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Everyday life in avant-garde housing estates

A phenomenology of post-Soviet Moscow

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Abstract
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This thesis explores the social meaning and function of what is known as avant-garde, or constructivist, housing estates located in central Moscow. Five of these estates – Budenovsky, Dubrovka, Khavsko-Shabolovsky, Nizhnyaya Presnya and Usachevka – comprise the empirical foci of the study. Built in the late 1920s, the avant-garde estates are the architectonic expression of specific ideals about everyday life and collective living for Soviet citizens.

Exploring the avant-garde housing in their current post-Soviet setting, the thesis analyses the lived and social experiences of their residents in the mundane fabric of everyday life, against the backdrop of structural societal forces and the sweep of historical changes occurring in the built environment. Theoretically, the study draws on phenomenologically informed humanistic geography scholarship as well as Henri Lefebvre's Marxist analysis of everyday life and social space. Empirically, the analysis is based on semi-structured interviews with local residents, including walking interviews, and interviews with architecture historians and preservation activists, as well as a survey, a range of historical sources and state register data.

The findings show that residents, in relation to the spatial, architectural and design features of their housing estates, make sense of their residencies as home places, thereby transcending the official historical and cultural heritage narratives. Furthermore, associated with the restructuring of housing markets in post-Soviet Moscow, the change in social (housing) relations has had a clear effect on the physical and social space of the estates, leading to novel patterns of place-based socialisation and politicisation. The thesis also demonstrates how residents rediscover the historical meanings and underpinnings of avant-garde housing in the course of their daily lives, showcasing the awareness and possibility of envisioning housing as a fundamental social right built with human needs, not profits, in mind.

This study should be of special interest to those concerned with housing and urban planning, urban history, residential architecture and urban phenomenology. It is also an invitation to revisit and actualise the humanistic tradition in current human geography studies.

Keywords: built environment, housing, everyday life, avant-garde architecture, humanistic geography, phenomenology, Henri Lefebvre, post-Soviet city, Moscow, Russia

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Contents

1 Introduction

On 6 June 2016, an excavator bucket soared above Pogodinskaya estate in central Moscow; three out of five of its five-storey houses were being demolished to make way for an elite housing complex. Built in 1928-1929 for the workers of the Kauchuk rubber factory, Pogodinskaya is one of Moscow's housing estates that are notable for their avant-garde, or constructivist,[1] architectural style. This style heralded an early Soviet ambition to promote a new, socialist way of life while at the same time solving the housing crisis, and is today commonly considered to be the only significant contribution of Russian architectural school to the modern movement worldwide. This latter heritage argument was actively – but unsuccessfully – used by the community of architecture historians and preservation activists as well as by some municipal deputies to resist the plans, preparatory work and the demolition itself through protesting, petitioning and appealing to the public in the online media (see 'Gromko spasali', 2016; 'Sleduyushchiy adres vandalizma', 2016). The city government, in turn, denied Pogodinskaya estate a heritage status – contra its 2012 decision – claiming that the houses were merely "ordinary objects of the 1920-30s" in a state of disrepair (*Mosgornasledіye o situatsii*, 2016). Moreover, a week prior to the start of demolition works in Pogodinskaya, Moscow's deputy mayor for urban development, speaking at an investor forum, declared to personally believe that only two or three constructivist estates should remain as "monuments of how not to build" (*Zammera: Doma Epokhi Konstruktivizma*, 2016). Today, the remaining (and still inhabited) two houses of Pogodinskaya estate and the adjoining Kauchuk factory workers' club, a listed regional landmark, neighbour the newly built Grand Deluxe elite housing complex that reaches 14 floors at its highest point.

The debates around the demolition of Pogodinskaya estate were vocal, and so were the sounds of demolition works. The silence of its residents, however, was all but deafening: the houses were gradually vacated since the mid-2000s when the plot of land on which they

[1] Constructivist style (or constructivism from *konstruktivizm* in Russian) is often used interchangeably with avant-garde, also in the present study.

were located was acquired by a private developer. Residents of Pogodinskaya – ordinary people living in ordinary houses – were absent from these debates as they had long left their dwellings and were not directly affected by the demolition. It is nonetheless the residents who were the immediate users of the estate and who had the first-hand experiences of living there and hence of the quality of this type of housing. Yet as the houses of Pogodinskaya had stood empty, there were no stories coming from within the estate to be told and heard in the debates surrounding its demolition. These untold and unheard stories could have shed light on what it actually is to live nowadays in a housing estate designed and constructed under decidedly different ideological, political, social, economic and technological circumstances at the very outset of Soviet Russia in the end of the 1920s.

In order to give voice to the residents in avant-garde houses and to learn about their lived experiences, this thesis turns to five estates in central Moscow. Not only are the chosen housing estates (still) physically present (not least thanks to their varied heritage status) but, most importantly, and in contrast to late Pogodinskaya, they are inhabited and dwelled in and, as such, used in accordance with their original function. The five estates that form the empirical foci of this thesis – Budenovsky, Dubrovka, Khavsko-Shabolovsky, Nizhnyaya Presnya and Usachevka – have been identified among the most representative and well-preserved examples of residential avant-garde architecture in a study conducted by the Genplan Institute of Moscow (Solovieva & Tsareva, 2012). The aforementioned study provides an impressive stocktaking of 26 housing estates built in Moscow during the 1920-30s, but its primary concern is with their architectural, design, planning and, ultimately, heritage aspects. The present work emphasises people rather than buildings and acknowledges both the material and structural (social, economic, political, ideological) factors that condition everyday life in avant-garde estates. Although remarkable architectural properties of the housing estates in question call for scholarly attention, as a geographer, I consider them as elements of the urban built environment, embedded within a wider web of socio-spatial relations, that reveal themselves as meaningful places in people's daily lives. Therefore, my ambition here is to provide a critical and humanistic account of avant-garde housing as a more-than-architectural phenomenon, and in order to do so I explore its current dwellers' experiences and perceptions of the places they live in.

Studying the contemporary housing experience

Critical Marxist housing scholarship has convincingly argued that there is a worldwide housing crisis today (see, for example, Madden & Marcuse, 2016). This crisis has been associated with the proliferation of neoliberal capitalism since the 1970s, and particularly the private market model of housing provision, which presupposes a predominant understanding of housing as commodified real estate, an instrument for profitmaking, as opposed to viewing housing as a lived and social space. Among the multifarious symptoms of housing crisis are, in political economy terms, the diminishing affordability and accessibility, tenure insecurity and precarity, as well as the increasing indebtedness and risk of dispossession. Spatially, these have been manifested in overcrowding, homelessness, displacement and residential segregation, to name but a few. On a personal level, crucially, the housing crisis has entailed the increasing number of people not feeling at home in places of their residence; that is, residential alienation (Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Marcuse, 1975). The impact of the housing crisis on the affected households and communities, however, "does not penetrate mainstream housing politics," argue David Madden and Peter Marcuse and they continue:

> If we want to truly understand the consequences of the hypercommodification of housing, we need to understand the alienated psychosocial experience – the fear, stress, anxiety, and disempowerment – that the current housing system produces. (Madden & Marcuse, 2016, p. 56)

In this sense, the experiential level reflects the structural level of housing by way of highlighting the consequences of the capitalist housing market workings that are tangible and can be related to by a growing number of residents. Similarly, there is a need to recognise the use value of housing (that is, housing as a lived and social space – home) as subsumed by the exchange value (that is, housing as a commodity). Recognising houses in their use value as lived spaces requires delving into the ways they are presented in everyday lives of their residents, on their own terms (Allen, 2008). Still, all too often, critical studies seem to have been preoccupied with mainly the exchange-value based conceptions of housing while calling on its use value merely declaratively.

The crisis of housing has also been discussed, yet from a notably different perspective, in the literature inspired by the phenomenological work of German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's treatise on the "plight of dwelling" in the modern world titled *Building Dwelling Thinking* (1971, originally published in 1951 perhaps in reac-

tion to housing shortage in the wake of World War II) has been probably the most seminal one to that end. He maintains that dwelling, a concept that denotes a meaningful relationship of human beings with a given place, has become detached from building (both a process and an edifice) that is increasingly understood in functional terms as just a provision of housing by way of construction and engineering. Echoing this critique, architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz (1985) has lamented the prevailing definition of dwelling in material and quantitative terms as a sheer number of square metres. Along similar lines, philosopher Vincent Vycinas asserts that the notion of home has become dramatically reduced to signify merely an exchangeable commodity:

> Home nowadays is a distorted and perverted phenomenon. It is identical to a house; it can be anywhere. It is subordinate to us, easily measurable and expressable in numbers of money-value. It can be exchanged like a pair of shoes. (Vycinas, 1969, pp. 84–85)

More recently, Peter King has noted that within broader housing studies there are tendencies to associate housing with housing policy and, as such, to mistake the production and consumption of dwelling for the phenomenologically understood activity of dwelling (King, 2009, 2018). Elsewhere, King (2004) has claimed that the former perspective is overly concerned with housing as a quantifiable, measurable and controllable phenomenon while missing its less concrete and more banal, ordinary and mundane character that can only be discovered in the process of habitation. The experiential aspect of housing as dwelling, in this view, again, fails to enter the 'mainstream housing politics' and housing policy – even if this often is not the phenomenological approach's aim per se.

Within geography scholarship, the topics of housing, home and dwelling were considered particularly in the 1970s and 1980s under the label of humanistic geography and mainly in connection to the concepts of place (see Buttimer, 1980; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977) and lifeworld (see Buttimer, 1976; Seamon, 1979a). These phenomenologically-informed approaches build on inquiring into the place-based lived experience which is rendered ontological significance. However, for its focus on place rather than social structure (or, for that matter, space), humanistic geography has been charged with failing to acknowledge the way people's lives were conditioned by forces beyond the immediate agency of individuals (such as capitalist relations, political power, gender roles and so on) while having little to no social and political ambition. It is possible, nonetheless, to rediscover

hidden 'subversive potentialities' to that end within this tradition of human geography, too, as Federico Ferretti (2019) has recently conceded. In this sense, understanding human experience in place can be considered as a first and crucial step in changing this place (and its wider spatial setting) in the pursuit of social justice.

It seems that critical Marxist and phenomenological perspectives in housing studies can be complementary and mutually reinforcing. Indeed, displacement literature stands out as a remarkable example in this regard. Seen as a key consequence of gentrification, displacement has been generally conceived of as a physical relocation of residents from their neighbourhood as a result of its class transformation. The repercussions of displacement, however, could be associated not only with the very event of relocation but also with displacement pressure prior to leaving the neighbourhood and in course of its transformation (Marcuse, 1985). Accordingly, critical analysis of displacement has taken on examining residents' lived experiences and perceptions of their neighbourhoods, before them being forced to leave. For instance, by illustrating the value and meaning that home places can have with regard to belonging, identity and stability, some studies have discussed the potentially disruptive effects of relocation at the emotional level, especially on the sense of housing security (Manzo, 2008; Manzo et al., 2008). Here, the structural forces accountable for the socio-spatial transformation of the neighbourhood, highlighted by critical Marxist analysis, are reflected in lived experiences of its residents; these can be fully comprehended through the lens of phenomenology.

