



Reflection Day May 30th 2014

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# Reflection Day



## REFLECTING ON PAST SUCCESS

KALDABRUĀA SCHOOL

VEHICULA



LECTUS EGRET

“A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions.”

—Oliver Wendall Holmes

## INTRODUCTION

Udenszīmes is an organisation that has built a significant working relationship with the local community in the seven years since the organisation began. It has brought a positive atmosphere to the small rural community and a sense of self-belief. Although the community is not rich in terms of money, they have built up substantial social capital, which they should find helpful in future projects and collaborations.



Ieva Jātniece initiated the organisation of Ūdenszīmes and has

been instrumental in raising a supportive and resourceful team. There is a feeling of inclusivity where people are comfortable sharing their ideas. Despite the fact that many of Ieva's ideas have been described as “crazy” or “impossible”, many have come to fruition and raised expectations within the village and bringing much needed hope to the community. The organisation has also been instrumental in organising a movement to have the local abandoned dairy in the centre of the village demolished. This symbolised a new beginning to the village and also brought about an improvement in the attractiveness of the environment.

## Timeline

### 2007

#### Established June

First members Ieva and Ingrīda

### 2008

#### First Hay Day

The sculptures were mentioned in the magazine “Darzs”

### 2009

#### Night concert in the Day of Hay

Indra and Solvita joined

### 2010

#### Ūdenszīmes gathering pace and adding more activities

Kristofers, Ilze and Indra joined

Grandma's kitchen opened - time to bake cakes  
Creating art  
Camp of cheese  
First large scale hay structure  
Charity work - seeing the need and meeting those needs  
Christmas gathering  
Helping Bebreņes Catholic Church

### 2011

#### LEADER experience exchange event



# Timeline

2012

## 5th Anniversary of the Day of Hay

Liena, and Sindija joined

Vedejs event

Excursion to Rundāle

Christmas event and gifts for the children



2013

## Opening of the exhibition hall

Renting of the land and the whole building

New jobs created

2014

Today!

## WINDOWS TO THE PAST

### Aspects of Ūdenszīmes work that are important to members

The organisation has provided a warm and friendly atmosphere where people feel needed, accepted and involved..

It has provided an important focal point for activities within the village, particularly the Hay Days and the Christmas gatherings

It has provided an outlet to meet the needs of the local community and helped with communication and cooperation



### Ūdenszīmes as a learning organisation

Ūdenszīmes has provided a learning environment with important skills and handicrafts taught

Poetry  
New Knowledge  
To organise events and parties  
Decoupage  
Other handicrafts



### Aspects valued by members of

#### Ūdenszīmes

The creative surroundings and the good changes made

A good and helpful working environment where people work with a good attitude and respect for one another

Art attracts people



I have learnt to write poetry.

I have learnt to organise events and parties



## WINDOWS TO THE PRESENT

### Needs of the members

People feel the need for sporting activities, to participate in the arts and crafts, dancing, gardening, floristry and theatre. Some feel the need to expand into computer graphics with a variety of designs.

Some like to participate in everything and some have especially enjoyed creating the birds from hay.

There is a sense that there is a need to continue what has been started



### Belonging to Kaldabruņa

As part of Kaldabruņa people feel that everyone is special, a personality with gifts they can contribute and teach others. All are appreciated and needed. Consequently people feel responsible for each other and a deep appreciation for what is done and are only too willing to help.

### Values appreciated by members

Input into a common interest

The good changes that have been created.

Appreciative of the results of people's good work and the good changes in the school building.

Pleased the organisation has had such good luck

The wonderful charity team



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Everyone is a part of the organisation. I feel needed, because everyone brings something of himself, something special.



## WINDOWS TO THE FUTURE

### What the members would love to do

To publish a book of poetry

To play folk music

Help the organisation to attract more people

Theatre club, design lessons, batik, floristry, a variety of crafts

Singing group

Interviewing the elderly from Kaldabruņa



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### What the members would love to see

Rural chic

Modern dancing in beautiful costumes

A workshop with a place for working with wood

Participation appreciated

Events that attract more people especially the locals

Less bureaucracy and more art!

Čiv riv - to have richness and good luck

Sports activities

Continued development of the organisation and surroundings, for instance a children's playground, but also mental preparation

Renovated rooms for accommodation



I would like to see everything cleaned up including mentally too.



# Analysis



There are many strengths within the organisation, not least is its longevity. This has enabled the long term building of self-esteem and belief within the group and the local area. It has also been a catalyst for community action, as in the demolition of the dairy.

Kaldabruņa school, which formally closed as a school in 2003 is now a focus for the community, serving as a meeting place and community centre. To many it feels like a second home. It also serves as a space for functions such as weddings and art workshops with the outside facilities being utilised for the annual hay festival. The organisation has made good use of the space with the transformation demonstrating a slow but steady pace of progress.

There is a national tendency in Latvia to be negative about the future, but Ūdenszīmes has promoted a positive atmosphere with the phrase "I believe" repeated often throughout the day and a sense of being on a new wave. This is an important feature and building block for the future. Ūdenszīmes has overcome much scepticism amongst the local population.

