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Self-Awareness of Soviet Lithuanian Architects in Their Creative Power and Social Significance

Dalia Dijokienė [1,*] **, Eglė Navickienė** [2] **and Edita Riaubienė** [3]

1 Department of Urban Design, Faculty of Architecture, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Trakų str. 1, 01132 Vilnius, Lithuania
2 Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Trakų str. 1, 01132 Vilnius, Lithuania; egle.navickiene@vilniustech.lt
3 Department of Architectural Fundamentals, Theory and Art, Faculty of Architecture, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Trakų str. 1, 01132 Vilnius, Lithuania; edita.riaubiene@vilniustech.lt
* Correspondence: dalia.dijokiene@vilniustech.lt; Tel.: +370-650-67897

Abstract: The field of contemporary Lithuanian architecture is influenced by architects from different periods with different attitudes. This is manifested by increasing miscommunication between generations of architects and a crisis of values. Various tensions in the community of architects triggered the idea to look to the past and examine the self-awareness of professional architects in Soviet society. In this study, we delved into their understanding of the architect's mission, role, status, and significance in society through their expectations, powers, impact, and perceived responsibility. This study is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with 9prominent and influential architects who received their professional education in post-war Lithuania and were actively working in the Soviet period (1955–1990) and later. In general, Lithuanian architects managed to withstand Soviet doctrine and remained loyal to Western cultural values. The study's findings reveal five components of the architect's self-awareness, which define the dual scope of this field, where architects perform their direct professional tasks and where they express themselves as people of culture. The self-awareness crisis becomes prominent in the main axis of the architect's choice of art creator vs. service provider, where Lithuanian modernists position themselves as artist–creator', leading to frustration regarding the current reality.

Keywords: architect's self-positioning; architect's role; artist–creator; architect–hero; creativity in architecture; modernists; interview; Soviet Lithuania

1. Introduction

Architecture in Lithuania during the 20th century and up to the present day has undergone significant changes, including a period involving the establishment of an independent state and the search for a national architecture identity (1918–1939), Soviet occupation and periods of ideologized and unified architecture (1940–1941 and 1945–1990), and a period of restored independence and the emergence of a new architecture identity (1990–present). During the past 30 years of independence in Lithuania, architectural activities have undergone several transformations. Not all changes have led to better quality. The laws regulating design and construction processes have been changing since 1996, redistributing the powers of the investor, architect, and builder, which has led to the devaluation of the architect's profession and resulted in a crisis of architectural identity. The architectural self-governance institution (the Architects' Chamber) was established, the procedure of respect for and observance of public interest and professional ethics was set. The recent years have been characterized by the concern of the architectural community regarding the quality of architectural objects. Since 2014, the Architects' Chamber, together with the Faculty of Architecture at VILNIUS TECH, has been organizing conferences on architecture quality. The Law on Architecture adopted in 2017 established criteria for the quality of architecture; in 2018, regional architectural councils were set up, the purpose and mission

of which are to perform the role of the valuator of architecture quality in the fields of architecture, territory planning, and architectural and urban heritage. Despite these efforts, various tensions are being felt within the community of architects, including increasing miscommunication between different generations, a crisis of values and lack of continuity of ideas, and confusion in the fields of and trends in architectural activities. In such a situation, the idea arose to look at the past and investigate the attitudes that shaped the specifics of Lithuanian architecture over the past decades and the self-awareness of professional architects in society during these periods.

Modernist architecture in Soviet Lithuania was created by young ambitious architects who obtained their education after the Second World War (WWII) in Soviet Lithuania. Despite the oppressive political, ideological, and economic situation and unfavorable sociocultural circumstances, the objects designed by these architects formed a distinctive style of architecture. Architectural themes relating to socialism have attracted increasing attention from contemporary architectural researchers [1–6]. In Lithuania, the focus is on the research of artifacts, including structures and urban formations [7–10], as well as their political, ideological, social, and economic contexts. Sovietology studies have been conducted with an emphasis on the processes and forms of social modernization [11–14]. This study is novel in that the data and basis for interpretation were obtained from authentic testimonies of the designers of the architectural environment from those periods.

This paper is relevant to Lithuanian culture as a study of architecture of modernism era that is already over, and a reflection on the Soviet period (which could explain some of the phenomena occurring in today's architectural environment in Lithuania), highlighting directions of architectural expression, trends, and paradoxes. This study is relevant to the community of architects as evidence of the emergence and development of Lithuanian architecture during the second half of the 20th century as the result of a search for cultural and professional identity. An understanding of the self-perception of architects from this period and their self-positioning in society would allow a better understanding of the attitudes of the generation that raised the architects who are practicing now.

