

# Recycling the past: the case of the intensive training programme in urbanism “Radi Rigu!” (Create Riga!)

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**Abstract.** This paper traces the etymology of the case in continuing professional education (CPE), restoring its historical societal roots, and discusses advantages which an integrative approach offers to planning education, to the urban planning practice and urban development in general. The narrative is drawn from the initiative of a multidisciplinary team of practitioners and scholars in the fields of planning, architecture, landscape architecture and transport engineering. The project RADI RIGU! – a number of innovative workshops undertaken in 2011/2012 - actualized the role of urban public spaces in social revitalization processes and the communicative and procedural character of the urban project. It made an effort to place the idea of spatial strategic planning in post-Soviet mindset as well as to elaborate new, more communicative tools and an emotionally rich language for planning. Finally, it introduced an integrated three-dimensional format of continuing professional education, amalgamating lifelong learning, urban action and implementation-aimed outcome. The methodology of the programme is inspired by a series of workshops on public space on the Belgian coast. It is also based on the reconstruction of the “*talka*” methodology, the popular form of volunteer work in the USSR. The paper introduces the notion of social heritage and declares its ultimate place in the ecology of planning.

**Keywords:** public space, planning ecology, urban project, social heritage.

## Introduction

Being placed in the centre of urban triangle “real world” – professional education – professional practice, we observe three (evidently) interrelated perspectives. The first – “real world” – is at the moment in the process of crossing the “post-bridge” from not yet fathomed past into unfathomable future. Like in post-colonial or post-dictatorial environments, post-Soviet space is revising its own “socialistic” past: right now an overwhelming revelation of the “historic facts”, as well as their reconsideration and interpretation, is taking place. Society is waking up after a twenty-year long “shock therapy” of wild capitalism. Confused collective memory is trying to allocate itself in unknown surroundings, looking for help and answers in the past. All realms of life – art, economics, politics, social life, education – are going through external and internal revision of processes: both “in the wild” and within their own fields. Cinematography shapes the form of „historical memory” (1), endowing “with a poetic value that which does not yet possess it” [1] in order to transfer into present public images of feelings [5].

Searching for new forms of relationship with society, politicians brandishing poetical images of Harmony (2) and Integration are undertaking attempts to restore and apply some tools to collective work used effectively in Soviet time.

Professional education in the realm of human settlements, mirroring the processes “in the wild”, nowadays is in search for new, more integrated and interdisciplinary approaches. These approaches

strive to reflect the needs of different but overarching fields, growing demand for all kinds of participation, interdisciplinary and interdepartmental collaboration and international co-operation. It is possible to trace similar tendencies in Latvia as well. However, intellectual and structural damages in the system of education, especially high education and research, brought by post-soviet transformation, practically paralyzed this field for last two decades. Recovery probably will require a lot of time and financial resources. Combined with a wild and chaotic urban development caused by the restoration of private ownership, the education and research in architecture have been laying in a coma. City planning as a discipline had died.

Last years’ professional practice, unlike the professional education, evidently reacts to the chaos created by intervention of financial capital based on a dogma of holy real estate [11] by alerting people both in everyday city making and professional education about the existing “dead ends”. Young professionals in architecture, planning, geography and sociology are successfully experimenting with new creative initiatives, promoting social revival in different ways. Challenging the prevalent black-and-white picture of the Soviet past [11] in the 1990s, when the terms “social” and “collective” were coloured dark black, they create “Socmap” (3), “*Ideju talka*” (4), “*Pagalmu talka*” (5), SPP (6), involving inhabitants, children, students, city departments, real estate developers and politicians in debates and action.

Urbanism as an approach is frequently on the agenda of city makers, but urban activism becomes a form of implementation of urban innovations. New NGOs which promote urbanism are appearing in the Baltic States - *Linnalabor* (7) in Estonia and Urban Institute Riga (founded 2011) in Latvia. There are two significant features which characterize public urban action today. First, it obviously functions on a regional level, building tight and creative cross-border cooperation (e.g. Est-Lat urbanist days 2011 in Kabli, participation of *Linnalabor* in RADI RIGU! Forum and others). Secondly, it declares and exercises a shift from protest-based action to trust-building action. In this respect the comprehensive RADI RIGU! programme delivered convincing results.

