

## LITHUANIAN RURAL LANDSCAPE CHANGE TRENDS AND CONSEQUENCES AFTER THE RESTORATION OF THE INDEPENDENCE

### TENDINȚELE DE SCHIMBARE DIN PEISAJUL RURAL LITUANIAN ȘI CONSECINȚELE LOR DUPĂ OBTINEREA INDEPENDENȚEI

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**Abstract.** *Within a few centuries, Lithuania has gone through many land reforms. All these periods formed different anthropogenic elements in the natural environment of Lithuanian rural landscape, which gradually made changes in the people's way of thinking, living and working conditions. This article analyses the last periods of land reforms, which had the largest influence on Lithuanian rural landscape changes. During the Soviet period in Lithuania territory dominated kolkhozes - Soviet agricultural companies, which were based on the idea of collective farming. Creation of large industrial farms in a rural, mostly natural environment, has made major changes. After the restoration of Lithuania's independence, farming conditions changed. Large complexes of the collective farms were replaced by private complexes, which took on the architectural expression with individual elements, having a different impact on the rural landscape.*

**Key words:** Lithuanian rural landscape, land reforms, Soviet period, independence period

**Rezumat.** *Timp de câteva secole, Lituania a trecut prin multe reforme funciare. Toate aceste perioade au creat diferite elemente antropice în natura peisajului rural lituanian, conducând treptat la schimbări în modul de gândire, de viață și de muncă al oamenilor. Articolul analizează ultimele perioade de reforme, care au avut cea mai mare influență asupra peisajului rural lituanian. În timpul perioadei sovietice pe teritoriul Lituaniei au dominat kolhozurile sovietice, care s-au bazat pe ideea agriculturii colective. Crearea de ferme industriale mari într-un peisaj rural, în mare parte natural, a produs schimbări majore. După restabilirea independenței Lituaniei, condițiile agriculturii s-au schimbat. Marile gospodării colective au fost înlocuite cu complexe private, care și-au asumat o expresia arhitecturală prin elemente individualizate, cu un alt impact asupra peisajului rural.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** peisaj rural lituanian, reforma agrară, etapa sovietică, etapa independenței

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## INTRODUCTION

Lithuania is an agrarian country, because 53 percent of the Lithuanian territory consists of agricultural land - arable land, meadows, orchards and berry plantations, 32.6 percent are covered by forests and 4 percent – waters. According to agricultural area for 1 inhabitant Lithuania is fifth in the world (<http://data.worldbank>). Lithuanian rural landscape changes, during the time, were closely related to political, economical, farming types and other conditions changes, which had a direct impact on the transformation of landscape structures and elements. Particular importance has to be paid to all land reforms, done within a few centuries.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

This article analyses the last periodes of land reforms, which had the largest influence on Lithuanian rural landscape changes. Comparative analysis were used from historical perspective, both documentary and photographic, also the analysis of systematization plans.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 1. LITHUANIAN RURAL LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT PHASES BEFORE SOVIET PERIOD

Lithuanian rural cultural landscape development before Soviet period had 3 main phases (Bučas, 1988):

- **Before Wallach reform** - until XVII c. The landscape was characterized by naturalness. From this period mounds hills are preserved. Agro structure is characterized by concentric small element - castles of dukes, manor houses, villages, farming settlements were built by dispersion.
- **Wallach** (Wallach is the unit of area, about 21 ha) – beginning XVII c. – XIX c. middle. In 1557, Duke of Lithuania Sigismund Augustus issued a decree entirely managing agriculture and introducing a system of Wallach. Under this law, land reform, peasants were allocated an equal amount of land - Wallachians at Manor area. By 1557 Wallach Law were established towns and church villages, manor houses, folwarks, street-planned and scrappy villages, residential areas were connected with road network. Many manors were established in the old settlements. Manors were located every few kilometers; they were set up around the farm units - folwarks farms and villages to accommodate the village (fig.1).
- **Bowery** – from XIX c. middle till XX c. middle. Agrarian territories were managed and used as individual farming system. One owner lands were merged into one estate. New rotational form of agriculture changed in to three-field. Manors were shared out. Villages divided into individual farms, appeared network of railway. Decreased landscape naturalness, increased small anthropogenic elements dispersion (fig.2).



**Fig. 1** Wallach reform settlements and land use  
(<http://www.maps.lt/map/default.aspx?lang=lt>)







**Fig. 2** Individual farms reform plan structure  
(<http://www.maps.lt/map/default.aspx?lang=lt>)

## **2. LITHUANIAN RURAL LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOVIET AND INDEPENDENT STATE PERIODS**

After 1940 The Soviet Union occupation and annexation of Lithuanian state, began its' political-social structures', the cultural and spiritual values' destruction and intense anthropogenic transformation of the rural environment, which fundamentally changed the historically formed landscape. These changes were influenced by the following main factors: the concentration of industrialization, settlements restructuring, agricultural land reclamation (Bučas, 1988). In 1940, according to the Soviet land reform, the nationalization of the land was executed, after which no longer existed manors, small individual farms (Butkevičius, 1980). Period from 1940 until 1991 is named as **kolkhozes period**. During this period, distinguished two types of rural settlements - in previous periods formed settlements reconstruction and developing of the new settlements.

