

Baltic Audience Links: approaches and cases in participatory urban culture



Photo: Julius Narkūnas (Laimikis.lt)

Report 2017

Dr. Jekaterina Lavrinec, Laboratory for urban games and research Laimikis.lt
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Context: Recently, in the cities of the Baltic Sea region we observe a growing number of bottom-up initiatives that foster local networks in neighbourhoods and across the cities through cultural activities. In some cases these local initiatives turn into movements and aim to bring structural changes into governmental practices in the cities, providing direct links between decision makers and urban communities. By launching the Baltic Audience Links we focused on the challenges, approaches and cases in the field of participatory urban culture. By mapping the experience of the NGOs and practitioners, active in **developing interconnections between people in the neighbourhoods and across the city through the cultural and non-formal educational activities**, we seek to contribute into understanding of **participatory approaches in audience development**. Collecting the cases and methods of the cultural NGOs active in the field of participatory urban culture is instrumental in monitoring the challenges, which communities in the cities of the Baltic Sea region face. The

solutions that are implemented by small organisations in their neighbourhoods and cities might need to be scaled up. We see the potential of this pilot to become a growing network of cultural organisations, active in participatory urban development and experiences in developing tools for inclusive decision-making.

Due to the frames of the project we focused on exploring the initiatives in several Baltic countries (**Lithuania, Latvia and partly Poland**), inviting practitioners from other BSR countries, active in the field of participatory cultural development, to join the growing network. In the perspective we seek to expand a small network that we managed to build by connecting it to the existing networks in the field of culture and non-formal education.

The aim of this pilot study is threefold:

(a) to map actors and initiatives in the field of participatory urban development;
 (b) to start crystallizing the model of participatory development, based on the methods and cases presented by cultural NGOs active in the field of participatory urban culture;
 (c) to strengthen the cooperation between cultural innovators in the Baltic Sea region by developing a network of practitioners in participatory cultural and urban development. The networks are needed primarily for sharing the methods and approaches in participatory development and for cooperation on the shared activities. In the heart of the growing Baltic Audience Links network is a practical knowledge of how to bring people together and how to manage a participatory process.

The Object of this study is to use participatory tools and formats that foster cooperation between various groups of people in the neighbourhoods and across the cities. We focus on very practical questions of how to bring people together, how to develop trust in the urban localities (neighbourhoods, public spaces, etc) – and what makes these participatory cultural initiatives sustainable. The latter question concerns the conditions of work by cultural NGOs – how the process is managed, what are the resources and which challenges are common to this field.

Definition: participatory urban culture is a field, driven by the idea that the essential basic element of urban life is **social interaction**. This focus encourages examining of cultural events and activities as forms of social contact. This paradigm brings new sensitivity to urban and cultural practitioners, who start using various forms of culture as a tools for developing social networks. It encourages us to explore urban life on a **micro-level**, paying attention to micro-contacts in urban places. This focus prevents us, the practitioners in this field, to use the notion of “audiences” (which belongs to the traditional cultural paradigm).

Participation and sustainable interconnections between participants become the aim of

our activities in urban places. However, in the cultural sector the number of organisations and practitioners, who apply this paradigm in their practice methodically, is very modest.

Conceptual framework



A conceptual framework for the study of participatory practices is based on the principles formulated by anthropologists, sociologists and geographers who studied the interactions in urban spaces – M. de Certeau, H. Lefebvre, R. Sennett, N. Thrift and A. Amin. Below, the basic explanation of each principle is being extended by comments on how these principles work in the field of participatory urban culture.

Spatial approach defines social practices as spatial ones – that is, brings attention to the spatial conditions, constellation of the elements in urban places, and potential of places to generate social contacts. Social practices are embedded in space and are shaped by the space and also transform the space. Collective creative practices in public spaces and neighbourhoods adjust existing scenarios of use (mis-use or non-use) of the place (see more: Lavrinec 2011¹). In some cases collective creative actions generate symbolic meaning of the place, which results in the alternative names of the place. The process of revitalisation of urban places involves the development of social connections, which may grow into a network of trust and mutual help (see more: Lavrinec 2014²).

