

The economic crisis and development of Vilnius urban region – spatial aspects



Main aim

The aim of the presentation is to reveal trends of development of Vilnius urban region and impact of recent economic crisis on it.



Main questions

The sprawl of Vilnius city is obvious phenomenon, but it's actual spatial pattern isn't clear as well as impact of economic fluctuations on it.

Usually metropolitan regions have greater capabilities to withstand threats of economic depressions, but present crisis seems to be an exception in Lithuanian case. What spatial effects on urban development of Vilnius had this slowdown. Does the recovery of a city will be faster than one in remaining country? What about future threats?

These are the questions, which are to be answered after completion of our research.

Concept of city (functional) region or an object of the research

Administrative borders of the city municipality just define the formal area of the city but not a space which functions as a unified spatial system. In order to understand processes shaping this space, one should analysis much wider areas.

Authors tend to use a concept **city (functional) region** as a territory, which is functionally connected with the city (the city and its Hinterland, which, in case of metropolitan regions, includes whole country and stretches behind its borders).

Urban region is treated as a territory where residents of the city permanently live and work. It does not mean that this is pure urban space; it just means that it's an area, where the city already exists.

Simplified structure of urban region

Urban region typically consists of:

Core city, or completely urbanized area, without any objective or subjective features of rural landscape.

Middle part of such an urban region consists of mostly urban landscape, where urban lifestyle, urban landscape and images dominate, but rural features are still visible. Urban perception clearly dominates here.

The **peripheral part** of an urban region could be described as a “war zone”, where urban world still did not reach the final victory (or a clash zone, depending on actual situation). This is a part where urban lifestyle, landscape, and identity spirals down and graduates till 0 at the edges.

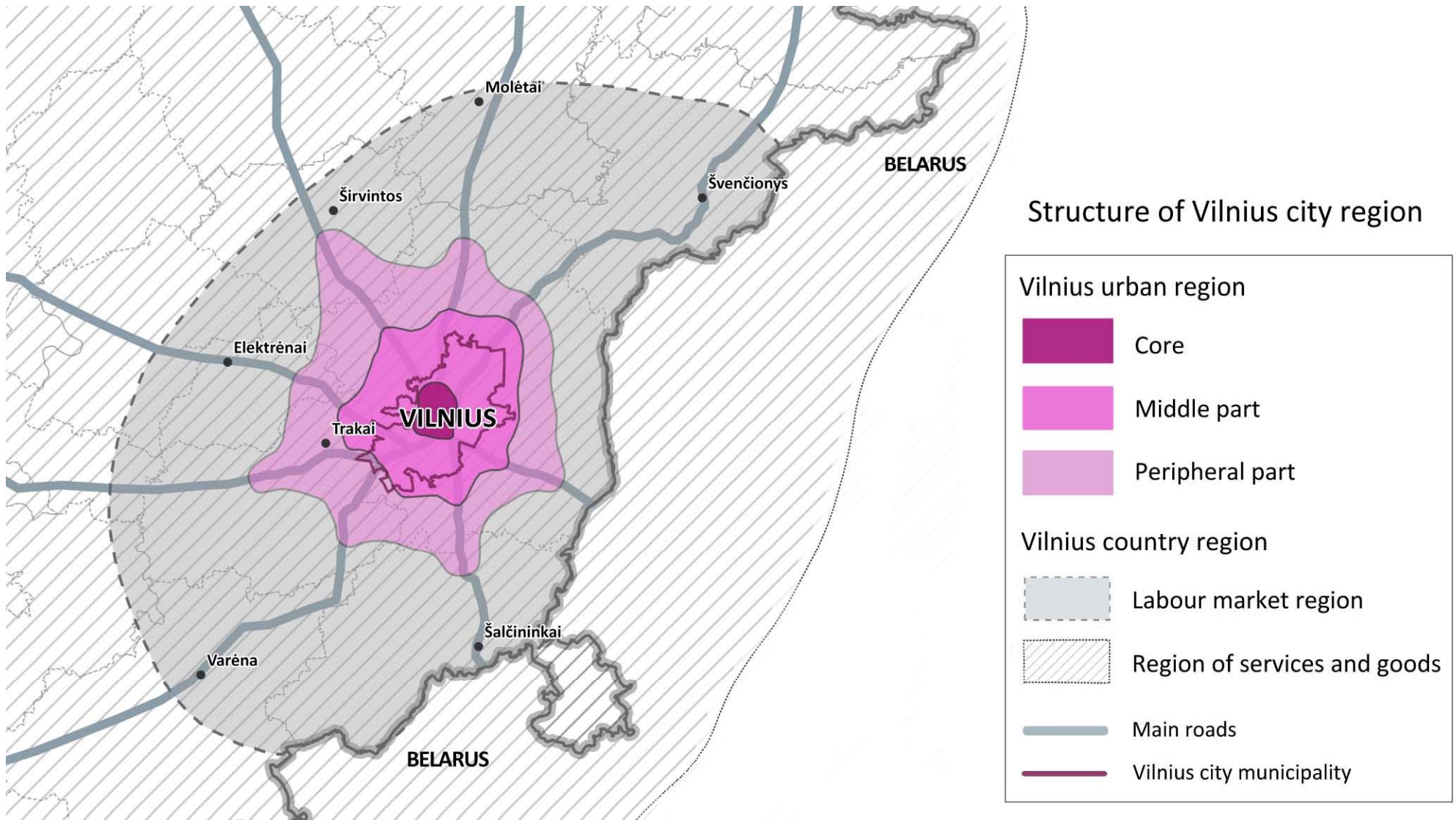
Defining actual structure of Vilnius urban region

Lack of any data, on lower than municipal level

Need to choose and use indirect indicators for empirical analysis

Field trips – time consumptive but inevitable

Structure of Vilnius city region



Shape of the Vilnius region

Quite elongated form of the region could be explain by the limiting macro level factors. E.g. - influence of second biggest city Kaunas and Belarus border is obvious in this case.

Mezzo factors, such as roads, protected territories, forests forms the actual shape of urban region.

Micro level factors, such as lakes, settlements, available private land etc. plays their role as well.

Vilnius city region – a part of international middle European problem region

Vilnius city develops (and sprawls) in an area, which is located in the middle of central European depression, which appeared mostly due to peripherisation processes.

The area is located in a border zone of East and West European civilisations and experienced problems of development especially during instable periods of history.

Such a context of development of Vilnius city wasn't favourable factor of its growth, because available resources in the region were poor.

Changing modes of economy, globalisation and diminishing dependences on local markets diminish those negative influences.

Vilnius and surrounding region – contrast area

The zone between Vilnius and surrounding region (zone of sprawling of the city) can be characterized as a space of huge contrasts in various fields:

- Economic
- Social
- Ethnic
- Political
- Environmental

All these differences potentially can cause tensions of various kinds and make impact on conditions for city sprawl to various directions.

