The path towards sustainable urban regeneration in Vilnius
CASE STUDY

The path towards sustainable urban regeneration in Vilnius
This case study is part of a bigger capitalisation initiative set by the URBACT programme for 2014–2015 with the objective to present to cities local good practices about:

- **New urban economies**
- **Jobs for young people in cities**
- **Social innovation in cities**
- **Sustainable regeneration in urban areas**

These four topics have been explored by four URBACT working groups (workstreams), composed of multidisciplinary stakeholders across Europe such as urban practitioners and experts from URBACT, representatives from European universities, European programmes and international organisations working on these issues.

The case study on Vilnius (Lithuania) is one of the concrete results of the URBACT workstream 'Sustainable regeneration in urban areas', after collection of data, a study visit, and interviews with local stakeholders.

It explores the context of the city, evolution of practices over time, challenges and steps for success. The first part of the case study summarises the key points of the practice, while the second part (analytical template) provides more details for those interested in transferring the practice to their local context.

*We hope this shall be an inspiration for you and your city!*

**The URBACT Secretariat**
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Like most post-communist cities in Europe, Vilnius faces a number of pressing urban development and regeneration challenges—uncontrolled urban sprawl, a large stock of out-dated multi-family buildings, vast brownfield sites awaiting redevelopment… How to deal with the complex requirements that these challenges pose? In countries where urban regeneration started only after communism, trying to achieve sustainable urban regeneration is to be understood as a gradual process of improvement or ‘stepping up’ efforts, where learning from past experiences is crucial. In this article, we discuss the experience of Vilnius by drawing on concrete and ongoing examples of urban regeneration, each of which include, to different degrees, elements of environmental sustainability.

Urban regeneration in Vilnius and Lithuania has a very short history by comparison with other parts of (Western) Europe as such efforts could only start after the fall of communism. With only 1,340 inhabitants per km², Vilnius is one of the most sparsely populated and least-urbanised capitals of Europe—compared, for example, to Paris with 21,060 inhabitants per km² and with Barcelona with 16,055 inhabitants per km².

Three zones reflect the development of the city through the centuries (see Figure 1): the central zone built in the XII–XIX centuries, the middle zone built in the XX century, and the peripheral zone built from the end of the XX century onwards. During the Soviet times, huge residential multi-dwelling districts were built in the middle zone (see Box 2). Over this period, there was a mass rural–urban migration into the capital. Families who lived in these districts used to have garden plots, where more recently the state has permitted construction of private houses. Soviet ideology did not allow private property; therefore after regaining independence, many families, especially young ones, moved to the suburbs and built their own houses. Furthermore, during the
Economic peak pre-dating the 2008 global financial and economic crisis, Vilnius experienced rapid and uncoordinated residential construction across the city. No comprehensive territorial planning was required at that time; new development took place very spontaneously and rather chaotically producing what is today called the peripheral zone, where urban sprawl dominates. This area is characterised by very low densities, ranging from 13–39 inhabitants/ha, the latter only in the more compact areas. The central city has been steadily losing its young population who live in suburbs and commute to their workplaces every morning. This pattern of urban development carries a significant number of disadvantages such as severe traffic congestion, limited social life and the need for expensive physical infrastructure. Thus a key question for the city administration today is to identify, test and implement initiatives which can attract more people to the central zone and generate the critical mass necessary to drive local economic development and urban sustainability.

Another key challenge for Vilnius is the renovation and retrofitting of its multi-family housing stock. In Vilnius, up to 60% of households’ income is spent on heating costs in the peak winter season. 66% of Lithuanian population lives in multi-family buildings built before 1993, 97% of which are now privately owned. The main obstacles for renovation are related to this, since the majority of owners are elderly people who live in the city centre and are reluctant to make any upgrades. Another obstacle for renovation is the significant level of emigration from the country of people with specialised technical skills, including energy-efficient construction and renovation. More than 6,000 multi-family buildings need renovation but in the last ten years only 92 have been renovated. Consequently, a key challenge in achieving comprehensive retrofit of the existing buildings is the adoption and implementation of stable, integrated policies and legislation at all levels.
To address the problem of urban sprawl the Vilnius City Plan focuses on consolidating development in the city centre, intensifying district centres to create a polycentric city, and stopping further outward expansion. The key to this strategy is the regeneration of industrial and brownfield lands within the existing city limits. The city recognises that one of the main tasks is to relocate industrial uses away from the central city and redevelop the remediated sites. Vilnius has great potential for such regeneration; approximately 500 ha in the whole city and 120 ha in the central area. However, there are a number of obstacles to the regeneration of brownfield lands. There is a general lack of planning policy for the identified areas. In addition, the land mostly belongs to private developers making it difficult for the municipality to take a leading role in its redevelopment. Communication with developers is difficult for the municipality, for other stakeholders and for the local community. Furthermore, former industrial areas are contaminated and thus the remediation of soil and buildings imposes a heavy financial burden on developers.

Regarding renovation, the 2007–2015 Vilnius City Plan gives priority to the comprehensive renovation of housing in the middle zone districts built in the Soviet times. In addition, there are a number of replicable renovation projects in development. The Environment and Energy department of the Vilnius municipality is co-operating with the municipal company ‘Vilnius plan’ in the preparation of 35 replicable projects for renovation of target areas including multi-family buildings. The public institution ‘Renew the City’, established by the municipality of Vilnius, is coordinating the implementation of energy-efficiency measures in the renovation of blocks of flats. In addition, as part of the ‘Smart Vilnius’ project, an interactive map of the city allows residents to find out data on the administration of multi-family buildings, covering issues such as their energy status and consumption.

While the above-described planning and policy framework seems to be moving in the right direction, it is at the level of project delivery where obstacles and challenges – but also solutions – for environmentally sustainable urban regeneration are more visible. Let’s have a look at these in what follows…

**BOX 2. THE LEGACY OF VILNIUS’ SOVIET ‘MICRODISTRICTS’**

More than 50% of Vilnius’ population lives in large-scale housing estates constructed in the Soviet era. These so-called ‘microdistricts’ were built after the central USSR government decided to deal with urban overcrowding. A replicable urban development model was devised to achieve the desired number of apartments in a cheap and fast way. The microdistrict became the smallest unit of soviet city structure, where people lived in multi-storey apartment blocks grouped around a common centre. Apartment blocks were built from prefab concrete panels, using plain inexpensive designs, mass production techniques, and typical layouts, all extensively replicated with little variation. Today, the majority of the buildings in these estates in Vilnius and Lithuania are outdated, badly maintained and losing popularity among citizens and thus driving suburbanisation. The regeneration of microdistricts is therefore a national issue as well as a primary task for every municipality. However, 97% of apartments are privately owned which makes regeneration a challenging task (see article ‘Towards pro-environmental behaviour’ in this publication).

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1 For more information visit: http://www.vilnius.lt/index.php?1635831436
2 http://www.vilnius.lt/vmap/t1.php?layershow=siluma
A number of urban regeneration projects carried out since the advent of democracy and capitalism in the country in the early 1990s, help to illustrate the path towards sustainable urban regeneration taken by the city of Vilnius. Here we will focus on three of them: one has already been realised and two are ongoing. While all three projects differ in scale, design ambition, management structure and even political context, a comparison will help us develop a good understanding of the reality of sustainable regeneration in Vilnius.

