

Case study ID

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GELGAUDIŠKIS MANOR HOMESTEAD

CASE STUDY SHORT SUMMARY REPORT

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GELGAUDIŠKIS MANOR HOMESTEAD

Case Study at a Glance

Gelgaudiškis Manor is an important part of the Lithuanian cultural heritage, which has undergone various historical changes. After a fire in 1979, it was abandoned for a long time until the community took the initiative to revive it. In 2002, the Gelgaudiškis Community Center “Atgaiva” was established and became the driving force behind the restoration process.

Although the beginning was difficult, there was a lack of funds, and the manor was threatened with privatization – community efforts and the support of high-ranking politicians helped to stop the privatization process and attract European investments. The restoration works took place in several stages, turning the manor into a place for cultural events. However, over time, changes in management reduced the involvement of the community in the activities of the estate.

Although the project revitalized the manor and turned it into an attraction, the community did not experience long-term benefits. This story reflects both the success of perseverance, and the challenges faced in implementing projects of such scale.

This report was prepared by the team of Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) within the UPRUN project. The team of KTU is responsible for the content and the accuracy of the statements presented in this report.

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Case Study Profile

Topic

- ☐ Community Gardening & Urban Agriculture
- ☒ Community Hubs & Cultural Activities
- ☐ Urban Design & Planning Processes
- ☐ Public Space Development & Management
- ☐ Local Economic Development
- ☐ Urban Regeneration & Rehabilitation

Scale

- ☐ Metropolitan / city region
- ☒ City scale
- ☐ Neighbourhood scale
- ☐ Block scale
- ☐ Building scale

Resilience Challenge

- ☐ Environmental and ecological resilience
- ☒ social & cultural resilience
- ☐ Infrastructure and technological resilience
- ☐ Economic & livelihood resilience

Duration

- ☐ Immediate (less than 1 month)
- ☐ Project-Based (1–12 months)
- ☐ Programme-Based (1–3 years)
- ☐ Strategic (3–5 years)
- ☒ Structural / Transformative (more than 5 years)

Stakeholders

- ☒ Community members
- ☒ Local government
- ☒ Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- ☒ Private sector
- ☒ Academic and research institutions

Type of Civic Engagement Supporting Neighborhood Resilience

- ☐ Resident-led and grassroots initiatives
- ☒ Collaborative planning projects or processes
- ☐ Advocacy and capacity building
- ☐ Volunteer and community service projects
- ☐ Short-term, more flexible project-based engagement
- ☐ Long-term, more institutionalized engagement (development of stable structures, etc.)
- ☐ Protest and resistance mobilization
- ☐ Art-and culture-based civic Engagement

Level of Civic Participation

- ☐ Information
- ☐ Involvement or participation
- ☒ Collaboration or co-creation
- ☐ Empowerment
- ☐ Resistance and protest-based empowerment

Empirical Basis and Methodological Approach

The study examined the revitalization of Gelgaudiškis Manor as an example of civic engagement, cultural heritage preservation, and community resilience. It analyzed how the local community, municipality, and other stakeholders collaborated to restore the abandoned manor and transform it into a cultural and social center.

The research focused on the role of community initiatives in preserving the manor, the participation of residents in public activities and discussions, and the contribution of local authorities and institutions to the restoration process. It also explored the main challenges faced during the project, including limited funding, heritage protection requirements, planning and management issues, and the risk of privatization.

The study evaluated the impact of the project on public spaces, cultural life, tourism, and community identity. Particular attention was given to the methods of civic engagement, such as public events, awareness campaigns, consultations, and community-led activities that helped mobilize support for the restoration.

The findings showed that the restoration of Gelgaudiškis Manor strengthened community cohesion, revived cultural activities, improved the surrounding environment, and increased the attractiveness of the town. At the same time, the study highlighted limitations in formal community participation within decision-making and long-term management processes.

The research was based on interviews with community members, municipal representatives, and beneficiaries, as well as document analysis and online sources. It provided insights into how bottom-up initiatives and cooperation between communities and institutions can contribute to sustainable heritage revitalization and neighborhood resilience.

