

I was born in 1988 on the verge of independence in Vilnius, capital of Lithuania. It was an interesting period with a lot of significant events happening around us. I say around us, because my generation haven't truly experience them directly.

After more than half a century under soviet occupation it was the time for revolution. Up until year 1991 the entire country had one goal – to be free, and this goal evoked numerous events of nation standing up against the Russian army with nothing more than their own presence. Such events like Baltic Way in year 1989 when human chain of 2.5 million people from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia arm to arm covered 650 kilometre distance from Vilnius to Tallinn; Rock March Festival when rock music rose from underground scenes and gathered masses to join the revolution. These are just few examples of what was the reality of that time and place.

But, we were kids, so even if our childhood was a bit different being born around the outbreak of revolution and encountered with two different systems – the socialist repression of Soviet Russia and rebirth of independent democratic Lithuania – doubtfully any of us had a chance to stand in the crowd or even understand the true meaning of the revolution. We only know the importance of that time from the stories told by our parents, teachers or other people who were in squares and alleys holding the Lithuanian flag that was forbidden for decades. Their experience is a history to us and the living monuments becomes our present experiences through their stories.

My Vilnius is full of spaces haunted by meanings, where structures are stuck in former time, because of the stories of someone's experiences were unveiled. Buildings like TV tower that is now a symbol of struggle for freedom, tells the story to me of my father and uncles rushing there the night of January 13th in 1991, the night when my family celebrated my third birthday, the night of thirteen people killed by Soviet army while trying to stop overtake of the tower.

This is not an uncommon story, but it's a story that comes back every time I'm there. I vividly remember the moment, long time after actual event when I was introduced to this piece of family's past by my grandmother. Instant point when the building started telling me a different story bringing that unreasonably uncomfortable feeling of being aware of your surroundings, that moment when the same place changed because of that information.

This text is about that realisation when the knowledge alters how we experience the space.

# Introduction

Knowledge in relation to space in this paper is referred to as piece of information about someone else's life events/experiences. It is not one's personal memory related to specific place that creates his/her particular relationship to it, nor tracing the full history of it. It's how you, a neutral impartial person, experience the space once you have that knowledge about the occurrences that did not affect you directly, but you can't separate one from another after you received that information. If

*"The experiencing of a spatial environment is characterised by emotional participation,"*

then your emotions are staged the moment you're faced with events that are related to a certain environment and someone else's story is now presented to you in a form of walls, windows and ceilings that are no longer only autonomous structures. It is irrelevant how that information, that story reaches you. The same way it's not significant if you get your first encounter with news from various media channels or a person, you are still aware of it even if you conclude your opinion about the matter after considering different sources. If you are diving deeper to the story or just being conscious about its existence it's still an add-on in your picture of a world.

In this topic it is important to define what is ascribed as a space: man-built structures that originally carried any basic functional need of that time such as shelter, isolation, living, working, transitional environment (A). In this context structures that were created for sole purpose of art are irrelevant, because they were designed with intention to interfere with emotions what makes them fundamentally subjective as they intentionally carry perceptual meaning (B). In the same sense natural setting is excluded for its powerful presence that a man had non/little control of in the first place and vice versa. City in this scenario is particularly interesting for being completely artificial creation or if we look at it as a 'blank slate' that people fill with different meanings.

Italo Calvino adequately defines the essence of a man-built environment in 'Invisible Cities'. The city that is not only the functional efficient machine, but the space where the past meets the present, the place where people indulged and the body of the city is a mirror of society and its experiences.

*"If humans are there, it is initially in spaces that have opened for them because, by inhabiting them, humans have given them form, content, extension and relative duration"<sup>2</sup>*



A



B

# Urban intimacy

City is continually changing its face as a consequence of various events that are inevitable companion of any society. It doesn't matter in what time of period structures are build, they are always created with intention to improve, to be better, however it's still just a room, our ordinary autonomous home, but by interfering we 'taint' them, mark with a meaning that repeats itself for others thru knowledge. Buildings become collectors of occurrences, encounters of characters that interact in that space and city is a place of discoveries in small and large scale.

