

## ENGAGEMENT OF THE POPULATION OF JURMALA CITY IN PROMOTING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESORT

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**Abstract.** For any urban population, it is important to feel the sense of belonging to the city. Jurmala city needs to position itself not only as a seaside resort and a place of residence closely located to Riga but also as a territory with its unique culture. As one of the priorities that is determined by the Jurmala City Cultural Development Strategy 2008–2020 is to involve Jurmala residents in Jurmala city's cultural life. In order to preserve the historical heritage of the resort, the Jurmala City Council is seeking opportunities to create innovative souvenirs that would represent the most typical culture elements of Jurmala in an original way. The aim of the research study was to evaluate Jurmala residents' readiness to get engaged in the promotion of Jurmala cultural life. In the scope of the research, the authors used the following research methods: the monographic, logical construction and graphic methods, and a social survey. The data were processed by using statistical analysis and synthesis methods. The research results confirmed the authors' assumption that Jurmala residents support the idea of creating original and socially innovative souvenirs for Jurmala cultural events, yet not all of the residents were ready to actively get involved in the creation of such souvenirs. The research results show that there are opportunities how Jurmala city could promote its resort offerings by means of original souvenirs created by its residents, which feature not only artistic but also socio-innovative values.

**Key words:** social innovation, promotion, population engagement

**JEL code:** M37, R11

### Introduction

It is important for any urban population to feel the sense of belonging to their city. The social and cultural life of the city as well as the active participation of residents in it are opportunities how to enhance the feeling of belonging to the particular territory.

In terms of area and population, Jurmala is the largest resort on the Baltic Sea. The image of the city in the eyes of Jurmala residents and elsewhere in Latvia and abroad is determined by the location of Jurmala by the sea and its resorts and sanatoria that exploit local natural resources (including sulphur water) and its cultural events and historical architecture. It is important for Jurmala city to shape its image not only as a resort and a residential place near the capital city – Riga – but also as a city rich in culture in order to evoke a wish in its residents to stay and live in this city for a long time. Culture may be promoted in the city both by preserving and maintaining important cultural objects and by contributing to the diversity of cultural activities and their attendance. To evoke the interest of

Jurmala residents in the city's cultural life, it is advisable to let the residents themselves to get involved in it as much as possible.

Jurmala City Council, to enhance the cultural image, has designed the Jurmala City Cultural Development Strategy for 2008-2020. Since the number of tourists visiting the city, on a national scale, is considerable, further development of the cultural environment plays a great role for both locals and visitors. One of the objectives set by the City Council in its Jurmala City Cultural Development Strategy involves creating new and innovative souvenirs for Jurmala city. The authors see an opportunity to engage residents too in this process.

The paper puts forward the following hypothesis: Jurmala city residents are interested in Jurmala cultural events and in contributing to the recognition of the events.

To identify the opinions of Jurmala residents on the cultural life in their city and their engagement in it, the following research aim was set: to evaluate Jurmala residents' readiness to

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get engaged in the promotion of Jurmala cultural life.

The following specific research tasks were set to achieve the aim:

- 1) to study the guidelines for Jurmala city's cultural life promotion in the Jurmala City Development Programme 2014-2020 and the Jurmala City Cultural Development Strategy 2008-2020;
- 2) to explore the attitudes of Jurmala city's residents to cultural events in Jurmala;
- 3) to find out Jurmala city's residents readiness to engage in the promotion of the cultural events that take place in Jurmala.

