

Lucia Wieger, Christina Schraml

WALKSHOP

Self-organized urban green initiatives – harvesting tomatoes or urban activism?

Abstract

People in Vienna love and use their green urban spaces. In a growing, densifying city the need for such open public spaces increases. Where they do not exist, more and more citizens take the initiative to create urban green spaces on their own. At first glance these initiatives seem much the same. However, a closer look reveals a variety of interests and motives in the involved actors. Some are simply carving out a piece of green space for their own needs, while others are fuelled by political activism and the right to the city.

Based on current debates and the growing importance of open public spaces in cities, this Walkshop (walking workshop) visits and/or discusses a range of initiatives including a D.I.Y. park, an intergenerational neighbourhood garden, a guerrilla garden, and an urban gardening project dedicated to explore urban farming.

The underlying questions of the Walkshop are: In what sense do these green spaces constitute green urban commons? Are they manifestations of the right to the city, the demand to participate and appropriate urban space? Or are these initiatives more driven by a lifestyle trend, even tending towards privatization à la “Schrebergarten”? Who are the actors involved, what are their goals, and what is their target audience? What are the opportunities and challenges for these actors and for the city as a whole?

In addition to a theoretical background, the importance of green urban commons for the quality of life and future of our cities will be discussed.