



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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# The Concept of the "Garden City": The Utopia Realized in the Construction of Socialist Yaroslavl

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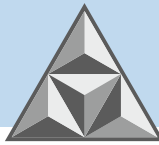
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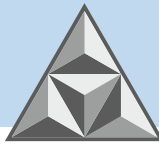
*After the October Revolution, Yaroslavl's authorities transformed all areas of public life. The article reveals the relevance of the 'garden city' concept in the formation of residential development in the 1920s. During this period, architects successfully incorporated both large districts and individual buildings into the urban environment. The Yaroslavl city planners considered such innovative ideas as strict adherence to the utilitarian functions of buildings, simple layout of neighbourhoods, taking into account all the requirements for organizing the life of citizens. At the same time, foreign philosophers borrowed practices predetermined the emergence of such social space as a compositional-planning structure. In practice, they applied fast-track construction method. There were built seven apartment blocks in two years, integrated into a well-appointed village. We should note the significant contribution of Konstantin Ivanovich Butusov, the Head of the provincial communal department, whose 130th anniversary will be celebrated by Yaroslavl town planners and historians in 2022. The development of a modern city allows the local planners to rely on the experience of preserving the urban environment and green areas as resources for sustainable community development in the context of infill development and the observed epidemiological situation.*

**Key words:** architecture, constructivism, garden city, Butusovskiy village, Yaroslavl, 1920s

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ТИП СТАТЬИ

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# Концепция «города-сада»: утопия, воплощенная в строительстве социалистического Ярославля

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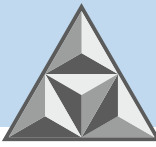
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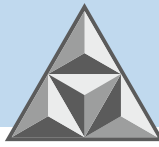
*После Октябрьской революции руководство города Ярославля преобразовало все сферы общественной жизни – от быта до архитектуры. В статье раскрыта актуальность концепции «города-сада» в формировании жилой застройки в 1920-х гг. В рассматриваемый период архитекторы удачно вписывали в городскую среду как большие районы, так и отдельные постройки. Строгое следование утилитарным функциям зданий, простота построения планировки микрорайонов, учет всех требований к организации жизни горожан – данные идеи ярославских градостроителей обычно считают новаторством. Вместе с тем заимствованные практики зарубежных философов предопределили появление такого социального пространства, как композиционно-планировочная структура. На практике был применен поточно-скоростной метод строительства, когда за два года было построено семь жилых многоквартирных домов, объединенных в благоустроенный поселок. Следует отметить весомый вклад заведующего губернским коммунальным отделом Константина Ивановича Бутусова, 130-летие со дня рождения которого ярославские градостроители и историки отмечают в 2022 году. Развитие современного города позволяет местным планировщикам опираться на опыт сохранения городской среды и зеленых насаждений как ресурсов устойчивого общественного развития в условиях точечной застройки, наблюдаемой эпидемиологической ситуации.*

**Ключевые слова:** архитектура, конструктивизм, город-сад, Бутусовский поселок, Ярославль, 1920-е гг.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Yaroslavl city planners considered such innovative ideas as strict adherence to the utilitarian functions of buildings, simple layout of neighbourhoods, taking into account all the requirements for organizing the life of citizens. During the period under consideration, architects successfully incorporated both large districts and individual buildings into the urban environment.

130 years ago, on 26 February 1892, K.I. Butusov, a legendary figure of Yaroslavl, the Head of the provincial communal department, was born. After the suppression of the White Guard rebellion in Yaroslavl in 1918, he became the initiator of the city's new residential district building, implementing a unique architectural project in the shortest possible time.

Nowadays, the local planners need convincing arguments for preserving the urban environment and green areas as resources for sustainable urban development in the context of infill development and the current epidemiological situation. By this point of view, the historical experience of Yaroslavl construction a century ago seems quite representative.