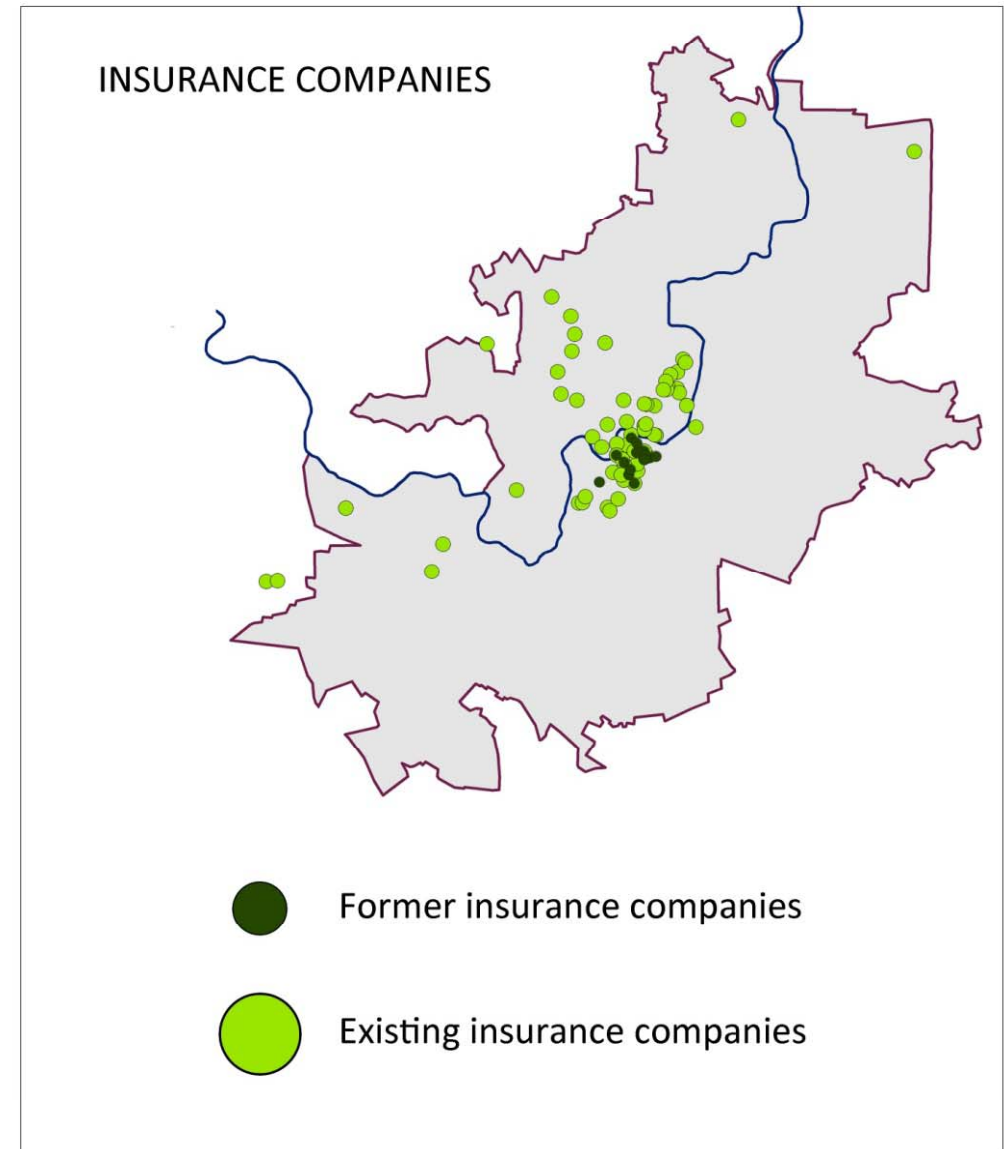
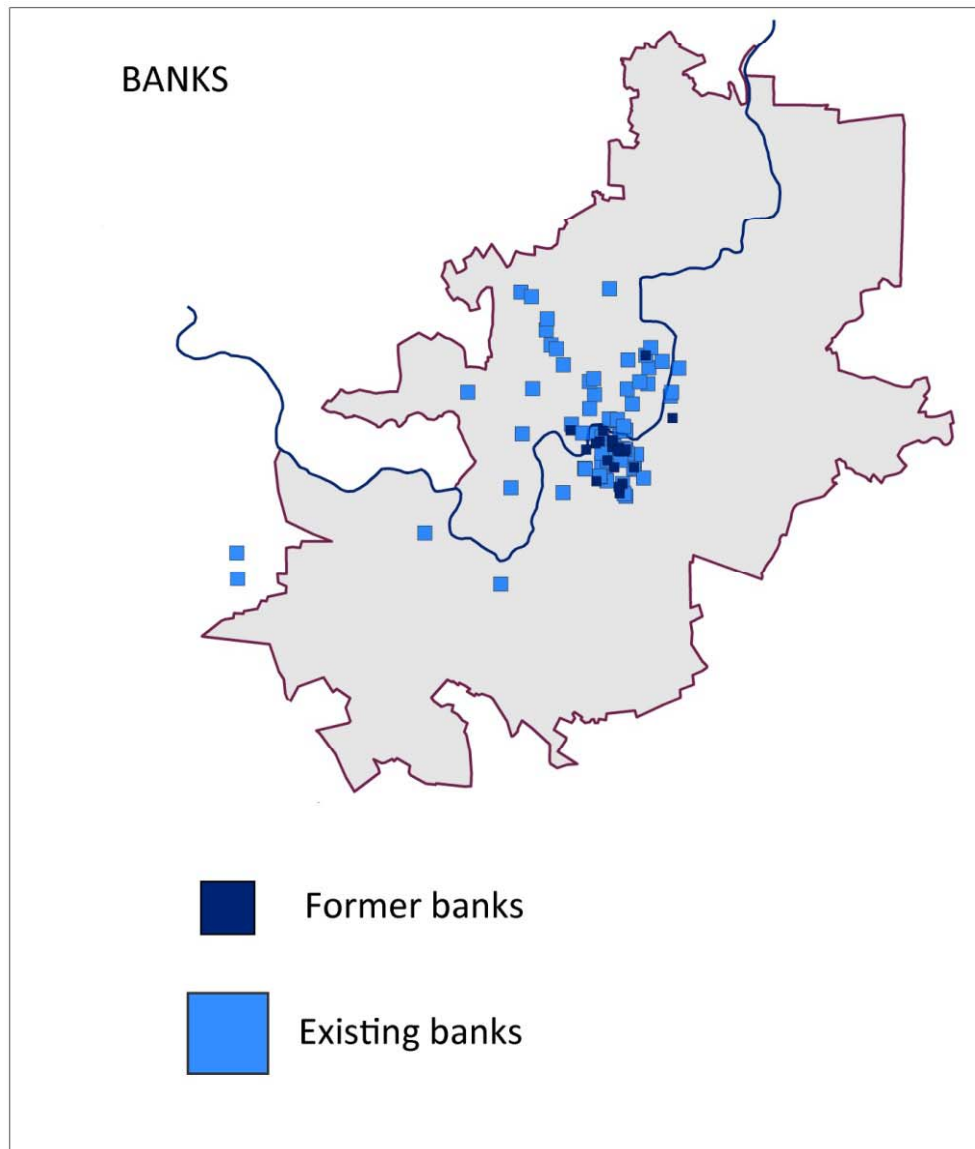
Trends of transformations in Vilnius urban region

Various activities of urban life had different tendencies of spatial development since the beginning of reforms in early 90-ies.