Perhaps most notably, Mark Davidson (2009) has observed that the contemporary gentrification debate is devoid of phenomenological perspectives and the associated critical understandings of place, whereas the prevailing conception of displacement reduces to a purely spatial event (that is, out-migration) what is in fact a complex socio-spatial process. Relating the spatial thinking of Heidegger and Lefebvre, Davidson has suggested that the critique of displacement should incorporate seeing space both as a domain of being and dwelling and of social relations. In this view, displacement is not just a spatial abstraction but a concrete phenomenon that residents experience in their everyday lives; socio-spatial changes in the neighbourhood can accordingly lead to the experience of displacement even when 'staying put'. Davidson hence contends: "[p]eople can be displaced <…> without spatial dislocation, just as much as they can with spatial dislocation" (ibid., p. 228). Following Davidson's intervention, a number of studies have focused specifically on the lived

experiences of tenants in gentrifying neighbourhoods (see, for example, Atkinson, 2015; Pull & Richard, 2019; Shaw & Hagemans, 2015; Stabrowski, 2014; Valli, 2015), addressing in a phenomenological fashion their sense of a loss of place despite remaining in the locality.

Although the present study is concerned with neither gentrification nor displacement issues as such, one critical insight from Davidson's paper (2009) is relevant here, too. By and large, he takes issue with the abstractive, calculative conceptualisation of space deployed in a part of scholarship (that is, displacement reduced to a mere spatial re/dis-location of individuals); this logic, he argues, neglects the lived experience of space and is, therefore, plagued by only a partial socio-spatial outlook. Davidson draws on, on the one hand, Lefebvre's understanding of space as both abstract and commodified and concrete and lived (Lefebvre, 1991) and, on the other hand, Heidegger's place-based phenomenological thinking (a source of inspiration for many humanistic geographers) in order to develop an analytical basis that "asserts the importance of space to Being" (Davidson, 2009, p. 231). In this view, any critical Marxist analysis of capitalist spatiality (in this case, displacement and gentrification) lacking this basis runs the risk of falling into the same trap of abstraction and commodification that allows this spatiality to prosper in the first place. In other words, the critique of the spread of exchange value in housing, commodification and residential alienation requires, simultaneously, attending to the glimmers of use value, appropriation and authenticity. These can be discovered in the everyday life and lived experiences of place – but only if the social (and existential) utility of home and neighbourhood is accordingly recognised; if this is not recognised, any critique of capitalist spatiality would struggle to justify why and how it really matters. In the attempt to comprehend and to alleviate the modern 'plight of dwelling', therefore, it is housing experience that needs to be considered, not housing per se. My study proceeds from this standpoint.

Aim and research questions

Writing about home and sense of place, geographer Anne Buttimer has noted that experiences, values and meanings of place "are often not brought to consciousness until they are threatened: normally, they are part of the fabric of everyday life and its taken-for-granted routines" (Buttimer, 1980, p. 167). Similarly, the significance of housing

experience as home and dwelling is obvious and goes without saying, unquestioned in its triviality and minutiae, even if only under normal circumstances. Yet it is precisely under these normal circumstances that the everyday experience of housing can and should be readily investigated, revealing its complexity in its seeming banality.

Pogodinskaya estate, mentioned previously, had not been brought to the public consciousness until its existence was threatened by an excavator bucket. Lost in the demolition was an understanding of the lived qualities of the estate and its significance as home. This thesis, accordingly, turns to study the everyday life in the yet unthreatened (or at least intact) historical housing in post-Soviet Moscow. With regards to particularly the avant-garde housing estates, which are the focus of this study, although their very avant-garde properties are of great interest (and will be duly accounted for), what really calls for inquiry is the experience of living in such houses. The valuation, meaning-making and discursive casting of avant-garde housing estates as heritage objects (on the part of experts and activists) or 'monuments of how not to build' (on the part of the city officials) is nothing more than an exercise in abstraction. This abstraction obfuscates what it really is to live today in a house designed and built nearly a hundred years ago in the 1920-30s. More so, it conceals the social function of housing, conceived at the very dawn of Soviet Russia, and its decline under the post-Soviet neoliberal capitalism. Following Davidson's (2009) insight discussed above, this thesis seeks to stay clear of the abstract conceptualisation of space and to engage instead with the lived, first-hand experiences of residential areas, while at the same time accounting for the wider socio-spatial setup they are situated within. Studying people's experience of housing, no matter how banal it may appear in the realm of everyday life, serves the purpose of reinstating its lived, social and, ultimately, use value in (critical) housing scholarship and providing a critique of market-driven conceptions of housing.

The overall aim of this thesis is to explore the social meaning and function of avant-garde housing estates in Moscow – given their particular historical geography (early Soviet through post-Soviet). In other words, this thesis seeks to analyse the residents' meaning-making of avant-garde housing estates as homes and to describe their negotiation of the more structural categories and factors pertaining to the post-Soviet capitalist transition. The central objective of this thesis is to study the lived experiences and perceptions of dwellers in an ordinary place – a housing estate – drawing on the phenomenologi-

cally informed humanistic geography theory and methodology, and Henri Lefebvre's Marxist analysis of everyday life and social space.

The thesis revolves around three research questions. First, how are the lost and surviving spatial elements and design features of avant-garde housing estates made sense of by their residents nowadays? In answering this question, the study employs a phenomenological perspective to describe the residents' experiences and perceptions in relation to specifically the built environment. This relates to the anthropological study of Moisei Ginzburg's Narkomfin block of flats, an iconic avant-garde building in central Moscow, undertaken by Victor Buchli (1999), who has examined the multilevel interactions between the material and social worlds through the quotidian domestic lives of its inhabitants. This thesis diverges significantly from Buchli's material culture outlook, however, in its commitment to the phenomenology of place and a wider geographical lens spanning an individual flat and a neighbourhood as a whole.

Second, the thesis asks: how is the social space of avant-garde housing estates experienced and navigated by their residents? Inquiring into the social life of neighbourhoods with the help of Lefebvre's spatial theory, the thesis seeks to demonstrate how this is negotiated through the structural categories of tenure and property. In so doing, the thesis taps into the debates on the experiences of homeownership in Russia following the fall of the Soviet Union (see, for example, Attwood, 2012; Zavisca, 2008, 2012). Given the study's particular focus on the everyday life, it also contributes to the more nuanced accounts of the place-based social relationships – contra prevailing narratives that any meaningful social life, not least civic engagement, in Russia is subsumed by the authoritarian state and/or market forces (cf. Argenbright, 2016; Fröhlich, 2020; Morris, 2016; Trumbull, 2014).

The third research question is as follows: what are the lived qualities of everyday life in avant-garde housing estates today from the perspective of their residents' experience? In attempting to answer this question, this thesis deploys a two-pronged theoretical approach, akin to Davidson's (2009) but reaching out beyond gentrification and displacement literature, comprising a phenomenological place-based analysis (as in humanistic geography) and Lefebvre's critique of everyday life. Last but not least, this thesis can hopefully contribute to the ongoing theorisation of housing (see Clapham, 2018; Ruonavaara, 2018), hence responding to Jim Kemeny's (1992) seminal call to introduce social science theories into housing studies by revisiting hu-

manistic geography scholarship and connecting it with Lefebvre's Marxist analyses to investigate the lived experience of housing.

Disposition of thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters. The present chapter introduces the study, situates it within the current housing scholarship and outlines its aims and questions.

Chapter 2 develops the theoretical framework of the thesis which draws on two bodies of literature. First, I turn to the humanistic geography tradition, and particularly to its phenomenologically informed stream. Phenomenology studies how various phenomena appear in people's experiences; it is the experience of living in avant-garde housing that lies at the centre of my inquiry. Second, I draw on Henri Lefebvre's critique of everyday life and his theory of the social production of space. The associated conception of everyday life and its experience as circumscribed, together with phenomenology, provides an opportunity for a more critical understanding of space and place. The lived and social dimension of housing, as it appears in residents' experiences, pertains to our understanding of its (use) value and its crucial role as a meaningful centre of existence.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological approach of my thesis in accordance with the outlined theoretical framework. It also relates case study research to phenomenology and problematises the chosen cases in Moscow. Naturally, the research methods and the empirical material are discussed, and the chapter concludes with a reflection on researcher positionality.

Setting the scene for the study, Chapter 4 outlines the historical and contemporary context for the study of lived experiences of residents in five of Moscow's avant-garde housing estates chosen as the empirical foci. This chapter discusses the rise and fall of avant-garde housing in Soviet Moscow, as well as its fate up until today. Importantly, the contextual information on the post-Soviet housing market in Moscow is provided, while the chapter concludes with the discussion of two major housing development and improvement programs unfolding in 2017 at the time of my second fieldwork.

Following the background chapter are the three empirical chapters. Chapter 5 explores the ways that the residents make sense of the avant-garde features of their housing estates. In doing so, I describe the residents' experiences and perceptions, past and present, in relation to the built environment in particular. The chapter reveals that

the meaning of housing is intricately linked with the residents' lived experiences within it, rather than with its historical or cultural status.

Chapter 6 investigates the social space of the chosen avant-garde housing estates through the prism of housing relations revolving around the categories of tenure and property. It does so by studying the mobilisation and the resulting conflicted relations between the residents faced with two citywide housing development and improvement programs. The chapter demonstrates that despite the prevailing narratives of the atomisation and estrangement of residents, the social space of avant-garde housing estates is animated and politically charged.

Chapter 7 studies the qualities of the selected avant-garde estates as they are discovered in the course of everyday lives of their contemporary residents. The chapter discusses the meaning of housing as a dwelling place in the world dominated by the exchange value and the commodified and commercialised property markets. With this, I highlight the importance of what could be seen as ordinary features of housing for its experience as home.

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by attending to the research questions, discussing the implications of the chosen conceptual approach to the study of housing, and pointing to the future avenues of research.

2 Theoretical perspectives on space, place and everyday lived experience

This thesis builds upon a phenomenological proposition developed by humanistic geographers since the 1970s who have suggested that one's lived experience finds its ontological foundation in place. In this view, place is experienced by humans in the course of their daily lives, and it is through this lived experience that a meaning of place is created and revealed. Phenomenology studies how various objects appear in people's experiences; it is the experience of living in avant-garde housing that lies at the centre of my inquiry. Additionally, the thesis draws on Henri Lefebvre's critique of everyday life and his theory of the social production of space. The associated conception of lived experience as circumscribed by, but not surrendered to, the forces of capitalism, together with phenomenology, provides an opportunity for a more critical understanding of space and place. The lived and social dimension of housing as it appears in the experiences of residents pertains to our understanding of its (use) value and its crucial role as a meaningful centre of a human being's existence.

The chapter consists of three parts: first, an introduction to the place-focused phenomenology- and existentialism-inspired humanistic geography, a conceptual understanding of the notions of dwelling and home within these literatures, and a critique of humanistic accounts and the (recent) responses to these; second, a conceptual bridge between a phenomenology of place and Lefebvre's analysis of space and everyday life; and third, an attempt to synthesise the interpretation of housing and housing experience based on both phenomenological, humanistic insights and Lefebvrian Marxist critiques.

Humanistic geography and experiential place

The issue of place-based experience has preoccupied geographers since the late 1960s when phenomenological and existentialist perspectives (associated with a broader term humanistic geography) were adopted in response to then dominant positivist and structuralist

approaches (Relph, 1970; Tuan, 1971). According to these perspectives, human beings are conscious and intentional subjects who mediate their experiences, meanings and values of physical and social worlds through senses, emotions and thoughts. And it is through the situated experiential engagement with physical and social worlds that human beings make sense of places and landscapes.

