

MLA Vilnius Tech

Assignment Foodscapes



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Introduction

This assignment is related to module Productive Landscape of MLA Vilnius Tech in the fall semester of 2026.

The subject is the area of the former greenhouse complex in Lazdynai, Vilnius (located near the Lazdynėliai and Bukčiai neighbourhoods) and how this relates to the local and regional food system. The planning area is the site and surrounding neighbourhoods as the main focus, with selected links to regional producers and food infrastructure. The scope of this food system will be defined during the course.

An analysis of a local or regional food system can take a lot of time, depending on the scope and level of detail it might take many months. In this light the assignment should be seen as an exercise in mapping, evaluating and future outlook.

Study area 2026:former greenhouse complex in Lazdynai

The history of the former greenhouse complex in Lazdynai, Vilnius (located near the Lazdynėliai and Bukčiai neighbourhoods), is a dramatic tale of transformation from a massive Soviet industrial agricultural site into a modern residential district and a focal point of high-stakes legal battles.

Here are the key eras of this location's history:

1. The Soviet Era: Industrial Agriculture	Before the mass construction of the Lazdynai micro district in the 1960s and 1970s, this area was mostly forested and rural. As the surrounding city expanded, a massive state-owned industrial greenhouse complex was built near the bend of the Neris River and what is today the Republican Vilnius University Hospital. - For decades, these greenhouses supplied the population of Vilnius with early-season vegetables and flowers. - The road running alongside the complex was officially named Šiltnamių Street (Greenhouse Street), and a dedicated public transit stop named "Šiltnamių" was established to transport hundreds of greenhouse workers.
2. Post-Soviet time and abandonment (Early 2000s)	Following Lithuania's restoration of independence in 1990, the centralised, highly energy-inefficient greenhouse complex could not survive the transition to a market economy. Production ground to a halt, and the complex was completely abandoned. - Over the years, the vast glass structures turned into a ghostly labyrinth of shattered glass and rusted iron framing. - The site became a legendary hotspot for urban explorers, photographers, and graffiti artists. Nature aggressively reclaimed the structures, with full-grown trees and wild bushes shooting up inside the skeletal glass hulls, creating a unique landscape.
3. Legal Controversies and land ownership	Because the greenhouses sat on highly valuable land—surrounded by pine forests, close to the river, and near major city arteries—the territory became a prime target for real estate developers. In 2010, the land use zoning was changed from agricultural to residential/commercial, which caused land ownership disputes: - The state land beneath the greenhouses had been leased to a private company ("SKR Baltic"). However, Lithuanian courts later ruled the lease invalid because the state land was being held for future commercial development rather than its original agricultural purpose.

	- The territory frequently dominated local headlines due to allegations of attempts to privatize premium state land without public auctions, prompting investigations by the Special Investigation Service (STT).
Current issues	We will assess the actual situation during the study visit on October 13. Based on this we can make a proposal for developing the area as a productive landscape to contribute to the debate on the future development of this area.

The main question now is can this area be transformed into a productive landscape where it plays a role in the supporting a sustainable food system for Vilnius and strengthening connections with producers in the region and raising awareness of the importance of local food for consumers. Important concepts are food security and food democracy.

Learning objectives

For the assignment the following learning objectives are formulated, the learner:

- a. Understands the concept of food systems in their cultural, local and regional setting.
- b. Is aware of contemporary challenges to sustainable food systems in context of spatial planning.
- c. Develops an understanding of the multiple dimensions of food systems: social, environmental, economic and spatial.
- d. Can map and evaluate a concrete situation of a food system, making use of a transparent method, to define the most relevant challenges.
- e. Can formulate an approach and/or a possible solution for a selected challenge that is related to his/her own competences and role in the system.
- f. Can define her/his own position and values regarding sustainable food planning
- g. Is able to reflect on his/her own process, using feedback from others reflecting on cultural, social and economic differences.