Some of these processes caused transformations of existing urban spaces, some – transformations of former rural areas.

Consequently the sprawl of the city and formation of Vilnius urban region was determined mostly by the spread of a very few of them.

Changes of distribution of banks and insurance companies in Vilnius city from 1990



Changes of distribution of shopping centers in Vilnius city from 1990



Changes of distribution of industrial areas – clear trends of peripherization

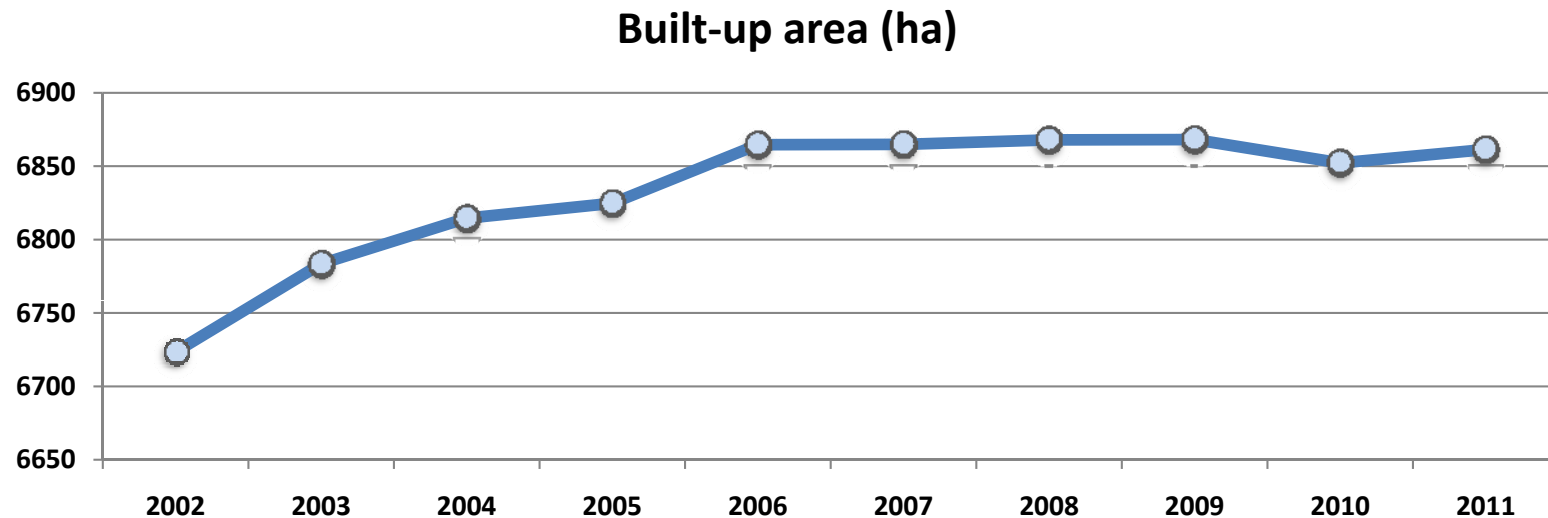
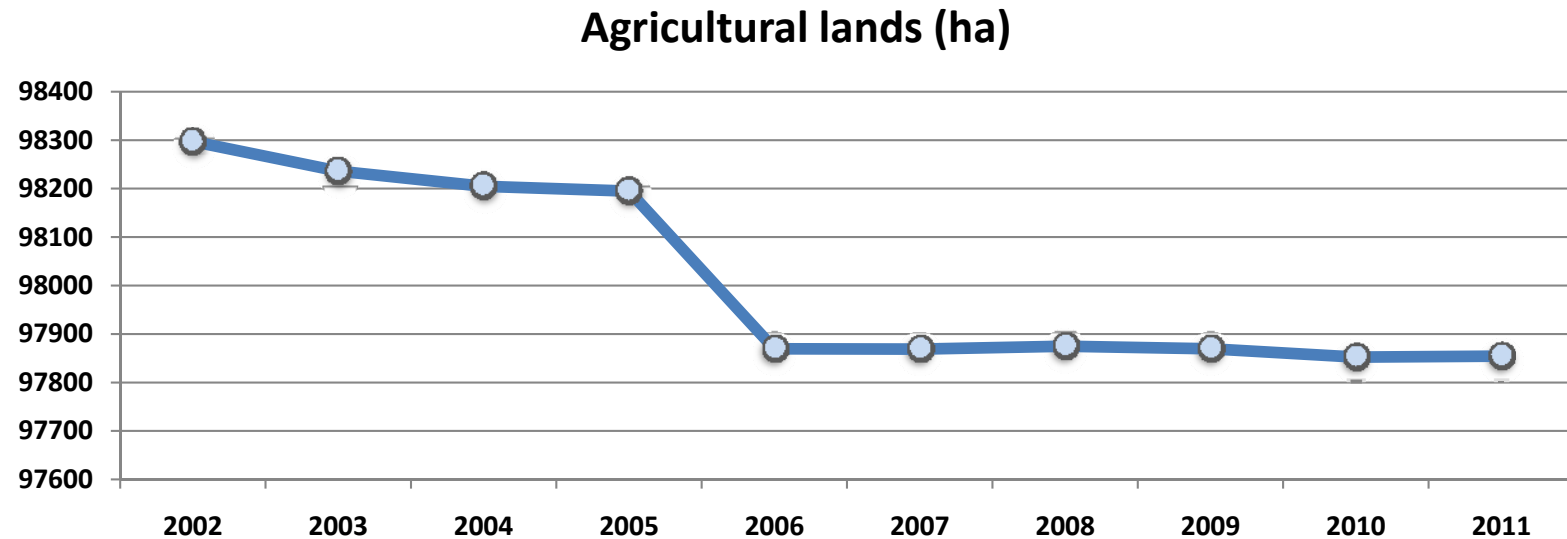
Factory in the middle of agricultural lands in peripheral part of Vilnius urban
region