The aim of this study was to analyze the self-awareness of outstanding architects who designed the architecture of the modernism epoch in Lithuania, were educated here after WWII, and practiced during the Soviet period and later. This study deals in depth with architects' understanding of their mission, role, status, and significance in society through their expectations, experiences, powers, impact, and perceived responsibility. We analyzed how architects construct their professional identity and how they perceive their role and tasks in society, keeping in mind the contradictory circumstances from the Soviet period under which Lithuanian architects had to maneuver. We investigated how much the Soviet approach, regulations, and ideology pervaded their professional attitudes; how loyal they remained to the cultural values of the Western world in which they grew up; and peculiarly Lithuanian or regional aspects in their attitudes. To answer these questions, the attitudes of Lithuanian architects were compared with Soviet doctrine and with the approaches that were prevailing in architectural communities in Western countries at this time.

Most prominently, recognized architects were interviewed, presuming that "a profession operates according to the values of its leading practitioners" [15] (p. 120). We investigated the self-awareness of architects during the Soviet period, their self-image, and how they view the profession, which is not always true to reality. The object of the study encompasses architects' understanding as a prerequisite and under the conditions of their professional activity. We did not investigate the creative process or its results, while admitting that what architects say and how they act are not the same: "Architecture and claims about architecture belong to different levels of discourse. Architects' words are their perception of an ideal vision of what the world should be:" [16] (p. 16). The study is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with nine prominent and influential architects who received their professional education in post-war Lithuania, were actively working during the Soviet period (1955–1990) and later, and were accessible during the study. According

to the nature of their activities, the studied group of architects proportionality represents practitioners (Ps), practitioners-academicians (PAs) and researchers-academicians (RAs).

2. Materials and Methods

Architects were selected as the study participants (their characteristics are presented in Table 1) according to three following criteria: they were architects who received their professional education in Lithuania in 1950–1970; prominent professionals, recognized by the professional or academic community, who held significant offices, designed exceptional objects; and they were accessible at the time of the interviews in 2015–2016. According to the nature of their activities, the interviewed architects represent three groups pro rata (3 architects in each group): (1) practitioners designing urban, architectural objects, objects of landscape architecture; (2) academicians lecturing in higher education institutions who were also actively engaged in design practice; and (3) academicians lecturing in higher education institutions who were active in research. As graduates, the respondents represent two higher education institutions in Vilnius and Kaunas, where architectural studies were conducted at the time: Kaunas Polytechnic Institute (KPI) and Vilnius Academy of Arts (VDA). As lecturers, they worked in the following higher education institutions: VDA; KPI, which was transformed into Kaunas University of Technology (KTU); and the newly established Vilnius Civil Engineering Institute (VISI), which was later renamed as Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VGTU, which is, at present, VILNIUS TECH). Notably, the school of architecture established in Kaunas that operated in the post-war period within KPI was transferred to VISI in 1971. The participants of the study who were active in the architectural field designed numerous objects in various Lithuanian cities [17]. The sex imbalance between informants should be noted. Although in 1950–1970, the ratio of female architects increased from one-quarter to one-half of all graduates of architectural studies, only a few of them were recognized in the profession, which was considered a male-dominated profession [18]. It is regrettable that in our study we could not rely on authentic insights from the then-prominent female architects Birutė Kasperavičienė (1926–1976), Elena Nijolė Bučiūtė (1930–2010), and Teklė Šešelgienė (1925–1982) as they were no longer with us.

Table 1. Profile of the study participants.

Participant Code	Year of Birth–Death	Sex	Year of Graduation and Higher Education Institution	Higher Education Institution as the Employer	Mostly Designed in (City)
Practitioners (Ps). Practitioners designing urban, architectural objects, objects of landscape architecture					
P-1	1927	male	1952, KPI		Klaipėda
P-2	1929	male	1958, VDA		Palanga
P-3	1943	male	1967, KPI		Vilnius
Practitioners–academicians (PAs). Lecturers in higher education institutions who were also actively engaged in design practice					
PA-1	1928–2018	male	1952, VDA	VGTU	Vilnius
PA-2	1931	male	1955, VDA	VDA	Druskininkai, Vilnius
PA-3	1931	female	1957, KPI	VGTU	Panevėžys, Vilnius
Researchers–academicians (RAs). Lecturers in higher education institutions who were active in research					
RA-1	1929	male	1954, KPI	VDA, KTU	
RA-2	1933	male	1958, KPI	VGTU	
RA-3	1945–2017	male	1969, VDA	VDA, VGTU	

Semistructured in-depth interviews of 9 selected architects followed a list of questions: What were the architect's mission, and his role and status in society? Qualitative data, from the transcripts of the 9 interviews, were investigated using the method of thematic analysis, which was used to produce data-driven (bottom-up) analysis. Through focusing on meaning across the transcripts of interviews, the thematic analysis allowed us to identify and highlight the shared meanings and experiences that are important in relation to the theme of self-awareness of Soviet architects of the modernism period and to research the issue of

professional role as constructed by architects, and their significance, expectations, powers, impacts, and responsibilities. We made active, interpretative choices in generating codes and in constructing themes that derived from the content of the interviews. The process involved the following stages: familiarizing ourselves with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing potential themes; naming the themes; producing the report [19].