Summary

Introduction

This case study examines the civic engagement of the district in addressing spatial challenges and building resilience. It examines how community initiatives, stakeholder participation and participation in urban planning have contributed to sustainable development. By analysing engagement mechanisms and their outcomes, this study highlights lessons for future urban resilience strategies. This case study examines the revitalization of the Gelgaudiškis Manor homestead, a historical site that has become a focal point of community and government efforts to promote neighborhood resilience and improve public spaces. Gelgaudiškis is a small town located in southwestern Lithuania, in Šakiai district municipality, Gelgaudiškis eldership, in the territory of Panemuniai Regional Park, near the Nemunas River. According to 2023 data, the population of Gelgaudiškis reaches 1522 inhabitants, so it can be said that it is a small and closely related community. The territory of the town is characterized by low-rise residential blocks, combined with wide green spaces, which are important for the leisure and social relations of local residents. The town is known for its historic manor homestead – one of the most important cultural heritage objects in the region, which has been the center of community life and identity for a long time. In 2001, the ensemble of Gelgaudiškis Manor was included in the Register of Immovable Cultural Properties as an object with architectural, historical, urban and landscape values. The Lithuanian Register of Immovable Cultural Heritage preserves the entire ensemble of the manor homestead, which was historically formed in the first side of XIX century. However, due to the long-term abandonment of the manor buildings and the surrounding public spaces, part of the town has lost its attractiveness and functionality. The condition of the manor homestead deteriorated significantly, and the infrastructure of public spaces wore out, so the community had limited opportunities to use quality spaces for gatherings and cultural events. Civic engagement emerged as a response to the deteriorating condition of the manor and its surroundings, and the community recognized the need to restore it as a cultural and social center. The initiative gained momentum through public activities, focusing on the preservation of local heritage, while addressing spatial challenges related to infrastructure, accessibility and public spaces.

The case study is relevant because it shows the collaboration of the community, government, and other stakeholders in addressing spatial challenges. It highlights the importance of civic participation, participatory processes, and the role of local heritage in community resilience. In addition to interviews, the case study also included document analysis and other internet sources.

Neighborhood challenge

The main challenge was the deterioration of the manor's buildings and environment, which raised concerns about the preservation of cultural identity and the unity of the community. This has led to various initiatives aimed at reviving and restoring the manor as a living cultural and social centre. The community faced the following problems in order to revitalize the famous heritage complex:

- ***lack of funds*** for restoration works, as such a project required large investments, so support from state or EU funds was needed;
- ***function and use***, as it is necessary to find a meaningful way of using it – for cultural, tourism, community activities;
- ***heritage protection barriers*** that ensure the use of the heritage site without compromising the valuable features of the historical object.

Response to the challenge

The ensemble of manor buildings has always been and remains the pride of Gelgaudiškis. The managers changed, the purposes of the buildings changed, but the manor and the nearby park always radiated majesty full of respect and mystery. Already in 2000 it was shown that Gelgaudiškis needed a manor. Then the first event for writers "The Muse of Spring" took place, which was initiated by the town's librarian. As the director of the Gelgaudiškis House of Culture stated, "since then the revival of the Gelgaudiškis Manor began." In 2002, active residents of Gelgaudiškis came together and founded the Gelgaudiškis community center "Atgaiva" (officially registered company, the main activity of which is unions, foundations, associations, <https://www.gelgaudiskio-bendruomene.lt/>). The resurrecting of the manor for a new life was one of the main goals of the community. It took almost 20 years to achieve this. The community members spent many hours discussing, dreaming, planning, looking for ways. Since people are really active, young and energetic, meaningful, purposeful activities have emerged. First of all, the aim was to disseminate information about the heritage object as widely as possible. In 2004, the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Gelgaudiškis was organized with a magnificent 5-day celebration (one day was dedicated to the manor), thus the traditional "Manor Day" appeared. In preparation for the "Manor Day", the members of the community went to the manor house building, cleaned garbage, collected pieces of plaster, covered the nailed windows from the inside with curtains, covered the crumbling parts of the floor with carpets, brought chairs, lit candles... And on that day, when they gathered for the celebration, they understood: the manor needs to be resurrected. The task seemed titanic, insurmountable for the forces of the community and the open account for the restoration of the manor could solve little, but in this way the goal of the community was broadcast and an attempt was made to find as many indifferent like-minded people as possible. Unfortunately, things didn't go so well. The community members received the news about the inclusion of the manor buildings in the list of objects to be privatized, which meant that the manor ensemble could be sold to different owners, i.e. dismantled. At that time, the behemoth turned to the highest authority of Lithuania. The request was heard and understood (President Valdas Adamkus visited Gelgaudiškis and inspected the buildings of the manor). The privatization of the manor homestead was suspended. Further, the "Manor Day" was prepared every year, to which the traditional Stasiukas Fair near the manor and the Žolinė Festival contributed. Community activities have already made the manor widely famous in Lithuania and even abroad, and the time has come for real changes, works for the restoration of the manor.

