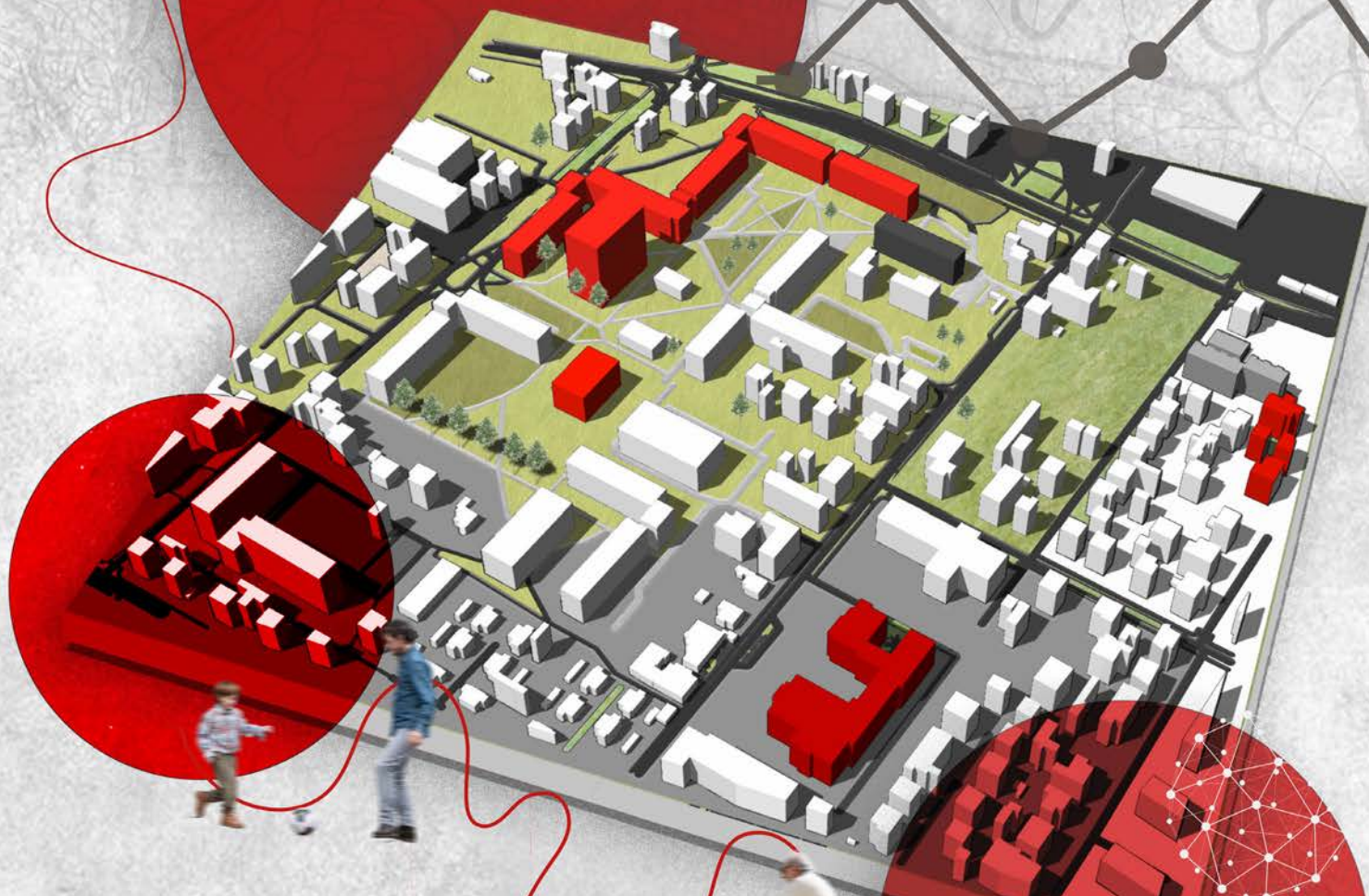


SLEEPING DISTRICTS



ENHANCING COMMUNITY REVITALISATION:

Exploring the Potential Impact
of Soviet Microcity Principles in
Glasgow's East End





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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to each person who has contributed to the collective support and encouragement that has led to the successful completion of this dissertation.

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I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the participants who generously contributed their time and insights, making this research possible namely Dariusz Kubior, Rares Cucos and Anna Tabacz. Your willingness to share your experiences has been integral to enriching the depth and breadth of this study.

This dissertation is not just an academic endeavour for me; rather, it represents the perfect synthesis of my passions and beliefs showcasing my profound confidence in the transformative potential of the architectural style in question, often cast aside due to its political stigma. I envision this approach not only enhancing the quality of life for individuals in the context of Glasgow's East End but also contributing to the enrichment of communities worldwide. **This work is a manifestation of my dedication to exploring how architecture can be a catalyst for positive change, fostering a more vibrant and interconnected society.**

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the transformative potential of Soviet microcity spatial principles as a catalyst for revitalising community cohesion in Glasgow's East End. Informed by the historical and theoretical foundations of Soviet microcity planning, this study delivers actionable examples of adopting and adapting these principles to the specific context of Glasgow's East End. The research analyses the impact of these principles on community revival by combining aspects of urban planning, architecture, and sociology, emphasising key elements such as community engagement, infrastructure, housing, and the importance of shared public spaces.

Utilising a mixed methodology, this dissertation merges qualitative insights from previous microcity resident surveys with spatial analysis to capture the first-hand experiences of residents and communities. This diverse methodology approach aims to highlight both the opportunities and challenges linked to implementing microcity principles in Glasgow's East End, exploiting the positives and overcoming limitations.

In conclusion, this dissertation emerges as an invaluable resource for researchers interested in the vital interconnectedness of urban planning, community revitalisation, and innovative spatial principles for the betterment of communal livelihood. The study explores Soviet spatial principles aimed at fostering community cohesion from an inventive standpoint, emphasising the need for flexible, context-specific approaches to address the unique challenges faced by urban contexts in a rapidly evolving world. Through intentionally functional spatial design, detached from any historical and political stigmas, the research illuminates the innate potential of nurturing community bonds and improving lives within urban environments.



Fig 3. Glasgow's East End

*'Modernism is not a shape, not a style
and not even an epoch. Modernism is
about the way of thinking.'*

Gubnika (2019)



Fig 4. Bucharest, Romania

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Fig 5. Stockwell, London



Fig 6.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Urban landscapes are constantly changing, reflecting the changing needs and desires of the communities they support. As our cities develop and transform, the search for innovative approaches to urban planning and community revitalisation becomes more important than ever. This dissertation embarks on a journey to explore the transformative impact of Soviet microcity spatial principles on Glasgow's East End, a part of the city steeped in industrial history and has its own unique character and challenges.

The East End of Glasgow is at the epicentre of opportunity for catalysing urban regeneration and community renewal. In this dissertation, I explore how the concept of Soviet microcity spatial principles can act as a driving force for community cohesiveness in the East End. Combining the historical concepts of Soviet planning with the modern context of the East End offers a novel and interesting way to look at the potential for change.

The scope of the study is narrowed down to explore the specificities of Soviet microcity spatial principles and their application to the unique context of Glasgow's East End. Urban planning, architecture and sociology are at the heart of the study, with key components such as community involvement, infrastructure, accommodation, and the development of public spaces.

RESEARCH DISCUSSION & BROADER APPLICATIONS

Due to my background and experiences, I have unique perspectives that add value to the dissertation however, I always want to expand my knowledge with more reading and varied viewpoints. The goal of this dissertation is to be part of the larger conversation about innovative spatial principles, and how they can be used to alleviate today's urban problems. The study acknowledges its role in contributing to the larger dialogue, exploring the potential of Soviet microcity spatial principles in addressing modern-day urban dilemmas.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, OBJECTIVES AND SIGNIFICANCE

As I embark on this exploration, the overarching questions guiding this research become evident.