3. Conditions for Professional Activities of Architects in Soviet Lithuania

3.1. Architecture in Ideological Frames

After WWII, Lithuania experienced the second Soviet occupation (1944–1990) and the Soviet regime radically changed the whole way of life of the country and the architecture system. Private design practices were abolished; unified systems for state design institutes were implemented; private ownership was abolished; the market economy was replaced by the Soviet planned economy; architectural design was regulated by rules, orders, and directives; and the only client was the state and its various agencies [9] (p. 27). The process of implementing the new procedures in Lithuania, as in the other occupied Baltic States (Latvia, Estonia), was quick and uncompromising [20]. As for the Soviet architecture, political order and ideological aspects assumed a slightly more important position here than usual [8] (p. 23). The results of Soviet architecture in Lithuania (as well as in Latvia and Estonia) were absolutely different from those in other Soviet republics [9] (p. 14) due to the shorter period of occupation and their longstanding involvement in a wider European cultural tradition. They were also different compared to the countries of Central Europe that were forced into the Soviet sphere of influence at approximately the same time, although the latter managed to retain more of their statehood and independence [21] (p. 639).

During the beginning of the economic reforms in the USSR in the 1950s, special attention was paid to the transformation of the architecture and construction sector, which led to new unprecedented developments: typification of architecture and industrialization of the construction became an absolutely dominant phenomenon throughout the Soviet bloc. The guidelines for such changes, the new direction of Soviet architecture, were set in two documents: in the speech of N. Khrushchev at the Soviet-Union-wide conference of architects and builders in 1954 and in the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR [22]. Although most of the resolution was devoted to a detailed criticism of specific buildings in the Stalinist Empire style, a new esthetic program of Soviet architecture was also defined: "the attractiveness of buildings is created not by fancy, expensive decorations, but by organically linking architectural forms with function and good proportions..." and the main means of transformation were indicated: industrial construction techniques, using assembly of structures, parts, and efficient construction materials; technology of construction manufacturing; and typical designs that accelerate construction and make it cheaper. Although the previously wide use of decor was abandoned, these changes were mainly intended to address the then-acute problems of the housing shortage and its quality in the USSR, as the aim was to build large amounts and quickly.

The resolution emphasized the importance of using not only the Soviet design and construction experience but also of obtained it from abroad. In the long term, information isolation somewhat lessened. Although access to foreign periodicals in libraries was provided only with special permits, increasing amounts of world architectural literature and periodicals were translated and published. For example, the French magazine L'architecture d'aujourd'hui was translated and adapted for the Soviet reader as Современнаяархитектура and published from 1961 to 1970.

With the gradual decentralization of the Soviet economy, some of the decision-making was transferred from Moscow (the center) to the Soviet republics. This made it possible to consistently replace Russian architects by a new generation of local architects who were educated after WWII. The first generation of post-war Lithuanian architects were educated

in an environment of propaganda and imposition of Stalin's architecture; despite this, they rejected it. They constantly emphasized the influence of the heritage of pre-war Lithuanian architecture and the European and American architecture that was then fragmentarily familiar from foreign press [21]. The architects involved in the study entered the field of architecture at that time, which was exceptional for the architect profession in Lithuania.

3.2. Architects' Ambitions

As a result of emigration, repressions, and deportations, Lithuania lost the majority of its community of architects who actively practiced before WWII (1918–1939). After WWII, in liquidation of the war's consequences, solving the acute problems of residential housing, and introducing a new Soviet ideology, the Stalin Empire style in architecture (also called Soviet Classicism or socialist realism), which was mandatory in the entire USSR, was introduced in the territory of Lithuania. This was namely the style that was followed by architects from Moscow and St. Petersburg (then Leningrad) posted to Lithuania: Kazarinskiy, Oleinichenko, Ripa, Anikin, etc.

Almost all the interviewed architects were born in the midst of the emergence and prosperity of the national state of Lithuania (in 1918–1940, independent Lithuania in the interwar period), raised in educated families that remembered the independent state and cherished national culture. They graduated from general education schools in the period just before, during, or soon after WWII, and studied architecture in the post-war Soviet Lithuania. Architects of this generation began to express themselves in the 1950s by criticizing and denying invasive Stalinist architecture, implementing important public objects in city centers, occupying increasingly important positions in the field of architecture and higher education institutions, and gaining the status of cultural elite [23] (p. 55).

There was a hypothesis in the community of Lithuanian emigrants supposing that during the Soviet period, some Lithuanian architects, planners, and government people managed to maneuver the central planning system s to gain benefits for Lithuania and its residents. However, in Lithuania, such ideas are often taken with skepticism and it was thought that the architects of that time indulged in particular self-mythologizing, telling stories about how they had to deceive, manipulate, and break the Soviet system from within to "achieve their goals" [24] (p. 35). In 2014, the international seminar Maištaujantis oportunizmas/Subversive Opportunism, held in Vilnius, debated whether dissidence in socialist architecture could exist at all—was resistance, rejection, and confrontation possible in the practice that was directly dependent on state infrastructure? [23] (p. 57). There is no way an unequivocal evaluation could be performed of the activities of architects of that time. Looking at the works and perceived values of the analyzed generation, we can see a clear effort to maintain a high level of professional culture in the context of Sovietization and to see the architect as a leader of cultural life rather than just a technical specialist. Subversive opportunism, as a certain ability to take advantage of the opportunity and the constant search for niches for activities, would probably be a more appropriate characterization, than the words "cultural resistance" that the architects themselves use [23] (p. 93). From a sociological point of view, the Lithuanian architect of that time is depicted as a brave, uncompromising representative of their profession in opposition [16] (p. 34). Such assumptions could be reinforced or overturned by insights of architects of that time in their self-reflection on their mission, role, and significance.

