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'THIS PLACE HAS POTENTIAL': TRASH, CULTURE, AND URBAN REGENERATION IN TALLINN, ESTONIA

ABSTRACT

The article analyses the use of cultural programmes and trash as tools for urban speculation in Tallinn, Estonia, naturalising an urban strategy that entails extensive spatial revaluation and socioeconomic intervention. Through an anthropological perspective focused on concepts of potential and trash, the analysis shows how the central-north shoreline was mobilised discursively as a wasteland and a zone of unrealised potential to justify capitalist development of the area. The way it was framed, both moving towards completion and as a playground for cultural activities and young people, increased the value and accessibility of the area, but also allowed real estate developers to exploit the synergies generated and make profit from the revaluated plots. Tropes of potential and trash appear thus as discursive tools for urban regeneration, co-related with a formal allocation of resources and official permits. As the case study shows, when an area is classed as having 'potential', it becomes defined by the fulfilment of that restrictive conceptualisation, which allows the economy to dictate urban planning and also cultural policy.

Keywords: politics of potentiality, urban regeneration, European Capital of Culture, waterfront of Tallinn, temporary uses, wasteland

INTRODUCTION[1]

What does it mean for a place to have potential? Potential for what? And *cui prodest* (to whose profit)? This article examines how discourses of 'potential' and 'trash' have created the conditions for a speculative regeneration of an industrial area of the Estonian capital. Data are drawn from research into recent practices taking place on Tallinn's shoreline and discursive uses of labels such as 'trash' and 'unrealised potential'

to connect the place with an image of moving towards completion while emphasising its negative associations. I start by investigating the relations occurring there and then develop an analysis of the recent discussions and public statements on the topic, arguing that discourses of trash and unrealised potential were used to represent the space negatively, as not belonging to the urban geographies of the present. In this sense, trash and potentiality appear as an intrinsic part of neoliberal spatial restructuring,

since a discursive shift in the conceptualisation of the shoreline produced a new set of spatial practices and representations, which have been used for a speculative type of redevelopment of the area.

The article considers how the concepts of potential and waste are applied for spatial uses, as well as the politics of naming and framing urban areas. It contributes, therefore, to current debates about the parallels between urban regeneration, symbolic waste-making, and the abuse of temporary artistic and recreational activities. It specifically shows how discourses of potential and socio-political hygiene as well as youth-led cultural practices are precursors of speculative regeneration in these spaces, also raising the rate of eviction in the neighbourhood. Some novel aspects introduced by this Estonian case study include the alleged weakness and impotence of the city hall to negotiate with real estate agents and prioritise public wellbeing over private interest, as well as how categories such as Soviet or European were re-spatialised.

The analysis looks at the processes of urban regeneration through an innovative anthropological perspective focused on trash talk and concepts of potential and waste. The theoretical scaffolding relies on previous studies about how symbolic waste-making is correlated with cultural and economic devaluation (Douglas 1966; Gordillo 2014; Glucksberg 2014; McKee 2015; Furniss 2017). The ensuing trash talk is here understood as a mechanism generating systems of speculation and dispossession that are rendered invisible through a naturalisation of the place as waste, establishing a false equivalence between the kinds of things disposed of. As pointed out by Luna Glucksberg (2014), symbolic devaluations of specific areas are often precursors of the demolition and removal that characterise regeneration processes. Emily McKee (2015) also foregrounds that

trash talk entails both emotional and material consequences, naturalising links between dirty places, disorderly people, and the need to remove or regenerate them. Trash appears thus as both an analytical category and an ethnographic one, intermingled in relations of power and ownership (Argyrou 1997).

In Tallinn's shoreline, discourses of potential and trash acted as the framing process that preceded a public recognition of the area as insufficiently utilised and in immediate need of redevelopment. The transformative vitality that discourses of potential entail was reinforced by narratives presenting the area as a wasteland. The virtuality of the discourse became fulfilled in the actual, following a process of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation with very limited lines of possibility, organised to take control over the becoming (Deleuze 1966).

The fulfilment of potentiality in the space was achieved through a portfolio of cultural events, temporary uses and public statements organised around the European Capital of Culture, which provided the right impulse for it. In this light, the way the shoreline of Tallinn was framed, as 'having potential' and being a playground for artists and cultural events, not only increased the public visibility and symbolic value of the area, but also created the very conditions that situated its users in a precarious position, allowing real estate developers to exploit the synergies created with ease and profit from the revaluated plots.

We could define this mode of intervention as politics of potentiality, referring to how naming and framing something in terms of potential has political effects in the world (Montoya 2013). The case study also draws attention to how discourses of potential might depict changes as natural and unavoidable, as something that with or without intervention has its future built into it (Taussig et al. 2013).
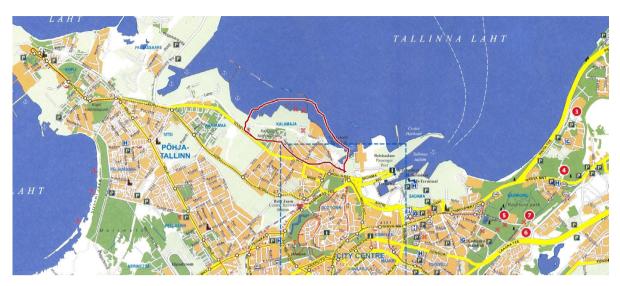
Fig. 1: Studied area marked in red. Tallinn City Map. Creative Commons.