- What are the key elements contributing to community cohesion in Soviet Microcities?
- What potential impact do Soviet microcity spatial principles have on community revival in Glasgow's East End?

Through these questions, the dissertation aims to explore the complex ways in which microcity principles are implemented and their impact on community.



LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This literature review aims to investigate the historical foundations of Soviet microcities and their relevance in addressing contemporary urban challenges, particularly in the context of community revitalisation in Glasgow's East End. By analysing the connection between spatial principles and community dynamics, this review combines existing research to identify gaps and contribute to discussions on innovative approaches. Utilising a range of qualitative and quantitative sources, the review is divided into three sections that explore the concept of community, the role of Soviet microcity principles in community formation, and the specific challenges encountered in Glasgow's East End.

The primary objective of this review is to demonstrate how exploring Soviet microcity spatial principles offers a distinct perspective for envisioning community revitalisation. The conclusion synthesises these findings, addresses research gaps, and establishes an underpinning for urban solutions by adapting these spatial principles.

1.2 COMMUNITY

1.2.1 DEFINITIONS

According to *Hieronymus (University of Illinois)*, a community is characterised by a close-knit group of individuals residing in a compact area who collaborate on crucial aspects of daily life. *Queen (1923)* expands on this definition, delving into the concept of community creation and the impacts of demographic diversity on community cohesion. Her study challenges whether divisions hinder or improve community existence whilst emphasising the importance of tolerance in fostering shared interests among residents. *Follett (1919)* suggests community formation is an ongoing creative process involving iteration over time, highlighting its dynamic and rejuvenating nature. *Francis (2012)* expanded upon this, associating strong feelings of communal belonging with enhanced well-being, safety measures, and engagement in civic affairs, an outcome that underscores its potential for further investigation and exploration.

1.2.2 CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

Amid technological advances and the COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of community has undergone increased scrutiny. For some, making connections has become easier through convenience, whilst others say that life has become more isolated. It can be argued that community without human connection is not a community at all (*Bramston, 2002*), and questionable whether we are losing our humanity as we interact less with each other and more with technology (*Floridi, 2014*).

1.2.3 QUALITY OF LIFE

Elewa's (2019) study argues that urban architecture offers a distinctive approach to a special type of building made for an urban setting, so it can enhance the QOL (quality of life) in UPA (urban poverty areas) through community projects. Emphasising community participation and revitalisation, Elewa views architecture as a catalyst for urban enhancement. *Huffman (2017)* builds on this, highlighting the importance of community engagement and exploring the link between space, participation, and community, noting that intentionally designed spaces can respond to and facilitate interaction whilst acknowledging their limitations due to demographic differences.

1.3 SOVIET MICROCITY CONTEXT:

1.3.1 HISTORY AND PURPOSE

The 'khrushchevka,' introduced by Nikita Khrushchev in the early 1960s, proved unsuccessful due to low quality and insufficient amenities (Varga-Harris 2008; Smith, 2015). In response, the 'mikroreyon' emerged, driven by societal, economic, and political factors, aiming to enhance community cohesion and housing efficiency through its design (Varga-Harris, 2008). This housing solution gained traction across post-Soviet nations, shaping cultural and community identities (Adrianova, 2016; Zupagrafika, 2019).

The mikroreyon model sought to build a collective society, promoting shared spaces, resources, and experiences for residents (Michalowski, 2014), thereby fostering a unified community identity. It efficiently addressed the USSR's large-scale housing needs, extending its influence on countries like Poland and Romania (Varga-Harris, 2008). The Soviet government's focus on minimising socio-economic disparities through uniform housing solutions contributed to decreased unemployment and homelessness, boosting the overall economy (Utekhin, 2015).

The mikroreyon model stands as a historical example where planning strategies prioritised community cohesion, offering insights into contemporary urban challenges and emphasising the enduring importance of fostering unity and shared experiences (Zupagrafika, 2019).

1.3.2 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Understanding community cohesion in Soviet Microcities involves exploring theoretical frameworks that clarify the connection between spatial design and residents' social dynamics.

The socialist ideology, emphasising communal living and shared resources, forms the theoretical basis for collective identity and social integration within Soviet Microcities (Fominaya, 2018). This ideology, rooted in fostering social integration and a sense of belonging, has historically been influential but may face challenges in integrating recent forms of social mobilisation in response to the fast-paced world of today (Fominaya, 2018).

Alternatively, the concept of social capital, defined by Field (2016) as intangible resources, shared values, and trust, provides a more concrete framework for understanding community cohesion in Soviet microcities. Shared spaces and communal facilities in these microcities served as mediums for residents to build this social capital, fostering trust and reciprocity within the community.

Proximity theory, based on Gestalt's principle of proximity, asserts that spatial closeness perceptually groups elements together (Ware, 2021). Beckes's (2011) study supports the positive impact of spatial proximity on community cohesion, noting its potential to reduce stress, promote health, and enhance community longevity. This aligns with mikroreyon planning, designed to bring residents into close spatial proximity, encouraging face-to-face interactions and community bonds.

Participatory urban planning models complement the proximity theory, emphasising resident involvement in decision-making processes to foster ownership and commitment to the community. Raynor (2018) underscores the need for planning processes that are responsive, adaptable, and participatory. In doing so, he addresses concerns about perpetuating existing inequalities and advocates for a reinvention of approaches. Collaborative planning, transition management, and design thinking emerge as key strategies to enhance community engagement and effectively tackle existing disparities.

PANELKI BLOCKS

The microcity layout, shaped by theoretical frameworks, manifests in the utilitarian housing form characterised by omnipresent concrete blocks, often referred to as 'panelki' or 'wielka płyta,' meaning 'large panel,' denoting the use of prefabricated panels in construction—a cost-effective and time-efficient approach.

EXTERIOR

Prioritising practicality aimed at improving residents' overall quality of life and interactions, Soviet microcities embraced a minimalist aesthetic, focusing on function over aesthetics and so rejecting excessive decorations or 'ornamentalism' (Choate, 2010; Khrushchev, 1955). This intentional design, with its repetitive and bleak nature, reflected a lack of individualism, enforcing control and centralised surveillance in a totalitarian regime (Nikolov, 2020). The standardised panel buildings, produced on "conveyor belts," exhibited compromised construction quality with issues like sagging balconies and out-of-order lifts (Varga-Harris, 2008). This utilitarian approach extended externally, showcasing concrete as a symbol of the nation's strength and resilience (Choate, 2010).



Fig 7. St. Petesburg, Russia

INTERIOR

Internally, the utilitarian principle persisted, featuring simple and compact apartment layouts (Choate, 2010). The uniformity of finishes and a somewhat bleak style adhered to political ideologies, placing its citizens in a controlled environment (Nikolov, 2020). This approach, however, may have encouraged outdoor social interactions by keeping interior spaces standardised (Daou et al., 2015), fostering community as a result. Despite limited space and thin walls causing dissatisfaction for some residents, others appreciated the modern design and viewed it as a rejection of luxury and consumerism (Zupagrafika, 2022).

The juxtaposition of uniformity and personalisation in interiors reflects the intricate interplay of societal ideals and individual expression (Nikolov, 2020). The balance between practical mass housing demands and aspirations for communal living is evident, allowing residents to inject individual identity into an otherwise uniform structure.

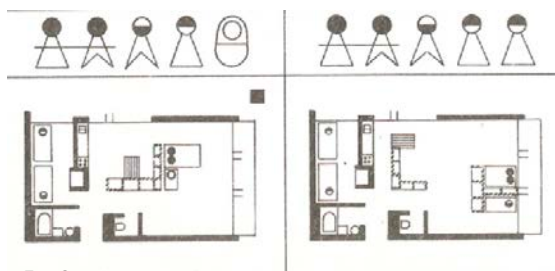


Fig 8.