The notion of place is hence central to humanistic geography. Place is not only a location, but also a physical structure to which human intentionality (and, by extension, agency) is directed.[2] Furthermore, place has been seen as a focus of meaning and human emotional attachment (Entrikin, 1976; Tuan, 1976). The associated meaning-making of place is borne out of direct human involvement with and experience of it, and, as such, resists objectification (Tuan, 1975). According to Yi-Fu Tuan, a prominent humanistic geographer: "The given cannot be known in itself. What can be known is a reality that is a construct of experience, a creation of feeling and thought" (Tuan, 1977, p. 9). A deeper knowledge of place, in this view, cannot be derived from an immediate impression of its visual properties, or, for that matter, the information that comes from non-first-hand sources. Tuan has argued that humans develop such a knowledge, and also place attachment, over a certain (sometimes extended) period of time:

> The visual quality of an environment is quickly tallied <…> But the 'feel' of a place takes longer to acquire. It is made up of experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years. (Tuan, 1977, p. 183)

Human geography saw a surge of studies developing a lived and meaningful notion of place in the 1970-80s. In his foundational work on place, Edward Relph (1976) explored the varieties of place experience along the insideness–outsideness and authenticity–inauthenticity continua pertaining to the creation of a particular sense of place, or lack thereof. Notably, for Relph, mass consumption and standardisation promoted by big businesses and governments (basically, the agents of capitalism which he refers to neutrally as the "economic system") have led to placelessness: the eradication of significant plac-

[2] Drawing on Husserl and Heidegger, John Pickles has argued that intentionality is linked not only to human consciousness but also practices: "Intentionality is, for Husserl, the basic structure of consciousness, where every act of consciousness is directed towards its intentional object. For Heidegger, the intentional structure is present not only as this cognitive or theoretical relation between man and his world, but in man's everyday world of practical concerns" (Pickles, 1985, p. 96).

es which undermines their experiential values. While Relph emphasised the role of human cognition, Anne Buttimer and David Seamon focused on the more pre-reflective, unselfconscious and embodied practical aspect of everyday life. They have argued that the experiences of urban everydayness are borne out of the taken-for-granted, routinised context of human lifeworld (Buttimer, 1976; Seamon, 1979a). Routines and habituality accordingly also lend meaning to places no matter how mundane and ordinary they may be perceived. What unites these and other humanistic accounts is their shared attention to human agency and their shared interest with either self-conscious or unselfconscious experience of everyday life.

Significance of place and lived emplacement

Humanistic accounts have in different ways conceptualised place as a meaningful centre of human intentionality, lived experience and action. Such a phenomenological view suggests that human subjects are situated (placed) in the world and relate to it through this very situatedness and orientation to other subjects and objects that furnish the world. In his seminal *Place and Placelessness*, Relph has claimed that places are "significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world <…> full with meanings, with real objects, and with ongoing activities" (Relph, 1976, p. 141). In this view, place is not just a location with particular physical attributes, but a focus of people's everyday lives.

Elsewhere, drawing on Martin Heidegger's phenomenological writings, Relph has explored the notion of being-in-the-world which is an immediate everyday relationship between people and their surrounding environment (Relph, 1985, p. 16). This relationship is mediated through place and denotes a complex web of (un)intentional, experiential, and emotional links between an individual and other subjects and objects. In a similar vein, by paying attention to the often unquestioned practical dimension of daily life, Buttimer (1976) and Seamon (1979a) have discussed, alluding to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, how humans unselfconsciously imbue the world around them with meaning and significance. To be in the world means to make sense of it.

The importance of place is associated with the possibility (or lack thereof) of identification and belonging to it arising from people's involvement with the world in which they live. For a phenomenologist, people make sense of places in the course of being-in-the-world. Sense of place denotes a set of meanings, attitudes and feelings, both

individual and shared (or collective), that are associated with a particular place. Sense of place is not simply derived from place but rather arises from human awareness of the surrounding world resulting from experience of and engagement with it.[3] In humanistic geography scholarship, sense of place has been described not only in terms of positive affective attitudes such as place attachment, insideness and topophilia (that is, a bond between people and place), but also negative ones characterised by estrangement, alienation, outsideness and topophobia (see Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974). As Relph puts it, "[b]elonging to a place, feeling part of it, gives many people a positive sensation of security, yet for others it may be oppressive and restrictive" (Relph, 1985, p. 27). Significance of place is therefore associated with the differential quality of its experience by different people (equally important no matter whether positive or negative), an insight made possible by the phenomenological mode of inquiry into the everyday world.

More recently, it has been recognised that any experience of place is conditioned not only by the characteristics of place itself but by the very situated-ness of self in this place, so that it is always both experience *of* and *in* place, or a situation of "lived emplacement" (Casey, 2009; Malpas, 2018; Seamon, 2018). These writings are marked by a rejuvenated view rendering place ontologically fundamental and therefore claim to provide an alternative to the prevailing poststructuralist and postmodern theories of place that have developed since the 1980s.[4] In this view, place is not reduced either to an objective environment 'out there' or to a subjective representation of it (whether cognitive/conceived or affective/perceived): it is rather that places and lived bodies "interanimate each other" (Casey, 2009, p. 327).

As the title of Seamon's most recent book eloquently says, life takes place (Seamon, 2018). Elsewhere, Seamon has argued that places "provide the everyday, taken-for-granted spatial and environmental context for each person and group's lifeworld" (Seamon, 2015, p. 44).

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[3] By comparison, an associated term *genius loci* (Norberg-Schulz, 1980) refers mostly to the intrinsic physical and cultural properties of place (and in particular its visual qualities), whereas sense of place lies in the domain of human awareness which can include awareness of *genius loci* of a particular place. *Genius loci* has been extensively discussed in architectural theory.

[4] Some notable examples of such thinking concerning the 'disappearance' of place include Marc Augé's thesis (1995) on the rise of non-places (that is, transitional places) and Joshua Meyrowitz's discussion (1985) of the loss of sense of place due to the spread of new media and communication technologies. Within geography, these critiques have been mainly associated with the works of David Harvey on the time-space compression (Harvey, 1989) and Doreen Massey on the global sense of space (Massey, 1994, Chapter 6).

By the similar token, philosopher Edward Casey has insisted that human beings require place to exist and are thus bound to and bounded by place: "to exist at all <…> is to have a place – *to be implaced*" (Casey, 2009, p. 13, emphasis in the original). For Casey, place is limiting in that humans, things and situations cannot exist independent of place and thus are necessarily emplaced somewhere. Taking a more processual stance on place (similarly to Seamon and diverging from Casey), philosopher Jeff Malpas has pointed to its experiential dimension. Interestingly, for Malpas, place is not just something that only emerges in human experience (cf. Tuan, 1977), but it is rather that "place is integral to the very structure and possibility of experience" (Malpas, 2018, p. 31). He further explains the deep links between place and experience:

> Places can be objects of experience – as I experience this place or that place – but place is also that within and out of which experience arises. Any experience of the world, along with the appearing of things within the world, will thus always be from within the embrace of place. What is described as the loss of place is therefore more properly described as an experience of place in which place is seemingly effaced in its very presentation. (Malpas, 2018, p. 203)

The last sentence in the citation above evokes a notion of placelessness, similar to that offered by Relph, who defined it in terms of a loss of significant places and an attitude that does not recognise significance in places (Relph, 1976, p. 143).[5] According to Relph, placelessness presumes shallowness of place experience, and, as Malpas further explicates, it is in and through the experience of place that one can record this loss. If place is seen primarily as an ontological structure, then the changes to place are reflected both in and through the human experience of it and in the material world in which this experience is situated. This also means that the quality of human life is inextricably (and dialectically) linked to the quality of place in which that life unfolds (Seamon, 2015, p. 42). Place experience is therefore central for making sense of place because it (dis)allows for a set of meanings, attitudes and feelings which renders its (in)significance for human life. Crucially then, in this view, place is the starting point for any understanding of how social and political constructs may be shaping people's lived experiences.

[5] Noteworthy here is that while Malpas emphasises specifically the experience of place, Relph is willing to insist that places themselves lose meaning (that is, become devoid of sense of place) by being rationally planned and mass produced in the postwar era.

On the notion of dwelling and home

In addition to the insistence on place as an ontological basis for human life, humanistic geographers have had a longstanding interest in the closely related notions of dwelling and home. The concept of dwelling, according to late Martin Heidegger (1971), denotes a domain of human existence characterised by the strongest sensual, emotional and cognitive bonds with the surrounding world. Along similar lines, architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz (1985) has argued that dwelling presupposes identification with the environment. Dwelling, then, is an existential notion that describes the manner in which humans are in the world: "[t]o be a human being <…> means to dwell" (Heidegger, 1971, p. 145). This being-in-the-world, as discussed in the previous section, is ultimately emplaced. As such, Heidegger suggests attending to dwelling by means of building, which signifies not only a physical structure, but also a 'habitual' practice of everyday experience. He insists, however, that "not every building is a dwelling" (ibid., p. 143) since not every building is a centre of human meaning and care (and hence signifies existential importance for human life). In this view, only those buildings that evoke a strong sense of place may be sites of dwelling.

For Heidegger, dwelling is associated with attachment, caring and rootedness which are the properties of authentic human existence. Authenticity and dwelling, in this rather conservative rendering, have been severely diminished by modernity wherein building became understood exclusively in terms of architecture and engineering (Heidegger, 1971, p. 157). Inspired by Heidegger's discussion of dwelling and authenticity, Relph has portrayed the decline of place-based identity as a result of the postwar spread of modernist architecture and urban planning plagued by standardisation and uniformity – a condition coined as placelessness (Relph, 1976).[6] The globalisation of capital, increasing human mobility and the spread of modern technologies have changed the ways that people relate to their environments and led to dwelling precarity. What used to come "from the workshop of long experience and incessant practice" (Heidegger, 1971, p. 158) has seen a major – and, in this view, negative – transformation. Heidegger's perspective on dwelling is notably an introspective and retrospective one, much like a romantic eulogy for the bygone past, anti-cosmopolitan, stagnant and not connected to other

[6] Looking ahead, Relph has also argued that in the contemporary society the significance of home has been equally diminished, not only by the increased mobility but also the commercialisation: "'Home' has <…> become a marketable, exchangeable and sentimentalised good" (Relph, 1976, p. 83).

processes and experiences. Yet, it can also be a useful one in its emphasis on the centrality of place-based experience for human existence, if one remains wary of its conservative associations.

Closely related to dwelling is the notion of home. From a phenomenological point of view, home is an ultimate manifestation of place, a site that is characterised by the strongest sense of place.[7] Home is also seen as an intimate place of human life around which this life revolves. Gaston Bachelard has argued that home is a central reference point of human existence since "all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home" (Bachelard, 1964, p. 5). He has observed the interior space of home, and particularly how memories, imaginings and dreams have been located within it. In so doing, Bachelard vividly reveals how even the small details of the interior such as doorknobs and candlesticks lend meaning to the inhabitants' lives. Bachelard's view on home has been sometimes disparaged as overly romantic and nostalgic and hence granted with positive, affirmative connotations – something that David Sibley critically termed a "happy phenomenology of the home" (1995, p. 94). However, such a reading of Bachelard's thesis seems to oversimplify its main point that home is a profound centre of human experience in its very complexity which cannot be reduced to simple binary categories of good/bad or positive/negative. Home is a place which encompasses in a meaningful way a physical structure and the associated material details, routines and habits, memories and poetic images.

