

Alec J. F. Hill

Königsberg to Kaliningrad:

A case study on urban development without cultural preservation, its consequences and recovery.

Bachelor's project in Cultural heritage management /
Kulturminneforvaltning

Supervisor: Thomas Brandt

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Historical Studies



Kunnskap for en bedre verden

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Introduction

Many cities in Europe faced utter destruction during the second world war due to bombing raids and urban fighting. Equally many faced further destruction after the war had ended, this time it was urban planners from both the east and west that took the opportunity that flattened cities gave them to redevelop them into what they envisioned the modern city to be. Old and damaged buildings were torn down to make way for the new or cheaply built housing that was very much in demand at the end of the war.

This bachelor paper will be focusing on one such city that changed hands after the second world war and spent the majority of its life after the war behind the iron curtain. I will also be comparing Kaliningrad to Leningrad, to see how Soviet urban planning differs from the newly conquered territory to a city that has nearly always belonged to Russia.

Before 1945 this city was part of Germany. Today, that city's name is Kaliningrad and is part of the Russian federation. However for most of its life it went by the names of Königsberg (German), Karaliaučius (Lithuanian), or Królewiec (Polish). For most of its time before becoming a part of the Soviet Union its name was Königsberg. So henceforth, when referring to the time prior to 1945 I will refer to the city as Königsberg.

Kaliningrad is a city located on the south baltic coast, at the end of the vistula lagoon, a little upstream from where the Pregolya river meets the sea. It is part of a Russian enclave known as the Kaliningrad oblast (Kaliningrad region). Its territory makes up the northern half of former East Prussia which was partitioned by Poland and the Soviet Union at the end of the second world war. When it was part of the Soviet Union, its territory reached the region uninterrupted, however when the iron curtain fell in 1989 and the countries that were under the Soviet's thumb declared independence, this was no longer the case. This left the region as an exclave, with only air and sea being the only means of transport that did not cross borders. A Soviet general half heartedly tried to sell the region to newly reunited Germany, however the Bonn government declined, as it was currently occupied with reincorporating East Germany into the federal republic.¹ Since then, the Kaliningrad oblast has remained a part of the Russian federation, acting as Russia's foothold in Europe.

The Russian navy has a huge presence in the area as it is one of Russia's few warm water ports on the baltic. The area is also heavily militarised with missiles.² Despite this, many of the locals wish for Kaliningrad to be a bridge to Europe rather than a strategic foothold. Many Russians who live in Kaliningrad are fascinated with its European past, and during the time post Soviet Union some even felt more like European Russians, than Russian Russians.³ This expression of fascination with the European, and German past can be seen in the local culture than exists in the city. Many of the dishes in restaurants today take inspiration from Europe, and the German cuisine that existed in the city prior to 1945, like dishes such as the *Königsberger Klopse*. The new architecture that has sprung up in the city in the past decade seems to take inspiration from European

¹ Klaus Wiegrefe, Historischer Ballast, Der Spiegel, 2010

² Russia deploys nuclear-capable missiles in Kaliningrad, BBC news, 2016

³ A baltic provinces' story in one man's life, The Christian Science Monitor, 2002

architecture, with a Russian twist in the colouring and ornamentation. The city was also a host city for the FIFA world cup in 2018, which brought with it new investment and infrastructure as well as the stadium and sport facilities that the World cup mandated. The city has been expanding in the commercial sector and is expecting population growth and overall has become a successful post soviet city, though like all cities, it is not without its share of problems.

Prior to writing this paper I did my hospitering at the Tukthuset in Trondheim. The Tukthus in Trondheim is a historical building that was formerly used as a prison for 'social deviants'. Today it houses the Senter for tidligmusikk, Barokkfest og Orkester Nord, which works on various projects within the historical music sphere in Scandinavia. They organise concerts and arrange for things in the Baroque festival in Trondheim.

During my time at the Tukthuset, we met a few times a week with the staff and mostly worked from home due to covid-19 restrictions. I also meet several times a week digitally with my co-students who were also doing their hospitering period at the Tukthus. My work consisted of writing a chronicle for a local newspaper the Adressavisa, on behalf of the Tukthuset. My article was about a man who lived in the late 19th century. His name was Hans Hagerup Lyngevær, who spent time imprisoned at the Tukthuset. We also brainstormed about potential improvements to make the Tukthuset more attractive as a museum and as a place for those with an interest in baroque music, working within the confines that a listed building such as the Tukthuset presents. Lastly, me and my co-students looked through various sources in regards to the history of the building and the people that had previously inhabited it, which helped us formulate what to write our individual articles on.

One of the things that inspired me to write this paper on the given topic is after looking at how the Tukthuset evolved in function and how the structure itself evolved, given the current construction work that was going on in rebuilding a section of the building that had been previously knocked down. This reminded me of Königsberg/Kaliningrad and its various buildings that had been repurposed and remodelled. I had initially had an interest in the city when I was a teenager. At the time I found the sudden destruction of Königsberg and its replacement with Kaliningrad tragic, but it was equally fascinating, with the different urban design philosophies the two cities employed, it was a significant contrast. I felt the subject was related to my chosen degree of kulturminneforvaltning in regards to how cultural heritage management/protection that was (or wasn't) employed in Kaliningrad post world war 2, and how that can affect urban development. This initial interest is what motivated me to choose this subject.

Throughout this paper I will be discussing the history of the region, its people, its lost and preserved cultural landmarks, intangible cultural heritage in the city, the urban development philosophies that dominated the city throughout the years as well as its future prospects and propositions that have been made for the city's development. In addition, I will also be comparing the development of Kaliningrad with Leningrad in the post war period.

The main questions I want to explore in this paper is how cultural heritage can survive utter destruction, how its destruction affects urban development and if Kaliningrad is an example of this phenomenon.