Skibniewska's (1958) 'open model' transforming a 56.3 m² space based on changing familial structures and individual expression, heritage, and traditions.

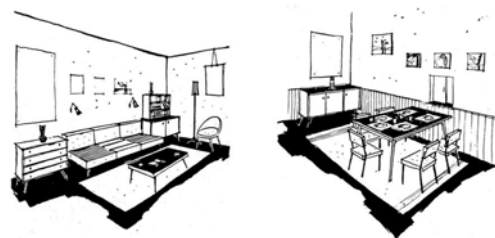


Fig 9.

Interior sketches showing various versions and configurations of the panelki interior in Bucharest, Romania.

1.4 RESIDENT PERSPECTIVES

Works like Zupagrafika's (2022) 'The Tenants' and Michalowski's (2014) 'Opowieści Z Osiedli PRL' provide personal insights into microcity communities through interviews and photographs. These sources offer a nuanced view of the positives and negatives of living in panelki homes. Harris's (2015) essay explores community dynamics through interviews and questionnaires, emphasising preferences for communal living in microcities. These insider perspectives contribute to a richer understanding of community cohesion within Soviet microcities.



Fig 10. Ms Halinka, Serbia



Fig 11. Mrs Zariņa, Latvia

1.5 URBAN PLANNING

The microcity's urban planning, exemplified by strategically positioned panelki residential blocks in an orthogonal grid system, reflects an innovative approach to efficient land use and navigation (Gobouleva, 2012). It not only addresses urbanisation demands but also prioritises resident well-being through functional zoning that separates residential, commercial, and industrial spaces, creating a balanced living environment (E. Harris, 2015). This planning model extended to 'monotowns,' characterised by a singular industry-driven economy. This in turn played a pivotal role in harmoniously integrating work, residence, and communal spaces, fostering convenience and a strong sense of community among inhabitants (Zupagrafika, 2021).

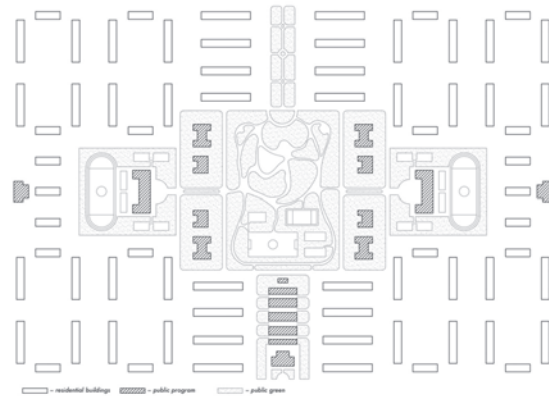


Fig 12. illustration of the ideal mikrorejon



Fig 13. Väike-Õismäe mikrorejon Tallin, Estonia

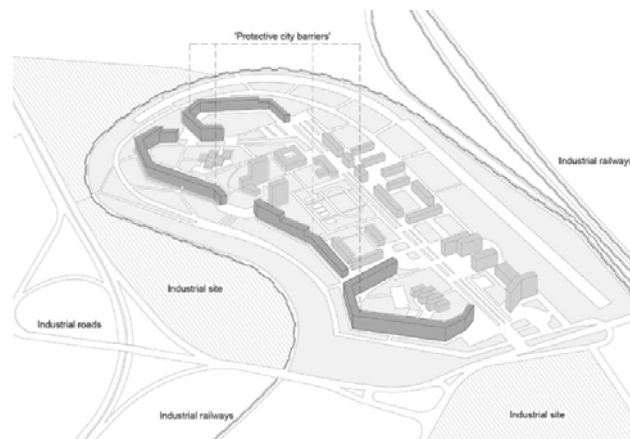


Fig 14. Monotown in Yaketerinburg, Russia

1.5.1 PROXIMITY OF AMENITIES: ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE

The microcity layout prioritised daily convenience by integrating essential services, reducing commutes, and fostering holistic living (Hess et al., 2017). Centrally planned facilities, including education and healthcare, responded to resident needs, enhancing personal and communal satisfaction (Adrianova, 2016; Karbowniczek, 2021). Leisure and recreation, central to community life, offered diverse activities, creating meeting places after work (E.Harris, 2015; E.Reid, 2015).

1.5.2 COMMUNAL THIRD SPACES: BLURRING BOUNDARIES FOR SOCIAL HARMONY

Communal spaces, both internal and external, explored the dissolution of private and public spaces, stating that they were “harmoniously intertwined along a continuum of well-designed and complementary spaces” (E.Harris, 2015). Shared cafeterias and amenities like cleaning supplies and washing rooms along with green spaces, promoted well-being, relaxation, and community bonding (Daou et al., 2015; Gobouleva, 2012). Despite the positive intentions, fear and safety concerns created by contemporary issues have led to the disrepair of communal areas, increased isolation, and community breakdown (Michalowski, 2014).



Fig 15. a typical communal wash room

1.5.3 RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT AND SECURITY INITIATIVES: BUILDING BONDS

Residents actively participated in social organisations, fostering harmonious relations and shared responsibility for housing care (E.Harris, 2015). Initiatives, such as foot patrols and neighbourhood watches exemplified a communal effort toward security and social order, strengthening bonds, trust, and respect (Leningradskaia Pravda, 1961; Gobouleva, 2012). Resident-led activities such as the ‘The Roof Garden’ initiative by Alla Sokol and competitions for child involvement and socialisation showcased a bottom-up approach, responding to community needs at their core (E.Harris, 2015).

1.5.4 CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS AND STIGMAS: TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL

Efforts, like the 15-minute city concept, echo microcity principles, envisioning self-sufficient and community-centric urban spaces (Pozoukidou, 2021). However, concerns about racial and ethnic segregation hinder its widespread adoption in Europe (Camprag et al., n.d). The lack of European examples highlights a stigma against mikroreyons, dismissing their potential due to past political bias with most principle integrations seen in Asia and South America.

1.5.5 TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL: FROM OPPRESSION TO RESILIENCE

The post-Soviet transformation saw mikroreyons redefined positively through repairs and vibrant remodelling, symbolising freedom, and resilience (Ciarkowski, 2017). Once oppressive reminders of Soviet rule, they emerged as beacons of positive transformation and endurance, an example for the rest of the world to shed the past and recreate their future.



Fig 16. cultural mural Krakow, Poland

1.6 GLASGOW'S EAST END CONTEXT:

1.6.1 SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Glasgow's East End grapples with persistent socioeconomic challenges, including income inequality and high unemployment rates, resulting in economic disparities (Co-op, 2023). These challenges impact residents' quality of life, limiting access to essential resources and opportunities. Limited access to quality education and healthcare services further exacerbates these issues, reflecting poor health outcomes (Maantay, 2016). Additionally, poor public transport links hinder economic potential, affecting around 300,000 workers (Centre for Cities, 2023).

Affordable housing remains a critical issue, with social housing cuts by 26% in 2022 and luxury projects increasing in funding (Gray, 2022). Since 2005 the city has lost 35% of its high-rise housing blocks and schemes largely because of social estate stigma, seen as "no longer fashionable... hotbeds of criminal activity, and the cause of everything undesirable and antisocial" (Leslie, 2022). The loss of community centres and independent bodies further strains community cohesion, impacting child poverty rates (End Child Poverty Data, 2021/22) through the reduced food bank and youth club operations.