### THE METHODOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE UTOPIAN 'GARDEN CITY' CONCEPT

"In four years' time there will be a garden city here!" [1] praised the construction boom in Soviet Russia by the poet Vladimir Mayakovskiy. The borrowed concept of sparsely populated and low-rise settlement by the English utopian sociologist E. Howard had a great influence on the development of Soviet urban architecture. In his *Garden Cities of the Future* he held the idea of filling human life with the gifts of nature - clean air, sunshine, etc. By his opinion [2], Nature was "a source of uninterrupted joy and pleasure" after a hard day filled with continuous work.

His layout of the residential part of the city was a coherent system (Fig. 1). In the middle of the area there was a park, and in the circle there were various cultural and social institutions (shopping centres, library, hospital, theatres, museums). This was followed by another green area equipped with sports fields, shopping and exhibition areas. Such development could be expanded by the residents themselves, guided by their creative ideas; low-rise construction with private homestead plots were preferred [3].

Howard's idea was realised. More than thirty innovative cities were built around London. Gardens by his design appeared in Germany, Spain, Italy, Austria, the Czech Republic and Russia, combining the comfort of urban life with the purity of the countryside environment [4, 5].

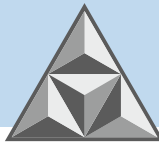
E. Howard's idea was to relieve already existing cities and build new ones outside metropolitan areas. In Soviet Russia, they were embedded in an already existing historical environment. An example of a place built according to the garden-city concept is the Butusovskiy village in Yaroslavl.

At present, urban development is also taking place in established areas [6]. The legacy of K.I. Butusov in Yaroslavl can stimulate interest not only to the study of social history, but also to a search of new urban solutions.

### BUTUSOVSKY VILLAGE AS A NEW ARCHITECTURAL PHILOSOPHY OF YAROSLAVL OF THE 1920S

In the 1920s, there was an urgent need for comfortable residential areas in socialist Yaroslavl. Part of the city was destroyed by the 1918 White Guard rebellion, forcing architects to pay special attention to housing construction.

The architects surveyed the vacant areas in terms of construction and designed new buildings.



They took into account regional specifics. The urban environment was transformed in terms of the historical development in order not to lose its uniqueness and identity [7]. The residential blocks were to be combined into small neighbourhoods incorporating an urban settlement and a park area. The inconvenienced districts were transformed into recreational areas with a necessary set of facilities for the future builders of communism. The homestead plots in the city were replaced by 3-4-storey apartment blocks combined into a single complex.

The first housing orders in the residential complex, named Butusovskiy after the death of its creator, K.I. Butusov, Head of the Gubkommunotdepartment, were issued to the new settlers in 1929. This complex was built in the central district of Yaroslavl in a block bounded by Borisoglebskaya (now Sverdlova), Danilovskaya (Pushkin), Dukhovskaya (Respublikanskaya), Lyubimskaya (Tchaikovsky) streets [8] (Figure 2).