The search for opportunities to achieve the set goal through investments in European projects has been started. Success did not accompany immediately, because the administration of the Marijampolė County

Governor did not understand the ambition of the community and even delayed the submission of projects for several years. The actual reconstruction works of the manor homestead began only after the district municipality took over the manor homestead in 2010. Already in 2011, an agreement on the financing of the reconstruction of the main manor house was signed, and in 2012 – due to the abandoned and devastated restoration works of the manor's dormitory and conservatory. As these reconstruction works are nearing completion, the 2014 agreement additionally allocated funds from EU funds for the arrangement of the public spaces of the manor homestead and adaptation to the needs of the public. The total amount of EU support allocated is one and a half million euros. The Šakiai District Municipality also contributed financially. Within a year since the signing of the agreement, not only has a detailed plan been prepared for the merger and expansion of the land plots of the Gelgaudiškis manor homestead at the expense of the state land in the city of Gelgaudiškis, as well as technical projects for all the works carried out, but also 11 different works for the restoration and beautification of the manor homestead have been completed. After the implementation of this project, the private investor – the concessionaire – has already started to be explored. The community center "Atgaiva" was also a participant in this project, so several restored premises were dedicated to the community, concerts and Friday music evenings were already taking place in the restored premises, which made Gelgaudiškis Manor famous throughout Lithuania. The Culture Centre and the Community Centre supported each other in their activities, works, and implemented joint ideas together. All the traditional celebrations took place near the manor. A modern history hall has been installed in the premises assigned to the community. Meetings of the community center were held on the premises of the basement floor. The timeline of action included public meetings, seminars and consultations with experts. The result is the revitalization of the manor and the surrounding park, turning it into a vibrant cultural and social center of the district.

After the appearance of the concessionaire, the contract for the possession of the premises of the community centre in the manor was terminated. The new tenants did not fulfil their activities and contractual obligations, and after a couple of years of termination of the contract, the manor was again on the balance sheet of the Šakiai District Municipality. Now an agreement has been signed with other tenants of the manor buildings, in which it is committed to allow the community to organize traditional celebrations in the vicinity of the manor, and to organize "Friday music evenings" every other Friday. The goal of the community members to restore the manor and make it famous through their activities has been achieved, it enlightens and invites everyone from all corners to stay and enjoy its beauty, to take a walk through the wonderful park of the manor.

Mechanisms of civic engagement

Community participation included public discussions and deliberations, and involvement in design activities. Stakeholder interaction between residents, local authorities, non-governmental organisations, volunteers, designers and builders was key, and efforts were made to ensure inclusiveness by addressing barriers to information publicity and digital access.

Community Engagement Level: the level of community involvement in identifying and defining the Gelgaudiškis Challenge was active, especially at the early stage of initiation. The initiative to restore the

manor was initiated by community members. Despite the fact that the community knew about the project and discussed it, they were not deeply involved in the planning or decision-making process. Engagement has primarily taken place through formal channels such as public meetings, feedback sessions and discussions organised by the local municipality.

Community participation in the action: although they did not participate directly in the decision-making phase, community members actively participated in community initiatives and advocated for the restoration of the manor. Their participation mainly consisted of organizing events, conducting educational tours, conducting intensive cultural life – classical chamber music festivals, folk music concerts, plein airs, exhibitions of professional artists, and the annual celebration of the "Manor Day". Despite the lack of formal participatory design methods, the community has been involved through public efforts and public awareness campaigns to mobilise support for the project and raise awareness.

