

The amazing story of our location “Yunist”

In the long and windy history of activist protests against illegal construction and demolition of cultural heritage that Kyiv is full of, there is one case of a particular interest. That is a case of the old Soviet sewing factory Yunist (Youth) built in the heart of historical Kyiv (at Andriivskyi descent). The factory wasn't working since early 1990's and the rights to use the land were bought and sold several times. In 2008 it was bought by ESTA Holding, a company belonging to the richest Ukrainian oligarch - Rinat Akhmetov. The company planned to build a business center, but then gave up on the project, because of the risks for their public image (if they'd start to demolish and rebuild in the historical center of town). But this decision didn't reach the technical department in time and the whole quarter was demolished.

After a series of mass protests and public actions, the company publicly apologized before the citizens of Kyiv and promised to build something for the public on this piece of land. A Public Board was gathered through the open voting for important and trustworthy public figures on the project web-site. And after 8



months of debates the Board has decided that there should be a multifunctional cultural center. The decision was announced in the beginning of February 2013.

Therefore Yunist is a unique case of (1) an effective public pressure on private capital, (2) a public plea by a private company, followed by an obligation to engage into a socially responsible project for the city and its citizens, (3) a use of mechanisms of public control and decision-making in choosing functional specification for the place and its further construction and functioning, (4) creating a contemporary cultural center. The SPACES programme “Architecture of Common” is the first art and culture programme that takes place at this location – hopefully, many more will come.