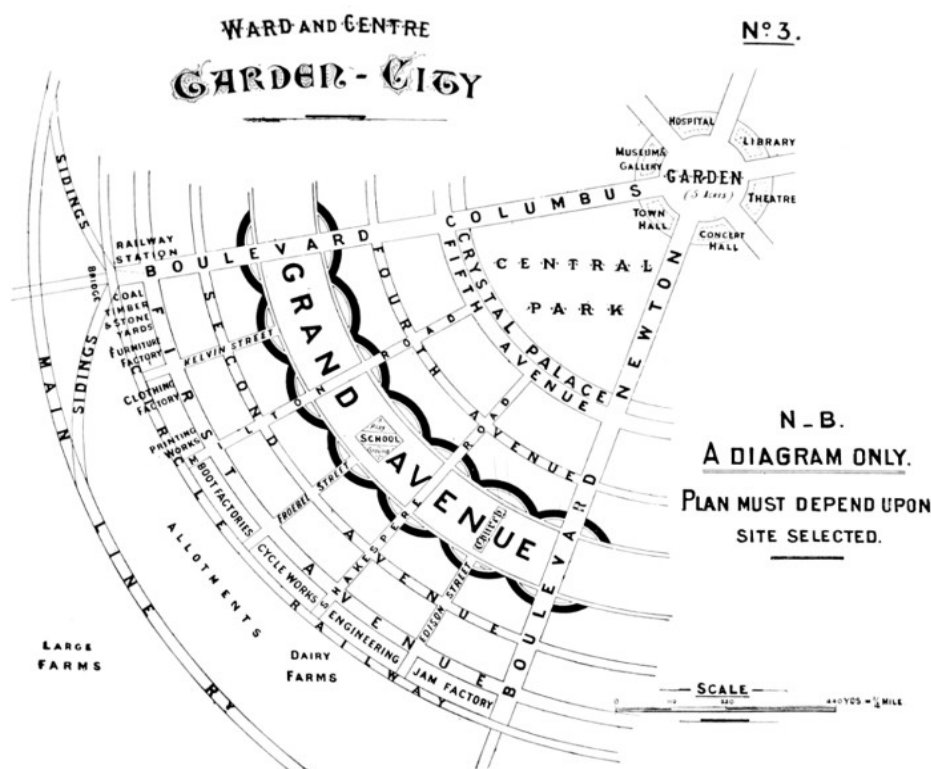
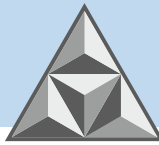


Fig.1. Hovard's Garden city plan [2]

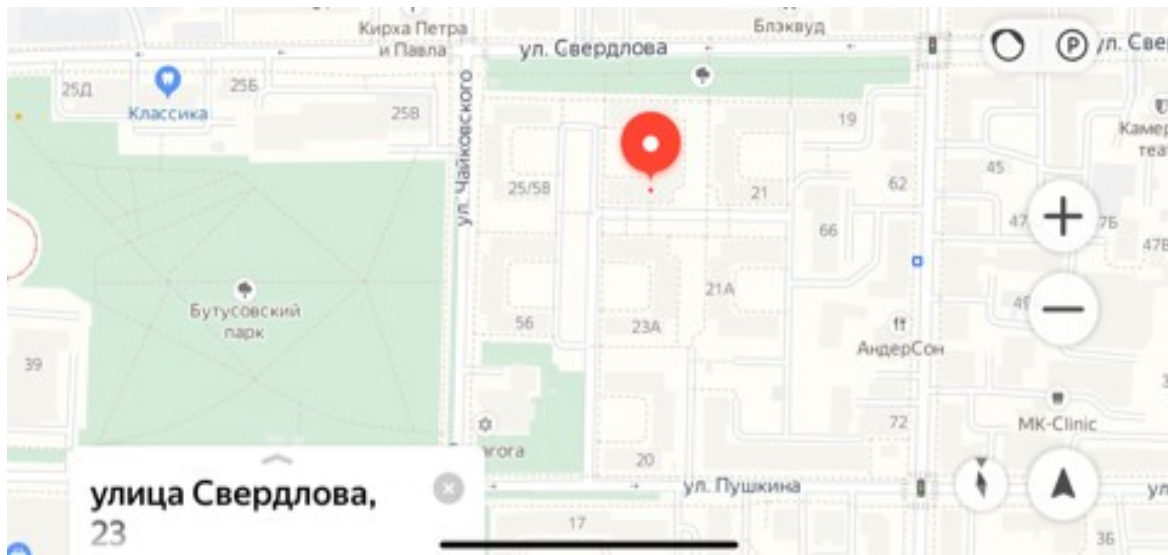
But the workers, moved from the villages to the city, as well as Red Army soldiers, civil servants and city managers, did not have enough housing. The authorities had to find a way to resettle large numbers of people in the shortest possible time. The flats, designed for a single family, were inhabited room by room and became the shared ones [4]. The absence of some conveniences (e.g. bathrooms) was compensated for by the services of a public bathing and laundry facility located close to the accommodation. The needs of the household were met by factory kitchens, public canteens [9]. The Butusovskiy complex was surrounded by a beautiful park, which included a large sports area with a billiards hall. The synagogue building was adapted as a clubhouse for the villagers. However, cultural sites were also actively used by residents of other urban areas [10].

