# Temple, fortress, sloboda, and workers' settlement
# as the essential models of the Russian/Soviet city

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**Abstract**

The article aims to study the essential models of the Russian/Soviet city. Russian urbanism, like Russian urbanization, has several distinctive features. First of all, its originality is connected with the fact that the Russian foundations of the concept of the city are somewhat different from the Western ones. The city has evolved over the centuries as a cultural form, and this form is determined by the form of culture. The research topic is relevant due to the need to understand the specificity of the process of urbanization in Russia—from antiquity to the present day. The author of the paper seeks to explore the city as a philosophical concept and its existential, structural and social foundations. The results of the comparative study allow the author to make a distinction between the Western and Russian concepts of the city. The article suggests several models of the Russian/Soviet city as the essential ones. However, this is not about pure functionality, but only about the conceptual and structural priorities: a temple, a fortress, a sloboda, and a workers' settlement. The selection of these types is determined by the need to classify the organizational models of the Russian city, which contributes to the comprehension and theoretical determination of its cultural (and architectural) originality.

## Introduction

Russian urbanism, like Russian urbanization, has several distinctive features. First of all, its originality is connected with the fact that the Russian foundations of the concept of the city are somewhat different from the Western ones. The city has evolved over the centuries as a "cultural form" [Smirnov, 2012], and this form is determined by the form of culture.

By common consent of urban specialists, the concept of the city is connected with the concept of civil society within the framework of the Western sociophilosophical paradigm, starting with Plato and Aristotle, and the civil community was forged as an urban one. The "urban orientation of global democratic values" [Kogan, 2010, 181], i. e, the deep affinity of the structure of the (Western) city with the concept of the liberal democratic structure of society, is an objective fact.

## Research results

In Russia, with the refraction of its historical development in the Tatar-Mongol era and the broad Eastern cultural front, the "Western" urban tradition was interrupted [Pastukhova, Ponomareva, 2004]. As noted by the famous urbanist V.L. Glazychev, "in Russia there were no cities and there are no cities, if by a city we mean first of all the social organization of citizens" [Glazychev, 1995, 137]; ancient Novgorod and Pskov are perhaps exceptions.

Other traditions developed, and the rigid power vertical borrowed from the Golden Horde determined the specific features of the process of urbanization: "What is usually called a city here has not so much developed as it has been built by the authorities as a tool for suppressing sparsely populated rural and natural territories and keeping them under control" [Ibidem, 137-138]. In fact, Russia remained largely rural until the beginning of the 20$^{th}$ century: only 7.8% of the population lived in cities by the middle of the 19$^{th}$ century [Gornova, 2014, 107].

Several predominant forms of urban culture have been formed in Russia.

*A temple*. Temple cities (Kizhi, Sviyazhsk) play a special role in Russia. They function as a kind of places of power, embody the magical topoi of Russian mythology and fairy tales (the White-Hot Stone, Buyan Island, etc.). In fact, this role could also be played by monasteries, around which cities grew (Sergiyev Posad). However, temple cities are unique and few in number: "The people who have built temple cities are killed by their customers" [Smirnov, 2012, 138]. Such settlements do not perform all the functions of a city: being focused on spiritual superiority, these cities are forced to belittle the importance of trade, reject worldly power in one way or another, and oppose the megalopolis as the "Whore of Babylon".

It is important to note that the phenomenon of holiness is initially associated with the concept of the city: there exists the expression "There is no city without a saint, and there is no settlement without a righteous person". The first city chronicles were also created in monasteries; and "every city in public consciousness was symbolically equal to the Heavenly Jerusalem" [Gornova, 2014, 109]. The "Moscow as the Third Rome" concept, in which Moscow is perceived as a holy city, also tends to this.

*A fortress*. This is how Petersburg was founded: "The city was not built for people to live in it" [Smirnov, 2012, 137]. It is a residence city—for receptions and parades.

Russia, expanding to the south, east, and west, showed an increase in such fortress towns, which were originally inhabited by military personnel, the Cossacks, and often prisoners. This is how the outposts of the expanding Russian Empire (Yakutsk, Berdsk, Kansk, Krasnoyarsk, Taganrog, Rostov-on-Don, etc.) were founded. Even the cities of Central Russia, such as present-day Volgograd, have

such "roots" [Paramonova, Belikova, 2018].