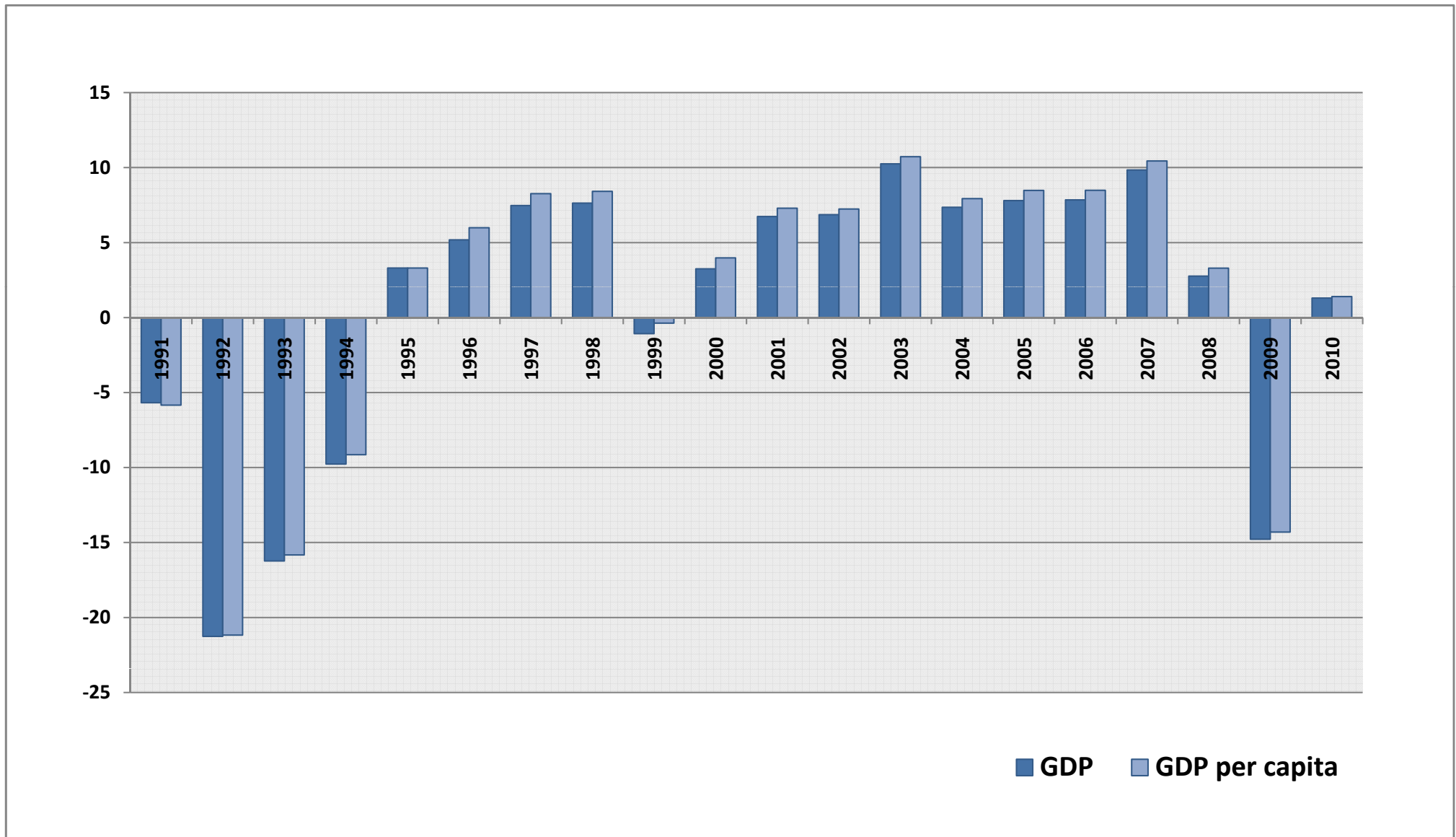
**However the main driver of the sprawl of city space
was process of “wild” suburbanization**



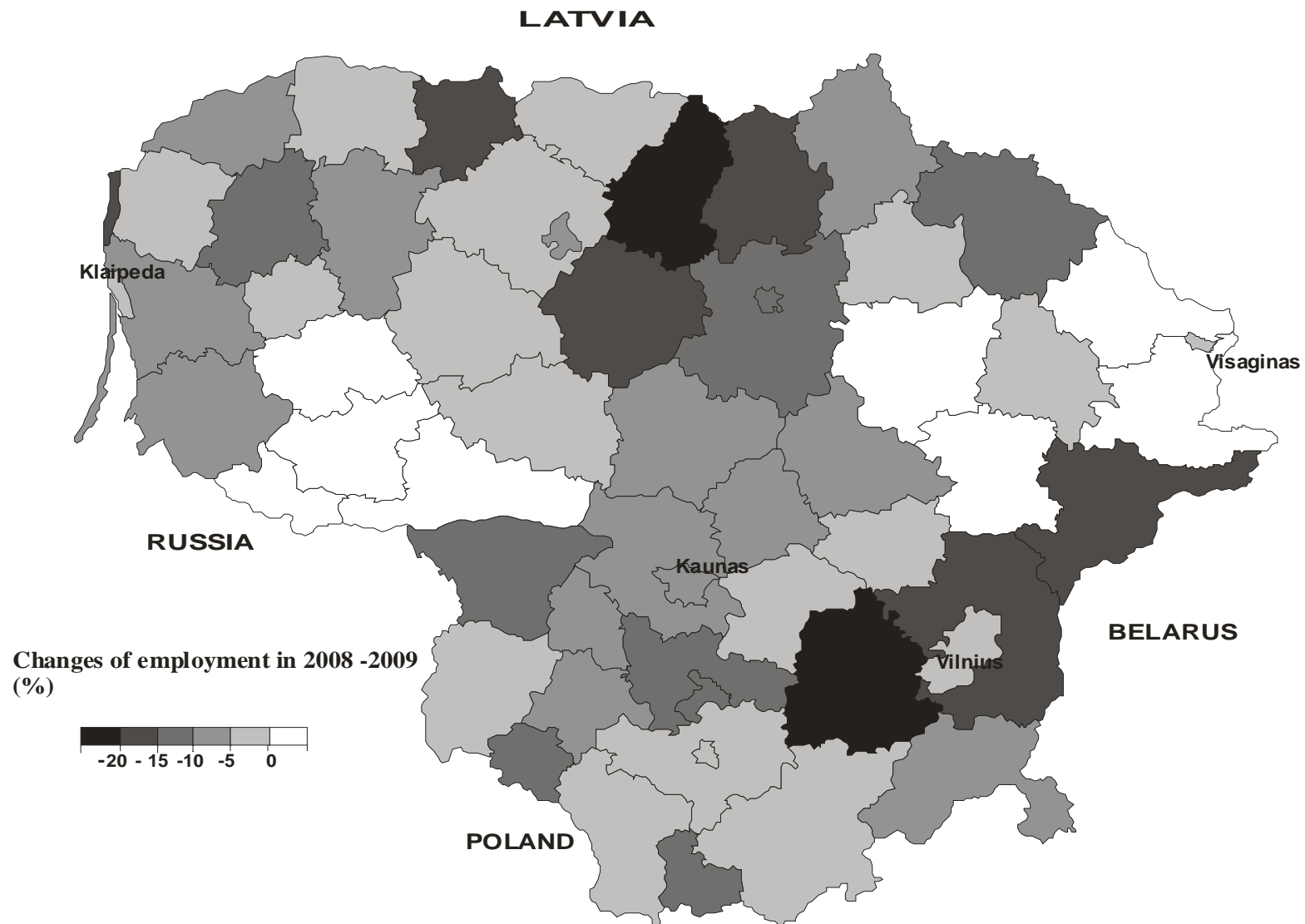
Changes of land use in Vilnius district municipality



