



ESTONIAN
ENTREPRENEURSHIP UNIVERSITY
OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Is effective and enterprising state democratic?

Town planning as an indicator of social effectiveness

Siim Sultson, Associate Professor of Art History, Head of The
Chair of Creative Industries



Totalitarian town planning. What is that?

- ▶ Totalitarian town planning is taken as something negative but meanwhile admirable.
- ▶ Similarly to totalitarian Italy and Germany Soviet Stalinist town planning seems anachronist but paradoxically embodying harmony and effectiveness.
- ▶ In the totalitarian countries strong ideologies were crystallised into *grandiose* and *ensembliste* memory carriers in architecture, town planning, as well.



Paris World Fair 1937. German Pavilion and Soviet Union Pavilion





Town planning as spirit of the time?

▶ Nevertheless the contemporaneous town planning was quite similar both in authoritarian and democratic countries.



Tallinn Freedom Square. Alar Kotli, Ernst Kesa, 1938



Giuseppe Terragni. Casa del Fascio. Como, 1932-36



Le Corbusier. Plan Voisin. Paris, 1925-26



Regular-shaped town planning: indicator of social effectiveness?

Strictly organised, axial town planning, wellknown since Roman times via renaissance and classicism upon the 20th century is rather functional in order to organise town gridline, to make state more effective, enterprising.



Lorenzo Bernini's colonnade and Via Concillazione (Vatican, 17th cent - early 1930s)



The National Mall. James McMillan plan. (Washington D.C., 1902)



Is axial and strict gridline of town totalitarian or just functional?

Strictly organised, axial town planning seemed to embody enterprising state tending to solve all social problems as effectively as possible.



St Nicholas Church (14th cent) and old town in Pärnu after WW II



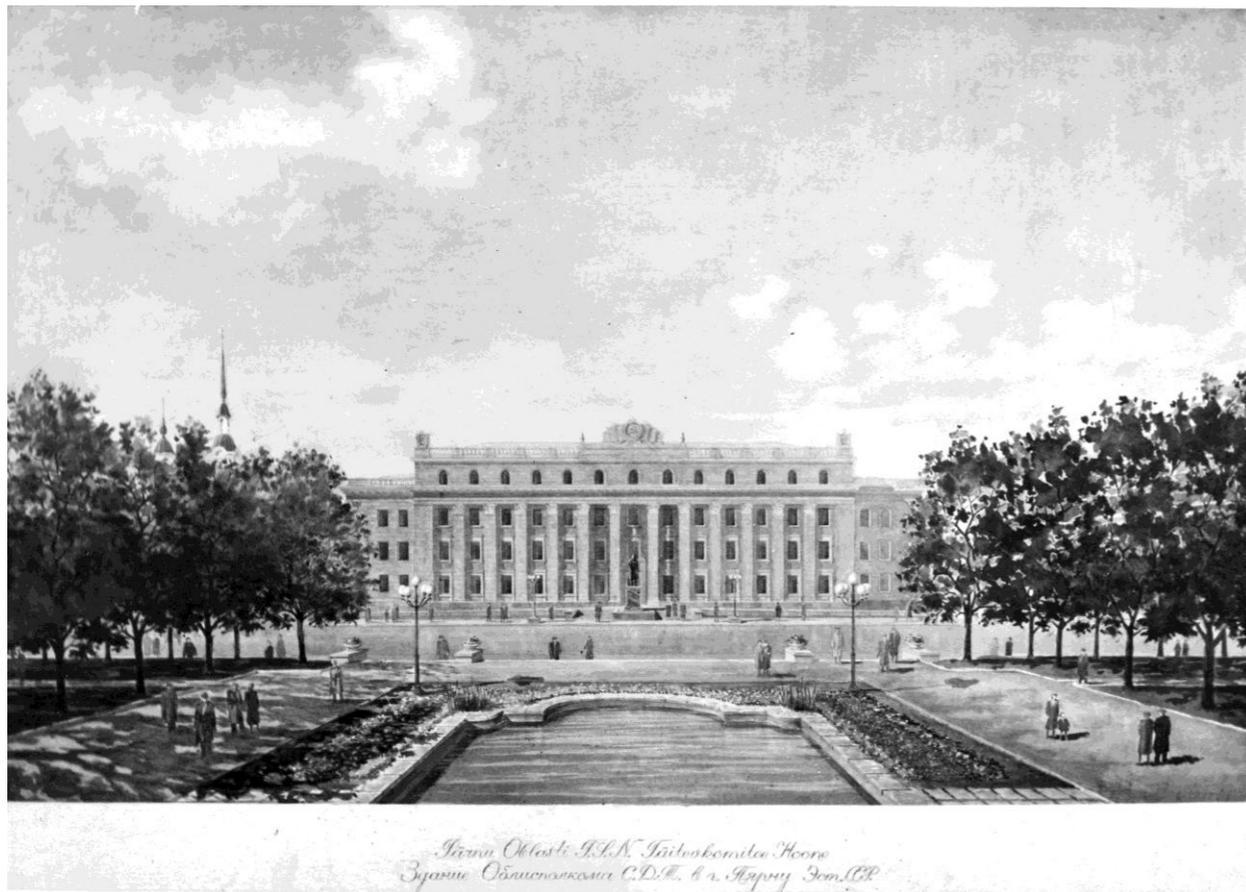
Explosion of Moscow Saviour Church, Dec 1932





Why did totalitarian systems use strictly organised, axial town planning?

- ▶ It seemed to embody peace, harmony and effectiveness.



Pärnu Central Square and local headquarters of communist party. Harald Arman, Mart Port. Model. 1952-1954



Boris Jofan, Boris Gelfreich, Vladimir Schuko. Palace of Soviets. Model. 1931



Could town planning be a projection of state?

- ▶ Platon's pyramide-shaped statemodel was static depicting eternally crystallised ideology ...



Albert Speer. Zeppelinfeld. Nuremberg, 1937, „cathedral of light“





Could town planning be an indicator of social effectiveness?

- ▶ According to Aristotle's dynamic state model the less democratic the state is the more effective, e.g. enterprising it seems to be.



Clockwise: Stalinist Moscow, Hitler-era Berlin, Stalinist Minsk





Merely a crystallisation of ceased ideology?



- ▶ Clockwise: Stalinist Kohtla-Järve, Sillamäe and Pärnu, early 1950s



Challenges for nowadays and the future

- ▶ There seem to exist quite effective examples of town plannings that are solved with rather enterprising methods in the world and in Estonia.
- ▶ On the other hand such town plannings are rather challenging to be handled by the local authorities, even by the states nowadays.
- ▶ Those axcially arranged representative, sometimes enormous town plannings are even nowadays fairly perspective by their functionality.
- ▶ Town planning as a memory support seems to be an indicator of social effectiveness.
- ▶ Effective and enterprising state does not tend to be democratic. On the other hand democratic states have always been interested in enterprising town planning.



Thank you!

