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Horticultural Cooperatives in Estonia and Lifestyle Change: The Case of Ihaste

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Abstract: This article explores the historical development and transformation of horticultural cooperatives in Estonia, focusing on the example of Ihaste near Tartu. Initially established during the Soviet era to mitigate food shortages, these cooperatives provided urban residents with small plots for growing essential crops. Over time, legislative changes allowed the construction of summer houses, and by the late 1960s, thousands of families participated in cooperative gardening. The study highlights the socio-cultural significance of these plots, which offered not only food security but also psychological benefits and a sense of autonomy during political oppression. Based on archive materials and interviews, the article examines how Ihaste evolved from a horticultural district into a suburban residential area, reflecting broader lifestyle changes. Following Estonia's independence, privatisation and economic shifts transformed garden plots into permanent homes, while gardening practices shifted from subsistence to leisure and ornamental purposes. Current challenges include land rights, environmental risks, and urban development pressures. The case of Ihaste illustrates how horticultural cooperatives have adapted to changing social,

economic, and ecological contexts, maintaining cultural continuity while responding to modern needs.

Keywords: horticulture, horticultural cooperative, food security, self-sustainability, urban gardening

Introduction

Spending summer in the countryside has been one of the preferred forms of vacation for the city dwellers. But even for them, the countryside has not always meant just vacation. Following the history of garden plots and summer cottages, it becomes apparent that these gained special momentum during and after World War II, when food shortages occurred in several affected countries due to the disruption of supply chains and the need to grow their own food became more important in an urbanising environment. Self-sufficiency and food production became a crucial survival strategy, and such practices were often supported by community cooperation. National campaigns were also conducted for gardening and food growing, for example Britain's wartime domestic gardening campaign Dig for Victory! which prompted a huge expansion in allotments. As a result, by 1943 the British produced a lot more food in allotments and private gardens than they did before the War (Ginn 2012: 296). Similar campaigns to transform urban spaces into productive land and to combat food shortages by growing vegetables during crises have been adopted in other countries (for example Japan, the USA, Germany).

The living environment in Estonia changed significantly during and after World War II. During the Soviet occupation, the land became state property, and collective farms were established on land taken from the farms (Banner 2019: 226–227). Only a small garden remained for residents to use. Within these limits they had to maximise the utility of available space to cultivate food crops and graze livestock in an effort to supplement their diet, which had been affected by systemic shortages. When possible, people tried to relocate to the urban areas to find easier employment and living conditions, leading to a gradual attenuation of their connection to the land and to nature.

The article discusses: (a) how popular horticultural cooperatives were created in Estonia; (b) what stages can be distinguished in the development of

horticultural cooperatives; (c) what does today's horticultural cooperative look like, using the example of Ihaste; and (d) the current problems.

Theoretical background

Agriculture, despite being commonly perceived as a rural phenomenon, has a longstanding history within urban environments, adapting over time to changing socio-economic and spatial dynamics (Yuan *et al.* 2022). Ensuring food independence has been particularly important during times of crisis and disruption of supply chains, for example government campaigns during the world wars (e.g. Ginn 2012: 296, Yuan *et al.* 2022) or the surge in public interest in self-sustainability and urban gardening during the recent COVID-19 pandemic (Hume *et al.* 2021, Yuan *et al.* 2022). The extensive establishment of war or crisis gardens resulted in increasing domestic food production amid economic or logistical hardships, exemplifying the historical role of urban farming in supporting food security.

Due to urban expansion and suburbanisation, the locations of numerous Estonian gardening cooperatives transitioned into suburban or peri-urban zones, resulting in this land being considered part of urban agriculture. Urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) uses practices that yield food and other outputs through agricultural production and related processes (transformation, distribution, marketing, recycling) that take place on land and other spaces within cities and surrounding regions (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, n.d.). UPA not only uses research associated with the natural sciences (agronomy, pollution, water and soil quality among others), but also important raises questions of a social and economic nature such as land markets, migration from rural to urban spaces and social integration, among others (Matos Souza & Sales Batista 2013). The UPA perspective recognises the evolving spatial and functional integration of food cultivation into suburban landscapes as part of broader urban agricultural systems.