Fig 17. Red Row Flats, Glasgow

1.6.2 CULTURAL CHALLENGES: DIVERSITY AND GENTRIFICATION

Glasgow's East End faces cultural challenges due to its diverse population and the delicate balance between cultural preservation and gentrification (Cesari, 2018). As the area becomes more ethnically diverse, gentrification dynamics can displace longstanding communities, altering the cultural character (Giglietto et al., 2019). The challenge lies in preserving cultural heritage while managing the impacts of gentrification.

1.6.3 ARCHITECTURAL CHALLENGES: URBAN DECAY AND STIGMA

The architectural landscape of Glasgow's East End presents challenges such as urban decay, inadequate infrastructure, and a scarcity of greenspaces (Gourlay, 2007; TGIP, 2022), where scarcity of recreational green space can contribute to a lack of gathering areas, impacting residents' well-being and the overall sense of community (Krellenberg, 2014). Prominent derelict sites pose threats to children and encourage crime (Spelman, 2002) with 53% of the population living within 500m of derelict land (TGIP, 2022).



Fig 18. derelict St. James Primary School, East End, Glasgow

The stigma associated with brutalist architecture, politically and aesthetically, adds to these challenges (Pile, 2019). The negative perception and failure to reimagine spaces hinder their potential to address urban community issues through meaningful spatial principles (Gubnika, 2018). "Brutalism - A Hope Dashed" (2019) exemplifies the controversial nature of brutalist estates in the UK. Architect Steven Pile emphasises their role as "experiments in living," intended to unite communities by providing space, light, and communal facilities. According to Pile, these structures concretise civic ideals, embodying a time when architecture was perceived as a force for communal good. However, with shifting priorities towards commercial interests, there's a loss of the ability to reimagine utopias within these spaces.

The negative perception of brutalism in the UK may stem from its association with failed utopian ideals, as it seemingly fell short of delivering on its promises. Additionally, brutalism carries political connotations, being seen as a concrete symbol of communism and its strict ideology, which remains largely taboo now more than ever. This negative perception limits the potential of brutalist architecture to address urban community issues through spatial principles and deeper meanings, emphasising function over aesthetics, as noted by Gubnika (2018).

1.7 CONCLUSION

BRIDGING HISTORIES FOR URBAN RENEWAL

The purpose of this review was to examine the spatial principles of Soviet microcities, focusing on their ability to harbour community and apply that to an urban and community-challenged context such as Glasgow's East End. It is clear from the literature reviewed that Soviet microcities reveal both their successes and critiques, showcasing the endurance of these urban models through time. Despite the critiques, their resilience in reimagining and adapting over the years is undeniable. The positive aspects of microcity planning, such as proximity, participatory frameworks, and communal spaces, offer valuable insights for addressing contemporary challenges in Glasgow. However, the divergence also highlights the need for adaptability when adopting these principles, recognising the unique socio-economic and cultural heritage of each urban context, and practising respect so as not to overwhelm with foreign aspects.

The gaps in the literature point towards a need for a more comprehensive compilation of these transformative principles in Western context projects and research papers. While the principles of microcity planning have stood the test of time, their application in different cultural and economic landscapes requires further exploration. This area of study holds significant contemporary importance, as it focuses on urban renewal and community revitalisation strategies, offering a proactive approach to alleviate various urban challenges.

FF

METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I explored the transformative potential of Soviet microcity spatial principles as a catalyst for revitalising community cohesion in Glasgow's East End. This section offers a concise yet comprehensive overview of the research approach that guided the investigation serving as a crucial foundation for this study.

2.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

My research approach integrated a mixed-methods strategy with a particular emphasis on qualitative analysis. I utilised a diverse range of primary sources, including academic journals, books, articles, and documentaries. The foundation of my study was built upon these varied sources to ensure an inclusive understanding of the subject. To provide a uniquely personal element and further inform my research, I utilised primary questionnaires surrounding community attitudes of past residents in Soviet microcities.

2.3 DATA COLLECTION

EXISTING PRIMARY

To inform my literature review and consolidate findings, I utilised a diverse set of credible primary sources, including original research articles, review articles, books, essays, academic journals, short films, and documentaries. Notable influences on deepening and informing my research included *Varga-Harris (2008)*, *Chaote (2010)*, *Gobouleva (2012)*, and *Gourley (2007)*. These resources were obtained both online and in person to ensure a full-bodied and high-quality database. The inclusion of a wide range of dated sources, spanning both recent and older publications, ensured the reliability and relevance of the information gathered.

PRIMARY QUESTIONNAIRE

For personal primary research, an email questionnaire was chosen as the most suitable method, considering the geographical distribution of participants. Dariusz Kubior, Rares Cucos, and Anna Tabacarz, all former microcity residents, participated, offering diverse perspectives based on varying living experiences, age, and current residences abroad.

The questionnaire was organised into four sections - demographics, community experiences, principles and revitalisation, and additional comments - consisting of open-ended questions. This structure aimed to prompt qualitative responses, taking inspiration from resident-focused methodologies identified in the literature review. This approach sought to capture authentic perspectives, either supporting or challenging existing literature, so enhancing the overall quality and depth of the research conclusion.



Fig 19.

Rares Cucos
Flat 25, Bl 57, 1 Decembrie 1918,
Piatra Neamț, Romania



Fig 20.

Dariusz Kubior
Wawelska 15/1, Rybnik, Poland



Fig 21.

Anna Tabacarz
16B/59, Ul. 35-Lecia, Czeladź, Poland

2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The qualitative data gathered from the primary questionnaires underwent rigorous analysis to extract meaningful insights into community cohesion within Soviet microcities, enhancing my existing primary research and literature review. This analysis process involved coding, comparison, and validation.

CODING:

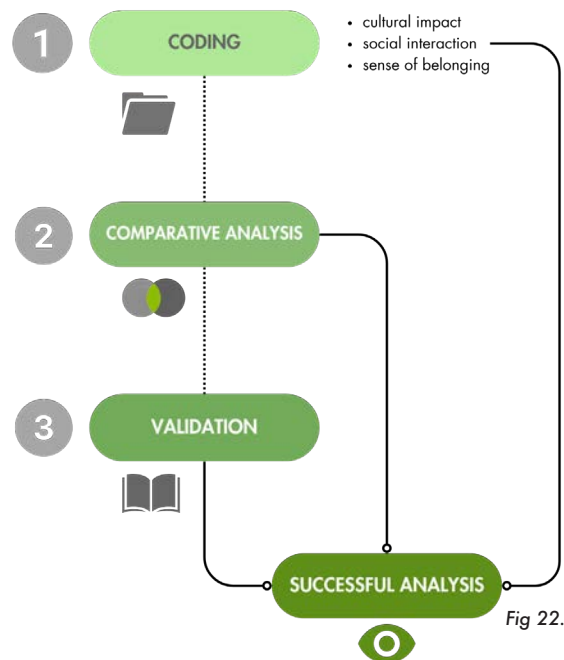
Participant responses were systematically coded to identify recurring themes and patterns. Responses related to community experiences were coded with labels such as 'Social Interaction,' 'Cultural Impact,' and 'Sense of Belonging.' This was done to interpret and organise data for appropriate later inclusion.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS:

Participants' responses were compared to discern any divergent or convergent viewpoints, adding depth to the findings and acknowledging the diversity of experiences among former microcity residents.

VALIDATION:

The analysed data was cross-referenced with existing literature, helping inform existing theories, and contributing to the overall success of the study.



2.5 EVALUATION AND JUSTIFICATION

The mixed methodology, emphasising qualitative analysis, was highly effective in achieving the research goals outlined in the introduction. It seamlessly aligned with the research objectives, leveraging diverse primary and secondary sources for a comprehensive exploration. Robust existing primary sources informed an insightful literature review, while the addition of a unique questionnaire provided a personal and multi-dimensional understanding of the topic. Finally, thorough data analysis was pivotal in extracting meaningful insights from participant responses, validating, and enriching the study through cross-referencing.

