

# Aesthetic Quality of the Gajok Community in Daugavpils

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**Abstract.** The city landscape is a dynamic environment which changes rapidly over time. However, some areas are unable to adapt to changes along with time, which in turn becomes a cause of degradation of the defined area and, as a result, the aesthetic quality of the area rapidly decreases. It is important to remember that the degradation does not mean that those "problem areas" should be abandoned, since they are important components of the city's image, which carries with it the rich cultural and historical heritage. Therefore, it is necessary to identify and revitalize the forgotten values, adapting them to the needs of modern society. Gajok is a vivid proof of this problem in the city of Daugavpils. It flourished in the middle of the 19th century, becoming an important industrial area, and even after enduring a number of disasters (fires, floods, wars), it was able to come alive every time. Unfortunately, the area was unable to overcome the de-industrialization processes of the 20th century, and the study found that today the area is dilapidated. Thus, the study analyses both the historical development and the current situation in order to establish the level of aesthetic quality of the Gajok community.

**Keywords:** post-industrial areas Gajoks community, aesthetic quality.

## Introduction

Gajok (from Polish and Ukrainian Gaj - stand, bosk (diminutives - gajok, Gajek – birch stands [1]) is the smallest (in size) neighbourhood in Daugavpils, which, since its inception, was associated with the development of industry. Over its more than a century long history, it survived both rises and downfalls, overcoming several fires, floods, as well as the World wars. Hence, the study aims to determine the aesthetic quality of the post-industrial Gajok neighbourhood territory.

The history of Gajok community began in the 60's of the 19th century. At this time, serfdom was abolished in Russia, and thus began an intensive development of the industry. Therefore, some traders, looking for a favourable location for the construction of their businesses in Daugavpils (then Dinaburg), noticed a small grove, which was located behind the dam, and which had some advantages compared to other districts of Daugavpils City: it was located at an important waterway (at the Daugava river), near rail freight stations, and close to the city centre, which, in view of the fact that public transport had not yet been developed, facilitated the attraction of labour force for the newly established industries [3].

The first man who started his own business in Gajok in the 50's of the 19th century, was a merchant and industrialist Savel Gurvich. In 1860 he founded a beer factory, which later became the largest beer factory in the Vitebsk province. Then came other industries: philistine Eidus's brick factory, philistine Cins's lime factory, merchant Vasiljev's oven factory, engineer Movshezon's oven factory, Prezma and merchant Kurjansky's soap production, merchant Rubanenko's

match factory, a sawmill company "Dvina", merchant Kovarsky's sawmill, merchant Mizroh's sawmill and other companies [3].

Although Gajok, from a simple stand, turned into a built-up area and became the city's industrial centre, for a long time it was not included in the territory of the city; therefore, it was not divided into quarters, and, as a result, its construction was quite chaotic, which in turn became a reason for complaints from citizens about the restriction of their rights. Consequently, in 1886 residents of Gajok community turned to Mayor Pavel Dubrovin with a request to include the Gajok neighbourhood as a part of the city, and already in 30 January, 1886 a decision was made about the spatial plan of this territory. The Gajok was added to the city plan [3].

## Materials and Methods

The study was conducted during the period from October to December of 2014. To determine the historical and current situation, the comparative method was applied. The comparative method was used to obtain tangible materials that describe Gajok neighbourhood as a whole, to identify the significant value and the aesthetic quality of the territory. The chosen method is based on the comparison of historical and contemporary photos. During the research process, in order to get a broader picture of the district's landscape quality, a survey and analysis of the current situation was carried out. Whereas, to assess the aesthetic quality, an extensive historical document research was carried out to identify the existing protected national cultural monuments in the Gajok neighbourhood. For the

assessment of the current situation, a valuation matrix was composed, which is divided into four criteria: 3 - a very valuable object, 2 - neutral object, 1- not valuable; can be dismantled, D - value of the object is not definable, the object has properties of dated era. The developed evaluation matrix was applied in the survey process for 123 objects in order to determine their value and function. To collect and define the results, a monographic or descriptive method was applied, which is based on conclusions obtained after systematizing the obtained data in the evaluation matrix.