Gardening can afford practitioners enhanced well-being, self-esteem and improved quality of life. Nurana Mamedova (2015) has previously researched community gardening benefits for both individuals and the environment based on urban gardening in Tartu, focusing mainly on smaller allotments. Gardening has significant psychological benefits, including reduced stress, anxiety

and depression through connection with nature, nurturing responsibilities, and achievement from plant growth; the benefits to physical health by boosting exercise and mobility are also equally important (Soga *et al.* 2017). In the case of post-World War II Estonia we must consider the fact that the Soviet Union had taken the land away from Estonian citizens during the process of collectivisation, and having access to even a small piece of land allowed individuals to cultivate a sense of personal agency (Banner 2019: 253). This also improved the individual's connection to the environment and nature, offering crucial psychological benefits amid political oppression and land dispossession.

Method

The review uses articles and studies of public gardens in Estonia from the 1950–2024 period. In addition, the authors conducted semi-structured interviews in which the questions concerned the existence of the Ihaste garden district and its functions, management and construction with first and second generation individuals from former horticultural cooperatives and a descendent of local farm family in Ihaste area. We also asked whether and why the summer house had turned into permanent dwellings and about general changes in lifestyle and leisure time.

The early stages of cooperative gardening

The first cooperative allotment sites, or horticultural cooperatives, appeared in Estonian urban areas at the beginning of the Soviet era, as food shortages continued in the country after World War II. To mitigate these shortages, municipalities began to distribute land to workers so that they could grow their own garden products. During this period, the construction of any permanent structures on this land was prohibited, and people could use the area only for horticultural activities. In small settlements, land plots were usually located within a 10-minute walk of the apartment buildings in which people lived, while in larger cities gardening cooperatives were located further away.

The materials collected by scientists from the Estonian National Museum show that collective farmers had 0.5 hectares of arable land, while state farmers initially had 0.15–0.25 hectares, with the plot size for state farmers growing

to 0.5 hectares after 1983; owners of private houses in towns and cities also had to allocate part of the land on their plot to gardening (300–600 m^2 in the city, 700–200 m^2 in rural areas) (Viira 2012: 10). The first garden settlements were built back in the late 1950s, with horticultural cooperatives formed based on these in 1965. In Tartu the vast majority of horticultural cooperatives established in the 1960s have survived to this day. On the official information page of the City of Tartu (Tartu Linnaaiad 2025), among the older cooperatives are Tiigi, Veeriku, Timuti, and Ihaste. From this we see that the sizes of horticultural cooperatives and individual plots varied. Tiigi Garden, with an area of 10 hectares, was established in 1965 in the Veeriku district as a garden cooperative for the local electric company and is probably one of the largest privately used communal gardens in Tartu County. It contains 91 plots, each of the considerable size of 500–1000 m^2. Veeriku Garden covers only 2.7 hectares, where plot sizes vary between 60–120–180 m^2. The area is mainly used for growing vegetables in open ground and in small greenhouses. Timuti horticultural land has been used by members of the Tartu Horticultural and Beekeeping Association since the 1960s. Today, there are about twenty users, and several plots are vacant. All cooperatives have agreements with the city of varying duration; the Timuti contract for land use with the city is valid until 2033, while most others expire in 2027 and later. The newest gardens include, for example, the one established in 2019 (formerly called Lammi Garden) with a land-use permit valid until 2029.

Changes in legislation in the 1960s made it possible to locate horticultural cooperatives at a distance, and then people were allowed to build small summer cabins. Cooperatives were usually created at the workplaces, with mainly employees participating, while management staff used the institution's summer cottage. The land designated for gardening was mainly unsuitable for large-scale agricultural production, often being a barren or swampy area. But although the land did not belong to individuals, instead being given for use by the state, this small piece of land provided people the opportunity to feel like masters of their own land (Banner 2019: 253). This was enough to contribute to the increase in the value of the land; in addition, a small cabin made it possible to stay overnight. By the end of the 1960s, about 6,000 families were already concentrated in horticultural cooperatives in Estonia and by 1985 ca. 100,000 individuals were involved in horticultural cooperatives (ENE 1985: 91). At that time, the main purpose was the growing the garden products necessary to feed

the family with, for example, up to two dozen fruit trees on a relatively small area, in addition to which families could grow most of the necessary potatoes and other vegetables.

