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Abstract: Urban Agriculture (UA) is practiced around the globe (Biel, 2016), supported and advocated by a diversity of actors ranging from local neighbourhood groups to supra-national bodies (e.g. FAO, 2014; Mougeot, 2006; UN Habitat, 2014). As such, UA must be understood as one of planning's current "models-in-circulation" (Roy and Ong, 2011), characterised by the traveling of ideas and policies in a globalised world (Healey, 2013). UA operates at a diversity of scales and engages a variety of actors. Yet, as a model in circulation, only some of the ways in which UA is practiced are presented globally and influence the way UA is perceived, thus disregarding UA's highly specific manifestations in different social/economic/political contexts around the world. We use a critical transnational perspective for a qualitative analysis of collective (rather than individual) UA practices happening in small-scale, left-over public spaces in three very different locations in Latin America and Europe (Bogotá and Medellín in Colombia, and Vienna in Austria) to get insights into how policies and initiatives inspired by typical models-in-circulation affect the situation on ground. The analysis shows that the reliance on such models can act like a filter impeding the acknowledgment that actors, objectives and barriers for UA practices are more complex, nuanced and multifaceted than those which a simple model can contain. As a result the benefits UA can yield are only partially attained. The conceptual device of translocal is subsequently formulated as one conveying the traveling of ideas locally, which can enrich and root models in circulation.

# 1 Urban Agriculture: Models in Circulation from a Critical Transnational Perspective

## 2 Abstract

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19 subsequently formulated as one conveying the traveling of ideas locally, which can enrich and  
20 root models-in-circulation.

21

22

## 23 **1 Introduction**

24 Urban Agriculture (UA) is practiced around the globe (Biel, 2016; Drescher *et al.*, 2006),  
25 supported and advocated by a diversity of actors ranging from local neighbourhood groups to  
26 supra-national bodies. Even though UA is described as a global phenomenon, its manifestations  
27 in different social/economic/political contexts of the world are highly specific, driven by  
28 diverging values, locations, scales and historic trajectories. These differences partly manifest in a  
29 highly specified nomenclature, describing urban gardening, urban allotments, guerrilla gardening  
30 and many more as types of UA, a term that comprises all forms of food growing in cities  
31 (McClintock, 2013). The benefits attributed to UA practices, such as sustainable livelihoods, food  
32 security, re-claiming and self-management of the city, development of local identity and  
33 community empowerment (Barriga Valencia and Leal Celis, 2011; Biel, 2016; Cantor, 2010;  
34 Certomà, 2011; Drescher *et al.*, 2006; Ernwein, 2014; Gómez Rodríguez, 2014; Purcell and  
35 Tyman, 2015; Turner *et al.*, 2011; ), have led to widespread endorsement within a multitude of  
36 policy recommendations and urban planning frameworks promoting them (FAO, 2014; Mougeot,  
37 2006; UN Habitat, 2014). As such, the several manifestations of UA must be understood as some  
38 of urban planning's current "models-in-circulation" (Roy and Ong 2011). These models are  
39 vehicles for ideas and policies that travel globally, in which differences of spaces and practices as  
40 well as their cultural/social/economic/political contexts seem to be disregarded, despite the  
41 recognition that even in a globalised world ideas need specific adaptation to the local context  
42 (Thrift, 2000). Much has been written on urban planning models and the way these have become  
43 globalised tools to understand and develop cities (e.g. Edensor and Jayne, 2012; Parnreiter,  
44 2011). Within this perspective, Roy (2011) critically analyses issues such as power imbalances  
45 and ethics, which should be one of the points of departure for establishing urban policies but are

46 hardly satisfactorily addressed in these models-in-circulations. In her studies, she promotes a  
47 critical transnational perspective, which pays attention to the values and power differentials along  
48 which ideas are travelling, as “some ideas are more likely to travel than others, some translations  
49 are more often made than others, and some agents are more prone to be senders than others”  
50 (Parnreiter, 2011:419).

51  
52 The very different circumstances within which UA is practiced around the world raise serious  
53 questions, which are not sufficiently addressed in the current research and policy environment,  
54 regarding the local applicability of such models-in-circulation. In particular, a wealth of literature  
55 promotes UA as a global solution to many problems (i.e. for food provision and poverty  
56 alleviation as well as for empowerment and community cohesion), but a lack of critical analysis  
57 (Badami and Ramankutty, 2015; Ernwein, 2014) prevents a more in-depth investigation based on  
58 questions such as: to what extent are current models-in-circulation relevant locally? Which power  
59 relations are embedded in their adoption? Do these power relations influence the fruition of UA’s  
60 full benefits? Capitalising on three studies based on extensive field investigation in Bogotá and  
61 Medellín, Colombia, and Vienna, Austria, the article analyses collective UA practices in very  
62 different contexts, focusing in particular on governance connected to urban planning and how the  
63 situation on ground is addressed by policies and initiatives that typical models-in-circulation  
64 encourage. We do so by drawing on the notion of critical transnationalism, an analytical approach  
65 that uses one place to interrogate the other (Roy, 2004). In order to frame the analysis, following  
66 the methodology section, two models of UA promoted globally, particularly within the aspects  
67 that relate to planning and governance, are outlined. This outline is based on literature review.  
68 Medellín, Bogotá and Vienna are then presented as case studies where these models were  
69 applied. Finally, an analysis based on transnational critique is developed in the discussion

70 section. The analysis suggests that an approach termed herein *translocal* should be adopted to  
71 mitigate problems that may arise when models-in-circulation are used uncritically.

## 72 **2 Materials and Methods**

73 The article brings together data from three pre-existent qualitative research projects; one  
74 analysing emerging collective forms of UA (as opposed to existing, strongly regulated allotments  
75 in which UA is practiced individually or at an household level) in Vienna (Schwab and Rode,  
76 2015), the others investigating open spaces in informal settlements in the Colombian cities of  
77 Medellín (Schwab, 2015) and Bogotá (Hernandez-Garcia, 2016). This material is summarised in  
78 Table 1 and underpins the discussion section, providing the evidence base upon which we  
79 demonstrate that a transnational approach to UA is a “double-sided sword” (Eizenberg et al.,  
80 2016: 101) with side-effects for the disadvantaged. Table 1 gives an overview of the three  
81 research projects, their aims, main findings and methodology. It also shows their different urban  
82 scales: In Vienna, the whole city was investigated, whereas in Medellín and Bogotá only one low  
83 income settlement, i.e. Comuna 13 and Potosi respectively, formed the spatial backdrop for the  
84 research projects. Each case study was undertaken independently and with distinct objectives,  
85 hence the differences in number of interviews, sampling, questions asked and approaches  
86 generally. Their individual outcomes show common themes, which are the basis for the analysis  
87 presented here. In spite of their differences, case studies can be analysed through the critical  
88 transnational lens (Roy, 2004 and 2011), which differs from comparative analysis in as much as  
89 it does not require congruence in parameters but focuses on dynamics of social relations and  
90 governance systems that can be studied at different scales.