Evaluations of dirty, trashy, and disordered spaces carry social and political weight, having implications for inequality, inclusion, and exclusion (McKee 2015). Further, this case shows how city symbols and abstracting processes are not apolitical or merely reducible to concerns with taste and the branding of neighbourhoods; they articulate the lines between what is visible and what is not, establishing a particular distribution of functions in relation to them (Zukin 2005; Rancière 2006).

Concepts and symbols are not simply the outcome of historical or physical conditions; they can also be discursively constructed, becoming the framework for social practices and articulating the cultural and material dimensions of urban transformation. In her study of how urban 'renewal' links the production of space with the construction of symbols, sociologist Sharon Zukin (2005) foregrounds that these practices tend to mask a commercialisation of culture and the privatisation of public space. We can also refer to Henri Lefebvre's reflections (1991 [1974]) on the societal production of the space as a dialectical interaction of practices, representations, and symbolisations, arguing

that capitalism generates the same abstraction in space yet for commodification, reducing the existing consistency of places to homogeneous abstractions to be sold and bought.

THE CENTRAL-NORTH SHORELINE OF TALLINN

The waterfront of Tallinn is long (46 km) and diverse, nowadays showing mixed land uses after centuries of industrial and military occupation. I focus on the central-north shoreline, where many of the uses have had a temporary character until recently. Various projects to develop the area are already in construction or on the municipal table, from the new administrative building of the city council to the residential project for Kalarand and Kalasadama[2] and the announced privatisation of the Kanala municipal plot.[3] Noteworthy buildings in the area include: the Maritime Museum; the Patarei prison complex; the former military shipyard factories of Noblessner; the Linnahall concert hall and energy complex nowadays occupied by a Cultural Incubator (KultuuriKatel); the Estonian Museum of Contemporary Art (EKKM);

the gallery of the Installation, Photography, and Sculpture Department of the Estonian Academy of Arts (ISFAG); and the Kanala recreational space.

The central-north shoreline can be considered a strategic area of Tallinn, affecting both urban development and how the public realm of the Estonian capital is constructed overall. Historically, the energy complex (presently the KultuuriKatel) has also had a relevant impact on the modern development of Tallinn. The private company AS Volta had already proposed to build an electricity station in 1899; however, the project was municipalised, and the city of Tallinn only provided the required permission and fund in 1909, closing a nearby private station that had been selling electricity (Vene St.). The first chimney was too low, creating dark smog over the city. The German and Soviet occupations brought an extension to the power of the station, and later transformed it into an energy complex. The creation of new electricity stations in Kohtla-Järve and Ahtme meant the decay of the Tallinn complex, which nonetheless worked until the 1990s (Vanamölder et al. 1983; Talumaa 2013). In the central-north shoreline we find also Linnahall and the former Patarei prison complex. The bastion was built in 1840 to protect the sailing route to St. Petersburg, then capital of the Russian empire. Later it became military headquarters, and between 1919 and 2004 functioned as a prison (normally over 2,000 inmates; top occupancy 4,600 prisoners). Architect Klaske Havik refers to the central-north shoreline of Tallinn as an area where new urban experiments can take place, noting that the public realm is a stage:

> Precisely this neglected coastal area, between Linnahall and the former prison, offers potential for realizing a meaningful

public domain in Tallinn. In fact, the uncanny but public character of the area could be the key to future development. The strength of this area is its marginality, its mystery and the accessibility for social minorities; maybe even a kind of threat, a touch of discomfort, precisely what caused the quality of suspense in Tarkovsky's Zone. This authenticity of the location is likely to be killed by too rigid commercial developments—as it is already visible in other parts of Tallinn. (…) Tallinn would precisely need to develop its coastal area in such a way that its marginal qualities become revealed and turned into urban potential, grounded exactly on its local specificity. (2006: 40-42)

Other authors have also noted a Tarkovsky-like heritage in this area, since part of the film *Stalker* was shot in this setting (Martínez and Laviolette 2016). Yet, land uses in the central-north shoreline have changed remarkably in the last decade. This happened in conjunction with a new conceptualisation and representation of the area in relation to Tallinn's term as a European Cultural Capital in 2011.[4] Several events and measures connected with the programme contributed to craft a change in the values associated with this stretch of coast, giving it new labels such as 'cultural', 'having potential', and 'European' after two decades of active negligence (Martínez 2018).

In 2011, a promenade was created along an old railway line spanning the entire shoreline, which received the name 'Cultural Kilometre'. Additional soil had been added in 2009 to establish a proper walkable path running from Linnahall to the Noblessner shipyard, passing KultuuriKatel, Kanala, Kalasadama, the Patarei prison, the Kalamaja cemetery-park, and multiple abandoned plots. The Cultural

Fig. 2: Quasi-street of the Cultural Kilometre / Kalaranna. T. Pikner, 2011.

