

## **Learning from Moscow – planning principles of the 1935 General Plan for Reconstruction and its political relevance**

Rolf Jenni May 2006

### **Abstract**

The *1935 General Plan for reconstruction of Moscow* can be conceived as a consolidation of the highly controversial debates and visions in urban planning in the period before 1931 and the rising political centralisation and concentration of power. This Essay calls for a connection in the reading of the transition from avant-garde concepts in urban design towards the new planning attitudes, '*Socialist Realism*' as a continuation of the avant-garde period. The idea of the role of architecture as a generative device for societal changes shifted gradually from the beginning of the revolutionary years. While the avant-garde's conception charted out a definite interest and faith in technological achievements to influence (and subsequently lead to) a transformation of the societal condition, the beginning of the thirties delved in the belief in the human spirit and its ability to create a projection of a proletarian future through architecture. Although the fact of political indoctrination of ideological constrains cannot be denied, the new spirit must have certainly had an influence on architects and planners in this particular period. The political imposition for a new direction in urbanism, resulting in rearrangements of planning institutions, was not only homogenising the different architectural positions but also leading to the possibility of unification of the extremely fragmented associations into a concentration of one collective project - the project for a new socialist city, represented through the Plan for reconstruction of Moscow.

Looking at the political and economical condition today, the so-called '*Capitalist realism*', manifests itself in the new *Master Plan for Moscow 2020*. A condition of undetermined propositions, represented through a field of points and connecting lines, constantly adapt and adjust to the requirements of a neo-liberal democratic system. A *terrain-vague* of juxtaposed zones, centres, sub-centres and street networks, abandoned from any political will and intention, randomly surrendered to the mechanisms of a free market. As against the General Plan for Reconstruction of 1935 is antagonistically powerful because of its holistic appearance to underline a strong common ideology about the socialist city of the future. This omnipresent ideology allowed the heterogeneity and diversity of this plan (due to the involvement of various personalities of planning and architecture) to perform as a 'homogenous collage' of very powerful and delicate urban planning principles.

This essay calls for a reinterpretation and reapplication of these principles in the contemporary situation, which would have the power to provide Moscow with alternatives to redefine and concurrently strengthen the lost representation.

### **Introduction-**

#### **Political and economical precondition of the paradigm-shift in the urban planning debate in Moscow**

The general plan for reconstruction of 1935 is generally considered purely as an attempt to concentrate and centralize the political power to Moscow, the form of centrality applied as a mean of political representation. Thus the political emphasis on the capital city would weaken other cities and strengthen Moscow, in order to demonstrate the political power in the hand of the totalitarian regime, but also as a reaction to control the increasing bureaucratization of the political establishment of Stalin.

The Ring-Radial Structure of the city as a very literal representation of centrality as well as the monumental radial streets, the so-called *magistraly's*, where the exaggeration of scale would repress and relativise any form of individuality, are often red and criticised as means of representation of the authoritarian regime.

However, this judgments, often based on cliché-like observations are justifiable, nevertheless one has to understand the context, which led the political power heavily be involved in planning decisions and directives resulting in the famous Masterplan of 1935.

In fact the economical situation in the cities in the period of the end of the first Five Year plan was in a desolate situation. The precipitation of the first years of the 1. Five year plan, emphasizing on heavy Industry and collectivization of agriculture, led on one side to economical and thus social crisis on the countryside, but the massive increase in the industry created in the same time a dramatic demand for workers in the urban areas. This resulted in a demographic condition of migration to the cities of not foreseen dimensions. The Living conditions, most of all in Moscow, were in dramatic situation. This forced the political power finally to take action, leading in a series of institutional changes and rearrangements that would strengthen the *municipal economy i.e. the*

*urban economy* which was almost totally neglected at the beginning of the 1. Five year plan.

Therefore the 'birth' of urbanism in Stalin's era could be considered as a side product of the accomplishment of the problems of the municipal economy, the model of this accomplishment was Moscow, its promoter *Lazar M. Kaganovich*, who was a very close collaborator of Stalin being a very influencing member of the politburo. In 1930, when Kaganovich became also General Secretary of the communist party in Moscow, he began to use his powerful positions in a very intelligent way, engaging himself actively in elaborating proposals for the enhancement of the municipal economy and thus for urban planning.

