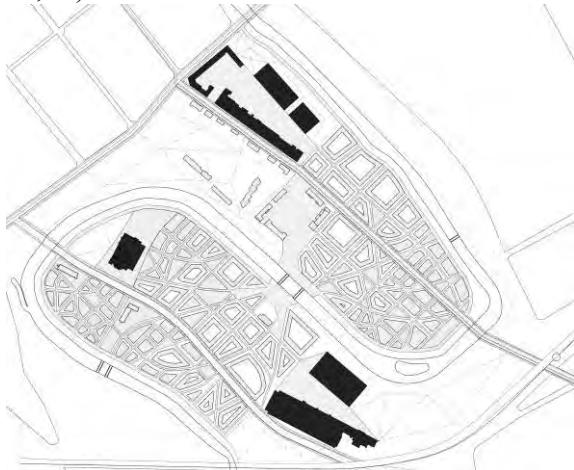


Fig. 21. Proposed densification of the area



Fig. 22. New "desire streets"

These "desire lines" can be found also on the proposal by Alfonso Melero Beviá, Ruben Martínez Sanchís and Rafael Miralles Armiñana (5d) presenting the adaptive streets that are based on the different movements on the site. Links with the surrounding areas are improved and a new loop (public transport one) based on the existing tramway is introduced to connect the whole area (including the new train station) with the rest of the city (Fig. 23,24). The result is a complex grid solved by the presence of two urban typologies which provide not only a varied public space but also a new urban skyline for the area (Fig. 25).

The next two proposals, as said before, try to work on the area introducing different variations of the former urban blocks. The one by Beatriz Antón Urrios, José Miguel Asencio Asencio and Jaime Simón Hernández (5e) underlines importance of the green

diameter for the city, not only as a real green lung, but mainly as a recreational area which concentrate the city life during spring and summer time (Fig. 26).



Fig. 23. Proposal for the area

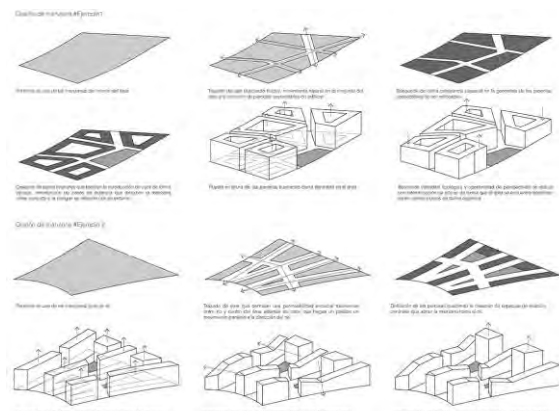


Fig. 24. Urban typologies and its development



Fig. 25. New skyline for Liahovka

The idea is to create a new "winter diameter" in the area (Fig. 27) attracting urban life during cold weather, and also providing a new experience of the city by crossing different atmospheres (natural vs. urban) while using it. As a result, the use of the diamond blocks which are in fact variations of the

existing ones in the area provides urban central areas linked to the main streets, plus “natural” zones as an empowering of the green diameter (Fig. 28,29).

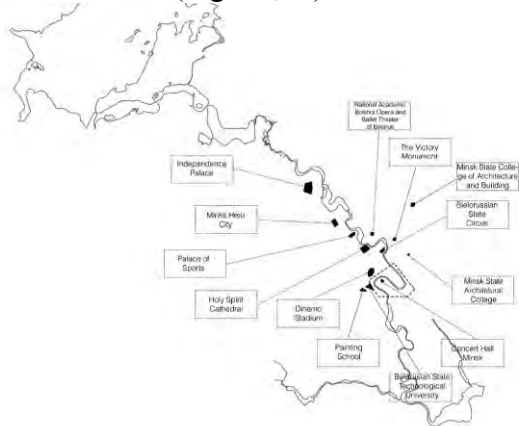


Fig. 26. Minsk Green Diameter

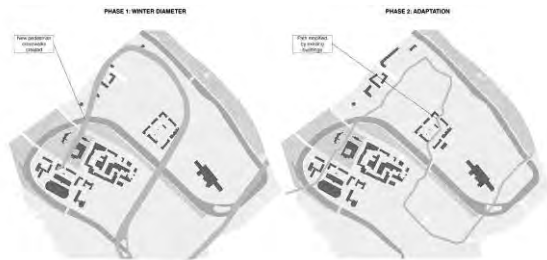


Fig. 27. New “Winter Diameter”