Kilometre crossed a number of privately owned areas, however, meaning that public use and open access had a temporary character from the beginning. This promenade was very popular and highly frequented between 2011 and 2014, and many of the locals commented on the correlated improvement of the life-quality, acknowledging the positive impact of the path for the public interest.

Geographer Tarmo Pikner (2014a; 2014b) also notes that the Cultural Kilometre generated favourable responses and appeal among locals precisely because of its unfinished intermediate state, whereby industrial layers and a landscape of leisure were intermingled. Garages, fences, voids, trees, rotting machinery, storehouses and bushes were not erased or demolished, appearing rather as the stage of the promenade. Something similar happened with Kalaranna

beach and the Kultuurikatla Aed recreational area (Kanala), where many citizens used to go to play ping-pong, listen to music, read literature, celebrate birthday picnics, bathe, or simply to meet other people. The authorities reminded neighbourhood dwellers and users about the ephemeral character of all this, but simultaneously prompted the *improvisational* cultural use of all these areas.

As part of the preparations for the programme of the European Capital of Culture, a collective tidying of the Kalarand and Kanala areas was organised, establishing an urban gardening zone and installing a bench and a changing cabin. Young volunteers cleared the garbage and rearranged the space. The involvement of the residents of Kalamaja in the gardening project was, however, modest, and cultivation itself was questioned on the site

since the environment was not very suitable (Pikner 2014a). Furthermore, the establishment of Kultuurikatla Aed provoked conflicts with some homeless people who attempted to occupy the area where they used to sleep. Then, after accusations of hijacking their original project of a 'chicken' garden, many of the volunteers[5] withdrew their involvement.

Nonetheless, the popularity of the area has exponentially increased since then, with dozens of people congregating there for diverse activities at different times of the day. Eventually, the uses of this area showed that things can also be *held* 'in potential', as accessible, open-ended, interstitial, and as indicating not only that it could be otherwise, but also that it could not be. Incomplete spaces have the capacity to accumulate informality and to compensate for other needs and shortages within a city, offering potential more than simply the absence of some desired quality. Kanala evolved as an in-between space (indeterminate, without a clear function), whereby micro-politics and alternative cultures were being produced, questioning the conventional sense of public culture and representing a valuable breathing space for many residents who found in the spatial margins an extension of their freedom. There one could experience feelings of empathy, difference, and transgression, as well as a different kind of publicness and culture; many of the people making use of this came from outside official, institutionalised, urban planning, an aspect that gave the space a participatory character.

The Cultural Kilometre outlived the European Capital of Culture, standing as a set of spaces that contributed to building community, a zone in which forms of living could be rehearsed and experienced differently. Despite critiques noting how little the programming was embedded and integrated in the actually existing cultural scene of the city (Ruudi and

Müürk 2011), the shoreline received a cultural boost with the European Capital of Culture programme. The experienced accessibility and public use of these areas made residents and users realise the benefits of holding the space 'in potential' instead of in completion, since that very spatial condition in-the-making was what improved their life quality. Keeping the space in potential instead of in completion allowed, for instance, a vernacular customisation of the area, which started to serve as a venue for a host of varied cultural practices, from the commodified to the transgressive.

The in-between is correlated to creativity and regeneration, naming the liminal as the site of pure potentiality (Turner 1982). Yet neither the city-hall nor the stakeholders conceived of potential in Turner's sense, since these activities were instead programmed as moving towards completion, fixedness, and profit. Kanala and the Cultural Kilometre were instead presented as just an ad hoc initiation of the flagship project and an instrument to increase the land value of the private plots along the shoreline. For instance, chief architect of Tallinn Endrik Mänd complained: 'people tend to take temporary things as permanent (…) the Cultural Kilometre was built after all as temporary. It has been in use for almost four years. It has paid off, and the highway that will cross the area has a regional importance'.[6]

In the summer of 2014, the municipality fenced off the area and bulldozers started the construction of a highway along the former Cultural Kilometre. A year later, the real estate developing company, Pro Kapital, was ordered to build up another fence surrounding the territory they own. The company plans to build a gated resort with five-storey, luxury apartments, and a yacht harbour around the Kalarand beach. The company, which owns a large part of the land on the central-north shoreline, is the most powerful

actor in the area besides the municipality. City Hall, on the other hand, has been reticent about proceeding with the authorisation to fence the gated resort completely, considering public access to the port strategic for Tallinn, and also under pressure from civil organisations to maintain open access to the beach.[7]

Allan Remmelkoor, board member of Pro Kapital, has insisted, however, saying that the fencing would favour investment in the area and would keep away 'dangerous social contingents' leaving behind their 'needles',[8] as if it were a matter of socio-political hygiene and a struggle against pollution, instead of the collision between private ownership and public interest. Defining waste is a way of demonstrating power, as well as of muting counter narratives. Ervin Nurmela (the head of the property developer's legal department) noted that Pro Kapital had no obligation to provide public access to the beach or the sea, as there will be a harbour attached and this has never been public land. The company claimed that Kalarand was always a harbour and not a beach, arguing that in the Soviet time there was a canned-fish industry and boat-repair workshops at the spot. Several of Tallinn's neighbourhood associations actively protested against the real estate project, while Nurmela alleged that these protests disrespect the rights of the owner of the land and are 'against the interest of many people who would like to have a quality promenade and not the current wasteland which is today's situation'.[9]

In October 2014, a detailed municipal plan was leaked, revealing a hidden agenda to privatise part of the plot nowadays composed of KultuuriKatel, EKKM, ISFAG, and Kanala. According to the plan, everything but the Cultural Incubator and the exhibition space of the EKKM (Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia) had to be removed, replacing it

with multi-storey residential buildings and a supermarket. As officials put it, the only way to pay for the construction of the KultuuriKatel was to sell all the surrounding land.