91 A critical transnational perspective (Roy, 2004 and 2011) enables the investigation and analysis  
92 of one place through experiences gathered in another setting, thus allowing for further analysis on  
93 the power imbalances integrated in the processes of adopting the idea of collective UA; power  
94 imbalances such as those that surface whenever models are presented as solutions from the top  
95 down, to actors who have limited power for negotiation. In this way, although comparability of  
96 the study parameters is low, we understand our cases to offer “transferability” (Groat and Wang,  
97 2002:38) instead of generalisability, and posit that findings can be transferable and cases  
98 explanatory for other cities with similar contexts. Each of the three cities in our studies is  
99 integrated in the circuit of policy tourism and is in itself a model. Outcomes of the different  
100 studies allow for the identification of common themes manifesting across the study areas. We are  
101 therefore using the cases from the three different cities as “instrumental” cases (Silverman, 2010:  
102 139), i.e. with the expectation that insights from our cases provide transferability and help the  
103 building of theory. We understand this as a way to acknowledge UA sites as “real places within  
104 society and space, [which] are not exempt from power relations and issues within and beyond  
105 their own boundaries” (Ernwein, 2014: 79).

106

107 We focus on civil society actors involved in UA practices and highlight values and meanings  
108 attached to these practices to address the questions of power imbalances in a transnational  
109 context. We see transnational dynamics not limited to the institutional domain (i.e. policy  
110 tourism), but also present in the way people engaging in UA are inspired by examples and  
111 discourses in other places. Semi-structured interviews (with 12 people in Potosi and 46 in  
112 Comuna 13, 10 of these touched upon the topic of UA), lasting between 30 and 60 minutes were  
113 conducted. In Potosi, observations and semi-structured interviews were conducted with  
114 community leaders of the *Junta de Accion Comunal* (JAC) (Community Action Group), staff

115 members of the community school called “*Instituto Cerros del Sur*” and residents. Members of  
 116 the JAC (two) as well as school staff (two) were adult males between 30 and 50 years of age,  
 117 most of whom were also long-time residents of the neighbourhood. Additionally, eight residents  
 118 were interviewed, all of whom were women aged between 30 and 50 years all with children.  
 119 Questions tackled UA practices in the *barrio* and their impact in social and spatial terms, social  
 120 and community life as well as the residents’ opinion of and role in it. In Comuna 13,  
 121 walkthroughs and semi-structured interviews were conducted with community leaders, residents  
 122 and planning experts. Interviewees were adults and senior citizens, the overall sample consisted  
 123 of 29 men and 17 women, the gender ratio being influenced by the dominance of males in two of  
 124 the groups of respondents (i.e. community leaders, planning experts). Groups of interviewees  
 125 were selected purposefully, but sampling of individual followed snowballing. Questions revolved  
 126 around socio-spatial practices and the effect of an ongoing governmental upgrading initiative  
 127 (PUI). Five of the ten people touching upon the topic of UA were female, five male. In the case  
 128 of Vienna, interviews with gardeners appearing in newspapers or social media as well as the  
 129 associations’ bylaws and mission statements were used as primary data. In all cases, qualitative  
 130 content analysis (Mayring, 2000), both with an inductive and deductive approach, has been  
 131 employed to the resulting transcripts or field notes to identify common topics and concerns.

132 *Table 1 – Summary of aims, methods and findings for the pre-existent three case studies*

Details of case study and summary of results	
<b>Location</b>	Vienna, citywide
<b>Research timeline</b>	Fieldwork conducted between August 2013 and May 2014. Data has been updated in spring 2016 for the present article.
<b>Aims</b>	Analysis of: locations of community gardens;



	<p>profile and motivations of gardeners;</p> <p>institutional response.</p>
<b>Methods used</b>	Site analysis and document analysis (e.g. bylaws and mission statements of community gardening associations, newspaper reports, planning documents).
<b>Results</b>	<p>Community gardens are located in densely built up areas in the city. Gardens are small in size, mostly publicly owned and fenced.</p> <p>Gardeners have an educated, creative class background. Associations are started by existing groups of friends/acquaintances. Motivations are the enhancement of local communities, productive leisure time and active improvement of the urban environment.</p> <p>Urban gardening is highly institutionalised and explicitly welcome in urban development/planning strategies.</p>
<b>Location</b>	Comuna 13 (informal settlement), Medellín, Colombia
<b>Research timeline</b>	Fieldwork conducted between June 2011 and January 2012.
<b>Aims</b>	<p>Analysis of:</p> <p>different types of open space and their daily use;</p> <p>role of open spaces, established in an on-going upgrading programme for the improvement of spatial justice;</p> <p>actors and roles in the production of space.</p>
<b>Methods used</b>	Walkthroughs with community actors, mental maps workshops with residents, semi-structured interviews with residents, municipality officials and experts.
<b>Results</b>	<p>UA is mostly practiced at the individual level surrounding people's homes or in left over landscapes and micro-spaces; UA is an important contribution to livelihood and a link to rural cultural traditions for the most vulnerable members of the community. Recently, UA has been introduced by the municipality as an activity in which groups of elderly people can engage with the support of social workers.</p> <p>Growing food is perceived as a practice for very low-income households with a rural background, as opposed to those with an urban lifestyle and is therefore associated with a stigma.</p> <p>Use of public open spaces to practice UA is negotiated with the community</p>

	leaders.
<b>Location</b>	Potosi (informal settlement), Bogotá, Colombia
<b>Research timeline</b>	Fieldwork conducted between May 2015 and May 2017
<b>Aims</b>	Analysis of: transformation of public space; new uses and appropriations; transformation of actors and their role.
<b>Methods used</b>	Observation, mapping and semi-structured interviews with residents
<b>Results</b>	<p>UA practices in Potosi are about 20 years old, starting from a private and in-house cultivation of edible crops and fruit, which was gradually extended to open spaces.</p> <p>Motivations for such practices are mainly related to the contribution that edible crops can give to the household financial condition. However, these include a higher connection with nature and the preservation of a link with rural cultural traditions.</p> <p>NGOs built on these motivations to establish three community gardens, one of which is active in promoting and sustaining the practice with students and the community generally.</p> <p>The other two gardens are struggling to maintain because of a lack of resources since the NGO left.</p>

133

### 134 **3 Urban Agriculture models-in-circulation**

135 Planning is increasingly characterised by a global attitude and the traveling of ideas (Healey,  
 136 2013), often in a “one-size-fits-all” manner. UA practices and spaces of production are  
 137 particularly suitable to test Roy’s claim (2011) that transnational planning models lack sensitivity  
 138 to local contexts. UA practices have been portrayed – and understood globally - as multi-  
 139 functional, addressing issues such as political activism (Certomà and Tornaghi, 2015),  
 140 community making (Holland, 2004), environmental awareness (Travaline and Hunold, 2010), the

141 preservation of lost ecological memories (Barthel et al., 2013) as well as biodiversity, resilience  
142 and food security.