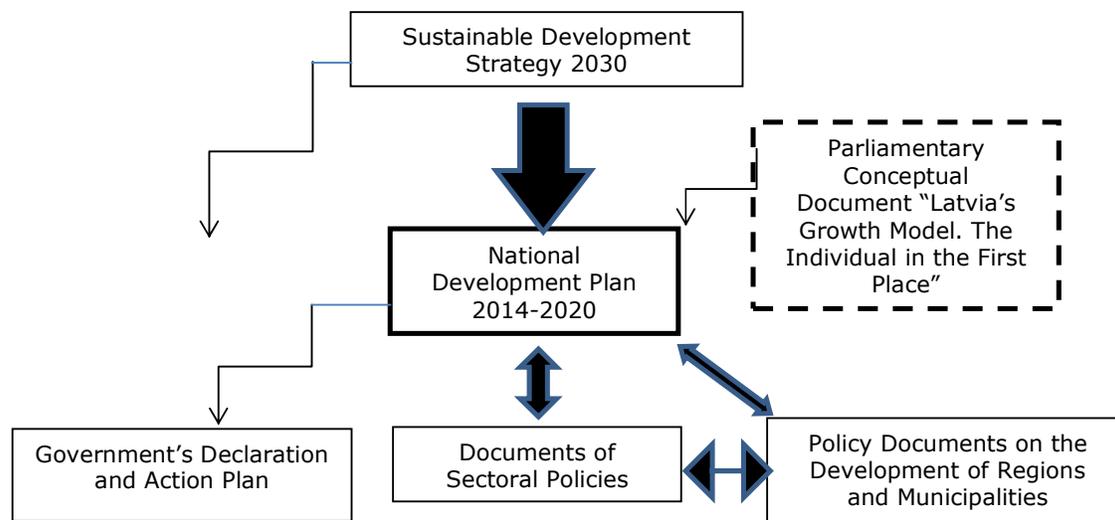
In the scope of the research, the authors used the monographic, logical construction and graphic methods, and a questionnaire survey of residents. Statistical analysis as well as analysis and synthesis were employed to process the data.

The present research also used the following policy documents: the National Development Plan

Jelgava, LLU ESAF, 21-22 April 2016, pp. 143-144 of Latvia for 2014-2020, the Jurmala City Development Programme 2014-2020 and the Jurmala City Cultural Development Strategy 2008-2020.

### Research results and discussion

The National Development Plan is the key policy document for the national and local governments, which is designed in accordance with the European Union standards. The authority of Jurmala has elaborated the Jurmala City Development Programme 2014-2020 as well as a separate cultural policy document – the Jurmala City Cultural Development Strategy 2008-2020. The key national-level policy document is the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014-2020. To find out what roles are specified for the cultivation of national values and the development of cultural activities in Jurmala, the authors analysed all the three above-mentioned development documents as well as other related policy documents.



Source: authors' construction based on the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre's presentation on the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014-2020

Fig. 1. Position of the NDP 2020 in the planning hierarchy

The National Development Plan (NDP 2020) focuses on such objectives as preserving cultural heritage values as well as engaging the public in the cultivation of national values. The national government puts a special focus on preserving, maintaining and popularising basic cultural

heritage values. To achieve the objectives, the national government improves its cooperation with local authorities, entrepreneurs, public organisations and international institutions. The canon of Latvian culture is an instrument of government policies on national culture,

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education, national unity and public solidarity as well as on shaping the image of Latvia (Parliament of the Republic of Latvia, 2012).

The Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 also envisages the preservation, interaction and enrichment of cultural space as one of the priorities, which may be achieved through the formation of a creative society. To better understand whether this priority is appropriate for the Jurmala City Cultural Development Strategy, the authors also examined Latvia 2030 strategy. Latvia 2030 prioritises the preservation, interaction and enrichment of cultural space: within the context of global and European cultural diversity, it is important for Latvia to develop its identity, language, national cultural values and lifestyle that shape the cultural space of Latvia, while at the same time exploiting the fruitful influence of other cultures and enriching the cultural heritage of mankind. The purpose is to preserve and enhance the cultural capital of Latvia and to contribute to the sense of belonging to Latvia's cultural space, developing a competitive national identity based on public creativity and shaping a quality cultural environment in Latvia (Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre, 2012).

In creating socially innovative souvenirs for promotion at Jurmala city cultural events, it is important to engage the local population in this process, thus, contributing to a creative urban environment and the participation of the public in cultural processes. For those engaged, such activities could also raise their sense of belonging to their national identity. The population could be engaged in souvenir sales, carrying out such activities at children's camps and events for associations. The development of urban cultural policies and the engagement of residents in the cultural life and in shaping it are important to the local authority of Jurmala city as well. Creating such souvenirs may be defined as a social marketing campaign for the population of Jurmala.