Bachelard's (1964) study demonstrates the importance of experiential understanding of home which significantly nuances its view as an architecturally structured place. "Inhabited space transcends geometrical space," writes Bachelard (1964, p. 47), and it is in the continuous inhabitation enabling not only cognitive meaning-making but also the embodied experience that a house as a physical structure can be made sense of as a home. In a similar vein, Casey writes about the distinction between house and home:

> Houses are displaceable from their sites and subject to destruction, even to literal re-placement, but homes are undetachable from the places to which they belong. Homes, then, are not physical locations but situations for living: "It takes a heap o' living to make a house a home." (Casey, 2009, p. 300)

For Casey then, like for Bachelard, a home is something more than just a house, and most importantly, it is a phenomenon borne out of

[7] Following both Bachelard and Heidegger, Casey insists that "it is in dwellings that we are most acutely sensitive to the effects of places upon our lives" (Casey, 2009, p. 341).

lived experience. Home is more than just a house also because it implies an emplaced and embodied relationship between the human and the material which transcends utilitarian and commercial considerations (K. Jacobs & Malpas, 2013). Home, by extension, is a place of dwelling, which is a more practical and relational notion as it denotes one's interaction with the material and social world around.

Imbued with poetic images and constituting a locus of the human psyche, home provides a place that centres human beings in the world and from which they orientate themselves towards the world. It is also in the domain of home that one may experience epiphanic moments when one's sense of existence is felt most acutely and deeply as both an inward security and privacy and an outward openness to the world around, a dialectical state which Bachelard calls intimate immensity (1964, p. 193). Moreover, for Bachelard, home is not a finished product, but something that emerges in the process of inhabitation and contemplation, and keeps on being altered by its inhabitants throughout the routinised and habitual horizon over the course of their lives.

Humanistic geographers have, too, dwelled on home in their writings. For instance, Relph has linked the notion of home with authentic place experience, where home is rendered a "central point of existence and individual identity from which [one looks] out on the rest of the world" (Relph, 1976, p. 83). In his turn, Seamon has argued that home is an intimate centre of rest, a place where one can withdraw from the daily movement and relish security, privacy and familiarity (Seamon, 1979a, pp. 132–133). An autobiographical account of searching for and finding (building) home by Edmunds Bunkše (2004) seems to bring both these perspectives together: on the one hand, it asserts the meaning of home as an intimate place which transcends real-estate values and location; on the other hand, it demonstrates how the notion of home is inextricably linked to the notion of road, the state of searching for home which trains and amplifies one's sensibilities. Bunkše understands these as 'geographic sensibilities'. His account of home is inspired by Bachelard's poetic imaginary, and particularly the idea of intimate immensity, which Bunkše interprets as a combination of concentration and expansiveness, a combination of "the-depths of one's humanity with the universe" (2004, p. 108).

Humanistic excursions into the notion of home have emphasised its experiential and value-imbued nature. In this view, home is a basic repository of meanings, attitudes and feelings that are revealed through the (often taken-for-granted) engagement of self within the

everyday, routinised, and habitual context. In other words, there is no place that would be as ordinary and basic, and yet as significant for human beings as home.

Critical reflections on humanistic geography

Being subject to a range of criticisms, humanistic perspectives had largely gone out of fashion in geographical scholarship by the beginning of the 1990s. Positivists argued that humanistic research remained far too abstract, subjective and ungeneralizable. Radical geographers claimed that it lacked attention to the ramifications of power in the construction and (re)production of places and experiences of them (see Cresswell, 2015, Chapter 2). For instance, Marxist critics have been disconcerted about the preoccupation with human agency (that is, its voluntarist outlook) which neglects the constraints imposed by the structural and material factors (see, for example, Harvey, 1993). Feminist critics, in turn, challenge humanists and phenomenologists for the presumably essentialist treatment of place (that is, appealing to the universality and invariance of human condition) that risks underplaying social inequalities inscribed in its experiences (see, for example, a critique of the notion of home in Blunt & Dowling, 2006; McDowell, 1999; Rose, 1993). Furthermore, humanistic geography has been criticised from a poststructuralist vantage point for envisioning place as static, bounded, parochial and exclusionary[8] – as opposed to thinking about place in terms of dynamism, mobility, plurality and relationality (see, for example, discussion of the concept of dwelling in Harrison, 2007; also see Massey, 1994, Chapter 6, for the notion of global sense of place).

It seems that a lot of these critiques against humanistic geography stem from the insensitivity to its main tenets. In response to the essentialist charges, Seamon has insisted that humanistic geography recognises "there are different dimensions of human experience and existence that all must be incorporated in a thorough understanding

[8] This refers mainly to the 'romantic' perspectives of Heidegger (1971) and Bachelard (1964) and scholars inspired by the two: for example, Relph (1976), for whom place is linked to rootedness and attachment, among other things. Malpas (2018, p. 197n22) has acknowledged the related critiques of conservatism, introversion and xenophobia, but warns against taking these 'pathologies of place' as a norm and rejecting place as problematic and dangerous altogether. Elsewhere, Malpas has pointed to the productivity of place-based thinking: "simply to reject place because of its use by reactionary politics is actually to run the risk of failing to understand why and how place is important, and so of failing to understand how the notion can, and does, serve a range of political ends, including those of fascism and totalitarianism, as well as of progressivism" (Malpas, 2006, p. 27).

of human and societal phenomena" (Seamon, 2018, p. 178). Although implicitly, humanistic research has been concerned with the particular (and often differential) aspects of lived experience – even if not directly inquiring into the broader political, social and economic structures shaping the human life. In response to voluntarist charges, Seamon has argued elsewhere that humanistic geography highlights (although, again, implicitly) the role of individual action that can be meaningful in a broader societal and political change (Seamon, 2015, p. 40). Lastly, despite embracing a non-political view of place, humanistic geographies have still hinted at place having deeply political dimensions: for instance, Relph's concept of placelessness (1976) suggests, among other things, a commodification of place identity by market forces and rational planning. Echoing this, Malpas suggests that place "does not so much bring a certain ethics and politics with it but rather defines the very frame within which the ethical and political must be located" (Malpas, 2018, p. 215). Humanistic and particularly phenomenological geography's concern with place and the lived experience of it, in this view, is not critical of the processes of place construction and (re)production per se, but can nevertheless be indirectly suggestive of these – hence an underestimated (and often unrecognised) potential of these approaches.

Despite the manifold critiques, the legacies of humanistic geography can be discovered in later work in feminist and cultural geographies with which it frequently shares a focus on subjective emotional, embodied, and performative dimension of place experience (Cresswell, 2013, p. 119), as well as an overall commitment to understanding it in strictly qualitative terms. Moreover, contemporary geographers working within a humanities tradition, not least critical geographers, owe an interest in studying the social construction of places, landscapes, meanings and human experiences to humanistic geography (Adams et al., 2001). Humanistic and phenomenological geography influences can also be directly derived from the names of some of the poststructuralist approaches, such as posthumanist and postphenomenological geographies (see, for example, Ash, 2020; Ash & Simpson, 2016; Panelli, 2010; Roberts, 2019). These burgeoning deconstructivist, 'more-than-human' and nonrepresentational geographies, however, are said to have a 'troubled relationship' with the issues of lived experience, social difference, human agency and politics (Kinkaid, 2020; Simonsen, 2013). Moreover, some works in the postphenomenological (for example, Wylie, 2005, 2006, 2009) and the new materialist vein (for example, Dewsbury, 2003; Edensor, 2005; Ingold, 2000; Latham & McCormack, 2004; Roberts, 2012;

Thrift, 2008) seem to have disregarded the essentialist and voluntarist charges against humanistic and phenomenological studies in their renewed (and deepened, almost solipsistic) focus on the self. In response to that, Kirsten Simonsen has proposed an alternative approach informed by Merleau-Ponty, feminist and postcolonial thinking termed 'new humanism' (Simonsen, 2013). In principle, Simonsen's idea is to rejuvenate interest in the embodiment and experiential dimension of social life (hence "emphasizing the significance of modest, situated experiences of everyday life," ibid., p. 23), to reaffirm the openness towards the other,[9] and to rediscover the importance of human agency (see also Simonsen & Koefoed, 2020). The resulting critical re-reading of phenomenology therefore presents an approach that is aware of power and the political while remaining focused on the everyday experiences of people.

Some humanistic writings of the 1970-80s have been reassessed and credited with relevance by critical and radical geographers. Most recently, Federico Ferretti has argued that works of Anne Buttimer, despite being seen as too 'moderate' by some of her contemporaries, came laden with "neglected subversive potentialities" and were highly socially and politically relevant (Ferretti, 2019).[10] For instance, Buttimer's study of working-class housing renewal in Glasgow highlighted the conflictual views on this process by the insiders/demanders (displaced residents) and the outsiders/suppliers (politicians and planners) and made a political call for a better correspondence between the two (Buttimer, 1972, 1980).[11] In a way, humanistic geographers are no strangers to the view that places are social constructs, but their optics is more focused on the microscale, local matter of lived experience of this construction. However, this does not necessarily preclude their tacit awareness of a 'bigger picture'[12] and sympathies to the issues of social justice.

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[9] This resonates with Sara Ahmed's (2006) phenomenological discussion of orientation as dependent on relegation of certain 'other' things to the background.

[10] Ferretti's paper pleads for the need to be aware of the contributions of humanistic scholars who may not bring explicit political labels: "[W]e should stop thinking that, if an author does not explicitly declare her/himself as Marxist, feminist or anarchist, she/he cannot be a radical critic of disciplinary conformism or social/political conservatism" (Ferretti, 2019, p. 1141).

[11] It is interesting that Buttimer's call for a "dialogue between people and plans, between residents and planners of housing developments" (Buttimer, 1972, p. 309) draws parallels with the idea of advocacy planning (Davidoff, 1965) and anticipates the works on communicative/collaborative planning (Healey, 1992) and the just city (Fainstein, 2010).

[12] Or, following Tom Mels (2004, p. 6), global 'totality'.

This thesis seeks to rediscover the underrealised critical potential of humanistic and phenomenological geography and to offer a contemporary re-reading of its writings in order to complement and inform housing studies with a rejuvenated focus on lived experiences by the residents. This is best done in conjunction with Henri Lefebvre's analysis of space and everyday life in connection to the notions of place, dwelling and experience, a topic of the next part of this chapter.

Lived space and everyday life under capitalism

Despite its strong focus on subjective individual experience, humanistic inquiry nonetheless does not presume that human beings exist independently and voluntarily in the world. Following Buttimer's conception of lifeworld, one "is anchored in a physical and social world, and <…> this 'world' situation influences the meanings and intentionality of [one's] consciousness" (Buttimer, 1976, p. 280). However, while acknowledging that the subjective everyday experience is self-aware and embedded in the social world and practice, humanism and phenomenology do not explain how these circumscriptive externalities are socially (re)produced and may dominate and manipulate everyday lives.[13] In what follows, I will discuss a critical (and complimentary to the one presented above) approach to the analysis of everyday life in place.

