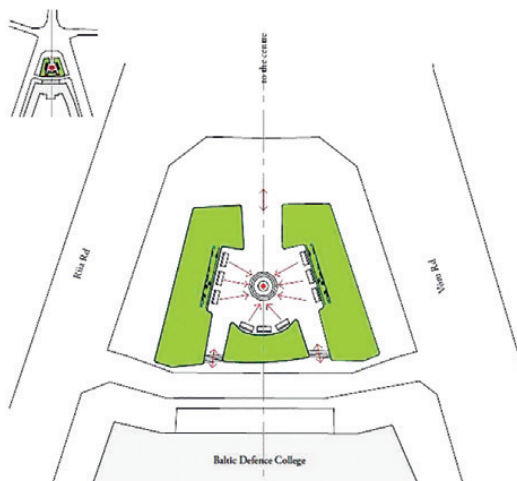


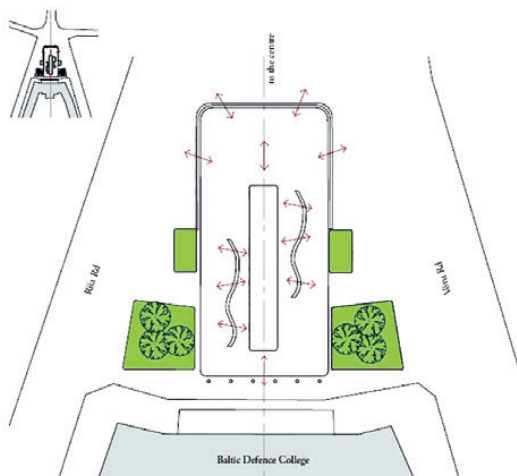
INTERPRETING THE VOID: POST-SOCIALIST URBAN PLANNING AFTER MONUMENT REMOVAL

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After the removal of their soviet statues, the locations, which mostly occupied prominent sites of Estonian urban centres, were transformed. The re-designs were not uniform though, as some places were altered very little, others were thoroughly transformed and in some cases the void, created by vanished monument, is still evident. Here are three examples of different interpretations.



The site in Tartu with Lenin monument.



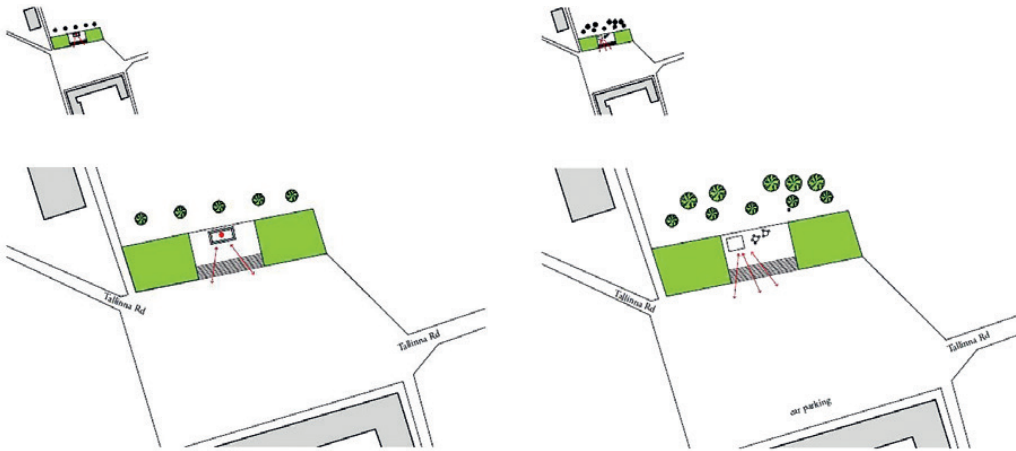
The site in Tartu after Lenin monument was dismantled.