143 Many urban planning frameworks, policies and programmes globally integrate UA, referring to  
144 such models in terms of stated objectives (e.g. healthy food, subsistence and community  
145 building) and modalities for implementation. According to the context, there is, both in literature  
146 and in practice, a tendency to emphasise specific aims. UA for subsistence, and related policies,  
147 is a model predominately sought for Latin America, whereas the ‘right to the city’ is another  
148 model which is much debated in Europe. Depending on each model-in-circulation, policies,  
149 institutional attitudes and responses vary. It is, however, worth noting how the two models-in-  
150 circulation discussed herein are inevitably the result of a process of simplification. In fact, there  
151 are elements of both in each case study presented in this article and in each of the two globalised  
152 areas of the world. Discourses surround the interpretation of both notions, which makes it  
153 important to recognise the difficulty in applying them universally.

154 What follows is a brief recount of these two models together with a brief description of the  
155 European and Latin American contexts, substantiated by case studies.

### 156 **3.1. The transnational model-in-circulation for subsistence**

157 Debate on UA in Latin America focuses predominantly on subsistence. A vast body of research  
158 from international organisations promote urban food growing (and the development of specific  
159 policies) as a fundamental form of livelihood and food security for many households. There are  
160 critics to this view (see Badami and Ramankutty, 2015; Webb, 2011), lamenting the inaccuracy  
161 and the inconsistency of data on which many studies in support of these assumptions are based.  
162 In spite of the need for further investigation on its real effectiveness, the subsistence scope and  
163 need for UA in Latin America is still universally regarded as key to socio-economic

164 development. For this purpose, official reports by FAO (2014), RUAF (RUAF, n.d.) and IDRC  
165 (Mougeot, 2006), showcase community projects as a successful format to engage local  
166 communities and provide sustainable livelihood options.

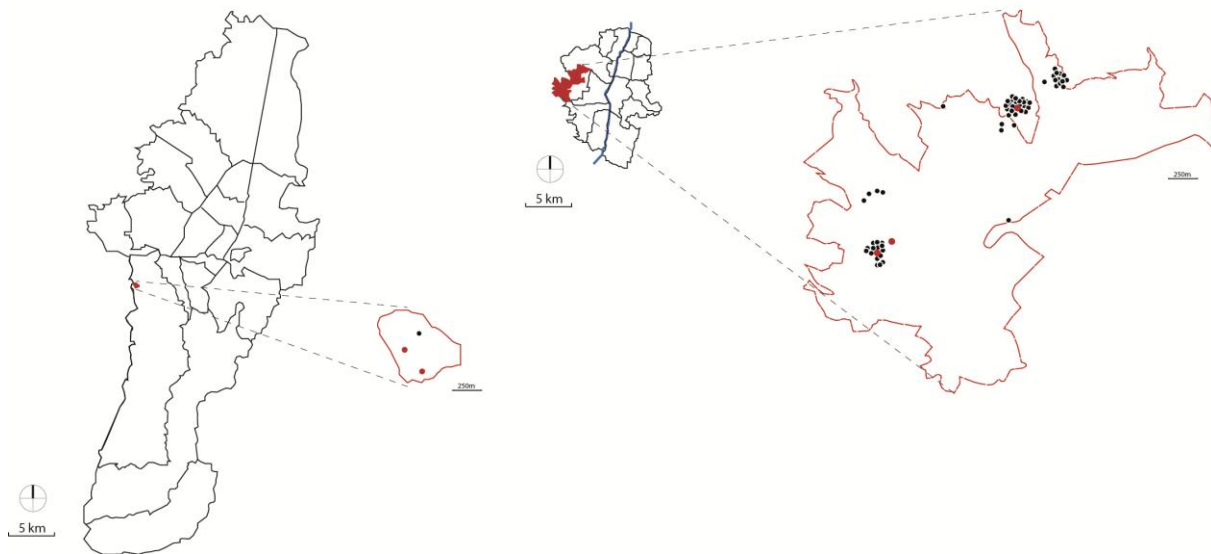
### 167 *3.1.1. The cases of Comuna 13, Medellín and Potosi, Bogotá (Colombia)*

168 The stated aims for UA in Colombia conform to those for Latin America (Barriga Valencia and  
169 Leal Celis, 2011; Cantor, 2010; Gómez Rodríguez, 2014), targeting low income groups such as  
170 those migrating from rural areas, sometimes as a consequence of forced displacement – i.e.  
171 guerrilla and paramilitary groups (Hermi, 2011). In this sense, UA as a household activity can be  
172 traced since the 1950s and 1960s, when a major migration process from rural to urban areas  
173 started. From 2004 onward, a series of UA top down initiatives (e.g. *Bogotá sin Hambre*,  
174 *Agricultura Urbana: Sostenibilidad ambiental sin indiferencia para Bogotá* and *MANA -*  
175 *Programa de Mejoramiento Alimentario y Nutricional* and *Ecohuertas Urbanas* in Medellín –  
176 see Gomez Rodriguez, 2014) promoted these practices, mainly by facilitating the implementation  
177 of community gardens. At present, UA still remains a practice of low income people, even  
178 though UA activities undertaken by other socio-economic groups are starting to appear.

179 As a consequence of top down initiatives mentioned above, observation sessions and  
180 walkthroughs by the authors, and interviews with residents show that Comuna 13 and Potosi  
181 present a mixture of spaces where food is cultivated by individual households and in community  
182 gardens. This is more evident in Potosi, where community gardens are three, as opposed to  
183 Comuna 13 with only one (see Table 2), and it is connected to the degree of commitment of local  
184 authorities and organisations to UA as form of subsistence. But the landscape of both settlements  
185 and interviews with residents suggest that, with the presence of many individual spaces used for

186 cultivation, UA is embedded in the cultural background of dwellers, thus going beyond the mere  
 187 subsistence as a motivation. Generally, observation and interviews suggest that the use of areas  
 188 surrounding people's homes serves three main purposes: a) establishing a claim over land, b)  
 189 satisfying basic needs for food and medicine, and c) expressing and creating aesthetic and  
 190 cultural values, all of which are important for identity-building. Maps of Bogotá and Medellín  
 191 (Fig 1) show the location of the neighbourhoods under investigation and the distribution of UA  
 192 spaces in them, with the ones shown in Figure 2 below highlighted in red. Table 2 summarise  
 193 their spatial characteristics.