2. Micro-level of social life: The concept of “light sociality” (N. Thrift, A. Amin), which refers to the connections and relations emerging in urban places, encourages to explore forms and scenarios of micro-communication. In the cities, there is a wide range of the forms of anonymous indirect communication. For example, spontaneously arranged places for sharing (like Little free libraries for sharing the books) and places for lost and found objects (like Street Komoda) propose to the potential users to become a part of ongoing indirect interaction with other users of the place. The micro-gestures of sharing and caring create a space of mutual care. These everyday interventions little by little transform urban

¹ Lavrinec, J. 2011. Revitalization of Public Spaces: from Non-places to Creative Playgrounds // *Santalka: Philosophy, Communication*, Vol. 19, Nr 2, p. 70-75

² Lavrinec, J. 2014. Community art initiatives as a form of participatory research: the case of Street Mosaic workshop // *Creativity studies*. Vilnius : Technika. Vol. 7, no. 1 (2014), p. 55-68

spaces, bringing more signs of friendly openness to it. The attentiveness to the micro-level of social communication enables practitioners to create effective communication tools.



3. The crucial role of creative cooperation for building networks of trust and mutual help:

As R. Sennett points out, cooperation itself is a craft, and it involves also learning new skills (Sennett 2013³). By creating favourable conditions for social contacts, cultural activities foster local and trans-local networks. Learning new skills and making things

together plays a significant role in the range of activities that practitioners in participatory culture implement in the neighbourhoods and public spaces.

- Within this conceptual framework the study was focused on the tools, formats, methods of developing the **networks** in the cities – based either on the principle of geographic proximity (neighbours, people coming from the same district), or on shared interests (e.g. in history of the city, in new experiences, in alternative scenarios for the leisure, etc.). We see this network as sharing-based eco-system that empowers its members and strengthens the field of participatory urban culture.

Methods: mapping of participatory urban practices in the Baltic Sea region is based on the reports on the local activities made by the practitioners – representatives of the NGOs from the cultural sector. The materials were collected in the form of presentations, discussions, questionnaires and interviews. To provide a platform for sharing the methods and discussing the challenges, a series of meetings was arranged in February-May 2017 (see short profiles below).

Channels: to spread the calls for participation and contribution, the questionnaires, and the materials related to the meetings the following channels were used: a) River Cities platform and newsletter (reach: international community of practitioners in the field of arts and culture); b) Co-urbanism Facebook group; Social Innovators network at Facebook

³ Sennett, R. 2013. Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation. New York: Penguin Books.

(reach: practitioners in the field of social innovations in the Baltic Sea Region) c) Intercult web page, Laimikis.It blog and Facebook, the channels of the Baltic Sea Cultural Center.



Stockholm meeting, February 21-23, 2017

Host: Intercult, Sweden. Baltic Links Audience meeting was an integral part of the event “Audience Links Xchange”. The whole event was structured around the topic of the audience development. The Baltic Links Audience session focused on the **creative**

communication formats (urban festivals, platforms for non-formal education, participatory art events) developed by BSR cultural organisations for fostering local participatory processes. We focused on the following questions: how do we involve various groups in the creative processes? How the cultural initiatives foster the local communities?

Formats of work: discussions based on the presentation of the methodological principles of the participatory urban development. Presentations of the cases and methods by the participating practitioners, discussions based on the presented cases. The questionnaire was spread among organisations working in the field of participatory urban development on the preparation stage of the event. **Program:** <http://intercult.se/program/> | **Presentations:** <http://bit.ly/2yeiMx3> | <http://bit.ly/2fZ52Mc>



Vilnius meeting, April 7-8, 2017

Host: Laimikis.It – Laboratory for urban games and research

Baltic Links Audience meeting was an integral part of annual forum “Co-urbanism” that brings together urbanists, placemakers and cultural innovators, active in the Baltic Sea region, alongside with urban and cultural strategists, for sharing their approaches and cases in participatory

urban development. The event seeks to map current challenges and tendencies in placemaking in Lithuania and in the Baltic Sea region.