The KultuuriKatel appeared as the iconic project of the European Capital of Culture, renovating part of the former energy plant as a cultural incubator. Intended to be ready by 2011, yet only finished in 2015, extensive works were needed to remove the asbestos in the walls, which increased the general cost of the project. However, the privatisation of the plot puts the survival of the EKKM at risk, since all the surrounding areas of the exhibition room are supposed to be demolished (thereby removing their offices, bookshop, and storage spaces).

The EKKM is a non-profit alternative exhibition venue created in early 2007 when artists looking for studio space started squatting in the office building of the former boiler plant, cleaning and renovating the building little by little. The museum gained convenient institutional stability in 2011 as a consequence of the increase in the number of visitors to the shoreline brought by the programme of the European Capital of Culture. The museum has since become a referential institution for contemporary art in Estonia, acting as a platform for experimentation and providing opportunities to young artists. Located next to the EKKM—thus pertaining to the same energy complex—we can find the Gallery of the Installation and the Photography and Sculpture Departments of the Estonian Academy of Arts (ISFAG). Due to the original negligence in constructing the building (a storage room and infrastructure for supplying coal to the energy plant), artists, scholars, and students worked for months in 2013 repairing the ceiling, paving the floor, and re-installing electricity in the space. Kanala, ISFAG and EKKM were all created by the altruistic activity

Fig. 3: The state of the place when they broke in. Denés Farkas 2006.

Fig. 4: The state of the place when they broke in 2. Denés Farkas 2006.

Fig. 5: Opening of the exhibition 'System & Error' in ISFAG. Kristina Villand 2016.

of young people, who managed to redevelop these places and attract visitors despite knowing that the use was interim.

LOST AND FOUND POTENTIAL

After the European Capital of Culture programme, and simultaneous to discourses of potentiality and a lack of investment in sufficient maintenance work, trash and abandonment took over the central shoreline, showing a strategic form of negligence (Martínez 2018). In April 2014, I took a walk around the area and found used Kleenex, bottles of vodka, cans of beer, coffee cups, broken glasses, plastic bags, newspapers, mattresses, CDs, toothbrushes, a leather jacket, fag-ends, ping-pong balls, ferry tickets, and even bills detailing consumption at the ferry bar. Hence, affected by a strategy

of disinvest and divesting, the area eventually fulfilled the a priori categorisation of wasteland, as a terrain with excremental value and simply awaiting its erasure and redevelopment (Gandy 2013).

The central-north shoreline was then turned into a 'grey space' awaiting completion, in-potential, positioned between the 'whiteness' of legality and safety, and the 'blackness' of eviction and destruction (Yiftachel 2009). As shown in this article, such strategy reflects new modes of urban power relations, since the grey condition proved easier to manipulate by the real estate investors and their political alliances. This case study can also be framed as affected by the 'politics of ugliness' (Przybylo 2010; Novoa forthcoming), referring to the power relations formed in the process of calling something or someone 'ugly' in public, by establishing cultural

margins and social binaries, or in our case presenting an area as 'non-inviting'.

This case shows however that divestment is not simply the counterpart to appropriation; they might also be related, as different stages of the same process and strategy. As Mary Douglas formulated (1966), waste is connected with notions of value and the processes of ordering. In her view, the constitution of waste has two phases, first the categorisation of what does not fit and rejection due to being 'out of place'. Second, a process of dissolving any characterisation (rotting), which utterly leads to its disintegration and loss of identity. Otherwise, waste has relational properties serving to make spaces visible in negative ways—as dormant, toxic, empty... (Pikner and Jauhiainen 2014). On the other side of potential, there is the category of wasteland, which refers to nameless strips, under-utilised structures and spaces that fall outside people's mental maps. More specifically, Panu Lehtovuori (2010) foregrounds that wastelands are often depicted as 'the Other', appearing as the wrong side of the fabric of the city, whilst Tuula Isohanni (2002: 118) defines wastelands as 'the opposite world to all the building and development'. Yet the wasting of places can be also understood as a symptom of negligence, disaffection, and human failure, entailing a contagious disinvestment, or even desolation and abjection (Lynch 1990; Martínez 2017).

