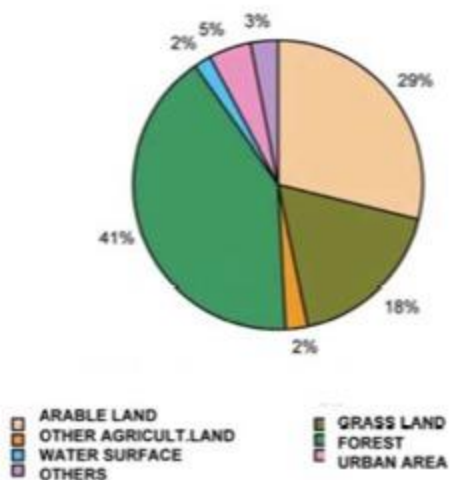


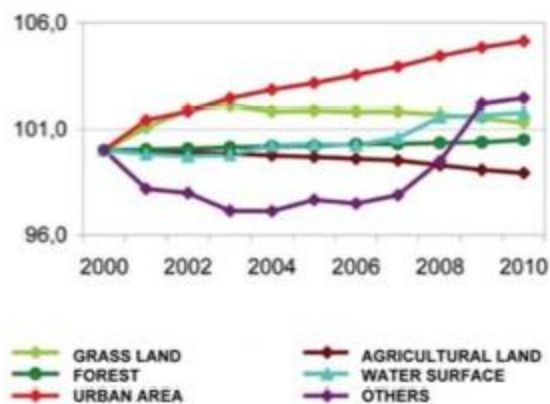
Allotment Gardens in Slovakia

Slovak landscape is a cultural landscape, for centuries cultivated by man. Most of the area of Slovakia was formerly covered by forests and man during his historical existence in this area focused on deforestation and change towards agricultural land and pastures. Agricultural land in Slovakia in 2011 covered 2 410 812 hectares, which represented 49,16 % of Slovak area (Klinda & Lieskovska et al, 2011). Anthropogenic pressures cause gradual decrease and losses of agricultural land towards other land use, mainly for housing, industrial and commercial purposes. Slovak cultural landscape is represented mostly by agricultural landscapes of different types - arable land, grassland, pastures, meadows, permanent crops, vineyards or orchards. Agricultural landscapes are typical representatives of cultural landscapes - man made and man dependent landscapes, which are subject of dynamic landscape changes, reflecting the changes in culture, society and economy.

LANDUSE STRUCTURE IN SLOVAKIA



LANDUSE STRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

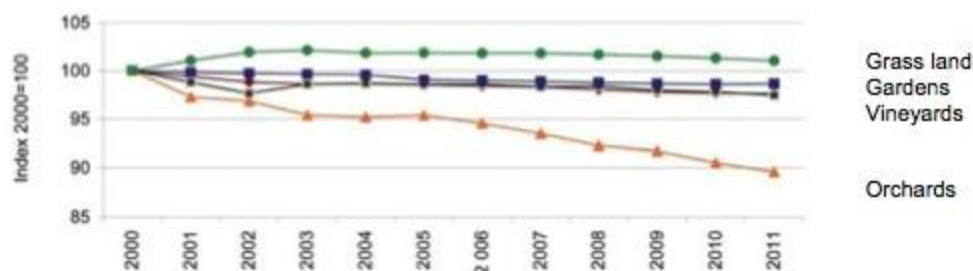


Source ÚGKK SR

Dividing of the agricultural land (31.12.2011)

Type of the land	Area (ha)	% from Agricultural Land
Agricultural land	2 410 812	100,00
Arable land	1 415 653	58,72
Hop field	517	0,02
Vineyards	26 997	1,12
Gardens	76 563	3,18
Orchards	16 858	0,70
Grass land	874 224	36,26
Total area of Slovakia	4 903 613	

Development of the different types of the agricultural land after 2000



Source ÚGKK SR

Description of the Nitra Region

Nitra region represents a typical agricultural region in Slovakia, with different landscape types and subtypes of agricultural land including arable land, meadow pastures, orchards, vineyards and forests varying from hilly parts of the Tribeč Mountains to flat parts of Danubian Lowland. The rural agricultural landscape of this region is in the same time a typical representative of historical cultural landscape, with significant parts having important aesthetic and historical values, although not protected as a cultural heritage or nature reserve. Main urban centre of this region is city of Nitra, located in the Nitra river valley at the foothill of the Zobor Mountain (587 m). With a population around 82 000 inhabitants, it is the fourth largest city in Slovakia. Nitra is regarded one of the oldest cities in Slovakia, a city of extraordinary historic importance connected with Great Moravia. Nowadays is Nitra a modern city with strong relation to agriculture.