194 *Figure 1 – Map of Bogotá (left) and Medellín (right) at the same scale. From both, the maps of*  
 195 *the case study sites (Potosi and Comuna 13) are enlarged, also at the same scale.*



196

197

198 *Table 2 - Summary of spatial characteristics of UA in Comuna 13 and Potosi*

Comuna 13 (Medellín)	Potosi (Bogotá)
----------------------	-----------------

<b>Total area</b>	700 ha	30 ha
<b>Number of inhabitants</b>	135,000	7,550
<b>Density inhabitants</b>	20,000 / km <sup>2</sup>	25,200 / km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Proportion of green areas</b>	approx. 10% of green public space plus 23% not built up space in risk zones or riverbeds. [Medellín: 3.8%]	8.13% [Bogota: 12.97%]
<b>UA spaces</b>	1 community garden, 3 public open spaces claimed for food growing, individual spaces for UA in 73 out of 160 spaces investigated.	3 community gardens in a total of 14 publicly usable green spaces in the area; many individual spaces for UA observed although not counted

199

200 Figure 2 displays examples from informal settlements in Medellín and Bogotá, which show how  
201 people use UA to establish claims over land, either on an individual level (see example 5 and 6  
202 from Comuna 13) or a more communal level (see example 2 “*Cerros del Sur*” and 3 “*Cocinol*”  
203 from Potosi), all while satisfying a basic need for food and medicine. A View of *Juan XXIII*  
204 neighbourhood in Comuna 13, Medellín, illustrates the impact of individual practices on the  
205 urban pattern (example 4). The examples also express the aesthetic and cultural values of the  
206 people engaged in UA. In example 1, the *Casa del Adulto Mayor*, a day-care centre for the  
207 elderly in Comuna 13, the municipality was the actor defining the aesthetic values at the same  
208 time as promoting communal activity over individual.

209 *Figure 2 – Images from Comuna 13 and Potosi to highlight UA’s manifold purposes*



210

### 211 **3.2. The transnational model-in-circulation for the right to the city**

212 The resurgence of UA practices in Europe is associated with a renewed interest of individuals and  
213 groups to the environmental, social and political aspects of urban life (Ioannou *et al.*, 2016). In  
214 this perspective, UA can be a vehicle to contest the flaws of current socio-economic  
215 arrangements, which have ultimately produced environmental damage and unjust distribution of  
216 resources. While traditional allotment gardens embody a more regimented form of urban  
217 gardening (Milbourne, 2012), in which the provision of dedicated space for this function is  
218 officially recognised and embedded in statutory urban plans, guerrilla gardening and community  
219 projects are practices in which space and vital resources are self-managed through alternative  
220 forms of regulation.

221 These forms of reclaiming urban land are recognised by some authors as an embodiment of the  
222 Lefebvrian ‘right to the city’ (Purcell and Tyman, 2015). In fact, social dynamics characterising  
223 community garden projects are concrete attempts to take back from central and local authorities,

224 the power of determination (of life, action, social arrangements, use of space, etc.)(McClintock,  
225 2014). This, in turn, transforms the urban landscape in ways that are not centrally determined  
226 through planning codes, with transformations needing negotiation between a diversity of actors.  
227 Some see this new mode of interaction between civil society and local government as “creative  
228 solutions” against decreasing public space and its blankness (Certomà, 2016), whereas others  
229 point out that for local authorities, the attractiveness of these community projects resides in the  
230 top-down attempt to move towards the devolution of public services and social assistance (see  
231 McClintock, 2014).

### 232 233 *3.2.1. The case of Vienna (Austria)*

234 In countries where the allocation of land to grow food in allotments is legally established but  
235 provision is declining, more informal UA practices have manifested with the use of small-scale,  
236 left-over open spaces for community gardens (Caputo *et al.*, 2016). The situation in Vienna  
237 shows similarities to this, in that community gardens receive growing interest also due to the  
238 limited availability of traditional allotments (Klein- or Schrebergärten). Community gardeners,  
239 however, are also driven by political and social motives.

240 The development of the first community garden in 2008 (Heigerleingarten) resulted in the  
241 establishment of the City’s urban gardening policy, which grants funding to UA projects if the  
242 site owner and the district council agree to its implementation and the gardeners are organised in  
243 an association. Current urban planning and development policies encourage the involvement of  
244 civil society into planning at the local level, with self-harvesting and community gardens  
245 explicitly welcome as a contribution to the high quality of life in Vienna and as testing ground for  
246 alternative city models (Häupl and Vassilakou, 2010: 58f) or recognizing its social, ecological



247 and economic relevance throughout the city (Urban Development Plan - STEP 2015). It is against  
248 this backdrop that the biggest share of contemporary community gardens rely on the procedures  
249 established and the funding possibilities outlined in the 2011 urban gardening policy of the  
250 municipality, leading to a proliferation of community gardens in the city's public spaces.  
251 Observations and document analysis show the strong institutionalisation of a movement that  
252 claims to explore political areas of action, albeit at the very local level of the neighbourhood. The  
253 Viennese situation exemplifies a way to embrace the right to the city model from the top, not  
254 necessarily as an attempt to pre-empt the most radical and subversive motivations driving  
255 community groups (McClintock 2014), but rather as a strategy to develop internal and external  
256 meaning for the city's quality of life.

257 Figure 3 shows examples from Vienna, which highlight some of their main characteristics, i.e.  
258 uniformity of organisation and aesthetic values, their use of public land and their location in left-  
259 over urban spaces (examples 1 *Gemeinschaftsgarten Juchgasse* , 2 *Gemeinschaftsgarten*  
260 *Arenbergpark* and 3 *Kistelgarten*). *Donaukanalgarten* (example 4) shares most of these  
261 characteristics, but is one of the few examples with no accessibility restrictions. A map shows all  
262 urban gardens, highlighting the four mentioned above in red. Tables 3 summarise spatial  
263 characteristics.

264 *Figure 3 – Images from Vienna (left) and position of community gardens in the city (right)*



265

266 *Table 3 - Summary of spatial characteristics of food gardens in Vienna*

Vienna	
<b>Total area</b>	40,600 ha
<b>Number of inhabitants</b>	1,797,337
<b>Density inhabitants</b>	4258.6 / km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Proportion of green areas</b>	45.5%
<b>UA sites</b>	68 community gardens

267

268 **4 Discussion:**

269 Data and interviews on urban food gardens in Bogotá, Medellín and Vienna, point to a diversity  
 270 of actors and a great variety of values and goals attached to UA practices. We also see a variety  
 271 of institutional responses to such practices. From a critical transnational perspective, however,  
 272 these practices are not “discrete and self-enclosed” (Ward, 2010: 479), but are part of a larger  
 273 network of spatial or political references which are employed by the different actors involved in  
 274 UA to frame their action. This way of framing UA is present both at the level of individuals, who

275 seek inspiration in practices from abroad and at the level of local governments, that seek policy  
276 advice.