2.6 REFLECTION AND ETHICS

Participants received and returned signed consent forms, approved by AUB, ensuring ethical compliance and ensure integrity. An additional ethics form was completed and approved as low risk to mitigate dangers and adhere to guidelines. To uphold ethical standards, participants were briefed on the academic publication's nature, data storage duration, and potential usage, with full consent granted voluntarily.

The selection process involved both personal connections (Dariusz Kubior, Rares Cucos) and no connections (Anna Tabaczar) to diversify perspectives. While personal connections increased the likelihood of participant engagement, acknowledging potential bias, efforts were made to counteract this by including responses from strangers vetted online.

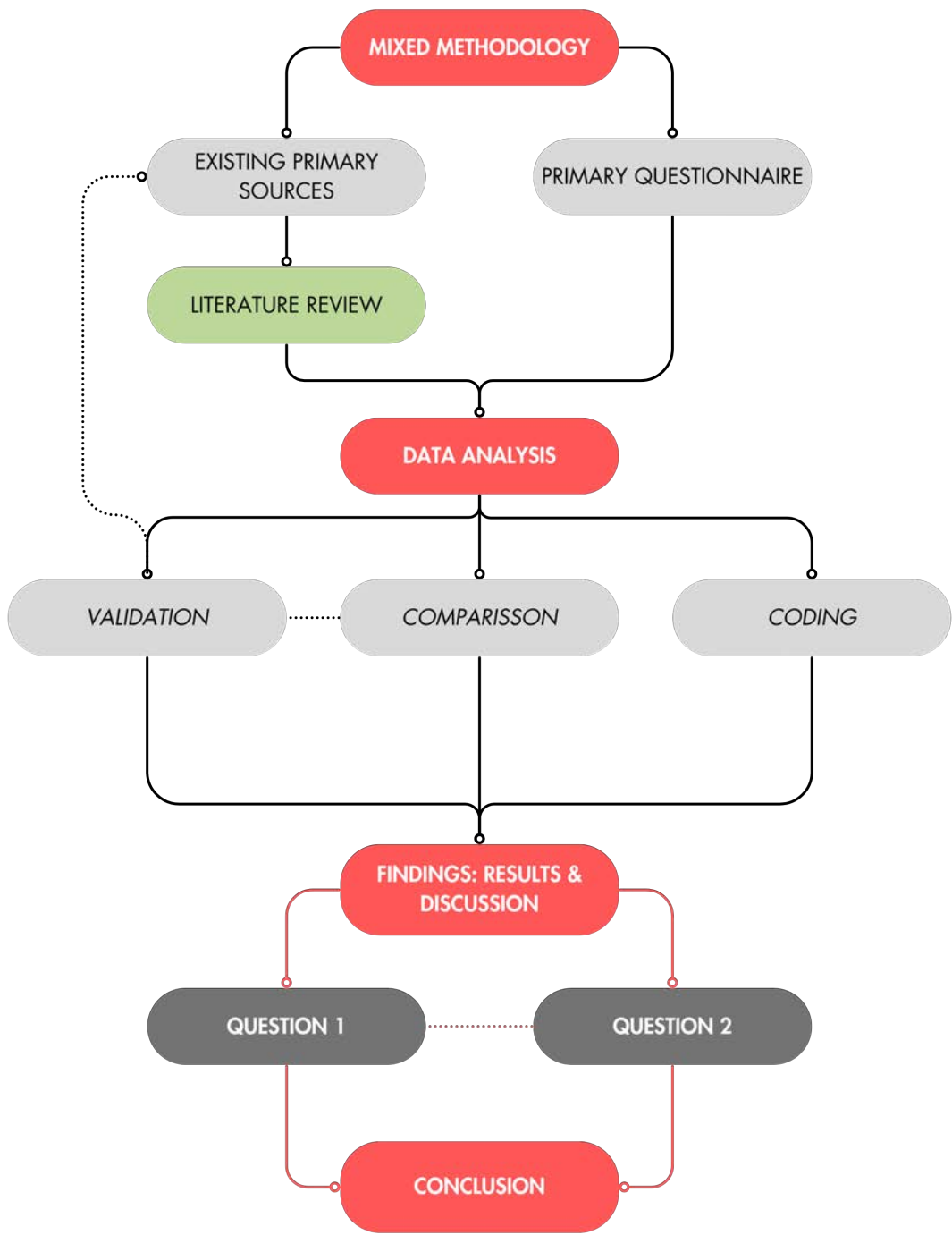


Fig 23.

FINDINGS: RESULTS & DISCUSSION



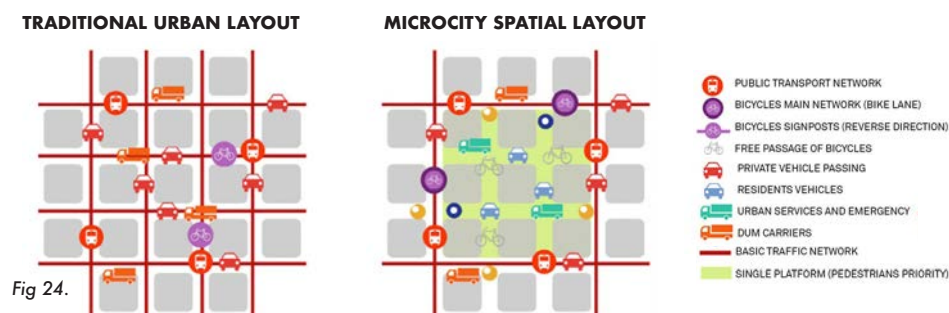
The analysis of both literature sources and primary questionnaire responses has unveiled critical elements central to Soviet microcities that play a pivotal role in fostering community cohesion. This section synthesises the findings from the literature review and questionnaire analysis, exploring their potential application within the urban context of Glasgow's East End. By doing so, I aim to address the prevailing urban and community challenges in the area.

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

What are the key elements contributing to community cohesion in Soviet microcities?

PROXIMITY AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Gelstat's principle of spatial proximity, a framework of Soviet microcity planning, was highlighted in participant responses. The intentional, human-centric layout of housing blocks nearby to essential amenities such as schools, shops and healthcare centres facilitated face-to-face interactions, contributing to a sense of community and convenience. Participant *Cucos (2023)* stated that "a large area between the blocks where cars were not allowed to enter facilitated places to hang out" also utilising the playgrounds of the school which provided a football pitch, basketball court and multiple other outdoor activities. All three participants agreed that it made life easier when everything was close by. As well as the immediate amenities, the well-connected transportation system facilitated swift access to more distant places, including work in monotowns "pushing us towards interacting with other members of the public" due to walkability and ease of transportation in the *mikroreyon (Cucos, 2023)*. This cohesive approach formed a complete microcosm, where every element functioned seamlessly towards collective identity and social integration.



SOCIAL INTERACTION AND SHARED SPACES

Participants consistently stressed the significance of communal spaces and shared facilities in promoting social interaction. These areas, including communal cafeterias, green belts, and recreational spaces, played a crucial role in providing opportunities for residents to connect and build trustworthy relationships. *Cucos (2023)* stated, "the sense of community was very strong, everybody knew each other, we knew what kind of family lived next to us, names, and relatives." Key community lessons learnt from these interactions were of trust, teamwork, and loyalty (*Kubior, 2023*) which further facilitated cohesion.



