

Collectivity VS Enclosure: Hidden Processes Behind the Commoning in Mass Housing in Russia

The paper explores the process of commoning in the urban spaces (Bresnihan, Ryrne, 2015) in relation to the ownership system (Hann, 2007) and expressing the citizenship (Garcia, 2006; Holston, 2019). The study is focused on the routine of everyday micro-activities, that establish the frame of common spaces in the large housing estates community.

In Russia, definition of 'public', 'private' and 'common' has changed with establishing the institute of private property and re-definition of collective rights and common spaces after the Soviet Union collapse. Despite the transplantation of neo-liberal model of property, it is argued that the interconnections between property and citizenship were never adopted, and common spaces has been reduced to spaces 'in-between' private (flats) and public ones. (Trudolyubov, 2015).

Nowadays public spaces are becoming one of the main political instrument for gaining the support of the middle class (Kalyukin et al., 2015). At the same time, the opportunity for commoning was often questioned due to the lack of political activism, collectivity, and community. The micro-level of commoning the urban space is not portrayed as a valuable process of claiming citizenship due to the lack of power on the municipal level and ignoring the outside spaces of the neighborhood.

Exploring the example of large housing estates, we reveal, what triggers and keeps up the process of commoning in everyday context. How people become (self-)excluded from managing the commons, how do they gather the resources for the commoning? How do they express and question the right to citizenship through the everyday commoning? What spaces become central for such process, yet unnoticed? What is the limit of the ownership in such context?

The analysis is based on the case of neighborhood in the outskirts of Tula, which is a middle-sized Russian city with half a million citizens located 200 km south from Moscow. The dataset includes in-depth interviews with the residents of the neighborhood, activists, management company, and authorities. The data is supplemented by the ethnographic observations, online-ethnography of the local media, and express-interviews. The analysis is concentrated on the spaces with different access: the common spaces inside the estates (stairs, space between the flats, entrances) and the spaces outside (yards, roads, playgrounds, etc.).

Tracking the process of setting up the frame of space sharing, confronting the management companies, negotiating and communicating with authorities, we uncover, how the concept of ownership is limited to the private space, or broadened to the space outside the apartment. The common spaces become political (Dikeç, 2005) in the sense of everyday claim of the citizenship. At the same time, the inclusion in the process of commoning is highly intersected with the notion of the privatization and enclosure.

Selected bibliography

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