

Eunice Blavascunas and Benjamin Cope

Abstract

This paper looks at how the Wisła River in central Warsaw became a site for articulating notions of the wild and the commons in postsocialist urban spaces. It asks what kind of commons might emerge in a semi-natural urban space fashioned out of informal networks and practices both at the level of the state and at the level of the everyday tactics used for 'getting-by' by the inhabitants of the space. By bringing the commons and the wild into focus within the urban space this paper argues that there are emergent conditions of activism and governance at work. The complex configurations in which the river flows means that it is a space where different, mutually contradictory modes of usage and governmental obligations come into contact. The contours of this story defy common divisions between private and public, between dissident environmentalists and a city/developer nexus, and between what 'wild' might mean as opposed to "usable green space." Different logics about governance and use come into play depending on how the 'wild' river is acting.