PANELKI BLOCK DESIGN

Cucos (2023) agrees with the idea that the bleak internal layout of apartments facilitated social interactions by prompting residents to spend more time in communal areas, providing the possibility to infuse their individual identity into the standardised living spaces, “built to contain only the necessities which would make use spend less time inside.” This transformation, from the generic to the individualistic, garnered mixed opinions. Some appreciated this modern living approach, while others complained about cramped quarters, excessive noise, and inadequate construction and maintenance, as articulated by *Tabacarz (2023)* “flats give less privacy than living in a house.” Despite facing criticism for their minimalist and utilitarian aesthetic, panelki blocks were viewed as advocates of functionality over appearance, underlining the importance of practicality in daily life, having a friend on each floor aided that feeling, ensuring there was always someone to confide in (*Tabacarz, 2023; Cucos, 2023*).



Fig 26. remodelled panelki interior Mezetonowiec, Poland

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND INITIATIVES

Residents actively participated in social organisations and initiatives, fostering a sense of collective responsibility. This is aligned with *Beckes's (2011)* study, which emphasises responsive, adaptable, and participatory design in urban planning models. Security initiatives like foot patrols, neighbourhood watches, local activities and communal maintenance schedules were highlighted as examples of bottom-up approaches (*Gobouleva, 2012*), showcasing a commitment to community well-being and increased safety. Maintenance activities such as the weekly cleaning of the shared stairs showcased this trust and involvement, even leaving keys to neighbours for safekeeping whilst away (*Tabacarz, 2023*). All three participants shared fond memories of interacting with their friends and other residents, planning activities such as BBQs, football matches and makeshift go-cart races. A clear friendly connection with neighbours was evident, seen as “friends and people you could rely on... since everybody knew each other, there was a big sense of security...” (*Cucos, 2023*). *Kubior (2023)* stated that people “stuck together... we met outside, and everyone felt safe,” adding that it helped build interpersonal relationships and, consequently, tolerance and understanding of others, a community value increasingly lacking in our changing world.



Fig 27. older residents organising a communal meal

COMMON IDEOLOGY AND BELIEFS

Despite facing criticism, the communist ideology served as a unifying force in mikrorejon communities. Shared beliefs foster a sense of closeness and connection, mobilising residents for communal change and improvements. The assurance of having a trustworthy support network makes residents more confident in relying on others within the community.” All participants agreed that friendships and connections were key to their community cohesion, with many friendships made then surviving to this day (*Tabacarz, 2023*). The idea of social capital by *Field (2016)* supports this, focusing on shared values, and trust provides a more concrete framework for understanding community cohesion.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2:

What potential impact do Soviet microcity spatial principles have on community revival in Glasgow's East End?

URBAN DECAY AND SPATIAL PLANNING

The challenges faced by Glasgow's East End, including urban decay and inadequate infrastructure, align with the initial experiences of Soviet citizens, tackled through the *mikroreyon*. The spatial planning model of microcities, characterised by strategically positioned residential blocks in a grid system could offer approaches to efficient land use and navigation. The emphasis on functional zoning to separate residential, commercial, and industrial spaces might address Glasgow's urbanisation demands and create a more balanced living environment that focuses more on the health of its communities.

PROXIMITY OF AMENITIES AND QUALITY OF LIFE

The microcity layout's emphasis on convenience through integrated essential services echoes Glasgow's challenges. Centrally planned facilities, including education and healthcare, could respond to resident needs, potentially enhancing both personal and communal satisfaction. The concept of proximity and accessibility may even contribute to improved quality of life for Glasgow's East End residents, tackling their increasingly high child poverty and mortality rates, and providing children with more opportunities for interaction and learning. Transport, something that's been decreasing in effectiveness, could also be minimised through the adoption of the *mikroreyon* model and its human-centrism which focuses on the idea of the *monotown*, historically a crucial part of Glasgow's community that could be revived and in turn also help alleviate the unemployment problem.

LOOKING PAST THE UGLY: HOUSING ESTATES

Housing estates in the UK bear a striking visual resemblance to microcities, yet they grapple with their distinct challenges. Although these estates share some commonalities with microcities in facing issues, microcities address these through hands-on community initiatives. Unfortunately, these estates are often burdened by stigma, unfairly associated with crime, and perceived as safe havens for those receiving benefits (*Gourlay, 2007*). Worsening the issue is the predominantly brutalist architectural style, which not only carries political connotations but is also seen as a symbol of utopian failure, contributing to widespread disdain (*Benson, 2019*).

In Glasgow, this negative perception has led to the demolition of many similar buildings. There does however exist a transformative potential to retain and reimagine these estates as beacons of positivity and hope. Drawing inspiration from the revitalisation efforts seen in numerous post-Soviet countries, where vibrant colours and creative redesigns have replaced dilapidation (*Ciarkowski, 2017*), a similar approach could be adopted in the East End. Instead of displacing residents, these estates could undergo a metamorphosis, shedding their weight of historical negativity and instead emerging as symbols of community renewal. Through the adaptation of the microcity urban planning model, there is an opportunity to create environments that promote unity, pride, and a sense of belonging, helping alleviate prejudice that has long plagued housing estates in the UK.



Fig 28. Rankine building, Glasgow

COMMUNITY SPACES AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES

Communal spaces, both internal and external, are crucial for community bonding (Francis, 2012; Krellenberg, 2014). While the dissolution of private and public spaces was a notable feature of Soviet microcities, challenges in Glasgow's East End such as cultural preservation amidst diversity and gentrification, call for a nuanced approach (Cesari, 2018). The positive aspects of communal spaces need to be adapted to respect the cultural heritage of the diverse population in Glasgow.

ELEMENT OF COMMONALITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Building on this element of respect and adaptation, rather than through ideology as was the case in Soviet microcities, East End residents could be connected through something cultural or historical locationally, and specific to their community. This uniqueness of a common belief or cause has the potential to greatly solidify connections within the East End, encouraging resident involvement within their community.

