

# Svetlovodsk: Realized Urban Utopia of the USSR. A Revitalization Strategy for the Small Post-Soviet Monocity

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The article is devoted to one of the most pressing problems for the former Soviet Union—the problem of survival and development of the small mono-industry towns. The aim of this work is the actualization of the problem of survival and development of the small post-Soviet towns—the unique urban artifacts of the Soviet industrial utopia. Svetlovodsk that was created in the 60's of the twentieth century during 'Khrushchev's Thaw' gave the example for the analysis of the specificity of small towns in Ukraine. The strategy of the development of this type of towns has been described in the article.

As the Modern society is becoming increasingly predetermined by information and communication technologies, artistic practice is often reduced to a phenomenon called "counter-industry" by M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno, which is connected with total globalization and "post-capitalization of social reality". In this situation architecture has transformed into an instrument for fragmentation of urban environment by means of turning a city into a field of representation of individual economic and political aspirations on the background of glob-

al popular trends. What is more, social potential and ethical role of architectural and urban planning solutions are not often taken into consideration.

One of the most urgent issues at the moment is the necessity to work out conceptual and theoretical strategies of Modern cities development, taking into consideration their specific and typological features.

Development of small towns is one of the most challenging problems for most post-Soviet countries. This topic has been tackled by outstanding Russian and Ukrainian scholars and urbanists,

including Professor V. Glazychev and Professor A. Bouryak, whose works have become an important theoretical and practical contribution into the ongoing research into this issue.

A mono-profile city (monocity) is a populated area, where the entire economic activity is closely connected with the only enterprise or a group of integrated enterprises. This enterprise (or a group of enterprises) is referred to as a city-forming enterprise. In many monocities city-forming enterprises were related to military industry. Therefore, those monocities had the status of administrative territories with limited access.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, city-forming enterprises in a lot of monocities experienced deep economic crisis which entailed unfavourable social situation, causing the rise of unemployment in the first place.

Similar transformations befell Svetlovodsk. This town appeared after the Kremenchug Hydroelectric Power Plant had been built [figure 1]. The USSR's policy of the 60s (the period of "the cold war" with the USA) called for new megaprojects intended to demonstrate the scientific and technological might of the USSR. This came as a premise for the creation of the enormous water reserve at the Kremenchug Power Plant, now the biggest water reserve on the territory of Modern Ukraine. People who used to live on the flooded territory were relocated to a newly-created settlement called Khrushchev. In 1962 it was renamed Kremges, and in 1969 the town received its contemporary name—Svetlovodsk.

Throughout the whole Soviet period the town was undergoing the process of intensive urbanization. Major industrial estates emerged in the west-



Figure 1. Kremenchug Hydroelectric Power Plant, Svetlovodsk, October 2, 1959.

Photo from "Інтернет-видання Світловодськ" <http://svetlovodsk.com.ua>.

Figure 2. The drawing of the view of Svetlovodsk of 1961. Photo from the author from the town's museum, November 23, 2011.

Figure 3. Architect unknown (typical project), "The Pure Metals Plant", Svetlovodsk, built in the 60s. Recent image. Photo from the author, February 14, 2012.

Figure 4. Urban development strategy components. Diagram made by the author, April 11, 2012.

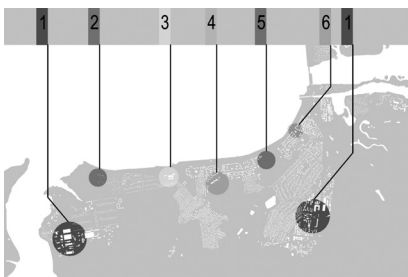
Figure 5. The concept of Svetlovodsk's museum—the part of cultural and educational complex. Visualization made by the author, May 7, 2012.



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ern and eastern areas of Svetlovodsk, thus forming the economic base of the town. Together with new enterprises there appeared housing estates and public buildings.

The development of the city evolved in accordance with the comprehensive plan which had been elaborated together with the key structures of the hydroelectric complex back in 1954. The main liv-

ing quarters of the town were located along the Kremenchug water reserve on the high forested Taburishchansky cape. The green grove together with the immense mirror-like surface of the man-made sea makes up picturesque scenery. The rectangular street grid of Svetlovodsk follows the topography and forms the architectural structure of the town [figure 2].

