

Gardening in the Context of Creative Consumerism and Development of Public Sphere

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DIY gardening has several connotations. On the one hand, this is another opportunity to invent and expand the methods and options of consumption. Numerous stores "DIY", built in the spirit of the IKEA philosophy, educational programs, and communities of gardeners offer consumers a lot of reasons to increase consumption with elements of creativity and without guilt. On the other hand, non-sanctioned interventions into the urban space are viewed in the context of getting "the right to the city" (le Droit à la ville) through social mobilization, collective political and social struggle. As a rule, such gardening is based on the cases of so-called squatting or abandoned public spaces or areas with limited access for certain groups of citizens. "These groups define themselves as 'the plot of the weak' in the Global Square space. Conceptual basics of this approach were built in the 1970ies during discussions about armed clashes around the public park of San-Francisco ("user-controlled park"), which became a milestone of the hippie epoch. The most relevant element in such research is an attempt to re-think the contradiction between the need in the public space and inevitable emergence of not only educated proprietors but also social outcasts, trumps, homeless people in this space – all those people whose presence destroys the positive idea of DYI as a sign of social well-being. The dilemma is in the character of inclusion. Who has the right to act on their own? What are the limits of such action? Who is entitled to receive public goods and who does not deserve them?

One of the most popular DIY trends, the so-called "guerilla gardening" can be in some cases regarded as a political statement, in others – as a state-supported art project or barely seen local initiative. 'Guerilla gardening' means planting greenery on abandoned public facilities and transforming them into self-regulatory parks and vegetable gardens. Such initiatives can be a temporary art action managed not by the district residents, but by eco-activists, artists, young architects.

Widespread in Europe, particularly in France, such initiatives are often defeated in the countries of post-Soviet space.

The report analyzes the reasons why such initiatives are widely discussed in social networks, but not implemented. The study is based on interviews with «guerilla» gardeners of Moscow (Russia) and Minsk (Belarus).