4. Results: Five Components of Architects' Professional Self-Awareness
4.1. Themes of the Architect's Self-Perception

The analysis of the interview data related to the concept of the mission, significance, and role of the architect in society revealed five key themes of the self-reflection of architects: super-designer, power in the field of architecture, artist-creator vs. service provider, universal artist, and a person of exceptional responsibility.

(1)   The super-designer theme arises as a manifestation of the power of the architect in the cultural field. It is the perception of the heroic mission of the architect in the

expanded field of architecture realized through dedication and service to the values of humanity. It is self-reflection of exceptional competences as the ability to encompass everything: to know, understand, predict, generate ideas, overcome contradictions, form, influence, organize, coordinate, direct, and create.

(2) Power in the field of architecture defines the daily process of architectural design, where the architect determines local solutions and operates safely within the boundaries defined in the city master plan despite possible pressures by the Soviet government.

(3) The theme of artist–creator vs. service provider arises amid the contradiction between architects' expectations and reality, when respect for the shaper of built environment is increasingly replaced by the pragmatic approach toward the architect as the service provider.

(4) The theme of universal artist is related to the syncretism of architecture, when the principles of all arts are condensed in the architect's competence. Diverse knowledge and skills, a broad and multi-layered concept of the world make it possible for an architect to express and find themselves successful in different fields of artistic activity.

(5) Architect's exceptional responsibility is perceived politically, socially, economically and ethically. Architects see themselves as people of politics, shapers of the image of the state, commemorators of historical memory, facilitators of continuity. A strong societal commitment presupposes the formation of a professional and sustainable environment, the resolution of contradictions, and the desire to be responsible for everything by assuming the role of the messiah.

4.2. Directions and Areas of Architects' Self-Reflection

4.2.1. Super-Designer—Powers in the Expanded Field

The study of the self-reflections of Lithuanian architects on the essence of their profession and its public significance produced the vision of the architect with exceptional power and significance. The architect, similar to a messiah, identifies the profession with vocation, a way of life, dedication: "the purpose of a person is to have his profession, and a person with a vocation seeks to become a professional of his field. You cannot be an architect without calling; perhaps the way of life is that calling" (Participant: PA-3). "It is difficult for me to distinguish between the profession and the way of life, < . . . > they did not call me by my name or surname, they called me architect" (Participant: PA-2). Participant RA-3 summarized: "a good architect is a dedicated person". The mission of service to humanity is reflected as implementation and realization of values common to humanity by designing, producing, and fostering a coherent living environment (Participant: RA-3). The absolute loyalty to the profession is quite humorously confirmed by the statement of Participant P-3, "the only love in life must be architecture, the rest are lovers. One should not lose one's way".

The perceived high status of the architect is associated with broad and diverse, i.e., exceptional, knowledge and competences: "A great architect is everything. Only extremely talented people can cover, feel everything" (Participant: P-3). According to Participant RA-2, an architect "has a developed skill to simultaneously embrace and think in a panoramic way, fusing unique and unparalleled criteria of science and art within himself", with humanitarian and technical beginnings. The most important thing for the architect is "to find, highlight problems and generate ideas" (Participant: PA-3), to see the invisible and foresee the hidden (Participant: P-2). Reconciliation of different restrictions and obstacles, and elimination of contradictions were accentuated as very important tasks for the architect—according to Participant RA-1, "upon overcoming some controversies, you immediately face other controversies, it is the eternal chain". The respondents saw the architect's power to create, to shape, and to have an impact. As Participant PA-2 observed, "architecture is not only the sphere of creation, production, but also the sphere of politics". If "you create anything new that has not existed before, you make a mark on the face of the world" (Participant: RA-1). The ability to create, as an architect's obligation and the inherent quality, was reflected by Participant PA-1: "without creation, architecture would

not exist, because the essential condition would not be met". In his opinion, architecture, as "spiritual creations, has an indirect but great impact on people; an ordinary person may not even understand why it is charming, but he will simply feel good".

The significance of the architect in the expanded field of activity was perceived by emphasizing their way of acting: to reconcile different things, to coordinate them, to organize processes. As Participant P-2 emphasized, "the architect has that skill, he knows how to organize"; the city architect is the city conductor with full responsibility (Participant: PA-2). The power and ability to handle important global issues—"to create, coordinate, assist in shaping the most appropriate material environment for social processes' (Participant: RA-2) come for the architect from the very concept of architecture—as the principle of forming structures, which is often involved "in politics, finances, economy, as here one cannot do without the word 'architecture'" (Participant: RA-2).