### **Planning status quo: pre-Soviet, Soviet and present-day Latvia**

When trying to understand today we turn towards yesterday and consequently towards the day before yesterday. This “day before” draws some surprising parallels with today. A geopolitical cataclysm throughout the centuries as well as national renaissance shape the “seismic landscape” of the country which at the edge of 19/20 centuries did not yet form own statehood and was a part of the Empire of Russia. Mental environment of nascent national consciousness sensitively responds to the processes in European cultural life and especially to the rise of modernism. We can read this today in the built environment of Riga. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Riga created its own unique ensemble of Art Nouveau, which nowadays has become a spectacular part of the national heritage. The garden city idea enriched Riga’s urban space with one of the nicest and earliest (1901) examples of this movement in Europe [2]. One may argue that at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Latvia was in the avant-garde of modern planning and architecture developments, following other European cities like Berlin, Munich, Copenhagen or Saint-Petersburg. Some milestones of professional history mark rapid development of and about architecture, synchronized with the building of Latvian national identity in that period. Among them are the opening of the Polytechnic School in Riga in 1862 akin to those of Karlsruhe (1825) and Zurich (1855), and creation of the building department in 1869. There is a remarkable difference between the activities nowadays and those of the first generation of Latvian civil engineers and architects in politics, cultural life and education: the civil engineer A. Anderson became Lord Mayor of Riga (1921-28), professors of architecture founded the new Faculty of Architecture in the University of Latvia (1919) and the Union of Latvian Architects (1924) [8].

The fight for independence following the First World War resulted in the first years of

independence in the history of Latvia: in 1918 the Latvian Republic was proclaimed. It was a time of building national identity. After gaining the status of capital city in 1918, Riga started to develop the features of monumental character in architecture and memorials as well as in planning [9].

The reflection on the city favoured the introduction of international knowhow. Urbanism (elaborated by *pilsētu būvniecība*, a copy of the German *Städtebau*), being a discipline taught in Riga since 1917, kept the tradition of the beginning of the century of the cultural exchange between cities. After 1920, the city of Riga, strong in having a heroic and sensible part in European debates on the city, did not renounce urban growth. Riga, convinced of having a national and international exemplary mission, tried to form a „Great Riga”, promoted by Latvian architect-urbanist Arnold Lamze [8].

World War II ended for Latvia with annexation to USSR in 1945. That was also a start of intensive economic, industrial and building development as well as a rapid increase in population due to immigrants coming from all Soviet republics. Soviet Latvia was presented as a “model Soviet republic” to the Western world, and the geographic position of Riga determined its position as a “borderland avant-garde”, administrative centre of the Baltic region [9]. Three planning events crucial for the present situation were carried out: nationalization of land, followed by organized deletion of the notion of “private property” and the system of centralized planning adapted to the “one landlord”.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s Latvia regained sovereignty and established a free market. The effect of an “avalanche-like” transition from a rigid system of central planning to a free market economy in its wildest, uncontrolled form on social as well as emotional and mental environments can be compared to an effect of a military intervention: a significant part of society was not able to adapt to the new unknown, obscure and, more importantly, alien order of rigid capitalism. Not for the first time and not only with us, history “played a bad joke”: striving for independence and departing from the “prison” of Soviet Union with an extreme enthusiasm, we found ourselves in the middle of storming water (8) without an appropriate boat or necessary skills. Used to free services and rights guaranteed by the state – work, education, recreation, healthcare and housing – we were not able to understand the new meaning of “my private property” concerning own living place.

The inhabitants’ small concerns about their own and common physical environment, low social activity and participation in urban development, explicit apolitical behaviour, inability to act in the urban space, absence of understanding and culture of communication in the new economic conditions were the side effects of the gained freedom. These were the

general feelings of the common people in the 1990s, and it was no different for professionals of urbanism. Knowledge about these aspects of “life of feelings” [5] at that time is crucial for understanding the processes in city development today.

Booming real estate, becoming a major force for urban development, required quick solutions for the conflict zones. Shortly after 1991 an elaboration of the Riga development plan for 1995-2005 started. Its author A. Roze called this time a „time of metamorphoses” which completely changed the art of social life of the last 50 years. Riga had to transit from the industrial type of socialists city to the post-industrial model of spreading agglomeration which consequently led to structural changes. [9]

Professional society met this “time of metamorphoses” without the necessary skills and education in planning. There are two reasons for this. First, the system of centralized planning was destroyed and together with it the Soviet system of planning institutions became obsolete. Second, the few planners who had been active in Soviet times, had started their professional careers after the Second World War, and in the 1990s had reached the age of retirement. [8] Culturally and professionally attached to the Soviet period, they were neither skilled for the planning of a free market environment nor able to communicate with a new type of political leaders. Furthermore, the “volume architects” could not rescue the situation because of their concentration on the aesthetic dimension of architecture.

As a result, the “workshop-kind” and “spot-kind” planning and design became very popular. The well-known foreign specialists (Gehl, Kolhaas, Forster, Meinhard von Gerkan etc.) were invited to consult and to create representative architecture. However, unlike the post-social cities of Central Europe like Berlin, Budapest, Prague or Warsaw, Riga implemented only a few of their projects. A significant number of international workshops, seminars, contests and *plain-airs* were organized to develop large-scale real estates and to provide expertise in urban development.

Despite these activities, their actual impact on the built environment of the city remained insignificant. The weakness of the planning structure, absence of comprehensive approach to city development and political interest in public space, land-use based urban development regulations are the main reasons for the inefficiency of the existing system. The Riga Spatial Plan 2006-2018 is in fact a transition between the Spatial Structure Plan and a land-use-based planning document [4], but strategic approach to public spaces is not present in any form and in any kind of planning documents [6].