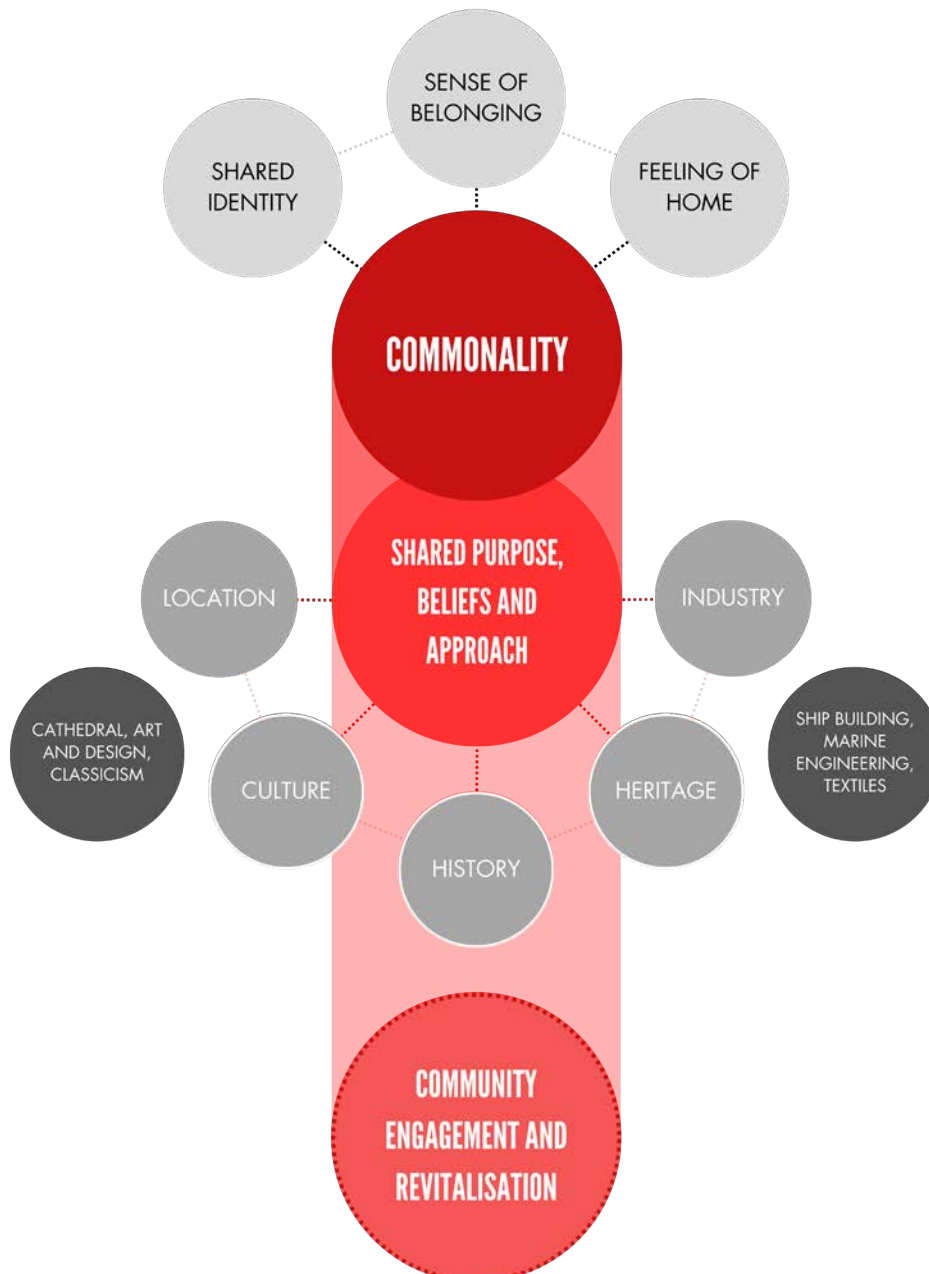


Fig 29.

3.3 INTERPRETATIONS

The results showcase that the principles of Soviet microcities, while rooted in a specific historical and ideological context, exhibit a potential for adaptation to address contemporary urban challenges. Social interaction, shared spaces, and community involvement emerge as powerful recurring themes that could contribute to community cohesion. The utilitarian design principles of Soviet microcities, criticised for their bleak nature, may offer solutions to contemporary urban issues like decay and insufficient infrastructure in areas like Glasgow's East End. By shedding negative historical connotations and focusing solely on their functionality, these principles can be adapted and reinvented to address modern urban challenges.

Based on my personal experiences with microcity living and the literature supported by primary questionnaire responses from former residents, these results aligned with my expectations. Initially, I was concerned about whether participants would be willing to share both positive and negative aspects openly, but they indeed did, which significantly enhanced the study. Their honest feedback not only highlighted the limitations but also suggested potential modifications to further refine the microcity model.

3.4 IMPLICATIONS

Due to the scarcity of research in this field of design, especially in Western contexts, it's difficult to compare these findings with others as there are very few to reference. However, these results seem to align with the core principles of proximity theory applied in mikroreyon planning, while also acknowledging the challenges faced by its participants. This study suggests that the principles of microcity spatial design could offer new and innovative approaches to urban planning in various settings.

A key aspect of these findings is the focus on community engagement and the development of shared spaces. These results are significant because they underline the importance of nurturing a sense of community and responsibility among residents.

3.5 LIMITATIONS

The study primarily relies on the perspectives of former microcity residents, and while their insights are valuable, incorporating current residents' perspectives could provide a more comprehensive understanding. Expanding the participant cohort through broader searches would also increase its consistency.

The study avoids direct political or ideological discussions related to Soviet planning, instead emphasising the uniqueness with which the mikroreyon model can interact with each community's identity. For some, the reception of this architectural model despite its adaptations and potential may be rejected due to its political and UK estate stigma associations.

The application of microcity principles to a Western context may face challenges due to cultural differences. This could be minimised by respecting local community cultures and beliefs and integrating those into microcity design and planning.

Time passing is impactful and inevitable. Society is rapidly evolving, becoming increasingly technology-focused and isolated, which in turn weakens traditional community bonds. This trend is extensively supported by *Tabacarz (2023)* responses stating that "back then there were different times without the internet, without computers or cell phones - people were more friendly, open, helpful - now life is different." All three participants stressed the idea of using applications for deliveries and connecting people via video calls rather than face-to-face, missing that personal interaction with "everyone isolated within their own homes" (*Kubior, 2023*).



CONCLUSION

4.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The exploration of Soviet microcity spatial principles and their potential application in Glasgow's East End revealed insightful themes. Social interaction, shared spaces, and community decision-making and involvement emerged as key contributors to community cohesion within microcities, with prospects of integration. The mikroreyon design principles, criticised for their bleakness and ideological stigmas, showcased adaptability and potential solutions for Glasgow's urban challenges, including urban decay and inadequate infrastructure.

4.2 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The identified themes embrace significant implications for urban design and policy. The adaptability of microcity spatial principles suggests the potential for innovative approaches in urban planning. Designing shared spaces that encourage social interaction and community involvement can foster a sense of belonging and responsibility, improving overall quality of life. Policymakers should study the lessons from microcity planning in addressing contemporary challenges such as urban decay, socio-economic disparities, and community fragmentation.

4.3 FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

While the study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The reliance on retrospective perspectives and the absence of current residents' views may limit the study's breadth. Future research could benefit from a more diverse participant pool, including current residents of Soviet microcities and Glasgow's East End estate residents. Additionally, the transferability of microcity principles to different cultural and economic landscapes requires further investigation for more respectful application strategies.

4.4 FINAL THOUGHTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

In conclusion, this study highlights the transformative potential of Soviet microcity spatial principles for community revitalisation in urban contexts. The positive aspects of social interaction, shared spaces, and community involvement offer valuable lessons for the future of urbanism. As cities grapple with contemporary challenges, these principles can inform thoughtful design and policy decisions. Adapting microcity principles, and respecting the unique characteristics of each urban context, holds the potential for creating resilient, inclusive, and cohesive communities. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discussion on innovative spatial principles, recommending urban planners and policymakers to draw inspiration from historical models, looking past stigmas whilst acknowledging the need for adaptation and resident involvement in shaping the cities of the future through community.



Fig 30.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

RARES CUCOS

Section 1: Demographics

1. **What age are you?**
21
2. **Between what years did you live in a Soviet microcity?**
2002 – 2015

Section 2: Community Experiences

3. **Could you provide some background on your relationship and life living in Soviet microcities and/or Panelka Bloki?**
I have lived in an apartment based in a block within a soviet microcity with my family since I was born, I had school friends within my apartment block and in the next block situated next to our building.
4. **How would you describe your sense of community within the Soviet microcity? (e.g., strong, weak, non-existent)**
I think the sense of community was very strong, everybody knew each other, we knew what kind of family lived next to us, names, and relatives. From time to time, we would plan activities with the neighbour's kids, things like BBQ's or social gatherings.
5. **Did you feel a strong connection with your neighbours and the community as a whole? Please explain.**
There was a connection with our neighbours, we saw them as friends, people you could rely on. Since everybody knew each other we could place trust in people with different life-to-life activities making life easier.
6. **Were there community spaces or events that facilitated social interaction? (e.g., parks, communal activities)**
The way our apartment blocks were situated created a large area between them where cars were not allowed to enter which facilitated places to hang out. We were also allowed to hang out within the playgrounds of the school which provided a football pitch, basketball court multiple other outdoor activities. School playground would be open until 10pm from Monday to Saturday and until 5pm on Sunday.
7. **What were the positive aspects of your community experience in the microcity?**
Since everybody knew each other, there was a big sense of security especially when hanging out with my friends because there were adults outside who would see us and could provide help if needed. Another advantage was the added security of constant police patrols during the later hours of the day between the hours of 8pm – 12am.
8. **Were there any challenges or drawbacks related to community life in the microcity?**
As a young teenager, me and my friends didn't find any challenges or drawbacks living within a microcity.