This engagement culminated finally in Kaganovich's famous speech at *16<sup>th</sup> party Congress of the Central Committee of the VKP (b)* in June 1931, persuading the party to decree a resolution for new directives in the municipal economy which would lead to the *law on the urban economy of Moscow and the law of urban economy in USSR*.

Through his critical arguments towards the 'unrealistic' *desurbanist* concepts and the strong emphasis on reconstruction of the old city and its clear limitation and compactness, thus an *urbanistical* approach, he established a new debate in urban planning in Russia. With this very important shift, where politics was taking over the responsibility in planning, the 'unrealistic' (avant-garde) visions in urban design were at first sight a passed, the party wanted to see the '*transformation in to the real*'. *fig. 1*

The consequences of this shift culminated in dissolutions and dismantling of the different very heterogeneous architectural associations and -organisations and in the establishment of a series of strong governmental directed institutional bodies.

### **Lazar Kaganovich's speech at 16<sup>th</sup> party Congress of the Central Committee of the VKP (b) 1931**

The speech of Kaganovich can be considered not only as a very important document in urbanism but also in politics. The manner how politics and urbanism was intermingled within this speech makes it highly crucial for the whole further development of the debates in the field in architecture and urbanism in the sovietunion. Suddenly architecture became an enormously relevant tool to establish ideological directives through pure physicality. Through built space. In comparison to present (capitalist) conditions where politics (involvement) and urban planning are highly controversial fields of never ending negotiating processes of multiple (democratic) interests, the 'subjectivity' of this political involvement can not purely be regarded in negative terms. The enormous broad content of Kaganovich's speech of three hours addressed very pragmatic issues as well as ideological comments. In that sense the holistic form of the vision for the socialist city of the future sketched by Kaganovich can almost be conceived as a 'gesamtkunstwerk', a large scale structure for the city that would create the perception of its wholeness and this clearly expressed in the General Plan for reconstruction of Moscow.

By describing the existing conditions in Moscow, Kaganovich claimed the indispensable need for a general plan for development, since until the beginning of the thirties there were still no planning regulations except the stop for further developments of industrial areas within the city territory.

Kaganovich stated that the Municipal economy was discriminated during the beginning of the 1. Five Year plan in favour of the massive industrialisation thus the social needs of the working class would not be corresponded. In that sense the historically important assignment of a socialist reconstruction of the City and its economy would have to be embedded and applied in the next years, i.e. in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Five-year plan. As a short term goal the reconstruction of the old cities and the construction of new buildings was mentioned, but in fact Kaganovich emphasized purely on the reconstruction of the existing cities, whereas the issue of building new cities was only touched shortly and comments about reconstruction of old cities were almost purely about concerns regarding the capital city. The capital city of the world's only proletarian state. Moscow as an urbanistical model, a 'laboratory' for the realisation of a vision.

To solve the urgent problems, Kaganovich at first recommended the construction of new housing, and apartment buildings. He claimed that the main assignment would be 'the apartment for the worker', and thus the investigation in the standardisation of houses in order to solve efficiently the housing shortage.<sup>1</sup> He further called for the adaptation to the new socialist way of living and the need for collective kitchens, day care centres, kindergartens and laundries. Other important issues to react in short term were the emphasis on reconstruction and transformations of existing buildings, the amelioration of the water supply system, the expansion and redevelopment of the green areas, but also the construction of a transportation (underground) system which should urgently solve the need for rapid and cheap transportations.

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<sup>1</sup> the wholeness and depth of his (political) speech is in this chapter clearly expressed through the fact that he even addressed the research in construction materials. The difficulty to produce concrete due to the lack of iron and cement would ask for the need in investigations of alternatives such as silicates, shales, or fibrolit which was actually used for the mass standardisation houses until recent days.