Two more reasons of organisational character should be mentioned. One is underdeveloped expertise and extreme shortage of good professionals in project management as well as a lack of understanding of its

importance. In the last 20 years Riga has not realized any remarkable public space projects, and each of the few ongoing projects is struggling with the designing process as well as communication within different departments and with inhabitants.

The second is the negative attitude towards any form of participation of city administration and politicians, based on insufficient knowledge about this trust-building instrument. Existing regulations for public discussion provide a legal platform for participation. However, because of the dominating mistrust and fears of negative reaction among politicians and city officials, these regulations usually are fulfilled very formally. Participation and involvement of all relevant actors is not deemed either necessary or very effective for the outcome of the project. Therefore these actors are not integrated into the planning and designing process on a regular basis.

The idea of integration as a two-way process is often stressed as the idea of cooperation and the necessity for both sides to overcome mutual mistrust and a feeling of being threatened [7].

#### **Education: historical “conceptual cross section”**

Although implementing modern planning ideas in practice from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the Second World War, in the realm of education the professional society in Latvia remains focused on the aesthetics of built environment and does not develop its own school in planning. This tendency became a tradition which one could call a “school” of “volume architecture”-oriented look on urban environment in Riga. A comprehensive approach to city development, which requires serious research in the fields related to built environment, is also absent due to the repeatedly mentioned influence of the fall of the Soviet system.

In the Soviet Union the functions of education and research were delegated to different institutions but they were not separated. The dense and multilayered (and also well-financed) network of the Научно-Исследовательский Институт (НИИ, scientific research institute) ensured development of scientific research in different spheres related both to theory and practice. The realm of architecture and planning had and still has its own scientific organizational body – Российская академия архитектуры и строительных наук (the Russian Academy of Architecture and Built Sciences). A significant amount of work in scientific research was elaborated in high schools. The post-graduate researchers (doctoral candidates) whose research was attributed to the high schools, were the “binding layer” between universities, the НИИ and the practice. Russia to a large extent has kept this system nowadays, adapting it to the current economic situation [15].

The situation in Latvia after the fall of the system built in the Soviet times was antipodal. After the demolition of industry, the system of field-specific

scientific research and following academic layer of scientific education that had functioned so well before was completely destroyed: research institutions were closed, post-graduate education was left without financing, and demand for scientific research decreased considerably.

All the aforementioned phenomena – transition to a free market economy, collapse of the Soviet planning and education system and traditionally aesthetics-based school in professional education-determined the current status quo in planning education. Despite the fact that the Faculty of Architecture and Planning in Riga Technical University includes the word “planning”, systematic knowledge in planning has not been provided.

However, the evident changes in socio-economic situation all over the world and the rising awareness of urgent necessity of integrated approach to urban practice and education do not leave much space for pure aesthetic issues. Global processes are mirrored in everyday local academic environment. Growing quality of education in landscape architecture in the Latvian University of Agriculture provides a comprehensive approach to planning and design of open spaces on a regular basis. Opening alternative programmes in architecture, urban design and planning and active interaction between the students from different universities influence growing interest of young professional generation in social aspects of urban spaces and in public space. Students of architecture organize exhibitions (for example, annual reviews of graduation projects) where the majority of the projects deal with public and open space issues rather than with purely architectural subjects. Although the signs of changes are there one cannot describe local educational system in planning, design and architecture as innovative.

Thus the professional environment in today's Latvia, especially in Riga, seeks to gain skills and knowledge that matches up to nowadays' social and spatial challenges. Professionals with a comprehensive mindset try to adjust their intellectual and practical actions to the rapidly changing environment. However, local academic environment does not provide students with a systematic professional approach and methodologies suitable to tackle the complexity of socio-spatial changes. Practitioners dealing with spatial transformation every day and therefore having more urgent need for appropriate knowledge, are especially “deprived”: there is no qualitative system of lifelong learning in urban planning which would give chance to gain information and skills without leaving one's own practice. Continuing professional development (CPD) and continuing professional education (CPE) have to be built in order to change urban research and practice that estrange them from the “real world”, vibrant actors and actants, their problems and challenges.

Continuing forms of education help professional urban practice that loses its role as facilitators (producer) of physical and social innovations and lacks models, instruments and approaches which can cope with continuous, complex change.

### **“Subbotnik” – a sustainable form of social co-operation?**

Riga's rich cultural heritage (10) forms the basis of the qualitatively built and successfully functioning system of built heritage protection. However, there remains an equally rich social heritage which is currently underestimated, unexplored and therefore not used in urban practice. The history of Latvian society provides us with unique examples of collaborative creation of the built environment already in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We compare two historical social events in Latvia - one from the times of the Russian Empire in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and another from the Soviet social practices.