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The key purpose of social marketing is to actively engage residents in tackling some problem; besides, it has to be done through conviction rather than persuasion. Such a kind of marketing calls for taking civil responsibility and active participation rather than just passive watching what is going on (Andersone I. et al., 2010). Kudins (2012) emphasizes that in order to achieve socially desirable outcomes, people should be able to organize themselves, to face the challenges, identify their needs and priorities and try to satisfy them by (1) self-organisation in groups; (2) local resource mobilization, and (3) by attracting other resources. Scientists from various countries have shown that self-organization of society and targeted involvement in socially significant initiatives are an essential prerequisite for harmonization of interests of various members of society (Barnes H.S., 2006; Yaojun L. and Marsh D., 2008; Petrova T. and Tarrow S., 2007; Habermas J., 1995; Kruzmetra M. and Rivza B., 2014). The target audience of social change drivers might be both an organisation and the entire society. However, it has to be taken into account that only part of the audience addressed is ready to actively participate. It is important to understand it when defining the expected results of a campaign (Donovan R., Henley N., 2010). An analysis of theoretical literature shows that some leading social marketing researchers (L.Wallack, M.E.Goldberg and R.Donovan) point that social marketing professionals have to more focus on environmental factors that create a social problem. Namely, social marketing professionals have to identify the environmental factors that contribute to the social problem and, accordingly, to make changes in the environment (Wymer W., 2011).

To influence the exogenous factors for Jurmala residents that can evoke the wish of Jurmala residents to engage in producing socially innovative souvenirs, it is important to involve Jurmala city in this process and to integrate

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social changes in its strategic plans. At municipal level, no separate cultural policy document has been designed for Jurmala city; however, the development of the cultural sphere in Jurmala was defined as one of the priorities in the Jurmala City Cultural Development Strategy 2008-2020 (Jurmala City Council, 2009).

The Jurmala City Cultural Development Strategy 2008-2020 sets the following priorities:

- preserving and popularising cultural heritage at national and international levels;
- developing the infrastructure of cultural institutions and objects;
- holding and popularising quality and diverse cultural events;
- building the capacity of professionals in the cultural sphere. Jurmala city's cultural environment and cultural sector are analysed in the strategy in more detail than in the programme (Jurmala City Council, 2013).

The popularisation of cultural heritage may be carried out by means of special souvenirs created in Jurmala city, which involve the depictions of objects of cultural significance. Besides, innovative souvenirs could also popularise cultural events and raise the quality of Jurmala city's cultural events.

The Jurmala City Cultural Development Strategy 2008-2020 focuses in more detail also on the production of souvenirs as well as the establishment of creative laboratories for the population. Accordingly, one of the objectives set in the strategy refers to raising the activity and participation of the city's residents in educational and cultural events through:

- enhancing informative materials on cultural and educational opportunities and cultural events and their distribution channels;
- raising the culture and creativity of children and youths and creative excellence and participation for all age groups of the population;

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- establishing creative laboratories and holding symposiums with the participation of residents;
- promoting cooperation with craftsmen living in the city concerning producing souvenirs and folk art items typical for the city.

The authority of Jurmala has envisaged activities for the period 2011-2020 with a budget of approximately LVL 100 000 or EUR 142 287 for establishing creative laboratories and holding symposiums with the participation of residents (Jurmala City Council, 2009).

The policy documents of Latvia and Jurmala focus both on how important it is to popularise objects of cultural significance and cultural values and on how essential it is to engage also the population in this process. The authors believe that the most effective way how to cultivate the national values of Latvia or a particular region among the population is to engage them in shaping their cultural life. It contributes to their sense of belonging to and the wish to defend and be proud of their identity.

At present, 49 750 individuals live in Jurmala. Their number decreased by 10.6% during the last 15 years. According to a survey conducted by the Jurmala City Council, 90.3% of the surveyed city residents planned to continue living in Jurmala over the next five years because of proximity to the sea, nature as well as their native home and land. The key reason (21.3%) for choosing other place of residence instead of Jurmala, according to the surveyed residents, was expensiveness: a high tax on land, high utility costs etc. (Jurmala City Council, 2013).