Results

1. Uploading a written report with a base text of 3-4 pages on the assignment containing the following sections, maps and schemes can be added as annexes to the written report
 - a. Scope and location of the food system – group work
 - b. Methods of mapping and evaluation – group work
 - c. Result of the mapping: diagnostic map – group work
 - d. Evaluation of the system, diagram – group work
 - e. a short log on your process (can be notes, schedule, schemes) – first group work
 - f. Selection of the main challenge to address – individual work
 - g. Future plan and approach for the selected challenge, conceptual plan with proposed intervention and connections to the wider food system, scheme for strategy with timeline – individual work
 - h. Self-reflection on process, with your own (possible) role in the system, the results, own values – individual work
2. Uploading a presentation (PowerPoint or other multimedia presentation mode) of the elements of the assignment.
3. Giving an online presentation of 15 minutes to the teacher and another staff member of Vilnius Tech. It is expected that colleague students are present during the presentation. Someone else of your own choice also can attend.

Guiding information and questions for the assignment

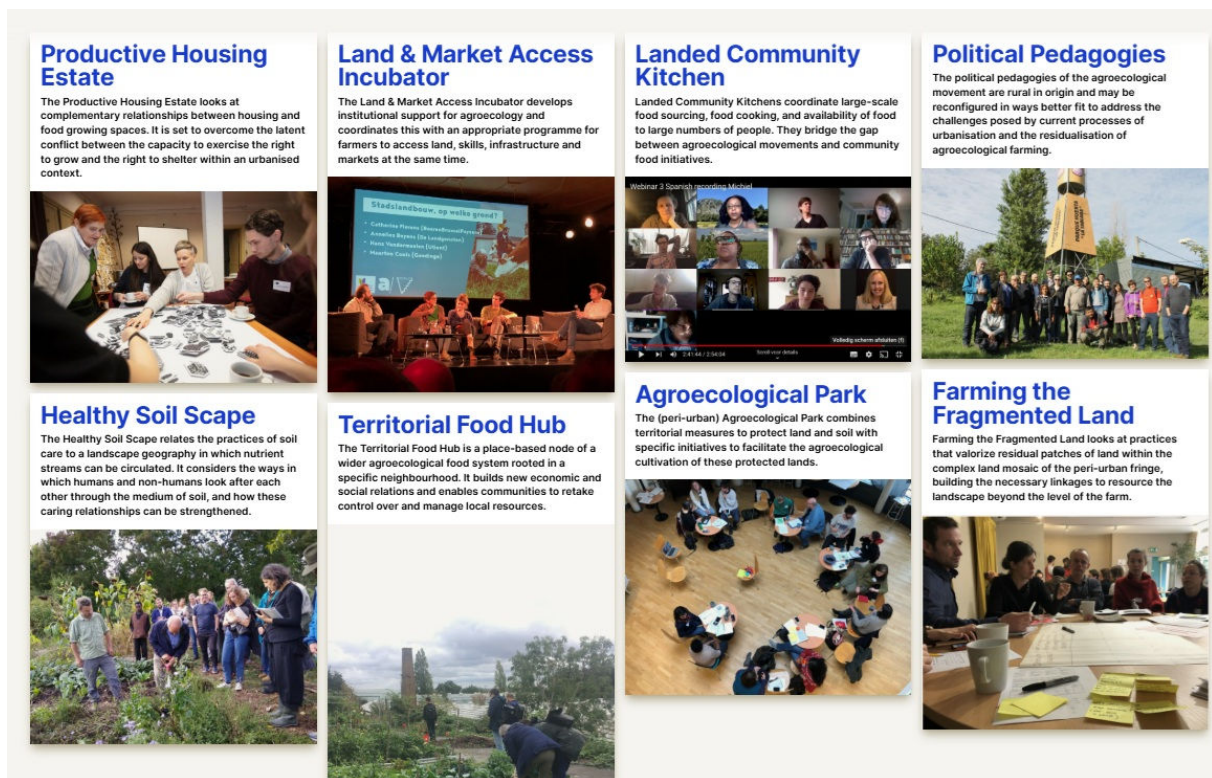
Scope and location of the food system

This assignment relates mainly to the spatial and organisational aspects of food systems. Depending on your role, experience and position you can define the scope of the food system you want to evaluate. The first part of the assignment can be carried out in small groups; this will be defined during the course. Students can jointly collect the available data of the mapping of your food system.