Central topics: How do we develop local networks? What tools do we apply to gain and share new knowledge about our cities and neighbourhoods? What creative formats do we use to bring people together? How co-design initiatives contribute to the growth of trust in the neighbourhoods and safety in public spaces? **Formats of work:** presentations, discussions based on the presented cases, field study in the form of urban game. Interviews

with some of the participants were made during this meeting. **Program:** <http://laimikis.lt/co-urbanism-2017/> | **Presentations:** <http://bit.ly/2yyZT40>



Gdansk meeting, May 17-20, 2017

Host: River Cities platform / the Baltic Sea Cultural Centre, Gdansk

The event was structured around local cases of culture-driven urban development, bringing together practitioners in participatory urban culture from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, with invited community artists and entrepreneurs active in cultural field from the UK and Romania. The main focus of

this meeting was participatory urban culture, culture as a part of sustainable model for urban development, and the role of non-formal education. **Central topics:** the role of community art projects in bringing positive change to the communities and sustainable effects, the role of non-formal education and cultural activities in promoting inclusive urban development. **Formats of work:** field studies, discussions focused on the cases, presentations, round-tables on community arts and non-formal education. **Program and summary:** <http://bit.ly/2pzuX3F> (River Cities page)

Toward the model of participatory development: components.

Cooperation as a Craft: participatory formats (tools)



Photo archive of Kaspars Lielgalvis

By implementing various cultural formats in the neighbourhoods, public spaces, abandoned buildings, urban practitioners **create conditions for cooperative creative actions**. Some actions are **open** to everyone, and the only limit is the space itself. For example, while implemented

in the neighbourhood, the cultural activity will gather people of the neighbourhood mostly, with some possible exceptions. While implemented in the abandoned building the initiative

attracts those who have access to the spread information. While implemented in public space it attracts accidental passers-by. However, to keep the initiative sustainable, in some cases the organizers sell tickets to the events, and it limits the accessibility of the event or action. Of course, the content of the initiative becomes a criterion for age groups to join the actions. Participatory culture is instrumental in creating interconnections between different age groups. **Who are the participants?** While addressing cultural activities to the urban communities, the range of the age groups is extremely wide. The activities run in the public spaces and neighbourhoods are open for many age groups: kids, youngsters, adults and seniors are welcome to join. However, there is a notable correlation between the locality and the openness of the activity. To sum up the experience of the interviewed practitioners **on** how much the initiatives are open to various age groups:

- **Neighbourhoods:** open to all age groups. In many cases kids are the first to join the creative initiatives, and it is a key age group to the neighbourhood (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia);
- **Public spaces:** depends upon the program, but potentially lots of accidental people can join (Poland, Lithuania);
- **Revitalised buildings** or newly constructed community spaces: depends upon the program and communication channels (Latvia, Lithuania).



Photo archive of Albertas Kazlauskas

The range of cultural formats and creative activities that bring people together for further cooperation and inclusive transformations of the place is extremely wide: • Excursions • Creative workshops in co-design and place making • All kinds of events, from small poetry,

music, cinema festivals and exhibitions to community picnic and improvised collective actions • Community art, art interventions and activities connected to them. Again, the idea of **co-creation** is present in many participatory activities. In some cases the initiating organisation reserves the role of advisor, not organizer, proposing participants to start organizing the activities themselves. **Do it together** principle is extremely important in many cases as a possibility to get helpers, build trust, maintain the place – and to develop a group of shared interests.



