Between Green Image Production, Participatory Politics and Growth: Urban Agriculture and Gardens in the Context of Neoliberal Urban Development in Vienna[1]

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Abstract

Vienna is a green city. Around 50% of the urban area is green space, which includes 630 farms and a constantly growing number of community gardens. Not only do activists try to reclaim the city by cultivating vegetables on fallow land, but even the new urban development plan presents urban gardening as an "innovative impulse" for the city. At the same time, agricultural spaces are increasingly under pressure due to population growth and a construction boom. This paper offers a thorough analysis of the implications of neoliberal urban development for agricultural spaces and practices in Vienna. Combining theoretical work on urban neoliberalization with a governmentality approach makes it possible to focus not only on transnational transformations, but also to shed light on specific developments and concrete acts of governing at the local scale. The Donaufeld, a district known for vegetable production and currently defined as an urban

development area, is an instructive case study for analyzing the selective preservation and implementation of specific kinds of urban agriculture and the use of participatory politics in urban development projects.

Keywords

Governmentality, land use planning, participation, urban development, volunteering

Introduction

Vienna has a reputation not only of being a city rich in culture, but also one that is exceptionally green. Around 50% of the urban area is green space; there are still 630 farms in the city, and more and more community gardens have popped up over the last years. A range of different actors refer to urban food production in a very positive way. Activists try to reclaim the city by growing vegetables on fallow lands, at the same time as the municipal administration encourages participation in neighborhood gardens and the new urban development plan presents urban gardening as an "innovative impulse" for the revitalization of the city (see Municipality of Vienna 2015a, 2016, for example). At the same time, population growth and a construction boom increasingly place pressure on agricultural spaces. This, however, has not led to the complete disappearance of urban agriculture and gardens. Rather, there is a selective preservation and even activation of specific kinds of urban agriculture and gardens while others disappear. A current example for this trend is the urban development area Donaufeld, where existing vegetable farms have to give way to apartment buildings, at the same time as community gardens are presented as important feature of the emerging neighborhood.

Within the context of neoliberal urban development, urban agriculture and gardens play a contradictory role. While self-organized collective urban agriculture projects often understand themselves as an alternative practice to the dominant food system and to neoliberal urban politics (McClintock 2013), urban vegetable cultivation is also used as an instrument to make districts more attractive, intensifying gentrification (Tornaghi 2014, Quastel 2009, Dooling 2009). Furthermore the participation and activation of the population with the aim of outsourcing former public responsibilities (like green space maintenance) can be understood as a key element of a neoliberal restructuring of the urban (Rosol 2012).

For a better understanding of locally specific processes of neoliberalization, this paper analyses the current transformations of urban agriculture and gardens in

Vienna and their contradictory and contested role within neoliberal urban development. To do this, I discuss the following two questions by focusing on one specific district, the Donaufeld, an area of about 60 hectares known for vegetable cultivation, but recently defined as an urban development zone: (1) How does the neoliberalization of the urban influence agricultural spaces and practices in Vienna? What kind of urban agriculture and gardens are preserved and promoted and which ones disappear? (2) How are participatory politics used in urban development projects and what is the role of urban agriculture and gardens within these processes?

The Donaufeld is an instructive case study, not only because 6,000 apartments will replace a number of long-standing vegetable farms, but especially because this development project is presented as remarkably sustainable and green. Large green spaces and community gardens are key elements of the development guidelines. In addition, a participatory process was initiated in order to encourage the participation and cooperation of the population.

In the following section, I outline the theoretical framework for this analysis, combining conceptual work on the neoliberalization of the urban with a governmentality approach. This combination makes it possible to focus on transnational structural transformations, as well as on specific developments and concrete acts of governing on the local scale. After a short description of the case study and the methodological approach, the I analyze the transformation of urban agriculture and gardens in the context of neoliberal urban development in the Donaufeld. I then discuss the citizen participation project and the question of how the meanings and forms of urban agriculture and gardens change, are negotiated and contested within such participatory politics. The paper ends with some strategic remarks.