Current structure of the agricultural land in the cadastre of the Nitra is decreasing because of the building and soft industrial pressure. Within the city could be seen private gardens, remains of the vineyards, several allotment gardens and “community gardens” and some of the schools apply the environmental educational program named “Green school”, which help them to create herbs or small permaculture garden in the school area. In the last very few years could be seen activities of young people, who started to create their own space for recreation, social contacts, production and education. They have rent a land from the private owners to cultivated it.

Nitra is a specific city, because the Slovak University of Agriculture with its Botanical garden and its productional fields. In the city is also located a great exhibition area of Agrokomplex – with its inner and outside exposition halls, fields and Agricultural museum. During the spatial development of the Nitra – several villages, which were in its neighbourhood, became a part of the city due to its expansion. Outside of the build up areas there are huge block of fields and vineyards or allotment gardens.

Comparison of the development of the agricultural types in Nitra

Year	Meadows and pastures	Gardens	Orchards, vineyards, arable land	and Woodlands	Water area	Other area	Settled land	Total
2010	112,2	626	3940,1	1011,1	13	408,9	855	6966,3
2004	126,5	543,9	4740,1	537,3	17	211,2	594,2	6770,2

Source: MSU Nitra

Allotment gardens in Slovakia

Slovakia, the same as Czech Republic, is considered as a country of allotment holders/gardeners. This phenomenon rised up from socialism era, when people could not travel

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abroad, so they spent a lot of time and holidays in the country side. In the late 1980s Slovakia was going through deep political and economic changes that have left a visible mark also on the structure of Slovak towns. With the start of the 1990s, scholars started to talk and write about a post-socialist type of city its structure, not only in Slovakia.

Allotment gardens – or „Garden Colonies” as they are called in Slovakia - have appeared as a particularity of the cities and urban environment. Their beginnings are dated to the Middle Age, when they were created behind the city walls. In what was to become the Slovak Republic, the first colonies as we can see them nowadays, were founded at the beginning of the 20th century, especially in relation to a lack of food during WWI. Some of them still exist although some of the oldest have been dismantled in recent years. Another wave of creation of garden colonies occurred during WWII, but it was the times after the war when gardening changed from a subsistence activity to a free-time hobby and became widespread not only in the Slovak Republic but around Europe (see van Eekelen 2003 for discussion of the Dutch case).

Allotment Gardens, as they are now days known in Slovakia, are dated back to 60-ties of the 20th century. They were set up for the cities over 50 000 inhabitants, but several years after, also small cities and villages established allotment gardens. They are seen an offspring of industrialization. The industrial revolution, caused people movement from the villages to the cities /because of the work/. The cities had to supply all spheres of the human life – work, living and recreation. People loosed connection with the nature. In the cities was no space for growing vegetable, having own gardens in the open spaces in housing estates, therefore they appeared in the suburb zones. Later, some of them became part of the city urbanism (Benčať, 1997).

The basis for a successful and permanent establishment of allotment gardens was laid through the establishment of associations of small scale gardeners in the cities (Drescher, 2001). The first guidelines for Allotment Gardens in Slovakia were approved by Slovak Association of Gardeners and Fruiteres in 1957. Štefan Dekánek is accounted as the funder of allotment gardens in Slovakia. During 1965 – 1968 was establishment of Allotment Gardens extended. Between the years 1979 – 1984 was dated second expansion of new members of Slovakian Federation of Allotment Gardeners. In this period were counted 109 000 new gardeners. After ten years the number of members increased twice – to 220 000, with total area 5 500 hectares of gardens. According to these factors the aesthetic and planting regulations for allotment gardens were elaborated. In 1977 was published second revision of regulations. The catalogue of the architectonic design of the cottages, suitable for the allotment gardens, depending up the localisation was published. There were 24 types of garden cottages for lowlands, heights and mountain regions. For beginners and those who wanted to have a garden, was established model allotment gardens in the exhibition areal of Agrokomplex in Nitra in 1982. There could be seen 12 different types of the gardens, with area of 400 m². Following types were presented: vegetable type, vegetable type with glasshouse, multifunctional garden in the lowlands, multifunctional garden in the heights, fruit type, vineyard type, garden in the suburb in heights, garden in the suburb near the water stream – recreational garden, garden with animal breeding, private garden in lowlands, private garden in heights,... These types are supplemented with bio garden, and examples of bio composting, types of mulching, plant allelopathy, suitable garden equipment...