## Results and Discussion

### *Disasters and revival*

The development of Gajok was hampered by a number of fires and floods, as well as wars significantly influenced its development. The largest fire took place on 1 June 1908, it burned down 155 houses in the area, see Figure 1. Later, for the reduction of fire threat, a reconstruction of some Gajok streets was offered for easy access to the River Daugava [3].

Major floods in the Gajok and Daugavpils history took place in 1922 - when the water level reached the second floor, see Figure 2. 554 ovens were destroyed in 151 homes, and for this reason, after the disaster the construction of the dam was begun in Gajok. After the First World War, almost all of the pre-war production plants were closed. Only a few factories continued to function. Brewery production decreased 3-4 times compared with the pre-war period. Equipment of the power plant was evacuated to Smolensk [3]. However, some businesses remained and continued to develop: a textile factory "Dvina", a small metalworking company of E. Jansons, M. Levitan steam mill, and K. Kurmelov's canning factory was founded. The Old Believer's Prayer House continued to operate, the prison was almost never empty, as well as children's shelter. The region had still not recovered after the World War I, when the World War II brought new havoc.

After World War II neighbourhood was practically built anew [3] and Gajok began to come alive. Began the building of new housing for furniture factories, new urban trust auxiliary undertakings, Daugavpils industrial furniture factory [2], and Riga glass and mirror factory's mirror workshop. The old companies such as: canning factory, power plant, beer factory, sewing factory "Latvia" were reconstructed [5]. New high-rise residential buildings, arranged greenery, and new, well-fitted streets were constructed [2]. The builders cultural centre, Kalistratov's house, stores, and kiosks were opened. Gajok continued to be the city's industrial area. [3] The postwar bloom lasted until the early 90s when Gajok once again



Fig. 1. Fire in Daugavpils, Gajok, 1908

[Source: <http://dinaburg.ru/viewtopic.php?id=170&p=19AZ>]



Fig. 2. Flood in Daugavpils, Gajok, 1922

[Source: <http://dinaburg.ru/viewtopic.php?id=2950&p=8>]

suffered significant downfall [5]. Nowadays there still appear new homes, small businesses, and trade in Gajok. Two major companies are still active in Gajok - "Daugavpils water" and the city heating plant [4].

### *Research of the current situation in Gajok community*

Gajoks was one of the most developed districts of Daugavpils, as it was founded during the industrial boom and became the city's industrial centre. Even the prison establishment in the region, which today can be perceived as a negative aspect, showed its importance, because, according to the Russian Empire informal tradition, prisons were built in the city centre to remind people about the imminent punishment for criminal activities [5]. Nowadays the image of Gajok has changed; it is left out of the city, empty, deserted, its historical identity slowly disappears from the memories of city's population. In order to assess the current situation in the Gajok community, understand the reasons for exclusion of this district, identify the value of the district, as well as to evaluate the potential for development, a visual inspection of the Gajok community was carried out, during which the aesthetic value of the area buildings, functional content and structure of the building height was explored.

Over time, the building structure of the area has changed several times, owing to the ravages brought by the World Wars, the consecutive fires and floods.

Province lost its regular gridded street system, which was influenced by several factors. For example, during the war Gajok was almost completely destroyed, when after several fires, some streets were reconstructed in a way to provide easier access to the Daugava waters. Also, with the expansion of growing industries, several small districts merged together; thus, appeared a number of streets that lead nowhere and couple of them end with deadlocks. The result is a network of streets, where it is difficult to navigate. The number of so-called "gates" (street through which one can enter Gajok) also decreased, which became one of the reasons why the region became less visited. The changes of street network over centuries, see Figures 3, 4 and 5. After a number of changes, the district became sealed, outcast from the city, difficult to access.

