

Case 6

● SK–Bratislava: Istrochem plant & Žabí Majer Garden Community

Location: Rača District, Bratislava, Slovakia

Type of site: Chemical industry brownfield and garden neighbourhood

Size: approx. 150 ha

Ownership: Fragmented (private local industrial firms + city parcels)

Main legacy: Chemical production (Istrochem)

Period of activity: 1948–1990s

Main challenges: Soil and water contamination, informal uses, unclear responsibility

Priority of cluster relevance: [Green Development](#), Economy & Reuse

Historical Overview

Originally a wetland and garden landscape known as Žabí Majer (“Frog’s Meadow”), the area was industrialised during socialism for chemical production by Istrochem.

By the 1980s, pollution levels were among the highest in Bratislava.

After privatisation, parts of the plant closed, while the garden neighbourhood survived along its edges, maintaining traces of the earlier landscape.

Present Condition

Today, Žabí Majer and Istrochem complex is a hybrid landscape – part derelict industrial area, and part thriving informal garden community, supporting informal social interaction and the everyday life of marginalised communities, alongside diverse species.

Despite contamination, residents continue to cultivate small plots, practice rainwater harvesting, and maintain informal paths.

The contrast between toxic legacy and everyday stewardship makes the site unique in Central Europe.

Governance & Actors

- Municipality of Bratislava – Rača District – planning and environmental supervision.
- Regional NGO (Spolka) – led documentation and engagement with local gardeners.
- Local gardening associations – active self-management structures.

Key Insights

Žabí Majer reveals how informal stewardship can coexist with contamination management. While technical remediation remains costly, recognising and supporting community adaptation creates immediate ecological and social value.

This case challenges traditional planning by showing that bottom-up resilience can complement top-down regulation.

Leverage Points

Recognition of informal gardens in policy

Integration of rainwater harvesting

Participatory mapping of contamination

Lessons Learned

Inclusion legitimises grassroots ecology

Small-scale adaptation lowers risk

Citizen science supports remediation plans

Transferable Tools

Community land stewardship frameworks

Nature based water retention strategies

Community environmental audit toolkits



Entrance to the former Istrochem industrial site, with disused structures and overgrown vegetation marking the area's postindustrial state.

Photo: Katarina Onderková / Spolka

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