As the plots given to people for use were small, they had to work around this limitation and try to fit in many fruits and vegetable plants as efficiently as possible. For example, one of the Estonian National Museum's correspondents describes his garden in Järvakandi in the following way:

> There were 12 apple trees, 16 red currant bushes and 10 black currant bushes in the garden adjacent to the house. In addition, there were raspberries, garden strawberries and chokeberry tree in the garden. All kinds of root crops grew in the beds, pumpkins were planted on a compost pile, and a 118-square-metre greenhouse supplied tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers. There were early potatoes growing in the backyard. In the garden, we were field beans, peas, and cucumbers under film coating for decades. (Viira 2012: 10)

The enthusiasm for jam-making was widespread in Estonia, extending beyond diverse preserve varieties to include the canning of jams, compotes, salads and juices in home kitchens, with an array of fruit and vegetables alongside foraged wild berries and mushrooms. This practice underscored household self-sustainability efforts, particularly during wartime or post-war scarcities akin to other countries that shared the same fate. Canning, drying, and other food preservation techniques ensured year-round access to nutrition. Although food shortages have been resolved and the need to stock up on food to survive the winter and diversify the diet has disappeared, cellars full of preserves and stored fruits and vegetables are still a significant part of many households. "In Võru, for example, women went to count who had 200 jars in the basement, who had 250, and who barely had 70 jars with preserves." (Viira 2012: 10)

Later the food program adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party at the May 1982 plenum set the task of "ensuring a reliable supply of all food products to the population, significantly increasing the consumption of highly nutritious foods and significantly improving the structure of nutrition." The issue was so topical that in 1983 the Party recommended that the leadership of the Tartu City Committee horticultural cooperative carry out explanatory work so that the land would not only be used for summer holidays, but also that "everyone should grow fruits or vegetables" (Viira 2012).

Horticultural cooperatives in the Ihaste area

Compared to gardening cooperatives near the capital city Tallinn, the construction of Ihaste in Tartu took place later, probably because many people had relatives living close by in rural areas with whom they could spend their holidays and help with agricultural work, receiving vegetables, fruits and even, for example, meat in return.

The name Ihaste comes from the village Ihaste. It is probably not as old as the first archaeological finds at this place, since the location of the Stone Age settlement of Ihaste is neither more nor less than 10,000 years old. Ihaste district includes meadows and floodplain areas on the left bank of the Emajõgi River, below Tartu, the relief gradually becoming higher to the north and northeast.

In 1967, 144.2 hectares of land were allocated to horticultural cooperatives here, of which about 88 hectares were usable; it took two years for horticultural cooperatives to obtain a plot of land in Tartu (Toomsalu & Visnapuu 1969). Applications for the establishment of horticultural cooperatives in Ihaste began in 1967, with the horticultural cooperative district planned by Maie Ilumäe (Tartu, n.d.). The allocated plot was able to meet the requirements of only 28 horticultural cooperatives (745 members). The number of members in cooperatives varied, with up to 90 members (Toomsalu & Visnapuu 1969). They planted trees on the plot, built a small house of the permitted size, and tried to build a sauna. In 1977, Ihaste was administratively annexed to the city of Tartu. The figures showing the growing popularity of the district speak for themselves: by 2020, 2,721 people were living in Ihaste, and its area had grown to 424 hectares (Tartu, n.d.).

Figure 1. The first picture from 1975 shows a pond has been dug in the swampy part of the plot allocated for the cooperative; the sandy part has already been filled in. The second picture shows the same view in 2024. The former sandbank is difficult to see after 50 years, and in general the place has changed dramatically.

The early days of Ihaste can be described as joint construction: relatives and colleagues were the first to lend a helping hand, and common labour days (a variant of community service, like clean-up days) were organised. The quality of received land plots was different, as indicated by previous statistics: there were sandy land and swampy areas, but there was also agricultural land suitable for farming: "Our plot was on a sandy area. So, if you dig even in the current garden plot, then somewhere at a depth of 30 centimetres at most there will be black soil, with clean sand under it. There used to be sand pits in this moorland, where people went to sunbathe and children could play in the sand." (Interview 2).

The plots of land have been owned by the same families for generations, and they tried continuing their traditions in the best possible way. It was typical to involve children in gardening and farm maintenance. The children who were brought to the summer cottage cooperative areas for the weekend, formed groups with local farm children and they played, swam and spent their childhood together:

> It was back in the days of my grandmother's ancestors, in my time everything was already there. It was a farm, a farm plot, and in my childhood there was another small farm house there. The children were obliged to make vegetable beds and weed. But at the same time, since there were children around, it was also possible to play and it was much better than in the city. But I didn't realise it until I was an adult. At that time, I thought that I had school friends in the city, why would I go to the countryside, because then it was a rural area. Every Friday I went to the country, and on Sunday I returned…. we had a proper water supply there, there were no problems with irrigation. (Interview 1)

The initial construction was carried out with the help of relatives, which was typical for all regions:

