

Russia: Public Space and Democracy

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- The most basic needs of democracy: actual, physical public space” (Budler 2012)
- John Parkinson (2012) also argues that democracy requires physical public space



Urban Squares as a Democratic Space in Russia

- **Veche** (вече)
- Popular assembly in medieval Russia: 11-14 centuries
- In city of **Novgorod**: the greatest prominence
- The place for gathering: **Veche square** usually next to the main Cathedral
- Discussed matters of *war and peace, adopted laws, and called for and expelled rulers*
- Similar to the **Norse ting**



Pskovskoe veche, Viktor Vasnetsov
Vechevaya square

Veche bell - one of the symbols of democracy



Red Square in Moscow

- Central square of Moscow
- Several ancient Russian towns, such as Suzdal, Yelets and Pereslavl Zalesky have their main square named *Krasnaya ploshchad*.
- History: site of various public **ceremonies** and **proclamations**, and occasionally: *coronation* for Russia's Tsars



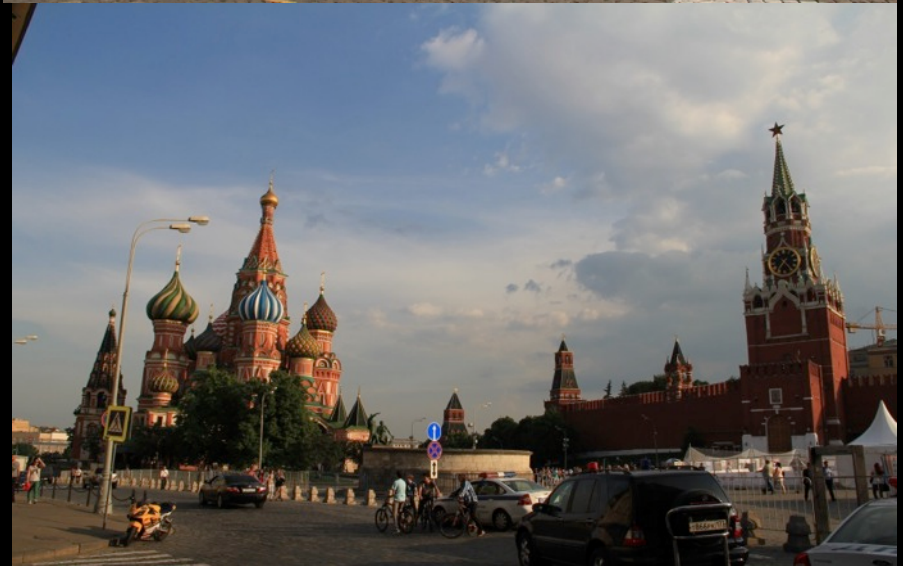
Red Square in Soviet Time

- Maintained its significance as one of the most **important public spaces**
- Become a **focal point** for the new state.
- Official address of the **Soviet government**,
- Showcase for military parades from 1919



Protest on the Red Square

- In **1963** a group of African students: protest in response to the alleged murder of a medical student Edmund Assare-Addo.
- First recorded political protest on Red Square since the late 1920's



Democratisation of the main square since

- **Western Influence**
- Result of "Perestroika" and democratisation of the society
- Venue for high-profile concerts
- New Year 2006, 2007, and 2008 celebrations
- Skating rink
- 2013-exhibition place



Moscow Bolotnaya Square: Democratic gatherings

- The venue for several rallies **"For Fair Elections"** in 2011-2012.
- Today: **gathering place of young people**, members of informal subcultures, drummers and faerschikov - people whose interests are fiery performances.
- **Pedestrian status** since 2013, the traffic on it is completely closed