Kaganovich saw urban planning in that moment rather as a 'device' to accomplish the exigencies for the municipal economy: That practical experience in urban planning should be developed on the basis of the theoretical directives given by Marx, Engels and Lenin and therefore three questions to be addressed: First, the socialist transformation of the way of living, second the internal planning of the cities, and third, the expansion of existing and building of new cities in the USSR, according the assignment to the evenly dispersion of industry and thus the abolishment of the contrast between city and countryside. In reference to this interpretation of these directives stands his quotes about the socialist city:

*'people are saying: we have to build socialist cities. They forget that from a social and political point of view the cities 'are' already socialist cities. Our city is from the beginning of the October revolution, since the moment were we disappropriated the bourgeoisie and were we socialized capital goods, a socialist city.'*

Further on Kaganovich criticised the actual inability of architects and urban planners and their endless debates about linear, ring, grid- etc. concepts for the cities, but not being able to react on the problems of reality, given by the conditions of the existing cities. But Kaganovich's main criticism was addressed to the so-called *desurbanists*. A movement, which claimed that the direction in city planning should either reduce the size of the existing cities to 1 till 2 million citizens or to completely abolish the difference of cities through the spread of a network like system, (a network of industrial cities) and thus a very literal translation of Lenin's claim to avoid the cultural alienation of rural communities (i.e. Engels' claim for distribution of industry away from cities towards the countryside)

*'we are aiming the abolition of the contrast between the town and the country, not by means of the abolition of the town, but rather through the socialist reconstruction of the village, by raising the latter to the cultural level of an advanced city.'*

In that sense Kaganovich took a position against diminution and against gigantism. The new city should become whether according to the desurbanists and '*ultra-leftist*'<sup>2</sup> ideas only small entities of 50'000 citizens nor the gigantic 'american-typus' of the capitalist city. He called for a controlled growth of Moscow with an increase of 2 million people to not more than 5 million people.

The CC of the VKP(b) accepted the resolution elaborated by Kaganovich und thus set the seal on the new direction in urban planning. From now on desurbanist projects were not possible anymore. Considering that, it manifestates the peak of that paradigm shift. The planning of new industrial cities was not anymore the focus in urban planning, main attention should from now on be given to the existing cities, in other words to Moscow. Through the emphasis on reconstruction, and thus historical estimation, semiotic and symbolical meaning was somehow already inherent in the content of this resolution, although the principles of 'socialist realism' were established not until the foundation of the all-union congress of the Russian association of proletarian writers in 1934.

### **Vladimir Semenov's position and the General Plan for Moscow of 1935**

After Kaganovich's report in January 1932 on the 3rd Moscow District- and City Conference of the VKP(b), the *mossovjet* established the, ***town planning and architectural organization APU***. *Vladimir N. Semenov* together with *Sergei Cernysev* became the new principle-architects for Moscow and head of the APU. Semenov was all ready commissioned by the mossovjet to elaborate a scheme for the reconstruction of Moscow in 1930 and thus a very influencing figure in urban planning. In his highly interesting scheme for a transformation plan for Moscow he proposed a transformation of the city towards a socialist city through decentralisation of the existing system. A system of 'city complexes' would surround the centre, each with it's own economical and administrative autonomy and enclosed with recreational green spaces. *fig. 2* Through the APU, finally an institutional body was created which was able to operate on a large-scale project through its political integration. The condition of non-institutionalized and very fragmented planning associations and unions before the 'paradigm-shift', was also largely responsible for the very conceptual and rather ineffective and unrealistic planning approaches in the avant-garde period. The general commission of the APU was to elaborate a 'scientific profound plan for the further development and transformation of Moscow'.

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<sup>2</sup> Kaganovich addressed his critic direct to Nikolai Milliutin, and Okitovitch who were the main protagonists of the desurbanism ideology

One of the main characteristic feature of the work on the general Plan for Moscow was the desire to see the city as the sum total of large-scale complexes under construction simultaneously, a shift from designing and constructing buildings to creating integrated ensembles. This tendency was also in accordance with Kaganovich's assessment of the condition of new settlements which were not planned as a part of the city, disconnected with its environment, claiming to start to build a uniform city. Semenov as well formulated critic on the German proletarian settlements, the 'Zeilenbau', a sort of row-house-settlements of the late 20ies, by calling it not representative and non architectural with respect to its hygienic advantages. Moscow should become a Capital City and not a assemblage of settlements, the socialist city shouldn't be a conglomeration of competing separate fragments but rather an urban complex, designed as an entity.