The guiding question is: How does your local food system look like: decision makers, consumers, retailers, processors, producers?

We would like to see on a map the location and a geographical representation of your food system.

We would like you to use the approach of an Agroecological Urbanism, with a set of building blocks that you can view on the Wiki. It would be good if in the first phase the small groups select which building block they want to apply to address the challenges of the study area.



See for information: https://wiki.landscape-portal.org/index.php/Concepts#Agroecological_Urbanism

Own position and role in the system

In your local food system, you can have different roles at the same time: consumer, planner, researcher. As a student you can choose a future role, you may position yourself as a landscape architect, a spatial planner or an urban planner.

Method of mapping and evaluation

For this assignment we propose that you use the approach of food system mapping as it is presented in the Wiki. It might be a matrix or a graphical scheme with actors, stakeholders, elements and their relations in the food system (decision makers, producers, processors, distributors, retailers, consumers).

For the analysis you can make use of the SWOT method or a comparable method you think is more suitable. You can have a look at the mapping instruction in the wiki:

https://wiki.landscape-portal.org/index.php/AESOP4Food_Methods_and_tools#Food_system_mapping

Result and evaluation of the mapping

Based on your overview of the food system, and your analysis you can define the main challenges and approach.

- What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the system?
- Which aspects of sustainability are the most important from your position?
- What do you consider as the most important challenge for the sustainability of this system?
- Which challenge do you choose to address from your (future) role or position in the system?

Approach of the challenge – building blocks of an Agroecological Urbanism

The challenges can be defined in a (small) group. After this each student can, depending on his/her ambition select a main challenge and define an approach or strategy to provide a solution of an improvement regarding the selected challenge. Which building block(s) of an Agroecological Urbanism do you want to apply to address the challenges?

Please describe your vision, goals, draw a future spatial maps with connections to the food system and schemes with the general steps for this.

Self-reflection on process, the results, own values and position.

When you look back on your activities for carrying out this assignment, how did the process work out? What would you do different for a future mapping assignment? Did your perceptions and values change in the process?

Assessment of the assignment

The teacher(s) will assess the results of your assignment based on the defined learning objectives. Depending on the regulations of Vilnius Tech there will be an oral examination.

The assessment consists of:

- Evaluation of the written and graphic material
- Evaluation of the online presentation.

You will receive a short feedback report and a grading for completing the assignment.

For further information and questions please contact by email: office@ln-institute.org.

References

Reports

Berkhout, P., T. Achterbosch, S. van Berkum, H. Dagevos, J. Dengerink, A.P. van Duijn, I. Terluin, 2018. Global implications of the European Food System; A food systems approach. Wageningen, Wageningen Economic Research, Report 2018-051. 56 pp.; 4 fig.; 2 tab.; 73 ref. This study aims to enhance the knowledge on the global implications of the EU food system. It provides an analysis of the trade relations between the EU and the rest of the world from several angles, case studies of the effects of EU trade in three products – cocoa, soy and fish - on local food systems, based on social, environmental and economic indicators; and analyses possible changes in the EU food system and its impact on the food systems in third countries.

FAO 2025. Transforming food and agriculture through a systems approach. Rome.
<https://doi.org/10.4060/cd6071en>. The Agrifood Systems Integrated Approach (AIIC) by FAO promotes systemic transformation to achieve the SDGs. It recognises food systems as interconnected networks of production, distribution, consumption, and governance. It defines three core challenges: Persistent hunger and malnutrition, Climate and biodiversity crises, and Inequalities in access, income, and power

Websites

FAO. (2018) City Region Food System Toolkit: <http://www.fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/toolkit/introduction/en/>

<https://wiki.landscape-portal.org/index.php?title=AESOP4FOOD>