

The garden is still a possibility

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At the beginning I didn't believe in gardening.

I never questioned the garden. As I grew up, it was always there. It was my playground, my safe space. I especially enjoyed playing hide and seek in the garden. I loved hiding in the green tent created every year by some old grape vines in the back of the house, or in the raspberry bushes near the fence, or in the green pees field in front of the house, or in the old apple tree. I could hide and eat at the same time. Such a bliss!

I grew up in a small city, in Cimisia, some 70 km away from Chisinau. Well, we moved several times to different houses and we switched back and forth between Cimisia and Hancesti. As I grew up, this constant change of places kept messing with my sense of home and what makes it a home. Looking back at that confused little girl, I see that one of the few constants in this permanent change was the garden.

The first time we moved, I was around 3 years old and I don't remember a thing. The second time I was around 5. The only memory I carry with me from that day is the field of daisies that covered the entire courtyard of our future home. You know how in movies, when people move to a new home they start to explore its corners, the cherry on the top being either the attic or the basement?! Well, in my case, everytime we moved places, I wouldn't run to the attic to see what it hides, I would go to the garden. To me it hid the most treasures.

When I saw the garden with daisies I knew we hit the jackpot because it meant that it was a garden undisturbed, a garden at peace with itself, a garden that was once nurtured but had time to recover and to let the wild also integrate in its web.

The first thing I would look for in the new garden were the trees. The old garden with daisies was really a treasure in this sense. It was enormous and had lots of different old trees. There were several trees I grew to love the most. The pear tree growing right in front of the door was really good looking and it provided us with a rich harvest of yellow sweet pears that if stored properly in the cellar would last until spring. They were so sweet and tender, they were melting in your mouth. The second one was the *belâi naliv* old apple tree hanging its outgrown branches over the shed. I

know for sure that the fruits are fully ripen on the 23rd of June. I remember that when my mom gave birth to my brother I was overjoyed and wanted to share some of my joy with the kids from the neighborhood. I gathered as many apples as I could fit in my t-shirt, ran on the street and gave them away to every child from my neighborhood. We were eating apples together when a small, white, old car stopped near our gate and all the kids from the neighborhood welcomed my little brother home. I look back and I am mesmerized by the strong belief that I had at that time that sharing those apples with the neighborhood kids was the most genuine way I could share my joy.

I believe that the garden is a tool for radical joy.

A garden is a place for collective joy. Why can't we have it in the city?!

Ohh, only imagine how our world would look like if joy and love were the fundament of all politics. How would our cities look like?! I bet we would have gardens!

When I moved to Chisinau, for the first time in my life there was no garden to explore. Just 70 km away from the joy of sharing belii nalive apples, I found myself in a totally foreign landscape. This landscape was too stretched, the distances between places far too great to be covered by walking. The buildings were crowded all over the space, the cars were crawling everywhere. There were only several designated spots - called parks - where trees were allowed, but only as decorations, never as a food source. There was no formal prohibition of gardening, but every inhabitant knew the unwritten rule: the city is no place for gardening. For god's sake, the city is not a village! But there were those who were breaking the rule. In silence. That's why you could see an apple tree growing on Stefan cel Mare boulevard, several exotic fig trees right near the government building, an entire garden with tomatoes and onions growing on Ceucari street, or a lonely sunflower shining in Central Park.

Because the garden was not there, I started to observe the city carefully in the search of it. Everytime i would find a fruitful tree, a blackberry bush or a tomato plant growing somewhere hidden in the web of the city - I would feel the joy I felt in my gardens. But it's a different joy, a joy that feels almost illegal, the joy of resistance. I embraced the joy of resistance!

Now the city is my garden.

I plant sunflower seeds and tomatoes and apple trees and raspberries right in the city!

This garden is not enclosed with a fence like my previous gardens, it's an open garden that I share with all the inhabitants of the city.

I practice the joy of resistance, I want to bring radical joy to the city. Come join the resistance!

There are many voices saying that the garden is disappearing -
the suburbs are trying to copy the image of the city;
the villagers are leaving their lands behind in the pursuit of the urban dream;

the urban environment is expanding -
it eats the lands that once were gardens and orchards...
and with them,

the city devours our memories

that once were born in the garden
so that we forget that the garden is still a possibility,
so that we forget the joy we once shared.

and it shrinks our imagination

so that we are happy with the gray landscape,
so that we don't dare to dance on the boundaries
of urban and rural, nature and culture,
the park and the garden.