Over the course of visual inspection the structure of the functional area (zoning) was studied and analysed. The industrial, commercial, residential, green and recreational areas were identified. Also, abandoned structures, which form a significant part of Gajok, were found. The study findings demonstrate that Gajok community is dominated by the industrial and residential housing. The study found that the prevalence of green areas is very low, and they comprise the memorial area for the people killed in the World War II and the abandoned or overgrown areas. The scheme of functional zoning of territory is illustrated in Figure 6. When comparing the data obtained with the data for planned / permitted use of the territory for the period from 2006-2018th year, the study shows that those areas mostly coincide with the course of work identified in the zoning, but it mainly focuses on the development of transport infrastructure, but no attention is paid to the importance of green and recreational areas, which would improve the quality of urban environment. Currently free areas have been designated for mixed construction. It would be important to expand the existing green and recreational areas in view of the fact that over time Gajok neighbourhood has developed a dense housing structure, similarly as in the new adjacent housing estate, where the housing is also dense, and it lacks large green and recreation areas. Green areas in the past were compensated by the Alexander Park, which was destroyed during World War II and later the park area was built-up with housing [3]. The urban aesthetic quality is also greatly influenced by the height of the building structure that is determined by functional zoning. The study found that the highest area buildings are located along the perimeter of the area defined by the commercial type construction that forms along the main road (18 November street), as well as industries that have historically formed along the Daugava river. In the central part of the Gajok community are located the lower buildings which are mainly residential housing, see Figure 7.

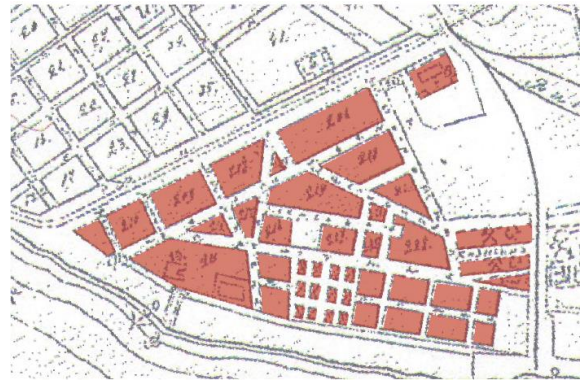


Fig. 3. Gajok neighbourhood street network in 1886  
[Source: Auziņš, 2008]



Fig. 4. Gajok neighbourhood street network in 1938  
[Source: www.zurbu.net]

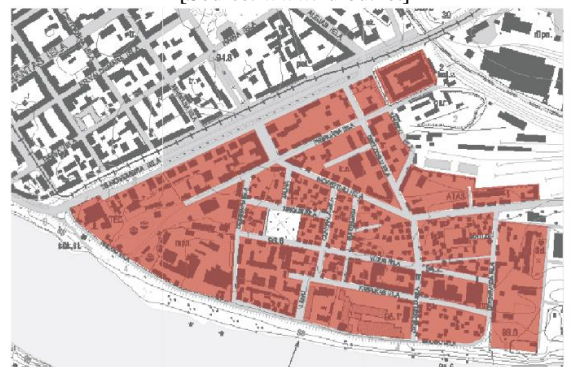


Fig. 5. Gajok neighbourhood street network in 2014  
[Source: www.baltimaps.eu]

When surveying the territory, applying the developed evaluation matrix, there was established that in the territory is located one state protected cultural monument of national importance and 10 state protected cultural monuments of local importance. In the research process, in order to identify the aesthetic quality and gain a broader picture of Gajok community landscape, 123 objects were analysed, where the assessment of buildings is the authors' subjective opinion. As a result of territory assessment, as the most valuable ("3") were classified the objects which are included in the list of national protected cultural monuments, as well as other buildings that reflect the industrial character of the area or they are examples of the Daugavpils architectural style (red brick architecture, "Stalin" 50's to 60's architecture