The label of 'having potential' frequently started to appear in media and public discussions about the coastline of Tallinn. For instance, architect Veronika Valk (2010) highlighted 'the potential of the Baltic coastline as the leisure landscape of tomorrow'. Journalist Juhan Tere (2012) explained that with the Kanala project 'young and creative people are trying to maximize the area's potential'. Researcher Damiano Cerrone remarked that by studying

'the positive experience of what the Culture Kilometre has done for the re-development of the waterfront, I learnt the meanings and the incredible potentials of making a place accessible' (2012: 7). Architect Tõnu Laigu also wrote a text published in the Kalarand workshop booklet with the intriguing title: 'Tallinn's Seashore is a Place for Culture, Communication and for Living', arguing that:

> If anybody claims that activity which accompanies political power does not affect urban space, he is clearly mistaken. Tallinn's centre of gravity and especially that of its central portion will gravitate towards the sea with the relocation of the municipal government, thus permanently altering the urban spatial relationships between the city centre, the seashore, and the old-town. (...) The area under consideration has obvious potential for the development of the city centre. (2012: 6)

The booklet included a quote from Jussi Jauhiainen, a professor of human geography, stating:

> 'Political power planning' style is used when the public sector wants to improve the development potential of a certain district in relatively poor economic conditions. The aim is to improve partnership between the public and private sectors in order to attract the private sector to participate more extensively in developing the district. (2005: 223)

I do not imply, however, that all these people were aware of the speculative agenda behind discourses of potential, but rather that they were part (probably involuntarily) of the apparatus mobilised to shift the conceptualisation of the area. Furthermore, these two paragraphs

provide four important messages about the situation of the central-north shoreline of Tallinn: 1. Political activity is important for the development of this area. 2. The city centre is gravitating towards the sea. 3. The area has 'potential' because of showing poor economic conditions, being thus in need of completion. 4. A partnership between the private and public sectors is needed (because of the weak situation of the municipality, we could add).

According to these descriptions, a place has potential when seemingly negative qualities begin to function as opportunities, or as Martin Kohler and Sabine Löwis put it (2008), when a space appears as de-territorialised—in contrast to those spaces that are already organised, limited, and functional, with fixed codes. Otherwise, landscape designers Anna-Liisa Unt, Penny Travlou, and Simon Bell foreground unpredictability as a key quality of spaces in potential, observing in regard to our case study that 'the site appears quiet and calming, full of potential for active or passive use (…) the space is loose, therefore the potential of the environment allows the unpredictable to take place' (Unt *et al.* 2013: 12); and 'derelict sites are the potential spaces where spatial disorder can lead to new spatial qualities' (ibid.: 18).

We could also say that potential refers overall to the availability of spatial, human, and economic resources, and may entail a predisposition for growth in whatever form: further densification or profit making. Another interpretation of 'potential' could be that if a space is empty, it must be filled. In short, potential entails the intuition of a forthcoming shift and tournament of value driven by the reordering of the spatial conditions through imaginary elements. An example of the symbolic re-conceptualisation of the area as having potential is the description of Product 71 (a plot in the area) as prepared by the

ELL real estate company: 'great development potential', 'renovated', 'updated', 'busy', 'active development'.[10]

Abstracting processes and symbolic re-conceptualisations can serve to mobilise people and resources and to apply a rhetoric strategy of presenting the only alternative for development. This was manifested, for instance, during the meeting of officials from the municipality and the KultuuriKatel with neighbourhood associations and civil agents. Part of the conversation of the meeting has been transcribed by Veronika Valk (2014) for the cultural journal *Sirp*. The participants were Väino Sarnet (board member of the KultuuriKatel), Toomas Paaver (architect), Grete Arro (psychologist), Liina Guiter (journalist), Andres Härm (Director of the EKKM), and Endrik Mänd (City Architect of Tallinn).

Here some excerpts of the debate:

Sarnet: I invite you to look at it realistically. The municipality is spending a lot of money to promote culture in this specific location. There is no future scenario in which the municipality would spend as much monetary resources. The result is that the area would not be developed at all if this plan is not considered, which will nonetheless allow other interests to be included. After all, the place would be developed and the seaside cleaned up. Nowadays, there is too much illusion in the world.

Paaver: You are the representatives of the city (…) all the cards are in your hand, you do not have to take into account just the interests of the private owners. You are free.

Sarnet: Many things went wrong because the people in the cultural scene assume that there is always enough money to be found.

Paaver: Some things are functioning even without money; but they require a place however.

Guiter: And the EKKM (Museum of Contemporary Art of Estonia) has been operating successfully for many years.

Sarnet: I would remind you that the rental agreement with the EKKM states that the landlord's reputation will not be damaged in any way. So I advise you not to be too loud.

Mänd: If we look at this from a perspective of 20–30 years, I think that the actual activities shouldn't continue there, but there should be buildings instead. After all, we want that a higher number of people access to the location (…) Therein the beauty of self-emerging spaces, like EKKM and Kanala; once they disappear they reappear in a new location of the city. This is the process.

Arro: In other words, some people come and improve the place and the others come and sell it for profit?

Mänd: This method has been used very much in the Netherlands and Denmark and elsewhere (…) people just move to other similar sites which are inexpensive.

References to other European cities were also part of the 'having potential' discourse; besides invoking the motto 'others do it too' to justify the exploitation of temporary uses, these explanations—based on taking *more advanced* European cities as models—served to objectify the central-north shoreline as outside time, as residual from the socialist regime. This depiction of the Soviet world as something wasteful and the idea of a civilisational break happening after

the end of the USSR were constructed through expressions such as a 'return to Europe' and to 'normality' (Sztompka 1996; Lauristin and Vihalemm 1997) and as regaining a European identity supposedly lost during the decades of socialist rule (Weszkalnys 2010), mobilising, therefore, architecture and urban planning in the service of social change (Molnár 2013; Martínez 2018).