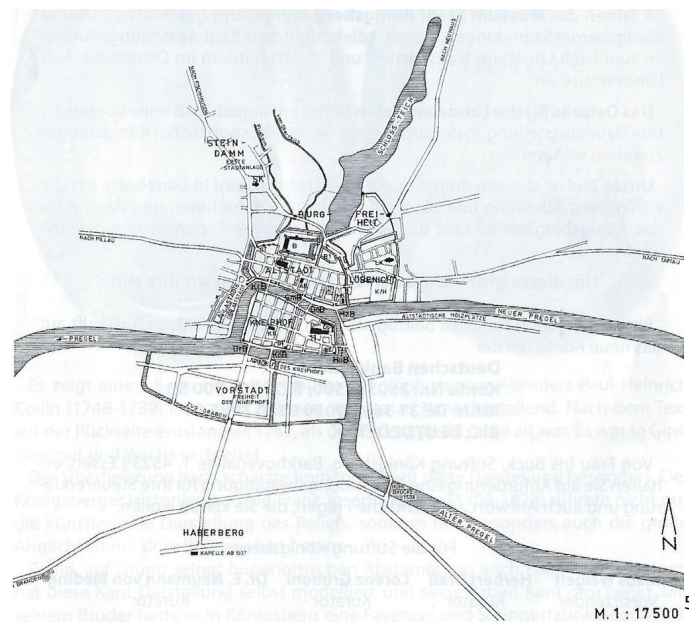
On methods and sources

This paper is chiefly about the city of Kaliningrad, its history and development. I have sourced the information I used to write this paper from a variety of sources, including news articles, academic papers, books, blog posts in English, German and Russian. I have also used social media comments by Russians living in Kaliningrad on websites such as Instagram, Youtube as well as other websites as a means of measuring Russian views on projects and present affairs in the city. It should be noted that social media comments alone are no metric to go by, so I have also read interviews with locals about current affairs in blog posts and news articles as well as their reviews of places on google maps. The views reflected by these interviewees and social media profiles is what I have gone on as the general mood of the people of Kaliningrad, but it must be noted that this does not necessarily reflect the entire mood of the city, nor the present day mood on certain issues. It must also be noted that I have used translator software to read the Russian sources, so there is a chance that some of it may be misinterpreted.

Chapter 1: A brief history of Königsberg

Before Kaliningrad there was Königsberg, and before Königsberg then there was Twangste. Twangste was a small settlement on the northern bank of the Pregolya river inhabited by the old Prussians, a balto-slavic people who lived along the south eastern baltic coast in the early middle ages, but have been slowly assimilated into German, Polish and Lithuanian populations throughout the last 800 years.

Twangste was conquered by the Teutonic Knights in 1255, a few years prior merchants from Lübeck had also created a settlement nearby. The region was renamed Königsberg (Literally: Kings Mountain) in honour of the Bohemian king King Ottokar II. The city continued to develop along the river's intersection and quickly Germanised and soon became a hub of German culture. ⁴



During the middle ages, Königsberg became the capital of the Teutonic order, and was a minor member of the Hanseatic league.⁶ Later it became the capital of Ducal Prussia, which was a fief of Poland. East Prussia gained its independence in 1660, and would later join with the German state of Brandenburg. Forming Brandenburg-Prussia, this state would later go on to form the kingdom of Prussia. Prussia was the country that formed Germany, and when it did; Königsberg was Germany's furthest eastern major city, sitting close to the border of Tsarist Russia. Königsberg was briefly under threat of siege during the first world war, but the overwhelming German victories at the battles of the Masurian lakes put that threat to an end.

Following Germany's defeat in the first world war, East Prussia, and consequently Königsberg was made an exclave of the Weimar republic. Torn off from Germany proper

⁴ Ludwig von Baczko: *Versuch einer Geschichte und Beschreibung von Königsberg*. Königsberg 1804, p. 23.

⁵ Lorenz Grimoni, *Königsberger Stadttore*. Königsberger Bürgerbrief 91, 2018

⁶ Association - The Hanseatic League, hansa.org

by the treaty of Versailles. Poland took over the area that had previously been West Prussia, creating the Polish corridor. The mood in East Prussia was very anti-communist, given their proximity to the Soviet Union and their perceived vulnerability to it. With this in mind, when looking at election results in 1933 it is not surprising the Nazi party got over half the vote in East Prussia. During the Nazi's short but violent reign, Königsberg embraced the toxic nationalism that Hitler envisioned. Proudly renaming the main plaza in front of the castle "Adolf Hitler Platz" and participating in rallies around East Prussia; The Tannenberg memorial being a favorite rallying place of the Nazi's.⁷

During the initial years of the second world war, Königsberg was spared the destruction of war, but was used as an important jumping off point for the Wehrmacht marching east. However when Nazi Germany went on the defensive, Königsberg was no longer out of harms way, and in 1944-1945 several devastating British bombing raids devastated the city core.⁸ As the Soviets came closer to Germany proper, the people of East Prussia and Königsberg stayed put, as Adolf Hitler had ordered that no one was to flee the Eastern provinces.⁹ As the guns of the Soviets drew ever closer, people all across East Prussia began to pack up their things, waiting to be allowed to leave. Eventually, Erich Koch (Gauleiter of East Prussia) gave the order to allow refugees to flee west, but by this point the Soviets were already marching into occupied Poland, and had cut off many escape routes along the Baltic coast. The Germans fought hard to keep the escape route via the Baltic open, but were eventually overwhelmed in April 1945.

Following the Allied victory in Europe, East Prussia was split between Poland and the Soviet Union. With Königsberg falling under the Soviet sphere, and becoming Kaliningrad. Here begins the history of Kaliningrad which I will be discussing further on in this paper.