**STEPPING-UP THE EFFORTS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE URBAN REGENERATION**

The redevelopment of industrial and/or military sites has been a topic in Lithuania since gaining independence. In the 1990s, there was a major housing shortage: while the municipality was financially unable to play any role in the housing market, the market economy quickly offered residents a new range of housing choices. In this context, the municipality offered the 53 ha North Town military camp to private developers as a large central site with public infrastructure for development. A company owned by Vilnius municipality managed and supervised from 1998 to 2008 the transformation of this former military camp into what has become a very popular residential, business and commercial neighbourhood. The importance of North Town for Vilnius is that it was the first such large-scale regeneration project in the country – and one considered highly successful in terms of its popularity as a living and shopping destination, its high quality infrastructure and public space design, and the fact that it was realised without any recourse to public funds. Furthermore, this regeneration project increased the value of the surrounding neighbourhoods. However, there is recognition that despite this success, North Town was not conceived as a sustainable regeneration project in general and, in particular, no specific environmental aspects were considered in the project. Hence, Vilnius municipality sought to step up the ‘green’ dimension of new urban regeneration projects, as we explain below.

**RAISING THE ‘GREEN’ BAR: ‘PARK OF ARCHITECTURE’**

While North Town was considered successful in the conventional terms of a free market economy, ‘Park of Architecture’ represents a considerable step forward in terms of integrating more complex ambitions and requirements, notably in terms of environmental specification. In 2008, the city started the regeneration project ‘Park of Architecture’, a 78 ha brownfield site in a historical location as part of its efforts to counteract the trend towards sprawl and suburbanisation described earlier. This project is part of the city’s attempt to re-focus development in central city areas. The municipality initiated the ‘Park of Architecture’ project with the overall ambition for an exceptional and innovative brownfield regeneration project, unique in
terms of process and design results. An open invitation was issued to investors willing to develop such a project. The site in the historical Uzupis neighbourhood fitted best with the ambition of the city and investors and landowners strongly backed the proposal. A partnership agreement to redevelop the site was signed between the developers and the city in 2008. The co-operation contract described the desired development scenario for the whole site and the responsibilities of the respective partners. In 2009, a project management group was established, consisting of representatives of every developer and representatives of different city departments. Between 2008 and 2011 the masterplan was prepared and various workshops and events took place in order to involve a larger professional audience. A public relations campaign provided a degree of project transparency and built public support. In 2014, construction of the first new residential district started.

The greatest challenge of the project has been to balance the new development with the historic and natural characteristics of the site. After working with the various experts and improving the plan, UNESCO evaluated the project as appropriately designed for such a historic location. Various solutions were adopted to improve the environmental performance of the new neighbourhood. First, the plan forms ‘green fingers’ through which streets lead to the river and green pockets are designed in between the blocks; second, several urban parks are planned in the vicinity of the neighbourhood – along the banks of the river Vilnele and at the Missionary’s Gardens. Pedestrian and bicycle paths will lead to the parks and to the protected landscapes in Pavilniai Regional Park.

Amongst the positive aspects of the Park of Architecture project is the fact that the city has found developers and project partners with the same ambition, with architectural and urban design quality requirements set at a very early stage. In environmental terms, this regeneration project represents a big step up from North Town. Environmental issues have been explicitly taken into account, such as moving polluting factories from the vulnerable part of the city and cleaning up contaminated soil. The new neighbourhoods will be linked with the surrounding landscapes and the river; new green connections and public spaces will add value not only to the district but to the wider city; and there will be more facilities for bike parking spaces and bike lanes than in other development projects in Vilnius. Last but not least, the involvement of various stakeholders in the preparation of the plan has secured high quality standards for the project and good communication to the wider audience and the architecture and planning communities who have given strong support for the city to continue this
project. In 2014, the first demolition and soil cleaning procedures began with the ambition of starting construction works by the end of 2015.

However, some critical considerations remain. The project is mainly aimed at middle-income households and doesn’t include any provision for social and/or affordable housing. This may lead to the gentrification of this part of the city and to higher levels of income-based urban segregation. In addition, although the project is very much in the spirit of the compact-city and includes a series of pro-environmental measures, one could argue that its environmental specifications correspond to ‘business as usual’ in other EU states, and are not really pushing the bar high enough e.g. in terms of energy-efficiency building requirements, recycling systems and infrastructure, etc.

THE FUTURE: ‘ZIRMUNAI TRIANGLE’

Zirmunai Triangle is a 52 ha neighbourhood with 12,000 residents, one of the oldest microdistricts built in Soviet times in Vilnius. The Zirmunai Triangle project aims to find ways to regenerate such areas where there is little space left for new construction and the thousands of apartment owners are not able or willing to invest in their rapidly deteriorating homes. The Zirmunai Triangle redevelopment started with a land use plan prepared in 1996 which permitted some new construction. That was followed by rapid and uncoordinated development of the new buildings in the few available privately owned or privatised land lots between the existing buildings. However, these and many other interventions had very little ambition and no overall vision. Private developers did not create any public spaces and focused only on the private plots. The city was unable to save some important green open spaces that were privatised and developed, some important public paths were blocked or rerouted and very little effort was made to solve increasing car parking problems. Various studies were prepared for parking possibilities, land zoning and partitioning in order to improve the environment of the neighbourhood – but these did not stimulate any action. In 2003, the first two socialist apartment blocks were renovated but this focused only on the energy-efficiency and was mostly funded by the apartment owners. In 2013, the municipality joined the URBACT RE-Block network (see Box 3), which provided an opportunity to start regeneration of the Zirmunai Triangle in a more comprehensive way. The municipality declared the area as the main test site for innovative regeneration proposals. To ensure the replicability and viability of the project, the neighbourhood was included into a designated strategic territory for integrated urban development that secured partial financial support to start first actions. The overall vision for the renewal of the territory was then drafted as a joint endeavour involving the municipality, residents, representatives of local businesses and institutions. The resulting Local Action Plan (see Box 3) serves as a working guideline for future project managing groups. The next steps include the preparation of more detailed projects for the main public spaces and pilot projects for comprehensive renovation of individual blocks.
Because there are many stakeholders in Zirmunai Triangle, developing a clear financing mechanism is challenging. The municipality is financing the improvement of public spaces and public infrastructure. For this purpose €3.9 m will be used from the EU fund for Integrated Territorial Investment 2014–2020. The energy-efficient renovation of houses will be funded by the JESSICA programme which covers administrative expenses; however, all the other construction expenses must be covered by residents.

**BOX 3. ZIRMUNAI AND THE URBACT RE-Block NETWORK**

The URBACT RE-Block network focuses on regeneration of large-scale housing neighbourhoods. Ten partner cities exchange knowledge and experience on how to improve houses, public spaces, and the social environment, working with residents. Vilnius municipality joined the network in 2013 with the Zirmunai Triangle project. This case was chosen for a number of reasons: its strategic location in the city, the fact that many initiatives had already started, and because it is one of the oldest and most deteriorated housing neighbourhoods in Vilnius. Within the framework of the URBACT RE-Block network, a Local Support Group (LSG) was formed to help prepare a Local Action Plan (LAP) for neighbourhood regeneration. The LSG consists of 15–20 people, including local residents, owners of local businesses, representatives from local institutions such as school and the youth centre, one municipal councillor and representatives from different municipal departments (urban planning, landscape, finance). Initially, the LSG helped to identify the main problems of the neighbourhood and the needs of residents. Later on, they have reflected on design proposals and a regeneration strategy for the area.

The LAP provides a draft of the steps needed to improve the quality of life of the area. Firstly, a new public space network has been designed which safeguards green open spaces, areas for social gathering and interaction, active and passive sport areas, and cultural spaces. These are all to be linked by improved pedestrian and bicycle networks. The plan also provides local residents with amenities that are lacking at this moment. A second set of actions focus on community buildings and on developing a sense of ownership over the common land around the buildings. Various social events, design charrettes and financial support seek to bring the community together to improve their living environment in the new neighbourhoods. A third set of actions focuses on transportation and decreasing the need for personal car ownership. The actions include optimisation of parking spaces, improvement of bicycle infrastructure such as bicycle lanes, secure parking places, shared city bicycles, improving pedestrian links to the public transport stops and upgrading the bus waiting areas.