4.2.2. Power in the Field of Architecture

The interviewed representatives of the first generation of Lithuanian architects, who worked as chief architects of cities (Druskininkai, Palanga, and Klaipėda), regarded the architect as the city conductor responsible for the whole concert (Participants: P-2 and PA-2). This power was vested in chief architects of cities by the general plan of a city (the equivalent of the current city master plan), which would be supervised by the architect and then approved by the then Council of Ministers. The approved plan would be binding on all planners, designers, and builders. On the other hand, the then city master plans would also become advocates of the architects—"if we followed the general plan, we could ignore those Soviet powers, < . . . > nobody had the right to scold us" (Participant: P-1). The tool created by the architects themselves provided them both power and protection.

4.2.3. Artist–Creator versus Service Provider

The conditions for architects' creative activities at that time were complicated: post-war demolished and insufficiently rebuilt cities; the political system, ideology, and the planned economy that did not allow free expression of creativity; the influx of new population from Soviet republics, which called for fast provision of housing. In spite of such conditions, the interviewed architects regarded their work as creative activity in the first place. "Architects must be creators" (Participant: P-1) and "sensitive and empathetic" in addition (Participant: PA-1). As emphasized by Participant P-2, an object of architecture must arise out of an idea; later, it must turn into a composition, and only then be realized in architectural drawings. The architects of that time were guided in their creative work by principles that can be grouped into two categories: respect for the context and reliance on the national architectural forms. Although all the interviewed architects treated themselves as artists and creators, their behaviors were different. While some focused on understanding the environment, the others assigned self-centered priority to self-expression.

The interviewed architects, shaping the built environment, expected exceptional respect from society, but felt underestimated (Participant: P-3). The interviewees felt that during the time of the post-socialist transformation, after the changes in political and economic conditions and with the changing character of architectural procedures, the purpose of the architect was changing, too. "It was time in the Soviet era when the profession of architect was highly regarded and the status of an architect was high. Now, the architect has become the client's subordinate: my money, my program, we have reached the agreement, signed a contract and . . . do your work", Participant PA-1 regrets. According to Participant RA-1, the attitude toward an architect has become very pragmatic, as toward a service provider: they design and obtain a building permit. Today, "the best architect is the one who manages to 'get approved' what is wrong to be approved" (Participant: P-3). This status of an architect in the post-socialist society, which is "diminished to a critical state", causes sadness and internal pain amongst the interviewed architects, as they regard their profession as complicated and difficult (Participant: PA-2). The interviewed architects

currently feel contradictions between the role of the architect they held previously and still remember, and the newly assigned role.

4.2.4. Universal Artist

The architects drew attention to the fact that the architect's education opens the way to a wide range of various activities, not necessarily related to architecture (Participant: PA-2). As noted by Participant P-2, a number of famous painters, cinema painters, designers, and sculptors have an architect's diploma, "the architect is an extraordinary profession". According to the interviewed architects, the architect is able to understand all areas of art, to generate and accumulate them in themselves (Participant: PA-3). All arts are certain fragments, and architecture is all-encompassing.

4.2.5. Activity Requiring Exceptional Responsibility

An analysis of in-depth interviews revealed that the interviewed architects, by the high expectations they themselves created for the scope of professional activities, erudition, social significance, and the quality of performance, consequently assumed a particularly heavy burden of responsibility. This responsibility is prospective, forward-looking, not retrospective, expressed in the forms of both social responsibility (deliberately formed ethical obligations to act for the benefit of society and the environment) and moral responsibility (a person's behavior based on personal morality). Various perspectives of the scope, and character of and reasons for the assumed responsibility were revealed.

The interviewed architects regarded themselves as actors in the sphere of politics, shapers of the image, and symbols of the state. According to Participant PA-2, "if I work as the chief architect of the city, then I form, as a politician, decide on matters of the state". The fact that the leaders of the then Soviet Lithuania recognized the significance and status of the architect is illustrated by the story told by Participant P-2 about how Motiejus Šumauskas, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, would personally come to the Institute of Urban Construction to supervise the architectural design of significant objects. The belief in the architect's importance and possibilities on the national scale was reinforced by the emphasis on the role of the architect Albert Speer, Hitler's right hand and generator of ideas in Nazi Germany, which surfaced in some of the interviews. The study participants compared this precedent to the aim of leaders of other, in particular authoritarian, states (the USSR, France, and the USA) to commemorate their names by means of monumental architecture, which increased belief in the powers of the architect in state politics and their impact on the image of the state.

