

RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL OF THE AGROKOMPLEX NATIONAL EXHIBITION CENTER, STATE ENTERPRISE IN THE CHRENOVÁ URBAN DISTRICT NITRA, SLOVAKIA

Zuzana Vinczeová¹, Roberta Legros Štěpánková², Roberta Štěpánková¹, Attila Tóth¹

¹ *Institute of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Horticulture and Landscape Engineering, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Trieda Andreja Hlinku 2, 949 76 Nitra, Slovak Republic*

² *Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Joštova 10, 602 00 Brno, Czech Republic*

<https://doi.org/10.11118/978-80-7509-963-1-0263>

Abstract

Agrokomplex is one of the largest and most significant exhibition complexes in Slovakia and its importance is proven by almost 50 years of exhibition activities. The exhibition area is an important part of the urban structure of Nitra city, despite the fact that a large part of the complex is unused. This article deals with the issue of the exhibition area of Agrokomplex and focuses on re-designing it into a more accessible space with a higher recreational value. Many of the premises of the exhibition complex have a great potential which has not been fully discovered yet. Unfortunately these areas are affected by strong privatization and the negative impact of local policies. One of the specific areas of the exhibition complex is in the immediate vicinity of the Chrenová urban district, which has a significant proportion of urban green spaces, but lacks park areas. Based on these facts, we created a proposal of landscape-architectural design and scenarios, one of which presents the design of a small park mainly for the communities of Chrenová urban district, but also for the all inhabitants or tourists. Presented design can make the exhibition area more accessible, functional and community oriented by maximizing the recreational potential and enhancing the overall aesthetic appeal.

Keywords: public space, urban green space, recreation, research by design

Introduction

Exhibition areas are a large part of the urban system and have a significant impact on the socio-economic aspects of the inhabitants, not only due to the size of the built-up and vacant areas but also due to their commercial intent. These areas are negatively influenced by the private sector, which leads to their unclear strategy and ultimately untapped potential (Čibík, Biľušová, and Tóth, 2022). Due to a lack of financial resources, it is often difficult to maintain exhibition complexes. Therefore, it is important to include sustainability as a main pillar in the design itself, which will help to create a healthy and sustainable environment (Tóth, 2022). In many cases, exhibition grounds are considered as private or semi-private spaces, just like campuses, but the result is always a collective space that should provide inclusive, comfortable, and safe open spaces (Čibík et al., 2020). Unlike campuses, exhibition grounds are many times separated from the surrounding environment by fencing, which can cause an uncomfortable visual barrier between the open areas of the exhibition grounds and the outside environment. A well-designed and well-thought-out open area of an exhibition complex can help to integrate exhibition grounds into the overall fabric of the city (Cejpková et al., 2019). The actual planning and creation of exhibition grounds have not yet been approached in an individual manner, despite their position in the urban structure. In several manuals, they are included in the shared category of all complexes (Vinczeová, 2023). Green spaces are an important component of exhibition areas, which are an essential part of high-quality urban life. Agrokomplex is significant precisely due to its large green areas and its location within the Chrenová urban district. The immediate vicinity to the housing estate opens many possibilities for new solutions for green space of the exhibition complex and possible increase in the quality of the green space of Chrenová urban district, which is currently weak (Melková et al., 2014).

Material and methods

The Agrokomplex currently fulfills primarily a commercial function, which also implies its great regional and national importance. The area of the complex is 143 ha, of which 63 ha are green areas, 20 ha are sidewalks or paved areas, and 6 ha are lakes and streams. The exhibition ground is fenced and is not open to the public outside of the exhibition season. Since the exhibition area has mainly green open areas, there are “deaf” spots in the area which are not used even during the season. These areas have huge potential, which is often overlooked or the investment in such areas is disadvantageous for the city or the management of Agrokomplex. There are many examples of such

areas in the exhibition grounds, but the article deals with only one of them, which is close to the Chrenová urban district.