A mode of human being-in-the-world, if inserted into the context of contemporary city life under the condition of early 21st-century capitalism, suggests the significance of the immediate cultural and material environment for the everyday experiences and lifeworlds of urbanites. In order to imbue humanistic and phenomenological analyses with a more critical understanding of value, meaning and experience as conditioned by wider power structures and processes, the rest of this chapter will turn to Henri Lefebvre's Marxist engagement with the notions of social space and everyday life. In his writings, Lefebvre combines the humanistic questions of alienation and human agency (which he studies through the lens of rhythms and habits of daily life) with dialectical materialism, developing what has been termed humanistic Marxism (Shields, 1999). As such, Lefebvre provides an

[13] In reaction to Relph's treatise on placelessness (1976), Neil Smith has intimated: "The destruction of place occurs at the behest of objective societal forces that neither humanism nor, in the end, phenomenology, can fully apprehend" (N. Smith, 1979, p. 368).

account of capitalist urban spatiality and spatial practices which transcends the pitfalls of agency-insensitive explanations of capitalist relations and social structures (the structuralist insight), while staying aware of the ramifications of these relations for the lived lives of people (the humanistic insight).

Lefebvre's account of everyday life and social space shares many common interests and concerns with humanistic and phenomenological geography scholarship. For instance, his rhythmanalysis has been said to parallel Buttimer's humanistic analysis of time-space rhythms: both emphasise the lived dimension of everyday experience of human beings in their diverse social and material environments, although Lefebvre offers a more politicised outlook (Mels, 2004, pp. 22–26). As such, Marxist analysis brings light to the workings of capitalist modernity and their social effects; humanistic analysis, in turn, highlights the intimate complexity of capable and social human beings since "there is far more to everyday human experiences than the colonization of lifeworld" (ibid., p. 35). Taken together, these two approaches may provide complementary insights into the issues of social space and daily life on a variety of scales, from the local one of a lifeworld to the global one of a structure.

Dwelling and modernity from a Marxist vantage point

There are intriguing intersections between Henri Lefebvre's Marxist approach to spaces of everyday life and humanistic scholarship on authenticity and dwelling. Lefebvre argues that people's lifeworlds have been subsumed by capitalist forces which control private life, consumption and material organisation of space (Lefebvre, 1971). The social space, which is the realm of the everyday life, has also been under the attack of capitalist meaning-making which seeks to abstract and commodify it (Lefebvre, 1991). In this analysis, capitalist modernity alters the character of places though organisational and technological shifts, dominates daily lives, and produces landscapes ridden with no values other than exchange value.

That daily life has been under attack in the 20th century, and particularly in the postwar era, however, is nothing new to phenomenologists and humanists. As was discussed in the previous part of this chapter, Heidegger (1971) insisted that there was a crisis of dwelling since people's authentic existence is threatened by the spread of modern technology and rationalism. Drawing largely on Heidegger, Relph (1976) argued that the modern(ist) urban development driven by big public and private actors and mass culture creates placeless

landscapes which are detrimental to people's sense of attachment to places. Both these examples resonate with Marxist critiques in their concern with the decline of meaningful experience of places and hence the alienation of people from places.

Seemingly paradoxical then, it is in this shared account of the modern transformation of lived spaces and experiences of everyday life that Lefebvre's Marxist analysis connects with humanism and phenomenology. The erosion of everyday lives of people by means of commodification and market exchange in Lefebvre's view parallels the modern crisis of authentic dwelling in Heidegger's view: both processes threaten to undermine the social practices which produce space and anchor one's identity and existence in it. For both Heidegger and Lefebvre "everyday life therefore becomes a key site of politics <…> and both see it as increasingly under assault by modern/capitalist socio-spatiality" (Davidson, 2009, p. 231). In other words, both see the lived and experiential dimension of human life as antagonistic to the contemporary abstraction and alienation tendencies. [14]

There are, however, a number of ways in which these analyses diverge. For one, Heidegger's take on authenticity and dwelling under the condition of modernity has been deemed problematic not only due to its allegedly exclusionary and nationalist connotations. David Harvey also notes that:

> [T]he problem of authenticity is itself peculiarly modern. Only as modern industrialization separates us from the process of production and we encounter the environment as a finished commodity does it emerge. (Harvey, 1993, p. 11)

Harvey, from a strictly Marxist perspective, attributes the crisis of dwelling and authenticity to the capitalist spatial transformation and insists on the political-economic grounding of the process of place construction (and people's experiences of it). As such, capitalism entails alienation and exploitation at the level of daily life (associated with inauthenticity for Heidegger), but for Marx it is precisely this everyday experience that is authentic (albeit circumscribed) and grounds one's sense of being, moral responsibility and political action (Harvey, 1993, p. 12). It is, then, in the realm of everyday life wherein the possibility for resistance against the capitalist spatial order lies and opens up alternatives for unalienated existence.

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[14] Another point on which Heidegger converges with Marxist analyses is his view of authentic communities as materially and physically grounded in places through dwelling, rather than being discursive constructs (see Harvey, 1993, p. 14).

While acknowledging Heidegger's diagnosis, Harvey also highlights his lack of prescription for the return of dwelling in the current highly industrialised, capitalist world. In this, he claims that "Heidegger refuses to see mediated social relationships (via the market or any other medium) with others (things or people) as in any way expressive of any kind of authenticity" (Harvey, 1993, p. 13). Heidegger laments authentic rootedness in place particular to peasant societies of the past and which, as he admits, is no longer achievable in modern societies (Heidegger, 1971, p. 158). Marxist analysis, in contrast, puts a stronger emphasis on the wider social processes and practices that underlie the construction of places, and sees it irreducible to the purely place-based individual experiences. These individual experiences, in turn, are necessarily characterised by individuals' awareness of the wider social relations which render them circumscribed yet authentic enough to be a basis for a meaningful existence and resistance.

From the above follows another point of divergence between Lefebvre's Marxist analysis and Heidegger's phenomenology. In his account of dwelling, Heidegger (1971) writes rather abstractly and only hints at the practical aspect of everyday life: for him, 'bringing dwelling to the fullness of its nature' is linked to both a more practical act of building and to a more reflective act of thinking. The salvation of dwelling, however, lies mainly in the realm of thinking about the alternative ways of dwelling, since building in the modern age is subsumed under the technical categories of architecture and engineering. In contrast, instead of dealing with these issues theoretically, Lefebvre relates daily life to concrete practice and material conditions (Elden, 2004b). In doing so, Lefebvre follows Marx in his definition of human beings as subjects or agents engaged in the material and historically situated *praxis* (Lefebvre, 1971, p. 112). Put differently, Heidegger's analysis of the sites of daily life is seen through the prism of dwelling and based on place ontology, while Lefebvre's take on the topic is more practical and agency-focused (which is in line with humanistic Marxism) and hence imbued with a transformative potentiality for dis-alienation. This last point will be discussed further below in a section dedicated to the notion of everyday life.

However, the divergencies between Marxism and humanism/phenomenology are by no means insurmountable to the extent that the two literatures cannot communicate with each other, as I have hopefully managed to show. To the contrary, they can be seen as complementary to each other, in the same way as the 'global' structures and social processes feed into the 'local' lifeworld and get within

it a necessary grounding. The phenomenological analysis of place-based everyday experience and the associated treatment of place as a frame of reference for the political (Malpas, 2018) is an important entry point for understanding the qualities and meanings of daily life. By mobilising Lefebvre's view on social space, a phenomenological analysis can stay aware of the links between the lived experiences and the wider social, economic and political conditions.[15] Humanistic and Marxist analyses can reinforce each other, rather than being seen as entirely incommensurable worldviews.

Social space – lived space

Place is a phenomenon of lived experience, insists humanistic geography scholarship. Human existence is associated with the spatial reality: place, and by extension, space, does not exist only objectively but appears in the subjective experience of people and encompasses human intentionality, awareness and action. For his part, Lefebvre also refused to see space 'in itself' as just an independently existing material reality, arguing instead that space is socially produced (Lefebvre, 1991). Both literatures, therefore, posit that thinking about space and, for that matter, place[16] is impossible without thinking about human and social life, and vice versa.

Lefebvre's theory of the social production of space is materialist and historical in its focus on the human beings in their corporeality, consciousness and emotiveness, as well as in its understanding of the social relations in the spatiotemporal context of a particular society. Every society, and with it a specific mode of production, has its own particular space, and the shift from one to another entails the production of a new space (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 31, 46). In this view, modern, highly urbanised society is characterised by the capitalist mode of production which consequently produces a highly differentiated,

[15] In relation to this, Lefebvre has written that "everything (the 'whole') weighs down on the lower or 'micro' level, on the local and the localizable – in short, on the sphere of everyday life. Everything (the 'whole') also depends on this level: exploitation and domination, protection and – inseparably – repression. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 366)

[16] The interchangeable use of concepts 'space' and 'place' in this part of the chapter is motivated by the need to associate humanistic geography terminology with Lefebvre's analysis. His notion of abstract space (by which he particularly implies the capitalist variety) can perhaps be correlated with what humanistic geographers termed 'space', whereas social space (and in particular its lived iteration) roughly corresponds to the humanistic notion of 'place'. The concept of social space, in turn, can be traced to the works of French scholars Maximilien Sorre and Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe (see Buttimer, 1969).

fragmented, yet a coherent space; a powerful totality held together by the mechanisms of exchange and surplus value creation. Space, in turn, is a medium for social relations, and Lefebvre claims that the two have to be understood as being involved in the dialectical interaction with each other:

> Social relations, which are concrete abstractions, have no real existence save in and through space. *Their underpinning is spatial.* In each particular case, the connection between this underpinning and the relations it supports calls for analysis. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 404, emphasis in the original)

Social relations, as follows from the above quote, are concrete abstractions inasmuch as they are exchange-value-based (mediated by an abstract quantitative measure: money) and inasmuch as they are reified through concrete practices and actions (such as consumption). Space, too, is a concrete abstraction as it combines material (concrete) elements with mental, imagined constructs and conceptualisations (abstractions). Lefebvre's take on abstract space is dialectical as well: it supports capitalist production, distribution and consumption, and is itself turned into a commodity that is produced, distributed and consumed (Stanek, 2011, p. 151). Abstract space resembles Marx's notion of abstract labour: what once was concrete, use-value-based and particular becomes abstract, money-driven (exchange-value-based) and universal (Merrifield, 2006, p. 111) and hence entails alienation. The materialisation of abstract space happens through the built environment and architecture, as well as the activities and various modes of market intercourse over and through space (ibid.).

One relevant example of such materialisation is the fragmentation (or 'pulverisation' in Lefebvre's words) of space by the social relations of private property under contemporary capitalism (Shields, 1999, p. 177). Viewed in this way, housing appears as a tradeable commodity, production of which is separated from its inhabitants, and its use value is displaced by the exchange value. Accordingly, Lefebvre discusses the substitution of absolute categories with abstract ones in relation to dwelling as "the replacement of *residence* by *housing*, the latter being characterized by its functional abstraction" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 314, emphasis in the original).[17] In this dialectical view, capital produces space (real estate) and is (re)produced through space (via the processes of commodification and consumption).

[17] Lefebvre argues that functionalisation of space removes it from the sphere of lived and hence reduces the possibility of its appropriation: use value of space gets substituted by exchange value and property relations (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 356).

As was discussed above, the idea of space as a concrete abstraction suggests it is both an imagined and a material construct. With this, Lefebvre sets out a dialectical relation between idealism and materialism, between conception and perception, between the abstract/mental/geometric and the concrete/material/physical (Elden, 2004a, p. 189). However, in between the imagined and the material lies also the lived, which depends on the former two constructs. The lived provides the third element in Lefebvre's conceptual triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and spaces of representations (ibid., p. 190). Space is accordingly viewed as consisting of three elements: perceived (physical space of social activity and interaction in the realm of everyday), conceived (imagined space of urban planning and architecture) and lived (social space of everyday experience) (Lefebvre, 1991).