The neoliberalization of the urban and the concept of governmentality

The term "neoliberalization" does not refer to a fixed condition, but a complex, multilayered, contradictory and contested process of market-oriented restructuring of society and daily life. The scale of the urban plays a key role in this process and serves as a field of experimentation for new forms of accumulation, regulation, and governing. The neoliberalization of the urban is characterized by increasingly entrepreneurial city politics and an intensification and transfer of a market-based logic to all societal areas. Fundamental elements of this development are deregulation, liberalization, privatization, and commodification as well as growing social control and surveillance. In addition, austerity politics and a technocratic, de-politicized, and economic management of the urban are turned into the urban mainstream (Brenner and Theodore 2002, Brenner et al. 2010, Harvey 1989, Mayer 2013a, Peck and Tickell 2002). Furthermore, a basic dynamic of neoliberalization is the constant necessity of growth: "Neoliberalism promotes and normalizes a 'growth-first' approach to urban development" (Peck and Tickell 2002: 394).

Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore point out that while neoliberal ideology proclaims universal rules and developments, as well as the pushing back of the state in favor of a "free market", neoliberalization actually needs intensified state interventions in order to enforce diverse forms of market rule. For a better understanding of locally specific implementations of neoliberal restructuring, they use the concept of '*actually existing neoliberalism*'. With this it is possible to understand and analyze neoliberalization as path-dependent, meaning that it is embedded in and structured by transnational market-oriented mechanisms, as well as in the concrete contexts always locally specific, differentiated, unstable and contested (Brenner and Theodore 2002).

Green gentrification and image politics

As a result of the growing mobility and flexibility of financial flows, cities find themselves more and more in global competition for the most attractive location for investments (Harvey 1989). In this context the image of a creative and innovative city is especially promising. Margit Mayer analyses how urban social movements are used systematically for this kind of image production. She speaks of a selective appropriation of their activities, critique (e.g. of a paternalistic welfare state), and demands (e.g. for more self organization). According to her, there is in many cases a double strategy: concessions and support for those groups (including protest movements) that are useful for the reproduction of neoliberalism and repression of those that cannot be commodified so easily (Mayer 2013b).

Urban agriculture and gardens have also been discovered as useful tools for neoliberal urban development and are incorporated in profit-oriented strategies of image improvement (Rosol 2012). A current research project on "Urban Agriculture Europe" concludes, for example, that urban agriculture is not only innovative and necessary for sustainable urban development, but can also play a vital role in upgrading districts (Lohrberg et al. 2015).

Chiara Tornaghi strongly criticizes the selective use of urban gardens as greenwashing tools in seemingly green and sustainable urban development projects (Tornaghi 2014). Likewise, Nathan McClintock, who emphasizes the contradictory nature of urban agriculture with radical, reformist and neoliberal aspects, points out that urban greening strategies often raise the price of real estate, which in the end creates exclusive spaces (McClintock 2013). Noah Quastel presents an example of this process in his analysis of Vancouver, where real estate companies use community gardens systematically to raise the value of certain districts (Quastel 2009). For critical research on urban greening projects and environmental programs as well as their consequences for marginalized groups Sarah Dooling uses the concept of "ecological gentrification". Her work on the displacement of homeless people from green spaces in the name of an ecological and sustainable city exemplifies the contradictions between ecological discourses and programs and the resulting intensification of social inequality (Dooling 2009).

Participatory politics and neoliberal governmentality

Another fundamental aspect of neoliberal restructuring processes is the increasing incorporation of non-state actors in decision-making processes and responsibilities of the (local) state. Erik Swyngedouw speaks in this context of "governing beyond the state", referring to the transformation of the institutional configurations of the local state and the externalization of (former) state tasks and functions (Swyngedouw 2005). One example is the outsourcing of green space maintenance to volunteer gardeners in Berlin. As Marit Rosol demonstrates, the inclusion of responsible residents and the activation of civic engagement does not aim to strengthen participatory rights of the population, but rather to shift responsibilities of the state to civil society organizations (Rosol 2012).