In the preparatory phase, we focused on collecting scientific literature and documents dealing with the subject of exhibition areas and their proper conception and integration into the urban structure. A complete analysis of the exhibition center was made based on a comprehensive site analysis of the selected area. The elaboration of scenarios and landscape-architectural design emerged from the acquired scientific knowledge. The main method we used for scenarios and the design itself consisted of qualitative research methods and the principles of "Research by Design" (Deming, Swaffield, 2011). Through this method, we integrated research principles with design processes to solve a complex exhibition site problem.

Historical analysis

Due to the influence of the new trade fair events and the resulting need for expanded exhibition grounds, the historical development of the greenery in the exhibition area has taken many different forms. For this reason, some areas were frequently changed and cut down, but new plantings have also been created in certain parts of the Agrokomplex. In the selected area, there was a restaurant located on the shore of one of the lakes. Although the locals loved this location and it was significant for recreation purposes, the restaurant eventually closed. The management had made plans to rebuild this place, but these were never implemented.

Current state analysis

The current state of the selected area has no function, and the visitor rate is very low, which is also due to the overall unaesthetic appearance of the area. In terms of ownership, the selected area is divided into several parcels owned by different private parties. Due to the privatization and lack of financial resources of Agrokomplex, other areas in the exhibition grounds have the same fate. During the design phase, we had to take into account the railway, which is a current part of the selected area, and incorporate it into the design. The overall appearance of the sidewalks is very chaotic and nonconceptual, while the composition and quantity of woody vegetation in the area is positive.



Fig. 1: Current state of the selected area. (Author, Z. Vinczeová, 2023)

Visitor rate analysis

Traditionally, the exhibitions and fairs focus primarily on agricultural production and horticulture, but various engineering and technical exhibitions also take place. The most important and largest exhibitions during the year are "Gardenia" and the "Agrokomplex" exhibition. Most of these exhibitions and fairs are concentrated and arranged in the pavilion areas, which are also the main exhibition areas therefore, the roads connected to the pavilions are the most frequently used, and the

concentration of people is densest in these places. The rear part of the Agrokomplex is mainly used for exhibition events at the time of the largest Agrokomplex exhibition, which is held only in summer. In terms of season, the exhibition center is most visited in spring, summer and autumn, while during winter, the overall cultural life is stopped. The analysis of the visitor rate showed that although the complex offers many exhibition and fair events, the rear parts do not use their great potential, as well as the areas near the Chrenová housing estate, which have the potential to provide various functions and services for the residents of the city, but mainly for the residents of Chrenová.

Results

Based on the comprehensive research of the exhibition site, we have identified an area that is in the immediate vicinity of Chrenová urban district and has high recreational potential. Because of its size, which makes it resemble a small park, we chose to build a concept for a small park. A recreational path that mimics the typology of residential buildings in the Chrenová urban district is the proposal's most notable element. One of the primary tenets of the research was accessibility and openness thus, we concentrated the design on potential new park entrances that would be universally accessible over the long term. The result of the research was a detailed landscape-architectural proposal with several scenarios that were applied to specific locations in the selected area. The main goal of these scenarios, despite their variety of uses and pursuits, was to provide a community garden for the residents of the Chrenová housing estate. We made modifications to the pathways in the proposal and eliminated the superfluous, underutilized sidewalks because they were in poor condition. By connecting them with the recreational path, our new communication system enables users to choose their direction. In the design, we have also included wooden piers connecting the lakes to the recreational path.

