

# HOME

*The show is over. The audience get up to leave their seats. Time to collect their coats and go home. They turn around. No more coats and no more home.*

Vasily Rozanov, 1918

In *The Apocalypse of Our Time*, the philosopher Vasily Rozanov describes a society that is going through a revolutionary transformation. Rozanov points out that the spectacle of the crisis is so grandiose that it will overshadow what actually matters. Only after the spectacle has ended the society will awake in an alienated world, where the homes are no longer homes. There are addresses, there are houses and apartments, but these once so familiar environments are no longer able to function as homes. The housings now only hide the absence of home. The history has turned and not everyone is checked in to the new contemporary.

Each era requires and creates new ways for a human to domesticate oneself. Modern welfare society was born from the belief, first articulated in 19th century imperial France, that moral reform will inevitably follow domestic reform. Edmond Demolins wrote in 1882: “Workers must be given every opportunity to acquire their own homes. Soon it is the home which possesses him; it gives him morals, it establishes him, it transforms him.” In Estonia’s recent history, home-oriented reforms have also played a transformative role: one of the most recent large social efforts of the early 20th century statehood was “Make homes beautiful!” movement. After the restoration of independence, it became president Lennart Meri’s priority to revive this movement, because “beautiful homes made Estonians a cultural nation”. At the same time, the Estonian cityscape was introduced with the new kind of people– the homeless. Not everyone was checked in to the new contemporary. Even today, Tallinn is the fastest segregating capital in Europe.

Estonia and especially Tallinn are rich in different living environments, but they are often struggling to create functioning public spaces around and between them. The concepts of shared and semi-public spaces have lost the battle with privatization. As a result, we witness homes as capsules of isolation having little to do with their surroundings. Despite the ideology of market self-regulation, real estate and housing development struggles to keep pace with societal developments and changing family-models.

In February 2020 Europe was hit by the pandemic and also people in Estonia were forced to seek shelter in their homes. The “stay at home” policy accelerated many of the already existing trends, and thus one might think that the crisis hit Estonian society softer than many other countries. Home offices and e-school, not to mention e-voting, have been part of Estonian everyday life well before the crisis. And the public space was underdeveloped anyway, not much to lose in this area. Still, as home becomes the sole epicentre of work, education and social life, even the homes of an e-country collapse and call for revolution. Home is not always a shelter, staying at home can also lead to increased depression and domestic violence. Considering that Estonia already has one of the highest depression rates in the world, this is a serious additional risk factor.

As global crises have become new normality and societies are living in constant state appropriation, our understanding of home also needs radical rethinking. The need to provide communal areas and in-between public/private spaces will only grow in societies where people are spending most of their time at homes. The proliferation of teleworking creates the need for a new kind of adaptable home that would offer privacy for work as well as connectivity to our physical neighbours or digital pals. Thus, we ask, what should be the next steps in a society that has well-functioning digital infrastructure but is suffering from lack of shared spaces and feelings of loneliness? What will our homes look like in the future when a home is no longer just a home but also a workplace, gym, community kitchen, nightclub and broadcasting studio? We ask if home can become a solution to a poorly functioning public space. We ask how to design homes as self-contained but not closed systems.

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Home is cosy. Home can be horrendous. Home is in a permanent state of becoming: we have a childhood home and we will end in a nursing home, and in the meantime, we build a home. It is not considered proper to talk about domestic matters in public. We should talk about domestic matters.