FORMS OF ACTIVITIES: workshops, excursions, cultural events (exhibitions, local festivals), place-making / urban co-design, art-interventions, publishing → patterns of activities;



The growing role of **non-formal learning** is widely recognized by the practitioners working in the field of participatory culture and urban development. While some of the formats of participatory urban culture are educational (excursions, workshops), other forms of participatory culture are also oriented toward improving skills or learning new ones. Besides that, participants learn more about the place they live in, or some places in their city.

Cross-sectorial cooperation is very common to the projects promoting participatory urban culture. Experienced practitioners also recognize the importance of effective communication with strategic decision-making institutions, such as municipality, regional government, and ministries. Interlinks between these levels are needed to ensure the

effective monitoring of the challenges in participatory urban development and to scale up the solutions that were successfully tested on the micro-scale. Switch from the pilot projects toward long-term strategic programs, based on the actual data, is one of the things practitioners are seeking for.

Formal education: some of the practitioners cooperate episodically with schools and universities programs (such as Urban studies), enriching teaching with the practical knowledge. Those practitioners who seek to implement the model of inclusive development for local communities recognize the importance of literacy in architecture and urban planning for wide audiences. The ability to read a plan, to understand and discuss the project is the first step toward active participation in decision-making (Lithuania, Latvia). Both formal and non-formal learning is seen as **essential tool for positive changes in urban development** alongside especially vertical cooperation (involving municipalities, ministries, other strategic institutions) is recognized by the experienced practitioners. In fact, seeking to bring sustainability into urban

Space and spatial practices: While some of the programs and initiatives, implemented by organisations active in the field of participatory urban culture, take place in typical surrounding (offices, galleries, cultural centres, libraries, etc.), **revitalisation of urban spaces** through creative collective actions is a common activity. For some organisations a focus on the revitalisation of abandoned buildings or neighbourhoods is essential. While in **Latvia** there is a vivid movement of reanimating abandoned buildings, in **Lithuania** and **Poland** there is a growing number of the initiatives, addressed to the neighbourhoods. Participatory approach is an effective way to build **a deep connection with the place**. People start taking care ~~for~~ **of** the place, which they have co-created, and the **emerging collective responsibility** may have a positive impact on the neighbourhoods and public spaces.

Changes that the initiatives bring to the locality (neighbourhood, public space, revitalised building). In the case of success, participatory cultural initiatives that practitioners arrange encourage local people or the group of some shared interest, that formed around the initiative, to develop their own activities, prolonging the scenarios, proposed by the artists. By taking part in the development of the participatory cultural initiative, people learn how to implement new creative initiatives, how to use communication channels, and later their own ideas can contribute to a revitalisation of the same place and into the sustainability of the cultural format.



Photo archyve: Žemųjų Šančių bendruomenė

Learning by doing method is widely applied in participatory urban cultural activities. Below are summarized answers by the practitioners:

- Local initiatives open people and places to the rest of the world. People learn to be more open (Lithuania, several answers of similar kind);
- Brings new contacts, it's a way to build the groups of shared interests.

People inspire each other through their

creative activities (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Sweden);

- Empowers local groups of people: people find out their potential, and they become more active (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia);
- Promotes the history of the place, brings more knowledge about the place (Latvia, Lithuania)
- Promotes small underground initiatives, providing them stage / visibility and creating a space for people of shared interest to grow together (Latvia, Lithuania).

Challenges: Most of the respondents from Latvia and Lithuania noted as a biggest challenge a lack of sustainable **financial model**. While for the NGO sector project-based financial model is the most common one, active organisations seek funding of their activities to keep them sustainable. During the discussions, the participants of Baltic Audience Links events noted donations for excursions and cultural activities as quite common way of keeping the activity going. Here are few answers from the questionnaires and interviews:

- “Main challenge is a lack of financial sources and permanent venue. We apply for public funding and sell tickets for some of events” (Latvia).
- “The biggest challenge is how to sustainably earn money and employ people” (Lithuania).
- “Sustaining is another challenge we are trying to solve by looking for sponsors, partnerships and trying different business models” (Lithuania).
- “Let's face it: working in this field might burn you out. We need a sustainable financial model to keep activities going” (Latvia).
- “Cultural sector in Lithuania is driven by crazy people, people will develop their ideas even if they do not get funding. But the main challenge with this approach is that you can't become a long distance runner, get tired at some point. The field loses experienced professionals in this way.” (Lithuania).