277 The following sections discuss the main findings generated from the analysis of the results of  
278 each case study (see Table 1) in terms of networks of actors and side-effects of the reference  
279 models that underpinned top down initiatives.

280 A central idea to both UA models-in-circulation is that it encourages collective practice and  
281 community building. In the case of the subsistence model this is a means to an end (i.e.  
282 cultivation for subsistence and the development of organisational structures) (Cantor, 2010;  
283 Barriga Valencia and Leal Celis 2011; Gómez Rodríguez, 2014). In the case of the right to the  
284 city model it should facilitate inclusiveness and the development of a powerful bottom-up  
285 movement (Iaonnou *et al.*, 2016; Purcell and Tyman, 2015;). In both cases, the inclusion of  
286 marginalised groups in community projects is documented in many case studies (e.g. Gómez  
287 Rodríguez, 2014; Passidomo, 2016; Purcell and Tyman, 2015). These accounts expose the idea of  
288 a coherent community to be a problematic concept, in which cultural and social norms underlying  
289 such a concept are disregarded (Campbell, 2016) as much as the manifold actors that constitute a  
290 community, their different aims and their different power capitals. Investigating these may  
291 highlight how “appropriate” ways of use of public space are framed (Ernwein, 2014) and how  
292 specific ideas travel. These processes are a result of negotiations between different actors and  
293 therefore reflect the way society is organised (Madanipour, 2010), or in Lefebvre’s words:  
294 “(social) space is a (social) product” (1991: 26). This consequently highlights the need to look at  
295 how power operates in the urban sphere in different forms, for instance by exercise of decision  
296 making power or by the introduction of certain norms and values through hegemony or  
297 naturalisation.

#### 298 **4.1 Bogotá and Medellín: The community and benefits for subsistence**

299 As mentioned in section 3, UA in Bogotá and Medellín is mainly practiced by low income  
300 population with a rural background. While these practices were and still are to a large extent  
301 undertaken at an individual level, policy programmes such as *Bogotá Te Nutre* and *Ecohuertas*  
302 *Urbanas* in Medellín, together with NGOs and parts of the local community, have played a key  
303 role in instigating collective practices. A case in point are UA spaces in Potosi. In 2004, the NGO  
304 *Planeta Paz* (Peace Planet) started an ambitious UA project with the aim to access local  
305 knowledge, promote the idea of collectivism above individuality and empower the community.  
306 The project, however, did not last long after the NGO left (Cantor, 2010) and plots were either  
307 used for housing or became inaccessible to the public. In 2016, two powerful community actors,  
308 the *JAC* and the School, started another food garden in *Cocinol*, a central square that is as  
309 important for the identity of the neighbourhood as for its actual usability, together with a local  
310 NGO experienced in UA practices. There are, however, different concepts about what *Cocinol*  
311 should be. Residents state that: "... we prefer to see *Cocinol* closed with a fence and with gardens  
312 inside, than misused with illegal activities and insecure" (Interview Potosi Resident (PR) 1). At  
313 the same time, community leaders see UA in *Cocinol* serving environmental sustainability,  
314 cultural and artistic expression and political struggles, stating that they are "promoting the idea of  
315 *Cocinol* as being the cultural, environmental and social centre of the barrio" (Interview Potosi  
316 Community Leader (PCL) 1). We see in this example not only a diversity of actors with different  
317 power capitals, but also a mixture of motives: whereas the leaders tap into global discourses  
318 associated with UA practices, a dynamic frequently highlighted in context of UA and other social  
319 movement practices (e.g. Ernwein, 2014; Mayer and Boudreau, 2012; Smith and Kurtz, 2003),  
320 the local residents' motivation operates at a different level of concrete use-value.

321 A similar mixture of global and local discourses around UA is present in Medellín's Comuna 13.  
322 A western idea of modernity (Mignolo, 2011) has influenced how the cultivation of land is linked  
323 to poverty and disorder in contrast to urban cleanliness and an urban lifestyle. "There is always  
324 this idea that the city needs to be attractive, urban conduct... that in the city all are the same, so  
325 nobody can put their plants outside and if they do it has to be in a certain manner... so this idea  
326 of urbanity restrains freedom and identity" (Interview Expert (EX) 5).

327 So while generally UA is not a well-regarded use of open space in Comuna 13 for its association  
328 with poverty and rural lifestyles, it is accepted by residents as a means of self-help to meet basic  
329 needs (Interview CCL 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18). However, as only the most vulnerable residents  
330 of this community are engaged in UA practice, there is the need to seek support and permission  
331 when using communal space for it. An interview with a community leader in Comuna 13 reveals  
332 the important role of community leaders in helping people establish their plot in public space,  
333 "when they ask us, of course we agree immediately because planting beds [in public parks] can  
334 also be used for food, cabbage, onion." (Interview CCL 10). Thus, in an environment which is  
335 partly unregulated by government, people find alternative ways of regulation through unwritten  
336 rules and informal local governance. In it, hierarchy and personal relations play a central role, as  
337 much as values and (unwritten) norms. Such a complex set of relations, however, is difficult to  
338 capture in a generic idea of community.

339 There are some critical voices concerning the feasibility of UA for food security and poverty  
340 reduction in informal settlements (e.g. Badami and Ramankutty, 2015; Martellozzo *et al.*, 2014).  
341 The main argument concerns the space restraints in low income settlements to make UA  
342 productive at a scale that would impact substantially on food security. Data on the restricted size  
343 of sites for UA in Potosi and Comuna 13 confirm these doubts. These accounts show quantitative

344 difficulties when applying the UA for subsistence model in the low-income countries. Data from  
345 Potosi and Comuna 13, in addition, reveal qualitative challenges for establishing UA. We found  
346 that there is considerable stigma attached to UA practices which in turn reflects on how public  
347 spaces are used – or not – for growing practices. In some cases members of the community see  
348 UA as a practice that is of interest to some and not all (“... community gardens are a good idea,  
349 but not in places that belong to all of us...”) (Interview PR 6), hence they are not prepared to use  
350 public space for food growing purposes. Also, collective forms of UA have little tradition in  
351 these areas, despite people’s experience with self-management. Public authorities are concerned  
352 with poverty alleviation and frame UA practices following the predominant narratives of food  
353 production and community building, forgetting that shared values must be found, and  
354 subsequently used to promote UA practices that are relevant and feasible in the local context.