Tartu

The statue of Lenin in Tartu stood in front of the Estonian Agricultural University building (between 1952–1990) on a triangular shaped square between the Riia and Võru roads. Originally the square was designed as a central focus, creating views to the monument. There were seats arranged around a raised decagon where the statue was placed on a plinth, and in order to reach the university building, one had no choice but to circle around it. After the Lenin monument was dismantled, the building at the south side of the square was taken over by the Baltic Defence College in 1999 and the square in front of it was transformed. The former central focus of the site was changed. The square was re-designed on a prolonged axis - the focus moved away from the centre into the direction of the main building. The flag-posts placed parallel in front of the classical portico increase the focus towards the College building. The new layout is furthermore extended with two long snaking seats and an oblong shaped fountain cavity. Around the fountain there are steps that direct movement towards the roads. The area has regained the ceremonial sense as originally designed at 1939.

Narva

The Lenin monument in Narva was situated on Peetri Square - quite an open place due to the fact that the buildings on three sides were reduced to rubble during WW II and never rebuilt. The monument (erected in 1957) was placed onto a large platform on the north side of the square with wide steps leading up to it. The robust granite parapet in front of the statue, where the communist party-bosses greeted parading crowds, was added in the 1980s. Narva was the last town in Estonia where the Lenin statue was taken down (21st December 1993). The location of the monument has remained nearly untouched. The central pedestal is gone but the steps and raised platform where the monument once stood remain the same. There used to be hedges lining the monument site, but as they got overgrown, the local municipality removed them. There is a small cafe-kiosk operating on top of the platform with a few tables overlooking Peetri Square, which mostly serves as a parking



← ← The site designed in Narva for the monument.

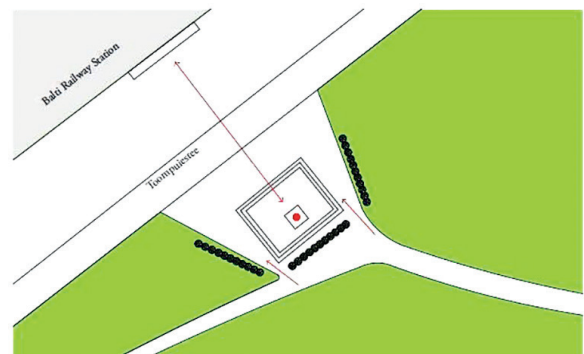
← The monument site with café on top of the pedestal.

lot. The trees that were planted when the monument was designed have become overgrown, thus making the platform embraced by greenery. The site is still quite grandiose, especially in contrast with the modest, temporary kiosk in place of the statue.

Tallinn

Opposite the Baltic Railway station there were two soviet era monuments: Stalin (1950-54) and a memorial for 1st December coup of 1924 (1974-1994). Stalin's statue could be seen straight from the main entrance of the original Baltic Railway building. The same principal was used for the memorial. For the latter, the site of the monument was slightly raised in order to create a more powerful effect of the ensemble. Nowadays the site does not bear any memory to the monuments as it is re-designed in a way that references to the monuments have been erased completely. The area is levelled and covered with some loose gravel and rocks as well as randomly planted shrubs and plants (most likely the concrete foundation is still lying underneath). The former monument location seems now rather mundane and even unnoticeable. There is rather busy tram stop and car parking lot next to it further de-glorifying the place. The central axis from the monument site to the station is also no longer in use, as people do not cross the road straight from that site anymore but use an underground tunnel or a pedestrian crossing further away.

So, there has been many different ways to transform the urban landscape after the soviet monuments were removed. Narva is the case where very little has been done to the site as if something could be placed back on the raised platform at any time, whereas Tallinn and Tartu have both implemented different approaches in order to claim back these sites. Tartu has transformed the square, interpreting the site as their 'own' by creating a prominent place using quite opposite methods of design, whereas Tallinn has adopted the never-been-there approach.



The monument site in Tallinn having straight view from the entrance of railway station.



The monument site being incorporated into the park.