TEMPORARY USES

In Aristotelian terms, potentiality appears as opposed to actuality, a not-yet that has qualities to actualise through development.[11] In Hegelian terms, potentiality is rather described as a directional force, as a power of actualisability or the capacity to actualise itself. But does potential exist first, followed by its realisation? Or does potential require that something is first exhausted? Giorgio Agamben (1999) moves beyond this question by saying that potentiality is 'a mode of existence' that simultaneously means to be and not to be. Hence, things have potentiality because of being open to choices of when and how to bring this capacity into actuality.

As pointed out by sociologist Claire Colomb in a study of temporary uses in Berlin (2012), interim spaces are characterised by a tension between their actual use (as publicly accessible spaces for experimentation) and their potential commercial value. These are 'spaces of hopes', which are destroyed once the extraction of value has been accomplished (Harvey 2000). The supposedly fringy activities organised along the central-north shoreline were rather harmless to the status quo, becoming elements of the city's policy-sanctioned creativity, merely serving 'to smooth the flow of capital' (Mathews 2010). Likewise, the cultural programme and artistic practices were instrumentalised in the

area as tools for economic speculation and entrepreneurial policy making, channelling these activities towards rising land values, city branding, and attracting tourists.

In an analysis of the post-socialist revitalisation of Berlin, Virág Molnár (2010) also notes how cities at the global periphery, lacking economic prowess and grappling with massive restructuring, rely more on cultural strategies to propel their development, putting creative discourses and the arts in the service of urban regeneration, and symbolically manufacturing their associations with these areas and relations between the local and the global. In Tallinn, the programme of the European Capital of Culture also followed strategies such as the explicit promotion of a 'creative city' label and the integration of previously non-represented spaces and people into official marketing and media imagery.

The 'creative city' discourse connected to the KultuuriKatel had a vernacular complement with the tactical urbanism deployed in the area— 'the latest cycle of the urban "strategy" to co-opt moments of creativity and alternative urban practices to the urban hegemony' (Mould 2014: 537). Generally, these temporary uses and small non-profit activities enable the municipality to avoid providing long-term, affordable space for cultural activities. Soon these practices cease being experimental and become instead part of the urban governance because of 'taking place momentarily but never claiming space, these moments of urban subversion are perpetually in motion' (ibid.: 533).

As in other post-industrial cities, temporary uses functioned in Tallinn to spark interest in out-of-the-picture places, attracting visitors and ultimately demonstrating some commercial value and investment potential (Colomb 2012). The other side of temporary usage is, however, the ease in which it is hijacked by private

developers to raise real estate values, and by municipalities to proceed with their labelling and creative-city strategies. In this scenario, temporary users remain nothing more than gap-fillers in the wake of market failures (ibid.). We, the users, contributed to increasing the value of the land, while also cleaning this area physically and discursively, bringing people to our exhibitions, gigs, workshops and various other events. Then, once municipal authorities and the real estate vendors are in a position to make money from the land, they present what we were constructing as irrelevant, despising existing cultural practices and abusing the precarious situation of artists and cultural workers, who often survive without health insurance or minimum wage.

What this case also shows is that once the economic goal is achieved, artists and temporary users are unceremoniously impelled to abandon their current locations and increasingly move to the outskirts. Often, artists, cultural workers, and youngsters are accused of being complicit with the status quo rather than challenging it, benefiting in the short-term from cultural appreciation and becoming agents of restructuring processes through their productive and consumption activities (Novy and Colomb 2012). Temporary activities in fringy urban environments create the stakes that make neighbourhoods attractive for corporate investment, so the challenge is how to integrate interim spaces into the normal cycles of urban development without making them a driver of gentrification and displacement.[12]

'The new economy is the creative economy', said Täino Sarnet at the official opening of the KultuuriKatel. Sarnet is a board member of the institution and apparently was not ashamed of still referring to the creative industry as the future in 2015. According to the official definition used in Estonia, the Creative Industry

is an 'economic sector' based on 'individual and collective creativity, skill and talent', regarded as important because of its 'potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property' (see Mäe 2015). Official accounts have presented 'the old economy' as 'stagnant' and 'something rudimentary', leading the former Estonian minister of culture Laine Jänes to conclude that:

> Everywhere in Europe it is now understood that the old economic model is becoming history. Everybody has turned their eyes on the potential of cultural creativity to enrich the economy. (...) It is short-sighted to speak about the model of economic production relying on cheap subcontracted workforce as a competitive advantage at a time when the most successful countries of the world produce ideas, solutions, emotions and experiences instead of things. (First issue of the *Creative Estonia Newspaper*; cf. Mäe 2015)