The organisations in Poland as one of the biggest challenge note **management** of the growing number of activities of the organisation and the need in scaling up the initiatives **promoting** them internationally. Here are few answers from the questionnaires:

- “We would like to try to work on international scale and promote innovative solutions for participatory design. It is our biggest challenge till now” (Poland).
- A well-structured management of the programs that organisation runs is seen both as a challenge and as a way to ensure development of the organisation: “PROGRAMMING (Selection of activities; Diversification of the activities; Adaptation of activities to the perceptive abilities, free time and artistic development of participants; Unification of some topic (cycles); EDUCATION (Diversification of the various types of programs/educational activities; The offer for the youngest participants; Cooperation with education sector; Different target groups (age and type - education, the degree of preparation); COLLABORATION (the exchange of good practices and experiences, including planning with regard to the calendar of events in the nearest area; the development of mechanisms to improve the cooperation with the other institutions/organisations, especially methods of cooperation with the private sector)” (Poland).

Outcomes of the activities of the Baltic Audience Links

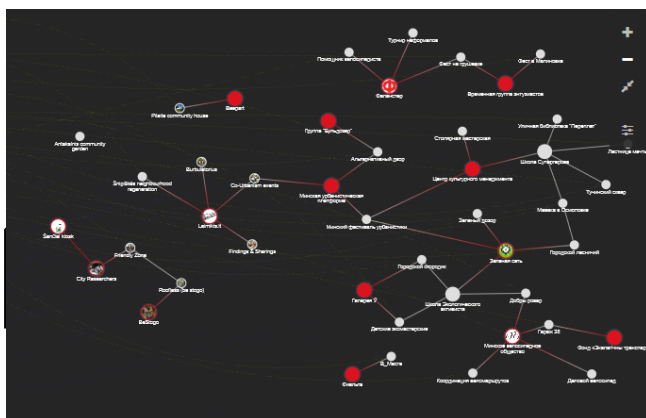
The model, based on periodical events in the cities, where partnering organisations are based, appeared to be very effective. During this period the participants:

- Formed working groups and applied at least for two BSR projects, focused on participatory urban culture. One of them, School of Citizen Artist for Social Transformation (organisations from Kaunas, Vilnius, Stockholm, Riga), approved by the Nordic Council in Lithuania, has just finished successfully.
- Took part in the discussions and workshops visiting each other's event as invited experts.
- Seek for new opportunities to come together! 😊

Perspectives

To keep the Baltic Audience Links network alive the following formats are needed:

Regular meetings: international gathering once every three-four months for open events (presentation, seminars, workshops, study visits) would provide conditions for monitoring the challenges and development of the participatory urban culture in the Baltic Sea Region will be helpful in building sustainable platform. It also provide advocacy for the local implementation of the principles, essential for the sustainable development of the region.



Interactive map of the initiatives in participatory urban culture. On the base of pilot mapping actual interactive map as a tool for collecting

and analysing methods and cases of participatory urbanism is needed. Interactive platform with administration would be instrumental in identifying the types of urban problems and methods of solutions implemented in different regions. So it would serve as an analytical tool. It is also a networking tool, helpful in exchanging the information on ongoing initiatives in the region. Therefore we invite every active urbanist to contribute into this growing map, by publishing the profiles of their initiatives and links to their sites. In 2015 Laimikis.lt has developed a pilot map for the NGOs in participatory urbanism in cooperation with Minsk Urban Platform. The aim of the platform was to map the initiatives and their methods in Lithuania and Belarus: <http://laimikis.lt/co-urbanism-map/> . However the map needs to be expanded and the pilot version needs to be technically upgraded.