In her work on citizen participation, Rosol furthermore analyzes how uneven power relations are overlooked within these settings and how the content is limited to topics that can easily reach consensus. Despite a growing number of participatory processes, she sees hardly any real chances for civil society to participate in decision-taking (Rosol 2006). Erik Swyngedouw calls such participation processes "post-political" because they erase the genuine political space of disagreement and impede the articulation of deviant, conflictual, and alternative developments. With the formulation of seemingly general interests, like a competitive city, fundamental conflicts of interest and the different needs of residents are made invisible and conflicts externalized (Swyngedouw 2013).

The implementation of a neoliberal restructuring of the urban, with its consensus-oriented language of competitiveness, flexibility, and efficiency, requires new formal and informal regulations and steering mechanisms. Since it focuses on concrete mechanisms and acts of governing, the governmentality approach, developed by Michel Foucault, enables an analysis of these processes (see Rosol 2015, for example). The concept of governmentality, as a technique of governing, emerged in Foucault's later work on power. There he defines governing as conduct and control of individuals and collectives. This open and non-state centered understanding of governing sheds light not on political institutions, but on the acts, techniques, and everyday practices of governing. With this analytical framework, concrete processes of neoliberalization of the urban can be investigated in detail. According to Foucault, governing refers to structuring the possible field of actions of others. Consequently, the goal of governmentality is to influence and to manage, in order to create a specific framework of possibilities that encourages desired behavior and prevents what is not wanted. He stresses that this way of structuring the field of possibilities must not be misunderstood as absence of power. Neither do seemingly "soft" technologies of governing replace other more coercive ones. On the contrary, these different mechanisms of power are strongly intertwined; they are based on and complement one another (Foucault 2014 [1978]). For this reason, it is crucial to investigate not only soft regulations and indirect management, but also the direct and coercive suppression of certain actions.

Urban agriculture, gardens, and urban development in the Donaufeld

The cultivation of vegetables in the city is not unusual in Vienna. As was mentioned before, there are 630 farms in the city and 5,733 hectares – about 15% of the urban area – are used for agriculture (Municipality of Vienna 2014a).[3] The proportion of vegetables produced self-sufficiently in the city is also remarkable: in 2014 it was around 30%[4] (Chamber of Agriculture Vienna 2015). Similarly notable is the fact that the Municipal Department for Urban Agriculture owns one of the biggest agricultural holdings in Austria, with around 2,000 hectares of farmland.[5] In addition, there are 26,831 allotment gardens, a growing number of community gardens (currently about 70 gardens), various collective urban agriculture projects, and guerrilla gardens.[6]

One place of urban food production is the Donaufeld, an area of about 60 hectares located in Floridsdorf, the 21st district of Vienna just north of the Danube River. As one of the last large open spaces in the area, this exceptionally fertile land is still mainly used for vegetable cultivation. In 2005 the Donaufeld was defined as one of the key urban development areas, and in 2010 a guideline for the construction of 6,000 apartments, offices and infrastructure was compiled. The future neighborhood is presented as particularly sustainable, providing large green and open spaces and community gardens (Municipality of Vienna 2010). Between April 2014 and December 2015, a public participation process was carried out in order to "develop the Donaufeld together with the population" (Municipality of Vienna 2010: 3). The objective was to inform the residents about the developments in the area and to collect ideas and proposals for the project. To this end, information events and discussions were organized, including lectures by urban development experts, round tables with local politicians, and workshops on the future design of the Donaufeld (Municipality of Vienna 2015b). The construction project was highly contested locally. For years, neighbors and a local citizens'

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[3] The total city area is 41.495 hectares (Municipality of Vienna 2014a).

[4] Here it is important to stress that this is an average value, which is the result of an export-oriented agriculture, producing around 300% of the cucumbers consumed by the Viennese population (Chamber of Agriculture Vienna 2015).

[5] While they now sell their produce, the original purpose was to provide food for Viennese hospitals and children ́s homes and to secure an independent emergency food supply for the population of the city. With around 1.000 hectares organic farmland this holding is furthermore one of the biggest organic farms in Austria (Municipal Department for Urban Agriculture: www.wien.gv.at/umwelt/wald/landwirtschaftsbetrieb/index.html (accessed 13 Apr 2017).