The interviews revealed the architect's commitment to performing complicated work professionally and honestly, to analyze and solve problems, and to see and overcome contradictions: "the architect faces endless restrictions and obstacles: the context, the client's wishes, needs, hidden, invisible things that he must see and predict" (Participant: P-3). Notably, the interviewed architects linked professionalism to responsibility toward society. In their opinion, their professional commitments include not only the formation of the built environment, but also, more broadly, the realization of common human values. Many of the study participants, speaking about responsibility and social significance, compared the architect's profession to that of a teacher, priest, and especially a doctor. It can be supposed that the mission to society undertaken by the interviewed architects as a commitment is excessive, maybe even heroic. The Participant PA-3 compared: "the architect's role in society is very great. I do not know how more important a teacher or doctor can be, but I think the architect is more important". However, despite the apparent commitment to form the built environment acting professionally and to create welfare for society, the interview material hardly revealed any attentive listening to the expectations and opinions of the public or the need for its response or feedback. Representatives of this generation, similar to some demiurges, were convinced that they intrinsically understand society and know its needs and expectations; thus, dialogue with society is not necessary.

Some reasons for the strong moral and social commitment of the architect were highlighted. The first one is financial: the architect's "activities are tied to high public costs, the objects they design require a lot of various resources, and operation can be very expensive" (Participant: PA-3); "architects' mistakes are very costly" (Participant: PA-1). The second one is sensitivity of the natural system: "or he comes and destroys those geomorphologic structures that do not recover, maybe destroying water sources, relief forms" (Participant: PA-3). The third reason is of social sustainability: "when he puts a person or the community in some fancy schemes of his and then they must live so. However, a person must feel good in his environment" (Participant: PA-3). The fourth one is preserving traditions: "continuity and tradition are important throughout the change of generations. Continuity is important both for family tradition and for the urban environment" (Participant: PA-3). In summary, the interviewed architects assumed social and moral responsibility for the long-term results that change the environment and impact society. As Participant RA-1 explained, "the architect is a creator, of course, with responsibility. Creativity is when you initiate what has not existed before, what is new < ... >. This comes with responsibility: it is good if you improve, but if you make matters worse, you are responsible for it".

4.3. Thematic Links and Connecting Fields

The analysis of the interviews revealed connections not only among the themes as such, but also among the aspects found in the themes. The first theme, which accentuates the super-designer's powers in the expanded field, presupposes the logical emergence of the fifth theme of the architect's activity, which entails exceptional responsibility. These two components of architects' self-awareness are correlated, as the perceived heroic mission is based on exceptional knowledge and abilities to create, to shape, to direct, to organize. Such a concept finds reasons and arguments for itself in the exceptional responsibility that architects load themselves with as actors important to society, the state, and history; as the creative power, protagonists, world transformers, improvers, who possess a very wide and diverse knowledge, and abilities; and who are responsible for everything. Assuming wide powers and the breadth and universality of the profession impose the burden of particularly big responsibility on architects, one way or another. Power to create and responsibility in the life of an architect are indissociable, they go hand in hand.

The fourth theme positions the architect as a universal artist who is knowledgeable and able to create in other fields of arts as well. Such a concept opens a field of opportunities for the profession and aspires to broader artistic contexts, a field of culture that is difficult to take in.

All the three components, i.e., super-designer, universal artist, and exceptional responsibility, define a very wide field of architect activities, the horizons of which are too far to see. Meanwhile, the second theme very clearly shows professional powers in the field of architecture, when the architect makes decisions in situations of different territorial scale from the level of the whole city to small-scale objects. Operation in the field of architecture is based on the master plan as a set of rules, options, and references, which is somewhat "sacred", because it clearly identifies the functions of the architect and provides protection against external impact, and allows for a sufficiently autonomous functioning of the architect. Such a system, when municipality architects prepare a master plan and this plan is followed by other architects, becomes a sufficiently autonomous one, always under the influence of architects, which guarantees independent functioning.

The third theme reflects the existential basis of the architect's self-perception, which arises as the scale of how the architect defines themselves, perceives their role and status in society from artist–creator to service provider. This major dilemma of the self-positioning of an architect pervades all fields of the operation of the architect and becomes a factor determining all the themes (the components of the architect's self-awareness). The interviewed architects identified the existential crisis of the profession: a change unfavorable for

their self-perception, a shift in the position of the architect toward that of a service provider. The change highlights the gap between architects' expectations and reality.