Palace Square (Dvortsovaya) in St. Petersburg



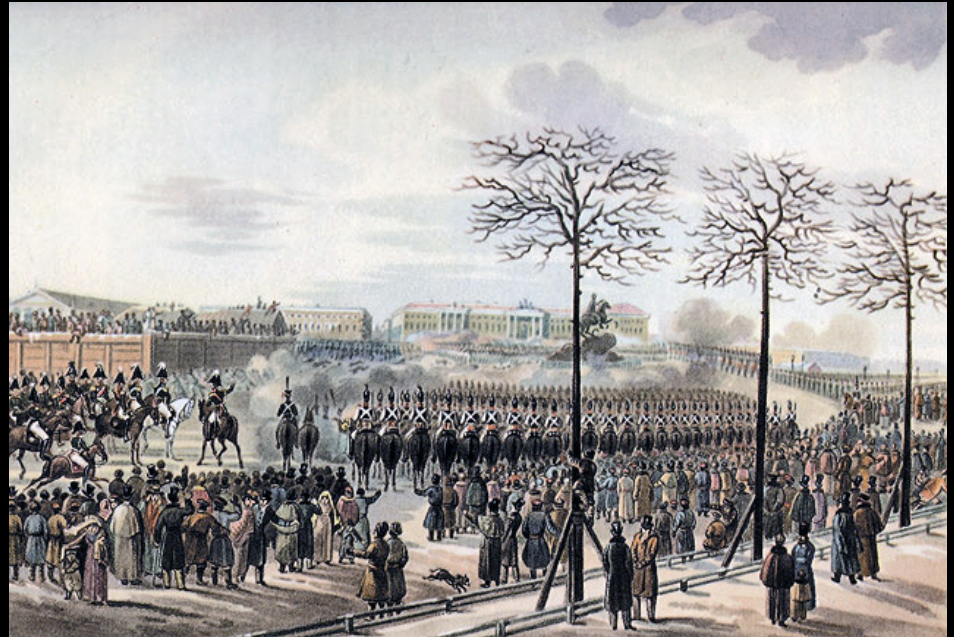
Palace Square (Dvortsovaya) in St. Petersburg

- **20 August 1991:**
- Spontaneous mass meeting-protest against the actions of GKCHP.
- 100 000 people



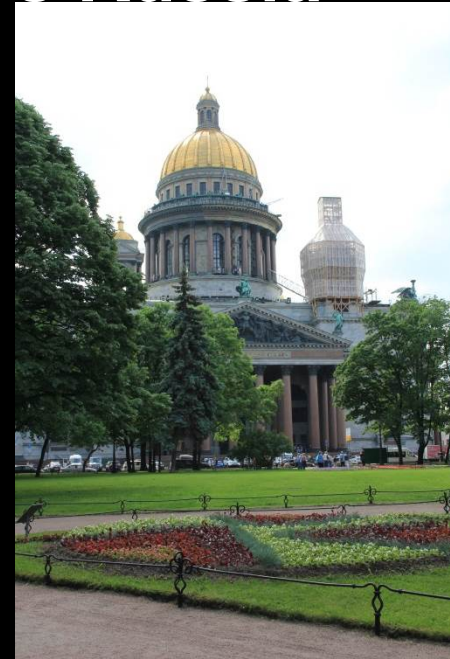
Senate Square known as Decembrists' Square (St. Petersburg)

- The **Decembrist revolt** or the **Decembrist uprising**
- 14 December 1825.
- Russian army officers led **about 3,000 soldiers** in a protest against **Nicholas the First's** assumption of the throne.
- Because these events occurred in December, the rebels were called the *Decembrists* (*Dekabristy*, Декабристы).



Public spaces in Tsar's Russia

- Squares next to **cathedrals**
- Public "**gulbizhe**"-open space for celebrations and gatherings
- First **public parks** – second part of the 19th century
- Boulevards- at the same time



Soviet Era

- ***Marxist theory:*** socialist man should emerge tolerant, unselfish, respecting collective bargaining and debate for collective good, and hold in high esteem socio-cultural values, harmonious '***brotherly***' living.
- ***Equality of opportunity***
- ***Dense living model***



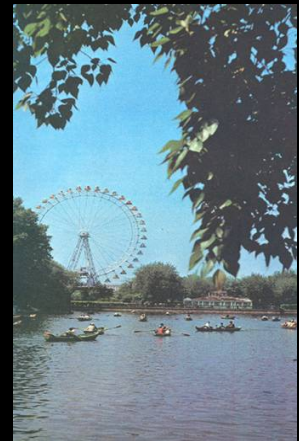
Public Spaces in Soviet Time

- Urban Environment- top – down approach
- Imposing the will of totalitarian state
- Primarily *public green areas* (parks, gardens, memorials, squares, residential green spaces).
- Actually these space were **very popular** and considered as **democratic**- places for people's gatherings, performances and parades.