#### 355 **4.2 Vienna: Collective practices and inclusiveness**

356 The idea of a universal applicability of models-in-circulation opens the door for misconceptions  
357 and undue generalisations, which can be also found in the Viennese case study. Despite Vienna’s  
358 long history with urban food growing, e.g. in allotments, current community gardeners have  
359 taken inspiration from projects around the world, most notably from New York, Berlin and Paris  
360 (Sonnleitner, 2016), with arts initiatives taking on a pioneering role. Viennese community  
361 gardeners still tend to be found in educated and creative class milieus, where existing groups of  
362 friends are the point of origin for many initiatives (a situation highlighted also in other cities by  
363 e.g. Adams and Hardmann, 2014). Inspired by international examples, they explore political,  
364 social and ecological areas of action which serve the interests of their specific community. It is  
365 thus appropriate to state that the UA idea has travelled to Vienna through “forms of authoritative  
366 knowledge“ (Roy, 2011: 411) such as arts and that only people with certain social and cultural

367 capital have been able to tap into the inspiration offered by this transnational idea of UA. As  
368 document analysis shows, the right to the city is a point of reference for gardeners to frame the  
369 political dimension of their UA practices; it is interpreted as “taking the neighbourhood in our  
370 hands and turn it into something that meets our own requirements and ideas” (Interview Gardener  
371 (G) 1). In contrast to other UA practices linked to the right to the city, e.g. as documented by  
372 Purcell and Tyman (2015), Viennese gardeners do not belong to vulnerable populations and thus  
373 hardly address vital struggles for food security and access to fresh produce, and only few tackle  
374 processes of marginalisation, e.g. through intercultural gardens. Even though Viennese initiatives  
375 use alternative formulations, they tap into and are backed by the city’s development strategies  
376 and coalition programme and are in this respect congruent with established forms of civil society  
377 engagement that require certain rules and regulations. Contemporary interpreters of Lefebvre’s  
378 ideas in the context of urban gardening highlight that the right to the city should not be  
379 “enshrined into state law”, but must be kept alive through continuous struggle (Purcell and  
380 Tyman, 2015: 1133). Also other authors have reported on the weakening of emancipatory  
381 struggles through integration into bureaucratic structures (Mayer and Boudreau, 2012). It is thus  
382 legitimate to question the motivation of both the municipality and the gardeners for entering into  
383 such a peaceful co-operation. For the gardeners, this arrangement leads to high security and thus  
384 long term engagement, enabling the fulfilment of individual requirements. The government has  
385 recognised the contribution of UA to the high quality of life in the city and actively encourages it  
386 by offering “guidance, assistance, professional and financial support” (Stoik *et al.*, 2010: 4,  
387 authors’ translation). The narrative of the city’s high quality of life, thus, has a dual function, one  
388 targeted at the residents of the city and their contentment, the other feeding into the transnational  
389 circuit to demonstrate the city’s competitive quality of location. While the right to the city is  
390 commonly seen as emphasising the use value of urban space in contrast to furthering its exchange

391 value (Purcell and Tyman, 2015), the Viennese case shows the combination of the two through  
392 the linking of UA to the city's quality of life.

393 There are some critical voices highlighting that community gardening in Europe is used as a  
394 receptacle for rhetorical ideas of community and alternative lifestyles (e.g. Adams and Hardman,  
395 2014; Ernwein, 2014; Pudup, 2008), with gardeners pursuing individual goals through collective  
396 action. Also in Vienna, the reference to the right to the city is mainly rhetorical and must be  
397 understood in the context of a "culturalisation" (Reckwitz, 2012) of cities, in which people's  
398 creativity forms part of an overall urban 'aestheticisation' and commercialisation - a phenomenon  
399 also found in other cities (e.g. Eizenberg *et al.*, 2016; Rosol, 2010). The Vienna case shows the  
400 pursuit of individual goals through collective action to be not only an inherent challenge of  
401 sociality, but one of systemic dimension, in which the government is a central actor in forming  
402 the movement due to its local and transnational value. Whether the UA "trend" forms part of  
403 sustainable urban development or will be changed for another trend in the near future remains to  
404 be seen; in any case it will depend on whether a greater diversity of actors can be attracted.

#### 405 **4.3 From transnational to translocal**

406 The above examples do not contradict mainstream literature about the benefits of UA per se.  
407 They do, however, highlight that models-in-circulation in no way fit all contexts, but must be  
408 applied with attention to local power asymmetries. The above also justifies a rethinking of the  
409 term "critical transnationalism". Parnreiter (2011: 417) argues that the "strength of the  
410 transnationalism paradigm is its conceptual sharpness in grasping the relationships between  
411 multiple cross-border interactions and the "national"". In a similar vein, Roy (2011: 407)  
412 highlights that the global forces shaping this transnational travelling of ideas "are simultaneously



413 embedded in and transcend national systems of governance. They are constituted through borders  
414 and yet trespass across borders”.

415 The UA practices that are the focus of this article add yet another scale to this reflection. UA  
416 must be understood as a practice that is intrinsically defined by and transcends more local  
417 boundaries, namely these associated to the use of “rural” practices of cultivation in an urban  
418 context. As such, UA adds a more local analysis to capture the essence of such traveling ideas  
419 and what happens through them as they manifest in particular places. We understand *translocal*  
420 as a concept highlighting the need to critically analyse any cultural factor in the traveling of  
421 ideas. Especially in concepts dealing with agricultural practices and education systems,  
422 management of commons, ecology and food growing, there is the need to recognise the link  
423 between specific local ideas and manifestations and generic globalised models, which are not  
424 sufficiently captured in the idea of the nation/national borders, but are related to cultural or value  
425 systems. These can be grafted when relevant within an urban context if careful consideration is  
426 given to the way such elements are incorporated in urban policies and translated into a course of  
427 action.

428 Consequently, in the context of UA, we find the term ‘critical *translocalism*’ better adapted to  
429 address the different scales of the crossing of boundaries that are not limited to national borders.

430

## 431 **5 Conclusions**

432 Spitthöfer (2010) has argued that the pluralisation and individualisation of contemporary society  
433 needs to be taken into account within urban planning, by providing diverse and new types of  
434 spaces, e.g. spaces for collective UA. Investigations into the use value of spaces should act as a

435 point of departure, helping to optimise planning and sensitise planners. Our critical transnational  
436 reading of UA practices in diverse locations in Europe and Latin America has shown how in the  
437 traveling of ideas, the idea of a pluralised society *across the globe* is disregarded. While traveling  
438 ideas can provide inspiration, turning a blind eye on power imbalances in the adoption of such  
439 ideas prevents closer scrutiny of spaces' use value for a diverse *local* population. To prove it, the  
440 article has analysed three case studies, firstly considering the models-in-circulation taken as a  
441 reference to draw up local urban policies and initiatives (i.e. the subsistence model and the right  
442 to the city model). Secondly, with the support of primary and secondary sources, it ascertained  
443 that the models as implemented were corresponding to a conceptualisation of the socio-economic  
444 conditions these are supposed to address, which is too narrow and general to be effective.