Economic crises in Lithuania

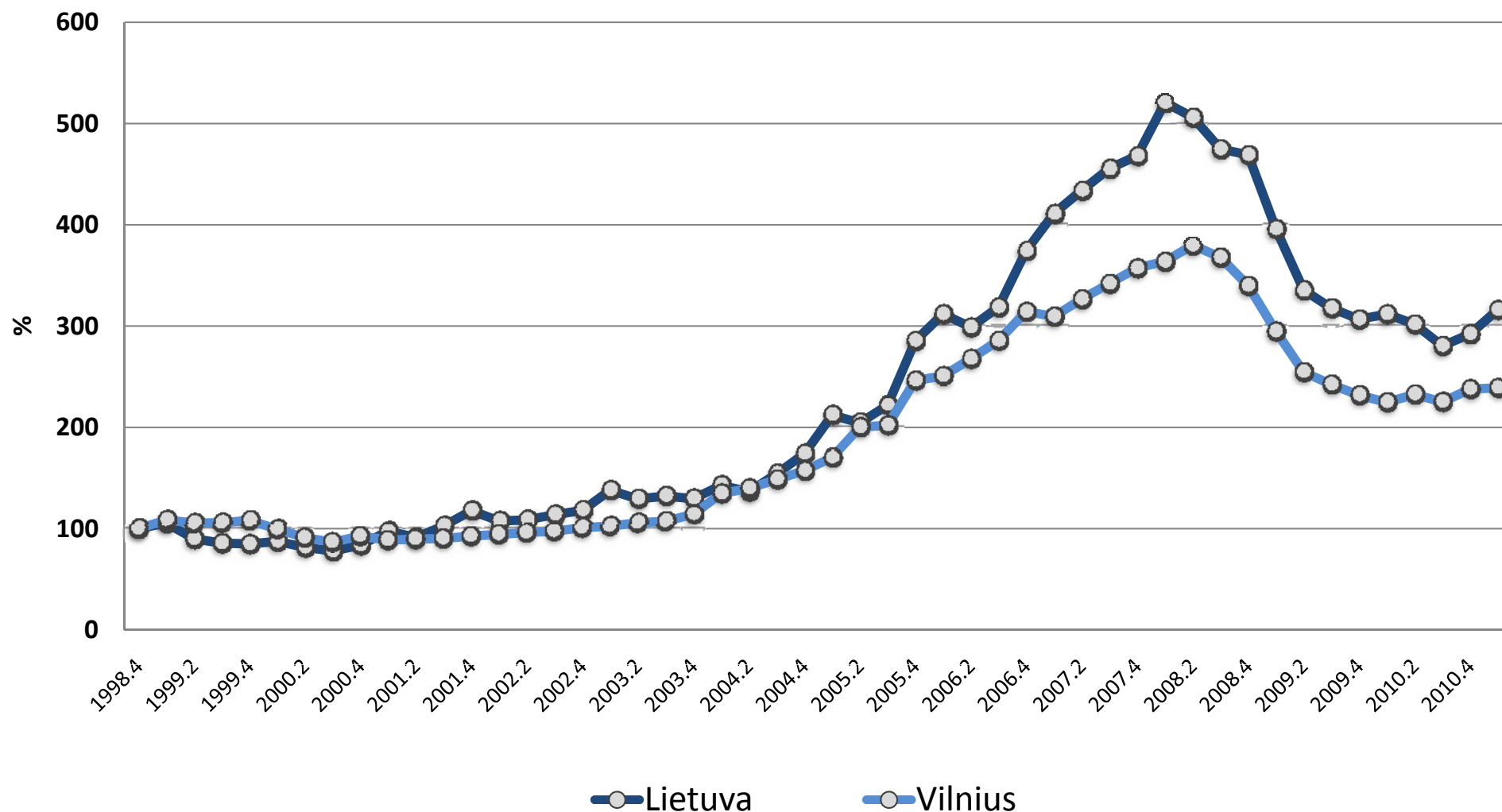


“Geography” of recent crisis – least developed regions weren’t substantially hit