⁷ Feier im Tannenberg Denkmal während der Rede des Führers, Bundesarchiv, 1934

⁸ From German Königsberg to Soviet Kaliningrad - Appropriating Place and constructing identity, Jamie Freeman, 2021, p 3-4

⁹ Andreas Kunz, *Wehrmacht und Niederlage: Die bewaffnete Macht in der Endphase der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft 1944 bis 1945* (2nd edition), Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2007, p. 92

Chapter 2: Urban development and culture in Königsberg before the second world war

Königsberg's relative areal size has remained fairly consistent from the 16th century onwards, however the style in which buildings were constructed has changed drastically throughout the ages. During the 1600's a large double ring of defensive fortifications was built around the city, which still stands mostly intact today. However, shortly before completion they became mostly redundant due to advances in artillery technology, but would later prove their worth in the second world war, the bastions being the last centers of German resistance to surrender in the city. In the 1700's, Königsberg made the transition from a medieval city into a baroque city, baroque being the new trending architecture style of the day.¹⁰

But it wasn't just new architecture styles sweeping into the city, the intellectual spheres of the enlightenment had made their way to Königsberg, producing one of the most famous critical thinkers of the enlightenment: Immanuel Kant. Kant studied at the Albertina university in Königsberg, which today bears his name as the "Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University." His theories and impact on society cannot be quickly condensed, but in short he made a large impact on philosophy, ethics, political philosophy as well as other fields, and his contributions cemented Königsberg as a city of the enlightenment.¹¹

The city saw another great facelift during the 1800's, with the neoclassical revival becoming the prevalent architectural style of the day. Throughout the century much of Königsberg's residential buildings were reconstructed into a more modern form, which is recognizable all across Europe today in many older residential areas. During the 1860's, Königsberg's most recognisable landmark; the castle replaced the baroque spire that had donned the top of the castle tower since the 16th century was replaced with a taller neo gothic spire. This new tower became a cultural symbol for the city, alongside the cathedral, as it was one of the tallest, if not the tallest structure in the city.¹² As demonstrated by these tourist, travel and celebratory posters from the interwar years.

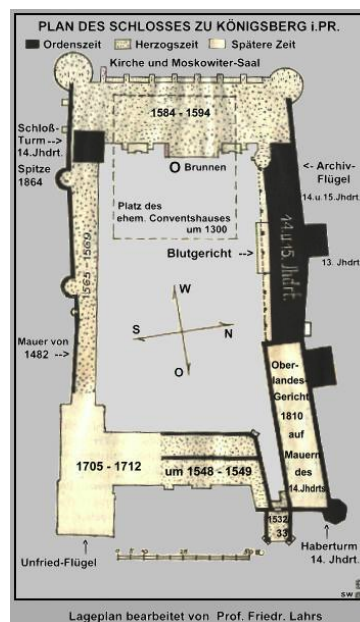


¹⁰ Museum Of The World Ocean, The past... , 2011

¹¹ Rohlf, Michael, Immanuel Kant, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2010

¹² Das Schloß in Königsberg/Pr. und seine Sammlungen, 1933

The castle formed the centerpiece of the city, the castle complex roughly made out of the shape of a rectangle, with four 'walls'. During the time of Weimar republic to the Nazi era, the western castle facade had two towers with a wall of buttresses connecting them. To the south, beginning on the west side was a tall section which extruded from the rest of the wall and rose into a gable type roof, and nestled alongside the aforementioned tower that connected to the buttresses. Along the rest of the wall were a few small outcrop towers. To the west side the wall connected to a building that extruded from the rest of the castle, which was known as the Prussian state archives. Alongside the eastern facade were a few different buildings, built into the wall, and various heights, including the gatehouse to which one entered the courtyard of the castle. At the end was another tower, slightly smaller than the twin towers on the western facade. Along the northside were two extruding parts, but generally was a smooth wall that came back to the north twin tower on the west facade. The building was a mix of several architecture styles from different time periods, blending seamlessly between one another, which made it an incredibly unique castle for its time. Königsberg castle kept parts of the original castle, while overhauling others and the result was a surprisingly beautiful structure that was the former heart of culture in Königsberg



(A plan of the castle showing the dates that each section was built)

Chapter 3: Post Königsberg and the rise of Kaliningrad

When one thinks of Europe's cities today, one's imagination instantly gravitates to the famous old buildings and monuments that constitute the cityscapes of every famous European city. For London, it is Big Ben, Buckingham Palace or the Tower of London. For Prague, its astronomical clock, the old town, or Prague castle, or a more local example here in Norway: Trondheim. In Trondheim you think of the colourful old warehouses lining the Nidelva, the great cathedral of the Nidarosdomen or perhaps the Studentersamfundet. To get a true sense of what happened to Königsberg in the aftermath of the second world war, one must imagine that almost every famous landmark you knew in your favorite European city is reduced to dust, and in its place is built large, blank concrete boxes, parking lots and green parks. The city center is moved to what used to be the suburbs and the old street system is completely overhauled, building motorways through what was once the heart of the city.

Many cities across Europe and Russia suffered the terrible fate of bombing raids during the second world war, but most culturally significant cities were rebuilt in their old image, or perhaps just with a new coat of paint, still retaining their familiar landmarks and old city street structure. Warsaw in Poland comes to mind here, using 18th century paintings by Bernardo Bellotto to reconstruct their old town.¹³ Kaliningrad was different though. Due to a mix of Soviet pragmatism and Russian resentment to the German's for their war of aggression, much of the remaining ruins remaining in the newly christened Kaliningrad were bulldozed, with the notable exception of the ruins of Königsberg castle and Königsberg cathedral. The old town center of Königsberg; the Altstadt and Kneiphof were flattened and left to return to nature.



