

ON POLITICAL AND SPATIAL CULTURE À LA CIVIL SOCIETY

This issue of U has been hijacked by the Urban Idea team to talk about space, democracy and responsibility from a citizen's standpoint. We will take a look at the teeming civil society but will say in advance that we do not view this increased activity as a thing-in-itself: it is not a terror of happiness or a revolution of consensus. For us, the pastry stand at a street festival is the first step towards taking more responsibility, the first soft antithesis to the private property and hedge cult of the new republic.

The Estonian Human Development Report notes that in the last two years, there has been a marked increase of civil activism in our society, demand for the honesty and trustworthiness of politicians' actions has grown.¹ Understandable. The continuing crisis of values and democracy, which is expressed in constantly surfacing funding scandals, the alienation of rulers and the absolutist syndrome of politicians, which is, in turn, affirmed daily in the lack of self-criticism of the authorities and brushing everything that has come to light under the carpet again – this is what should be a wake-up call to the people in whom, according to our constitution, the supreme power of the state is vested, and prompt them to ask: hey, guys, what is going on?

As is noted in the Human Development Report, the greatest weaknesses of Estonian democracy are principally the functioning of governance, participation and political culture.² We will republish the article 'The Development of Political Culture in Estonia' by Marju Lauristin, Peeter Vihalemm and Ivar Tallo that first appeared in the cultural weekly Sirp in 1997 and which explains the concept of political culture and helps us position the Estonian state in its stages (additionally, we can take it as an ABC of political culture and therefore, we recommend it to everyone, even if only as a reminder). It is truly ironic that for sixteen years, a similar cultural change or natural development into a mature democratic political system was anticipated by leading Estonian sociologists, who now have to admit excessive optimism when it comes to swiftly defeating the ghosts of socialism.

How to reach a mature deliberative democracy and what has the civil society done to hasten the process is the subject of the section, which summarises the nearly year-long exercise in developing a culture of co-operation between neighbourhood associations and political authorities of the city. The head of the Urban Idea Teele Pehk talks about her experience in coordinating the initiative; Madle Lippus will expand on the content of Good Collaboration Pact, about to be signed with the city authorities, and explain its importance in regulating the communication between the city and the NGOs; and Toomas Vitsut, Alari Rammo and Yoko Alender will place the Good Practice in the context of today's city governance.

Typical Estonian attitudes about space are related in a dialogue between Kristi Grišakov and Kadri Koppel, who talk about spatial responsibility and the need to review our current spatial values. A good example of demolished

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EDITORIAL

attitudes is Gert Zavatski's brief draft about apartment associations and NGOs, which ironically equates two kinds of NGOs: a housing co-op and a political party, and calls for cleaning up the reputation of apartment associations and using their full potential.

U15 cannot ignore the loudest movement in Tallinn's civil society: the neighbourhood associations, mapped by Jaanika Ait and Anu Kõgu in this case. The gap in the map where nothing seems to be going on is filled by Annika Haas and Maria Derlõš with the stories and photos of Lasnamäe residents who opened up their hearts.

This issue of U is concluded by a sweet obligation to chronicle the events in the urbanists' field. An outsider's view of the Tallinn Architecture Biennale is provided by PhD student from Tallinn University Francisco Martínez. Mark Minkjan, one of the engineers of the workshop organised by Failed Architecture³ during the Architecture Biennale, speaks about holistic approach to built environment on the basis of the Rapla KEK building. U15 is pepped up by Gunnar Grímsson's (who is almost-of-a-dad of Icelandic e-democracy) slogan-essay.

The editorial team of Urban Idea and U wishes you a pleasant read and great co-operation.

1. *Introduction.* Marju Lauristin. *The Estonian Human Development Report, 2012/2013, Estonian Co-operation Assembly, Tallinn, 2013, p 61.*

2. *Civil society and social capital.* Juhan Kivirähk, Marju Lauristin. *The Estonian Human Development Report, 2012/2013, Estonian Co-operation Assembly, Tallinn, 2013, p 74.*

3. www.failedarchitecture.com