445 Instead, the traveling of ideas can be made more effective through a context-specific examination  
446 of spaces' use value for a diversity of actors in order to find traces of those same ideas promoted  
447 in globalised models, often already existing in a form or another. The analysis of primary sources  
448 discussed above shows that ways in which UA practices were imported from the rural to the  
449 urban context, in the cases of Bogotá and Medellín, give an indication that such practices are not  
450 exclusively related to poverty but to cultural heritage and, therefore could be promoted more  
451 effectively as such. By the same token, a more nuanced conceptualisation of community, as  
452 argued in this article, could help to develop narratives to attract a greater diversity of actors and  
453 turn UA's strength as transnationally inspired bottom-up movement into a vehicle for the self-  
454 realisation of more diverse social groups. This is not only true for the two Colombian case studies  
455 but also for the Viennese case. There, an ambiguous policy linking local and transnational  
456 requirements creates an environment in which marginalised groups and the disadvantaged  
457 generally as actors that could benefit from UA practices, seem to attract less interest. In Vienna

458 too, internal (*translocal*) dynamics seem to be not as influential as the prevailing models-in-  
459 circulation which tend to simplify a complex reality.

460 Tailoring globalised ideas through a *translocal* analysis of dynamics on ground becomes  
461 therefore imperative. As mentioned above, the term *translocal* captures an approach to  
462 understanding how ideas travel between the local and the global and in doing so adapt to different  
463 circumstances. These dynamics give important clues as to how socio-cultural constructs (e.g.  
464 agriculture, social hierarchies and democracy) are locally understood.

465 In order for urban planning to fully take advantage of the benefits of UA for a diverse population,  
466 the ways ideas travel and influence practice needs to be carefully considered. We have used a  
467 critical transnational lens to gain insights into how the travelling of ideas needs a *translocal*, as  
468 opposed to globalised, approach, which can generate a critical and fruitful scrutiny of the actors,  
469 their motivations and power capitals.

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## List of Tables

*Table 1 – Summary of aims, methods and findings for the pre-existent three case studies*

*Table 2 - Summary of spatial characteristics of UA in Comuna 13 and Potosi*

*Table 3 - Summary of spatial characteristics of food gardens in Vienna*

Details of case study and summary of results	
<b>Location</b>	Vienna, citywide
<b>Research timeline</b>	Fieldwork conducted between August 2013 and May 2014. Data has been updated in spring 2016 for the present article.
<b>Aims</b>	Analysis of: locations of community gardens; profile and motivations of gardeners; institutional response.
<b>Methods used</b>	Site analysis and document analysis (e.g. bylaws and mission statements of community gardening associations, newspaper reports, planning documents).
<b>Results</b>	Community gardens are located in densely built up areas in the city. Gardens are small in size, mostly publicly owned and fenced.  Gardeners have an educated, creative class background. Associations are started by existing groups of friends/acquaintances. Motivations are the enhancement of local communities, productive leisure time and active improvement of the urban environment.  Urban gardening is highly institutionalised and explicitly welcome in urban development/planning strategies.
<b>Location</b>	Comuna 13 (informal settlement), Medellín, Colombia
<b>Research timeline</b>	Fieldwork conducted between June 2011 and January 2012.
<b>Aims</b>	Analysis of: different types of open space and their daily use;

	<p>role of open spaces, established in an on-going upgrading programme for the improvement of spatial justice;</p> <p>actors and roles in the production of space.</p>
<b>Methods used</b>	Walkthroughs with community actors, mental maps workshops with residents, semi-structured interviews with residents, municipality officials and experts.
<b>Results</b>	<p>UA is mostly practiced at the individual level surrounding people's homes or in left over landscapes and micro-spaces; UA is an important contribution to livelihood and a link to rural cultural traditions for the most vulnerable members of the community. Recently, UA has been introduced by the municipality as an activity in which groups of elderly people can engage with the support of social workers.</p> <p>Growing food is perceived as a practice for very low-income households with a rural background, as opposed to those with an urban lifestyle and is therefore associated with a stigma.</p> <p>Use of public open spaces to practice UA is negotiated with the community leaders.</p>
<b>Location</b>	Potosi (informal settlement), Bogotá, Colombia
<b>Research timeline</b>	Fieldwork conducted between May 2015 and May 2017
<b>Aims</b>	<p>Analysis of:</p> <p>transformation of public space;</p> <p>new uses and appropriations;</p> <p>transformation of actors and their role.</p>
<b>Methods used</b>	Observation, mapping and semi-structured interviews with residents
<b>Results</b>	<p>UA practices in Potosi are about 20 years old, starting from a private and in-house cultivation of edible crops and fruit, which was gradually extended to open spaces.</p> <p>Motivations for such practices are mainly related to the contribution that edible crops can give to the household financial condition. However, these include a higher connection with nature and the preservation of a link with rural cultural traditions.</p> <p>NGOs built on these motivations to establish three community gardens, one of which is active in promoting and sustaining the practice with students and the community generally.</p> <p>The other two gardens are struggling to maintain because of a lack of resources</p>

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since the NGO left.

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	Comuna 13 (Medellín)	Potosi (Bogotá)
<b>Total area</b>	700 ha	30 ha
<b>Number of inhabitants</b>	135,000	7,550
<b>Density of inhabitants</b>	20,000 / km <sup>2</sup>	25,200 / km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Proportion of green areas</b>	approx. 10% of green public space plus 23% not built up space in risk zones or riverbeds. [Medellín: 3.8%]	8.13% [Bogota: 12.97%]
<b>UA spaces</b>	1 community garden, 3 public open spaces claimed for food growing, individual spaces for UA in 73 out of 160 spaces investigated.	3 community gardens in a total of 14 publicly usable green spaces in the area; many individual spaces for UA observed although not counted

Vienna	
<b>Total area</b>	40,600 ha
<b>Number of inhabitants</b>	1,797,337
<b>Density inhabitants</b>	4258.6 / km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Proportion of green areas</b>	45.5%
<b>UA sites</b>	68 community gardens

