

Growing interest in the theoretical and historical issues of culture and the mechanisms of economic development demonstrate the importance of culture in the information age. The transformation of cultural objects into commercial products and the changes in values of national minorities, religious and other communities allow stating the need to expand studies of such nature.

Until the third decade of the 20th century, Lithuanian culture was mainly developed in rural areas and provincial towns. The rise of a national culture in Vilnius and Kaunas was a difficult and complicated process. In fact, the Jewish and Polish culture that developed in towns constitutes an inseparable part of our urban culture. Urban culture is marked by multiculturalism and harmony of various traditions that manifest themselves in a variety of lifestyles and ways of thinking.

At the moment we are witnessing fundamental changes taking place in Europe. International and regional processes of integration bring forth separate territorial conglomerates with well-developed industries and systems of communication. It should be noted that Vilnius and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Kaunas and Klaipėda, are being incorporated in these processes as well, i.e. they become areas of influence. The cultural field is modifying, the conception of tradition and the significance of cultural heritage are changing, but the historical tradition survives. The processes of globalization inevitably deform traditional national cultures and create new identities. Our membership within the European Union will pose new challenges with respect to the preservation of cultural distinction. Human civilization parameters, cultural diversity and the concentration of various religions suggest of a contact of universal values with local cultures, which is commonly problematic. The tenth volume of *Culture Studies* is devoted to the analysis of all these issues.

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