Fig. 28. General plan of the proposal



Fig. 29. Overall view of the model

The second proposal by Carolina Díaz de Argandoña Araujo, Raquel Plaza González,

Rosa Villaescusa Alfaro (5f) focuses its interest on the connections to the neighborhoods and provides a strong new character to the green diameter linking it to the existing industrial buildings as a buffer area for them.

The urban experience of the existing Stalin era blocks is the origin of the proposal. Some modifications of them are introduced to provide a possible densification process closing some of the existing openings, creating new parts of the blocks in the inner yards and adding a new version of the characteristic “altanas” that could be found at the city center.

Also different possibilities for the using of the interior space of the blocks as green areas, parking space but also as a commercial ground floor, again a possible inner path for winter times are provided (Fig. 30-32).

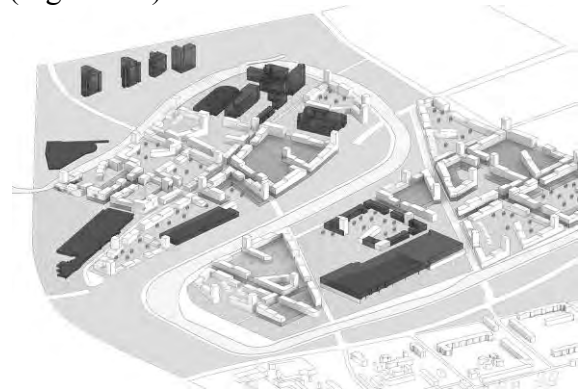


Fig. 30. Axonometric view of the proposal

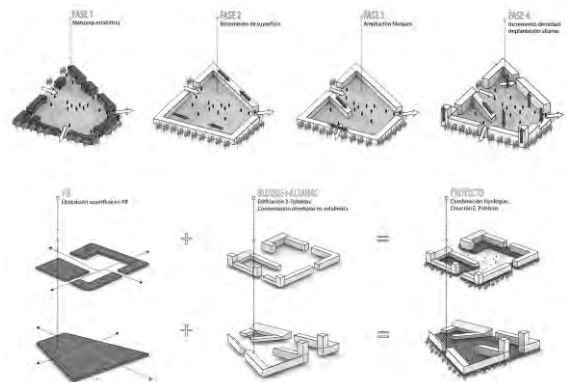


Fig. 31. Variations on the Stalin era blocks

Finally the proposal by José Luís Carratalá Rico, Elisabeth Ferrando Ferrando and Carlos Sanjuan Martínez (5g) works on a different scenario. Minsk is the central city

of Belarus and it is absorbing most of the potential of the country.

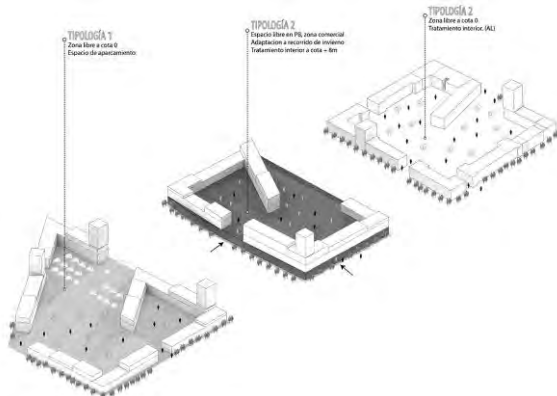


Fig. 32. Different uses for the inner yards

So a new site for a real central business area, a Minsk “downtown” is proposed to settle in Liahovka as a result of its central position in the city and strong presence of the green diameter (Fig. 33-36). Half of the area will be green, while the other half would become a high density urban area with skyscrapers till 30 storeys high, which takes Manhattan island, and its iconic views as a clear reference.