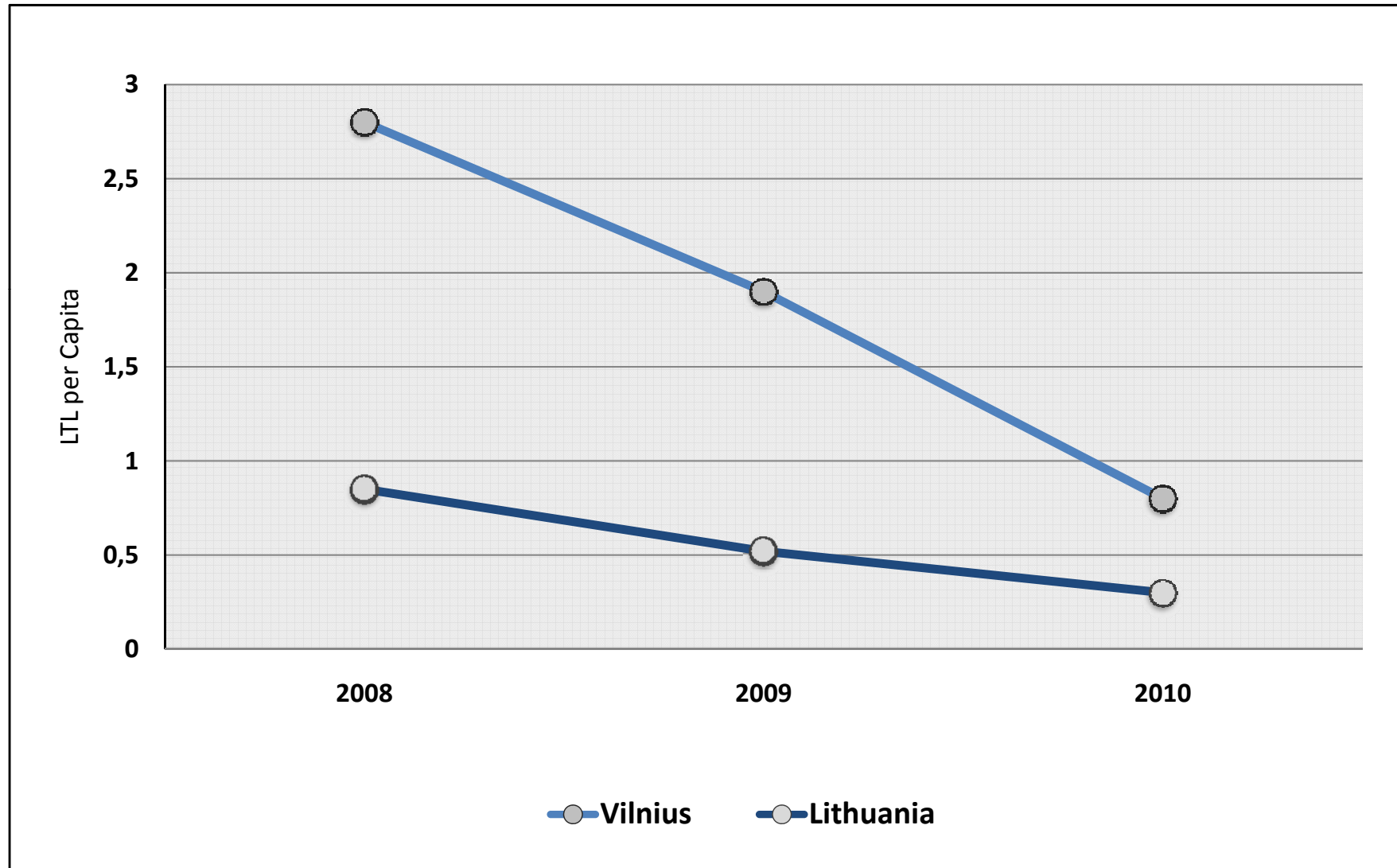


Bubble of housing prices and its collapse

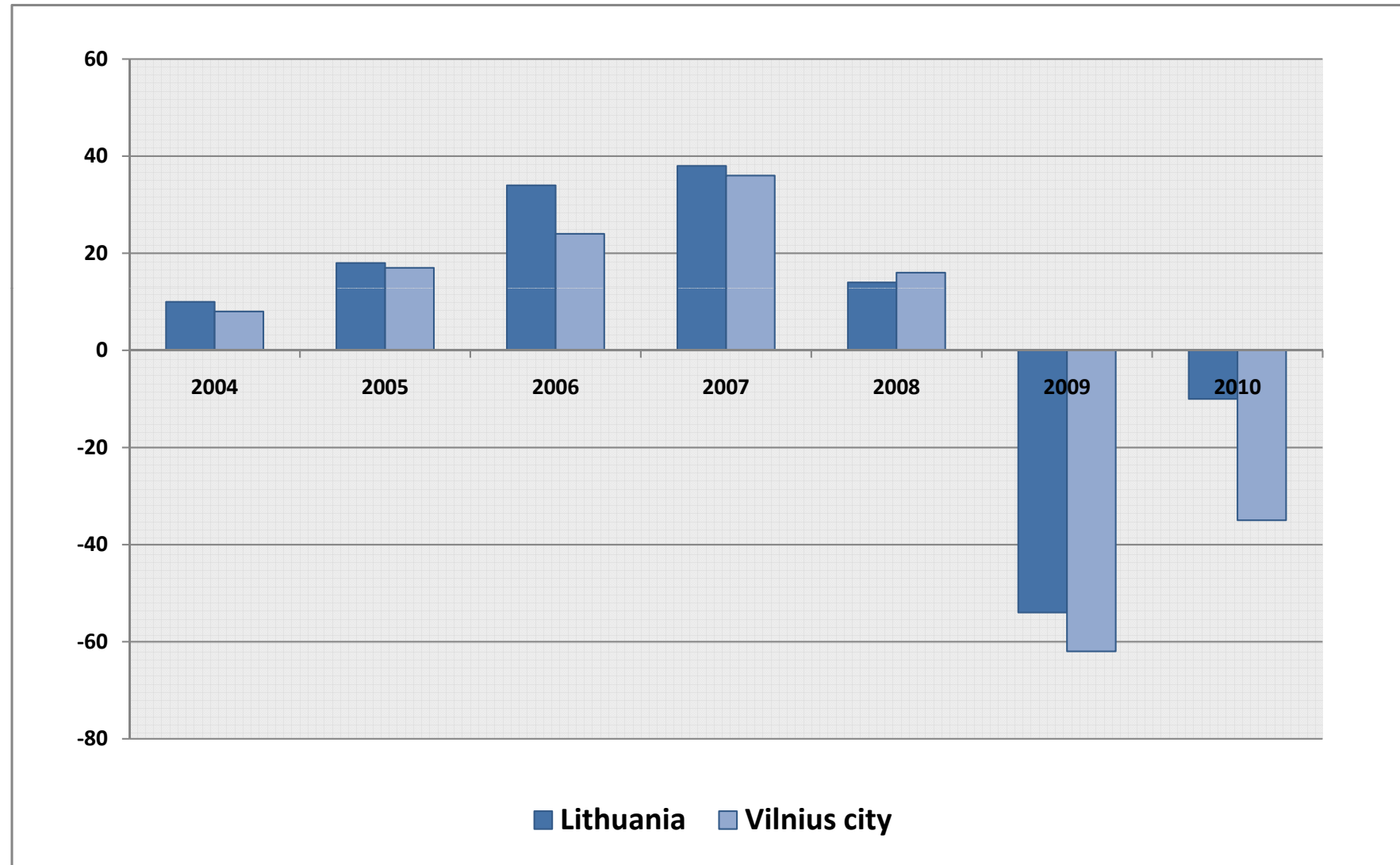
Changes of prices of dwellings in 1998 - 2010