Lefebvre's spatial thinking, and particularly the perceived-conceived-lived iteration of his spatial triad, has been said to allude to phenomenology: perception is dependent on the sensuousness of the subject, the conceived is related to consciousness and thought, and the lived denotes the experience of everyday life (Schmid, 2008). In this view, the concrete materiality of social space (and practices underpinning it) cannot be imagined independent from the realm of thought that directs and represents it and from the realm of lived experience with feelings that are invested in this materiality (ibid., p. 41). Lefebvre's spatial theory, therefore, can be seen as describing threefold production of materiality, knowledge, and meaning. The latter point echoes humanistic/phenomenological claims that the meaning of place is revealed through the human engagement and experience of it. Once again, space appears not as a thing in itself, but as a phenomenon intricately linked with the social and lived life. As will be shown next, this becomes particularly clear in Lefebvre's engagement with the concept of everyday life and the related issue of lived experience.

Lefebvre's critique of everyday life: Marxism meets phenomenology

Human life is lived somewhere; it is materially grounded and located in particular spaces and places. Insofar as lived place (or social space) has no essence on its own but only in relation to the concrete human actions (both individual and collective) and social processes situated within it, lives of people, too, have a spatial foundation and need to be considered in this (geographical) dimension. In Lefebvre's dialecti-

cal view, questions of space have to be considered in the context of practice: for him, the spatial is a medium for the practical, the experiential and the lived. This resembles the phenomenological work on place and lived emplacement in its understanding of place as both a phenomenon of human experience and the very condition for this experience, as was discussed in the first part of this chapter. This section will consider Lefebvre's take on the issue of lived experience. In this, he concentrates on the notion of everyday life, a horizon of people's habitual practices and routines of living that gets penetrated by (but notably not completely succumbed within) the postwar capitalist forces of commodification and mass consumption.

Lefebvre's analysis of everyday life has been said to be situated between two main theoretical schools of postwar France: existential phenomenology and structuralism (Elden, 2004a, p. 113). Following Marx, Lefebvre seeks not only to understand and interpret the 'outside world' (that is, larger social systems and structures) but also to realise the need to transform it, and this transformation concerns above all the human world, or everyday life (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 317). His approach, therefore, rests in between the two movements as he refuses to strictly follow either and rather points to their shortcomings:

> Phenomenology looks at too small a scale, removing too many of the important contextual issues and fails to see the wider picture; structuralism reifies the structures instead of looking at their interrelation with the issues of agency, the level of life and individuality. (Elden, 2004a, p. 113)

In other words, while phenomenology is overly preoccupied with lived experience, structuralism completely neglects it.[18] For Lefebvre, phenomenology lacks explanatory and transformative capacities (since its propensity for description is inadequate in grasping the realm of *praxis*); yet he acknowledges its specific focus on the lived (Lefebvre, 2014, pp. 349–351). As such, Marxism strikes a balance between the two approaches by considering the lived in the wider societal and structural context, hence humanistic Marxism which Lefebvre employs in his critique of everyday life.

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[18] In this regard, Lefebvre criticises structuralists (and, perhaps, above all Althusser) for being insensitive to the matters of daily life: "Thinking people were obsessed with the political drama. <…> But they were forgetting that although the political drama was being acted out or decided in the higher spheres – the State, parliament, leaders, policies – it still had a 'base' in matters relating to food, rationing, wages, the organization or reorganization of labour. A humble, everyday 'base'. Therefore many Marxists saw criticism of everyday life as useless and antiquated" (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 28).

One of the main contributions of Lefebvre's work on everyday life is the extension of Marx's analysis of alienation from the domain of work to the domain of nonworking life and leisure, broadening its scope beyond the economic sphere to the everyday life in general. Lefebvre concurs with Guy Debord's claim that everyday life is being increasingly 'colonised' in the modern postwar world (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 305). As such, both state socialism and state capitalism are found guilty of undermining daily life: the former bureaucratised, planned and impoverished it in the name of productive growth, while the latter congested it with commodities and advertising for the sake of business and market expansion (Merrifield, 2006, pp. 9–10). However, it is particularly postwar capitalism that has been most intricate in 'colonising' everyday life, both by replacing its lived qualities and use-values with exchange value and by subjecting more and more aspects of free time and leisure to consumerism.[19]

Maintaining that meaningful and fully lived everyday life is circumscribed in postwar capitalism, Lefebvre echoes Heidegger's concern with the spread of inauthenticity under the condition of modernity. Indeed, as was discussed above, there are some convergences and important divergences between the two; in this respect, both have taken interest in daily life, particularly regarding its banality and habituality traits, but their analyses point in very different directions. Heidegger (via Lukács) problematised the notion of everydayness with its trivialised, banal and repetitive qualities as a realm of inauthentic, meaningless – and, ultimately, alienated – existence; Lefebvre, in turn, highlighted the habitual and routinised nature of everyday life which may be 'colonised' but still is "essential to the 'moments' and flashes of unalienated presence" (Shields, 1999, p. 66). Lefebvre's account of everyday life has been said to allude to Heidegger's discussion of everydayness, yet Lefebvre is critical of Heidegger's undervaluing of daily life by association of primitivity, triviality and anonymity with it (Elden, 2004a, p. 113). His critique of everyday life, then, points to the transformative potentiality which is harboured in the quotidian domain of life and can end alienation.

It is precisely this view of the possibility of a radical, revolutionary change in everyday life that makes Lefebvre's analysis stand out. In principle, Lefebvre takes issue with the depiction of everyday reality particular to German Romanticism: "trivial, given over to care and

[19] This critique of modernity finds parallels with the Frankfurt school, and particularly with the works of Jürgen Habermas (1984, 1987) who argued that quantitative system media (social power and money) are colonising the lifeworld, thereby losing their legitimacy and prompting crisis. In order to reorganise this, situations of free and open speech (dialogue) need to be created.

void of meaning" – as opposed to the true life, or authentic existence and authenticity (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 694).[20] This account of everyday life as inauthentic and alienated "involves a fundamental, absolute pessimism about the social and the practical," which is in sharp contrast with the Marxist vision that alienation can be countered and overcome (ibid., p. 695).[21] While everyday life is limited by capitalism, it is nonetheless never entirely subsumed and definitely not inauthentic; "the level of *the everyday* is not the illusion of a false consciousness," as Lefebvre puts it (2014, p. 352, emphasis in the original). He juxtaposes the murky world of bureaucratic domination and consumerism with a more optimistic picture of daily life in which there is place for subversive instances of unalienated life.[22] Lefebvre refers to these as 'moments' of enjoyment, spontaneity, self-expression, liberation, play, love, passions and dreams (as well as disgust, surrender, horror and outrage) reminiscent in their intensity of the rural festival.[23] These moments, although fleeting and ephemeral, are important points of rupture and realisation of revolutionary possibilities. Everyday life is therefore equally a domain of "vestigial authenticity" (Mels, 2004, p. 25), a lived space imbued with use-based values and the possibility of dis-alienation.

In everyday life, both domination and liberation, alienation and dis-alienation are possible, and the relationship between the two is a dialectical one. By highlighting both the misery and boredom of everyday life (with its narrative of tediousness, survival and need) and the power of everyday life (with its narrative of resilience, adaptation and struggle), Lefebvre has pointed to the subversive and revolutionary potential that is "concealed in everyday life's apparent banality, a depth beneath its triviality, *something extraordinary in its very ordinariness*" (Lefebvre, 1971, p. 37, emphasis in the original). In this regard, the most banal, trivial and repetitive activities can also be "occasions for moments when people can experience themselves and their activities in an unalienated manner" (Shields, 1999, p. 70).

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[20] Interestingly, while romanticism is inextricably linked to nostalgia, avant-garde is all but nostalgic in its belief in the possibility of creating the new authentic existence.

[21] Lefebvre argues that for Marx everyday life implies "both alienation and disalienation (its possibility): alienation in class relations, disalienation in revolutionary potentialities" (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 695).

[22] By contrast with Heideggerian drawing inspiration from German Romanticism, Lefebvre adheres to Marxism in espousing a new, revolutionary romanticism (Elden, 2004a, p. 119).

[23] Lefebvre's notion of moment is reminiscent of Bachelard's concept of intimate immensity at home (1964) in its epiphanic realisation of one's sense of being: one's position in and orientation towards the world.

Importantly, it is this practical, experiential and lived aspect of everyday life that opens up for its rehabilitation and transformation. The sphere of everyday is a dynamic arena of revolutionary practise where people "resolve to overturn 'everydayness', the alienating conditions and meaninglessness of daily life" (Shields, 1999, p. 72). The domination of commodity and consumerism is not total inasmuch as people are not passive consumers but rather disruptive subjects struggling to adapt to and circumvent the established order (cf. the notions of strategy and tactics in de Certeau, 1984).[24] Furthermore, Lefebvre has insisted that the transformation of everyday life cannot be confined only to the domain of production (that is, labour and economics) but also reaches outside of it into the realm of human experience. In this sense, *praxis* involves not only instrumental and repetitive (quotidian, every day) action but also a range of creative, emotive and imaginative practices which Lefebvre elsewhere calls *poesis* and which point to the active, transformative role played by human subjectivity (Gardiner, 2000, p. 80). This seems like a simple recognition of human beings not as passive rational, logical and emotionless but rather living and able subjects who are no strangers to love, passions and dreams, but this recognition is a crucial one and is in line with the humanistic Marxism that Lefebvre develops. Therefore, not only changes in the mode of production but also meaningful changes at the level of human lived experience (such as changes of daily routines and material conditions) are essential for transfiguring modern everyday life in general.

In order to change life, it is not enough to just describe it; it has to be studied and understood. This is precisely why Lefebvre's project is a *critique* of everyday life, as he tries to critically analyse the alienation of the everyday as well as the hidden potentialities for dis-alienation within it. Moreover, such an analysis implies the focus on the experiences of human subjects since, according to Lefebvre, "it is a mode of the 'lived' which we have no right to overlook or to parenthesize in the name of higher or supposedly higher experiences" (2014, p. 317). Lefebvre thus argues that by attending to the small scale of human life as it is actually lived one can comprehend the bigger struc-

[24] Michel de Certeau (1984) discusses daily local-level practices (tactics) that transform the space created by the hegemonic forces (strategies). De Certeau's analysis is worth mentioning for two reasons. First, there are certain similarities between his dualistic notions of strategy and tactics and the dualistic notions of space and place that have occupied humanistic geographers. Second, the notion of practiced everyday life renders spaces meaningful and laden with subversive potentialities resembling Lefebvre's critique. De Certeau, however, imagines power as a totality and does not elucidate how it is mediated through the social relations at different spatial levels.

ture of the human world and see the ways it can be reinvented. Such a phenomenology of everyday life (and thus of lived space) feeds into the politics of production and space.