Figure 1  
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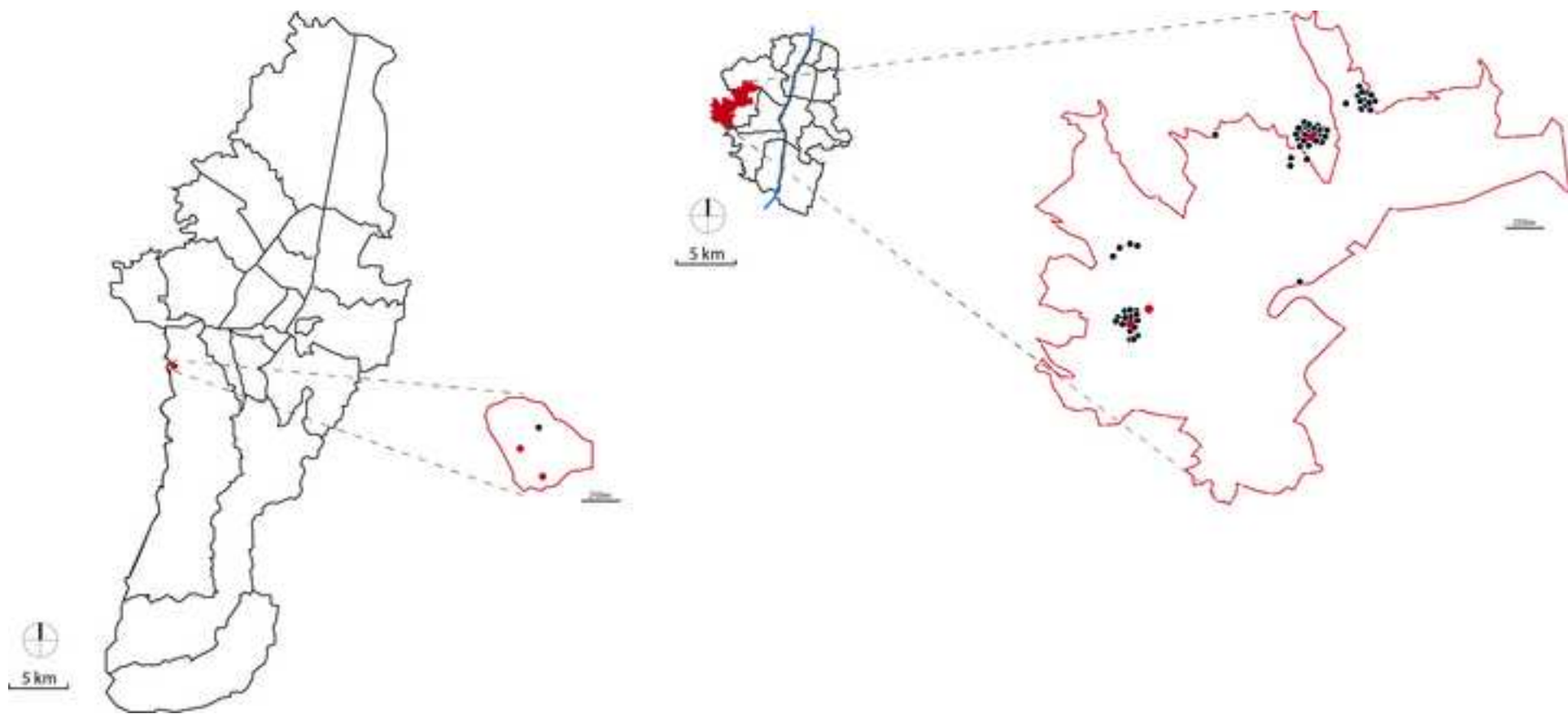


Figure 2  
[Click here to download high resolution image](#)

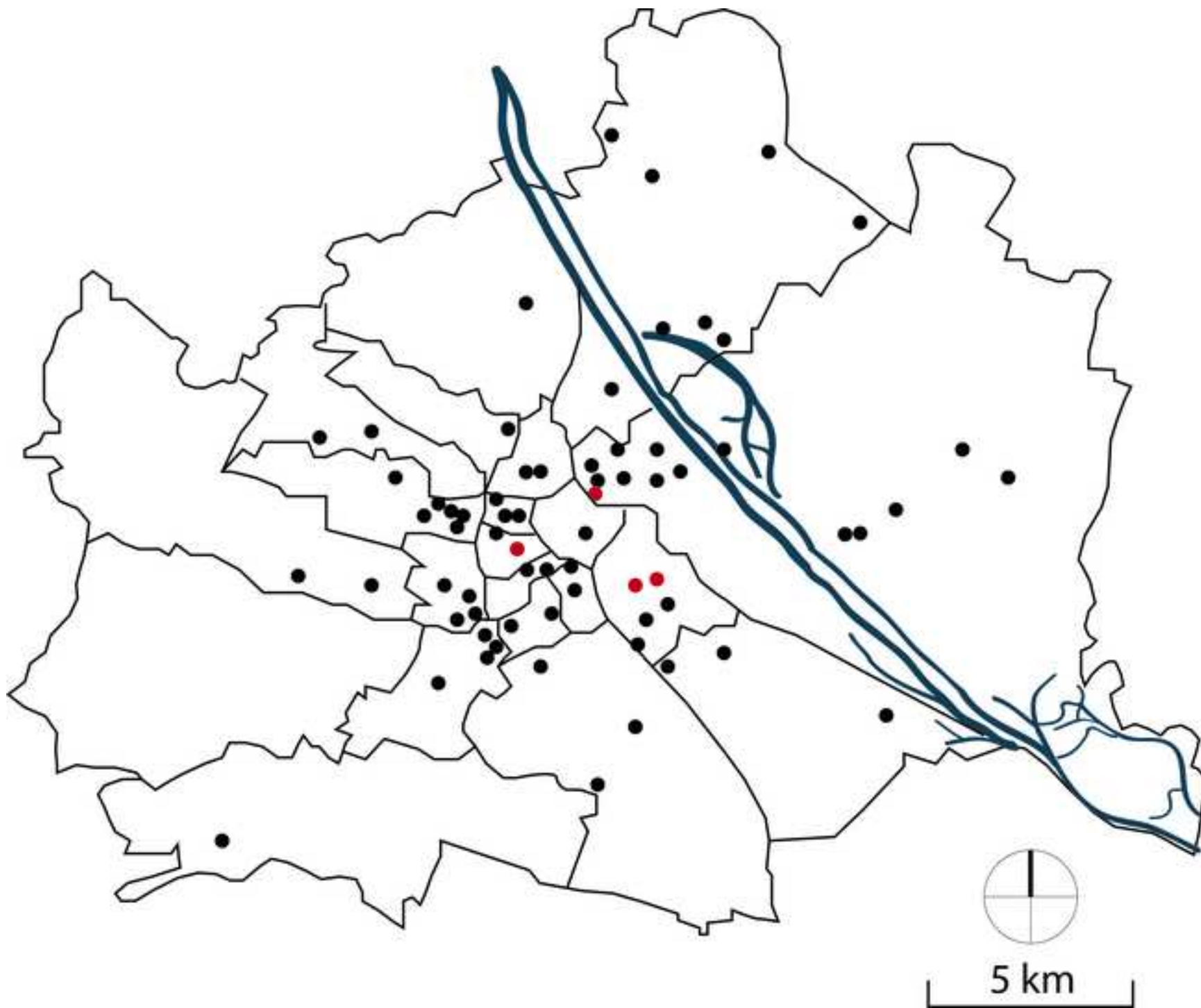




Figure 3 images  
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Figure 3 map  
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