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On the 4th of July 1946 the city was officially renamed Kaliningrad in honour of Mikhail Kalinin, who had died a few months earlier that year. Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin was a bolshevik revolutionary and Soviet politician had no affiliation with the former Königsberg, but regardless, the Soviet Union needed a Soviet name that would blot out the old German one. The new city then proceeded changed its name from the unofficial "Кёнигсберг" (*Kings mount*) that the new Soviet settlers and occupying Red Army had been calling it until then, to the new Kaliningrad. Any remaining Germans in the city were deported to Germany around this time. Meanwhile, the Soviets got to work

¹³ Philip McCouat, "Bernardo Bellotto and the Reconstruction of Warsaw", *Journal of Art in Society*, 2015

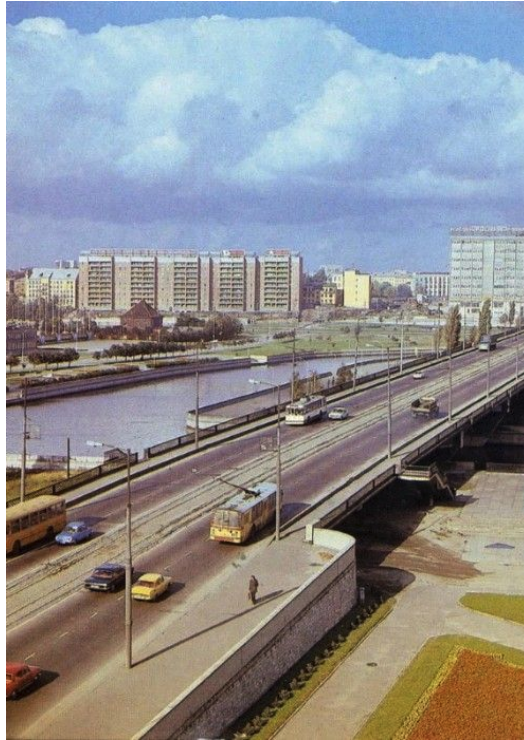
¹⁴ Photo album by V. Aldakushkin, Kaliningrad, 1966.

rebuilding other parts of the city in their image. The city center of Kaliningrad was reestablished around the former Nord Bahnhof train station and along the former Steindamm thoroughfare, now renamed to the Leninskiy Prospekt. Like much of the rest of the world that had been ravaged by the war, but especially so in the Soviet Union; function took precedence over form. As the need to build new housing was great, most of the new residential buildings built over the city were built in the now famous standardised Soviet apartment block form; the Khrushchyovka.

Standardised, fast and easy to build; these buildings could house many people at once.¹⁵ This was the fate of the suburbs of Vorstadt, Sackheim, Tragheim and Rossengarten. Where once unique communities of fishers, students, shopkeepers, factory workers and others that had thrived around their given industry or profession, were now replaced with new citizens that had no connection to the area of the city they lived in. Now, these new citizens had no need to live close to their workplace, they could enjoy one of the benefits of the modern era: the car.

Transportation in the post war period in most nations is marked by the phasing out of the tram and the train, and their replacement with the bus and the car. The Soviet Union was no different in this regard, however since the Soviet's were communist, and hence being very in favour of collectivism, decided to retain the public tram system that had served Königsberg. The Soviets were also very keen on showing Kaliningrad off as a model Soviet city, so a lot of work was put into planning its transportation network. Unfortunately, the plan that came to fruition was purely pragmatic and reminiscent of American highway building schemes that tore through neighborhoods. Fortunately for the urban planners though, there were no German neighborhoods left in the city to oppose their plan. So, in the 70's construction began on the new motorway infrastructure. Kaliningrad decided to build the motorway through the now derelict plains that had formerly been Altstadt, Löbenicht and Sackheim, along the Pregolya river. The main thoroughfare from the south that had led up to Königsberg castle and the Altstadt over the Kneiphof island was replaced with a continuous suspended bridge, replacing the Krämer bridge, Grüne bridge and the road that had gone through the Kneiphof. Transportation was now quick and easy from north to south and east to west. This, in opposition to the alternative way of building motorways through cities which would be around or under it.

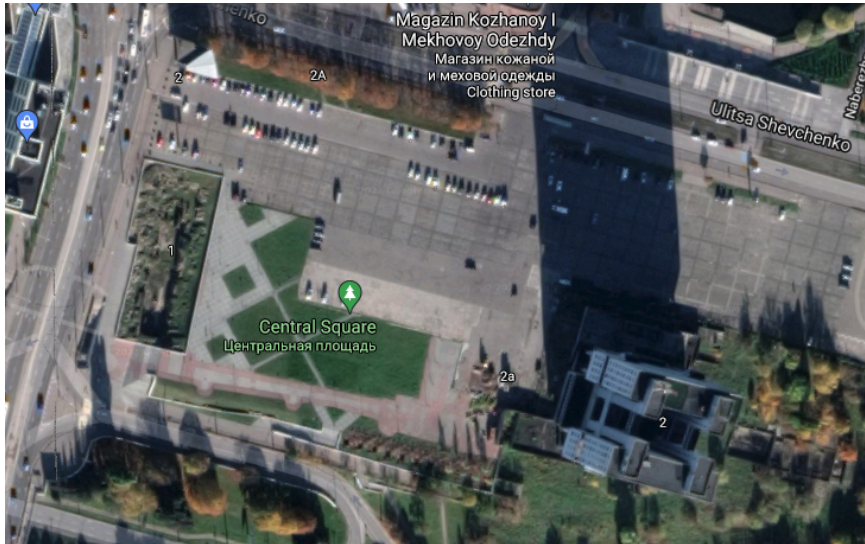
¹⁵ Vitaly Mikhaylyuk, *The condemned: Living in a Khrushchyovka, Russia beyond the headlines*, 2017



From the urban planners perspective, it was probably the most ideal spot to build a motorway. It was just derelict grassy plains, littered with the occasional ruin, sitting right in the middle of the city. Even though the motorway was just the final nail in the coffin for cultural preservation of Königsberg, the motorways created much faster routes through the city, whereas formerly, to get from one side or the other, you would have to drive through comparatively narrow roads. Now, there were six lanes (tram lines included) on the north-south axis. To further the designers' credit, it was still possible to walk from the south bank of the Pregolya to the north, however you would have to endure the noise pollution from the cars for long stretches. Henceforth the only practical way of making it from one side of the city to the other was by either driving a car or taking public transportation, but unlike American cities where walking was completely replaced with driving. Kaliningrad kept a balance of the two. The new motorway bridge crossed the 'Knaypkhof' (*alternatively; Kant island*) as the Kneiphof was now called, became a green park in the center of the city, which eventually would become the green cultural heart of Kaliningrad.