> I remember that in 1969, the institution transferred the so-called potato furrows to the employees, and a year later horticultural cooperatives were established and building residential buildings on the site was forbidden. Those who built dwellings were forced to demolish them. My father and my husband were building, and they chose the cheapest project. (Interview 4)

> The plots were allocated, my father received a plot, and since the apartment was located in the city, mother and father decided that they would engage in agriculture in Ihaste. The project was official, but it resembled an informal settlement, as the entire street was practically built up according to one project. As they said, at first it was a small booth where you could change clothes and prepare food. Then the construction started. Judging by the stories, the materials were somehow acquired somewhere, and my father was helped by his son-in-law, his own father (my grandfather) and colleagues. Thus, a small garden house was built with a dry toilet, a tiny tiny kitchen unit, two rooms and a woodshed. It was ready sometime in the early 1970s. According to my recollections, I can say that the electricity was turned on in 1971 or a year later. (Interview 2)

Figure 2. The most common summer house built according to a standard project, and Arvo Veski's popular book *Construction of Summer Houses* (1971).

Designing summer houses became a significant source of income for architects all over Estonia, as most summer house owners were building their dwellings within a short period of time. In 1971, the first edition of Arvo Veski's book *Construction of Summer Houses* was published, which became a real bestseller as it contained plentiful practical instructions that most home craftsmen could understand and were able to use in the construction of their own small summer houses.

The speed of construction in Ihaste district was characterised by rapid connection to the electricity grid and the house was registered with the city council, as well. However, there are several typical failed approaches to land cultivation,

such as excessive fertilisation (chemicals had replaced natural manure), which led to groundwater contamination, in addition to which constant land use has led to depleted of the soil. The bigger shock was related specifically to water, as the water-rich wells dug in many plots turned out to be contaminated with nitrates and nitrites.

In early 2000, the city of Tartu received a subsidy from the European Union, and the residents of Ihaste were able to connect to the central city water supply and sewerage system at a 75% discount. This meant that Ihaste had acquired all the amenities of the city. At the same time, construction was carried out around the summer cottages as well as, to the delight of residents, the construction of a pavement, which made the road, with its increased traffic load, safer for pedestrians.

Risks and limitations for the plots

The main risk was that in the long run the land belonged to a cooperative or it had been obtained from a company. These workplace gardens were small and on land owned by the town or the state. The main difference was that after Estonia regained independence cooperative shareholders could privatise an apartment, house, or horticultural plot using privatisation vouchers, the so- called yellow cards, which were issued to citizens in the early 1990s as part of the country's transition from a state-controlled to a market economy. At the same time, the owners of the plots belonging to the workplace had few rights: when the city decided to take over the land for development, the gardens, with their greenhouses, were demolished. People did not, and still do not, have the right to compensation. This situation persists to this day with plot holders having no rights over this land.

Of the gardens belonging to the institutions, those beside the railway were notable. Railway workers had the right to have a small plot and lay out beds for vegetables, bushes, erect a small greenhouse and sometimes even a small shed made of improvised materials.

In 2013, the Railway Gardens exhibition was held with great success at the Estonian National Museum (curated by Heli Hinto and Kristy Ziugand). The exhibition gave a cross-section of gardens located along the railway that passes through Tartu using photographs taken from spring to autumn 2013. When the

rail tracks were removed the gardens were also destroyed. The Railway Gardens exhibition provided an opportunity to recall aesthetically different buildings and gardens and was chosen as the audience's favourite in the Create Your Own Exhibition competition of that year (Tarand 2013).

Like the railway gardens, other sites belonging to institutions also appeared to be under the threat of destruction. For example, in 2011, the plots next to Tallinn Airport were demolished, "as a result people who had considered the garden plot their second home for several decades were left without daily gardening activities" (Karro-Kalberg 2014).

Similarly, the so-called garden system of the Chinatown of Tartu (officially Jaamamõisa district), where one-story wooden houses were built after the World War II for the families of Soviet Army officers, was destroyed. The area was formerly a closed Soviet military site separated from the rest of the city by a stone wall, on the other side of which was a military airfield that was closed to civilians. Although multi-storey houses were also built in Chinatown in the 1970s and 1980s. it This was area of the gardens which belonged to the Raadi military airfield. The gardens and the summer houses attached to them, made of improvised materials. The gardeners gradually formed their own community. When the air force left in the 1990s, some of the residents stayed in Tartu and continued to cultivate these gardens. Since the remnants and everything that was at hand were used as building materials, some of the erected buildings looked picturesque. The poor quality and peculiar appearance of the buildings and gardens attracted attention after the closed area was opened to the public and new construction began. As many Soviet military personnel and other garden plot users left for Russia or grew old and died, much of this area was abandoned and further deteriorated over the decades. As part of the construction of a new road, approved in the General Plan of Tartu for 2030, the gardens were demolished in August 2023.