It is essential for Jurmala City Council to engage residents in planning the development of their city life. The website [www.jurmala.lv](http://www.jurmala.lv) includes a section about the municipality; it offers interactive communication and residents may make their suggestions and participate in surveys on various matters. According to a survey by the Jurmala City Council, 36.3% of the respondents were satisfied with an opportunity to

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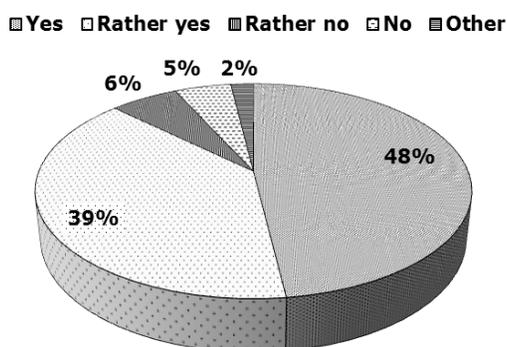
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participate in the planning process of the city's development, while 33.7% did not have a clear opinion about that. The main reason of their dissatisfaction was the fact that the opinions of residents were not taken into consideration (10%) (Jurmala City Council, 2013).

To find out the attitude of residents to the city's image and it's positioning by appropriate souvenirs during cultural events, the authors designed a special questionnaire aimed at identifying the opinions of Jurmala city's residents regarding opportunities to buy souvenirs at Jurmala cultural events and their

Jelgava, LLU ESAF, 21-22 April 2016, pp. 143-147 wish to engage in creating socially innovative souvenirs characteristic of Latvian ethnography and Jurmala and in promoting the souvenirs at Jurmala cultural events. The respondents were Jurmala city's residents, and the key survey focus was placed on identifying their wish to creatively engage in their city's cultural life. In total, 186 randomly selected residents of Jurmala participated in the survey. Of the total respondents, 65% were women (121 respondents) and 35% were men (65 respondents).



Source: authors' construction based on survey data

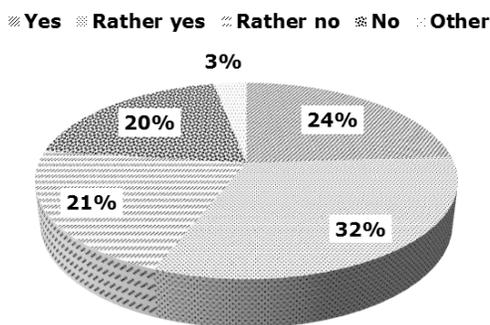
Fig. 2. Percentage distribution of replies to the question "Is it important, in your opinion, to sell souvenirs to visitors at Jurmala city's cultural events in memory of the event?"

The surveyed residents of Jurmala admitted that it was important to sell visitors souvenirs in memory of the event they participated in. In total, 87% or 162 respondents gave positive answers to the question. Of the respondents, 48% (90 respondents) were convinced that such souvenirs were necessary, while 39% (72 respondents) answered that such souvenirs would be quite necessary rather than unnecessary.

Only 11% of the residents (21 72 respondents) answered that it would not be necessary to sell souvenirs to visitors at various cultural events.

A very small part of the surveyed respondents - 2% (3 residents)- chose the reply option "other", mentioning that souvenirs would have to be free of charge, or it was difficult for them to answer the question.

A negative attitude to selling souvenirs might be associated with the low purchasing power of individuals and the inability to see values in the souvenirs. However, in order to distribute souvenirs free of charge, sponsors are needed, who would cover the cost of production of the souvenirs.



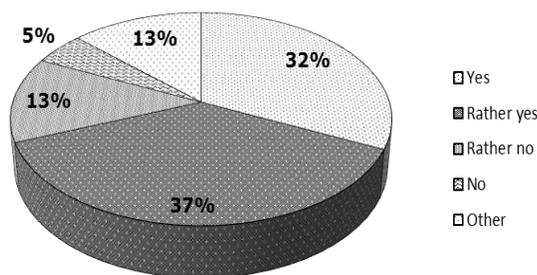
Source: authors' construction based on survey data

Fig. 3. Percentage distribution of replies to the question "Are you interested in engaging yourself or your relatives (e.g. children) in producing souvenirs if you are given such an opportunity?"

The majority of Jurmala city's residents were doubtful about whether they would be interested in engaging in the production of innovative Jurmala souvenirs or whether they would involve their relatives in this process. However, more than half of them (56% or 105 respondents) gave affirmative answers – they would engage in such activities with pleasure (24% or 45 residents) or would rather engage in than reject the activities (32% or 60 residents). Many residents also admitted that they would rather not engage in the production of souvenirs (21% or 39 residents) as well as they were not interested in such activities (20% or 36 residents).