Up until now I have not mentioned Kaliningrad's most prominent landmark; the house of Soviets, *Dom Sovetov*. The house of Soviets is Kaliningrad's main landmark, despite it never actually being completed. The house of Soviets, despite the common misconception that it was built on top of the old castle, it was actually built on top of the old eastern moat, where the schloss platz was prior to 1945.

¹⁶ Smoila Alla, Old photos of Koenigsberg and Kaliningrad (part 2) Leninsky prospect, 1980



(The area where the castle once stood is marked on the 'central square', as opposed to the House of Soviets which is located to the east of it.)

During the construction, there were a great many problems with structural integrity. The castle itself had been built on marshy soil, but its mass had been spread out over a greater area, and in smaller chunks, reducing risk of structural failure. The house of soviets was compressing a tall and heavy structure onto a much smaller area. Eventually, the foundations were proven inadequate to support the structure and the building was abandoned in 1985 after funding was spent. Since then it has slowly begun to sink into the ground and has the appearance of a robot's head, leading locals to call it 'the buried robot'. The process of the sinking into the ground is sometimes referred to by locals as; "The monster" or 'The Prussians' revenge', in reference to the building slowly being dragged into the depths of the earth by the dead Prussians who once lived there. There were several attempts to finish the building and redesign the area for the remainder of the century, but all failed. Included one bid from a Danish firm.¹⁷

¹⁷ Oleg Vasyutin, Alexander Popadin. Historical and Analytical Review "King's Mountain in Kaliningrad", p 18-19, 2013

Chapter 4: 21st century Kaliningrad - reconstructing culture in a new image

The 20th century ended with more of a whimper, than a bang for Russia. The Soviet Union had fallen, the Warsaw pact countries had jumped ship at the first opportunity, the United States had been victorious in the cold war, and the country was still scrambling to rebuild the economy on a capitalist model. Kaliningrad's hopes and ideals of being a prosperous Soviet city on the level of New York seemed dead in the water. Around this time the city was also struggling with an epidemic of smuggling, drug abuse and HIV. However, around this time, Kaliningrad began planning a way to reinvent itself. Kaliningrad's economy in the early noughties began to expand rapidly, with help due to Kaliningrad's status as a special economic zone within Russia, which gave it a low manufacturing tax rate. Which led to Kaliningrad becoming one of Russia's largest exporter of manufactured goods domestically in 2006.¹⁸

Back in the early Nineties, the Königsberg cathedral had been successfully restored with foreign funding.¹⁹ The rebuilt cathedral had proven immensely popular with the citizens of Kaliningrad, and created a worthy tourist destination for history enthusiasts as well as former citizens of Königsberg, curious to see how their city had changed. The city was ready for more projects of a similar vein and in 2004, the fishing village project was greenlit and construction began in 2006,²⁰ being finished in 2007. The fishing village is a pseudo historical representation of what this area of the city once was. Built on the eastern bank, where the two upper and lower pregołya rivers converge into one, it was built where once was only a grassy lawn and a few small residential houses.



It was built mainly as a tourist destination, so it should come as no surprise that it is located just a short walk across the honeymoon bridge from the cathedral. The new buildings seem to mirror the old warehouse district that used to be on the western bank of the river, which I will be discussing later. The development has proven widely successful with both tourists and locals alike, it being a particularly picturesque spot to enjoy a cup of coffee overlooking the river and the cathedral. Its success further proved

¹⁸ Laura Sheeter, Kaliningrad erases stains of past, BBC News, 2006

¹⁹ Miłosz J. Zieliński, Kant's Future: Debates about the Identity of Kaliningrad Oblast, Cambridge University Press, 2019

²⁰ Federation News, Regions.ru, The first pile of the "Fish Village" was hammered in Kaliningrad, 2006

to the authorities that such developments were of benefit to both the economy and wellbeing of the citizenry. With this, rumours began to circulate that the Königsberg castle could be rebuilt. After all, the site of the former castle had just been left as a vacant car park after the flattening of the castle ruins in 1968.²¹ No concrete plans to rebuild the castle ever came to fruition, but there was archaeological work done on the area in the early 2000's. During this work the dungeons of western wing of the old castle were unearthed and left exposed to the surface for onlookers to observe.²²

In 2005, in preparation for a state visit from Vladimir Putin and the 60th anniversary of the founding of Kaliningrad, The house of Soviets was painted in mellow blue and white. This significantly decreased the dreary presence of the building, but the move has been criticised as a Potemkin facade and destroying the key brutalist design feature of the building. The area around the House of Soviets remained stale up until 2018, when plans to revitalise the area were put in motion to give the area a facelift for the world cup. The old cobbled car park that had occupied the site of the castle was partially removed and was replaced with a new grassy lawn, with brick paths. Furthermore, there were two colours of brick used, one a mild red colour and another just a regular gray. The red bricks were arranged in a way so that they followed where the outline of the old castle walls would have been, the archaeological diggings in the former western wing were fenced off, and the crumbling staircase to the plaza were replaced with some brand new concrete. The locals had mixed reactions to their new central square. On the one hand, it was nice that the historical significance the area had was getting some attention, but the area did not have a lot going for it other than that. It still remains overshadowed by the house of soviets, which is a building many locals have a love-hate relationship with. So after 50 years of standing derelict and never being used, and also due to the unstable nature of the structure; the regional governor announced in November of 2020 that the building would be demolished and later reconstructed with a more modern touch.²³ The locals' feelings about this are bittersweet. Most locals do indeed believe it is an ugly building, but they have come to enjoy the inherent quirkiness of the building. There are criticisms toward the reconstruction plans as some point to the fact they are basically invoking the image of the Soviet Union again. Which leads some to draw parallels to what Putin's Russia is trying to brand itself as.