The LSG group has been preparing the LAP for around two years now. It is planned that they will continue to work while implementing and monitoring the project. Overall, the municipality’s participation in the URBACT RE-Block network has prompted Vilnius’ city government to carry out this project in a different way, involving representatives of residents and various local institutions (from the LSG) to apply experiences from partner cities and test the proposals, getting comments from the LSG and from the foreign partners as well.

**MORE INFORMATION**

http://urbact.eu/re-block
The project has recently started and the major problems and success factors are already apparent. The city has to find ways to convince residents to participate in the renewal of their apartments and to find ways to attract investors to take part in the renewal. Offering tax incentives or win-win public-private partnerships could attract potential investors. An additional challenge is to ensure continuation and implementation of the Local Action Plan once the project management group steers the regeneration. Nevertheless, some steps have already been taken to ensure project continuation. Firstly, the project site was designated as one of the strategic sites for city development and included in an Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) programme. That secured political and financial support for the initial phase. Secondly, very intense and detailed preparation of future steps allows forward planning to secure the desired outcomes. And finally, the municipality has an ambition to develop Zirmunai Triangle as a pilot neighbourhood regeneration project. The process methodology would be applied in the renewal of many other housing estates in Vilnius and throughout Lithuania. Declaring the project as a pilot gives more opportunities for experimentation and innovation.

**CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT**

All three projects differ in scale, design ambition, management structure, and even political context. However, only the comparison of these different projects over time can provide us with a comprehensive picture of the progressive ‘greening’ of urban regeneration practices in Vilnius (see Figure 2). We believe that such experience can also be transferred to other European cities, especially those where the private sector has a strong involvement in developing large parts of the city and where the city administration lacks financial and political powers to adequately react and guide such development towards more sustainable development (see interview with Ruta Matoniene in this publication).

North Town, a case from the past, describes the development process in the years immediately after gaining independence and during the economic peak before the 2008. While rated as highly successful at the time of its completion, particularly in terms of its popularity and good quality infrastructure and public spaces, North Town did not include any specific environmental measures. Park of Architecture, an ongoing project, describes the case of development during and after the global economic crisis, when the project started slowly, defining process and results at the very early stage. While environmental aspects have significantly been stepped-up compared to those of North Town, the lack of social and/or affordable housing in the project makes it less of an integrated approach to sustainable urban regeneration. Zirmunai Triangle, a project that has started very recently, relates to a significant and growing challenge for the future: how to regenerate declining large-scale housing estates, taking environmental and social aspects into account? If the project is successfully realised it is expected to become a pilot for the same type of neighbourhoods across the country – and perhaps also in other European cities facing similar challenges.

Other aspects to consider include the issue of land ownership. Without ownership of any land and without the means to contribute financially to the development, the city can only use its relatively weak powers of regulation and incentivisation to achieve higher environmental standards and secure contributions to public objectives in private developments.

The example of Vilnius should also be regarded as a context-specific innovation; in other words, these projects can be deemed innovative when we consider the constrained circumstances under which they have been accomplished. Thus, transferability of this type of innovation is mostly relevant for countries and cities that are in similarly constrained situations.
This also helps to explain the relative lack of social aims in some cases. For example, the aim of creating a mixed neighbourhood in Park of Architecture had to be given up, mostly due to the lack of public subsidies to facilitate social and/or tenure mix. On the other hand, we have seen that there are some environmental aims in indirect form, notably attracting back to the city centre families from their suburban locations and offering good opportunities to young families who otherwise would move out to the suburbs.

To conclude, reflecting on the three above urban regeneration cases in Vilnius, we can draw some lessons that could be transferred to other cities, both in Lithuania and in other parts of Europe, facing similar challenges:

- **Gaining political support for the project from the very early stage** ensures easier communication between city departments, faster decision-making and continuation of the process, securing public funding, and, last but not least, greater integration of environmental concerns in urban regeneration practice.
- **Appointing one body responsible for implementation and management** of the project is crucial to ensure success and coherent development. Some examples of such bodies are given in the article ‘ Governing the Sustainable City’ in this publication.
- **Developing large-scale urban areas as one project with a common vision** is a very important lesson for cities in Lithuania and other transition countries. Having one vision/plan ensures quality of spaces, right densities, integration of the site into the city and finally it makes possible win-win situations between private developers and the city.
- **Having ambition for architectural, environmental and urban design quality at an early stage** and setting out this ambition in public and private tendering and contracts helps to achieve better urban development and quality urban space.
- **Embedding project-specific environmental measures** (e.g. recycling systems, energy choices, cycling lanes, etc.) into wider urban systems requires a longer-term citywide environmental vision.
- **Changing behaviours and involving residents** and other key stakeholders is crucial to ensure the effective design and implementation of environmental goals, especially when dealing with home-owners who are key players in making decisions about the housing stock and common areas (see article ‘Towards pro-environmental behaviour’ in this publication).
ANALYTICAL TEMPLATE OF THE CASE STUDY
# Background Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of City</th>
<th>Vilnius</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region and Country</td>
<td>Republic of Lithuania</td>
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## Geographic Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vilnius</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area of Vilnius Municipality: 401 km²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urbanised area: 39%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Density: 1,340 inh./km²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population in Vilnius: 537,152</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily population in Vilnius: 673,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area of Vilnius metropolitan area (Vilnius County): 9,731 km²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population in metropolitan area: 810,000</td>
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</table>

## Target Areas

**North Town**
- 53 ha former military camp
- 5,000 residents
- Density: 94 inh./ha

**Park of Architecture**
- 78 ha area of factories and industries
- 6.8 ha developed in first phase
- 2,000 residents planned in first phase area
- Density: 234 inh./ha

**Zirmunai Triangle**
- 52 ha residential district built in 1960s
- 12,000 residents
- Density: 243 inh./ha
This case study adopts a process-perspective to illustrate the path towards sustainable urban regeneration which the city of Vilnius has taken since the early 1990s, following the demise of communism in the country. Three different urban regeneration projects are presented, some of which have already been realised and some of which are on going. Together, these projects show the progressive incorporation of environmental sustainability aspects in regeneration practices in Vilnius. These projects are: North town, Park of Architecture, Zirmunai Triangle.

**North Town**, an urban transformation project, started after gaining independence. During the 15 years a former military camp was redeveloped into mixed use housing, commercial and business area. Now this 53 ha area is an important and popular part of the city.

**Park of Architecture**, an ongoing urban transformation project, started in 2007. The 78 ha site of former factories is located in a very particular environment bordering the historical old town and protected landscapes. It is planned to be redeveloped into a dense and sustainable residential city quarter.

**Zirmunai Triangle** project, covering a 52 ha area with 12,000 residents, focuses on renovation of large scale housing estates, a topic discussed at national level. So far, there is no comprehensive strategy on how to regenerate such territories including renovation of the buildings and its surroundings. Therefore this project offers a new approach: to integrate in the renewal of public spaces and infrastructure, the involvement of residents, businesses in the preparation and implementation of an action plan for the area.