Positive achievements of Soviet Landscape Architecture

- *'Parks of recreation and culture'* (parki kulturi i otdicha) were **multifunctional** and served the interests of urban citizens all over the country.
- Politicised-place for rallies
- But very popular among citizens



Areas and Public Spaces of Residential Micro-District (Mikrorayon)

- ***Microdistricts*** (population 10,000-12,000, area 30-50 hectares): dwelling units, stores, laundries, cleaning and repair stores, dining-rooms, schools and pre-school facilities.
- Attempts of including ***quite extensive green areas*** within residential quarters as an important tool for improving ***quality of life and environmental health.***



Mikrorayon

- ***'Layering'*** of service structures.
- ***Deliberately planned green areas*** as a part of the City's Master Plan.
- ***Scientific approach*** for planning structure, design, planting design and management (done by ***specialised governmental organisations***).
- **Public spaces**-next to the shop centres, schools, in parks and inner green areas.



One of the typical Tbilisi microdistricts
(Soviet time)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microdistrict>

Public Spaces in Mikrorayon

- Safe
- Ecological
- “Brotherly”
- Neighbors watching
- Popular
- Place for interaction



End of Socialist Era

- Collapse of the Soviet Union in **1991**.
- ***Dramatic changes*** in economic and political life echoed in all spheres of social and cultural life as well as in architectural and design practices.
- Everything connected with the ***Communist*** and ***Socialist*** past was considered as ***'evil', old fashioned*** and ***stagnant***



Features of the modern Russian Society in the Era of Market Economy

- Dramatic division of Russian society into two parts - *the rich* and *the poor*. No middle class.
- *Switching of priorities* in Russian landscape architecture.
- **Now: private gardens** for rich “New Russians”.
- The policy of “*dense development*” and *high land prices* in the historical centres- *loss of green areas*.



Globalisation Era

- New spatial patterns
- Urban spatial restructuring
- **Pedestrian zones**-new democratic spaces with numerous cafes and shops
- Influenced by **western patterns**



New life of public spaces-humanisation



Tendencies in Russian Urban Public Spaces

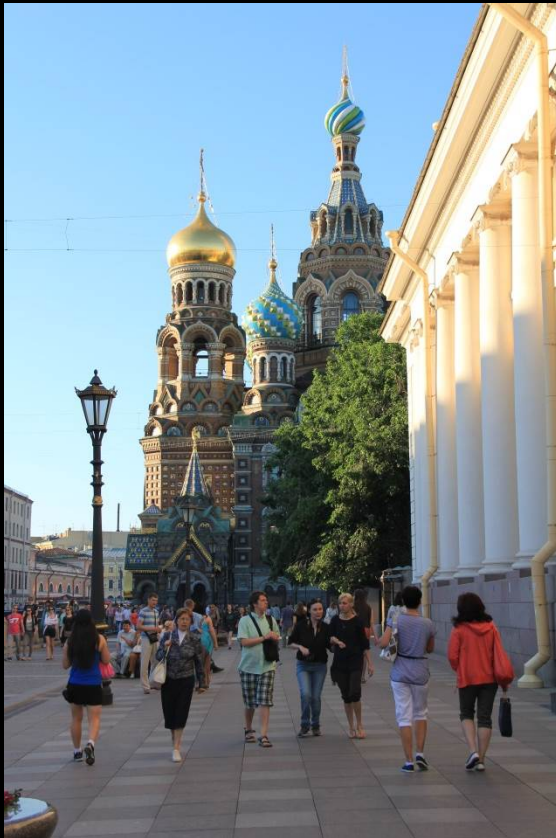
- Growing **bottom-up approach**
- Slowly **involving public** in planning and decision making processes
- People's **care** about historic values of their city
- **Specially designated places** (most common squares) for political gathering and protesting



Democratisation of open spaces



- Growing importance of **Orthodox Religion** and associated spaces



<http://ifla2015.com/en/>

- **52nd World Congress of the International Federation of Landscape Architects**
 - **7-15 June 2015**
St. Petersburg, Moscow, Russia
“History of the Future”
1. East to West: methods of integration and innovations in modern landscape architecture
 2. Historical and ‘Natural’ Landscapes in the 21st century - conservation, reconstruction and restoration; research for integration into modern urban and rural landscape
 3. Green-blue infrastructure and sustainable urban development

Tack!