As the Soviet Union collapsed, Svetlovodsk saw a deep economic, social and cultural crisis, caused by the need for urgent adaptation to the specific character of emerging market economy and new social and cultural values that replaced the Soviet ideology. Numerous citizens had to leave the town in order to make their living.

The rupture of economic and political ties, which



had dominated throughout the Soviet time, brought forward the decline of Svetlovodsk's industry, mostly oriented towards the military sector of economy. The end of the socialistic utopia in 1991 stopped the intensive construction of gigantic plants in the newly-created industrial districts of the town (Revovka, Taburishche). Among them there were such enterprises as "The Pure Metals Plant" [figure 3], "Calculator Plant" and "Reinforced Concrete Products Plant". Built in the 60s and early 70s of the 20th century, in the period of rehabilitation of the Soviet avant-garde of the 20s, the plants of Svetlovodsk are valuable architectural monuments of the Soviet industrial age in its prime. Being large-scale architectural landmarks in the urban structure of this small town, the gigantic plants are now in decline. Most of them are towering over the cityscape, with their abandoned buildings resembling the skeletons of enormous extinct animals.

Taking into consideration the immense scale of these industrial enterprises, as well as their satisfactory technical condition and their cultural significance as artifacts of the Soviet architecture of the 60s, it seems rather timely and prospective to try to renovate these plants and adapt them to Modern economic reality. Renovation of Svetlovodsk's industrial enterprises can facilitate the search for new strategies of the development of the entire town.

Thus, the suggested analytical and design work addresses the alarming problem of small monoprofile post-Soviet towns on the example of Svetlovodsk. This paper represents an attempt to work out promising approaches for the solution of this problem and to suggest possible development strategies of similar monocities taking into account their specific features.

The analytical study of the town structure, added by the interview with representatives of local initiative groups, made it possible to outline the following major problems of Svetlovodsk:

- limited landscape and spatial resources of the territory
- disused green areas are turning into abandoned wasteland, their ecological and recreational capacity being untapped
- due to topography, Svetlovodsk is divided into two parts: low-lying areas and the hill
- Svetlovodsk stretches along the coastline of the water reserve, while other structural elements of the town have insufficient functional saturation
- there is only one highway that connects the town with the rest of the region
- most industrial estates are abandoned (about 74%), turning into depressive territories

The analytical study of the main problems of the

town and the existing solutions to the problem of small monocities survival and development brings forward the strategy of Svetlovodsk's further development as a service centre—the node that would accumulate various processes in the region and provide necessary services to the areas lying within its social and economic influence. As Svetlovodsk is surrounded mainly by villages and small urbanized settlements, the agricultural sector can naturally act as the main possible consumer of the services provided by the town. Thus, orientation towards agricultural needs can become a new strategic vector of the town. In this respect, we have analyzed the existing ties between Svetlovodsk and the region and singled out the following main city-forming nodes of the strategy [figure 4]:

- rehabilitation of industrial enterprises, installation of eco-friendly technologies and retrofitting to suit the new demands of the market
- development of the existing recreational and tourist capacity
- creation of a multi-functional agricultural service centre
- expansion of the existing regional hospital which can later grow into a major medical centre
- creating a public core in the centre of Svetlovodsk, by means of building a cultural and educational hub with agricultural orientation [figure 5]
- due maintenance of the embankment walking area

Functional zoning of the town with due account of sustainability issues is another burning problem of Svetlovodsk.

The suggested strategy of the town development provides for differentiation and intensification of agricultural and urban processes, which are now chaotically interwoven, by means of their concentration in buffer nodes. One these buffer nodes can be created on the basis of the renovated "Calculator Plant" which can be retrofitted into a multi-functional agricultural service centre attracting people from the surrounding rural areas. Creating such nodes is one of the key points of the strategy promising the economic rise of the town and expanding the sphere of its potential influence.

The problem of small post-Soviet monocities requires comprehensive multidisciplinary approach. The present paper devoted to the research of small town potential and development strategy on the example of Svetlovodsk represents an attempt to highlight this issue because of its relevance not only for Ukraine, but also for the majority of post-Soviet countries. This problem can only be solved if local initiative groups pull their effort and the European

Union provides its support, since sustainable social and economic development of small post-Soviet towns is an integral part of the whole European urban space.

## Notes

1. Vladislav Tyminski graduated at the Kharkov National University of Civil Engineering and Architecture in 2011. He is the author of five research articles and participant of three international conferences. A theme of his current research is the urban strategies of the development of small post-Soviet cities, on which his diploma work was based.

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