[6] On allotment gardens, see www.kleingaertner.at/wir/vereine/ver_wien.htm Given the overall population of 1,814,225 people in 2015 (Statistik Austria 2016), the number of allotment gardens is relatively high. On community gardens, see www.gartenpolylog.org/gardens; on collective projects, see http://solila.blogsport.eu and www.wilderauke.at; on guerrilla gardens, see www.laengenfeldgarten.at (all sites accessed 13 Apr 2017).

initiative (Initiative Donaufeld) opposed the project.[7] Even a land squatting action took place in May 2013.

These processes make the Donaufeld an excellent research site for the analysis of participatory politics in urban development projects and the transformation of urban agriculture and gardens within a neoliberal restructuring of the urban.

Methodological approach

During the research, all relevant planning instruments of the Viennese municipal government and administration were analyzed (on the level of the municipality, as well as for the Donaufeld, in particular). That includes both the previous Urban Development Plan (2005) and the most recent one (2015), along with its Strategic Paper for Green and Open Spaces, the Smart City Framework Strategy (2014), the first Agrarian Structural Development Plan (2004) and its updated version (2014), as well as the Development Guidelines for the Donaufeld (2010).

Since governmental programs can never be implemented exactly the way they are planned, a thorough understanding of urban restructuring needs more than just the analysis of text material of (local) state institutions. For this reason, interviews with key actors in the urban development process of the Donaufeld were conducted in cooperation with Andrea*s Exner. Between July 2014 and June 2015, we interviewed: (1) members of the citizens initiative Donaufeld, which during the past years has been trying to preserve the local agriculture and green spaces; (2) the private planning company carrying out the participatory process; (3) a local politician and expert in the transformation of urban agriculture in the district; (4) a landscape architect and author of a study on productive urban landscapes in the Donaufeld; and (5) the representative of the Municipal Department for Urban Agriculture.

In order to shed light on the processes of negotiation, the patterns of argumentation, and the ways this urban development project was contested, participant observation and informal conversations were also carried out at two events of the participatory process in May and July 2015.[8]

Growth, image production, and participatory politics

The growth-first approach in urban agriculture and the garden as image product

"Vienna is growing" – this phrase is omnipresent nowadays. Apart from the desired economic growth, this refers mainly to the increasing number of people living in the city. Currently there is a population growth of around 30,000 people per year (Statistik Austria 2016), with predicted growth of 10% between 2014 and

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[7] See http://donaufeld.buergerprotest.at (accessed 13 Apr 2017).
[8] Notes taken during the participant observation are referred to as "transcript" in this paper.

2024 (Municipality of Vienna 2014b).[9] With the resulting demand for more housing, agricultural land is increasingly under pressure. At the same time, the preservation of green and agricultural spaces in the city is formulated as a goal of the Viennese Urban Development Strategy (e.g. in the Agrarian Structural Development Plan). What are the implications of this goal given increasing pressure on land for housing? How do these urban restructuring processes affect agricultural spaces and practices in Vienna? Which types of urban agriculture and gardens are preserved and supported through this process and which are forced out and disappear?

What can be observed in Viennese agriculture is what Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell call the "growth-first approach" (Peck and Tickell 2002). This is the result of developments occurring at two different political scales: the European Union and the municipality. Regarding the former, a study on the restructuring of European agriculture by Saturnino Jun Borras and Jennifer Franco shows how Europe is currently experiencing tremendous and rapid land concentration. They ascribe this development to the subsidy scheme of the EU Common Agricultural Policy among other things, which assigns subsidies per hectare of farmland, accelerating a process of "grow or cease" (Borras et al. 2013). This pressure is also experienced in Vienna. In the last 20 years, the number of agricultural holdings declined from 1,200 in 1995 to 630 in 2014 (Möhrs et al. 2014, Chamber of Agriculture Vienna 2015). A detailed look at the size of the farms that closed reveals that around 70% were small-scale farms of less than five hectares (Moehrs et al. 2014).