All three projects differ in scale, design ambition, management structure, and even political context. However, comparison of all three will draw a wide picture of sustainable development practices in Vilnius. **North Town**, a case from the past, describes the development process in the years immediately after gaining independence and during the economic peak before the 2008. **Park of Architecture**, an ongoing project, describes the case of development during and after the global economic crisis. Sustainability and innovation are very important topics in this project because the city wants to highlight inner-city locations as places with quality, innovation and character in order to attract young residents from suburban areas. **Zirmunai Triangle**, a project that has started very recently, touches a topic of the future: how to regenerate declining large-scale housing estates? If the project is successfully realised it is expected to become a pilot example on how to deal with the same type neighbourhoods all around Lithuania.
## 1. PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ONE-LINER DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE</strong></th>
<th>Three different urban regeneration projects developed in Vilnius since the advent of democracy in the 1990s until today are presented to illustrate the process of gradual incorporation of environmental sustainability in regeneration practices in this city.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAIN REASON FOR HIGHLIGHTING THIS CASE</strong></td>
<td>Urban regeneration in Vilnius, and in Lithuania overall, has a very short history in European comparison. Therefore, trying to achieve sustainable urban development is to be seen as a gradual process of improvement, where it is very important to learn from past experiences. The <em>North Town</em> project started in the early years of independence and was the first large scale urban transformation. The project attracted many developers and was realised without any public money. The area has rapidly evolved into one of the key business and residential districts of the city, featuring a combination of military heritage sites and newer construction of houses, shopping malls, and office buildings. Despite the popularity and commercial success of <em>North Town</em>, it cannot be considered a sustainable regeneration project in the same way as in Western European regeneration projects. However, it did provide a motivation for the Municipality to step up the ‘green’ dimension in future regeneration projects. <em>Park of Architecture</em> is an initial step in that direction. In <em>Park of Architecture</em>, the Municipality initiated this redevelopment with the ambitious goal to create a pilot project that adds value to the city. The redevelopment project is exceptional in Lithuania not only for its scale, management partnership, public relations campaign, but also for the ambition to create quality urban and architectural design, public spaces, attract creative people, involve residents, and keep a link with history and nature. The third example is different from the previous two. <em>Zirmunai Triangle</em> is a residential area that is outdated and in urban decay, in need of regeneration. There is no Lithuanian example of neighbourhood’s renewal in an area such as this, where new construction is hardly possible and thousands of apartment owners are not capable or not willing to invest. Therefore, this project is innovative in terms of a common vision of changing the district as a joint endeavour involving the Municipality, residents, representatives of local businesses and institutions. Furthermore, the regeneration of <em>Zirmunai Triangle</em> will be financed partly with EU support for an Integrated Territorial Investment project (ITI). An action plan on how to implement and finance the vision is being prepared.</td>
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### OVERALL OBJECTIVE

**North Town** was the first big scale transformation, when the city did not have experience of running such projects. Therefore, the overall objective was bold and simple: to transform the military site and integrate it into the city, by offering residential, commercial and office functions.

The Municipality set a much more ambitious task in the Park of Architecture project. The goal is to develop an exemplary redevelopment project that adds value to the city. The objective of Park of Architecture is to relocate industrial companies away from historical territories and to create a dense sustainable city quarter of coherent structure with working places, rich cultural life, social infrastructure, active community of different income levels prospering in a top city location associated with historical and natural contexts.

The overall objective in the Zirmunai Triangle project is to renew a declining residential neighbourhood. The regeneration of the area is expected to improve the life quality of the existing residents and to attract newcomers. On the one hand, the goal is to renew the neighbourhood by following one common vision on how the houses, public spaces and social and public programme should change. On the other hand, the ambition is to create a new process management method: develop a common vision and prepare an action plan on how to achieve it, involving residents and local institutions.

### DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

**North Town:**
- A company named North Town owned by the Municipality was established to manage the transformation of the military camp.
- The area development plan was prepared and the company started searching for investors who would develop the plots.
- The Municipality did not have money to finance construction of infrastructure; therefore a tax on infrastructure was established for the developers operating in this area.
- In 10 years of construction the site has changed from military barracks to an urban district. Investors developed houses, shopping malls and office buildings. The company North Town built streets, took over communications and supervised the process. During the process the development plan was updated and improved (e.g. Requirements for amount of public spaces or playgrounds increased).

**Park of Architecture**

**Concept phase:**
- The Municipality opened an invitation to find a project site and possible partners.
- A site for Park of Architecture was chosen in a central location, formerly an industrial area.
- The developers are the owners of the land and the Municipality is joining the project with financial support for infrastructure and demolition.
- A contract was established between the Municipality and four companies, owners of an industrial area next to the Old Town.
- The concept how to develop the area was drafted and adopted.
- The land use plan was adopted giving the green light for the redevelopment.

**Design and implementation:**
- A project management group is created, consisting of representatives of every project partner and of different city departments.
- Before the final development plan is approved, various workshops, events and discussions were held to guarantee the quality of the final design, and to ensure the approval of residents, architects and historians.
- Demolition work has started and construction of the first blocks will begin in 2015.
### 1. PRACTICE DESCRIPTION (CONT’D)

#### DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES (CONT’D)

**Zirmunai Triangle**
- Before Vilnius Municipality joined the URBACT RE-Block network, all the interventions in *Zirmunai Triangle* happened with little overarching vision.
- Local Action Plan (LAP) on how to renew the area has been prepared. It describes how, when, what has to change. Representatives of residents, businesses and local organisations participate in the process by expressing needs and revising proposals.
- To ensure continuation and financing of the project, the project site was included into Vilnius city strategic area for integrated urban development.

**Next step:**
- Approval of the LAP by the city council as a strategic document.
- Establishment of a project management group that will steer the regeneration.
- Renewal of key public spaces and starting renovation of pilot housing blocks.

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### INTEGRATED APPROACH

The ‘integrated approach’ is not commonly used in the Lithuanian planning context. Planning documents are supposed to link to each other but in many cases this is understood as simple interference check. However, gradual progress is being made by the city in terms of incorporating different dimensions of sustainable urban development in regeneration projects. This progress can be illustrated through the three projects presented here:

- **In North Town** neither social nor environmental issues were taken into account. The *North Town* area was developed as one project trying to ensure a balance of the programme, the densities and the continuity of the streets.

- **In Park of Architecture** environmental issues were guiding principles for its design from the very beginning. *Park of Architecture* is located in a particular urban environment; therefore, environmental issues were significantly taken into account.
  - Polluting factories are to be moved out from the fragile part of the city.
  - New neighbourhoods will be linked with the surrounding landscapes and the river. Green connections and public spaces will add value for the district and for the city as well.
  - Bicycles are promoted in the neighbourhood. There are more requirements for bike parking spaces and bike lanes than in other development projects in Vilnius.

- **Zirmunai Triangle** represents a step even further. Here, an integrated approach is a guiding principle for decision making and planning. *Zirmunai Triangle* is an ongoing project. In the action plan, spatial, social, environmental and economic issues are discussed. Some examples include:

  **Social issues:**
  - Residents can express needs and expectations of the renewal; they are involved in the design.
  - Social equality: The plan defines special spaces and facilities for specific social groups, such as teenagers, kids or the elderly. Special attention is given to elderly people, as now they form the majority of the inhabitants.
  - Activities and events are planned to strengthen social life and sense of community in the neighbourhood.

  **Environmental issues:**
  - Houses will be renovated to reduce energy consumption on heating. To raise interest amongst residents and encourage their involvement in regeneration process, an interactive actual energy consumption map was prepared.
  - Public transport and cycling is promoted to reduce the use of cars and the space used for car parking. Residents have also initiated the establishment of a paid car-parking zone in the district.
1. PRACTICE DESCRIPTION (CONT’D)

| TARGET AUDIENCE | In *North Town* the city targeted private developers that could possibly develop the site. The developers targeted middle class households, mostly young families. Since there were no civic activities on site all new functions brought new customers and new residents. Local communities were formed only after the project was developed.

