The Commons
Participatory urban neighborhood, Vienna, Austria

Main authors

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Summary by the jury

Located in the city of Vienna, Austria, the project identifies a set of rules for establishing a sustainable urban neighborhood based on democratic principles of governance, communication, and participation. Instead of proposing a pre-designed urban tissue, the strategy tenders a collective pattern based on a grid of gardens that structure the area. The gardens function as a framework for physical and social development, outlining a porous fabric with low environmental impact and a collective space – re-programmable in time, while furthering ownership capacity-building. The area will first operate as an urban park; a matrix of gardens is inserted around existing trees. Gradually the district grows around these gardens and the shared open space. The approach establishes a minimally-invasive intervention that will develop over time according to the needs of the society at every step – a continuous process of small scale growth and appropriation, with autonomy at every stage.

Appraisal by the jury

The jury especially commends the focus on questions of procedures, including stakeholder participation and its effects on physical form. Particularly interesting is the changing relationship between built and un-built areas that is constantly negotiated and re-negotiated in a process that engages a range of relevant parties. The proposal offers a method for a step-by-step urban densification, combining both bottom-up/top-down and formal/informal practices – to create an urban commons.

Project data

Context Landscape, urban design and infrastructure
Client ARE (Austrian Real Estate)
Background Private commission
Planned start January 2016

Further authors

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The Commons (Garten STADT) vs City Block: we look for a human and local scale based district.

Porosity, not only in the urban fabric, but also in the low ecological footprint.

Flexibility, which guarantees social and economic balance, where everyone can find what they need.


Game-board: Democratic urbanism, in which different actors and needs can take place.

Diversity of urban scenarios is possible in the common space, thanks to urban-post-it appropriation.

Pedestrian area based on alternative mobility. Peripheral road traffic, minimized transport demand.

Allmende: collective, reprogrammable, low-maintenance open space for the community.