It was interesting that the first and fifth themes that exceed the boundaries of professional activity were mentioned more often than the one that is directly related to activities in the field of architecture (Figure 1).
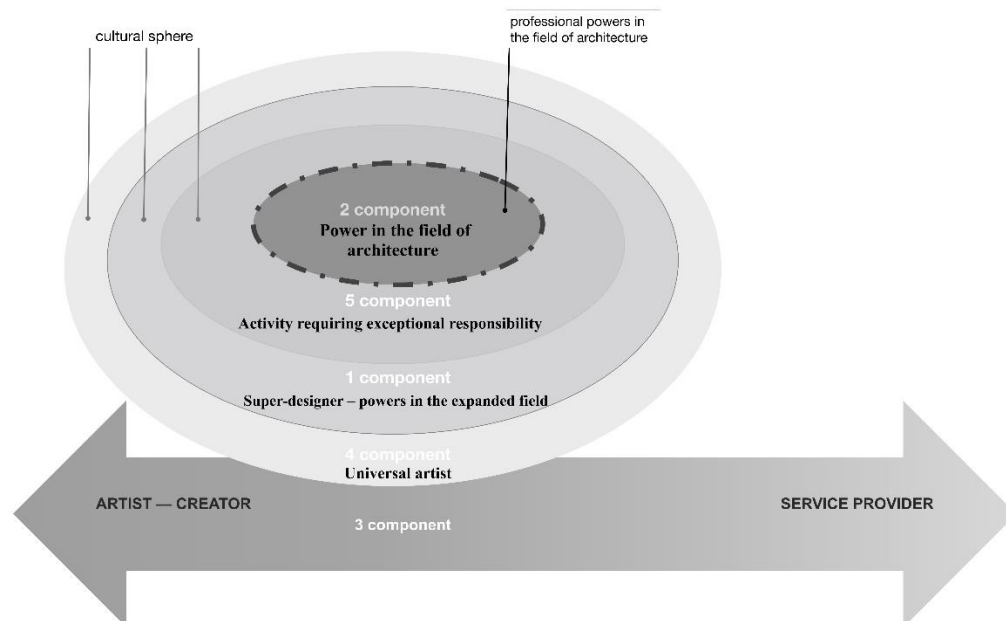

Figure 1. Components and fields of architect's self-awareness.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study revealed an unexpected conclusion that the requirements imposed on architecture by Soviet ideology, which included standardization, typification, industrialization, repetition, and quantitative aspects (more, faster, and cheaper), did not affect the attitudes and self-perceptions of the interviewed architects. This contradictory observation is supported by the research conducted by Milerius et al. They concluded that architecture, as an autonomous sphere, negates the importance of political, economic, and social conditions for architectural design. In the opinion of architects interviewed by Milerius et al., the political and economic structure of the country had little impact on architectural ideas in Soviet times. Architecture was somewhat separated from the ideas of time that dictated its expression and was disassociated from social impact [25] (p. 150). It is a paradoxical situation when architects active in an authoritarian regime managed to dissociate from it.

Although Lithuania was a part of the USSR for almost five decades, Lithuanian architects managed to withstand the pervasive Soviet doctrine and remained loyal to cultural traditions, values, attitudes, and approaches prevailing in Western countries, as well as in independent Lithuania before WWII. This is why we parallel the attitudes and approaches of post-war Lithuanian architects with the ones predominating in the professional communities of Western countries.

The interviewed architects perceive the sphere of their activities as a two-layer and dual scope structure, consisting of a field where the architect performs their direct professional tasks (power in the field of architecture) and another field where they express themselves as people of culture, as artists, and as creators (super-designer—power in the expanded field). This distinction between the fields of activity and roles of the architect was also discussed by the researchers of ethics in architectural practice, explaining the alternative roles of the architect referring to their broad and versatile education. Architects, who act outside the boundaries of their profession, are not homogeneous in their roles: we can notice their grouping into seekers and solvers, where the former could be characterized as

"reflective, intuitive, and aesthetically oriented", whereas the latter as "more task- and result-oriented" [15] (p. 217). The reflections of Lithuanian architects did not articulate the obvious differentiation of the actors in the expanded field, but we can observe certain polarization among the verbs they selected to describe their activities: "to see, understand, predict, generate ideas, create, give meaning to" and "find problems, overcome contradictions, organize, determine, answer".

The peculiarities and controversies of the self-vision of post-war Lithuanian architects arise out of the romanticized, idealized self-positioning of the artist–creator. During the emergence of the profession in the 19th century, it was realized that the only aspect that separates architects from other professions is artistic creativity. Architecture developed from a craft to a profession when it came to be related to the arts, intellect, and theory; it was no longer a craft taught through apprenticeship by training in skills and construction techniques [15] (pp. 106–108). The beginnings of architecture as a professional activity created a strong image of art–architect—a sponsored-creator individualist, holding a privileged position in the middle class [26]. In the long term, it became one of the dominant roles in the profession, the architect–hero, entertaining the illusion of architecture as closed, finite, and elitist [27] (p. 40). Samuel called such a role "cultural architects": charismatic leaders who create "high art: that becomes cultural and symbolic capital. Although, in reality, this role is played by a small number of architects, it is namely how society sees the activities of an architect [28] (p. 142). The Lithuanian architects interviewed during the study identified themselves with the role of artist–creator in the profession. They considered themselves as creative, highly educated people with belief in their profession as a branch of art.

