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Waste 'at its best'. DIY in the context of garbage discourses

Do-It-Yourself (in its diverse forms) and garbage (as a material and as a concept) are interconnected with each other in many respects. Not only is "DIY waste" a common category in municipal waste management, but also garbage appears to be a main material resource for DIY activities – it serves as a perfect substance in terms of sustainability and affordability. A widespread conviction in amateur crafting (probably the most traditional form of DIY), for instance, is that "you should not throw anything away without good reason – you might need it again and you can make something out of anything." Repairing and recycling as DIY-based cultural techniques in times of need are basically interrelated with the idea of bringing broken things back into use or transforming things, which are no longer needed, into new objects (tins become toys or ashtrays, car tyres are turned into shoes and so forth). And the DIY strategies of anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist counter cultures (above all the punk movement since the 1970s) not seldom draw on used stuff as a basic element of their clothes and equipment as an easily accessible form of protest. Moreover, DIY-designers in their conceptualisation of *Do-It-Yourself* refer to the principle of recycling or even upcycling – as an integral part of their DIY-policies. And, not to forget, integrative socio-educational DIY projects working with waste material (crafting and art projects) are often based on the idea of (re-)inclusion and (re-)valuation – of material and participants alike.

My paper contributes to the idea that it helps to understand DIY culture and economy as an apparently attractive and influential concept by exploring its interrelations with garbage practices and discourses, particularly with the concept of recycling. Therefore, I will discuss selected examples of *Do-It-Yourself* that directly or implicitly refer to garbage/recycling. Looking at garbage/recycling and its role in DIY practices historically and theoretically, sharpens the perspective on core aspects of *Do-It-Yourself*, such as, for instance, the idea of inclusion and (re)integration, producing value and questioning the value system alike, conceptualising DIY-aesthetics, the provocative power of DIY as a critical comment on common assumptions and certainties, its moral implications, the aspect of DIY-practices as an integral part of cultures of remembrance (and DIY-products as its carriers). And, last but not least, it sheds light on different forms of agency and (em)power(ment).