Section 3: Soviet Microcity Principles and Revitalization

9. **Do you believe that the design and planning principles of the Soviet microcity influenced your sense of community? Please elaborate.**
I strongly believe so! By placing the main roads away from our blocks, the council has made it easier for kids and adults to commute via walking or public transport therefore pushing us towards interacting with other members of the public. Our apartments were built to contain only the necessities which would make us spend less time inside.
10. **How do you think the application of Soviet microcity spatial principles could contribute to community revitalization in areas like Glasgow's East End?**
Cities within the United Kingdom are built around individual houses which limit the amount of people allowed to live within a set area, because of this, the youth need to travel over a longer distance to meet. Most houses are divided by roads which reduces the space allowing kids and adults to walk, this internally pushes the younger generation to spend more time within their house due to the car-centric city planning.

Section 4: Additional Comments

11. **Please share any additional comments, memories, or insights you have about your experience living in a Soviet microcity or any suggestions for improving community life.**
In my opinion, kids and young adults gain a lot more from living within a moderately concentrated area built to provide housing, education, and entertainment within a shorter distance because it makes life much easier when everything is close by. By creating a more concentrated living area kids do not need to travel longer distances to meet with their friends increasing the likelihood of doing so. I loved living within a microcity due to the ease of commuting as a young teenager and having all my friends live close by.

DARIUSZ KUBIOR

Section 1: Demographics

- 1. What age are you?**
42
- 2. Between what years did you live in a Soviet microcity?**
1981 - 2005

Section 2: Community Experiences

- 3. Could you provide some background on your relationship and life living in Soviet microcities and/or Panelka Bloki?**
Life in the block of flats was nice because in the 1990s there were a lot of young people, and we would always spend time together. Everything was always close because there were sports fields, shops, and schools near the blocks of flats.
- 4. How would you describe your sense of community within the Soviet microcity? (e.g., strong, weak, non-existent)**
The community was very large, we always stuck together, and we are talking about 30 people, we met outside, and everyone felt safe. However, this does not mean that there were no divisions because a person from one estate did not often venture into the other estate unless it was for competitions.
- 5. Did you feel a strong connection with your neighbours and the community as a whole? Please explain.**
The bond was strong, but only with peers. Because we spent most of our time together.
- 6. Were there community spaces or events that facilitated social interaction? (e.g., parks, communal activities)**
There were social spaces in the form of sports fields, parks and playgrounds. But we made a lot of social spaces ourselves because those were the times when adults still allowed young people to be creative and we invented the fields and race tracks ourselves.
- 7. What were the positive aspects of your community experience in the microcity?**
The positive aspect was that the person learned trust and felt who could be trusted, and he learned teamwork and loyalty.
- 8. Were there any challenges or drawbacks related to community life in the microcity?**
As it was written above, were territorial divisions. This was the only and most significant disadvantage.

Section 3: Soviet Microcity Principles and Revitalization

- 9. Do you believe that the design and planning principles of the Soviet microcity influenced your sense of community? Please elaborate.**
It would certainly get the youth out of the house and help build interpersonal relationships and, consequently, tolerance and understanding of others.
- 10. How do you think the application of Soviet microcity spatial principles could contribute to community revitalization in areas like Glasgow's East End?**
The UK is very different in how people live here, everyone is isolated within their own homes, they don't socialise between one another like we used to.

Section 4: Additional Comments

- 11. Please share any additional comments, memories, or insights you have about your experience living in a Soviet microcity or any suggestions for improving community life.**
There are a lot of memories from childhood/youth, but I think that the most important thing here is the building of bonds between people. Even though we were young, we still remember how nice it was to spend time together and build something together.

ANNA TABACARZ

Section 1: Demographics

1. **What age are you?**
44
2. **Between what years did you live in a Soviet microcity?**
1980-2005

Section 2: Community Experiences

3. **Could you provide some background on your relationship and life living in Soviet microcities and/or Panelka Bloki?**

I lived in a block of flats as a child and teenager, so for me it was definitely a plus that it was easy to establish and maintain contact with other children - I had a friend on each floor and if I had a problem, I could even go down in my pyjamas and talk to them. Everything was close - kindergarten, school, shops, pharmacy, etc. - everything was concentrated in one place. Residents did not have to worry about heating, garbage collection or modernization of the building - everything was taken care of by the housing cooperative. There was definitely some noise - loud noises from neighbours or loud music, it seems to me that living in a block of flats gives less privacy than living in a house (everyone knew everything about each other). Another disadvantage was the lack of a private garden, we only had a small balcony.

4. **How would you describe your sense of community within the Soviet microcity? (e.g., strong, weak, non-existent)**

It seems to me that the sense of community among the people living in the block was strong - we took care of the staircase together (weekly cleaning of the stairs), and when we went on holiday, we left the keys with the neighbour lady and she watered our flowers.

5. **Did you feel a strong connection with your neighbours and the community as a whole? Please explain.**

As I already mentioned, a lot of my friends lived in my block, so if I needed something, I could always go and borrow something, ask for advice, or just go for a coffee and gossip. For me, this bond was very strong because I knew there would always be someone, I could count on to help me when I needed it.

6. **Were there community spaces or events that facilitated social interaction? (e.g., parks, communal activities)**

There were playgrounds where my mother took me as a child - so I could play with other children, and at the same time my mother could talk to other mothers, then, as a teenager, the place for "our meetings" was the beater 'trzepak' and a nearby park, so we had a common room where we could go after school and, for example, play games.

7. **What were the positive aspects of your community experience in the microcity?**

I described it in point 4.

8. **Were there any challenges or drawbacks related to community life in the microcity?**

I described it in point 4.

Section 3: Soviet Microcity Principles and Revitalisation

9. **Do you believe that the design and planning principles of the Soviet microcity influenced your sense of community? Please elaborate.**

You certainly feel this sense of community when you live in a block of flats, but now, as an adult woman in these different times, living in my own house with a garden, I value this.

10. **How do you think the application of Soviet microcity spatial principles could contribute to community revitalization in areas like Glasgow's East End?**

I don't think I have an opinion on this, because it seems to me that fewer and fewer people live in blocks of flats these days - now people no longer have the need to integrate with other people - there used to be no telephones or computers - people went out to the staircase to talk, find out what's going on in the world - now you can find out everything on the Internet or talk to someone on a social networking site. Now we prefer privacy, peace and quiet.

Section 4: Additional Comments

11. **Please share any additional comments, memories, or insights you have about your experience living in a Soviet microcity or any suggestions for improving community life.**

Having lived in a block of flats for several years, I remember this time very fondly - the friendships I made have survived to this day, but back then there were different times without the Internet, without computers or cell phones - people were more friendly, open, helpful - now life is different - you don't need it anymore. "borrow some sugar or salt" all you need is Uber or another application, if you want to talk to someone, you write on Messenger or Whatsapp.

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GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

SLEEPING DISTRICTS:

A term by photographer and architect Mihai Rotaru, populated in the evening by people who would then commute during daytime to work in factories in other parts of the city (a monotown), encapsulating the reality and day-to-day rhythm of these concrete ecosystems.

MIKROREYON:

A residential complex—a primary structural element of the residential area construction in the Soviet Union and in some post-Soviet and former Socialist states.

PANELKI: WIELKA PŁYTA:

Residential blocks housing Soviet populations after WW2. The name refers to the buildings prefabricated 'big panel' structure.

QOL: UPA:

quality of life
urban povert areas



TEHNOIMPORT



↑ OPTICA

URUSUS Magazin Mixt URUSUS

↑ URUSUS

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Fig 31.

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