Meanwhile, another construction from the former Königsberg was being rebuilt nearby the Fishing village: The old Synagogue. The Synagogue had overlooked the river and the cathedral before the Nazi's rise to power. Like many other Synagogues in Germany in the pre war years it was torched and demolished by Nazi's following the Kristallnacht.²⁴ Nothing was ever built on its place during the remainder of the Nazi's rule, and it remained that way during the reign of the Soviets as well. However in the 2010's, reconstruction plans were laid out and finally initialised in 2017, and fully completed the following year. The construction was true to the form of the original and built on the same spot as the original, except this time with some more varying colours and layers in

²¹ Alexandra Artamonova, Raze and rebuild: Kaliningrad's battle to preserve its complex post-war cityscape, The Calvert Journal, 2018

²² Alexander Kwiatkowski, Kaliningrad rediscovers its history, BBC news, 2002

²³ Andrew E. Kramer, The Haunted House of Soviets Gets a New Life, The New York Times, 2021

²⁴ Miachel Wieck, *Zeugnis vom Untergang Königsbergs: Ein «Geltungsjuden» berichtet*, 1990, Munich: Beck, 2005, (Beck'sche Reihe; vol. 1608), pp. 81 and 194.

the brick work. The modern synagogue now houses a kindergarten, school, community center and some kosher restaurants.²⁵

The next construction project in Kaliningrad I will be discussing is the riverside houses on the western bank of the Pregolya, parallel to Kant Island. Prior to its completed construction in 2018, it was simply an empty plot of land. Now, there stands a modern take on the river facing part of the former Lastadie (warehouse) district of Königsberg. Instead of storing all the exports and imports of the city, this new 'warehouse' district instead houses shops, hotels, salons and conference halls.



This particular example is interesting as it is not a direct reconstruction, nor is it an entirely new structure. It imitates the shapes of the old warehouses, somewhat distorts them and brings it together with a modern facade.

Finally, I will be discussing Kant Island's role in the 21st century Kaliningrad. As previously discussed, Kant Island, or the Kneiphof as it was called, was destroyed by fire bombing in the second world war. So it was left a blank slate like much of the rest of the old town in the post war era. Around the 1970's some minor revitalisation came to Kant Island in the form of a sculpture park, however this was not initially successful, due to weeds overgrowing in the summer and heaps of garbage making its way into the park. In the 1980's, a native Kaliningradian architect proposed to make a museum on the island by exposing the foundations of the old buildings that once stood there, another idea was proposed to cut the trees already on the island to the shape of the roofs of the old buildings. Neither of these ideas gained any traction with the authorities, and both ideas were shelved.²⁶

During the 90's, as I have previously mentioned, Kant island's biggest revitalisation project came about in the form of refurbishing the ruins of the old cathedral. After the cathedral was refurbished however, not much else was done on the island. The aforementioned issues with weeds and trash were steadily dealt with in the following decade at the same time Russia was gradually recovering from the Soviet breakup. Kant island was now a relatively pleasant green space in the middle of the city. New developments didn't come until the 2018 world cup, during the leadup to the world cup the city invested in Kant island, installing new benches, improving the footpaths and

²⁵ Ashira Weiss, Historic Synagogue Rises Once Again, Eighty Years After Destruction, 2018

²⁶ Russian Pompeii of Koeningsberg, D. Yakshina, 2009

adding some swingsets. This can be presumed to be to encourage families to take their children on family outings to the island.

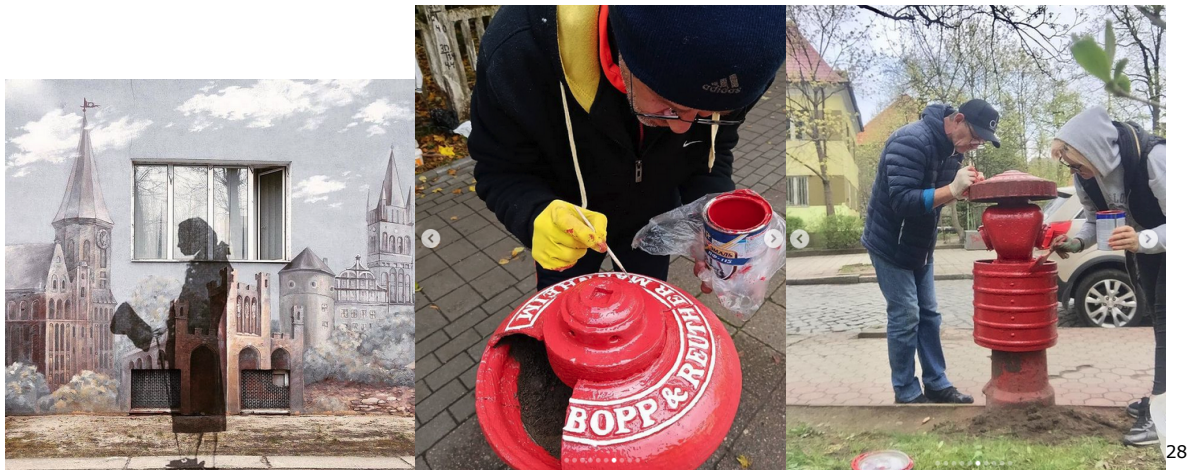
Overall there are many new exciting construction projects going on in the Kaliningrad region, including some that I haven't mentioned such as the reconstruction of the Bellevue hotel on the Lower pond or the reconstruction of the facades on the Khrushchyovka buildings along the Leninisky prospect into a more ornamented European style. As well as future prospects such as rebuilding the Altstadt, and rerouting the Moscow prospect highway underground. That however remains to be seen. What the current projects show us is there is an appetite both among the locals and the city administration for construction projects that call back to Königsberg. Overall, the new architecture in the center of Kaliningrad seems to favour either pseudo historic styles, faithful reconstructions or modern interpretations on old buildings. Of course, Kaliningrad is not just making callbacks to Königsberg. In the new suburban areas, around the world cup stadium, there was no prior construction here, even during the time it was German. Here there are many new modern apartment blocks, which are much more stylish and colourful than their Soviet counterparts. Unlike the Soviet blocks, which were made for a classless society, these blocks are made for the upper to middle classes with young families.²⁷

The streak of semi historical constructions clearly shows a trend towards reconnecting with the past, but other constructions show that Kaliningrad is also on its way to becoming a modern city in connection with its past. Either way, while Kaliningrad still has its issues, and Russia as a whole struggles with the authoritarianism of Putin, the city is well on its way to becoming one of Russia's most prosperous cities on the baltic.

