

Tallinn conference on the trends and problems in urban development and policies

April 26, 2007

On April 25 and 26, representatives of SIA "Jaunrīgas attīstības uzņēmums" participated in the 4th Urban Studies Days organised in Tallinn by the Architecture and Urban Environment Department of the Estonian Academy of Art.

The hosts of the conference observed that the traditional methods and policies of urban planning often lack reliable solutions for a number of issues encountered by a city. Certain activity areas such as revitalising of former industrial areas, mitigating of social polarisation and developing of diverse and harmonious cultural environment often remain unaddressed.

At the conference, chairman of the board of SIA "Jaunrīgas attīstības uzņēmums" Valters Māziņš presented several modern solutions for reusing legacy industrial buildings. The presentation unfolded around the example of Andrejsala, where cultural and creative activities have a strong role in reshaping the former industrial environment.

A number of problem areas and real-life cases were discussed at the conference, for example, ways of converting industrial, usually dilapidated areas into centres of arts and culture as well as the role of short-term culture-related projects within the context of urban revitalisation (based on the example of Budapest). The participants also talked about the relations between urban culture, human environment and the media and brought up the topic of using information and communications technology for encouraging social involvement, i.e., increasing the civic activity during debates that influence the development trends of a city. A Helsinki project called Urban Mediator served as an example when various ways of cooperation of the general public and town authorities were discussed.

Further debate on policy making in a city touched upon the ideas of Richard Florida that concern 'creative cities' and the creative class. The participants also tried to determine whether creativity is indeed the current buzzword in urban development and whether it is able to bring the diverse European urban cultural values and culture-friendly business activities prominently to the foreground of urban policy making.

The Tallinn Urban Studies Days also featured lectures of German, Finnish, Hungarian, Dutch, Italian, Swedish and Estonian specialists.