Community Engagement Methods: citizen engagement techniques have included public consultations during which the municipality has collected feedback from residents, some informal community initiatives such as clean-up activities and organizing events to showcase the manor's potential, the manor and its park have become a well-known tourist attraction.

Case study findings

The participation of citizens in Gelgaudiškis had a significant social impact of resilience, which was direct and transformative. The community's involvement in promoting the restoration of the manor contributed to the cohesion of the community and provided a sense of common ownership of valuable local property.

However, the volume of participation did not have a direct impact on broader spatial outcomes, such as the creation of multifunctional spaces. Community events such as “Manor Day” have become important platforms for civic participation, but they have focused more on raising awareness rather than directly influencing urban planning. The main spatial result was the restoration of the manor, the purpose of which was to foster the local cultural heritage and tourism. However, this result did not include many innovative urban design strategies. During the project, only partially explored solutions for nature conservation, adapting infrastructure or multifunctional spaces that could have increased long-term resilience.

Conclusions

1. This study of the case of Gelgaudiškis revealed that civic engagement, especially through public initiatives and information campaigns, played a decisive role in the preservation of culture and heritage. The involvement of community members in the restoration of the manor highlighted the importance of local ownership and social cohesion, but had a limited impact on the broader resilience of the city or spatial planning.

2. The most successful forms of engagement were informal methods such as publicity and community events (e.g., Manor Day). These initiatives have helped to create a community identity and provided a platform to express local desires.
3. The case study highlights the importance of integrating bottom-up civic participation into urban planning processes, especially when it comes to building resilience in neighbourhoods. Policymakers and urban planners should consider community involvement as a vital part of shaping urban spaces, ensuring that projects meet local needs and aspirations.

Recommendations

1. Future efforts to increase citizen participation in the urban planning process could focus on closer cooperation between local communities and urban planners, fostering mutual understanding and trust. provide resources for community-initiated spatial initiatives, such as funding participatory design processes or public seminars that allow residents to make a practical contribution; participatory planning training: Urban planners and community leaders could benefit from specialised training focusing on democratic urban governance and the tools needed for inclusive urban planning. Investing in long-term community engagement: Instead of focusing only on one-off projects, ongoing initiatives that foster ongoing dialogue and feedback would help to build resilience in urban planning in a sustainable way.
2. The methods used in Gelgaudiškis, especially publicity and community events, can be replicated in other urban contexts, especially in smaller towns or regions, where local heritage plays an important role in identity and development.

Compendious summary

Part 1. INITIATOR

1. Introduction and Motivation

An interview for the role of initiator was given by a third-generation resident of Gelgaudiškis, who in 2008-2010 was the chairperson of the Gelgaudiškis community centre "Atgaiva", who herself generated and implemented various community activities with like-minded people. The resurrecting of the manor for a new life was one of the main goals of the community. First, the aim was to spread the information as widely as possible that the manor is still a very important object of the town. In the initial phase of the project, community members actively participated in discussions about the goals of the project and activities related to the future of the manor homestead. The community was constantly initiating meetings, looking for financial opportunities, as well as activities that could publicize the manor homestead. The task seemed titanic to the forces of the community, an account was opened for the restoration of the manor, but it could not solve anything. However, in this way, the goal of the community was broadcast, and an attempt was made to find as many indifferent like-minded people as possible.

2. Project Design and Approach

The community participated in the process of activating the manor homestead: the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Gelgaudiškis, the traditional "Manor Day", the traditional Stasiukas Fair near the manor, the Žolinė Festival, classical music concerts, etc. were organized. Later, when the Municipality started preparing the manor renovation project, meetings with residents were organized. Despite the lack of direct community involvement, the respondent believes that better participatory strategies, such as workshops and more inclusive discussions, could have been useful in fostering a deeper connection between residents and project promoters. Although residents did not identify specific areas for improvement, this may have been due to a lack of active community involvement and a lack of physical involvement in the planning process.