For that reason the stories that are autonomous can have a little impact in society, but give a strong experience when you are in the place of occurrence. For example the loss of beloved one is considered to be an obvious emotional experience while particular historical events apply more for people that relate to a certain place culturally, so for them experience of related space is stronger than someone's that is not connected to it in a first place and in some situations a story becomes a phenomenon of masses.

In the same judgement, doubtful if functionalist utopia ever had a chance to be successful. Just like animals we mark the space that belong to us, or space that we adopt for the temporary usage. In most homes there are pictures, books, little bits and pieces that tell the story of their owner. The space is adapting and changing to every new person. If it is wallpaper, tiles or dents that become scars in this once clean space and links the past and present. If we take a look at any modernist urban environment that was intended to provide with a model of new equal society by giving uniform spaces inside and outside, we now see multi-coloured windows and insanely shaped balconies that bring headache to architects, but for every new possessor it is the inside to the former sole and structures itself telling the story of urban experiment.

*"They would not be viable human individuals, however, if they did not bring a dowry of memories of the symbiotic field and its enclosing power with them into the strange new land. It is the power to transfer the integral space that ultimately also overcomes the intruder trauma, the law of the disrupter like a new sibling—as if, in fact, it were a necessary element in its own system."<sup>3</sup>*

In situations when the structure is so distinctively related to the historical event it doesn't need one specific happening to evoke emotional association. Particular style of soviet buildings or fascist architecture connects the space with those time periods and people who encountered them, so the space doesn't necessarily embodies the single story, but the entire juncture of events. The obsession or the fascination with all its perceived emotions can be invoked by one space that is intertwined with the broad ratio.

*"At its beginning, every life goes through a phase in which a mild two-person illusion defines the world. Caring ecstasies enclose mothers and children in an amorous bell whose resonances remain, under all circumstances, a precondition for a successful life. Early on, however, the unified two become related to third, fourth and fifth elements; as the singular life ventures out of its initial shell, additional poles and larger spatial dimensions open up, each defining the extent of the developing and the developed connections, worries and participation. In fully-grown spheres, forces are at work that draw the individual into an illusion shared by millions. It seems impossible to live in a large societies without yielding in some measure to the delirium of one's tribe."<sup>4</sup>*

# Story becomes a fascination

When the event is so powerful that it reaches masses it becomes a form of fascination. Every city has an icon, the structure that became an attraction and draws people to it because of that one event that erased initial intent and the unseen presence of the story overpowers the physical expression. Spaces where future events are no longer welcome. The building becomes the tombstone where experience is preserved or even exposed as a statue and the sole purpose of space is erased. Like Anne Frank house where the life of the building stopped after the last occupant. The impact of the story was understood by many and the obsession draws thousands to experience the presence of one's now absent appearance.

*"... the feeling of absence is a source of desire; desire towards the person, thing or place that is absent."<sup>75</sup>*

In case of Anne Frank house the most ordinary space was turned into the object of fascination. Just as TV tower in Vilnius (C) the space by itself doesn't tell the story that turned it into an iconic structure, but the knowledge of the event makes us look at it from a different angle. The event is absent and the building is there though they both are intertwined for imminent future and at times when event was so powerful even the absence of a structure evokes the uncomfortable awareness of a happening. Just like Twin Towers of NY where the footprint of former structures is understood by most and the emotions that the absence carries.

*"Rather, as an ambiguous interrelation between what is there and what is not, absences are cultural, physical and social phenomena that powerfully influence people's conceptualizations of themselves and the world they engage with"<sup>76</sup>*

In a sense, once the space is marked by the event, it becomes its present forever. We tend desperately not to forget and in the cases when experience is owned by masses the structure gets new purpose – to remind and repeat for every arrival. It's no longer the place that indulges and creates new experiences, it's a place where that particular one is contained and even the image of it programmes the emotion (D).