- **Collecting and visualising Baltic Sea Region's experience in participatory urban culture and participatory urban development through cultural activities.** Publishing the guides and study books in participatory urban culture would be helpful in promoting the tools and methods for sustainable urban development. Exhibitions as publicly presented collection of the cases and methods, lead by the practical workshops, could become a productive format for disseminating the practical knowledge accumulated by the practitioners in the field of participatory urban culture.
- **Implementation** of the collected information in the **university courses**. The field of participatory urban culture reacts develops rapidly due to the challenges that emerge in the cities and its
- **Implementation in the programs of place making and communities development** in the cities of the Baltic Sea Region. Ministries and municipalities might use the knowledge of approaches, methods and criteria in participatory urban culture in the process of preparing and implementing the programs in placemaking and communities development. There is an urgent need in the stronger links between the actual practitioners and strategic institutions.

Participating organisations and practitioners in participatory culture

* Organisations, which did not participate directly yet answered to the questionnaire and expressed their will to join the BAL platform, are included as well are highlighted grey. We seek to include them to our upcoming events to expand BAL network. The leaders of the project from Sweden, Poland, Lithuania are highlighted yellow.

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Organisation, NVO	Participating representatives	City / Country
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Intercult	Iwona Preis	Stockholm / Sweden
ArtAgent	Lott Alfreds	Stockholm / Sweden
Konstproduktion	Maria Backman	Stockholm/Björnsjö/Sweden
Laimikis.lt – urban games and research	Jekaterina Lavrinec	Vilnius / Lithuania
Žemųjų Šančių bendruomenė	Ed Carroll and Vita Gelūnienė	Kaunas / Lithuania
Teka	Rasa Chmieliauskaitė	Kaunas / Lithuania
Open House Kaunas	Adelė Dovydevičiūtė	Vilnius / Lietuva
Šilainiai project	Evelina Šimkutė	Kaunas / Lithuania
Beepart	Indrė Misiulytė	Vilnius / Lithuania
Street Music Day / Culture Night	Judita Strumilaitė	Vilnius / Lithuania
Gatvės gyvos	Albertas Kazlauskas	Vilnius / Lithuania
200m2	Mindaugas Butvila	Kaunas / Lithuania
Vario Burnos	Tomas Butkus	Klaipėda, Vilnius / Lithuania
Free Riga	Ieva Lange	Riga / Latvia
Totaldobžē Art Center	Kaspars Lielgalvis	Liepāja, Riga / Latvia
LCCA	Evita Goze	Riga / Latvia
LCCA, Survival Kit	Diana Popova	Riga / Latvia
Urban Institute	Jonas Büchel	Bigaunciems, Riga / Latvia
ROKU	Māris Grosbahs	Riga / Latvia
Baltic Sea Cultural Center	Magdalena Zakrzewska-Duda	Gdansk / Poland
Fundation ARTeria	Anna Ochmann	Zabrze / Poland
Arteria Association	Anna Miler	Gdansk / Poland
Forms and Shapes	Iza Rutkowska	Warsaw / Poland
Make your own city	Paweł Jaworski	Warsaw / Poland
Artists' Colony in the Gdansk Shipyard	Roman Sebastyanski	Gdansk / Poland
River // Cities	Klara Kopcińska	Warsaw / Poland
River // Cities	Agnieszka Wlazel	Warsaw / Poland
The culture-making association "Miastodwa"	Anna Wilczyńska	Warsaw / Poland
GUEST ORGANISATIONS AT THE EVENTS		
Arts for City	Alexandra Nenko	Sankt-Petersburg / Russia
Art Arctic Forum	Ekaterina Sharova	Archangelsk / Russia
Fablevision	Liz Gardner	UK
PlayHelloCity	Agnia Asanovich	Minsk / Belarus

Additional materials: short information on the participating practitioners and their organisations (alongside with guest organisations):

Lott Alfreds, ArtAgent (Sweden). Lott Alfreds, is a Swedish visual artist with vast experience in collaborative, cross-disciplinary and participatory art projects in Sweden and the Balkan countries. She was educated at the Royal Art Academy in Sweden and, since graduating has exhibited extensively in Sweden and abroad. Alfreds is the co-founder ArtAgent, a non-profit organisation focused on the creation and presentation of art projects in the social environment. Since its founding, ArtAgent was responsible numeral international collaborative projects and publications.