There are several important target audiences in *Park of Architecture*. The residents’ community of the Užupis neighbourhood is involved in the regeneration efforts as their district will change significantly with the vicinity of a new dense quarter. The site is bordering a protected historical district and natural park therefore experts from UNESCO, historians, architects, researchers and students were involved in the design process in order to achieve the best possible quality and professional support. Developers are targeting upper middle class residents because of the central location and higher standard housing stock.

Local inhabitants, local entrepreneurs and local social facilities are the main target audience in the *Zirmunai Triangle* project. Residents own their apartments and will participate in the redevelopment and they will be mostly affected by the renewal process. However, redevelopment will hardly be possible without extra funding therefore attracting developers who would like to take part in the renovation is an important task.

| MAINSTREAMING OF GENDER EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION | Gender equality and non-discrimination have not been taken into account explicitly in the design, planning or implementation of the three cases. |
# 1. Practice Description (Cont’d)

## North Town

1992 .......... Soviet army leaves the military camps. Area is returned to the city.

1993 .......... A non-profit organisation, *Siaures miestelis (North Town)*, was created with the assignment to manage the conversion of the military camp. Small businesses temporary spread in the area. The integration of the site happens slowly and not effectively.

1998 .......... The organisation *North Town* is reorganised into a company owned by the Municipality. The company gets the assignment to speed up the process, attracting investors and finding money to develop infrastructure.

1999 .......... The territorial development plan is approved. The site is divided into 49 plots of land.

1999–2009 .... The area is developed: 45 apartment houses, 12 commercial and business buildings, including shopping mall that was built in 200 days and was the biggest in Northern Europe at that time.

2001 .......... During the construction works mass grave of Napoleon Grand Army was discovered.

## Park of Architecture

2008 January .... The idea was born to develop a second largest conversion project in Vilnius. A scenario for development model and ambition is presented to ministries, universities and developers.

2008 July .......... Cooperation between the Municipality and four companies is established with a goal to implement the project.

2010 .......... Project is inscribed in Vilnius City Strategic Plan as a priority area in order to channel of financial flows and EU financial support for project development.

2009–2011 ...... Workshops and events are held with architecture students and professionals with the aim to propose best designs and ensure transparency of the planning process.

2012 .......... Development concept is approved.

2013 January .... Detailed plan for the first phase development is approved.

2014 October .... Demolition of the former factories started.

2018 .......... It is planned to develop first phase until the end of 2018.

## Zirmunai Triangle

1996 .......... Land use plan is approved for the site, allowing new construction.

2003 .......... First pioneering renovation projects begin.

2013 .......... The neighbourhood is included into the area defined as strategic area for integrated urban development, in order to channel financial flows for project development.

2013 .......... Vilnius Municipality joins URBACT RE-Block network, focusing on revitalisation of high rise housing neighbourhoods.

2013–2014 ...... A vision to regenerate Zirmunai Triangle and an action plan for its implementation and financing is being prepared together with local support group.

2015 .......... It is planned that the city council approves the action plan and starts further steps such as establishing a project managing group, renewal of key public spaces and apartment blocks.
## 2. Political and Strategic Context

### 2.1 National, Regional and City Framework

After the 1990s, big and rapid change from socialist to liberal economy led to rather chaotic and short-sighted decisions. 97% of apartments in the large-scale housing estates were privatised. There isn’t any large-scale housing corporation that would be managing these housing estates. Moreover, the share of social housing is only 2.4% of the total housing stock and is hardly increasing. Privatisation of the land led to rapid sub-urbanisation process. However, the land around the socialist housing estates was not privatised and remained ownership of the National Land Agency. While the Municipality was in control of city expansion, the city was financially unable to play role in the housing market, therefore most of the development was left in the hands of private developers. Thus, North town was offered as a big central site with common infrastructure for the development by the private developers.

City development plan, approved by Municipality in 1998, allowed rezoning of agricultural areas into residential use. The city, and the central government, did not realise back then that suburbanisation would happen in such a massive scale. In contrast, living in suburbia was considered as the most comfortable way of living. Vilnius was massively suburbanising. To counter-act this trend, in 2007 the approved new City development plan, set an ambition to re-focus development mainly on the central city areas. Park of Architecture, a brown field area in a central location fitted this main city target.

Zirmunai Triangle is addressing the national issue of mass housing estates. The Ministry of the Environment is looking for new ways to regenerate such territories and to support residents in regeneration processes.

### 2.2 Housing Situation in Lithuania and Vilnius

Lithuania is a shrinking country. Population in 25 years decreased 20% from 3,690,000 in 1990 to 2,940,000 in 2014. Vilnius is the only city with a growing population. Now there are 540,000 residents in the city. Over 50% of them live in large-scale housing estates, so called ‘microdistricts’, constructed during the soviet era. Zirmunai Triangle is one of the oldest microdistricts build in Vilnius.

Microdistricts in Lithuania started to be built, after the central USSR government decided to deal with urban overcrowding. A replicable city model was prepared to achieve the desired number of apartments in a cheap and fast way. Microdistricts became the smallest unit of the soviet city structure, a residential neighbourhood covering ≤60 ha areas, where 5,000 –15,000 people lived in large-scale apartment blocks grouped around the common centre. A group of microdistricts formed larger residential city districts. Apartment blocks were built from prefab concrete panels, using plain inexpensive designs, mass production techniques, and stereotyped layouts. Therefore, all the large-scale housing estates in post-soviet cities look alike.

After Lithuania gained independence housing shortage was 7%. The market economy opened possibilities for citizens to choose desired accommodation type. Houses in the large-scale estates became less popular, as they are old, out-dated and apartments are very small. Currently, all the microdistricts with the apartment blocks, public spaces and infrastructure need renovation. Only 100 apartment buildings, in microdistricts are renovated in Vilnius.

In Vilnius, during the last two decades many well-off families moved to the suburbs. Young people started searching apartments in other parts of the city. There was a big increase of housing construction, with 35,500 dwellings in apartment buildings and 7,000 single family houses being built between 1995 and 2010. Apartment buildings were constructed by private developers and single family houses were constructed and financed privately. North Town area was the first one and major newly built residential neighbourhood, where apartments, public spaces and infrastructure met nowadays requirements. Houses are more spacious, modern, with sufficient space for car parking and surrounding facilities.
2. POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT (CONT'D)

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<tr>
<th>2.3 THE PLANNING CONTEXT</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Municipalities</strong> do not own all the land in the cities. Formed and registered plots are owned by private owners or juridical entities, while the rest of the land is owned by the state agency National Land Fund. However, municipalities are responsible for the maintenance of national land within city boundaries. If the city wants to privatise the land (to develop, sell or return to previous owners), the city must ask permission from the National Land Fund. Therefore, municipalities participate in planning only by initiating development projects, or supervising and approving projects initiated by other entities.</td>
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The Lithuanian planning system was changed in 2014. Before, only two levels of planning documents were required — city scale and plot scale. Each city had a general plan that specified zones for development, infrastructure, social functions and main landscape elements. The next level was land use plan for each plot. Each plot owner could prepare land use plan that should correspond to cities general plan and there was no requirements to develop neighbourhood plans or more detailed urban plans for larger territories. All separate development projects had very little overlaps, which led to scattered and not coherent development.

**North Town** was an exceptional project at that time since it had one main land use plan covering the whole site with zoning regulation. The city was able to set some of the qualities within the land use plan.

From 2014, a new planning law requires to develop territories with an integral approach and set the ambition for the cities to have an intermediate scale plan in order to achieve cohesion between various developments. Such plans regulate the build-up zones, main transport, pedestrian and cyclist connections and describe land use.