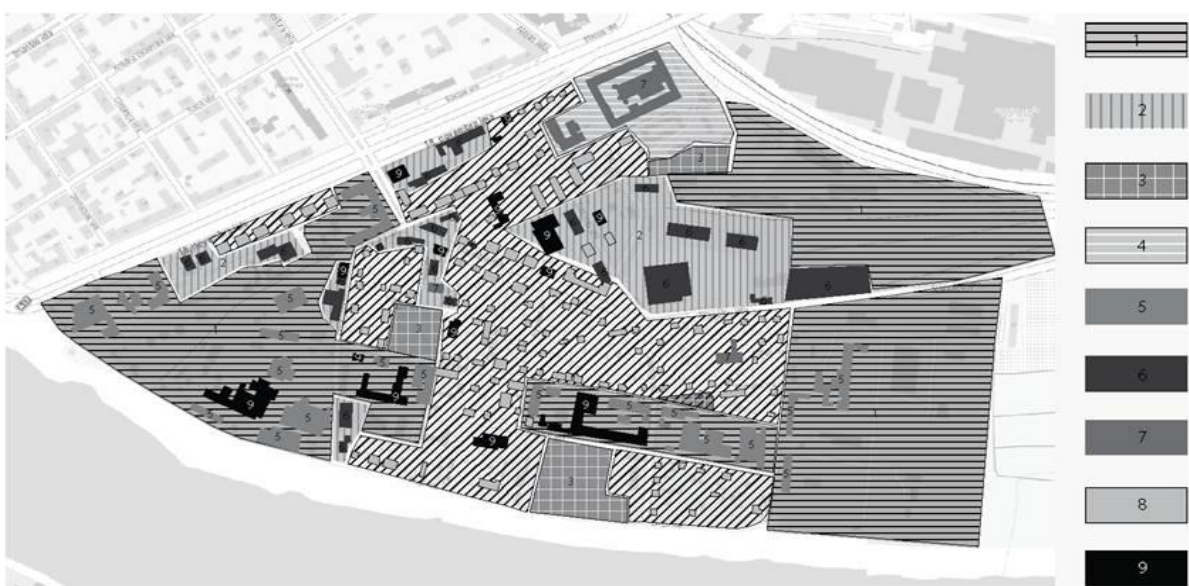


Fig. 6. Functional territory zoning in Gajoka community [Source: construction by the author's, 2015]  
1-industrial objects area; 2-public business area; 3-park or square; 4-public agency area; 5-industrial object; 6-business object; 7-educational building; 8-living house; 9-object without function or deserted object.