Tomas S. Butkus is an independent publisher, editor-in-chief of *Vario burnos*. In his practice Tomas develops innovative approaches in spatial learning. According to Tomas, one of the challenges for contemporary society has become an ability to connect elements and to see a panoramic view. That's how the idea to start arranging creative workshops for spatial learning has emerged. The title of his presentation is "Universe Minor" – Spatial Education Workshop for Children.

Rasa Chmieliauskaitė (Teka, Lithuania) Kaunas-based architect, is an active member of social-cultural movements. She is a member of TĖKA – a creative community that seeks to bring interconnections between Kaunas cultural life and the river. The community arranges events, discussions, provocative actions asking, how Kaunas could live WITH the river (not just by the river). One of the central question for the activity of Rasa's group is how the river can be a source of city life, identity and inspiration.

Adelė Dovydačiūtė (Open House Vilnius, Lithuania) is a team member of the **Open House Vilnius** team that arranges an architecture weekend during which usually or partly inaccessible buildings in Vilnius city open their doors to the public.

Vita Gelūnienė and Ed Carroll (Žemųjų Šančių bendruomenė, Lithuania) are community artists who work independently of institutions in collaboration with others in the area of community culture. Their practice is durational, involves artistic research and engages publics in spaces where community, culture and politics collide.

Indrė Misiulytė (Beepart, Lithuania) is a projects coordinator at Beepart workshops in Vilnius: "I started my appearance here as a volunteer of social project and now am happy worker. I've found Beepart only last year, so all the information is still new and fresh to me. Don't hesitate to ask me anything, because I might question you even more".

Jonas Büchel (Riga Urban Institute, Latvia): co-founder of Riga Urban Institute. Educated social worker, practicing cultural manager and urbanist.

Ieva Lange (Free Riga, Latvia): "I am a resident of the newly established Free Riga residency for social projects and initiatives related to activation of empty urban spaces and empty buildings in Riga, especially in the Moscow Forschtadt neighbourhood. Since autumn 2016, we have organised a neighbourhood celebration and created a map that introduces various places in the area through short descriptions of their everyday happenings and human interactions. Our aim is to continue building a neighbourhood network and to organise more activities involving people who live or work or are simply interested in Moscow Forschtadt – such as building a sauna in the nearby empty green field and continuing our free shop and DIY adventures. My own background is in anthropology with an interest in the making of urban (green) space and community building".

Jekaterina Lavrinec (Laimikis.lt, Lithuania), PhD, urban researcher, participatory artist and educator in Urban studies. She is a co-founder of Laimikis.lt - urban games and research lab (since 2007) that serves as an interdisciplinary platform for cultural innovations, spatial learning and promotes participatory urban culture by launching creative communities' initiatives in underused urban spaces. She is the author of a number of modules in Urban Studies, such as "Creative Communication in Public Spaces", "Public Spaces: Creativity and Power". Since 2010 she has been running practical workshops in cultural revitalisation of public spaces and inclusive development of the neighbourhoods for local communities and practitioners in European cities. Since 2012 she has been curating annual arts and research week for urban interventions in public spaces "priARTink!" (pARTicipate). She is the organizer of annual forum for urban practitioners in Vilnius "Co-urbanism". In her art and research activities she focuses on the issues of the perception of urban environment, user experience in public space, temporal urban solidarities and cooperation.

