In the framework of this workshop we explore existing research on cultures of shrinking in post-industrial towns, with particular reference to the case of Visaginas. We wish to discuss how a variety of understandings of culture are and can be employed in the discussions of the future of Visaginas, as a specific example of the wider phenomenon of shrinking urban settlements in the context of the Baltic States.

Visaginas has undergone a radical transition from rapid growth under conditions of Soviet planned, mono-functional industrial development to dramatic shrinkage under those of a multilateral and multi-scalar competitive determination of resources and workplaces. The urban structure of Visaginas was planned from scratch in the context of short-term economic abundance created by the construction of the adjacent Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (1975-2009). For this reason, Visaginas is considered one of the best examples of a centrally planned, mono-functional urban unit in the Baltics, highly successful in terms of architectural decisions, quality of living and human capital. Because of the rapid Soviet mode of urbanization, the Visaginas population historically consisted of nuclear scientists, engineers, construction workers and their family members brought from the entire Soviet Union, while it was mainly the nuclear power plant and collectively constructed housing blocks that facilitated local belonging and enabled identification with place.
From the 1990s – due to the gradual shutting down of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, one of the conditions in the aftermath of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster of Lithuania’s EU accession – the town stopped growing, with consequent features of rising unemployment, dwellers’ anxiety about the future and more than 20 percent population decline. In addition, inhabitants formerly perceived as a Soviet elite are now primarily seen as a problematically Russian population in the context of the independent Lithuanian nation state.

The workshop gathers academics who have worked on Visaginas and other shrinking settlements from such fields as sociology, urbanism, anthropology and cultural history, in order to more fully understand the situation of the town today, and to try to open paths for imagining scenarios for its future. In order to do so, the workshop examines Visaginas through a discussion of the roles played by culture in a context of shrinkage: as strategies for coping and survival, modes of community identification and everyday praxis, and potentially as means for producing visions for the future and opportunities for economic growth. We are interested to explore questions of how the heritage of soviet modernism, nuclear technology and mono-functional urban planning in Visaginas relates to the town’s position in a new socio-economic paradigm; how ethnic cultures relate to the new narratives of the Lithuanian state; what potential there is for cultural initiatives to enable the survival of built and community infrastructure or to facilitate new modes of economic growth; how the memory of having built the town influences inhabitants’ sense of identification with the place; or how the habitus of nuclear scientists relates to the contemporary town and what paths might this present for the future?

After presenting recent research on Visaginas along with contributions from specialists on other shrinking settlements, we wish to discuss the design of future research inquiries, in particular as we are preparing an international summer school in late September 2015. What can the engagement of academics bring to the future paths of development of this shrinking town?

23.2. Arrival of German, Latvian and Estonian Scholars

20.00 Joint Dinner, Šniekutis, Šv. Stepono g. 8

24.2. EXPLORING VISAGINAS

8.12 Train to Visaginas for Organizers & Scholars from Germany, Latvia and Estonia
11.30 Preview of Workshop Locations
12.30 Lunch
13.30 Walking Tour through Visaginas guided by Inga Freimane
17.30 Discussing Observations
25.2. DISCUSSING VISAGINAS

7.15 Bus shuttle from Ecotel for Lithuanian and Belarusian Scholars, Slucko g. 8

10.00 **Session I: The Starting Point – the Nuclear Power Plant of Ignalina from Inside**

   Guided tour inside the nuclear power plant

12.00 Lunch

13.00 Welcome note, Aliaksandr Kalbaska, Vice Rector of European Humanities University

   Siarhej Liubimau (Vilnius): Cultures of shrinking, Introduction

   Ben Cope (Vilnius), Miodrag Kuč (Berlin), Dalia Čiupalaitė (Vilnius), Steffen Schuhmann (Berlin), Felix Ackermann (Vilnius): Short presentations

13.30 **Session II: Engineers as Builders, Technicians and Inhabitants**

   Anna Veronika Wendland, Herder Institute, Marburg: Inventing the Atomograd. Towards an STS history of nuclear urbanism in the Soviet Union and beyond

   Galina Orlova, EHU Vilnius: The town of research institutes: (de)constructing “sredmash assemblage”

   Comment: Andrej Sciapanau, EHU Vilnius

14.30 Transfer to workshop venue (House of Creative work, Vilties g. 16, Visaginas)

15.00 **Session III: Anthropological and Sociological Studies of Visaginas**

   Kristina Šliavaitė, Lithuanian social research centre, Vilnius: Anthropology of decline: the main insights from fieldwork in Visaginas before and after the Ignalina nuclear power plant closure

   Rasa Balockaitė, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas: Summing up the sociological Research on Visaginas

   Comment: Olga Sasunkevich from a historical-anthropological perspective, Vilnius, tbc

16.00 Coffee

16.30 **Session IV: Between Architecture History and Human Geography**

   Marija Drėmaitė, Vilnius: Ideal? Visaginas as an example of late modern urban planning

   Anna Storm, Stockholm: Visaginas as Post-Industrial Space

   Comment from a human-geography perspective: Gintarė Pociūtė-Sereikienė, Vilnius

18.30 **Session V: Parallel round tables with representatives of Visaginas**

20.00 Reception

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26.2. CONTEXTUALIZING VISAGINAS

9.00 Discussing the outcomes of the first day

9.30 Session VI: East-German Parallels? A Comparative Perspective
   Laura Colini, Leibniz Institute for Regional Development Erkner: Financialization in the Backyard: Shrinking, Welfare State Restructuring and New Housing Investments
   Steffen Schuhmann, Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee: Designing Social Communication in Shrinking Cities
   Comment from an anthropological perspective: Vita Petrušauskaitė

10.30 Coffee

11.00 Session VII: Studying the Memory and Future of Visaginas
   Inga Freimane, Tallinn / Glasgow: Mapping the Transition of Space in Visaginas
   Comment from a heritage perspective: Sciapan Sturejka, EHU Vilnius

12.00 Lunch

13.30 Session VIII: How to teach urbanism during a Summer School?
   Miodrag Kuč, Berlin: Urbanist Experiences from Working in Berlin Moabit
   Evelina Ozola / Toms Kokins, Technical University Riga: The Latvian experience in Urbanism, tbc
   Maria Derlõš, Estonian Academy of Fine Arts, Tallinn: The Estonian Urbanist Practice

14.30 Final Discussion

15.30 Departure to Vilnius

18.00 Evaluation with organizers and experts

27.2. Departure of German, Latvian and Estonian Scholars

POST PRODUCTION PROCEDURE

25.3. Redrawn Papers handed in incl. footnotes, bibliography, short-bio and summary
25.4. Peer-Review remarks in regard to papers will be
31.5. Call for Student Participation in International Summer School in Visaginas
15.6. Final version of papers handed in
25.6. Production of a reader for the Summer School with texts provided during Workshop
15.11. Final manuscript sent for confirmation
25.12. Production of a publication including Workshop papers

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