The first took place in the area of Riga's garden city *Keiserwald* (germ., old), today's *Mežaparks* (latv., Wood Park) in 1913 as an initiative on laying out a new public park. The action was organized by the recently founded public organization *Latvijas Izglītības Biedrība* (Latvian Association for Education) which was indented to promote and develop Latvian schools, kindergartens, libraries and reading rooms. The process of building *Saulesdārzs* (Garden of Sun, latv.) was organized as a common action, with the participation of Latvian businessmen, intelligentsia, inhabitants and city officials. The private property was bought with donated money; the design and implementation were created in a participative way [10]. Today *Saulesdārzs* has kept its public function in a reduced form (albeit an attempt of its privatisation was undertaken) as well as its historical composition. However, its most important quality, which nowadays is discussed as an element of sustainable urban development – its significant role as a facilitator of social activity, national identity, collaborative design and economic activity - is completely lost.

A different phenomenon, appearing in recent urban practices, is *Subbotnik* (from *суббота* – Saturday, rus.), the form of volunteer work developed during the Soviet time. This contemporary legend was drawn from Lenin's articles “О героизме рабочих в тылу. По поводу «коммунистических субботников», (1919, About heroism of the workers in the rear: the case of communist *subbotniks*) [16] and “Великий почин”, (The Great Initiative) [16] and was based on the real event of volunteer work on Moscow's railway in spring 1919. The success of the first event and its enormous positive impact on the mood of the people

determined the following systematic development and popularisation of the initiative during the whole Soviet period. Although the form of the event has changed, shifting from the industrial sphere in the beginning of the USSR to the works on public space towards the end, the mental and (one may argue) also emotional positive image of *Subbotnik* has remained deeply rooted in the mentality of the Soviet people.

Under circumstances of general instability and bewilderment in the years of financial crisis Latvia has restored (2008) the initiative of *talka* (Latvian equivalent for *subbotnik*) in its later form – as the “*Lielā talka*” or Big Clean-up Day (one might draw the parallel with Lenin’s “Great initiative” in 1919) of outdoor space. Officially *Lielā talka* was initiated by the then-President of Latvia V. Zatlers with an overarching aim of “making nature garbage-free, allowing it to recover and urging people to take care of their environment” [16]. In 2010 the new dimension – that of upgrading public spaces – was added as an initiative of social workers and landscape architects. This new form, gaining more and more popularity by inhabitants as well as by professionals, this year gathered professionals and students of architecture, landscape architecture and art and had huge success as socialization act with visible results of improved living environment. The format of *Pagalmu talka* (Courtyards’ *talka*) includes workshop based student competition, competition based selection of the courtyards and principles of public private partnership in implementation.

#### **CPD [19] as an instrument for urban development**

By the year 2010 an international group of professional planners and landscape architects working in Latvia started to explore the possibility to apply the principles of *Talka* to urban planning and design. A scope of several factors worked as the driving impulse: the aforementioned lack of political interest regarding public spaces, insufficient professional knowledge and experience in urban planning and design, passive societal attitude, growing mistrust, aggression and segregation between all social groups – politicians, professionals, inhabitants, city departments and businessmen. A year later an intensive interdisciplinary training program *RADI RĪGU!* (Create Riga!) for practitioners in city planning, architecture, landscape architecture and road engineering was launched with a motto “public space as lever for social revival”. The broader aim was to bring to the “round table” as many stakeholders and shareholders taking part in Riga’s spatial transformation as possible, in order to activate discussions about an integrated approach to city development and to create trust among

professionals, politicians and inhabitants. This aim prescribed heterotopian nature and methodology of the programme. “*RADI RĪGU!*” has a 3D aspiration – as a professional training programme in urbanism, as an urban action and as a research by design aimed at implementation. All three dimensions of the programme were interwoven with a strongly expressed socially interactive and communicative character applying an approach which initiators formulated as the EAR (educate, act, realize) approach (Fig. 1).

#### *Professional training*

The training programme *RADI RĪGU!* had the intention to provide experience in all stages of planning and design, from project definition to project management, for a multidisciplinary team of practitioners: architects, landscape architects, city planners and road engineers. Despite objective and subjective difficulties – a rather high price for training in a time of economic crisis, the large amount of time required, a very vague idea about the issue of spatial planning, project management, participation and involvement – 25 professionals working in Riga’s architectural bureaus, among them in Latvia well-known professionals, responded to the call. A multidisciplinary, multi-aged and international group started training in April 2011 and worked together in nine workshops during one year.

High-level professional expertise was guaranteed by the international team of coaches from University of Leuven (prof. J. Schreurs and prof. Jef Van den Broeck), Free University of Brussels (prof. Marc Martens), Belgium and experts from Copenhagen (Tina Saaby, city architect), Barcelona (Jordi Farrando, architect) and Moscow (Anna Schtetinina, architect, leader of “Arhistojanije”) were invited to participate in different phases of the work.

The workshops were organized in three phases, each aimed at a different stage of project processing (Fig. 2).

