



LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 64, No.4 - Winter 2018

Editor of this issue: Almantas Samalavičius

ISSN 0024-5089

Copyright © 2018 LITUANUS Foundation, Inc.

www.lituanus.org

Abstract:

Democratic Crisis or Return to the Western World? Civic Engagement, Social Capital and Media in Latvia

Sergei Kruk and Janis Chakars

Abstract

The Baltic states have seen the peaceful transfer of power through democratic elections for a generation since the reestablishment of independence. However, surveys indicate dim faith in government and little sense that people feel the power to change and influence society. Rates of civic engagement are low, thus diminishing the social capital necessary for a vibrant democracy. This study explores this situation in Latvia with reference to Estonia, Lithuania and four other European countries. Two interpretations emerge: first, that democracy in Latvia is not being realized to its fullest potential; and, second, that the pattern in Latvia is broadly similar to other European countries. Therefore, in order to explain the phenomenon, scholars must look beyond the legacy of communism. Latvia, in particular, has a longer history of elite-directed communication and social action patterns that may contribute to the inhibition of social and political action.