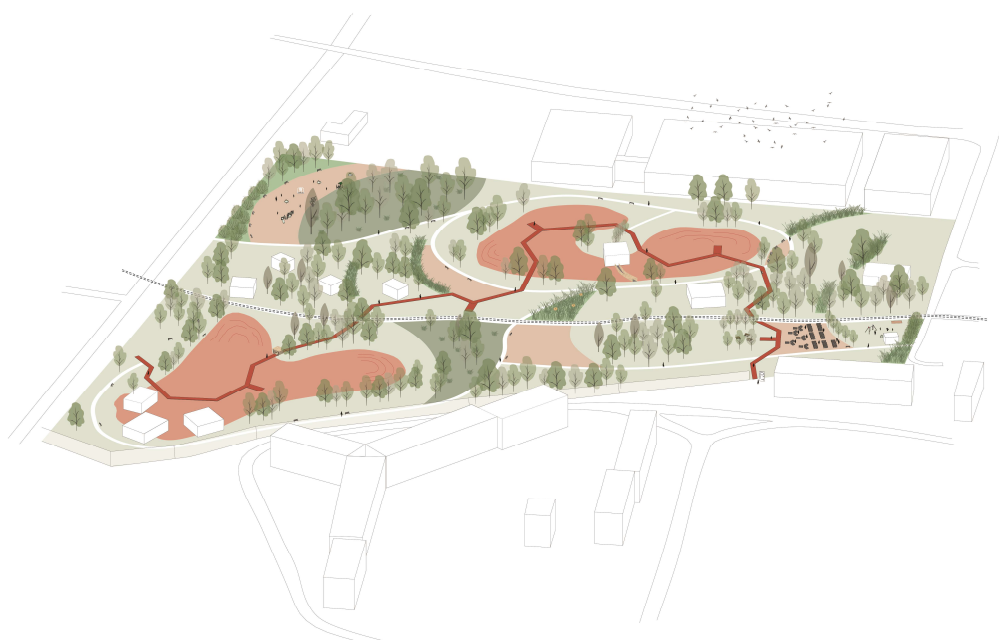


Fig. 2: Axonometry of the landscape-architectural design. (Author, Z. Vinczeová, 2023)

Discussion

The Agrokomplex exhibition complex is undoubtedly an important part of the urban structure of Nitra, but it is frequently negatively impacted by the company's management's economic goals and political views. Many areas of the exhibition complex have huge dormant potential but unfortunately, these areas are affected by strong privatization. This scenario would lead to a gradual degradation of the public space and at the same time would deprive the inhabitants of the city of the opportunity to build a multifunctional facility on the premises of the exhibition complex. Although there is a great deal of interest in the public areas among the residents, these interests are unfortunately different from those of the exhibition center's management.

Residential zone revitalization and greening initiatives play a significant role in the development of local communities, the involvement of local leaders, and the crucial support of commercial, non-profit, and government entities (Marišová et al., 2023). Locals might directly participate in project implementation or participatory planning. They help to enhance the environment and encourage

sustainable growth (Mariš, 2022). Volunteering has increased steadily in recent years to go along with investments in climate change mitigation strategies (Slobodníková, Tóth, 2022). Obtaining good public space requires accessibility first. In this instance, accessibility is severely constrained because the Agrokomplex falls under the category of semi-public space. Therefore, public space needs to foster community connections and deepen the significance of cities. A sustainable approach to planning and design processes is required to attain the overall quality of such areas (Kaw, Wahba, Lee, 2020).

Conclusion

Every public space should be public and accessible to everyone. Public space is formed by diverse communities that shape and give deeper meaning to it. The Agrokomplex offers areas that can serve as gathering areas for residents, which will strengthen community relations. In conclusion, from a psychological point of view, it is important to provide a wide range of options for the users of the residential area for daily relaxation. The final proposal seeks to maximize recreational potential and address all issues. It represents a suitable aesthetic public space for the inhabitants of the Chrenová housing estate, the inhabitants of the town Nitra and tourists.