Political and social changes after 1989 had influence also land owners and gardeners. Before 1989 the land was given to the members of Slovak Association of Gardeners without attention to the previous land owner (the land has belong to the state or cooperative societies). After 1989 the original owners of the land became into the legal conflict with the gardeners, who were cultivated “their” plot of lands. In 1991 was authorized the law N. 229 /1991 adjusting the owner’s rights to the land and other agricultural properties. Nowadays is in ordinary the law N.64 / 1997 about land exploitation in allotment gardens and land ownership regulations.

Slovakian Federation of Allotment Gardeners has 42 country committees, in 2011 it has 80 648 members. (It is decreasing: in 1990 – 216 114 members, in 2000 – 120 705 members, in

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2005 – 97 244 members). The size of allotment garden varies between 250 and 400 sq metres. Each allotment garden is connected to a used water supply system and electricity is available. The allotments are used as fruit and vegetable gardens, vineyards as well as recreational and flower gardens. There are no regulations stipulating the minimum area of the plot, which have to be actively used for production (fruit, vegetable). There are only building restrictions. Cottage can have a maximum size of 40 sq metres, there are no limitations regarding the cottage's height. There are many different types of cottages, ranging from simple garden shelter, up to summer cottages where the gardeners can live during the summer months.

The first role of the allotment gardens was the production (fruit, vegetable), later increased their social and recreational afford. Most of the recent owners of the gardens inherit them from strips, so their connection with garden work and affinity for gardening could vary between none to serious. Therefore there is big number of allotment holders, who transform their gardens from production ones to the recreational garden - garden with the lawn, some flower beds, fruit shrubs and trees, equipped with the grill / fire place. The second group represent gardeners, who bought or rent the plot of land, with the aim to have place for relax and planting some vegetable, fruits or cultivate vineyards.

Demands of the society have changed, also as the amount of the free time and type of the work. The age of having own family and children is moving up to the 30ties, young people spend a lot of time at the work /psychical work/, they are educated, they travel abroad a lot, so their needs for recreation differ from the demands 5 - 10 years ago. Soft skills (IT, managers, business men, ...) substituted manual/physical work. Those people mostly do not want to / do not need to work in the garden. They use the environment of the allotment garden for resting, relaxing, having fun with friends occasionally at the weekends. Also the middle age people, living in the housing estates, working 5 days per week and having children, spend only some time during weekends in their gardens. Everyday visits of the gardens are done by old or elderly people. They spend quite big amount of the time in their gardens (the motives are mentioned above).

The allotment gardens are part of the history, "trends", but also part of the landscape. They have many tangible and intangible benefits. They provide a space for exercise or rest, companionship or solitude, contemplation or work. They could have not only productional and recreational function, but they could take part at the educational process and support the healthy life style of city dwellers (producing organic, non-genetically modified foods, bio products). There is also an interest of some groups for the spreading knowledge about permaculture and sustainability.

Aim of the research

We reveal the reasons for the changing demand for allotments over the course of the twentieth century and argue that the value of an allotment has a social and/or cultural dimension both to the individual and his/her community. This paper begins by reviewing the supply of, and demand for, allotments throughout the twentieth century, started in 60ties, during the big boom of allotment gardens in Slovakia, continuing till 21st century. Next, it discusses the motivating forces behind allotmenting. These forces include the reasons people take up this activity and the conditions that contribute to its success. It considers the relationship between plot holders and the wider community, as well as what produce is grown.

An interdisciplinary approach has been taken to addressing these questions. Allotments have been considered within a social/cultural, political and economic framework. Apart from archival research, fieldwork - including interviews with allotment holders in the case study area of city Nitra we compare the design of allotment gardens, which different communities not only to grow food, but also as a social and cultural space.



Figure 1 Permanent fence, communal path to allotment gardens



Figure 2 Compost area



Figure 3 Permanent fence, communal path to allotment gardens



Figure 4 Fruit trees or vine presents a barriers between two plots



Figure 5 Production type of AG with Green house and small cottage



Figure 6 Recreation type of AG with fruit trees

Nitra – Case studies

Owners

Allotment gardening used to be widely popular in the former Czechoslovakia under the communist regime. It gave people from suburban prefabricated apartment blocks - called "paneláky" in Czech - a chance to escape from city chaos, pollution, and concrete architecture. It is assumed that a significant part of the allotment owners live in apartment blocks in Nitra. Currently, all gardens are used for individual gardening and recreation.

Signs of individualization

In all case studies special features concerning the individual plots are permanent huts and greenhouses. Each member can choose his features on his own, so that all individual parts look totally different. Most allotments include well-taken-care plots, glass houses for growing vegetables and shed houses for garden tools. There are no gates for individual plots.