The connection between the micro and macro scales is not very obvious, however. At first sight, everyday life appears to be so tedious and banal that it does not suggest the possibility of this upscaling. At the same time, it also seems familiar and simple and hence easy to grasp. However, the way that people live is not always reflected upon and fully understood, and it is Lefebvre's aim to reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary of daily life:

> In one sense there is nothing more simple and more obvious than everyday life. How do people live? The question may be difficult to answer, but that does not make it any the less clear. In another sense nothing could be more superficial: it is banality, triviality, repetitiveness. And in yet another sense nothing could be more profound. It is existence and the 'lived', revealed as they are before speculative thought has transcribed them: what must be changed and what is the hardest of all to change. (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 341)

Everyday life is a basic, irreducible horizon of human world, but it is at this very microscale level that the global 'totality' resonates. Lefebvre's work reminds us that despite the banality of everyday life, it is impossible to overlook or ignore it: "[n]obody can get beyond everyday life, which literally internalizes global capitalism, just as global capitalism is nothing without many everyday lives, lives of real people in real time and space" (Merrifield, 2006, p. 10). Therefore, the project of understanding the mundane realities of daily life, the concrete lived experiences of people and their practices, is central for understanding and criticising the current mode of production and consumption and also for envisioning an alternative society (and space).

Lefebvre's critique of everyday life lacks a clear spatial foundation: everyday life seems to be ubiquitous, while the issues of where it unfolds (that is, in what space and at what spatial level) and how its spaces are (re)produced are not dealt with in detail. Elsewhere he writes, however, that everyday activities of people are situated at the level of lived space which is concrete and subjective – as opposed to the abstract and objective (represented, conceived) space of experts: architects, urbanists and planners (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 362). Lived space is nevertheless in a dialectical relationship with conceived, abstract space as the latter tends to transform the former into a space devoid of lived, use-based values, meanings and qualities. Since everyday activities and practices are constantly 'oscillating' between representations of space and spaces of representation (that is, between

phenomenologically conceived and lived space), daily life flees immediate consciousness of people (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 233). In this view, everyday life assumes certain familiarity: its quotidian and habitual traits are perceived as banal and trivial. This familiarity of everyday life, in turn, pertains to false consciousness. However, following Lefebvre's critique, it is precisely in the realm of everyday life – and lived space – that the subversive and revolutionary potentialities are dormant, the moments that can liberate lives of people from the confines of abstract space. Therefore, by attending to the everyday experience of space (or, in humanistic terminology, place), this thesis seeks to uncover the meaningfulness of daily life that can be overshadowed by its seeming banality and ordinariness.

Placing housing: towards a synthesis

The preceding parts of this chapter discussed humanistic geography work that has focused on the place-based experience, being informed largely by phenomenology. Lefebvre's Marxist approach to the study of social space and everyday life as a locus of mundane but meaningful human existence was also reviewed above. While the first body of literature puts a greater emphasis on particularly the lived emplacement of human subjects, the second one highlights the wider social relations and structures that condition this emplacement. One phenomenon through which these two bodies of literature can productively communicate is housing (see Davidson, 2009). The notion of housing encompasses both the spatially situated (emplaced) and socially conditioned (that is, signalling abstraction, according to Lefebvre) aspects of everydayness, hence stressing its existential and socio-political dimensions for the lives of people. This final part of the chapter attempts to 'place' housing; that is, to discuss how both aforementioned theoretical perspectives can contribute to a deeper and more critical understanding of the experience of living in a residential area.

The conceptual links between place, on the one hand, and home and dwelling, on the other hand, have been considered previously. How are these, in turn, related to the notions of house and housing? From a humanistic experiential viewpoint, as was discussed above, a house that is lived-in and invested with meaning becomes home. In this sense, a building that is referred to as a house can become a home place if it accommodates people and fulfils their existential and

emotional needs irrespective of its quotidian banality.[25] As Tuan has written in this regard:

> A house is a relatively simple building. It is a place, however, for many reasons. It provides shelter; its hierarchy of spaces answers social needs; it is a field of care, a repository of memories and dreams. (Tuan, 1977, p. 164)

In other words, the notion of house comprises a number of dimensions: it is a physical structure (a building with architectonic properties), a functional space (a shelter and an accommodation) and a place of dwelling (home).

Strikingly, this tripartite interpretation of the phenomenon of house resembles the perceived-conceived-lived iteration of Lefebvre's (1991) spatial triad. Crucially, in his analysis of the production of space, Lefebvre explores the contradictory relationship between the lived space (home) and the conceived space (house as a socio-economic function – housing). Housing, in this view, denotes functional abstraction that promotes commodification of dwellings-houses and alienation of dwellers from (ontological) dwelling. Lefebvre's outlook, therefore, can been used to situate phenomenological place-focused view of house as home within a wider socio-spatial web of capitalist relations and provide insights into why, for some, their houses do not pertain to homes.

Elsewhere, Lefebvre (2003b) has discussed the space/place dialectic of house and home in terms of habitat and habiting. He insists that modern capitalist urbanisation has promoted habitat as an ideology and practice of functional abstraction in the housing sphere:

> Habitat was imposed from above as the application of a homogeneous global and quantitative space, a requirement that "lived experience" allow itself to be enclosed in boxes, cages, or "dwelling machines." (Lefebvre, 2003b, p. 81)

The notion of habitat conveys the spatial dimension of the abstraction and colonisation of everyday life (Wilson, 2013, p. 371) as opposed to the concrete practice of habiting. The former notion, for Lefebvre, presents a reduction of human being (associated with habiting) to a set of basic acts such as eating, sleeping and reproducing (Lefebvre, 2003b, p. 81). Again, this suggests the contradiction between abstract/conceived and lived space, for as Elden observes that

[25] However, geographer Jessie Speer has argued that home can entail a radically different material vision. Studying homeless people's conception of domestic space, she has demonstrated that home for them does not necessitate the presence of permanent physical structures associated with buildings (Speer, 2017).

habiting "is an activity, a situation, whereas habitat is a function, a brutal material reality" (Elden, 2004a, p. 190).

Lefebvre's claim that habiting has been reduced to habitat notably resembles Heidegger's thesis on the crisis of dwelling (1971). Lefebvre concurs with Heidegger in that "lodging built on the basis of economic or technological dictates is as far removed from dwelling as the language of machines is from poetry" (Lefebvre, 2003a, p. 122).[26] The spread of rationalised, multipliable and standardised habitat is therefore seen as at odds with poetic dwelling and habiting. In drawing on Heideggerian notion of poetic dwelling, as well as Bachelardian oneiric home (curiously akin to 'a repository of memories and dreams' in Tuan's words), however, Lefebvre attempts not to diagnose modernity's vices but rather to bring attention to the unknown, overlooked and misunderstood within the everyday lived experience of inhabitants which opens up for the transformative potentialities. In this regard, Lefebvre has contended that the human being cannot dwell or "possess a dwelling in which he lives, without also possessing something more (or less) than himself: his relation to the possible and the imaginary" (Lefebvre, 2003b, p. 82). This relation resides in habiting and dwelling as a domain of *praxis* and *poesis* that can be discovered, as was discussed above, even in the most mundane everyday existence. Therefore, the view that habiting has become subsumed under the abstracting and alienating forces of habitat is more complex if seen through Lefebvre's humanistic Marxist theoretical lens: habiting is not only colonised by habitat, but is nevertheless imbued with transformative potentiality for dis-alienation.

Such a practice-focused and agency-laden conceptualisation of habiting translates into spatial terms through two interconnected notions of (economic and technological) domination and appropriation in relation to physical and natural environments (Lefebvre, 2003a, p. 130). The latter concept, appropriation, is said to be the closest approximation of Lefebvre's understanding of dwelling (Stanek, 2011, p. 87). Appropriation as an inherently qualitative and, ultimately, poetic practice denotes the possibility of shaping (lived) space within the overarching social and cultural framework (or, for

[26] This resembles Peter King's critique of the conceptualisation of housing as a quantifiable, measurable and controllable phenomenon. Although King's (2004) thesis on private dwelling is too introspective, it provides an invaluable pledge to focus on the lived aspect of housing as potentially lost in the prevailing associations of housing with housing policy.

that matter, conceived space).[27] In a preface to a study of the lived experiences of residents in Pessac neighbourhood in Bordeaux (designed by Le Corbusier), Lefebvre has written on the appropriation of the planned space of a housing estate as follows:

> Instead of installing themselves in their containers, instead of adapting to them and living in them 'passively', they decided that as far as possible they were going to live 'actively'. In doing so they showed what living in a house really is: an activity. They took what had been offered to them and worked on it, converted it, added to it. (Lefebvre, 1972, n.p.)

The rearrangement and modification of the planned space of a neighbourhood occurs markedly at the level of everyday life and, as such, falls within the scope of the inhabitants' lived experience. Turning back to the phenomenological notion of dwelling, spatial appropriation can be seen as a process of home-making in which the residents actively seek to make houses they live in into their homes. This process, as was suggested above, could be discovered if the experiential character of place is acknowledged, a claim made by humanistic geographers. Strikingly, writing coincidently with Lefebvre, Buttimer likewise remarks that the everyday life in residential areas is a condition of becoming that arises "when resident communities engage in creative dialogue with their environments, molding, re-creating and eventually appropriating them as home" (Buttimer, 1972, p. 281). As such, in the everyday life and experience Buttimer sees the possibility of 'at homeness' and identification with place despite the prevailing housing "model of fitting a population into an environment prefabricated on the basis of technological, political, and economic constraints" (ibid., p. 313). Unlike Lefebvre, Buttimer does not explicitly take issue with the capitalist variety of spatial production, which nevertheless does not make her work less political as she calls for a need of a dialogue between residents, on the one hand, and planners and politicians, on the other hand, for the benefit of the former. What is particular to her account, of course, is the starting point in place and (built) environment and, thus, the focus on place-based human experience which she emphasises within the wider social space framework. It is this phenomenological, humanistic geography outlook that asserts the importance of home and dwelling to house and housing

[27] Interestingly, Lefebvre notes the differences in lived experiences between different housing forms as he maintains that in a detached house, poetic dwelling is possible as its environment can be creatively rearranged – as opposed to the rigid and inflexible space of housing estates that is already provided for tenants or co-owners and is hardly convertible (see Lefebvre, 2003a, p. 130).

(cf. Davidson, 2009) which enables the discovery of the lived qualities of otherwise functionally (and economically) abstracted phenomena and suggests the possibilities for their dis-alienation.

On a final note here, the practical aspect of everyday life in residential areas has to be considered from the phenomenological standpoint. Some geographers cited above (for example, Buttimer, 1976; Seamon, 1979a) have discussed how human environmental experience associated with habitual, routinised and often pre-reflective, preconscious context of daily life (referred to as lifeworld) renders places meaningful and significant for their inhabitants' existence.[28] This humanistic observation finds similarities with Lefebvre's critical analysis of everyday life, yet seeks to probe into it as a phenomenon, as it were. The understanding of place through the focus on its embodied experience by its users and inhabitants is faced, however, with a problem of what Buttimer terms the 'insider's trap'. She writes:

> [O]ne lives in places and may be so immersed in the particulars of everyday life and action that he or she may see no point in questioning the taken-for-granted or in seeing home in its wider spatial or social context. (Buttimer, 1980, p. 172)

The outsiders, conversely, may be all too aware of the socio-spatial context, but their view can be abstracted from the concrete reality of specific places. Just as Davidson (2009) has maintained in regard to housing studies, the understanding of spatial processes and their social consequences needs to recognise the importance of place and its lived experience, since it is through place and experience that the socio-spatial relations are enacted and negotiated in the space/place dialectic. It is, then, the task of the inquiring outsider, the researcher, to bring the matters of place, home and everyday life to the fore by empirically engaging with the practices and experiences of people whose emplacement is sought to be comprehended. Accordingly, the following chapter will present the methods and materials used in the present study of residents' lived experiences in avant-garde housing estates in Moscow.