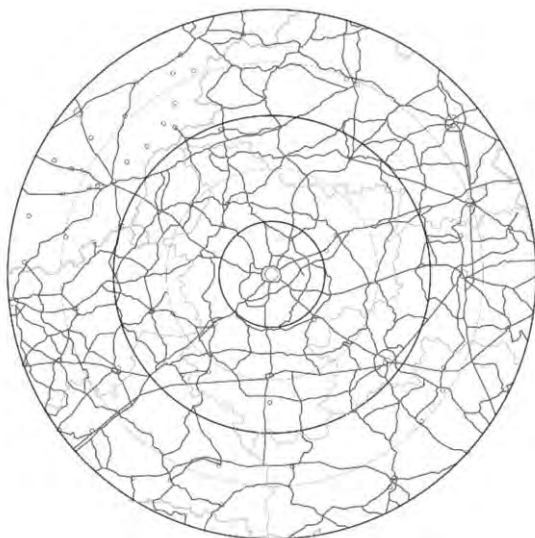


Fig. 33. Minsk center of Belarus

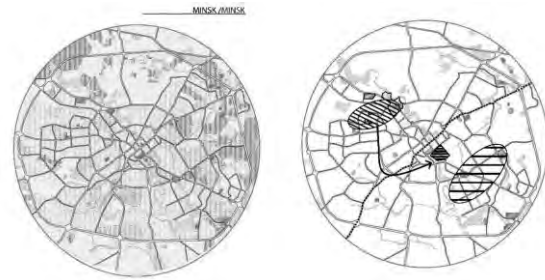


Fig. 34. Liahovka center of Minsk



Fig. 35. Green diameter vs. Downtown

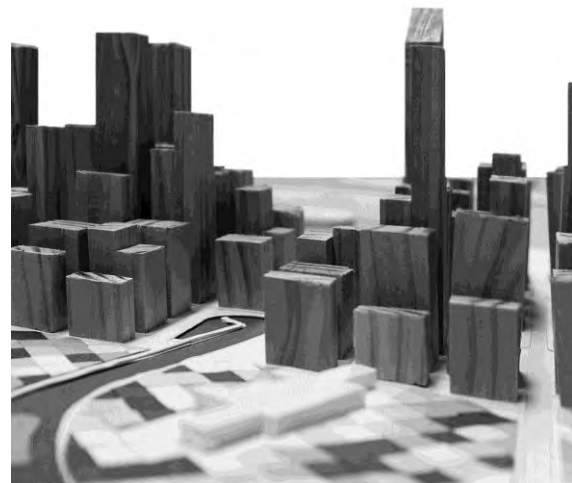


Fig. 36. Iconic views for the area

Conclusion. The result of the workshop, analysed through these eleven proposals, allows us think about the different approaches nowadays in a city. The projects should be considered just as a reflection on a certain urbanistic approaches as without knowing the real and actual planning conditions of Minsk it would not be possible to design true changes in the city.

In any case all these proposals offer a debate about the different strategies taken in account in each one. They offer independent approaches but the addition of several of them can also be considered as a mixed and compatible.

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**РЕКОНСТРУКЦИЯ ЧАСТИ ГОРОДА
МИНСКА В ХОДЕ КУРСОВОГО
ПРОЕКТИРОВАНИЯ**

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В работе представлены результаты курсового проектирования в университете Аликанте (Испания), по реконструкции центрального района Минска - Ляховки. Студенты попытались заочно освоить градостроительные условия незнакомого им города и дать свои предложения. Рассматриваются различные подходы, рекомендуемые для решения градостроительных задач в аналогичной ситуации: управление плотностью застройки, преобразование открытых анонимных пространств, насыщение городской среды общественными объектами, многофункциональное использование территорий, а также реконструкция промышленных территорий.

Поступила в редакцию 1.12.2014 г.