This restructuring process is not only the effect of EU regulation, but also of transformations on the local scale. One of the key planning instruments in this context is the Agrarian Structural Development Plan (AgStEP). It was first published in 2004 in the context of the Urban Development Plan by different departments of the municipality in cooperation with the Viennese Chamber of Agriculture. The aim of the AgStEP is to preserve the cultivation of agricultural land in the city. In order to achieve this, "agricultural priority areas" were defined which need to be protected. "Priority areas" include both large-scale agricultural spaces and smaller agricultural areas "with special local significance that offer ideal possibilities for development." All other agricultural spaces are defined as "other areas" which are not visualized in the maps of the AgStEP (Municipality of Vienna 2004).

Data on the loss of agricultural land in the city, presented in the updated version of AgStEP, demonstrate the significance of the plan. While in 1997 there were still 7,000 hectares of agricultural land, this was reduced to only 6,000 hectares in 2012. The fact that the loss of around 1,000 hectares of fertile land took place almost exclusively in the category of "other agricultural areas" and did not affect the "agricultural priority areas" is presented as evidence for the effectiveness

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[9] The population grew from 1,753,597 in 2013 to 1,814,225 in 2015 (Statistik Austria 2016).

of the AgStEP (Municipality of Vienna 2014a). With the implementation of the category "agricultural priority area", this planning instrument has the power to define what counts as urban agriculture worth protecting (namely a competitive and growth-oriented mode of production) and what other urban agricultural spaces and practices are defined as "other areas" that disappear not only from the maps and plans but eventually also from the city.

The Donaufeld is one of those "other areas" that were not declared a "priority area"; it is neither a large space on the fringe of the city, nor is it defined as "small area with special local significance". Despite the destruction of existing fields for new apartment buildings, the Donaufeld urban development project is presented with rural, green and agricultural imagery. The development guideline plans the creation of a sustainable neighborhood with large green and open spaces and community gardens (Municipality of Vienna 2010). One of the proposed projects is a green belt of 14 hectares where urban agriculture will also be possible. What the citizens' initiative criticizes, however, is that "urban agriculture" in this context does not refer to food production, but rather to neighborhood gardens. Furthermore the exact location and extent of the green belt is still yet to be determined (interview, 8 Jul 2014). A landscape architect and author of a study on productive urban landscape in the Donaufeld also raised doubts about its realization, since major parts of the area are still the property of private owners with no intention of selling their land to the municipality (interview, 26. Mar 2015).

Even though the creation of the green belt is not guaranteed in any way, it is already presented as a key element of the urban development area, in planning documents and during public presentations. An illustration in the development guidelines is an especially revealing example of the production of a green image for the new neighborhood. In the guidelines, the green belt is depicted in green, while existing fields and houses are sketched as whitish background (Municipality of Vienna 2010), the message being that green space will be created here. What is concealed by this design is that most of the areas depicted in white are actually vegetable fields and already green.

During the participatory process, different "green" activities were organized. A botanical walk on the topic of "edible Donaufeld" was carried out and a community garden was created. However, after only one gardening season (from spring to fall 2015) the garden was closed again. This shows how green qualities and activities were promoted and incorporated into the urban development process in a selective and temporary way. Furthermore, the community gardens that are planned can by no means be compared to the existing agricultural holdings, either in terms of size or yield. This means that the production of vegetables is increasingly being replaced by the production of garden imagery. The temporary community garden as well as the proposed agricultural projects in the green belt can therefore be classified as tools for the production of a desired green image rather than as spaces of actual food production. Finally, in contrast to the currently

existing agricultural holdings, the planned urban agricultural projects, as well as the temporary community garden, are based on unpaid volunteer work. In the analysis of how the neoliberal restructuring of the urban affects agricultural spaces and practices in the Donaufeld, the reliance on volunteer labor is consequently another key element. This leads to the second research question on the deployment of participatory politics in urban development projects and the role of urban agriculture and gardens within such processes.