²⁷ RC "ART quarter", Novostroyka 39

Chapter 5: Königsberg - intangible and tangible cultural heritage in Kaliningrad

Kaliningrad is a Russian city, with a German heritage. The Russians that live there today have no direct connection to the heritage that was left behind after the deportation of the Germans during the years 1945-1950. Yet, many developed a fascination with the fading German past and chose to protect, and in some cases, restore it. For example, here are some locals restoring some of the old fire hydrants around the Kaliningrad region.



Königsberg, despite being wiped off the map in world war two remains subconsciously around every corner in Kaliningrad. Plaques, murals, manhole covers and street art depicting what once stood there, sketches and paintings by local residents, and the food that is served in some restaurants. Social media accounts, and other internet discussions are a strong force behind the preservation of the intangible heritage of Königsberg. It is mostly Russians that keep this dialogue alive, but some from the international community discuss and share old photos from the pre Soviet times, on pages such as the r/koenigsberg subreddit, and the facebook page; MyOwnKoenigsberg.

An example of intangible culture in the digital space is the castle tower which still remains a symbol of both Kaliningrad and Königsberg in the modern era, with social media accounts dedicated to the memory of Königsberg or even Kaliningrad as well, often invoking its image. On Russian social media circles around Kaliningrad, particularly on instagram there are many accounts that dedicate themselves to showing off different aspects of the lost culture of East Prussia. Some show off old photos, some colourise photos and others show off the present tangible culture of East Prussia such as the ruins of churches, castles and remaining villages. Another example of intangible culture in Kaliningrad is the rise of the virtual reality tours of Kaliningrad, where the user gets to walk around the Kaliningrad and experience, with a virtual reality headset how Königsberg was before the war.²⁹

A place where intangible and tangible culture collide is in the Museum of miniatures. On the southern edge of the city of Kaliningrad, this outdoor museum houses several

²⁸ Etokoenig, Instagram, 2021

²⁹ Kaliningradez, Instagram, 2021

miniature scale models of famous buildings around Russia. Among them however is a scale model of the Königsberg castle itself. So in a small way, the intangible cultural heritage of the castle becomes tangible here.



Chapter 6: Leningrad - a parallel to Kaliningrad

Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and Kaliningrad are two very different Soviet cities that evolved on the shores of the Baltic after World War 2. Leningrad was actually partially rebuilt from bricks of the ruins of the Altstadt and Kneiphof of Königsberg.³⁰ However unlike Kaliningrad that replaced Königsberg, Leningrad had been built on a simple Swedish fortress captured in 1703, and had been a Russian city ever since. It carried with it, all the historical material and culture that had survived the siege of the city in the war. The Soviets, despite being notorious in the west for building ugly buildings, had a much more comprehensive architectural palette than what is first appreciated. It changed over the years and with the chairmen of the Soviet Union, just as architecture styles evolved in the west. Leningrad's urban design philosophy differs from Kaliningrad in that the Soviet authorities, (in line with much of the rest of the Soviet Union) intended to simply reconfigure the city, instead of building a new one on top of the old. For example, parts of old apartment complexes in the backyards of streets were torn down to let in more light and to add more green areas to the cityscape. The Soviets in Leningrad took a more relaxed stance on rebuilding historical buildings, reconstructing those buildings that were of significant cultural value and were not damaged beyond repair, but deciding to replace those buildings which were beyond repair or had been leveled by the war.³¹

Much of the historical center of St. Petersburg remains to this day, being a major tourist attraction in Russia, pulling 15 million tourists in 2018.³² It is constructed in Baroque, rococo, and neo-classical architecture styles, painted in bright colours, creating a lively and beautiful cityscape to contrast with the northern darkness of the winter months. Its Imperial palaces are a big attraction for many, being a splendid architectural gem in the north. It saw heavy revitalisation in the post cold war era, much like the Kneiphof in Kaliningrad. This is not to say that the Soviets did not do some revitalising of their own on the former imperial palaces. The imperial dynasty had caused widespread famine, suffering, state sanctioned murder and oppression towards the people of imperial Russia. (Not to say that the Soviet Union did not commit all 4 themselves). But at the time, the Soviets were of course keen to dissociate themselves from the Imperialist past. Perhaps similarly to how the Soviets of the late 1940's wanted to distance themselves from German culture in former Königsberg. However unlike Kaliningrad the old structures in Leningrad were mostly repurposed with minor alterations instead of torn down and something new rebuilt in its place. This being known as the principle of moderated historicism. For example, a huge symbol of the imperial dynasty; the Winter palace had its symbols of the monarchy removed, and following the October revolution, exhibitions about the revolution were exhibited in the palace. The public were also allowed to view the private rooms of the former royal family.³³

³⁰ Andrew Stroehlein, *Ghost City*, andrewstroehlein.com, 2019

³¹ Catriona Kelly, 'Scientific Reconstruction' or 'New Oldbuild'? The Dilemmas of Restoration in Post-Soviet St. Petersburg, *évolution et nostalgie*, p 17 - p 39, 2015

³² St Petersburg Tourism - a look at the growth of tourism in Russia's northern capital, *St-Petersburg Essentialguide.com*, 2020