3. Participation and Actions

The idea of restoring the Gelgaudiškis Manor was born from a personal initiative – the first step in this direction was an appeal to the then head of state. This idea quickly found an echo among the local residents: active residents of Gelgaudiškis founded the Gelgaudiškis community center "Atgaiva", one of the main goals of which became the resurrectment of the manor for a new life. Over almost two decades, the community has put a lot of effort, work and creativity into planning, organizing events, spreading the word about the manor. The first significant step was the 500th anniversary of Gelgaudiškis – a five-day celebration, one day of which was dedicated to the manor. This event became the beginning of a new tradition – the "Manor Day", which has been organized annually since then. In preparation for the first event, community members voluntarily cleaned the building – cleaning garbage, collecting

plaster debris, creating a festive atmosphere using carpets, chairs, candles. Although it seemed like an impossible task for a small community, the symbolic opening of the first support account and the public broadcasting of the goals helped to build a circle of support. Later, the community became actively involved again when it became clear that the manor ensemble was included in the list of objects to be privatized. This meant the risk that the buildings could be distributed to different owners. The head of state was again addressed. The reaction was positive: the president visited Gelgaudiškis, inspected the manor buildings, and the privatization process was suspended. The community continued to be active – every year the "Manor Day", the Stasiukas Fair, the Žolinė Festival and other events were organized, which helped not only to strengthen the local identity, but also to maintain attention to the importance of the manor. These initiatives and the constant involvement of the community in the cultural and historical heritage have become an essential driving force in the restoration of the manor, preserving its integrity and significance for the entire community of Gelgaudiškis.

4. Challenges and Support

In the early stages of the project, the community opened a support account for the management of the manor, but this was not enough. Only a few years later, when some events were already being held in the manor homestead, a renovation project was prepared, and additional funds for its implementation were sought. The road to the restoration of Gelgaudiškis Manor was not easy – the community faced many challenges, both technical and organizational. One of the first serious problems became apparent after the restoration works – moisture began to accumulate in the premises of the building. In order to solve this problem, the community purchased moisture collectors, fuel for heating the manor at its own expense and took care of the operation of the heating system. Although at that time the manor already belonged to the Šakiai District Municipality, due to which it was possible to receive some financial support, some of the problems were still solved on the initiative of the community. In the further process of restoration of the manor, it was envisaged that the building would be taken over by a concessionaire, who would contribute funds and complete the restoration works. However, the search for a concessionaire was difficult – the organized tenders did not immediately receive the desired results. Finally, a lease agreement was signed with investors from the Alytus region, but their expectations and obligations were not fulfilled. The contract was terminated, and the manor returned to the municipality's balance sheet again. At that time, the community centre had already lost the opportunity to operate in the premises of the manor. Despite the difficulties, the community did not give up – a new lease agreement has been signed with other managers of the manor buildings, which consolidates the right to organize traditional celebrations at the approaches to the manor. Although some activities, such as Friday music evenings, are now less frequent, the community's goal of restoring the manor and spreading its notoriety has been largely achieved. Today, Gelgaudiškis Manor attracts visitors and invites them to take a walk through the renovated park. The young team working at the community center continues the work started and creates new plans, proving that although there is no shortage of challenges, community spirit and perseverance help to overcome even the most difficult stages.

5. Results and Reflections

The history of the revitalization of Gelgaudiškis Manor is an inspiring example of how the efforts of the local community can lead to significant changes in the preservation of cultural heritage. Despite various bureaucratic, financial and organizational challenges, the community of Gelgaudiškis was able to mobilize human resources, attract public and international support, and implement a long-term cultural project. The results are not only the restored buildings of the manor, but also the revived cultural life, the development of tourism potential and the strengthening of the community's identity. The manor has become not only an aesthetically renovated object, but also a functional cultural center where concerts, exhibitions, celebrations and community gatherings are held. The manor's park and architecture attract visitors from all over Lithuania and even abroad. Inclusive community participation – from initial ideas to ongoing activities – has helped create a sustainable and vibrant local environment. Although the community did not have full power in decision-making, its public efforts, events, and constant interest in the fate of the manor had a significant impact on the final decisions.

6. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

The case of Gelgaudiškis Manor highlights several important lessons:

- ***Community involvement has impact and power*** – even a limited but motivated local community can become an engine of change.
- ***Long-term commitment is more important than quick results*** – the manor restoration process lasted almost 20 years, and the results achieved showed that patience and consistent work pay off.
- ***The importance of partnership*** – cooperation with the municipality, the cultural centre, non-governmental organisations and EU funds was necessary for the implementation of the projects.
- ***Formal participation in decision-making remains a challenge*** – although the community has been active, its integration into formal planning and decision-making mechanisms has been lacking.