Participation as a neoliberal technology of governing

Apart from the creation of a new sustainable neighborhood, the participation of the population was declared a key goal in the development guideline (Municipality of Vienna 2010). For the analysis of the participation procedure, Michel Foucault's conceptual framework of governmentality is insightful. With this approach, it is possible to shed light on the concrete mechanisms and acts of governing that constitute neoliberal restructuring of the urban, enabling not only a close analysis of how certain conditions and practices are presented and accepted as normal, natural, and unchangeable, but also of how these are always contested (Rosol 2015).

In the Donaufeld, population growth is presented as an external constraint that forces the local state to promote the construction of new houses (transcript, 7 May 2015). Neither the constantly high vacancy numbers in Vienna nor the possibility of using spaces like large-scale parking lots or one-story shopping malls for the creation of apartment buildings was considered in this context. With the population increase and the definition of the Donaufeld as a land reserve (Municipality of Vienna 2010), a fixed and seemingly unchangeable framework was produced, one in which urban development must be realized. This predefined setting, with its limited options of action, was visualized during the participatory process in a public workshop on building density. With wooden toy blocks symbolizing the future buildings, participants were asked to discuss the most suitable location of the houses in terms of density. Neither the presence nor the size or quantity of the blocks were at issue, but only *how* they could be arranged (transcript, 7 May 2015). With this activity the participants were placed in the role of planners who have to deal with a fixed framework of possibilities. Highly political questions on urban development were thereby reduced to mere technical and seemingly socially neutral problems – how high, how dense, how many. Nevertheless, during the activity, some of the participants questioned the supposedly natural pressure to grow and criticized any form of construction at the expense of fertile soil, and instead suggested parking lots and shopping malls as possible construction sites. In doing so, they questioned the presented frame of the possible and challenged the naturalization of agricultural lands as building reserves.

Another key element of neoliberal restructuring is the practice of "governing beyond the state," which refers to the increasing incorporation of private actors in processes of urban development. In the case of the Donaufeld,

private planning companies not only worked out the development guidelines (in cooperation with the municipality), but also carried out the participation process. In an interview with the planning company, staff members reported that one advantage of having a private, externally contracted actor implement the participatory process was that participants would perceive them to be a neutral intermediary. The planning company presents itself as an interface and voice between the public and the municipal government (interview, 6 Feb 2015). Since the planning company does not have any decision-making power in urban development questions, it is in a position of mediator, informing the population about new developments without being responsible for those, and passing on ideas and concerns of the residents to the local state. In this position as organizer and contact point, however, most of the critique and frustration about the development project was directed towards the planning company, even though politicians were present at some events. Thus a buffer was created between the population and political decision-makers which could absorb potential resistance.

As Georgina Blakeley points out in her work on participation procedures in Barcelona and Manchester, the institutions of the (local) state have not lost power despite an increasingly pluralistic governance setting and the growing number of actors involved. While the state still holds a pivotal position in these processes, there is a transformation rather than transfer of power. Therefore, a growing number of participatory events does not result in more possibilities for non-state actors to take part in decision-making processes (Blakeley 2010). During the participation procedure in the Donaufeld, participants frequently voiced their concern about how much they can actually influence the planned developments (transcripts, 7 May and 2 Jul 2015). In the course of the numerous information and discussion events, the construction project was criticized many times, but the question of whether it should be realized at all, was never up for debate. As staff members of the planning company stressed in an interview, the participation procedure did not start at zero; the content and goals of the development guideline were already set. Consequently the objective of the participatory process was not to take decisions. As one staff member put it, "participation does not mean bottom-up democracy" (interview, 6 Feb 2015).

The goal was rather to inform the residents and to invite them to formulate ideas and recommendations for the new urban development area (ibid.). Therefore participants were asked to share their suggestions at the events and on an internet blog. A summary of their ideas and proposals can be found in the final report of the participatory process (see Municipality of Vienna 2015b). While the main concern of the participants was the implementation of the green belt and the preservation of green and agricultural spaces, they also called for more influence of citizens on particular planning steps. These demands, however, are not binding in any way, but serve only as recommendations to the municipal administration which decides if some of them will be implemented and, if so, in which way (interview, 6 Feb 2015).