*An estate (a sloboda).* As V.L. Glazychev points out, rather a patriotic translation of the Scandinavian word *Gardariki* (used for the states of Kievan Rus) as the "country of towns" is essentially incorrect: "gards" included estates, small settlements, which has been repeatedly confirmed by archaeologists [Glazychev, 2011, 13]. The size of ancient settlements varied from 50 to 100 m in diameter, and there were only two major cities—Kiev and Novgorod. Settling in small groups is quite logical for a society with slash-and-burn agriculture.

V.L. Glazychev comes up with the idea that many Russian cities have a spirit of slobodas: "The spirit of slobodas, their style, the morality of slobodas, brilliantly displayed by Russian writers—from Leskov and Uspensky to Gorky and Zoshchenko, the environmental standard of slobodas consistently crept into settlements called cities and claiming to meet the urban standard, until they completely absorb the settlements, except for their representative centers" [Glazychev, 1995, 138]. Slobodas were transformed into cities—but its constituent relations remained typical of slobodas, i. e., settlements. Western travelers were surprised that Moscow consisted of estates. Petersburg was modeled after "European" cities.

Such types of settlements as estates, dachas, suburbs concentrate Russian culture, the intelligentsia, i. e., they function as cultural centers. For example, Pushkin worked most fruitfully in Boldino.

Relatively recent actualization of the concept of suburban dachas dates back to the period of Brezhnev's fascination with dachas; the dacha, along with the kitchen, turned out to be the topos of freedom. The dacha is no city, but it is a purely urban invention; the system of urban settlements has become its continuation [Glazychev, 2011, 7-8].

Industrial slobodas were later transformed into workers' settlements (near industrial enterprises).

*A workers' settlement (a socialist city).* The formation of this type of the city dates back to Soviet times, when towns were organized around plants, factories, mines—in other words, around new town-forming enterprises.

The concept of the megapolis, as early Soviet philosophers of architecture believed, is transient and temporary: "A modern city is a product of the commodity society and will die with it" [Milyutin, 1930, 13].

At first, the ideals of "new life" and "new man" dictated the construction of fundamentally new types of settlements: ""new settlements" should be completely different from the existing ones, they are designed to replace old cities and embody new forms of the organization of life, public services, education of children and vocational training of the younger generation, recreation, leisure, etc. ("socialized housing", "socialized nutrition", "socialized education"). Old cities should be diminished and reconstructed" [Meerovich, Konysheva, Khmel'nitskii, 2011, 46-47]. Individual apartments and cottages, as a rule (but with some exceptions), were declared a sign of the old way of life and bourgeoisness; a fundamentally new way of life was assumed in socialist cities.

As a result, these ideals were reduced mostly to the construction of a large number of barracks (as temporary workers' dwellings), as well as to infill construction of "communal" houses without kitchens and bathrooms. For example, house-communes formed a basis for the socialist city project during the construction of the Gorky Automobile Plant; however, the house-commune projects were later found premature, and they were built with an eye towards individual apartments. In these socialist cities, as a rule, space was saved for green zones, residential areas were saved, which created the "industrial" appearance of a village and overcrowded housing [Gordin, Radchenko, 2014, www].

The absence of university cities such as Oxford in Russia seems interesting in this context. "Socialist resettlement" concerned far-flung places and industrial enterprises located there.

## Conclusion

We distinguish four essential models in the history of the Russian/Soviet city: a temple, a fortress, a sloboda, and a workers' settlement. The identification of these types is connected with the need to classify organizational models of the Russian city, which contributes to the comprehension and theoretical determination of its cultural (and architectural) originality. It is obvious that cities combine these functions, but specific analysis makes it possible to identify historical and cultural priorities in the ontology of a particular city.

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## Храм, крепость, слобода и рабочий поселок как сущностные модели русского/советского города

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**Аннотация**

Выбор темы исследования связан с актуальностью осмысления своеобразия процесса урбанизации в России с древности до наших дней. Автор стремится к исследованию города как философского концепта и его бытийно-структурных, а также социальных оснований. Результаты сравнительно-сопоставительного исследования служат в качестве основания для выявления различий между западной и русской концепциями города. В статье предложены в

качестве основных несколько моделей русского/советского города, при этом речь идет не о чистой функциональности, но лишь о смысловых и структурных приоритетах: город-храм, город-крепость, город-слобода и город – рабочий поселок. Выделение данных типов связано с необходимостью классификации организационных моделей русского города, что способствует осознанию и теоретическому определению его культурного и архитектурного своеобразия.

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