Kaspars Lielgalvis (Totaldobže Art Center, Latvia): "I am artist, curator, art manager and culture activist. I am co-founder and the head of artists run Art Centre "[Totaldobže](#)" which has become as experimental platform for cross-over creation and meeting for artists, poets, musicians, dancers and representatives from other culture disciplines in Riga. Since 2008 in collaboration with other artists and institutions "Totaldobže" has organized more than 300 contemporary art events – artist talks, art exhibitions, experimental workshops, interdisciplinary concerts, poetry slams, public discussions, international interdisciplinary festival and other types of contemporary art activities in Riga, Liepāja and outside Latvia – in Estonia and Spain. "Totaldobže" gets project based funding from Latvian Culture Ministry and Riga City Council every year since its foundation. "Totaldobže" projects has been funded also by European Culture foundation, Swiss foundation Prohelvetia, Dutch Culture Ministry, British Council in Latvia, Goethe institute in Latvia, Embassies of USA, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland and Estonia in Latvia. Since 2014 "Totaldobže" is producing printed Riga Culture maps and online culture events calendar www.culturemap.lv"

Anna Ochmann (ARTeria Foundation, Poland) is a resident of ARTeria Foundation, where she connects the world of fine arts and music with realisation of a variety projects, propagation of an active participation in culture and development of working in creative industries and in cultural sector. Her ideas are achieved through working out the alternative ways of spending free time, innovative methods of social and cultural animation but also thought an invitation to: shared initiatives, an investment in oneself, a participation in social life, a development of social abilities, simulation of creativity, discovery of the contentment with life and stimulation human's curiosity for the world.

Diāna Popova (LCCA, Survival Kit, Latvia) is a culture and art event producer, currently working at the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Riga. She has been involved in the production of the international contemporary art festival "Survival kit" since 2014 and she has organised and curated a whole year of events dedicated to Latvian avant-garde artist Hardijs Lediņš in 2015.

Iwona Preis (Intercult, Sweden): as Senior Associate at Intercult she works as Executive Director for Administrations & European Resource Centre for Culture including Europe Direct Information Centre and a Swedish network of cultural operators Access Europa, engaging in cultural politics, educating Swedish cultural sector about funding for culture, European Union, setting up projects with international partnerships, initiating debates and arranging spaces for cultural & social dialogue. She is also an initiator and leader of international, collaborative culture projects. In 2015 she has been appointed a President of international cultural platform River//Cities.

Magdalena Zakrzewska-Duda is Head of International Relations Department in the Baltic Sea Cultural Centre in Gdansk, Poland. She has been the leader or co-leader of many international and local projects e.g. Open Culture Spa – Sopot 2011 (to mark Polish presidency in the EU), Space around us (since 2012), Rivers of Opportunities (March 2014), Baltic House LAB 2015, Baltic Audience Links (2016-2017), ARTmosphere (2016), Shared History (2017-2018). Her main interest in cultural project is "culture for social change" and "culture for sustainability".

Evelina Šimkutė is an artist and curator. Her professional interest lay in community based, site specific art practices as well as participatory creative models. In 2012 Evelina graduated from the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design and she is working between London, UK and Kaunas, Lithuania. She is currently leading two socio-cultural projects based on the practice of de-centralization: [Šilainiai Photo](#) and [Šilainiai Project](#) in the micro-district of Šilainiai, Kaunas.

Ekaterina Sharova (Art Arctice Forum, Russia) (b. 1980): art historian, curator, educator. Her background is in Pedagogy, Aesthetics and History of Art from Pomor State University (Arkhangelsk, Russia), University of Oslo (Norway) and Norwegian Institute of Rome (Italy). She has co-curated such projects as The Mobile Institute, The First Supper Symposium, festival Barents Spektakel on the border between Russia and Norway. She

currently works with the local art community in her home town Arkhangelsk as well as in Norway. Ekaterina is a co-curator of the largest contemporary art event in the Russian North, Arctic Art Forum, where she has worked with participatory projects, popular culture and the local heritage.