Even though this area is now open to the public, former gardeners continue to come and recall the former days at this location. For example, Pjotr, who spent most of his time here for 50 years, recalls it with love. "There were pear trees here, and there was a greenhouse. Then there was another one. Tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers – everything was home-grown. Onion, garlic, everything was there. I was young and I had the strength, but now I don't". Pjotr, a former horticulturist from Chinatown. (Punamäe 2023)

Changes in the nineties and later

Mari Nuga (2016) notes that people began to move *en masse* and turn summer cottages into residential buildings back in the 1990s. This was done (contrary to current popular belief) by poorer people, since it allowed better control of costs. They were able to build gradually and slowly improve their living conditions; some people financed their construction activities by renting out an apartment in the city. During the real estate boom, which began later, plots belonging to garden cooperatives became increasingly attractive around the towns and cities in Estonia. During this period, a lot of economically prosperous families moved to live in private housing and new residential areas, and for many people the horticultural areas became a more comfortable and homely alternative to suburban neighbourhoods (Nuga 2016).

As mentioned above, land plots were privatised in exchange for yellow cards and entered into the land register under the name of the new owner. Such actions gave the owner the opportunity to plan the reconstruction. In the 1990s and early 2000s, new projects began to be commissioned to transform old summer cottages into modern insulated houses. Construction refinancing was often carried out by selling or renting out a city apartment, with the money (often along with a bank loan) going to cover project costs. Some people went abroad to earn money for construction, either to Germany or Scandinavia, including Finland. The projects often had to be changed several times, which meant new expenses, and several respondents mentioned that they had decided to make their new insulated homes bigger to accommodate children and grandchildren. The purchase of new houses, including the resale of completed houses and the relocation of children and grandchildren to places of residence in Ihaste, meant that the population there was of different age groups. At the same time, it was noted that relatives who receive high salaries, especially abroad, bought one or more places of residence, often in different parts of Estonia.

Nevertheless, respondents acknowledged that what was built with their own hands is dearer to them than what was created with hired labour, adding that building themselves was partly inevitable for financial reasons. In addition, it is still common practice for the children in the family, and the next of kin, to have the right to several beds in order to grow plants, as well as having their own room in the now insulated house. This ensures a broader responsibility among the relatives, giving them the opportunity to stay out of town.

> On April 1, 2002, the builders came and started building, and in August of the same year the house was ready – a two-story house with a gable roof. For the construction, we had to sell the apartment in Annelinn, and during the construction we lived on the ground floor with our family – my wife and a small child. In our spare time, we built the second floor ourselves. It was also a real challenge. You plaster the wall the day before, come home from work the next day, take sandpaper and start sanding this plaster, apply a new layer – and so on from day to day. (Interview 2)

Major changes can be noted in plot use. Land formerly used mainly for crop production has changed to accommodate ornamental gardening and leisure activities, something that became evident in the interviews. Even before recommendations on cultivating land and growing healthy food, diet enrichment was one of the main goals of horticultural cooperatives. The respondents emphasise that also in their cases most of the land originally served agricultural purposes: fruit trees were planted, greenhouses were built for plants that do not grow outdoors in Estonia (cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, etc.):

> The lion's share, or two thirds of the plot, was a field. Initially, there were nine apple trees. There were about a dozen berry bushes, and the rest of the land was under root crops: carrots, potatoes, beetroot, dill. And slowly we began to build greenhouses there, filling in the foundation…. Two greenhouses were for tomatoes, one for cucumbers. Then there was another bed where cucumbers also grew. In those days, in the deep Soviet era, there was practically no need to buy garden products in the shop. Potatoes, carrots, beetroot, turnips, everything that could be imagined was home-grown. (Interview 2)

> Garden products, berries and apples were mainly grown. It wasn't a place to lie on the grass, at least not here, but it seemed like that in other places too. Every piece of land was supposed to provide a yield. For me, this meant work. I couldn't go out with friends, for example, to the sea. I was probably 35 years old, and my children used to travel with us, they probably liked it. (Interview 4)

