

Davis Projects for Peace: Rooftop of Eden  
Summer 2014 – Bratislava, Slovakia, in Collaboration with *Záhrada na Dunaji*  
Boglarika Ivanegová (Slovakia). Ana Puhac (Croatia), and Zuri de Souza (India)

## Historical context

Slovak society today is built on an unstable foundation of unresolved historic conflicts. It has experienced all the major political and economic regimes of the twentieth century: discrimination within the Austro-Hungarian empire, the fascist regime during the Second World War and the revolt against it, followed by Communist rule for forty-one years. The collapse of the Communist regime in 1989 presented critical obstacles to the democratic transitions of all the post-socialist states. Slovakia emerged from a long and repressive period of Communist rule not only in search of a national identity but also in a dire political and socioeconomic state, lacking the means for collaboration and open dialogue. In this context, ethnic divisions came to prominence, leading to the emergence of a violent form of ethnic nationalism. These regular acts of ethnic violence are most apparent in the upcoming and diverse Slovak city of Bratislava where the majority is silently consenting to social and economic exclusion.

The intention of our project is to provide Bratislava with that public space where we can actively engage with the conflicts of ethnic nationalism in a manner that is both nonviolent and productive. The ecological agriculture movement is currently gaining unprecedented popularity in Bratislava and there is an increasing demand for local, fresh produce. This movement establishes our project within a contemporary context. Simultaneously, the inhabitants of Bratislava are expressing a deep interest in the reappropriation of urban public spaces. However, since there are still no practical manifestations of these interests, our goal is to create a multifunctional community-based project that promotes reconciliation and social inclusion through urban gardening.

## Project background

*Záhrada na Dunaji* is a current initiative that plans to open a sheltered, rooftop garden in May 2014. The core group consisting of urban designers, landscape architects, and program developers has secured a donation from *Tatra Banka*, a local bank. The group contracted the structurally suitable roof terrace of the Tesco building, located on Kamenné Námestie, in the center of Bratislava. While *Záhrada na Dunaji* would like to have a public outreach, due to financial and staffing constraints this is currently not feasible. However, our Rooftop of Eden Project will bridge *Záhrada na Dunaji* with the public. The grant will allow us to transform this closed urban gardening project into an open platform for dialogue and community interaction. It will be fully accessible to all communities within Bratislava and will reach out to those that are, and have been, marginalized over the years. To facilitate interest in the dialogue and encourage participation in gardening, we will organize open community meals and offer free workshops on ecological and innovative gardening techniques.

Through the [World Cafe Method](#) in partnership with the *Záhrada na Dunaji* team and [Walia Ibex](#), an organization representing the African minority of Bratislava, we will facilitate dialogues among large groups of people for community improvement in an efficient and nonconflictual manner. The World Cafe relies on the familiar café or a garden setting and facilitated conversations. Martin Kuštek from Walia

Ibex, who has expertise in facilitating debates, will lead these discussions. To ensure broader community outreach and involve more parties in discussions about extremism and peace, our partners from [Provida Foundation](#) and [MakeSense Factory](#) will facilitate communication with the public and issue press releases.

We would like to equip the lab with a 3D printer to manufacture components for tools and data sensors using open-source plans that are freely available. Using these tools, we will hold workshops to enhance user-led innovations in the development of low-power, open-source technology. These workshops will be facilitated by members that collectively possess an in-depth knowledge of urban design and IT technology. We will use Raspberry Pi, a Linux-run computer system, to monitor the garden. We realize that people might not be able to partake in the project on a daily basis, and so this technology will allow us to create a system that is independent of constant manual labour. By installing moisture sensors and watering systems, the plants are cared for as and when they need water. Gathering data from the monitors will allow us to share progress reports with anyone interested in the success of our garden.

Our project will establish regular interactions between previously isolated communities.

The public incentives to partake in such a project are many — the act of gardening is a peaceful and rewarding task that transcends the boundaries of language and eases tensions in a manner that is both honest and nonconfrontational. Coupled with casual community meals, we aim to create new social experiences that cultivate strong civic values and a deeper sense of togetherness.

#### Our Team and Motivation

Our team shares a strong interest in self-organized urbanism and food systems. We are committed to combine our beliefs, skills, and knowledge to work for a peaceful and sustainable future at the local and global level. We are confident that this project will yield fruitful experiences.

→ Boglarka Ivanegová is currently in Bratislava, conducting community-based participatory research about Slovak agricultural transitions and food activism over the past 25 years. Boglarka has experience with agroecology and organic gardening and is interested in open-source technology. She has been part of the *Zahrada na Dunaji* team since August 2013 and plans to work for the enhancement of food sovereignty after graduation.

→ Zuri Camille de Souza has just completed fieldwork on the subcultures of ecological architecture within Europe and the Middle East. After designing a series of permaculture gardens in Palestine, she is now working on a manual that provides design solutions for leading an ecologically resilient urban life. Her aim is to implement a similar project along the western coast of India where she grew up, an area now destroyed by tourism and mining.

→ Ana Puháč has been studying sustainability in cities through a cross-disciplinary approach. This project is the ideal practical application of her senior thesis on successful methods of urban agriculture and social justice. She has worked in several community gardens in New York City, practicing square foot gardening, organizing a garden curriculum, and designing landscape plans. Having grown up in post-war Croatia, Ana is greatly motivated to implement this model of peacebuilding within the urban setting at home.