

## The Village Garden

Vaški vrt

LOCATION

**Smlednik, Slovenia**

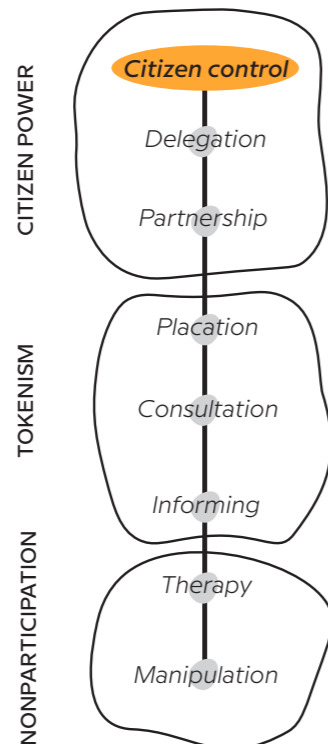
TIME PERIOD

**Since 2018**



### THE PROJECT

The garden was designed at St. Urh Square, in the historical village center of Smlednik. Although it produces herbs and vegetables, its main function is educational and social because this is the place where people and residents can gather and exchange knowledge on growing the plants. Thus, the aim of the project is to link these two functions by connecting the local community while developing the garden to preserve cultural heritage, indigenous plants, and self-sufficiency.



### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

When asked, **inhabitants of Smlednik have the self-impression of being remote.** As a matter of fact, there are poor public transport links to the city of Ljubljana and other towns in the region, but also difficulties in accessing daily-life-support facilities. Apart from a sports park used by the school and the residents, the **only public space is the village square** in the historical center. This place is only surrounded by a few community buildings and residential houses. Even if there is the Society of Arts and Culture next to the village square, we can highlight a lack of creative activities in Smlednik.

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

The **initiator of this project is the local Society for Oral History**, which built the garden in honour

of the 900th anniversary of the first mention of the village of Smlednik with the help of local organizations and donors. The long-term maintenance of the garden however largely **depends on the volunteers** and member of the Society for Oral History.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The garden is designed permaculturally so as to thrive with little maintenance and follows the principle of sustainable development. Wooden stairs run through the garden, making it easier to access the flower beds and there is also a bench with a view at the top of the garden. The **whole community is involved in this project: the children, through the primary school, as well as the adults who do the maintenance work.** The knowledge, skills and involvement

of local residents were decisive in the implementation of the garden. Local institutions supported the project through financial help but local companies and societies also provided assistance in the form of support and donations.

### RESULT

The project has achieved its target to a large extent. **Thanks to the garden, old sorts of cultural plants, knowledge and traditions of the region have been preserved.** Moreover, residents meet in or around the garden and arrange it. More and more people come to the garden to relax, learn, and there are also many visitors from other places. An annual festival of exchanging seedlings is of benefit to not only the local community but also beyond. If there are no economic benefits, all participants gain knowledge about the traditional ways of growing plants as well as new approaches to it (e.g. permaculture). Moreover it keeps the intangible cultural heritage of Smlednik alive. The project was well accepted in the community, and it has been presented in local and national newspapers in Slovenia.



An exchange of seedlings in the village square  
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Designing and building the village garden following the principle of community gardens  
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Children's workshop on learning about plants  
©Janez Strojani, Društvo za ustno zgodovino



Summer gardening in the village garden  
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Smlednik, Slovenia

more about this project