Therefore the (re-) construction of the so-called *quartaly*, a sort of self-sufficient archetype, a 'Blockrandbebauung' provided with different infrastructural functions such as schools, day-care centres, shops, clubs, leisure areas was re-established. This can be seen in opposition to the idea of previous developed 'avant-gardist' projects to integrate the entire infrastructure in one house (for instance *Narkomfin*, *M. Ginzburg*). Through its huge scale, a quartaly contained about 15 hectares and can therefore almost be conceived as small cities within the city, these super blocks could fulfil both, the social needs but also the exigencies for a homogeneous landscape of the city. In that sense it was the perfect urbanistical principle to regulate and define (equal) densities as well as infrastructural facilities over the whole city territory, avoiding (social) inequalities along the boarder and peripheral areas of the city. These insufficient conditions were at most equated with capitalist cities. *fig. 3*

Regarding these approaches the creative thinking of Semenov was moving from the general towards the particular, from the city as a whole to its components. For Semenov the new starting point for planning was the image of the city, its holistic apprehension. The design of a city supposed to be '*not a two-dimensional, but a three-dimensional city*'.

Therefore an other important issue was applied: the introduction of large-scale public- and administrative buildings within the structure of the city, with the purpose to create free-standing centres around which the space of large sectors of the city would be absorbed; urban artefacts within a sea of the quartaly. *fig. 4*

In terms of a need for an architectural expression for the future Moscow, Semenov referred to classicism which should become the formative expression, not through form but through its principles. Despite the fact that the avant-garde architecture was highly influencing the discourse and in a certain way also the style of a lot of practicing architects at the time, it is often forgotten that a lot of very important soviet architects (*I. Zoltovskiy*) were always rather developing a sort of neo classicism combined with a reinterpretation of the historical Russian architectural heritage.

The most important points of the scheme elaborated by Semenov and the APU consisted at first on the reconstruction and maintenance of the radial- concentric street system. The roads should be broadened and transformed in large-scale generous *magistraly's* and therefore even existing buildings relocated. Although often criticised in the forefront of the debates regarding its limited potential of urban growth, Semenov claimed that a rejection of the existing ring system would mean to reject Moscow itself. Nevertheless, the reading of the general Plan reveals not only the emphasis on the existing structure but also the imposition of a series of new structures. Remarkable issue is Semenov's concept of a sort of 'theme urbanism' where each street and each square should consist of a special theme or character achieved through the implementation of specific programs, such as business streets, square of literature etc.

An other important key element was the 'garden-city' concept, which of course has to be conceived far beyond its origins. A series of elements such as peripheral parks, city parks or green corridors carefully planned and designed evolved in a system of green spaces. The idea of a blossoming garden that would penetrate throughout the entire aesthetic structure of the new plan was based on a reconstructive and transformative approach to nature. The Moscow of the future was envisioned as a luxuriant man-made oasis.

The emphasise on the river and water system was an other vital component of the Moscow of the future. It was not only symbolising the revitalisation aspect for the city but fulfilled also very pragmatic exigencies such as hygienic conditions or infrastructural issues; the construction of the Moskva-Volga canal was a highly important project to connect the city with the black sea in the south and the east sea in the north.

A very crucial role in the whole General Plan of 1935 was the public-transportation system i. e. the construction of the metro. All ready in the controversy debate about urbanism and desurbanism, the issue of fast and cheap means of transportations, which would bring the workers on a direct and convenient way to their locations, was largely discussed. In fact it was the first of the major projects, which actually started to get realized. But only after the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> five-year plan, leading to institutional, organisational and financial changes the project became integral part of the general plan for Moscow and thus promised to become successful.

The project but at most the work on the metro stations is exemplifying the enormous influence of the political in to architecture and planning through its main figures Kaganovich and Khrushchev, which were even taking decisions in terms of materials or detailing. The goal in the 'gestalt' of the stations was to create illusions of being in a palace in an unknown locality, architects should neither hide the underground ness, nor treat it as a

positive quality, instead he had to create the illusion of a palatial space truly present somewhere on earth but 'ideally' away from any specific location: a utopia. Realizing the utopia literally was the architect's task. Looking at the very rich and expensive materials, this collective grandeur was an invisible process of dispossessing the individual of his property rights, for which the symbolic architecture became a type of compensation. It was as if the metro continued the theme of a dream city of the future existing in a subterranean world in conventional time and space. Isolated from the real city, the metro became a kind of projection into the present of the festive beauty and harmony of the architectural ensembles of the future. *fig. 5*

In order to be able to elaborate all these different projects in depth, Semenov himself but also critical voices on the Masterplan, as well as political figures claimed for a more efficient instrument for the realization of the general plan. The reorganisation of the planning institutions led in the setting up of ten architectural and ten urban planning ateliers, the so-called *masterskajas*. These ateliers should create that unity from which an integrated organisation of a whole architectural network, Magistraly's, squares and finally the whole city were to arise. Together with the *masterskajas*, the ARPLAN another institution was created, with the fundamental role for political co-ordination and decision-making, involved was Kaganovich and Khrushchev, as well as the planners Semenov and Cernysev.