In the future, the community of Gelgaudiškis could further consolidate its position as a partner and initiator of the manor's activities; look for ways to strengthen their representation in the decision-making process; to develop educational and cultural programs that promote youth involvement; to maintain and develop the tourism infrastructure so that the manor becomes a sustainable source of income and a strengthener of the local economy.

Part 2. GOVERNMENTAL BODY

1. Introduction and Role

Information about the municipality's involvement in most of the cases had to be collected from online sources and had a rather abstract conversation with municipal representatives. This happened since the implementation of the project was started more than a decade ago and the current municipal employees were not involved in the initiation and implementation activities of the project.

Šakiai District Municipality was actively involved in the revitalization of Gelgaudiškis Manor, their role included planning, ensuring and coordinating the reconstruction of the manor and public spaces. Activities began after the municipality took over the manor in 2010 and official contracts for the reconstruction were signed in 2011. The municipality led the planning process, worked with experts, signed agreements on EU funding and supervised the implementation.

2. Spatial Challenges

From the point of view of territorial planning, the main concern was to arrange and adapt the public spaces of the manor to the needs of the public, ensuring better accessibility and functionality. Public spaces, including pathways, lighting, and green spaces, needed to be improved to restore the manor's grandeur and functionality.

3. Policy and Governance Framework

The project was supported by state institutions covering the preservation of cultural heritage and urban planning regulations. The project complied with local planning laws, environmental regulations and heritage conservation regulations. The Department of Cultural Heritage has provided recommendations on the restoration of historical elements. Community input: The project has been designed with community input in mind, especially by involving local leaders and residents in discussions about the future of the estate. Government support: The municipality provided technical assistance, ensured compliance with the legislation and assisted in the approval of the project. Among the visible actions was the restoration of the manor's paths and lighting.

4. Collaborative Efforts and Challenges

The municipality has partnered with community leaders, the cultural center, NGOs, and businesses to ensure broad support and engagement. A public consultation was held to give the opinion of residents on the project. The municipality communicated with residents through meetings and feedback sessions. It also facilitated the necessary permissions for temporary changes during the project. The municipality balanced the needs of the community with the broader goals of the city's development, ensuring that the

project was culturally sensitive and economically feasible. Cooperation with the community has been largely effective, although there have been challenges in reconciling different interests.

5. Barriers and Solutions

Some limitations: historical protection, the need to preserve the manor's cultural heritage, environmental identity, required greater efforts in the implementation of the project. However, the municipality managed these restrictions by carefully restoring the manor in accordance with the heritage guidelines. The municipality balanced the technical requirements with the wishes of the community, ensuring that the restoration was in line with the historical features and in line with modern needs.

6. Support, Funding, and Resource Allocation

The municipality provided financial support, technical assistance and regulatory guidance throughout the project, and EU funds were crucial for the restoration work. The project is mainly financed by EU funds (more than 1.4 million euros) and the municipality's own contributions (about 200 thousand euros). The allocation of funds was focused on the restoration of the most important aspects of the manor – public spaces and historical features, ensuring cultural and recreational value.

7. Impact and Long-Term Vision

The project increased the resilience of the eldership by revitalizing the manor and its surrounding public spaces, providing cultural, recreational and tourism opportunities. The public spaces around the manor have been the most improved, with restored paths, lighting and landscaping that have increased accessibility and attractiveness. The manor homestead palace building has been successfully restored, restoring historical details and trying to maintain its historical appearance. The project has shown success in civic engagement by involving the community in the restoration process, which has led to stronger ties between the municipality and residents. The municipality's role in neighborhood projects has evolved to include clearer processes for community initiatives, and this project is an example of future efforts. The municipality imagines Gelgaudiškis Manor as an important cultural and tourism centre that contributes to the development of the region. There are opportunities to replicate the model in other areas and facilities of this type in order to promote tourism and economic growth.