In order to provide exercises in the beginning stage of an urban project the participants were invited to select cases – spaces in Riga’s neighbourhoods. Before the start of the programme the participants decided to work on city neighbourhoods rather than the city centre. They were motivated by the necessity to pay professional attention to the periphery of the city, left out of professional interest for the last 20 years.

From twelve spaces offered for selection they had to choose five according to six criteria defined by the coaches: 1. Strategic character of the neighbourhood, 2. Large involvement of inhabitants, 3. Ownership, 4. In favour of local authorities, 5. Complexity, 6. Shining example.

Selections were made in an interactive role-based way. One of the stages of selection included voting. The interesting fact was that the cases chosen by voting were re-evaluated guided by emotional attitude,



Fig. 1. "Create Riga"! Methodological model  
[Source: created by author]

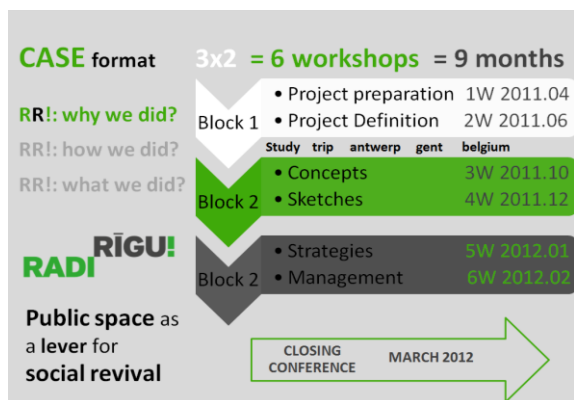


Fig. 2. The format of the professional training programme "Create Riga"!  
[Source: created by author]

which was influenced by feeling of social justice or, in other words, social sympathy: mono-social and identity-lacking neighbourhoods built in late Soviet time were preferred to the spatially and socially more diverse ones which were more interesting for planning and design.

Instruments like mental mapping, analysis of different scales ("from space to place" method), visits to the sites, cross-evaluation and diversity games, combined with theoretical information given in the lectures by coaches, helped to receive and to adapt significant amount of new information as well as to apply the principle of integrated approach in the workshops and to own everyday practice.

#### Urban action

*RADI RĪGU!* has made an attempt to build trust by bringing public space users and policy makers closer to each other in co-operation under a non-written slogan call "City makers are on the street!". The ultimate task of the intensive programme, disclosed in its title "CREATE Riga", is to make participants assume the role of mediators between decision-makers, stakeholders and the public. The traditional soft PR campaign tools were used: a website ([www.radirigu.lv](http://www.radirigu.lv)), information in public media and open lectures given by the external experts. Two public conferences were organized

during the programme: a mid-review of the results during the second phase and a two-day closing conference in the City Hall, which brought together most of the important actors: politicians, decision makers, inhabitants, professionals, foreign experts and urban activists. An effective tool for getting closer to users and city administration was "moving workshops". Starting in the House of Architects, participants worked in all selected neighbourhoods, in the schools or district administrations, involving the local people. It created a platform for effective communication with inhabitants and local authorities. Between the seminars participants did their "homework" on participative design, organizing workshops for children and involving different departments, real estate developers, NGOs, police and port authorities.

The integrative approach, applied as a methodology to all levels of the programme - aim, structure of the workshops, preparation of the process, selection of the cases, branding and implementation of the results, doubtlessly served as a strong communicative platform. The integrative approach also determined multiple, layered aims of the project, which can be articulated in eight flows: discover, learn, realise, cooperate, involve, marketing, link, create - Riga! (Table 1).

As an example one can mention communication with city officers at the early stage of the programme, which was organized not as passive information, but as active involvement. They were also invited to evaluate the variants of the programme's logo, which added an informal note to the communication process.

This preliminary friendly communication helped to create interest, understanding and personal engagement of the city officials invited to the discussions. Indeed, during the process they changed their positions from "observers" to "participants". Initially discussions were not aimed at gaining permission or "financial support" (the project is partly financed by the ESF programme and participants themselves) but sharing opinions about questions such as "Is it necessary for Riga?", "What do we need to make Riga better?" and "Which are the tools to achieve it?".

All these activities definitely placed *RADI RĪGU!* on the public stage of the city. However, it must be admitted that the PR programme planned by the organizers was not entirely successful due to financial and time shortage. The biggest contribution to the successful "RR-story" concerning "best practice" public image was made by the well-organized and broadly popularized last conference in the City Hall as well as the FORUM -format of this event.