### **Continuation of avant-garde thinking in 'socialist realism'**

Looking at the leading architects of the *masterskajas*, illustrious names are appearing on the list of the architectural ateliers, such as *I. A. Fomin, I. A. Golosov, D. F. Friedman, N. Kolli, V. A. Vesnin*, or *K. S. Melnikov* but also in the urban planning ateliers, *M. ja. Ginzburg, N. A. Ladovsky, Kurt Meier*. Most of them well known for their highly innovative architectural oeuvre during the avant-garde period. This fact explains that the political changes of institutions didn't result in the occupation of important positions through other people. A lot of the avant-gardist architects and planners were still in, or became part of very important positions, this also in consideration of the fact that the architect leaders of the *masterskajas* were fully and personally responsible for the commissioned projects.

The guiding principles in 'socialist realism' established in literature, gradually changed the attitudes also in architecture, legibility through semiotics and symbolic meaning started to get applied in the designs in order to adapt to the politically implemented pledge for a prosperous future. The projection of a not yet reached utopia, expressed through architecture. The new 'zeitgeist', was certainly also affecting a lot of avant-gardist architects. Was in the twenties rather the belief in the technological advancement which would influence or change the society, then it was now the faith in the human spirit and its ability for the creation of a socialist future. Nevertheless it is hardly to believe that people, such as *Hannes Meyer*, who was involved in teaching in the Moscow Architectural Institute until 1936 and rather known for his desurbanistical approaches in planning, completely rejected his original thinking. Or another German architect Kurt Meier, who became a highly influencing collaborator of Semenov through his deserving engagement in the forefront of the General Plan of 1935. His project for the competition of the reconstruction of Moscow, as it will be discussed in the following part, was probably one of the most valuable concepts and received a lot of attention also from Kaganovich. Still he was rather radical in his proposal of a decentralised system of the city. Taking these arguments into consideration, one can almost assert, that a lot of the thinking of the previous (avant-gardist) debates and concepts through these figures must have been part of the whole debates and proposals of the General Plan of 1935. In that sense the plan cannot only be conceived as a political top-down realisation of an ideology, but also a culmination of an extremely broad spectrum of innovative urbanistical thinking.

### **The competition for the reconstruction of Moscow, 1931/1932**

Besides a large field of results and proposals for the transformation of Moscow such as Le Corbusier's plan or the competition for the green city of Moscow, one important event has to be regarded as highly influential: the competition for the reconstruction of Moscow of 1931/1932.

The competition was held exactly during that forced change of the political direction in urban planning. Hence there was never really a winning proposal chosen, since the 3<sup>rd</sup> Moscow District-and City Conference of the VKP(b) decided definitively about the new directives in the future of urban planning. Nevertheless the projects were integrative constituents of the whole process towards the General Plan of Moscow and were largely discussed and criticised the Soviet Union at 'public' podiums as well as abroad.

Despite the fact of the new tendency in urban planning towards urbanistical approaches the invited architects and planners were advocates of both movements, desurbanists and urbanists such as, *Ernst May with Hans Schmitt, Hannes Meyer, Kurt Meyer, Nikolaj Ladovsky, the proletarian architects WOPRA, Vladimir Kratjuk and German Krasin. fig. 6*

In the following part I try to extract the most formative planning principles which were pursued in the different approaches and which are in a certain way still 'traceable' and identifiable by analysing the General Plan of 1935. Even though the urbanist approaches were in hindsight much more (politically) appreciated, also the 'desurbanist' approaches contained some very considerable proposals. The projects were attempts to spread the urban fabric of the city on a larger territory through small satellite-cities and would thus resolve in a demand for huge investments in infrastructure. Therefore these projects were heavily criticised, although, they proposed to retain the radial-concentric system.