Klaus Selle uses the term "particitainment" in order to analyze participation procedures that are presented as opportunities to take part in urban development questions, but which do not offer any real possibilities to influence these processes (Selle 2011). Both the incorporation of non-state actors and the activation of civic engagement can be understood as key elements of a neoliberalization of the urban (Rosol 2012). In the Donaufeld, the title of the participation process — "Developing the Donaufeld together" — indicates already that participation does not necessarily refer to decision-making power, but to the activation of residents and the mobilization of volunteer work. In the course of the participatory process, people were encouraged to build outdoor furniture for the new meeting place in the Donaufeld (without getting paid for it), to work (for free) in the temporary community garden and to spend many (unpaid) hours at discussion events. Whoever does not have the time to participate in the numerous events is excluded from this process. This kind of *particitainment* can also be understood as a strategy to weaken critique and resistance by keeping neighbors and local activists busy.

What needs to be considered in a discussion of participatory processes in general, as well as in the the case of the Donaufeld, is that seemingly "soft" technologies of governing did not replace disciplinary technologies of power. On the contrary, as Foucault points out in his work, different mechanisms of power are intertwined and are based on and complement each other (Foucault [1978] 2014). Likewise, in the Donaufeld, there was not only soft regulation and indirect guidance, but some actions were also directly and forcefully suppressed. One example is the eviction of the land squatting action of SoliLa! (Solidary Agriculture) in 2013. In May of that year, students, peasants, and urban activists started to cultivate 1.5 hectares of fallow land in the Donaufeld in order to start a non-commercial urban agriculture project. With the intention to reclaim the city, to preserve agricultural lands and to take urban planning (back) into their own hands, they dug small fields, planted seedlings, and invited the neighbors to join. This attempt to create an open space for exchange and collective food production was brutally stopped after ten days, when the police evicted them.[10] This example shows how the local state accepts and promotes only certain kinds of participation and activity on the part of the population in the Donaufeld, while those urban agriculture projects that are not desired are faced with repression (Mayer 2013b). Besides the eviction of the land squatting action there were also court cases against farmers who refused to sell their lands for construction projects, which demonstrates that local restructuring processes cannot be realized solely by participation procedures.

Conclusion: Contradictions and resistance

So how does the neoliberalization of the urban influence agricultural spaces and practices in Vienna and especially in the Donaufeld? In the context of a

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[10]   See solila.blogsport.eu/presse/presseaussendungen/ (accessed 13 Apr 2017).

growing city with its demand for housing, agricultural lands are increasingly under pressure. At the same time, the preservation of urban agriculture and gardens is presented as an important development goal of the city. Agriculture and gardens in Vienna are therefore affected by two developments that can be understood as key elements of a neoliberal restructuring of the urban.

First, there is a selective preservation and promotion of competitive agricultural holdings and a tendency of "grow or cease" (Borras et al. 2013). This development is driven by regulations on the level of the European Union (like the Common Agricultural Policy with its subsidies according to the size of the farm), as well as by local planning instruments (like the Agricultural Structural Development Plan). With the objective of preserving agricultural holdings "with ideal development possibilities," this planning document determines which kind of urban agriculture is defined as worth preserving and which other forms and practices progressively disappear from the city. Second, urban agriculture and gardens are utilized systematically as an image product in urban development projects. In the Donaufeld it is the proposed green belt with its community gardens and urban agriculture projects that create a particular green and rural character for the future neighborhood. The opening of a community garden for a single season is only one example among many that illustrates how the production of food is increasingly replaced by the production of garden images.

These developments are neither natural nor socially neutral, as discussed in the second part of this paper. Using the conceptual framework of governmentality, it is possible to analyze how participatory politics were used in the Donaufeld urban development project as neoliberal technologies for governing, and the role that urban gardens play in these processes. The five most important aspects are as follows:

(1) With the current population growth presented as an external restraint and the definition of the Donaufeld as land reserve for construction, a seemingly unchangeable framework of possibilities was created. Consequently, highly political questions of urban development were reduced to merely technical problems. Nevertheless, many of the participants criticized the supposedly natural and inevitable transformation of agricultural land into buildings, and pointed to the large amount of vacant apartments and to one-story shopping-malls as possible construction sites.