References

- Cejpková et al. (2019). Principy tvorby veřejných prostranství. Brno: Kancelář architekta města Brna, 2019. 284 s. Available on the internet: <<http://kambrno.cz/principy/>>. ISBN 978-80-270-6463-2.
- Čibík, M. et al. (2020) Recognising green infrastructure as a part of the fourth nature concept through university campuses. In: *Acta horticulturae et regiotecturae*. 23, 2 (2020), s. 71-75. ISSN 1335-2563.
- Čibík, M., Bihuňová, M., Tóth, A. (2022). Scenarios for Open Space Conversion from an Exhibition Ground to a Sustainable Multifunctional Urban Park. In *Public Recreation and Landscape Protection - with Sense Hand in Hand?* 470 s. ISSN 2336-6311. ISBN 978-80-7509-830-6. pp. 297-301. Available on the internet: <<https://doi.org/10.11118/978-80-7509-831-3-0297>>.
- Deming, E. M., Swaffield, S. (2011). Landscape architecture research: inquiry, strategy, design. 1. vyd. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 272 s. ISBN 978-0-470-56417-2.
- Kaw, J., Wahba, S., Lee, H. 2020. The Hidden Wealth of Cities: Creating, Financing, and Managing Public Spaces. 1. vyd. Washington, DC: World Bank. 453 s. ISBN 978-1-4648-1449-5. Available on the internet: <<https://www.thegpsc.org/sites/gpsc/files/9781464814495.pdf>>.
- Mariš, M. (2022). Economics of Sustainable development and its environmental impact in The European Union: Case Study. In *Ecocycles Soc.* 2022, 8, 37-46. ISSN: 2416-2140. Available on the internet: <<https://www.ecocycles.net/ojs/index.php/ecocycles/article/view/236>>.
- Marišová, E. et al. (2023). Prerequisites for cooperation between self-government and state administration in the construction sector of the Slovak Republic in the light of the new legislation. In *Eastern European Journal of Transnational Relations*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 199–208. ISSN: 2544-9214. Available on the internet: <<https://eejtr.uwb.edu.pl/article/view/668/583>>.
- Melková, et al. (2014). Manuál tvorby veřejných prostranství hl. m. Prahy. Praha: Institut plánování a rozvoje hl. m. Prahy, 2014. 290 s. Available on the internet: <<http://manual.iprpraha.cz/cs/manual-tvorby-verejnych-prostranstvi-ke-stazeni>>. ISBN 978-80-87931-11-0.
- Slobodníková, K., Tóth, A. (2022). Hands on the local green: Community-based projects of green space co-design in Slovakia. In *Public recreation and landscape protection - with sense hand in hand?*. 1. vyd. 470 s. ISSN 2336-6311. ISBN 978-80-7509-830-6. Public recreation and landscape protection - with sense hand in hand, s. 157-161. Dostupné na internete: <<https://doi.org/10.11118/978-80-7509-831-3-0157>>.
- Tóth, A. (2022). Planning and designing green infrastructure across landscapes and scales. In *Acta horticulturae et regiotecturae*. ISSN 1335-2563, 2022, vol. 25, iss. 1, s. 1-7. Available on the internet: <<https://doi.org/10.2478/ahr-2022-0011>>.
- Vinczeová, Z. (2023) Agrokomplex - multifunkčné zázemie mesta: diplomová práca. Nitra: FZKI, SPU. 63 s.

Acknowledgement

This paper was funded by the EU NextGenerationEU through the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic under project No. 09I03-03-V02-00043 and is also an outcome of the KEGA projects 004SPU-4/2023 KR:EK:IN and BIN SGS02_2021_013 RelmaGIne and the present article was prepared with the support of the project APVV-20-0076 entitled "Waste and Construction - Modelling the Effectiveness of Alternative Options for Cooperation between Administrative Authorities" and the

cultural and educational projects KEGA 038SPU-4/2024 U:INT - White Spaces and Ephemeral Urban Interventions.

Souhrn

Článek představuje krajinářsko-architektonický návrh malého parku pro komunitu žijící na sídlišti Chrenová, pro obyvatele města, ale i pro turisty. Na základě podrobných analýz a metodického postupu "Research by Design" jsme vytvořili scénáře a návrh, který může zpřístupnit výstavní plochu, učinit ji funkční se zaměřením na komunitu a využití rekreačního potenciálu.

Contact:

Ing. Zuzana Vinczeová

E-mail: xvinczeovaz@uniag.sk

Open Access. This article is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, CC-BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