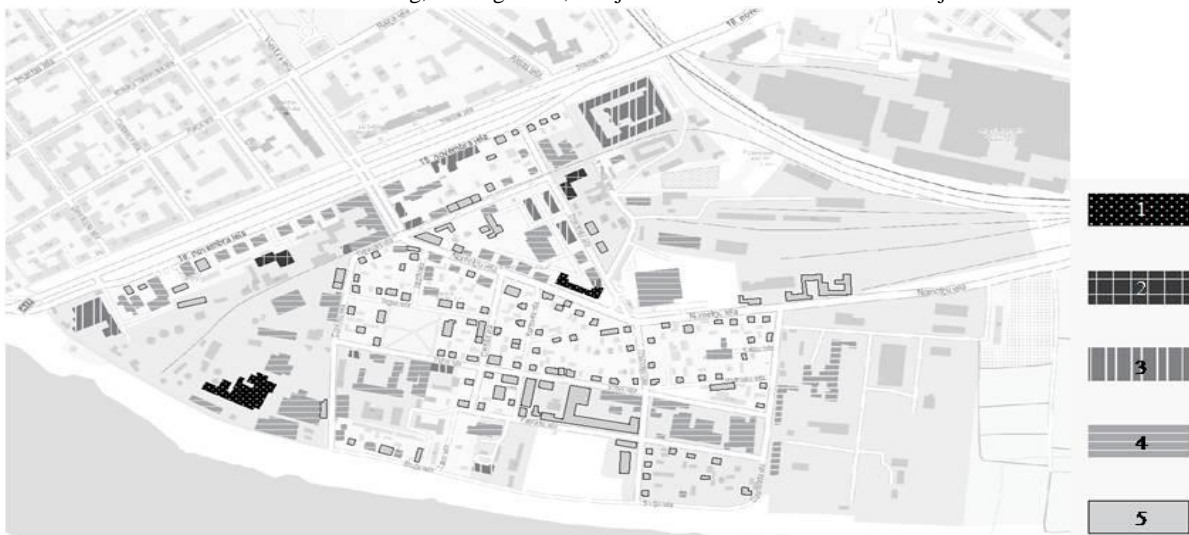


Fig. 7. Building height structure in Gajoka community [Source: construction by the author's, 2015]  
1- 5 till 9 floors; 2- 4 floors; 3- 3 floors; 4- 2 floors; 5- 1 floor.

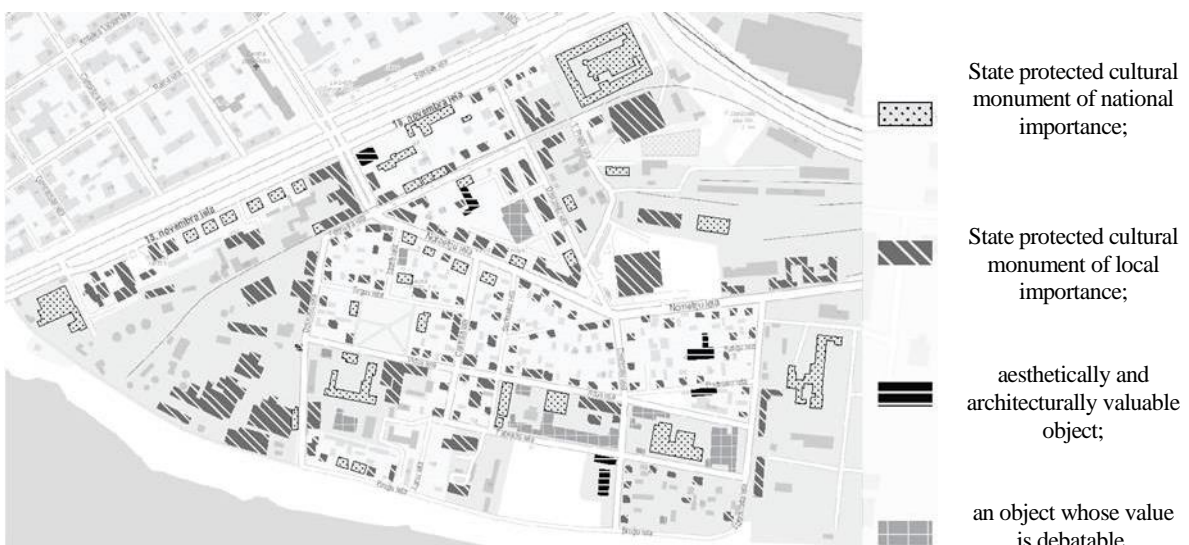


Fig. 8. Aesthetically and architecturally valuable objects in Gajok community [Source: construction by the author's, 2015]

(Russian classical tradition), etc.). Conversely, as the neutral ("2") were classified those buildings that do not significantly affect Gajok landscape aesthetic quality (in this category are mainly included residential buildings) and as a low-value ("1") were classified the low-quality housing that degrades the district landscape and should be demolished,

see Figure 8. As non- definable were considered those buildings, which were difficult to attribute to a particular group, because they comprise the properties of both the valuable and low-value buildings. Part of the results in the assessment matrix see in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Part of the evaluation matrix for Gajok Community [Source: materials, photo by authors, 2014]