The Hay Festival taps into the traditional way of life in rural districts, whilst bringing a creative flair to the celebration. It has drawn in new members and put Kaldabruņa on the map, Festivals are an important feature in bringing communities together in celebration, although often requiring a large input of work to host them, it usually reaps the benefits of an improved sense of community and attracts newcomers to the area.

Ūdenszīmes has made good use of the abundant creativity of both Ieva and the local community. Many have demonstrated a great deal of resourcefulness in using simple materials to create beautiful surroundings. This is also having an impact in the local area, with local people adopting some of the ideas to decorate their own properties. People strive to create a happy atmosphere with cakes being baked just to make people smile. There is an attention to detail to ensure that the local community feel included, for instance ensuring that all local inhabitants receive personalised invitations to events.

Members of the organisation have a realistic view that the youth cannot always be retained, some will move away to study, work or gain new experiences, but they do understand the need to maintain a vibrant community to support the younger youth still at home and to attract families into the area.

Members of the organisation proactively work on projects, they do not wait for Ieva to tell them what to do. There is a good cooperative atmosphere with people happy to contribute to activities. Whilst it is mainly women who work on the everyday functioning of the group they are able to draw on the support of partners to enable them to attend and men are involved in the practical aspects of upkeep of the property.

# Weaknesses and Threats

It is only to be expected that there will be weaknesses in any organisation and these are apparent to the members of the organisation. The lack of independent finances is of course a worry, especially as no successful business ventures have started yet. Although this is a weakness, the very fact that this is an issue that is understood and acknowledged by the group is a positive factor. Successful business cooperatives require a degree of trust and desire to collaborate and this takes time to build. The strengths built up over the last seven years are a perfect building block to address this weakness at this point in time.



Learning from the past to help with the future

**It was noted in the reflection day** that there were few men present. While we were assured that men played an active role in the practical aspects of running Ūdenszīmes, facilitating ways of encouraging input from men could do with being addressed.

If men are not comfortable with contributing in meetings, then alternative ways of encouraging their input will be needed. Perhaps unstructured meetings around mealtimes?

## Threats

Whilst the team are very capable with the ability to work independently, the organisation and local authorities still rely heavily on Ieva for inspiration. There is a need to build the leadership team that allows Ieva to continue to make her valuable inputs for as long as she wishes, but also seeks to build the team for future sustainability.

Other threats to the organisation include

Loses its popularity

Arguments

No road improvements

Maintaining the positive atmosphere

These kinds of threats to future sustainability are not specific to Ūdenszīmes, they apply to any organisation. Understanding the risks helps organisations to prepare for the future



## OPPORTUNITIES

### Workshop expansion

It is noted from the website that workshops are free to the local community. This has built skills in organising and running workshops and can provide a foundation on which to provide art workshops where participants pay. The surroundings of the Kaldabruņa school are of sufficient quality to attract small informal groups for three or four day workshops. If accommodation is provided by local home owners, this can spread the benefits and keep costs down, as no infra-structure building would be required.



### Local shop

As there is no local shop in the village there is room for a Cooperative shop. Building upon the Christmas market it could provide an outlet for local produce, such as vegetables, art work etc., as well as basic provisions.

There are many joint resources that members hold, land, forests etc., these can all be utilised if members are willing to collaborate. One suggestion was a chicken business, another floral material from forest residues. Individually it maybe difficult to generate revenue from the resources, but when combined they maybe of more commercial value. Rural dwellers often need more than one income stream and opportunities to combine outputs can improve access to markets.

### Wifi and Business

Wifi access in the Kaldabruņa school building opens up the possibility for it to be used as an online learning centre, business centre and a business incubator. Businesses working from home often lack the facilities to accommodate clients or lack the opportunity for social interaction, both of which can be provided within the building. Entrepreneurs working in the same building, at least part-time, on their own individual projects may also lead to a synergy of cooperation that is not always possible at home.



It is important to me  
to be believed in and  
in my abilities.

It is important to me  
to feel needed



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# Conclusion

Ūdenszīmes is a good example of how long term investment in a community can reap the benefits of a significant build up of social capital. This is a good basis for future development, especially with regards to business and economic development.



**It is especially important within Latvia** to build up the capacity to cooperate and collaborate on projects within a community and to build trust in the process. Ūdenszīmes has demonstrated that with good, positive leadership this is possible. It has also demonstrated that the development of what is possible in people's minds can bring a great sense of joy and energy to a whole community. It should be noted that this has occurred during a period of significant economic upheaval within the country and is therefore of credit to the vibrant leadership of the organisation.



**There is a good mix of ages** participating within the organisation, which is important for the future.



Training of up and coming leaders will help to ensure the continued growth and future sustainability of the organisation. Developing the role and creating space for men will bring added strength to the role of the organisation within the community.



**Ūdenszīmes** has contributed much to the community and the community has responded with enthusiasm. It will be exciting to see what develops in the years ahead.



"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." -

African proverb

## AND THE FUTURE?.....

### Recipe for the future

- 1 A good team
2. Positive encouragement
3. Cooperation and collaboration

Foundations for a successful future have been built in Ūdenszīmes. Continued commitment to working together to meet the needs of the local community and building a vibrant community will be important assets for the future.



The successful collaboration with the local municipalities is also a positive example of what can be done.

**Report prepared in conjunction with**

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