Case study Chrenová

Overview

Chrenová allotment gardens are situated in the residential area Chrenová, eastern part of the city Nitra, 20 minutes away from the city centre. The area is owned by Nitra city and Catholic Church. And they tolerate the gardeners on their land, where the swimming pool used to be planned. Local people transformed this area into the small plots, arranged in rows (in parallel), connected by paths and divided by vegetation.

Spatial Configuration

The original boundary of the area – iron fence, have been kept and three main entrances have been created. There is a public view to the garden from the roads, and there is a public access to compost hill (compost area). The gates are locked at all times, only plot holders are given the key with 24 hour access to the site.

The site is bounded by explicit barriers from all sides. The spatial layout of the allotment gardens is divided into three parts with individual entrances. Access to the allotments is through tree entrances, when each entrance is for particular parts of plots. The space inside the garden is shared and no particular boarded area is seen.

Internal boundaries

The plots are rectangular shape with informal, natural borders. They stand tightly next to each other separated usually by vegetation (vineyard, fruit trees or shrubs). In some cases one could easily go to another yard without even noticing it. As a barrier are also ropes or other permeable materials. Special features concerning the individual plots are permanent huts and greenhouses. Each member can choose his features on his own, so that all individual parts look totally different. Most allotments include well-taken-care plots, glass houses for growing vegetables and shed houses for garden tools. There are no gates for individual plots.



Case study- Chrenová

Case study- Allotment gardens near Agrokomplex exhibition centre

Overview

SPU allotment gardens are situated near exhibition area – Agrokomplex on south-eastern part of the city Nitra, in the city centre and there are few other allotment gardens in the neighbourhood. The area consists of 59 plots arranged in 6 rows (in parallel), connected by paths and divided by vegetation. From one side is surrounded by river. The total area is 19 245m². The maximum area of the plot is 513m² and the minimum 168m². The plots were in 60ties offered to rent to employees of Slovak agricultural university and after privatization they became their property. Some owners rent their plots to the other people.

Spatial Configuration

The area has been fenced and on the main gate is the sight of the Slovak Association of Gardeners and Fruiterers with the note “Private area, No access”. There is a public view to the allotments from all sites. The gate is locked at all times, only plot holders are given the key with 24 hour access to the site.

The area of allotment gardens is divided by paths into seven parts. The space inside the garden is shared and no particular boarded area is seen.

Internal boundaries

The plots are rectangular or triangle shape with informal, natural borders. They stand tightly next to each other separated usually by vegetation (vineyard, fruit trees or shrubs). In some cases one

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could easily go to another yard without even noticing it. As a barrier are also ropes or other permeable materials.



Case study- Allotment gardens near Agrokomplex exhibition centre

Case study Klokočina

Overview

Klokočina allotment gardens are situated on north-western part of the city Nitra, in the area built during socialism with the characteristic building of that time called “paneláky”, inhabited by 21 000 people. They are surrounded by small urban forest- Borina, cemetery, health care complex and the main road- connection from city centre to Klokočina- city site with “paneláky”. The area consists of 82 plots divided by paths to 5 sections. The total area is 35 147m². The maximum area of the plot is 596 m² and the minimum 101 m².

Spatial Configuration

The area has been fenced and on the main gate is the sight of the Slovak Association of Gardeners and Fruiterers with the note “Private area, No access”. There is a public view to the allotments from all sites. There are two entrances and the gates are locked at all times, only plot holders are given the key with 24 hour access to the site.

The area of allotment gardens is divided by paths into five parts. The space inside the garden is shared and no particular boarded area is seen.

Internal boundaries

The plots are mainly rectangular shape with informal, natural borders. They stand tightly next to each other separated usually by vegetation (vineyard, fruit trees or shrubs). Although the borders have natural character; one could easily defined each yards.



Case study- Klokočina

Case study- Mlynárce

Overview

Mlynárce allotment gardens are situated near highway north-western part of the city Nitra. The gardens consist of two parts divided by the highway. The first part consists of 40 plots divided in 4 rows and the second part consists of 48 plots divided in two rows by paths. From the east side are areas surrounded by industry area, from the other sides the highway presents the main barrier. The total area is 29144 m² and the area of both parts is around 14 500m². The maximum area of the plot is 577m² and the minimum is 64m².

Spatial Configuration

There is a public view to the allotments from all sites. The gate is locked at all times, only plot holders are given the key with 24 hour access to the site. The area of allotment gardens is divided by paths into six parts. The space inside the garden is shared and no particular bounded area is seen.

Internal boundaries

The plots are mainly rectangular shape with informal, natural borders. They stand tightly next to each other separated usually by vegetation (vineyard, fruit trees or shrubs). Although the borders have natural character; one could easily defined each yards.



Case study- Mlynárce

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