Nevertheless the aspect of *decentralisation* in Ernst May's and Hans Schmitt's project through the satellite-settlements had also its valuable strength. The emphasis on the *proximity of working and living areas* or *hygienic reflections*, were also highly important issues in the General Plan. Hannes Meyer pursued an other similar approach, which was very influential: He proposed a '*patchwork-system of coexisting settlement areas*' which were clearly defined and distinguished from each other, further he proposed a series of revaluations of existing *green areas with emphasis on the riverbanks and -spaces*.

Besides May/Schmitt and Meyer, the maintenance of the radial-concentric street system was also the intention in Kurt Meyer's project whereas of other reasons. The experience, which he brought from his previous collaboration with *Fritz Schumacher*, who was the principal architect for the General Plan of Cologne in 1923, allowed him to propose a very concrete and realisable project. Being aware about the huge effort a complete transformation of the street system and expansion of the city area would create, Meyer proposed a *compact* structure, through densification of the existing urban fabric, penetrated through a series of green wedges. Though he emphasised on the political and historical centre, that would have its *raison d'être* in the role of the 'proletarian Capital', he proposed a series of *decentralising districts*, where each would have its own administrative centre.

The other designs, which suggested rather 'urbanistical' approaches for a compact city, such as those of the WOPRA, Ladovsky or Kratjuk were basically *opposing the existing radial system* with other principles. Ladovsky, who was already commissioned in the late twenties to reconsider a new structure for Moscow, proposed a further elaboration of his functional scheme of a parabola-like city. The radical idea of a 'dynamic centre' through the combination of a ring- and a linear- system provided every possible opportunity for a further development and urban growth. Despite its qualities, the project was highly criticised through its emphasis on industrial areas.

The WOPRA's entry was considered next to Kurt Meyer's project through its compactness but also among other qualities, as one of the most valuable one. The Proposal suggested dividing the city in to five districts, which would be connected with the existing industrial area in the southeast. The most promising part of the proposal was a new *orthogonal system of streets that would be superimposed with the existing network* of roads and thus enable better connectivity with the districts. Analogous to that approach, the project of Vladimir Kratjuk contained also principles of disturbances through series breaks of the ring-system in the form of linear cities at different scales, focussing the existing centre. To conclude, a set of principles can be identified that suggested *Modifications and disturbances* of the radial concentric system: the *combination of the radial with linear system*, (parable-city principle, i.e. dynamic centre, Ladovsky), the *juxtaposition of the radial and the orthogonal grid system* (WOPRA), the *breaks in the radial concentric system through a system of linear cities* (Kratjuk). In a general view it is of great importance that these projects, due to the examination with the idea of a compact city within the more or less existing boundaries, were somehow forced to deal with highly innovative principles that were, through the conflict with the existing system, very controversial. The planning directives, for the maintenance and reconstruction of the radial concentric system and thus the emphasis on manifestation and representation of centrality, given by the political establishment were of course opposing these approaches. Nevertheless, the high attention, which was given to the projects in the aftermath of the competition, as above mentioned, acknowledged the potential of those principles. The reading of the General Plan for Moscow although in rather understated and subtle form, reveals the inherence of some of those principles.

## Reading the 1935 General Plan for Reconstruction of Moscow and its principles

At first glance, it is striking that the urban tissue of the General Plan for Moscow, consists of high compactness and an almost equal density, expanding over the whole territory of the city. Another remarkable characteristic is that the irregular contour of the city-boundaries is obviously not congruent with the very formative ring-street system.

The abstract analytical reading of the plan and its limitations allows to identify areas in the urban fabric which are almost avoiding structural relationships with the existing ring system, and thus representing a sort of independent entities; an archipelago consisting of island-like areas, in the majority of the cases urban fabrics (*quartaly*) in dialog with green parks, precisely defined and planned, giving the city its contour and sharp distinctions from the countryside. *fig. 7*

In reference to this characteristic and focussing on the street network, the above-mentioned disturbances of the existing radial- concentric system through grid systems are also identifiable through abstraction. Whether the grid structures are opposing and relating simultaneously with the existing system, such as the new southwest extension of the city (one of the main development areas in the 1935 General Plan of Moscow) or are almost neglecting it through different orientations: it is creating a characteristic in the city-structure which is almost balancing the importance of both systems equally. *fig. 8*

The course of the river itself with its spatial condition through the curvaceous shape, crossing the whole city diagonally can be conceived as a sort of disturbance of the structure of the city. This huge water body emphasised through the accompaniment of a series of 'designed' green spaces and urbanised areas creating its own identity and specific characteristic. *fig. 9*