Mostly negative answers were given by residents aged 19-25 as well as 51 and older. This may be explained by the fact that youths aged 19-25 begin their studies at a university and have other hobbies and ways of spending their leisure time, and the engagement of their relatives is not urgent. Individuals aged 51 and more have to be often convinced of how useful a particular activity is before offering them to engage in the production of souvenirs.

The residents who chose the reply option "other" mentioned that schoolchildren could be engaged as well as suggested establishing an interest group for this purpose.



Source: authors' construction based on survey data

Fig. 4. Percentage distribution of replies to the question "Do you prefer buying souvenirs produced particularly by the population of Jurmala at the city's cultural events?"

Despite the fact that part of the population doubted whether they wished to engage in the production of souvenirs, most of them would buy

the souvenirs. Of the surveyed residents, 32% (60 respondents) claimed that they would prefer such souvenirs, compared with souvenirs of other

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producers. Also, 37% (69 respondents) admitted that they would rather choose the souvenirs created by Jurmala residents. Only 5% (9 respondents) were sure they would definitely not choose such souvenirs.

It was difficult for 24 respondents (13%) to answer this question, as their choice would depend on the quality, price and uniqueness of souvenirs. One respondent said that he would buy such souvenirs only if their prices were lower than those asked by traditional craftsmen.

Consumers are often guided by their emotions at the moment of buying goods. All the mentioned factors – price, quality and souvenir uniqueness – create certain emotions in consumers.

Jurmala city's residents acknowledged that it was important to sell souvenirs to visitors at their city cultural events in memory of the event. However, not all the residents wished to engage themselves or their relatives in the creation of souvenirs. Most of them admitted they would prefer purchasing souvenirs being created by representatives of various social groups of Jurmala by their own hands. At the same time, the survey revealed that the respondents mostly would not be ready to pay more for socially innovative souvenirs created by Jurmala city's residents than for other souvenirs sold at any event. It is a positive fact that Jurmala city's residents were convinced of being ready to suggest tourists to buy such souvenirs if the souvenirs were of high quality and original. The respondent replies on other less important matters acquired in the survey confirm the authors' assumption that in general Jurmala city's residents support the idea of socially innovative souvenirs to be sold at city cultural events and are interested in cooperation to improve the city's cultural life if they are given such an opportunity.

### **Conclusions, proposals, recommendations**

1) The policy documents of Latvia and Jurmala for the period 2014-2020 emphasise that it is important for national and municipal policy makers to popularise objects of cultural significance and cultural values as well as to engage residents in this process.

2) According to the survey organized by Jurmala City Council, 36.3% of the respondents were satisfied with an opportunity to take part in planning the city's development; the main reason of their dissatisfaction was the fact that the opinions of residents were not taken into consideration (10%). Therefore, in order to strengthen the link between Jurmala city's residents with their place of residence, Jurmala City Council has to take measures to more engage residents in shaping their city life, including the cultural life.

3) Of the surveyed residents of Jurmala, 87% admitted it was important to market souvenirs to visitors in memory of the event they participated in.

4) More than half of the respondents (56% or 105 respondents) said they would engage themselves and their relatives in the production of Jurmala souvenirs or in this process with pleasure.

5) Of the respondents, 32% claimed they would prefer purchasing souvenirs being created by Jurmala city's residents rather than those produced by standardised providers of outsourcing services.

6) In order any participant of Jurmala cultural events can get a souvenir free of charge in memory of the event, the organisers of the event have to be motivated to establish creative workshops where visitors can create some art items from materials, prepared in advance, with small efforts and the help of Jurmala craftsmen.

7) Jurmala City Council has to seek for opportunities to establish creative workshops

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for Jurmala city's population where they could cooperate with craftsmen to create special Jurmala souvenirs. In authors' opinion, Jurmala City Council should also organize free

Jelgava, LLU ESAF, 21-22 April 2016, pp. 143-150 public educational lectures on historical facts and cultural and historical objects in Jurmala city, which residents could later represent in their own made souvenirs.

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