TABLE 1

Aims of the project [Source: created by author]

1	2	3	4
<b>DISCOVER</b>	<b>LEARN</b>	<b>REALISE</b>	<b>COOPERATE</b>
the world of planning	<b>about a design process</b> from order to project definition from project definition to concept from concept to design from design to project	<b>real projects:</b> - on short term -relatively cheap -substantial -eye catching examples -pilot projects -best practices -projects that improve daily living conditions in own neighbourhood	all stakeholders and actors in all stages of the process: - decision-makers city administrations (national level) -district officials -external actors - NGOs
the importance of public spaces in all stages of the process	<b>project and process management</b> from idea to project from project to realisation from realisation to governance <b>to cooperate with:</b> stakeholders, actors, inhabitants <b>to preserve</b> spatial qualities during the whole process		
5	6	7	8
<b>INVOLVE</b>	<b>MARKET</b>	<b>LINK</b>	<b>CREATE RIGA</b>
inhabitants in all stages of the process, including realisation and governance	integrate several stages of the process into public events: -happenings -exhibitions -design contests for children	link the project and its process to parallel events and programmes: - RIGA 2014 - Talka - Apkaimies	hand over a set of tools to the City of Riga in order to develop a real Public Space Policy: - methodologies, guidelines - motivated staff - skilled professionals - enthusiastic people

## Implementation

Despite the great number of different workshops organized in Riga in the last two decennia, there was a lack of practical results: very few ideas found their path to realization. Therefore *RADI RĪGU!* and the city administration agreed (by signing a contract with the city development department) about possible implementation of the programme's results.

It is worth mentioning that this agreement was an encouraging step and a sign of trust from the side of the city administration and politicians, because of a rather vaguely defined outcome and unknown result of the whole event. Moreover, the agreement was closed with a programme which was just an urban action, without any legal status. One can argue that *RADI RĪGU!* is a unique example of (positive) collaboration between city authorities and urban activists, built on mutual trust.

## Results

Before articulating the outcome of this heterotopian one-year-long urban action/training programme, it is worth briefly describing the initial emotional landscape of the story. Rereading the negative comments on the article announcing the start of *RADI RĪGU!* in the archive of the interactive architecture platform A4D ([www.a4d.lv](http://www.a4d.lv)), remembering scepticism and mistrust, even resistance from the side

of politicians as well as professionals, one would wonder if there ever was hope for (positive) results. There was, however, a shared space of enthusiasm, eagerness for new knowledge, love for one's own city and a rare air of creativity mixed with friendship. It was exactly this mixture that delivered results which were officially and publically approved on the *RADI RĪGU!* Forum in March 2012.

The first and most important result is the fulfilment of the main goal, namely, to raise awareness of the need for a comprehensive approach to city development. During the year *RADI RĪGU!* activities – communication with inhabitants, public lectures, discussions with city officials – attracted enthusiastic people who joined the groups and worked on the projects together with the participants.

Due to its 3D character the training programme turned into a common event. Students and professors of three Latvian universities, civil servants, district authorities, Ministry of Environment, police, schools and inhabitants were all involved in the action. The "homework" in communication and participative design resulted in the foundation of NGOs in two of the five programme's neighbourhoods.

The most mistrusted and (even among the coaches critically discussed) intention, to deliver practical results for the City in order to implement them, is in the stage of possible realization at that moment. Decision-makers publically announced their willingness to further develop the programme for neighbourhoods and particular projects created by *RADI RIGU!* The city development department has officially started to work on the proposals.

As a continuing professional development this programme fulfilled its task most successfully: all practitioners and students who participated in the training programme emphasized the high importance of the gained knowledge and skills for their further professional careers and understanding of the processes in the city. *nRADI RIGU!* initiative has also gained international interest.

However, the most important outcome of the programme, which was meant as a positive and constructive action of the professionals, may be that it is a demonstration “for” rather than “against”. It is the first step in building trust and mutual understanding between participants of the urban project in its broader sense.

## Conclusions

Searching for the more effective methods of professional education, the social aspect of learning appears not less important than methodology. In this concern historical perspective of social life comes forward with forms of co-creation rooted in local culture. Together with material cultural heritage and non-material ones like song festivals, carnivals or religious rituals, the social heritage as a ritual of spatial co-production has a capacity of being transformed into new forms of urban planning practice and education. The case of *Talka* with its shift from industrial production to spatial co-production provides us with valuable information and methodologies.

There is a challenge for building effective learning ecologies is the creation of enhanced ‘navigation’ models that facilitate learners positioning, imagining better horizons, choosing strategic directions and evaluating operational strategies.

Contemporary urban development increasingly turns into mass creativity and mass innovation, but urban co-production requires interaction of all actors. Learning in architecture and planning, having creativity at the bottom [13], has to become a platform for urban development as open source and co-creation (“yes, you can use my ideas”). As much as the urban project “in the wild”, the major task of the “laboratory” of urban education is to provide professional training in co-existence, non-aggressiveness and tolerance.

Bridging educational contexts and actual planning environments can benefit from developing the metaphors of ‘field’ and ‘laboratory’. Digging into the field produces basic material for the living lab and generates self-esteem within the field. Being in the field generates awareness for samples in their context and produces a reflective field.

Becoming open to each other, field and lab can generate connections between two severely separated realms: practice and theory, professional and academic urban practice, constantly changing urban environments and institutionalized policy making. Aiming at an educational setting functioning as a workplace for researching, observing and approaching these changes while (necessarily) participating in the process, learning ecologies should be created, based on the imaginative power of the stage. The programme *RADI RIGU!* with its evolution from shared mistrust and resistance to shared enthusiasm and willingness to co-operate offers a convincing methodology for creative learning.