**Park of Architecture** already offers this new approach where the whole site is developed with one main master plan, and coherent spatial elements are already set at the very early stage with quite precise architectural proposals. Such development model between multiple owners and the city is very new and one of the firsts in the country.

**Zirmunai Triangle** is a project with large housing estates. The biggest problem is that 96% of apartments are privately owned. 47 apartment buildings need renovation, 22 of them have formed owner associations. To renovate a house all the apartment owners need to form owners’ association. The owners’ association can initiate renovation and can become owner of the plot around the house. Now the land surrounding these buildings is owned by the state, not the city. Since the buildings are owned by apartment owners, it is rather difficult to plan such areas with a comprehensive planning document. Therefore the Local Action Plan fits very well as the strategic document that would draw the next steps for the redevelopment. The LAP document helps the Municipality to steer the process, as it describes all the steps that have to be done with all the land owners and stakeholders. Furthermore, the LAP describes how and where to direct public funds, which public spaces to fund first, which traffic solutions to implement and which parts of the project site are left for apartment owners to upgrade and maintain. Such document is rarely used as a planning tool.
3. DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

All projects are initiated by the city. Over time and in varying contexts, the city took slightly different and more complicated approaches in developing the sites.

North Town was a unique project at that time as such large scale development involving various stakeholders in one site had never been done before. After acquiring control of the site in 1993 the regeneration process was very slow with little site activities. After 1998 the reorganised North Town company owned by the Municipality started preparing the land use documents and searching for developers. The process was very quick after the city agreed to issue land lease contracts for private development. Since Vilnius city had no possibilities to finance public infrastructure, the company North Town was set up to use the money gathered from the lease contracts to develop public infrastructure. The Municipality took a steering role of the development by preparing land use documents where basic spatial qualitative elements were set. Private developers had most of the freedom in what would be developed inside private plots. Therefore, there was no final master plan prepared at the beginning and the final outcome was changing together with new needs or new stakeholders.

For Park of Architecture, the city took a different approach. The city wanted to re-focus development in central city areas and set the overall ambition to redevelop a former industrial site as an exceptional and innovative brownfield regeneration project. A small competition was organised for developers to find the best project site and partners for redevelopment. The Uzupis site fitted best with the ambition of the city and the proposal was well backed up by strong investors and landowners. The agreement to redevelop the site was signed between the developers and the city in 2008. In 2009 a project management group was established, consisting of representatives of every project partner and representatives of different city departments. Between 2008 and 2011 the main master plan was developed, and various workshops and events took place in order to involve a larger professional audience and get their knowledge and support.

The Zirmunai Triangle redevelopment started with a land use plan prepared in 1996 that allowed new construction. It was a rapid and scattered development of new buildings but nothing was done about regeneration of existing buildings. In 2003, a renovation process started first with the pioneering renovation of the buildings. However, it was a small-scale intervention with very little ambition; only on the scale of individual buildings. Various studies were prepared for parking possibilities, land zoning and partitioning in order to give land plots to each building for maintenance - but it did not spring any action. In 2013, the URBACT RE-Block network gave an opportunity to start a new way of thinking about the redevelopment. The Municipality declared this site as the main test site for innovative regeneration proposals. The overall vision for the renewal of the area was drafted. The vision describes new organisation of the public spaces, streets, courtyards, car parking and housing renovation. The Local Action Plan is currently under preparation. It explains implementation of the vision (phasing, priorities and finance). The LAP will serve as a working guideline for future project managing groups. Next steps would require more detailed planning and more detailed projects for the main public spaces and pilot projects for renovating blocks integrally.
### 3. DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION (CONT’D)

#### 3.2 MANAGEMENT

**North town**

A development company owned by the city was in charge of managing the regeneration process, decision making, attracting investors, developing public infrastructure and preparing parcels for the lease. The Municipality guided the development by preparing land use documents. Everything inside a private plot was left for the developers to solve.

**Park of Architecture**

The Municipality was the initiator of the project and therefore has set goals for spatial and environmental qualities. Since land is privately owned, a contract was signed between the city, private developers and landowners. In the two-sided agreement major decisions were described. The contract was approved by the city council. A managing group was formed with representatives from each party. A 15-person group is in charge of all projects and preparatory actions. It deals with operational questions,

**Zirmunai Triangle**

Vilnius Municipality has initiated and is running this project. Two employees at the urban planning department and two external experts have worked part time for two years to prepare the Local Action Plan. They have consulted with the Local Support Group, consisting of 25 persons. The Local Action Plan sets up the target to form an active development management group based on a Local Support Group. URBACT participation methods have been used to manage the Local Support Group, however it is still unclear how to involve wider part of residents as active regeneration stakeholders.

(Read more about management in the paragraph 3.4 Governance, partnership, participation, mobilisation and empowerment.)

#### 3.3 MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

Monitoring of the development projects in Lithuania is not common. It is not required by the law, therefore municipalities or developers do not plan a budget for evaluation. For that reason monitoring was never done for the North town project. Park of Architecture has got no plans to include any monitoring system as well. However, Zirmunai triangle has planned ahead a monitoring system together with setting up the targets and goals in the Local Action Plan.
### 3. DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION (CONT’D)

#### 3.4 GOVERNANCE: PARTNERSHIP, PARTICIPATION, MOBILISATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Vilnius city has little experience governing large-scale urban projects; therefore trying to achieve sustainable regeneration is a gradual process of improvement in which learning from past experiences is crucial. For that reason the city took a different, more advanced governance approach in each project.

The *North Town* project was experimental. Key success factors include the favourable economic situation at the time and the fact that the City was in control of the land. Project partners were not that much involved in the overall planning process, but they initiated changes of the main masterplan on a number of occasions.

*Park of Architecture* already goes into more complex partnership arrangements based on the legal contracts signed between all parties – Municipality and four companies, owners of an industrial area. Each party takes responsibility for certain aspects of project development. The city has responsibility to direct EU funds for public infrastructure, public spaces and preparation of the site. Private stakeholders have responsibility to develop the site based on the conditions stated in the contract and main master plan. Various stakeholders such as the Ministry of the Environment, the architects’ union, universities, and local communities are involved in preparing the future vision for the site. However, end users and future residents were not involved in the preparation of the plan.

By participating in the URBACT RE-Block network, *Zirmunai Triangle* was dealt with new ways of governance. During the network a Local Support Group was formed. It consists of representatives of Municipality departments, politicians, residents, social associations and entrepreneurs. A core group of 25 people was actively involved in the preparation of the Local Action Plan. In later phases more active community involvement is planned. All public space projects will require the involvement of the local community in the design phase. Empowering local communities will be one of the biggest challenge and task of the Local Action Plan, as there are 12,000 residents in the district, and only very few of them are part of the Local Support Group. Residents should be involved and encouraged to upgrade and maintain the land around the buildings.

### 4. INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS AND NOVEL APPROACHES

All the three regeneration practices in Vilnius presented here are considered innovative mainly because of the integrated project management concept, which was/is new in the local context.

*North Town* military camp transformation was managed by a company owned by the Municipality. A new feature was that investors developing the site were supervised by the Municipality. Furthermore, infrastructure tax collected from developers allowed building streets and connections without any public money.

The overall ambition of *Park of Architecture* is to have an exceptional, innovative regeneration project. The beginning of the process was new; the Municipality issued an open invitation to investors who would be willing to develop such a project. In addition, a partnership model, where developers and representatives of the Municipality sign a cooperation agreement, is new in Lithuania. The partnership contract describes the entire desired development scenario. Besides innovative project management, *Park of Architecture* has a good public relations campaign, which is more common in private projects, not the ones initiated by the Municipality.