An issue of the plan, considerable as principle is highly remarkable: a very repetitive regular 'block' structure is covering the whole territory of the city, not changing its dimension, neither in the centre nor at the boundaries. The Quartaly, the self-sufficient entities as a principle to enhance the living qualities distributed evenly on the whole city, but also to enable a spatial condition through its repetitive density that is characterising the compactness of the city, the representation of a holistic entity. *fig. 4*

## Conclusion

Taking the economical and social conditions particularly in Moscow as a reason, the political establishment finally took action for a top-down engagement in urban planning which was basically about 'making things real' after mere conceptual and visionary debates. The Confrontation with the new situation forced planners and architects to deal finally with real exigencies and conditions of the existing cities. Moscow as the Capital was to be envisaged as a model, a laboratory to reconsider urban planning. The new formation of institutions urged but also allowed the members of the previously splintered organisations and associations for more efficient collaborations. Hence it is highly considerable how a series of precise political adaptations and rearrangements like the emphasis on the municipal economy evolved in a chain-reaction which had Impact of gigantic dimensions on the whole architectural and urban planning culture of Russia. Looking at today's political conditions, not only in relation to Moscow, (political) decision-making is very often hindered through highly complex processes of a pluralistic interdependency and free-market mechanisms, the subjectivity in the message for 'a change' given through the political establishment and its personification, Kaganovich, cannot purely be seen in negative terms. To agree with certain aspects of a totalitarianism is of course highly questionable and means to walk on thin ice, but the problems of a democratic community is that it has also its limitations, at least when it is confronted with large scale projects, such as a plan which is considering to reorganise a whole city. The danger remains, that a project like this and in this particular situation is committed defenceless to the mechanisms of the market. This is exemplified through the fact that the emphasis on housing in the Masterplan for 2020 is somehow very much unprivileged in relation to commercial activities or tourism for instance, whereas one of the main features of the 1935 Plan was housing, a demand which had urgently to be solved.

The occurrences towards an 'urbanist' approach in city planning was in that sense a logical development of the above mentioned changes of the period. To strengthen Moscow as a political and cultural centre and thus to emphasise on its representational character was the first aim of the political leadership. The realisation of 'the project' through the high interdependency of politics and planning, lead to a remarkable holistic concept. The so called golden years at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> five year plan shifted the goal and perception about the socialist city of the future essentially in contrast to the revolutionary years of the twenties and can thus not merely be understood through the top-down infiltration of a symbolical propaganda of the totalitarian regime. Apart from the appearance of its totality, a project that would represent one single idea, the plan itself is of a highly heterogeneous character. This due the fact, that it embodies also the heritage (of the knowledge) of a

whole generation of (avant-garde) architects. The culmination of planning principles which can be 'extracted' from the plan are of high contemporary relevance and rise the question for adaptations in the today's condition of Moscow. Looking at the new Masterplan it reveals a rather vague, not clearly defined character, an amalgamation of 'points of interests', zones, and 'rhizomorphic' street systems, a 'network-city', where boundaries and limitations are determined purely through infrastructure. *fig. 11*

Therefore the implementation of precise defined elements or elements of disturbances as the General Plan of 1935 is suggesting, could be adapted, able to create their own identities, within a field of undetermined 'events' and to resist to a future process of sprawl, that surprisingly, did not yet happen in Moscow in the same way as in western (capitalist) conditions.

The reconsideration for emphasis on the river space within the Masterplan of 2020 can be understood and answered as a very pragmatic issue, regarding the fact of the enormous spatial potential to redevelop the existing industrial areas along the riverbanks. But apart from this highly realistic dimension, the potential of this condition can also be interpreted as a very important counter-space, a principle for disturbance of the radial-concentric morphology through an 'architectural' emphasis on its qualities of differences. As the General Plan of 1935 demonstrates, a series of defined spatial situations, creating contrast and thus specific identity through its confrontation with the 'revitalisational' element of the river. But also a condition of spaces, as in the Plan of 1935 adhered, that contains of a social content; an alternation of public spaces, collective housing and green parks. Thus to confront this concept with the 'market-oriented' new Masterplan of 2020, where the privatisation of spaces is increasing gradually, is of inevitable relevance; to give something back to the city, the possibility to create a new identity, a representation through the reading of its inherent historical, cultural and political values.