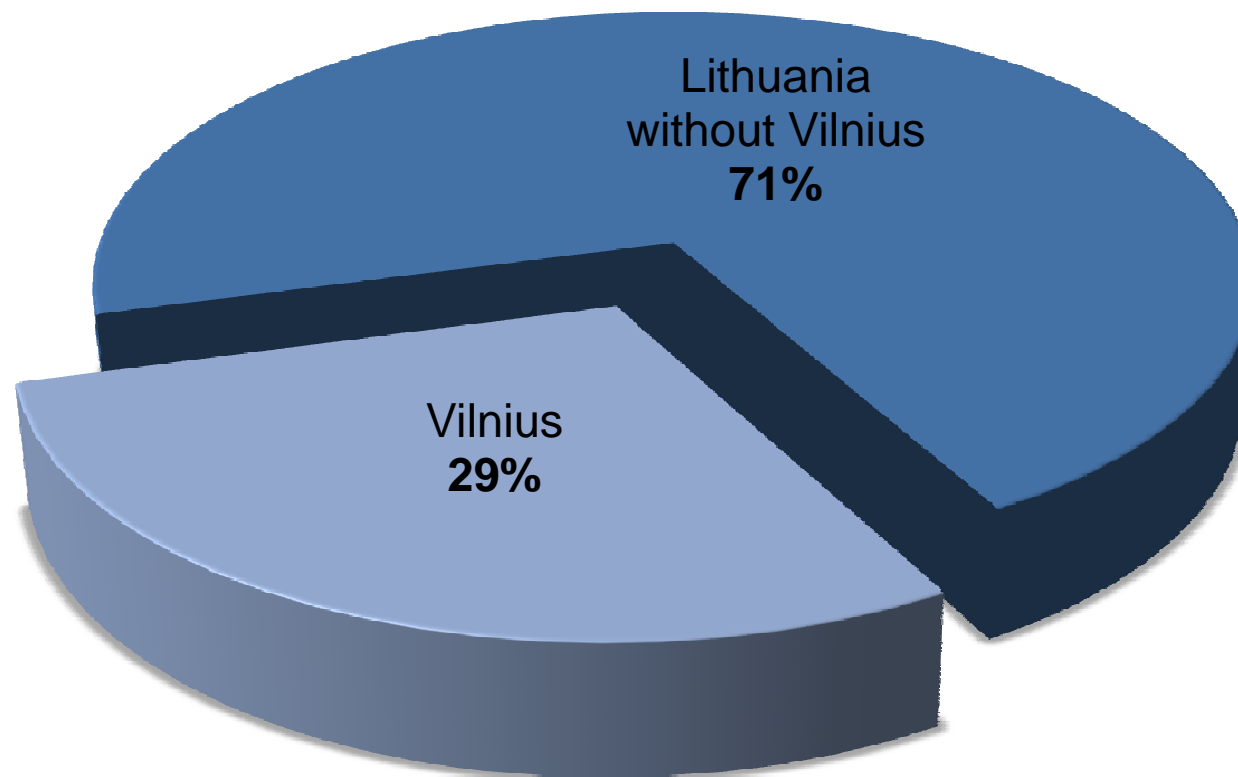
Gathered profit tax (LTL per capita)



Trends in construction sector



Construction works in Lithuania in 2008

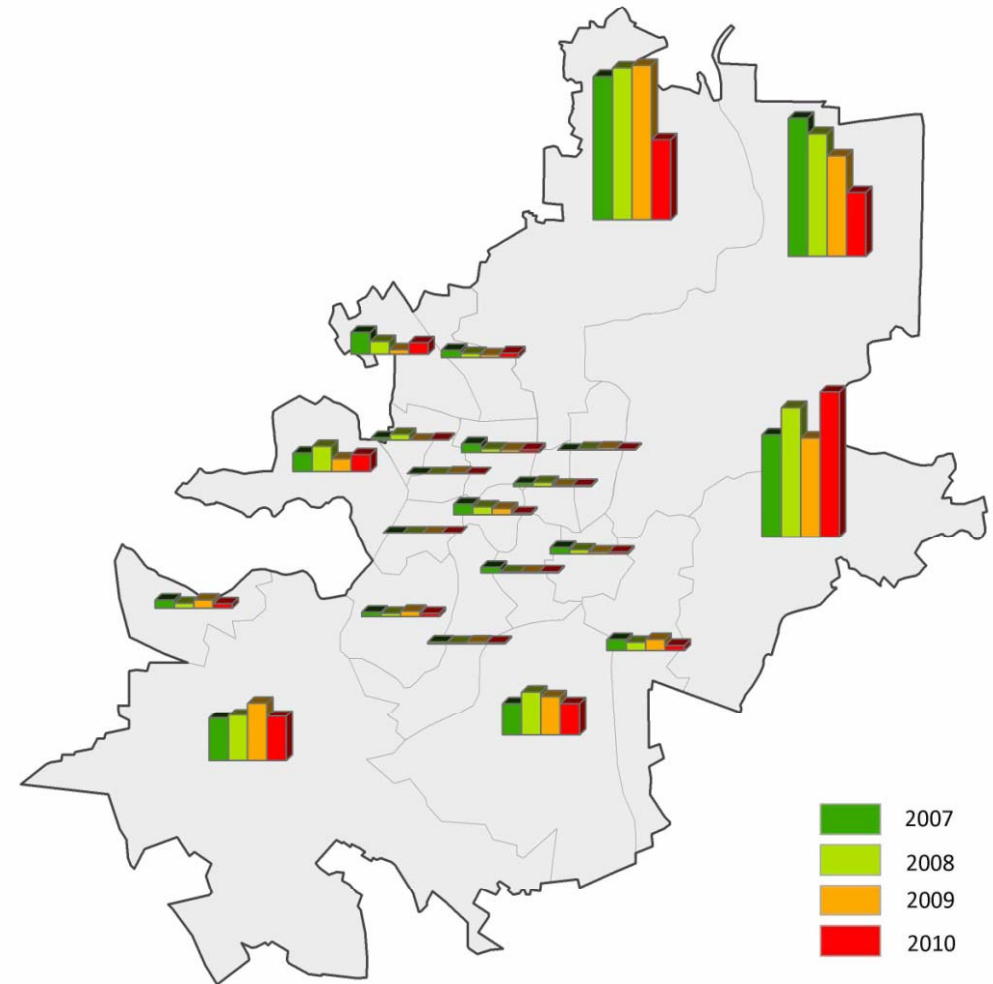
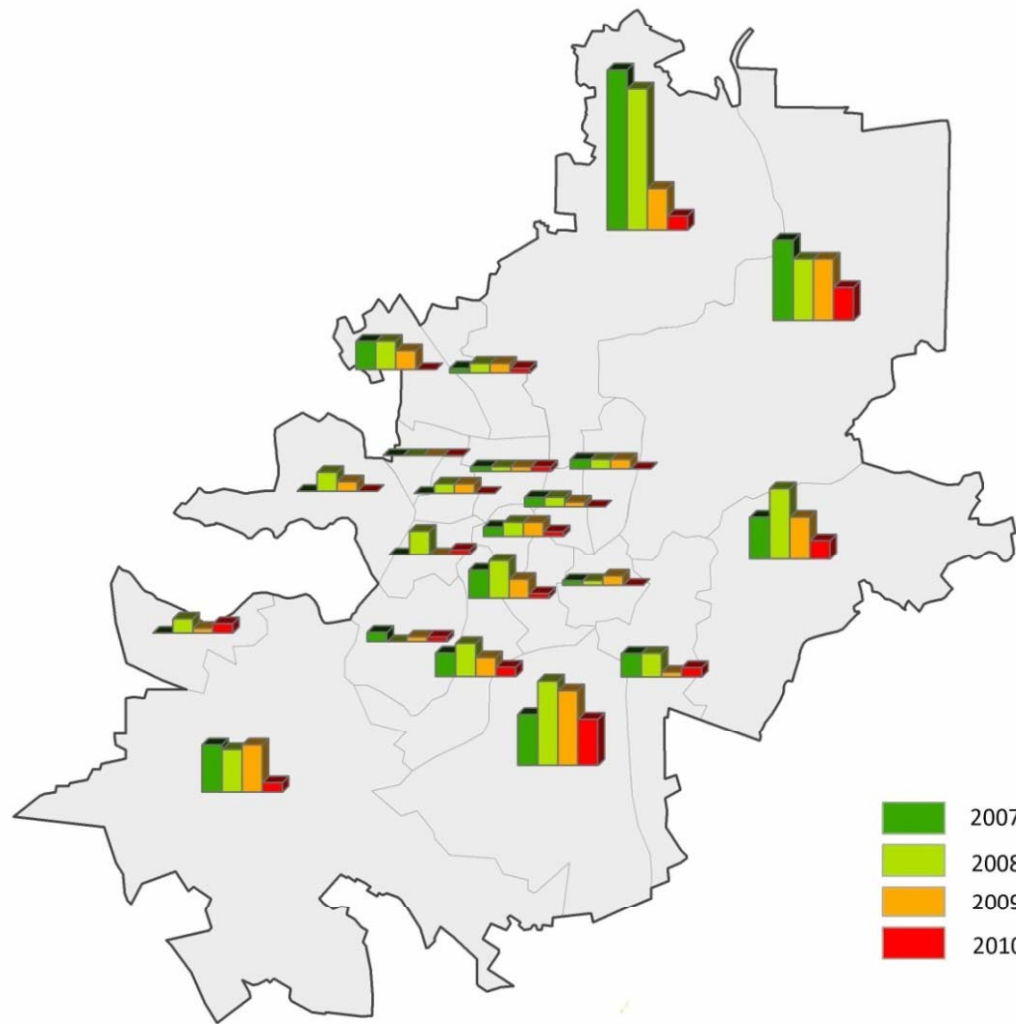