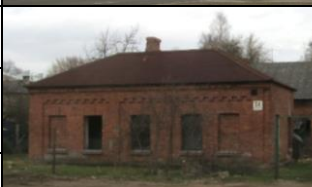



|   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| 1 | Name of building / function / adress  | "Kaļistratova", without function,<br>21 Nometņu street |    |
|   | 3 - a very valuable object; 2 - neutral object;<br>1 - not valuable, can be dismantled;<br>D - value of the object is not definable | 3  |   |
|   | Amount of floors  | 2  |   |
| 2 | Name of building / function / adress  | Ltd. "Daugavpils ūdens",<br>23 Ūdensvada street        |    |
|   | 3 - a very valuable object; 2 - neutral object;<br>1 - not valuable, can be dismantled;<br>D - value of the object is not definable | 3  |   |
|   | Amount of floors  | 1-2  |   |
| 3 | Name of building / function / adress  | Office house,<br>30a Preču street                      |   |
|   | 3 - a very valuable object; 2 - neutral object;<br>1 - not valuable, can be dismantled;<br>D - value of the object is not definable | 3  |   |
|   | Amount of floors  | 2  |   |
| 4 | Name of building / function / adress  | Prison, 66a Novembra street                            |  |
|   | 3 - a very valuable object; 2 - neutral object;<br>1 - not valuable, can be dismantled;<br>D - value of the object is not definable | 3  |   |
|   | Amount of floors  | 3  |   |
| 5 | Name of building / function / adress  | Without function,<br>54/56 Novembra street             |  |
|   | 3 - a very valuable object; 2 - neutral object;<br>1 - not valuable, can be dismantled;<br>D - value of the object is not definable | 3  |   |
|   | Amount of floors  | 1  |   |
| 6 | Name of building / function / adress  | Living house,<br>5 Nometņu street                      |  |
|   | 3 - a very valuable object; 2 - neutral object;<br>1 - not valuable, can be dismantled;<br>D - value of the object is not definable | 2  |   |
|   | Amount of floors  | 3  |   |
| 7 | Name of building / function / adress  | Living house,<br>39 Februāra street                    |  |
|   | 3 - a very valuable object; 2 - neutral object;<br>1 - not valuable, can be dismantled;<br>D - value of the object is not definable | 2  |   |
|   | Amount of floors  | 1.5  |   |
| 8 | Name of building / function / adress  | Without function,<br>42 Novembra street                |  |
|   | 3 - a very valuable object; 2 - neutral object;<br>1 - not valuable, can be dismantled;<br>D - value of the object is not definable | 1  |   |
|   | Amount of floors  | 2  |   |



Fig. 9. Building on Vidus Street 31/33, in winter 2012  
[Source: [www.panoramio.com/user/420066?  
with\\_photo\\_id=32767610](http://www.panoramio.com/user/420066?with_photo_id=32767610)]



Fig. 10. Building on Vidus Street 31/33, January 2015  
[Source: [www.panoramio.com/user/420066?  
with\\_photo\\_id=32767610](http://www.panoramio.com/user/420066?with_photo_id=32767610)]

As a result of visual inspection, a number of aesthetically and architecturally attractive objects were identified in Gajok that are not included in the national list of protected properties, but they still form the area's industrial image and bring evidence of their century. These buildings can be considered to be at risk, because, being in the hands of private owners, their appearance can be modified or the object may lose its historical value. Even under the merciless influence of time, the neglected building progressively degrades and collapses, as has happened with a building on the Vidus Street 31/33, see Figures 9, 10.

### Conclusion

The housing structure of Gajok has changed significantly over the years, not only because of the fact that small industries, scattered in a mosaic order, were unionised into large closed inaccessible areas, but also the fact that the district suffered from various disasters several times, thus, it was rebuilt. Nowadays the structure of Gajok area consists of mostly industrial and residential construction, which generally affects the aesthetic quality. Building height formed respectively by their functional content - low central area (residential housing) and the highest external building consisting of industry and commercial building.