Constructivism became the one of the leading trends not only in Western Europe, but also in Russia among materialistically oriented architects and artists who welcomed scientific and technological progress [7]. There were built five new buildings by the project "Norma" of architect V.V. Kratyuk. The plan of their building in the constructivist style was modern and actual. V.V. Kratiuk originally implemented his ideas by combining English asceticism and German practicality





(fig. 3). Minimalism and the strict limitations of space demanded the new planning decisions provided the prospect of building a new life [11]. The modern architects still pay attention to the shape of the buildings, the cosy courtyards are important factors when assessing a project. However, this kind of construction is a complex and costly process. A shortage of financial resources and building materials [8] stimulated the search for new approaches to the implementation of the project. RUB 1.2 mn for the construction was allocated from the local budget. In addition, the city council took out a long-term loan of RUB 600,000 from the Central Communal Bank. [12, 13].



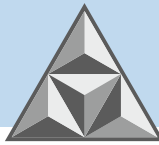
**Fig. 2.** Modern layout of the Butusovkiy village (Yandex Navigator)



**Fig.3.** The current state of the houses in Butusovkiy village (author's photo)

The organization of construction was also innovative for its time. It had a strong influence on the architecture of buildings. In practice, they applied fast-track construction method. There were built seven apartment blocks in two years. In a complex block development of Butusovkiy village, specialists distinguish a transitional type of sectional high-rise building from the first (1925) to the second residential section (1928), as evidenced by the space-planning of the flat and the absence of bathrooms. The Butusovkiy housing project was the second standard design, used as the basis for development in various parts of the town.

The experimental housing complex was done by the mid-1930s. The houses of the blocks had an equal four storeys height, according to that time regulations. Emphasis on the entrances was created



by the configuration of the flanking buildings - indentations, "bevelled" corners, creating a soft transition into the interior of the building [10, p. 50; 12, p. 63]. The necessary elements of the area (landscaped courtyards, green areas, the district administration, a school, the Volkov's Theatre, museums) began to define the semantic content of the new area of the old town. As a result, the settlement territorially occupying an urban block made it possible to economically solve the problem of incorporating the elements of public utilities into its structure. It allows to serve the entire housing complex rather than each individual house.

Special attention is paid to the specificity of the organization of the Soviet workers' settlement through the prism of the main principles and guidelines of the state urban policy of the second half of the 1920s. [14].

## CONCLUSION

The 1920s was a very creative period in all spheres of Soviet society. The change of style in design is evident in the field of architectural construction. Experiment assumed the citizens of the new country would live in harmony with nature in cosy, comfortable urban areas, work on industrial plots close to home, and enjoy the necessary benefits of civilization without the stresses of a capitalist metropolis. The implementation of foreign borrowed solutions (in particular, the Garden City concept as a sparsely populated and low-rise settlement) combined the advantages of city and village without inheriting the major disadvantages of both.

A few typical houses of Butusovskiy village are such a product. This project reflects an integrated approach to the residential development of neighbourhoods in constructivist style and tests the options for organizing living space for the 'man of the future'. The appearance of the houses differs from each other, nevertheless a new urban space was created. The architectural projects were simple, rational and recognizable, embodying the image of a socialist city for the citizens of that time.

The current transformation of lifestyles and conditions (spending time at home, living in an online environment, etc.) may lead to an increased interest in the construction and implementation of the 'comfort neighbourhood-garden' concept. At the same time, the Butusovskiy housing estate is at risk of losing its integrity. The houses having the overall spatial composition are managed by the owners, which increases the risk of non-typical operating conditions. Different contractors renovate these buildings, which results in irregular colouring and finishes and largely destroys the perception of the integrity of the composition

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