*RADI RIGU!* has a heterotopian character and combines learning, urban action and the aspect of implementation. As such it was like heterotopias often are [3], a “reaction on crisis”. It complies with a planning cycle which analyzes an existing situation, develops a vision about a better future, implies transformations and evaluates these in the light of a next cycle [14] and marks a shift towards ecological approach to planning education.

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## Notes

- (1) Popular Russian series „Александровский сад” [Alexander’s Garden] recreates the last days of Lavrentiy Beria, the most influential Stalin’s secret police chief in the film “Охота на Берия” [Hunting Beria] (2008). [http://www.domkino.tv/announce/6545\\_rus](http://www.domkino.tv/announce/6545_rus). [On line 5 May 2012].
- (2) “Saskaņas centrs” [Harmony Centre] is the name of the popular Latvian political party, which has declared overcoming ethnical and social conflicts their main goal.
- (3) Recently (2009) built and pending approbation virtual interactive platform for inhabitants for active participation in improvement of their own environment <http://socmap.com/> [on line 18.05.2012].
- (4) Ideju Talka (The Talka of ideas), translated as Do Talk, is using the homonymy of the Talka (volunteer work, *latv.*) and talk (act of speech, *eng.*). The DoTalk co-creation event technology was developed in mid-2009 in Latvia based on belief that we can organize ourselves in a way that everyone’s ideas, motivation and contribution work in synergy with contributions of others



- towards making ideas happen, reaching common goals and overcoming the crisis. <http://idejutalka.lv/pages/en> [on line 18.05.2012].
- (5) Pagalmu Talka (Courtyard Talka) is a kind of volunteer work aimed at improvement of own environment. <http://www.talkas.lv/?page=621&lng=en>, [on line 15.04.2015].
- (6) Skolnieks, pētnieks, pilsētnieks (SPP) means Pupil, Explorer, City-dweller. It is an initiative (2009) of young architects for educating children in architecture and planning, using a creative game-based workshop method. <http://www.skolniekspetnieks.pilsetnieks.lv/> [on line 18.05.2012].
- (7) Linnalabor (Urban Laboratory) is in 2006 founded Estonian NGO that exercises urban activism. <http://www.linnalabor.ee/en/?lk=0> [on line 18.05.2012].
- (8) Interesting embodiment of the 'water' metaphor appears to the first post-Soviet decennia is presented in the documentary about the former owner of Yukos Oil Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Film "Khodorkovsky" "tells the drama of Khodorkovsky's Odyssey, all the way from socialist believer to perfect capitalist and subsequently becomes the most known Russian prisoner...." <http://www.khodorkovsky-movie.com/> [on line 01.05.2012].
- (9) The year when was internationally accepted the state status of Baltic countries.
- (10) Historical centre of Riga is protected by UNESCO

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**Kopsavilkums.** Atrodoties urbānā trīsstūra – “reālā pasaule”- profesionālā izglītība - profesionālā prakse - centrā, paveras trīs savstarpēji saistītas perspektīvas. Pirmā – “reālā pasaule”- pašlaik šķērso post-tiltu no vēl neaptvertās pagātnes uz grūti aptveramo nākotni. Līdzīgi procesiem post-koloniālā vai post-diktatoriskā vidē, post-padomju telpa pārvērtē savu sociālistisko pagātni.

Profesionālā izglītība cilvēku dzīvesvietu zinātņu jomā, atspoguļojot procesus “reālajā pasaulē”, šodien meklē jaunas, integrētākas un vairāk starpdisciplinārās pieejas. Šīs pieejas tiecas aptvert dažādu nozaru vajadzības, augošo pieprasījumu pēc līdzdalības, starpdisciplinārās, starpresoru un starptautiskās sadarbības. Latvija nav izņēmums, neskatoties uz to, ka pēc-padomju transformāciju procesu radītie intelektuālie un strukturālie zaudējumi izglītības sistēmā, it īpaši augstākajā izglītībā un pētniecībā, praktiski paralizēja šo jomu uz gandrīz divām dekādēm. Brīvā tirgus attiecību izveide, padomju plānošanas un izglītības sistēmas sabrukums un tradicionāli spēcīga estētiski orientēta arhitektūras skola noteica „metamorfozu” laika situāciju pilsētplānošanā un ar to saistītajā izglītībā: pilsētplānošana kā disciplīna bija mirusi. Kā galveno instrumentu pilsētu attīstībā turpināja izmantot funkcionālā zonējuma plānu. Neskatoties uz to, ka arhitektu un ainavu arhitektu profesionālās izglītības programmas definīcijās vārds „pilsētplānošana” tika iekļauts, sistemātiskas zināšanas un prakse plānošanā netika piedāvātas.