³³ 1917: Declaration of the Hermitage and the Winter Palace as state museums, *History of the Hermitage*, 2011

Following the second world war, Leningrad had endured a gruelling siege. In which the Wehrmacht had purposefully surrounded the city with the intent to starve the population instead of just taking the city.³⁴ During the siege, the Wehrmacht shelled the city with artillery, while the Luftwaffe bombed the city from the air. However, most of the city did not receive the amount of punishment that Königsberg took from the RAF and the Soviet offensive, as Leningrad had adequate anti aircraft guns in place. So while the citizens of Leningrad suffered massively under the siege and many cultural objects of significance such as the winter palace sustained a few hits from artillery, overall the city's structures were not as badly damaged as other cities such as Warsaw, Berlin or Stalingrad (today's Volgograd). What followed the war was a caring rehabilitation of the buildings that had received war damage, including most of the former imperial palaces. In fact many cities in the Soviet Union were more meticulous and accurate to their pre war selves than many western cities were.³⁵

By comparing Kaliningrad to Leningrad, we can see that the Soviet attitude towards rebuilding in Kaliningrad is more of an exception rather than the rule when it comes to socialist urban planning post world war 2. Overall, urban planning just after the war in Russia proper can be seen as a drive to house and heal a country that had been devastated by 4-5 years of brutal warfare, rather than a purposeful drive to redesign cities according to a socialist model. Building cities according to the socialist model tended to be entirely new cities by themselves. Examples of this include Dimotrovgrad and Eisenhüttenstadt.³⁶

³⁴ Anna Reid, Leningrad: The epic siege of world war II, 1941-1944, p 132-133, 2011

³⁵ Catriona Kelly, 'Scientific Reconstruction' or 'New Oldbuild'? The Dilemmas of Restoration in Post-Soviet St. Petersburg, *évolution et nostalgie*, p 17 - p 39 , 2015

³⁶ Eco Gecko, Sotsgorod: The Socialist "New Cities" & Planning for Utopia, YouTube, 2021

Summary and conclusion

Königsberg and Kaliningrad are fascinating case studies on urban development that are not talked about much. The destruction of Königsberg can remind oneself of fallen civilisations such as the Minoans or myths such as the fall of Atlantis. Yet what sets it apart from these, and what makes it so fascinating is that a new city, a new culture and a new urban design philosophy lived on in its place. Königsberg was a product of hundreds of years of cultural and political evolution, whereas Kaliningrad is a product of the social-political attitudes of the Soviets and one of the consequences of Nazi Germany's warmongering. A vital difference in the reconstruction of other European cities and the rebuilding of Kaliningrad is that the destroyed cities of Europe had a sense of continuity. For example, though Warsaw had been flattened by the Germans in world war 2, it was still *Warsaw*; capital of Poland. Whereas Kaliningrad was not a continuation of what had come before, rather it was a completely fresh start for the region that had been north East Prussia. A new people, a new political system, a new urban design philosophy, and a new motherland.

The urban design philosophies that dominated the city at the time just after the war were, of course; utilitarian, due to the need to house people after the most destructive conflict in human history. With the ferocity with which the German's had conducted their war of aggression in the east, the Soviet authorities felt no obligation to protect any significant cultural products of Königsberg left standing after the war. As a result, a huge amount of cultural loss was incurred on the old city as Kaliningrad grew. Accumulating in the demolition of the ruins of Königsberg castle in 1968. This period of neglect for remaining cultural monuments continued until the fall of the Soviet Union. Following its fall, a string of reconstruction projects and clean up of old monuments such as the old city gates spurred forth enthusiasm for more projects and ever since. Continuing to the present day Kaliningrad has been reconstructing and reinterpreting old or long forgotten structures that once existed in the city.

In the beginning of this paper I asked the question: what were the consequences of the urban design philosophy that existed during the time of the Soviets? At first the consequences were that apart from the tragic loss of culture, it is that the city became rather disjointed, due to what was the main city center being gutted and turned into what essentially was a wilderness. This was rectified with the new bridge that crossed both sides of the Pregolya river at an elevated height, skipping the Kneiphof island completely, this however further diminished the possibility of rebuilding in the center of the city. Despite the city's lofty ambitions of being a model Soviet city, the economic boom it has been waiting for didn't come until much later. With the Iron curtain across Europe and the inherent values of communism, it prevented many potential tourists from visiting, or from what could have been wealthy West Germans from investing in the area. The failure of authorities to maintain funding for the construction of the House of Soviets further cemented the fact that the region was not living up to expectations.

The next part of my question was if Kaliningrad was an example of culture surviving through utter destruction only to come though in a new form, so I will now be summing up on how Kaliningrad is indeed an example of this. Kaliningrad turned over a new leaf with the turn of the century, refurbishing the old city gates and painting over the dreary concrete facade of the house of Soviets. During the same time the proto-historic Fishing

village was built, in a nod to the town's old roots as an important fishing port. Following these developments came the reinterpretation of the Lastadie warehouses along the waterfront of the river, the redoing the facades of the Khrushchyovkas along the Leninisky prospekt and the reconstruction of the hotel Belluve, among many other projects.

One can therefore conclude, with all the points stated that Kaliningrad is a good example of the fact that cultural heritage can live on, long after it has expired, in new forms, or as intangible culture, regardless of the attempts to extinguish it in the past. Despite how tragic the loss of culture can be over the course of history, it is important to note that it can live on in new ways. One can argue that loss of culture and new interpretations of that same culture is not the most ideal way of experiencing culture. However variation and diversity in the way we experience culture can be a way we can learn to discover and interpret things about the cultures and history of the past in new ways. It should not be a uniform experience, as the experiences, societal conditions and history of people all across the world differ in many different ways. In conclusion, Kaliningrad is indeed a fascinating example of cultural rebound, and that its development will be interesting to watch for the next few decades.

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