Design and project management methodology in *Zirmunai Triangle* project is very uncommon in neighbourhood regeneration practice in Lithuania. Firstly, one renewal vision is drawn for the entire *Zirmunai Triangle* district. Residents are involved in the design. Furthermore, an action plan is being prepared to implement the goals. The project group will steer the implementation of the plan. The Municipality has an ambition to develop *Zirmunai Triangle* as a pilot neighbourhood regeneration project.
## 5. FUNDING

### 5.1 FUNDING

*North Town* area was funded entirely from private money. More than 20 investors have spent 6.5 m LTL (€1.9 m) for infrastructure, 1.1 bn LTL (€0.3 bn) invested in development of houses, shopping malls and offices. The Municipality did not spend any money.

*Park of Architecture* will be financed partly by the Municipality and partly by developers. The Municipality will finance construction of green spaces (river bank, park, squares), street infrastructure (public transport, pedestrian and bicycle roads, public parking lots) and engineering infrastructure. The Municipality is also responsible for financing decontamination of sites. Money for this purpose is channelled from the EU financial support. Investors will finance the development of buildings, courtyards, and approach roads. Furthermore, developers will get from the Municipality various tax privileges. It is planned that in a first phase the development area will need 350 m LTL (€100 m) of investment.

There are many stakeholders in *Zirmunai Triangle*, therefore making a clear financing mechanism is a challenging task. The Municipality will finance public spaces and public infrastructure. For this purpose 13.3 m LTL (€3.9 m) will be used from the EU fund for Integrated Territorial Investment 2014–2020. The renovation of houses (energy efficiency improvements) now is based on the JESSICA programme. The programme covers administrative expenses, such as preparation of the renovation project, project management and supervision of construction. All the other construction expenses must be covered by residents. There is also possibility to get loans with fixed loan interests. Overall, the renewal of houses, courtyards and parking spaces will be financed by residents and investors. The final financial method is not confirmed yet.

### 5.2 OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

*Park of Architecture*

Soil contamination removal is financed by ‘Cohesion Promotion Operational Programme’, working group ‘urban development’ with investment direction ‘Urban infrastructure of municipalities; diversifying of activities in rural areas; heritage/tourism’ (Nr. VP3-1.4-AM-06-R). The programme is operated by the Ministry of Environment.

*Zirmunai Triangle*

- Public infrastructure (public spaces, kindergarten) will be funded by Integrated Territorial Investment 2014–2020 programme. The programme is operated by the Ministry of the Interior.
- The renovation of houses/apartments will receive financial resources from the JESSICA programme, supported by the European Commission and the European Investment Bank. The Lithuanian Ministry of the Environment’s Housing and Energy Development Agency (HESA) is the main managing authority for the apartment renovation programme.
**6. PROJECT ASSESSMENT**

| 6.1 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY | North Town was developed by private investors. There are still some buildings owned by the managing company that could be transformed, however in the coming years this is not planned.

In Park of Architecture project the Municipality and investors signed a partnership contract, which describes financial obligations of each partner. There is the possibility of an 'exit-strategy'. However, the Municipality is the initiator of the project and is interested to continue and realise the transformation. If EU funding is not possible, duties will be funded from the regular city budget. In general this project is considered as financially sustainable.

Zirmunai Triangle is a complex regeneration project. The site is very big; therefore if the EU support is not possible, it would be very hard to continue regeneration. On the other hand, Zirmunai Triangle (and other estates) has a threat of decay and has to be renewed anyway. If there is lack of funding, only minimal interventions will be realised. There is very little new development planned and most of funding goes to public space and infrastructure that will not generate any direct financial return. The upgraded environment will most probably increase the value of the apartments, but there is no current measurement of this. |

| 6.2 ISSUES AND PROBLEMS | North Town was developed by private developers; therefore there is a lack of public spaces and of public infrastructure. For example, while the area is very popular for young families, there are no kindergartens or schools in the district.

In Park of Architecture the biggest challenge was to balance the new development with the historic and natural characteristics of the site. In the end, UNESCO noted this project as very well designed for such historic locations. The second issue was a lack of residents’ involvement from the very early stage. After the project started, local residents showed interest to be involved in the development. Their requirements were taken into account and public participation became part of the planning process. However, participation ended up being more about informing the public rather than about actively involving them in planning.

In the Zirmunai Triangle project, financing and dealing with a large number of stakeholders have been the main problems.

Main challenges in Zirmunai Triangle project include:

- How to convince residents to participate and invest in the renewal of their houses and courtyards?
- How to attract investors to take park in the renewal? What kind of tax privileges and win-win models would help to attract investors? Which PPP projects could be offered?
- An additional challenge, when the action plan is prepared, will be how to ensure continuation and implementation of the project? |
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. PROJECT ASSESSMENT (CONT’D)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6.3 PROJECT OUTPUTS &amp; RESULTS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The <strong>North Town</strong> area transformation is impressive for its scale and results. A former military camp became one of the major shopping and business areas of the city and an extremely popular district for young families. Concentration of big shopping malls and big flows of passers-by prompted the appearance of small-scale commerce and businesses. Urban structure and public space design is of high quality. Furthermore, it is impressive that all this was done without any public money. Project results: 45 apartment houses, 12 shopping and business buildings, and seven streets. The successful transformation of North Town increased the value of the surrounding neighbourhoods. There are several smaller industrial sites in the vicinity that could be transformed in the future and expand the <strong>North Town</strong> centrality.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Park of Architecture</em> and <em>Zirmunai Triangle</em> are still ongoing; therefore there are only mid-term results. The major outcome of <em>Park of Architecture</em> is the approval of planning documents outlining the development of a concept for the entire area, and a detailed plan for the first phase development have been approved. Demolition works have already started and construction of the first blocks will begin in 2015. <em>Zirmunai Triangle</em> project is only in the planning phase; therefore the biggest achievement so far is the preparation of a district development vision and Local Action Plan on how to renew the area. In the beginning of 2015 the document will be approved by the city council.</td>
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## 7. Success Factors, Lessons Learned, and Conditions

### North Town:
- The favourable economic situation that enabled private developers to work on such large-scale projects.
- Housing shortage and project site location gave strong guarantees for the developers.
- One municipal company in charge of all public infrastructure.

### Park of Architecture:
- The city initiated prior selection of the project site and selected project partners that fitted best city ambitions.
- High quality urban design and ambitious architectural requirements were set in the contract between partners.
- Involvement of various stakeholders and shared decision making process in the preparation of the plan secured high quality project.
- Very well communicated to the wider audience and to the professional community that gives strong support for the city to continue this project.

### Zirmunai Triangle:
- Involvement in the URBACT RE-Block network opened possibilities to continue the project in an innovative way (for the local context). Participation is a new thing in Lithuania, and it was received very well. Public participation methods such as working with a Local Support Group were successfully applied. Participation created transparency and trust in the project from the very beginning.
- Designing an integral project including all layers (governance, social, economic, buildings, public space and infrastructure) into one Local Action Plan document is expected to secure a comprehensive result. The LAP helps to steer the process and stick to initial goals.
- Selecting the project site as one of the strategic sites for the city development and including into an ITI programme helped to secure political and financial support for the initial phase.

### Factors that are expected to bring success:
- Very intense and detailed preparation of future steps would allow planning ahead and securing desired outcomes.
- Declaring the project a Pilot project, which would give more opportunities for experiments and innovation.

### Future conditions needed for success:
- An administrative unit at neighbourhood scale (such as: residents' association, community association, housing association, local action group or similar) for the local redevelopment and empowerment of the residents.
- National support for renovation processes beyond the scale of individual buildings.
- Support from the Municipality, residents and politicians in order to fully develop the project.
In line with our process perspective on the three regeneration projects featured here, the following lessons can be applied to other cities:

- Gaining political support for the project from the very early stage ensures easier communication between city departments, faster decision-making and continuation of the process, securing public funding, and, last but not least, greater integration of environmental concerns in urban regeneration practices.