Trends of development of the Vilnius urban region in recent period

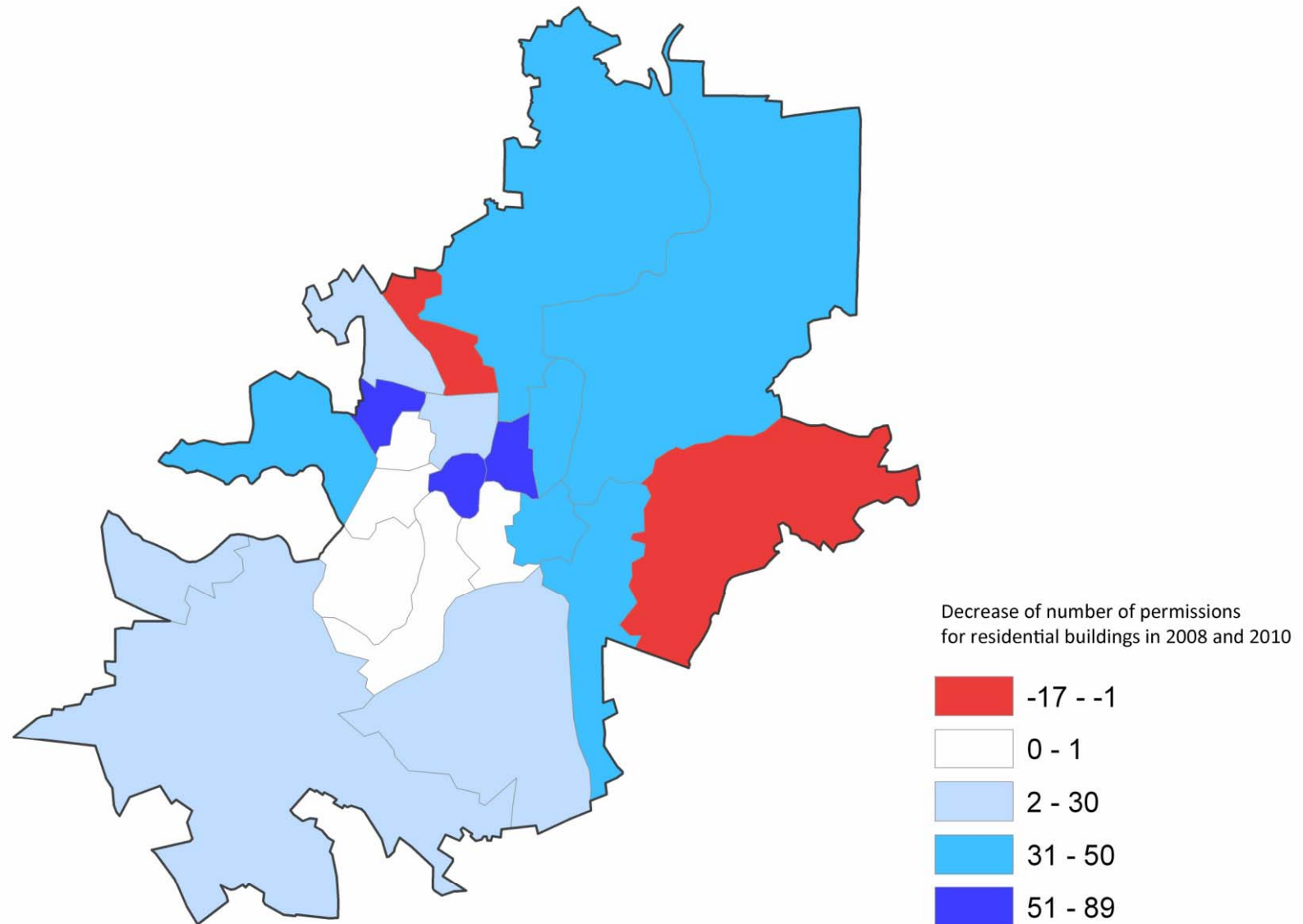


Non residential buildings buildings

Residential



Impact of crisis on construction of residential buildings



Traces of crisis in Vilnius landscape – unfinished projects in central part



Conclusions

Analysis of cities oriented to functionally related spatial systems with integrated social, economic and natural environments are capable to reveal spatial as well as structural development processes. Such a wide spatial social system can work as logical framework for research of various social and even ecological phenomena.

Both structures, urban and rural, coexist together on the same space and in such situations conflict is almost inevitable. Consequences of such conflicts falls upon society and urban landscape.

Impact of economic crisis has very clear spatial consequences, which will be felt for a longer period than a economic ones.

Thank you for your attention