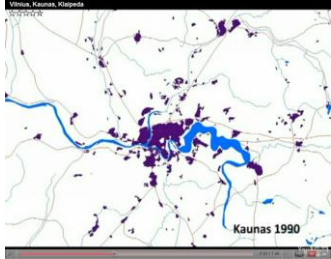
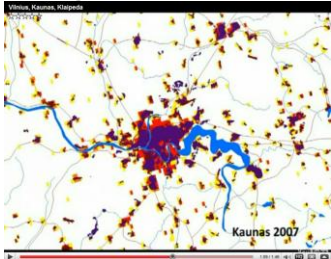

## Lithuania's rural landscape trends in Soviet period

Period	Description	Examples
Kolkhozes	<p>The landscape changes on this period are associated with land expropriation, settling the population to urban areas. Expropriation decreased ecological stability; the hydrological regime has been changed: chemical concentrations in rivers, species diversity decreased. Most of the streams and some of the rivers were turned into canals.</p> <p>The liquidation of the individual farms - brought social, economic effect: increased in field size, easier reclamation works, declined small elements in the landscape. However, often, liquidated a well-performed, suitable for recreation and not prevented for production homesteads' (Bučas, 1988).</p>	 <p><b>Fig. 3</b> Collective farm complex <a href="http://www.efoto.lt/node/47778">http://www.efoto.lt/node/47778</a></p>  <p><b>Fig. 4</b> Babtai <a href="http://www.miestai.net/forumas/showthread.php?t=12143">http://www.miestai.net/forumas/showthread.php?t=12143</a></p>  <p><b>Fig. 5</b> "Baltic fisher" collective farm village. Klaipeda region. 1964. P. Rimša photo <a href="http://www.miestai.net/forumas/showthread.php?t=12143">http://www.miestai.net/forumas/showthread.php?t=12143</a></p>  <p><b>Fig. 6</b> Meškuičiai <a href="http://meskuiciu.blogspot.lt/">http://meskuiciu.blogspot.lt/</a></p>

Historically formed rural landscape complemented by large collective farming centers (fig.3) and complexes with high water, electricity, TV towers (fig. 4) and etc. New settlements were designed on flat relief areas far from the natural elements - water bodies, forests (fig.5). Straight streets planning principles had been applied not only to the creation of new settlements but also for the reconstruction of the old villages. This approach encouraged the uniformity of settlements (fig. 6, tab. 1).

Table 2

Lithuania's rural landscape trends, Independent state period

Period	Description	Examples
Independent	<p>Coming back to private farming system. The aim is to highlight the natural frame, expanding the urban frame, increasing the number of protected areas. Uncultivated land afforested with forest.</p> <p>Public and private interests in territorial planning, gradually built up such negative phenomena as agricultural areas, growing cities dispersion, unreasonable urbanized areas development (fig. 7, fig. 8)</p> <p>In XX century 9<sup>th</sup> decade had been eliminated in Soviet period applied strict construction prohibitions and restrictions. Lithuanian rural landscape was supplemented by small urbanized areas - suburbs of the big cities. The appearance of those suburbs was the most affected by private interests and the returned land.</p>	 <p><b>Fig. 7 Kaunas in 1990</b></p>  <p><b>Fig. 8 Kaunas in 2007</b></p> <p>Evaluation of urban structure and its development from 1990 til 2007 by Sebastien Gadal and Jurgita Lekaviciute  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=La-lpogv0w8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=La-lpogv0w8</a></p>  <p><b>Fig. 9 Kaunas suburbs</b></p>

After the restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1991, the land reform had been launched, which main goal was restitution of the land, nationalized in Soviet times (Aleknavičius, 2012). According to the law, returning of the land could be returned as kind and as equivalent kind (equivalent to the area in a different location) or could

be given compensation for it (Banionytė, 2015). Thus, by 2011 1<sup>st</sup> of July, Lithuania converted 84.1 percent of agricultural land. During the land reform, had been formed a new private land management structures. For unprincipled legal provisions, land had been formed irregular, without taking into viable use (tab. 2).

## CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions stand out in a short comparison of soviet and the independence periods of Lithuanian rural landscape.

During the Soviet period, carried out the nationalization of land, had led to changes in farming conditions. Also, in rural landscape had been built farms complexes, large in their volumes. Kolkhozes changed the landscape dominants from Bowery period - churches, manors. These cultural heritage objects were destroyed or adapted for the new needs of the farms as storages. Meanwhile, after the restoration of independence, land reform aimed returning of the nationalized land, large farms were privatized and split into small territorial structures.

After the restoration of independence, the changed political and economic conditions and the lack of strict spatial planning, allowed the formation of new suburban areas, thus promoting the urban landscape structures dispersion. The rural landscape had faced and was affected by private interests. Recently, had been started to talk about the spatial planning with more regulation and public goal setting. Meanwhile, during the Soviet period, landscape planning has been strictly regulated, private interests were ignored, creating a monotone environment and ignoring the historical environment.

Landscape diversity, its purposeful formation and identity preservation is important for each country's identity. However, the landscape is constantly changing, the times, political, economic and social conditions affect the landscape aesthetic and physical face.

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