D



C

5+6 MIKKEL BILLE, FRIDA HASTRUP/TIM FLOHR SØRENSEN  
'AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF ABSENCE- MATERIALIZATIONS OF  
TRANSCENDENCE AND LOSS'

C - TV TOWER IN VILNIUS, LITHUANIA. ON JANUARY 13, 1991 AS THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE USSR REACHED A FRENZIED  
PAGE AND MOSCOW ATTEMPTED TO RETAKE CONTROL OF THE LITHUANIAN MEDIA, SOVIET TANKS SURROUNDED IT IN AN  
ASSAULT THAT KILLED 13 UNARMED CIVILIANS. THE TOWER HAS SINCE BECOME A POTENT LITHUANIAN SYMBOL.

D - ONCE I STARTED PHOTOGRAPHING THEM IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO BE MOVED  
BY WHAT THE BUILDINGS SYMBOLIZED AND WHAT THEY HAVE WITNESSED.  
JONATHAN ANDREW 'WAZ BUNKERS'

# Anonymous story

The fascination that attracted Jonathan Andrew to seek World War II bunkers, the structures that capture the great obsession of a story shared by many. But here, the frame and the scenography of the series becomes much more interesting when you know that in the process of making the photographer was lighting up the structures from different angles in each and every frame. Now you are looking for the traces of man in the frame, so the man and the knowledge becomes your fascination. This 'discovery', the moment a space so familiar becomes different and you become aware about the presence of a post-event is the core of human-space relationship.

*"Should not we define a city as a place where the surprise of discoveries and encounters is the major potential, the main productive force? Micro-or macro-events occurring in a city are not a side-effect of urban life, but the very substance of urbanity. That is why what can fascinate in the city is not only specific items of the city but the city itself, the city as the unplanned programme of unexpected experience."*<sup>7</sup>

In the anonymous everyday structures these 'revelations' appear through traces of someone else, the hints that link you to that someone. It is what Sloterdijk refers to a death of the sphere, a small scale emergency sublated into products of things, when ordinary events manifests in a physical form of everyday items and continues to live in a form of knowledge. Magazines, a picture in your new home of an old tenant are hints of the event, presence of someone's absence, so the physical (the thing) becomes the event. In that form that other person's former interaction in that space is the event and being aware of it is the past's interference with presence. The item is a medium now, a link between two.

In the contexts of your home it is an intruder, an uninvited interruption in the space that belongs to you, because you are the present and this is your world, the space where you are exposed. It is understandable why such encounter is not usually welcome in the intimate space of one's home. The moment it's yours you erase all traces that suggest the existence of someone that lived, used and interacted with it. The hints that reveal unexpectedly create the idea of a person, like a shadow in the world of my presence; a space is tainted with the post-presence of him and the nail in the wall is not just a nail anymore, it was the action of him.

*"They would not be viable human individuals, however, if they would not bring a dowry of memories of the symbiotic field and its enclosing power with them into the strange new land. It is the power to transfer the integral space that ultimately also overcomes the intruder trauma, the law of the disrupter like a new sibling-as if, in fact, it were a necessary element in its own system."*<sup>8</sup>

# From physical to emotional

The power that is inclined to the everyday objects in the small scale of your private space is the fascination, the obsession driven by knowledge. At this point we can make a conviction that the same space with the same ingredients can be divided into before and now and the link that relates one to another is the knowledge.

Let's place them in two sides, two separate worlds. In one there's now, it's you, the present and the physical. It is a blank space with ordinary physical elements- walls, tables, cupboards and chairs – that you know from your own interrelation. On the other one there's before, the former figure, the event or experience, the emotional (to attach emotional only to the past event is necessary, for the reason that the memories, which create one's personal relationship with the space, in this context are irrelevant).

This division shows the significance of the link that bind two together. The point when surreal becomes real or in this case real becomes surreal, physical becomes emotional - the thing is the event. This link, this overlap of two is the connection between two anonymous, as Stoterdijk points – intimacy is the realm of surreal autogenous containers. The experiences shared through spaces and objects, items of everyday surroundings that preserves the stories of one's life, hinges from physical to emotional worlds.