Sociologist René Mäe has been analysing the discourse on the 'Creative Industry' in Estonia, contending that this term became a signifier conciliating economic interests and articulating an entanglement of power (2015). Drawing on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, he posits 'Creative Industry' appellations as acts of hegemonic constitution, which merely view cultural, artistic and knowledge work(ers) in economic terms (profit, export, turnover). From an analytical category, 'creative' has turned into a term for policy making, finding a sympathetic ear among politicians, activists, and developers who see in this strategy a quick, 'ready to hand' solution for all kinds of problems. Through attracting a 'creative class' from elsewhere as a stimulus for local competitiveness and

economic growth, Richard Florida articulated a world-wide influential model of urban development that relies on extending the amenities desirable to the 'creative class', namely, a local arts scene, galleries, and street cafes, among other things. According to Florida, the creative class was drawn to cities because of 'atmospheres' and 'coolness'; the prescription was apparently simple and linear: make the city more vibrant with artists and cultural workers and become globally competitive, since the attraction of creative people would eventually be able to resolve many urban problems (e.g., revitalise city centres, create jobs, alleviate the degradation of infrastructures).

Many institutions followed the dogma; even the European Commission distributed a report in 2010 that had as a headline, 'Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries' (European Commission 2010). However, if examining cases where a creative city strategy has been applied, we rarely uncover tales of sustainable development and collective benefit, but, rather, new problems that include gentrification and inequality (Zukin 2005; Vickery 2011). As seen in the case of Tallinn, policies of urban regeneration through iconic buildings, flagship projects, and major events have also undermined alternative and experimental cultural practices and the diversity of urban life overall. Equally, the city is being radically transformed into a stage set for the purposes of fostering consumption and facilitating the capitalisation of urban space. An example of this is the current use of the old town as a touristic showcase, promoting an *ersatz* place-identity and co-opting selective local histories, whilst conforming to global market-led patterns of development. Another example is the current booming of urban festivals, stripped, however, of their transgressive functions and original gift economy,

becoming instead commodified by a *cultural* programme that ranges from vintage markets to open air concerts and cake stands.

Once Western cities saw how support from the state was decreasing, municipalities developed strategies mobilising the city as a cultural good to be consumed in order to attract foreign investment and impel private actors to fulfil responsibilities traditionally attributed to public managers (Golubchikov et al. 2014). Cultural policy and urban regeneration were also merged as a strategy to create a post-industrial urban landscape, resolve the shortage of public finance, and strengthen competitiveness in a global economy (Harvey 1989). This strategy of eventification hides the small number of regulatory instruments and resources used by city governments to influence housing, employment, education, and the welfare of their citizens (Häusserman and Siebel 1993), as well as disguising the creation of a sense of exclusivity, manifested for instance in the description of the Katla Maja apartments developed on the area by the Liven real estate: 'It might only be the sea that greets you each day'.[13]

Dealers in real estate are masters of the language of design and the so-called creative industry, promising to solve collective problems and to answer the national economy strategy. In our case study, Estonia's rapid conversion to a neoliberal market economy imbued private investors with a great power to influence Tallinn's urban development. Besides the economically weak position of the municipal authority, the prioritisation of the exchange value of urban spaces over their use value and accessibility has produced a mode of development in which finances have acquired an extensive control over the city. One of the paradoxes, however, is that these neoliberal prescriptions were directly incubated on the state's grounds, requiring public investment, privatisations of common assets,

and concentration of resources in privileged areas (Brenner 2004). Another paradox is that discourses of potentiality have dried out the potential potency of the area—the capacity of being and not being simultaneously, which is characterised by openness and a deterritorialisation of meanings. As a result, the primacy of private property caused the disintegration of social relations without securing economic power for the municipality.

As in other post-industrial cities, processes of urban regeneration in Tallinn have relied on cultural expressions and incidental forces of urban change, following the 'Creative Industry' agenda that instrumentalises art practices and temporary uses as a planning category for bringing people to the shoreline. Nonetheless, even if the strategy of turning culture-led practices into a tool of urban entrepreneurial governance is a global phenomenon, in Tallinn we can recognise distinctive aspects related to the post-socialist character of the city, such as: the 'delay' and particular re-appropriation of the creative industry strategy, when compared with other Western cities; the reluctance or alleged incapacity of the municipality to prioritise public interest over private ownership in strategic cases; the connotation of discourses of waste and Europe as leaving behind the Soviet past and moving towards the future.

CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

This article has foregrounded paradoxes between regeneration and the symbolic representation of urban areas. As shown, discourses of potential and trash presented the central-north shoreline of Tallinn as lacking something, wasted, and not fully realised, mobilising negative affects and creating a representation that does not always correspond to the actual heterogeneity and

value of the space. The research also showed how representations of an area can influence the way we view and understand the city at large, by disrupting the correspondence between the material and the social, and by reconfiguring the weight of the private and the public in a centrifugal way.

The conceptualisation of the area as 'having potential' correlated with the spatial creation of waste (the non-form) and the mobilisation of affects about the place (first positive, then negative, and finally positive). These discursive changes involved subtle shifts in the spatial, temporal, scalar, and material processes of the area, which acted organically (as in a change of the weather). Together, these processes helped to constitute social transformations: in the short term, mobilising young people and cultural workers to clean and attract visitors; in the middle term, raising the prices of the land, bringing in new tenants, and turning the area into a compartmentalised residential area of exclusive access.