The elitist, privileged self-vision of Lithuanian architects was reinforced by the concept of supremacy of the architect's profession in society. Aesthetic values created through the so-called objective formal laws articulated by Bauhaus established the division between good design and bad taste, thus also between a great creator and a society ignorant about art [29] (pp. 188–189). This idea of superiority, separation from the ignorant society that should be educated, is obvious from the interviews. The respondents treated it as the status of cultural elite acquired by virtue of the profession, granting demiurge powers to create a new world for a new society. Modernism, and especially the soviet modernism, manifested as functionalism in architecture and urban planning, was too concerned with efficiency, but, similar to any other historical movement, it was mostly concerned with the meaning of the idea and the desire to provide humanity an existential point of support [30] (p. 11). The fact that Lithuanian modernists shunned dialogue with society because they are convinced that they understand society and its needs and expectations directly relates to the paradox identified by Symes et al. in the values of British architects in the second half of the 20th century: "architects believe they are offering a service to society but resist the allocation of any great proportion of their professional time to scientific study of its needs" [31] (p. 20).

From a sociological point of view, Čiupailaitė aptly noticed the parallel with Ghirardo's observation [32] (p. 12) that, in the mythology of the field of architecture, the architect is presented as a genius with a connection to the "transcendental essence":—the architect's thoughts are "higher" and their ideas are "deeper". Thus, the architect can offer better spatial solutions because, as an artist, they see more and have no interests in terms of ethics. In this way, it is sought to attach the status of art to the field of architecture a priori, but not necessarily according to the results achieved [16] (p. 21).

The overemphasis of the architect and their activities, which do not correspond to reality, can be interpreted as a form of self-mythologizing. The first Lithuanian post-war generation of architects acted as ambitious creators of new Lithuanian architecture. After driving out architects introduced from Russia who produced imperative, retrospective architecture, and referring to the Kaunas modernism architecture tradition formed during Lithuania's independence (1918–1939) [33], they formed a myth of emergence of the Lithuanian modernism architecture via subversive opportunism [23]. The exceptional trust in one's own powers was fueled by highly valued architectural and urban designs and

Soviet Union prizes, along with the understanding that the first generation of Lithuanian architects in the Soviet times were the best architects in the entire USSR [34].

The Lithuanian architects of the investigated generation, similar to their colleagues in other countries, including the Western bloc, feel superior also in a team of designers, contractors, and builders. It was namely in the post-war decades that the architects' ambition to actively consolidate and expand their leadership in building industries became internationally noticeable, emphasizing their exceptional ability to think in a strategic and holistic way; Saint called this ambition to be "obsession with control" [26] (pp. 145–146). It is especially evident in the role of an architect "as an independent artist and creative genius who refuses to sully his or her profession in any act of artistic compromise and has clear superiority over the rest of the construction team" [27] (p. 40). In the socialist bloc and especially in authoritarian countries, architects' leadership in design and construction processes found an ever-stronger ground in the visions of the socialist system, opening possibilities for it even up to the level of social engineering.

In the long term, the role of the privileged artist–creator, construction leader, and cultural hero started losing its strength. The stereotype of the architect as an artist, both within the profession and in the construction industry and in society, began to change in the Western countries at the end of the 20th century. From an independent elite professional, the architect has become an active market participant, a service provider with contractual obligations. Due to distrust in architects and the criticism that they do not fulfill their obligations to society, the binary accountability to the client that prevailed until it was replaced with accountability to a dispersed committee in the form of regulation, licensing, audits, and reporting, which restricted decision-making possibilities. The three essential obligations to society include contractual obligations, regulatory law, and standard of care [15] (pp. 148–149). Thus, trust in the architect's professionalism and their authority as that of a leader is replaced by managerial accountability [35]. According to Saint, actually neither the state nor the public believe that architecture is so important, and the way architects see themselves is contrary to reality in the construction market [36] (p. 9). Changes in the profession occur not only in the form of deteriorating status, but also with regard to the nature of activities. Roles are changing and becoming more diverse: from the artist, the architect becomes a mediator, entrepreneur, and manager. The focus shifts from product-oriented individualistic monument-making to informed and inclusive process-oriented place-making with communities [29] (pp. 199–200). The architect becomes a member of a growing trans-disciplinary group of participants creating the environment, which includes different specialists, as well as the local population. In the eyes of the researched generation of architects, the changes that have occurred in the recent decades are controversial and disappointing. In this way, their self-awareness involves losing the status of an elitist artist and leader, which is a part of their values, expectations, interests, and sincere dedication to the profession.

The epoch of modernism, coinciding in Lithuania with the Soviet times, is associated with the reinstitution of the modern profession of architect, and pride and respect for the professional, by creating the image of the architect–hero. The interviews with the architects revealed the essential position of their self-perception as artist–creators, which is at the extremity of architectural attitudes, as the antipode to service providers. It can be presumed that depending on how architects position themselves in the axis of choice of artistic creativity vs. service provision, the architecture they create takes a certain place in the cultural space of society.

However, the ambivalence of the architects' self-awareness is noticeable as the modernism architecture of the second half of the 20th century has been created by architects who identify themselves with the emergence of a new kind of architecture, but, at the same time, feel the need for continuity, and eventually perceive the inevitability of a turning point and implement all this in the unfavorable historical, political situation during the Soviet period. This dualism of self-identification between modernism and regionalism could be treated as a certain peculiarity of Lithuanian architects of that period.

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