There are a number of objects in the territory which have been awarded the protected national or local heritage status, but there are many historically and aesthetically valuable monuments, which are not protected, and their existence is therefore

Creating an attractive environment is an important aspect to attract the population, therefore the basic principles of sustainable planning should be applied to the whole Gajok territory, thereby increasing its aesthetic quality, making it an available and people-friendly urban space. For the Gajok community it is important to understand that one of the basic principles of sustainable planning is related to the preservation of the identity of the object, which in turn will maintain Gajok's historic industrial image as a whole.

endangered particularly in view of the fact that many of valuable buildings have remained without function. These buildings should be assigned new functions in order to protect them from further dilapidation, as well as to protect the unique industrial atmosphere of the Gajok community, by raising aesthetic quality in a much higher level. The research process has marked further research directions that would affect the world's experience in the development of post-industrial heritage, where districts with similar past are not a rarity and a number of industries were closed. However, because of the people's initiative and the desire to preserve a unique testimony of the past, these areas are being revitalized through various development strategies, which would be worth analysing also in this kind of neighbourhood.

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**Kopsavilkums.** Pilsētas ainava ir dinamiska vide, tā strauji mainās laiku gaitā. Tomēr dažas teritorijas nespēj laicīgi pielāgoties izmaiņām, kas savukārt kļūst par noteikto rajonu degradācijas iemeslu. Ir svarīgi atcerēties, ka degradācija nenozīmē, ka par šīm „problēmzonām” ir jāaizmirst, jo tās ir svarīgas pilsētas tēla sastāvdaļas, kas nes sevī bagātu kultūrvēsturisko mantojumu. Tāpēc ir nepieciešams identificēt un revitalizēt aizmirstās vērtības, pielāgojot tās mūsdienu sabiedrības vajadzībām. Gajoks ir šis likumsakarības spilgts pierādījums Daugavpils pilsētas kontekstā. Tas uzplauka 19. gadsimtā vidū kļūstot par svarīgu industriālo teritoriju, izejot cauri vairākām katastrofām (ugunsgrēki, plūdi, kari) katru reizi spēja atplaukt, bet nespējot pārvarēt 20. gadsimta deindustrializācijas procesus, mūsdienās šī teritorija ir degradējusies. Līdz ar to pētījumā tiek analizēti vēsturiskās attīstības posmi un esošā situācija, lai tiktu konstatēta Gajoka mikrorajona estētiskā kvalitāte.

Gajoks (no poļu un ukraiņu gaj – audze, birze (pamazināmā formā – gajok, gajek – birzstaliņa [1]) ir Daugavpils mazākais (platības ziņā) mikrorajons, kas kopš saviem pirmsākumiem bija saistīts ar rūpniecības attīstību. Savā vairāk nekā gadsimtu garā vēsture tas pārdzīvoja gan lēcienus, gan kritienus, izejot caur ugunsgrēkiem, plūdiem, kā arī Pasaules kariem. Līdz ar to, pētījuma mērķis noteikt postindustriālās teritorijas estētisko kvalitāti Gajoka mikrorajonā.

Gajoka mikrorajona vēsture sākās 19. gadsimta 60. gados. Šajā laikā tika atcelta dzimtbūšana Krievijā un līdz ar to sākās intensīva industriju attīstība. Tāpēc daži tirgotāji, meklējot izdevīgu vietu savu uzņēmumu būvniecībai Daugavpilī (toreiz Dinaburgā) pievērsa uzmanību nelielai audzei, kas atradās aiz dambja, un kurai bija dažas priekšrocības salīdzinājumā ar citiem Daugavpils pilsētas mikrorajoniem: atradās pie svarīga ūdensceļa (pie Daugavas upes), dzelzceļa kravu stacijas, tuvu pilsētas centram, kas ņemot vērā to, ka sabiedriskais transports vēl nebija attīstīts, atvieglotu darbaspēka piesaistīšanu jaunizveidotām industrijām [3].