(2) There is an increasing incorporation of private actors in urban development processes, leading to a trend of "governing beyond the state" (Swyngedouw 2005). In the Donaufeld, both the preparation of the development guidelines, as well as the realization of the participation process, were outsourced to a private planning company. Without any decision-making power, and as seemingly neutral facilitator between local state and population, the company serves as a buffer against possible resistance.

(3) Participation does not refer to the inclusion of the public in decision-making processes. Even though the participants' ideas and suggestions collected during the participation process were published in the final report, they are still not binding in any way and serve only as recommendations to the local state.

(4) The activation of the population during the participatory process is a key element of neoliberal urban development. For the realization of the proposed urban agriculture projects in the Donaufeld (as well as the temporary community garden), the mobilization of volunteers is needed. With its numerous activities, the participation process can also be understood as a means to weaken critique and resistance by keeping neighbors and local activists busy.

(5) Seemingly "soft" technologies of governing in no way replaced disciplinary mechanisms of power, but these two modes of power instead built on and complemented each other. The eviction of the land-squatting action of SoliLa! is just one example that demonstrates how the neoliberal restructuring of the urban cannot be realized through public participation alone.

Understanding the neoliberalization of the urban as a process also requires shedding light on the inherent contradictions and resistance within these developments. Participation processes in general, as well as the one in the Donaufeld, are never operations that are centrally planned and implemented in a linear way, but rather are contested processes. Jane Tooke shows how participants always find ways to reinterpret and transform these technologies of governing: "Governments … face an inevitable risk that citizens will shift the parameters of that political space in unexpected ways" (Tooke 2003: 237). Therefore participation always simultaneously means being governed and resisting this governance (ibid.). There is always resistance and unintended side effects both within and outside formal participation procedures (see e.g. Blakeley 2010, Lanz 2013). Likewise, it would be wrong to present the participatory process in the Donaufeld as a program that only pacified and de-politicized. On several occasions, the events were interrupted by interventions, statements, or the distribution of flyers by participants. To give one example: during the workshops on density, the wooden blocks symbolizing the future buildings were pushed off the round table with vegetables from the Donaufeld. Participants used the space to raise their own topics, demands, and critique, to network and to start a process of organization outside of the set framework. The participatory process was thereby partially reclaimed, reinterpreted, and used for the repoliticization of urban development questions.

Analyzing public participation procedures as contested processes also calls for a discussion of the possible directions of this politicization. Even though mostly *white*, long-term Viennese were involved in the protest against the construction project, it was still a heterogeneous group. While some participants focused their critique on the destruction of urban agriculture, others pointed out the lack of democratic ways to participate in decision-making processes. Aside from classic

"NIMBYs" (not-in-my-back-yard) who felt their quality of life threatened by more people jogging in the parks, there were also openly racist and xenophobic opinions raised. According to them, the biggest problems in the Donaufeld are foreign investors and new people moving to the city. This illustrates that criticism of construction projects as well as the preservation or activation of urban agriculture and gardens are neither homogenous nor necessarily emancipatory, which calls for a detailed and thorough analysis.

For emancipatory urban politics, it is not enough to protect agricultural lands against construction and to cultivate vegetables in beautiful community gardens. Urban agricultural initiatives and the activation of volunteer labor can become effective instruments of urban neoliberalization if people do not look beyond their garden beds. At the same time, protest against the construction of apartment buildings on agricultural lands can easily turn into a reactionary and local patriotic discourse of "Vienna for the Viennese". For this reason it is crucial not only to question the seemingly natural framework of possibilities that is presented within a neoliberal urban development and to shed light on the interests, processes and technologies of governing within these processes, but also to link different spheres of urban politics. For a true repoliticization of urban politics, it is necessary to connect, for example, struggles for the preservation of agricultural lands with the struggles for access to housing for everyone. In order to counter the dominant process of neoliberalization, alliances and the collective organization of different groups are urgently needed. Especially the active cooperation between more established initiatives and those groups that are faced with discrimination and repression is essential. This is the only way to destabilize the exclusionary restructuring of the urban and to continue building in its cracks a city for all.

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