The European Capital of Culture programme thus brought an opportunity for the physical and symbolic transformation of the central-north shoreline which was accompanied by strategies of urban governance that exceeded the duration of the events. Cultural and temporary uses created a set of positive meanings and articulated a discursive frame of 'having potential'. However, the representation of the area as existing towards completion reduced the existing uses to a gap-filter condition, while spontaneous cultural promoters inadvertently functioned as agents of gentrification in their search for spaces of autonomy and experimentation. This appropriation of informal initiatives for

urban entrepreneurial governance went hand in hand with discourses of potentiality and waste, confirming, once again, that abstract categories can shape specific urban practices and that culture and economy should not be thought of separately, but as entangled entities.

The article also argues that the condition of being in potential has an actual value, since it allows for accessibility, the chance encounter, the spontaneous event, the enjoyment of diversity, and discovery of the unexpected. Urban spaces in potential are deterritorialised and inclusive, appearing as necessary sites of ambiguity and entertainment, out of which new situations and possibilities are generated. In that sense, places such as Kanala, EKKM, or ISFAG were points of emergence where the actual met the potential, showing fluidity of meaning and making normal the fact of being different. Furthermore, these sites in-between have exercised a number of affective powers within the dynamics of the city at large: 1. Pedagogic: they created their own audience transversally, bringing different people to the arts and culture. 2. Making the public realm stronger: they allowed experimentation and provided room for spontaneous projects. 3. Training: they offered opportunities to members of the younger generations to improve their skills beyond commercial logics. In that sense, spaces in potential complement traditional and well established cultural institutions.

Nonetheless, bringing art, play, and festivity to the shoreline failed to enable local ownership and create lasting cultural legacies, because the discursive shift and catalysed change was oriented to rapid profit-making and touristic branding, instead of to a sustainable re-appropriation of the public space.

NOTES

1 I want to thank Patrick Laviolette, Siobhan Kattago, Matti Eräsaari, Marten Esko, Kirill Tulin, and the anonymous reviewers for their generous feedback and suggestions.

2 The project comprises an area of 7 hectares and foresees the creation of a private yacht harbor (docking up to 335 vessels) and the construction of private housing (400 apartments, equivalent to a surface of 34,000 m2).

3 The municipality of Tallinn only owns about 16% of the whole territory of the city and less than the 2% of the developing land. Source: Tallinn planning office. (Jan 2017) See https://tpr.tallinn.ee/

4 Each year the Council of the European Union designates one or more cities with the competed-for city brand of European Capital of Culture. The original objective was to foster a feeling of European citizenship. Often, the nomination is used as an opportunity to regenerate cities, develop cultural sectors, and raise the international profile.

5 Namely, Grete Veskiväli, Mari Hunt, Kaisa Kangur, Triin Orav, Juula Saar, Aet Ader, Liisi Tamm and Isabel Neumann.

6 Vill, Ants 2014. "Tallinn pole veel valmis, ega ka Kalamaja". 23.10 http://m.ohtuleht.ee/600641

7 See for instance the work of Linnalabor, http://www.linnalabor.ee/failid/n/2cbe77069c839c397b739e0f6268cfb8

8 (January 2017) http://epl.delfi.ee/news/eesti/tallinna-kalaranna-arendaja-tahab-mere-aarde-minejaid-aiaga-tokestada?id=70676911

9 See 'The battle for the Estonian coastline', Garlick, 2015. *The Baltic Times*. Pro Kapital was established in 1994, buying the land in 1997. They were the promoters of the first shopping mall in Tallinn, Kristiine, in 1999. The company is present in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The CEO is an Italian citizen, Paolo Vittorio Michelozzi, and the council is composed of a Swiss and two Finns.

10 See 'The real estate is located by the sea in Tallinn city center in a district with great development potential and within 5–10 minutes walking distance from the Old Town and the passenger port … the city and the state are planning to actively develop the seaside area. Besides seaplane hangars which were previously mentioned, it is likely that the Patarei prison will also be renovated and a new palace of justice will be built nearby. Hopefully the city officials will be successful in finding a new owner or an operator for Linnahall which would enliven the seaside area considerably. Regarding the renovation or construction of these objects important to the city and the state, the traffic organization and the infrastructure in that area will be updated. This will advance the launch of new residential building developments planned in the area. As a result of the active development in the near future, the said area will be a busy residential and entertainment district where office buildings with appropriate functions will also find their place'. (April 2017) http://www.ell-realestate.com/eng/Developments/Eesti/?productID=71

11 For Aristotle, causality does not mean an immediate infinite chain of causes and consequences, but the conception of motives and agents, independent between them, that act. In this sense, he argued that the becoming of anything depends on its potential and the act (a motor) The becoming will be primarily based on the form (primal movement), which is nonetheless of a concrete material (a limited range of possibilities). As a result the transformation appears, therefore, as contingent, but not arbitrary.

12 For that, temporary uses should be accompanied by a struggle for ownership, definition, and representation, challenging the very rule of the game that makes them interim. I thus advocate reconsidering the tensions between public and private interest and enabling local communities to re-establish ownership and public occupation without exhausting the potentiality of spaces.

13 See https://liven.ee/en/postitus/katla-maja/ (Retrieved Nov 2017)

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