- Developing big areas as one project with a common vision is a very important lesson to other cases in Lithuania and to other transition countries. Often in Lithuania areas are split into smaller plots and developed individually. Having one overarching project ensures better quality of spaces, optimal densities and the integration of the site into a city.

- Land ownership is a crucial factor for municipalities to be able to develop bigger scale projects and ensure public interest.

- It is important to have one body responsible for implementation and management of a project. That can be a company, project managements group or local support group.

- Participation of residents and other key stakeholders in such projects is a very important success factor. It ensures the effective design and implementation of environmental goals, especially when dealing with home-owners who are key players in making decisions about the housing stock and common areas. Inhabitants and/or the wider public can participate in task definition stage, designing or evaluation.

- Having ambition for architectural, environmental and urban design quality at an early stage and setting out this ambition in public and private tendering and contracts helps to achieve better urban development and quality urban space. Embedding project-specific environmental measures (e.g. recycling systems, energy choices, cycling lanes, etc.) into wider urban systems requires a longer-term citywide environmental vision.
In general terms, ‘innovation’ in these three regeneration projects in the city of Vilnius can only be seen in relative terms, given its very much constraining conditions compared to other Northern/Western European countries. Thus, transferability of innovation has relevance mainly for countries and cities facing similarly constrained conditions. These are young democratic states such as post-socialist Eastern European countries, where the private sector has a strong involvement in developing large parts of the city and where the city administration lacks financial and political powers to adequately react and guide such development towards more sustainable development.

**North Town**

The municipal company Start Vilnius (previously named North Town), which was responsible for the redevelopment of the former military camp into North Town district, is currently responsible for the transformation of several other military camps. The same management method, where one company supervises the process, is applied. However, many other experiences are not applicable, as the camps are not in such strategic locations as the North Town, and the economic situation is different (there is no such economic boom as before 2007).

**Park of Architecture**

The Municipality came to the idea to develop the exemplary Park of Architecture project after participating and gaining experience in EU knowledge exchange projects, such as B-Team. Park of Architecture was inspired by Bo01 -Malmo, Vauban - Freiburg, Vikki - Helsinki, IBA – Berlin, Hamburg, Emshcr, GWL site – Amsterdam.

Now the project is ongoing, but already some of the lessons could be transferred to other cities, especially in transition countries. These lessons include: transparency of the project process to the public, involvement of citizens, partnership model between the city and developers, and including design quality requirements in the partnership contract.

**Zirmunai Triangle**

Vilnius Municipality is participating with Zirmunai Triangle in URBACT RE-Block network focusing on the regeneration of neighbourhoods with large-scale housing estates in decline. Participants in RE-Block exchange knowledge, experiences and receive comments from international experts working with similar topics. Therefore Zirmunai Triangle is very much inspired by neighbourhood regeneration projects in Rome (IT), Salford (GB), Sodertalje (SE), Magdeburg (DE), Budapest (HU), Komotini (GR), Lasi (RO), Gelsenkirchen (DE) and Malaga (ES).

Later, when the Zirmunai Triangle project is more advanced, it is planned to transfer experiences and process methodology to other housing estates in Vilnius and Lithuania. Other cities could learn how to work with community, prepare a development vision, an action plan, and how to manage and implement a housing regeneration project. Design proposals and/or the working methodology could be very easily applied in other cities. However, it is different with implementation and finance. Zirmunai Triangle in Vilnius will be financed partly with EU support for ITI. Without such support implementation in other cities would be very difficult.
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## URBACT II Projects

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| **2nd Call Projects (2009–2012)**                                    |                                                                                  |                            |
| Active Travel Network     | Promoting walking and cycling in small and medium-sized cities                  | Weiz - AT                   |
| Cash*                    | Sustainable and affordable energy efficient housing                              | Echirroles - FR             |
| ESIMeC                   | Economic strategies and innovation in medium-sized cities                         | Basingstoke and Deane - UK  |
| EVEUE                    | Electric Vehicles In Urban Europe                                                | Westminster - UK            |
| LINKS                    | Improving the attractiveness and quality of life in old historical centres       | Bayonne - FR                |
| OP-Act                   | Strategic positioning of small and medium-sized cities facing demographic changes | Leoben - AT                 |
| RomaNet*                 | Integration of the Roma population in European cities                            | Budapest - HU               |
| SURE                     | Socio-economic methods for urban rehabilitation in deprived urban areas          | Eger - HU                   |
| TOGETHER                 | Developing co-responsibility for social inclusion and well-being of residents in European cities | Mulhouse - FR               |

| **3rd Call Projects (2012–2015)**                                    |                                                                                  |                            |
| 4D Cities                | Promoting innovation in the health sector                                        | Igualada - ES               |
| CityLogo                 | Innovative city brand management                                                 | Utrecht - NL                |
| Creative SpIN            | Cultural and Creative Industries                                                  | Birmingham - UK             |
| CSI Europe               | Role of financial instruments (Jessica Urban Development Fund) in efficient planning | Manchester - UK             |
| ENTER.HUB                | Railway hubs/multimodal interfaces of regional relevance in medium sized cities  | Reggio Emilia - IT          |
| EUUniversities           | Partnerships between cities and universities for urban development               | Delft - NL                  |
| Jobtown                  | Local partnerships for youth employment opportunities                             | Cesena - IT                 |
| My Generation at Work    | Youth employment with focus on empowering skills and attitudes                   | Rotterdam - NL              |
| Prevent                  | Involving parents in the prevention of early school leaving                       | Nantes - FR                 |
| Re-Block                 | Renewing high-rise blocks for cohesive and green neighbourhoods                  | Budapest XVIII District - HU |
| Sustainable Food in Urban Communities | Developing low-carbon and resource-efficient urban food systems                      | Brussels Capital - BE |
| URBACT Markets           | Local markets as drivers for local economic development                          | Barcelona - ES              |
| USEACT                   | Re-utilizing existing locations to avoid land consumption                          | Naples - IT                 |
| User                     | Involving users and inhabitants in urban sustainable planning                     | Agglomeration Grenoble Alpes Metropole - FR |
| Footprint                | Local economic development through the reuse of brownfield and buildings of the wood furniture sector | Piacca de Ferreira - PT |

| Diet for a Green Planet                                         | Cooperation to align eating habits for an ecologically sustainable development | Sideratze - SE             |
| ESI MeC II                                                        | Economic strategies and innovation in medium sized cities                         | Basingstoke and Deane - UK  |
| EVUE II                                                           | Electric Vehicles in Urban Europe                                                | Westminster - UK            |
| Gastronomic Cities                                               | Promoting gastronomy as a key urban development                                  | Burgas - ES                 |
| Genius: Open                                                     | Creating innovative solutions to city challenges via an on-line collaborative platform | York - UK                   |
| Healthy Ageing                                                   | Cities’ action for an active and healthy ageing                                  | Udine - IT                  |
| PlaceMaking 4 Cities                                            | Useful public spaces instead of nice public spaces                                | Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council - IE |
| RomaNet II                                                       | Integration of Roma populations                                                  | Budapest - HU               |
| TUTUR                                                             | Temporary use as a tool for urban regeneration                                   | Rome - IT                   |

*Fast Track Label
URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting integrated sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, re-affirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal changes. URBACT helps cities to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT II comprises 550 different sized cities and their Local Support Groups, 61 projects, 29 countries, and 7,000 active local stakeholders. URBACT is jointly financed by the ERDF and the Member States.