

Title: Urban Gardening. Growing the Green City of the Future

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Bachelor Thesis Presented to the Faculty of History, University of Graz, June 2015

A garden in a city? Does a garden even belong here? For many urban gardening may seem like a paradox, as a city is still widely associated with everything that is not rural. The countryside is the cities "Other". Everything that is part of the countryside doesn't Gardening doesn't either.

However the view is slowly changing and new forms of green spaces are finding their way back into the cities. Community gardens, vertical gardens, roof top gardens, mobile gardens, guerilla gardening – there are no limits to one's creativity. From New York via Berlin to Graz, all over the globe people are reconnecting with nature in the form of gardening. With many different intentions: environmentalism, doubts about the conventional food production, financial difficulties...

The world's population is growing steadily and urban centres are experiencing the biggest growth rates. Cities are the future, but cities are demanding. Their whole functioning depends on external supply, be it food, be it water, be it energy. Little is produced within the city limits, making the urban population vulnerable to external shocks. Urban gardening is not just about gardening, its potential is as diverse as its forms and the people involved. It can positively contribute to food security, a healthier lifestyle (diet, physical activity, mental well-being..), community building (negative impact on prejudices based on race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender...) and the micro-climate of cities (lower temperatures, storage of CO₂, capture of particulate matter, biodiversity...)

The thesis first gives a historical summary of urban gardening and then argues how and to what extent urban gardening projects can contribute to build the resilient, sustainable and independent city of the future. Interviews with different actors the urban gardening scene in Graz, Austria were conducted to gain inside knowledge. Politicians such as Lisa Rucker and Heike Possert-Lachnit but also activists such as David Steinwender or Ulrike Dietschy were among the interviewees. Therefore Graz was the focus of attention in this thesis.