Pirmais, kas sāka dibināt savus uzņēmumus Gajokā 19. gadsimta 50. gados bija tirgotājs un rūpnieks Šavels Gurvičs. 1860. gadā viņš dibināja alus rūpniecību, kas vēlāk kļuva par lielāku alus rūpniecību Vitebskas guberņā. Tad parādījās arī citas industrijas: mietpilsoņa Eidusa ķieģeļu rūpniecība, mietpilsoņa Cina kaļķu rūpniecība, tirgotāja Vasiljeva krāsns podiņu rūpniecība, inženiera Movšezona krāsns podiņu rūpniecība, Prezmas un tirgotāja Kurjanska ziepju ražošana, tirgotāja Rubaņenko sērķociņu fabrika, kokzāģēšanas uzņēmums „Dvina”, tirgotāja Kovarska kokzāģētava, tirgotāja Mizroha kokzāģētava u.c. uzņēmumi [3].

Tomēr kaut arī Gajoks no audzes pārvērtās apbūvētā rajonā un kļuva par pilsētas industriālo centru, tas ilgu laiku nebija iekļauts pilsētas teritorijā, līdz ar to arī netika sadalīts kvartālos, kā rezultātā, apbūve veidojas diezgan haotiski, kas savukārt kļuva par iemeslu iedzīvotāju sūdzībām par viņu tiesību ierobežojumu. Rezultātā, 1886. gadā Gajoka iedzīvotāji vērsās pie pilsētas mēra Pāvela Dubrovina ar lūgumu iekļaut Gajoka teritoriju pilsētas sastāvā un jau 1886. gadā 30. janvārī tika pieņemts lēmums par šīs teritorijas plānojuma izstrādi. Turpmāk Gajoks tika pievienots pilsētai [3].

Gajoka apbūves struktūra ir ievērojami izmainījusies gadu gaitā, ko noteica ne tikai tas, ka mozaīkveida izvietotas nelielas industrijas tika apvienotās lielās slēgtas nepieejamas teritorijās, bet arī tas, ka rajons vairākas reizes cieta no dažādām katastrofām, tāpēc tika pārbūvēts. Mūsdienās Gajoka struktūru veido pārsvarā rūpniecības un dzīvojamā apbūve, kas arī ietekmē estētiskās kvalitātes līmeni. Apbūves augstums izveidojies attiecīgi pēc to funkcionālā satura – zema centrālā zona (dzīvojamā apbūve) un augstākā ārējā apbūve, ko veido industrijas un komercdarbības apbūve.

Teritorijā atrodas vairāki objekti, kam ir piešķirts valsts vai vietējas nozīmes aizsargājama kultūras pieminekļa statuss. Tomēr ir daudz arī vēsturiski un estētiski vērtīgi pieminekļi, kuri nav aizsargāti, un to eksistence līdz ar to ir apdraudēta, kā arī daudzas vērtīgas ēkas ir palikušas bez funkcijas. Šīm ēkām ir jāpiešķir jauna funkcija, lai pasargātu tās no degradācijas turpmāk, kā arī lai pasargātu Gajoka mikrorajona unikālo industriālo atmosfēru, ceļot estētisko kvalitāti daudz labākā līmenī. Pētījuma procesā iezīmējušies turpmāki pētījuma virzieni, kas skartu pasaules pieredzi postindustriālā mantojuma attīstības gaitā, kur mikrorajoni ar līdzīgu pagātņi nav retums un vairākas industrijas tiek slēgtas. Pateicoties cilvēku iniciatīvai un vēlmei saglabāt unikālas liecības par pagātņi, tiek revitalizētas, izmantojot dažādas attīstības stratēģijas, kuras būtu vērts izanalizēt arī šāda veida mikrorajonā.