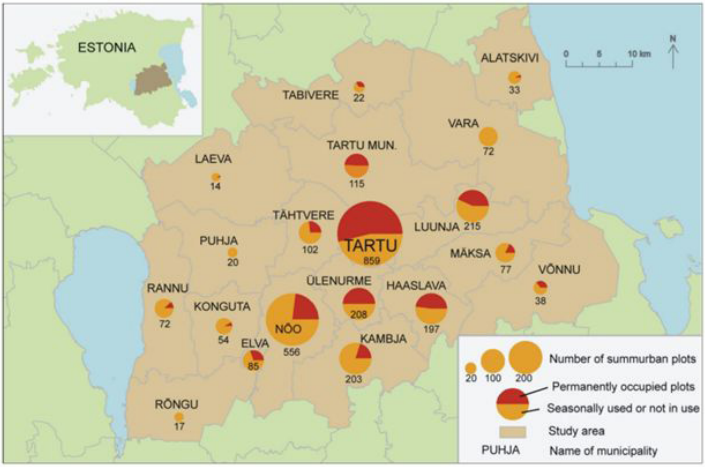

Figure 3. In 2015, an article appeared reviewing the transition of former suburban cooperatives located in Tartu County to permanent settlement, by which time half of the suburban summer houses had already been converted into residential buildings. (Nuga *et al.* 2015)

Big changes have also taken place in cultivated plant species and varieties. After the gardening of the 1970s to 1990s when experiments were carried out with various exotic plants, diversity was increased when people started bringing back plants and seeds from holidays or hiking trips. This category also includes experiments growing grapes and efforts to keep them alive in the hard winters. In later periods, it becomes obvious that gardens are primarily used for recreational purposes and ornamental gardening, as there were no longer any food shortages after the transition from a state-controlled to a market economy. For the same reason, preparation of jam and other preserves has turned from a necessity into a hobby, and is now often replaced by eating the berries fresh or freezing them, which means that eating habits have also changed. However, there are signs that people are keeping their plots of land, and that old trees and bushes are being maintained, although they are no longer being planted in such large numbers. The respondent humorously noted:

> When the hungry time comes, we will plough the lawn and plant potatoes. And if we grow field crops in one place for 50 years and apply only fertilisers there, then in the end we will find ourselves in a situation when, so to speak, the tops of potatoes grow to the chest, and in the furrow there are potatoes the size of berries. The earth will simply stop

> bearing fruit, it will be depleted; now it is resting under the grass. And if we're ever left out in the cold, or some economic need arises.… We'll uproot the grass, plant potatoes and farm again. (Interview 2)

Figure 4. Ihaste, where former garden houses have been converted to residential buildings. Ihaste has one of the oldest Neolithic settlements in Estonia (~8000 BC) and now on this site is a new development between rural cooperatives (right).

Conclusion

Based on interviews and documentary evidence, the origins of Tartu horticultural cooperatives mirror global trends such as urban expansion and suburbanisation. Some Estonian horticultural cooperatives, including Ihaste, have now acquired the status of official city districts; however, beyond providing residential space, they also constitute part of urban agriculture and urban nature.

Horticultural cooperatives in Estonia emerged during the Soviet era, primarily in the 1950s and 1960s as a response to chronic food shortages. Authorities allocated small plots near urban areas to workers to grow fruit and vegetables. These cooperatives quickly gained popularity because they provided food security, autonomy, and psychological relief during times of political and economic hardship. By the late 1960s, thousands of families were involved, and by 1985 approximately 100,000 individuals participated in cooperative gardening.

The development of horticultural cooperatives can be divided into several stages:

1. Initial Phase (1950s–1960s): plots were strictly for gardening; construction was prohibited.

2. Expansion (1960s–1980s): legislative changes allowed small summer houses; cooperatives became social spaces.

3. Privatisation and Transformation (1990s): after re-independence, plots were privatised and summer cottages converted to permanent homes.

4. Modern Era (2000s–present): the purpose of gardening shifted from subsistence to leisure and ornamental, with improved infrastructure and urban integration.

Ihaste has evolved from a horticultural district into a suburban residential area with modern amenities such as water supply and sewerage systems. While some gardening persists, the focus is now on ornamental plants and recreational use rather than food production. Many former summer cottages have been rebuilt into insulated family homes, reflecting lifestyle changes and urbanisation.

Key challenges include insecure land rights for plots still without cooperative or institutional ownership, environmental issues such as soil depletion and groundwater contamination, and urban development pressures that lead to the demolition of garden areas. Additionally, balancing heritage preservation with modern housing needs remains a concern.

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