Part 3. BENEFICIARY

1. Introduction and Involvement

The interviewee is a resident of Gelgaudiškis, who has a deep connection with the city and its historical heritage. Her dedication to the preservation of local culture encouraged her to actively participate in community initiatives, especially in the restoration and revitalization of Gelgaudiškis Manor. Her involvement in the neighborhood resilience project began when the community recognized the urgent need to restore the manor, a landmark of local identity. The initiative has gained momentum due to public efforts, information is spread by word of mouth, public meetings and cultural events, such as "Manor Day", an annual tradition created to raise awareness and support for the project. The community's vision was to protect and revitalize the manor as a thriving cultural center, ensuring its preservation for future generations.

2. Participation

The interlocutor played a significant role in the restoration project of Gelgaudiškis Manor, actively participating in ideas generation sessions and practical community activities. Overall, many community members contributed by organizing and participating in meetings, proposing design concepts, organizing various events, including tidying up initiatives, to prepare the mansion for public use. The decisions were based on both practical needs and historical value, ensuring that the restoration efforts aligned with the broader vision of transforming the estate into a vibrant cultural center.

3. Understanding Resilience and Participation

In the context of Gelgaudiškis, resilience is understood as the ability of a community to preserve, restore and maintain its cultural and historical monuments despite challenges, so that the manor remains a symbol of local identity and a gathering place for future generations. Prior to the project, the community faced several challenges related to resilience. The manor suffered extensive damage, and its constant neglect raised concerns about cultural and structural decline. The main concerns were the deterioration of historic buildings, limited funding opportunities and the risk of privatisation, which could have fragmented the community and local authorities.

4. Perceived Benefits and Changes

The restoration of the manor not only preserved an important historical place, but also created a space for cultural gatherings and strengthened community ties. The collaborative nature of the project allowed residents to express their opinion and actively shape the result. However, the process was also fraught with challenges, especially in securing funding and overcoming bureaucratic obstacles. Nevertheless, the community's perseverance ensured that the project moved forward. After the implementation of the Gelgaudiškis Manor restoration project, a significant improvement in both public spaces and the infrastructure of the general area is noticeable. Once abandoned and dilapidated, the manor has been

revived into a vibrant cultural and historical monument. The surrounding park, which also suffered from neglect, has been restored, making it a welcoming and well-maintained green space for the community. The project had a great impact on the daily life of Gelgaudiškis. The renovated manor has become a centre of cultural events, concerts, and social gatherings, encouraging greater community communication. The improved spaces reinforced the pride of the place and provided a common place where residents could come together, strengthening the social fabric of the city. In addition, the restoration has contributed to the increase in tourism, bringing economic and cultural benefits to the area. The manor itself, together with the park, has become a favorite place for walks, cultural events, and community meetings. The annual Manor Day celebration and other traditional events continue to attract people, reinforcing the importance of the place as a community gathering place. Joint efforts to restore the manor brought the neighbours closer together, fostered a greater sense of unity and responsibility for the preservation of the city's heritage.

5. Experience with the Process, Challenges and Concerns

Some aspects, in particular administrative procedures and applications for funding, were complex and needed to be well prepared. At times, there was a lack of transparency in the decision-making process, making it difficult for community members to fully understand the next steps or influence key outcomes. In addition, bureaucratic hurdles slowed down the approval of the project, making it difficult for the community to act as quickly as it needed to. Although public meetings and events helped to disseminate information, there were moments when communication gaps made it more difficult for residents to be informed and engage. However, the respondent acknowledges that more attention could have been paid to certain areas. For example, additional efforts could have been made to improve the right part of the manor house building, which was not included in the initial restoration funding. In addition, management changes were introduced at a later stage of the project, which limited community access to certain spaces, which did not correspond to the original vision of full public participation.

6. Long-Term Impact, Future Participation and Recommendations

The long-term impact of the Gelgaudiškis Manor restoration project is the revival of a significant cultural and historical monument that has become a source of pride for the community. The manor and the park surrounding it have turned into a lively space that attracts visitors, organizes cultural events, and fosters social ties among residents. For future projects aimed at increasing the resilience of the neighbourhood, the respondent suggests paying more attention to the integration of local residents into planning and design processes. Involving residents from different backgrounds in the design phase could help ensure that the project meets the most important needs of the community. In addition, in order to improve the participation of residents in shaping the future of planning and development of the territories of the district, better results can be obtained.

Attachments

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