Pēc neatkarības atgūšanas 20. gadsimta 90-os gados, brīvā tirgus sistēmas rekonstrukcija pilnībā izmainīja pilsētvides profesionālās prakses rituālus. Lavīnas kustībai līdzīga pāreja no centralizētās plānošanas uz brīvā tirgus ekonomiku un tās ietekme uz emocionālajām un mentālajām sabiedrības ainavām salīdzināma ar militārās intervences efektu: nozīmīga sabiedrības daļa nebija spējīga pielāgoties jaunai un nezināmai, ar neskaidriem spēles noteikumiem un, vissvarīgākais, svešai brīvā kapitālisma ideoloģijai. Profesionālā prakse šajā laikā, atšķirībā no izglītības, jūtīgi reaģē uz apjukumu, kuru rada uz “svētā nekustamā īpašuma” dogmas balstītais finansiālais kapitāls, vairākos veidos norādot uz pilsētvides procesu strupceļiem.

Jaunajiem apstākļiem piemērotās pilsētplānošanas trūkumu kompensē pasaulē pazīstamo ārzemju speciālistu (Geils, Kolhāss, Forsters, Meinrads Fon Gerkans un citi) vadītās radošās darbnīcas, semināri, plenēri un arhitektūras konkursi, kuri kļūst par lielo nekustamo īpašumu attīstības un pilsētplānošanas ekspertīzes instrumentiem. Taču šo aktivitāšu reālā ietekme uz pilsētas izaicinājumu efektīviem risinājumiem vēl joprojām ir salīdzinoši neliela. Plānošanas struktūru vājums, visaptverošas pieejas pilsētas attīstībai un politiskās (arī arhitektu) ieinteresētības publiskās ārtelpas kvalitātē trūkums, kā arī funkcionālā zonējumā balstītie normatīvi kļuva par galvenajiem speciālistu radošo iniciatīvu efektivitāti samazinošajiem iemesliem..

Savukārt, jaunā profesionāļu paaudze ģeogrāfijā, arhitektūrā, pilsētplānošanā un sociālajās zinātnēs aktīvi izmanto 90-os atvērtās robežās un apgūst Rietumvalstu kolēģu pieredzi. Tā veiksmīgi eksperimentē urbānā vidē, ar radošām iniciatīvām dažādos veidos veicinot sociālo atdzimšanu. Urbānisms kā pieeja bieži ir „pilsētu veidotāju” dienas kārtībā, bet urbānais aktīvisms kļūst par pilsētvides inovāciju ieviešanas instrumentu.

Atbildot uz pašreizējiem izaicinājumiem, starpdisciplināra Rīgā praktizējošo arhitektu, ainavu arhitektu, ceļu inženieru un citu nozares speciālistu un studentu grupa 2010. gadā uzsāka mēģinājumu pielietot vēsturiski izveidojušās koprades metodes, pazīstamas kā talkas, pilsētplānošanā un urbānajā dizainā. To pamudināja vairāki faktori: iepriekšminētais intereses trūkums ārtelpas kvalitātē, nepietiekamās zināšanās pilsētplānošanā un dizainā, pasīva sabiedrības attieksme un augošā dažādu sociālo grupu - politiķu, nozares profesionāļu, iedzīvotāju, ierēdniecības un uzņēmēju - savstarpējā neuzticība un segregācija. Gadu vēlāk tika uzsākta intensīvā apmācību programma RADI RĪGU!, kurā piedalījās starpdisciplināra pilsētvides praktiķu un studentu komanda pieredzējušu Beļģijas pilsētplānotāju un akadēmijas profesoru vadībā. Dalībnieki kopā ar organizatoriem (publiskās un privātās ārtelpas darbnīca ALPS) noformulēja Programmas moto - „publiskā ārtelpa kā sociālās atdzimšanas instruments”. Viens no galvenajiem mērķiem bija aicināt pie „apaļa galda” pēc iespējās daudzveidīgu ieinteresēto pušu, kuras piedalās Rīgas pilsēttelpas pārveidošanā, grupu, lai aktivizētu diskusiju par integrētu pieeju pilsētas attīstībai, kā arī radītu uzticību starp politiķiem, profesionāļiem un iedzīvotājiem.

Vissvarīgākais RADI RĪGU! iniciatīvas rezultāts ir programmas galvenā mērķa – radīt kopējo izpratni par visaptverošām pieejām pilsētplānošanai un to mūsdienīgiem instrumentiem – sasniegšana. Gada laikā RADI RĪGU! aktivitātes piesaistīja un iesaistīja entuziastus no iedzīvotājiem, politiķiem, nozares ierēdniecības, policijas un citām sociālām grupām, kuri kopā ar dalībniekiem strādāja pie piecu Rīgas apkaimju atdzīvīšanas programmām. RADI RĪGU! praksē demonstrēja principu „esi par, nevis pret”, un tika vērsta ne tikai uz ideju radīšanu, bet arī uz to īstenošanu, un kļuva par unikālu precedentu uzticības un savstarpējas izpratnes veidošanā.