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[28] Seamon (1979a) has also developed the notion of place ballet that signals a set of routinised and habitual practices combined in space-time. He argues that the coming together of multiple place ballets in one location enables at-homeness and dwelling. Seamon's insight is clearly inspired by Jane Jacobs' notion of sidewalk ballet (J. Jacobs, 1961).

3 Method and material

The choice of a place-focused and humanistic theoretical framework for this thesis suggests a need for a qualitative, interpretive and participatory way of understanding people's lived experiences and relationship with their worlds. Theoretical choices in favour of phenomenology and humanism reverberate, therefore, in the methodological choices as well. Given that the thesis seeks to understand the lived experiences of residents of housing estates, qualitative research methods seem to be the most relevant for achieving this: they enable a deep and detailed account of social subjects and phenomena, by providing tools for obtaining the subjective, personal, contingent and situated knowledge. Crucially, this qualitative phenomenological toolkit is well aligned with the Lefebvrian outlook and its ambition to capture the space/place dialectic by enabling the insights into the micro levels of lived space and everyday life. In considering individual environmental experiences and perceptions, the methodological approach here is informed by rather phenomenology than ethnography, as the latter assumes a focus on group practices and more participatory engagement which is not the case here (yet both disciplines largely share the methods utilised).

The first part of the chapter discusses the methodological implications of the chosen conceptual approach. It then relates case study research to phenomenology and problematises the cases in Moscow chosen as empirical foci. Afterwards, the research methods and the empirical material enabling this study are discussed. The chapter concludes with a reflection on researcher positionality, and particularly a situation of doing a study 'back home'.

Phenomenological approaches in geography

> Phenomenology is a way of thinking that enables us to see clearly something that is, in effect, right before our eyes yet somehow obscured from us – something so taken for granted that it is ignored or allowed to be disguised by a cloak of abstractions. (Relph, 1985, pp. 15–16)

Humanistic geography, by putting human nature at the very centre of its inquiry, has correspondingly employed idiographic, intuitive and qualitative methods. This set of methods used by humanistic geographers in order to 'get into the minds' of people has been described as eclectic, in the sense that any method has been seen acceptable if it allows for an understanding of goals, meanings and values that humans attach to their environments (Entrikin, 1976). This lack of a clearly defined methodology prompted Neil Smith to claim that humanism is merely an attitude – in contrast to the closely related phenomenology which is more firmly rooted in both philosophy and research practice and therefore makes use of a range of specific methods (N. Smith, 1979). In a similar vein, Tuan has indicated that humanistic geography work would be a "disjoint esoterica" unless it rests upon a solid philosophical foundation, "for philosophy raises fundamental questions of epistemology to which [one] can seek exemplifications in the real world" and also prescribes methodology for studying various human phenomena (Tuan, 1976, p. 275). For Tuan and many other scholars who have been associated with humanistic geography, it is phenomenology that provides the necessary theoretical and methodological grounding which enables the exploration of human subjects.

Phenomenology has been argued to offer responsive methods that are adaptable to the 'form and character' of the subject of study (Relph, 1989) and, in a more general sense, a way of understanding that requires openness and attentiveness (Seamon, 1979b). Phenomenologists conceive of all knowledge as acquired through the world of experience and – contra Cartesian *a priori* assumption – not independent of that world (Relph, 1970).[29] In other words, phenomenology avoids abstractions and preconceived conceptual and theoretical constructions particular to positivist inquiry in favour of first-hand modes of research. Therefore, phenomenological investigation involves direct observation, encounter, engagement and participation as primary methodological approaches that all put humans and their relationships between each other and with places in the spotlight.

Among the phenomenologically-inspired approaches applied within human geography, description and interpretation seem to stand out. As such, phenomenology attempts to inquire into human life-world, the taken-for-granted, mundane and routinised context of

[29] In this vein, drawing from Merleau-Ponty, Buttimer has argued against the distinction between subjective and objective modes of knowing, claiming that "[o]ne must reject any scientific cause-effect models of subject and object, and conceptualize the relationship between bodysubject and world as reciprocally determining one another" (Buttimer, 1976, p. 283).

everyday life that rarely becomes an object of conscious attention (Buttimer, 1976). It does so by means of accurate and rigorous documentation and "descriptive clarification" of phenomena and events – as opposed to objective, positivist modes of study that seek explanation[30] and causality (Seamon, 1979a, p. 21). Elsewhere, Seamon (2000) has referred to this as a method of radical empiricism, asserting that phenomenological understanding comes from researcher's first-hand, grounded involvement with the phenomenon. Description and interpretation also serve as verification and validation criteria: a phenomenologist attempts to provide such an account of place and experience that could make sense and be recognisable to somebody else (either those studied or the readers) in such a way that it could resonate with their own sensibilities and provide a sense of immersion into the studied 'reality' (see Relph, 1989; Rodaway, 2006).

Phenomenological research allows for both direct contact with a phenomenon (that is, the researcher's own participation in experience akin to autoethnography) and getting insights into experiences of individuals and groups in particular situations and places. In this regard, Paul Rodaway (2006) distinguishes between two possible research strategies: the first one is based on empathetic and experiential knowing in order to allow the phenomenon to 'speak for itself' to the researcher, while the second one builds upon the idea of interpersonal knowing and shared knowledge production through a more participatory engagement of the researcher with individuals and communities. Alluding to that latter strategy, Graham Rowles (1978) has argued that it moves beyond conventional participant observation by emphasising mutual exploration and discovery resulting in the generation of experientially grounded descriptions.[31] This thesis employs the second strategy to study the everyday life experiences of residents in Moscow's avant-garde housing estates. It accordingly utilises a range of methods of interpersonal knowing, mainly in-depth interviews but also less structured exchange of reflections and observations during walking interviews and, in a few instances, informal explorations of the neighbourhoods or selected buildings.

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[30] Even if explanation is pursued, in phenomenology, according to sociologist Patrik Aspers (2009), it still needs to be grounded in the subjective experiences of people studied, or rather in their meaning structure (that is, the ways that people relate to and understand phenomena).

[31] Interestingly, Rowles (1978, p. 187) has characterised description and interpretation at the post-interaction stage as a process of translation – in that the conclusions are unavoidably researcher's own but they need to convey participant's subjective knowing; in case of this thesis, translation (given that I conducted the interviews in Russian and write in English) has taken place both figuratively and literally.

Despite the idiographic nature of humanistic inquiry, it does not preclude the possibility of identifying shared experiences and conditions between human subjects (that is, intersubjectivity), as exemplified by Seamon's (1979a) seminal study of group environmental experience. Indeed, research within humanistic geography has often involved case study research with a goal to register common trends and topics that can be relevant in other contexts and places. On this point, Susan Smith (1984) has linked humanism to pragmatism, a philosophy of action grounded in everyday life, with its focus on experienced reality and a commitment to practical purpose of knowing. In response to criticisms of subjectivity and idiosyncrasy often aimed at descriptive ethnography, Smith has suggested that analytical, interpretive case studies offer a rigorous and logically sound methodology which anchors case material within chosen humanistic (or, for that matter, phenomenological) theoretical framework. As such, the validity of a case study, and generalisations from it, relies not on the representativeness or experimental replicability criteria but rather on the logical consistency of researcher's argumentation and reasoning which develops as the researcher accumulates knowledge and experience – hence developing understanding – of the studied matter (S. J. Smith, 1984, p. 359).[32]

A case study in Moscow

Case study, a close examination of particular phenomenon, is a common strategy in urban research. It enables a deep immersion into the subject and an advanced awareness and understanding from within the context, which is conducive to a phenomenological study. For this thesis, the case study of avant-garde housing estates in Moscow has generated situated empirical knowledge of this type of dwelling and provided experiential insights into everyday lives and meaning-making of residents. This section will briefly consider the case study approach and its implications in general, and the construction of Moscow case in particular.

[32] Elsewhere, Smith (1981) has addressed a related challenge of communicating the experiential insights generated by case studies to those who cannot experience them first-hand. She argues that while much humanistic geography has been concerned with experiencing and describing qualities of place, another important issue of researcher's subjective interpretive role has gone under the radar. Explicit acknowledgement of this role, according to Smith, supports the academic credibility of humanistic inquiry while highlighting its unique capacity to "accommodate man's idiosyncracies, inconsistencies and uncertanties" (S. J. Smith, 1981, p. 297).

Some concerns have been voiced that one cannot generalise from a single case or that case studies are too arbitrary and tend to confirm the researcher's own preconceived ideas; Bent Flyvbjerg has consistently rebutted these charges, highlighting rather the advantages of case study approach (Flyvbjerg, 2001, 2006). For one, he has reasoned that since case study entails direct contact with the reality, it can be instrumental in the production of concrete, practical knowledge which may reinforce research reliability and validity hence undermining its falsifiability (Flyvbjerg, 2001, Chapter 6). In this view, a researcher who is doing an in-depth case study benefits from the proximity to either the phenomenon (enabling the first-hand experience of it) or to those who are in the focus of research (enabling their feedback, or intersubjective exchange). From a phenomenological standpoint, this helps to avoid falling for the preconceived theories and concepts and to directly (and empirically) engage with the studied matter. Furthermore, Flyvbjerg (ibid.) has argued that a single (yet strategically chosen) purely descriptive, phenomenological case study without any attempt to generalise can be as crucial for scientific development as explanatory and predictive studies (see also Herbert, 2010). In this instance, case study is seen to take strategic advantages associated with "the power of the good example" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 77) generating empirically sound knowledge and understanding of the research subject by going 'deep' rather than 'wide' or general. Again, from a phenomenological standpoint, this approach promotes first-hand research methods, such as interviews and participant observations, instrumental in generating 'thick' descriptions and interpretations of subjective experiences of the phenomena in question.

The quality of description underlies the case's potential for theory-building, which is further amplified if the chosen case is representative of the phenomenon the researcher is intended to investigate. The selection of cases for this thesis – avant-garde housing estates in Moscow – seeks to gain insights into the lifeworlds of their inhabitants while also providing a more general evidence about everyday life in post-Soviet, capitalist housing.

Constructing the case

According to Herbert (2010), there are three strategies for selecting the case(s): picking a representative case (a single phenomenon representative of a larger class), picking an anomalous case (a phenomenon which differs from others in the same category), or taking up a comparative approach (thus expanding theoretical understandings by

highlighting the similarities and differences between two or more instances within the group). While five housing areas in Moscow are chosen as empirical foci, this study does not differentiate between these and treats them all as representative of a particular type of housing – avant-garde, or constructivist, housing estates originally built for workers. Moreover, the findings of this study are intended to reverberate more broadly beyond just the avant-garde type of housing and contribute to the understanding of the capitalist housing experience in a more general sense. Notwithstanding the undeniable differences between five estates (in terms of location within Moscow, population size and social structure, tenure and property forms, design solutions, heritage status, to name just a few), studying these differences hence lies outside of the scope of this thesis.

The selection of cases to study is motivated by the fact that Moscow as a capital of the Soviet Union was on the forefront of avant-garde architecture experimentation in the 1920-30s, and nowadays boasts a rich legacy of this period which is still in active use. A study by the Moscow General Planning Research and Project Institute in 2012 identified 26 housing estates dating back to the avant-garde era (Solovieva & Tsareva, 2012). This thesis is focused on five estates: Budenovsky, Dubrovka, Khavsko-Shabolovsky, Nizhnyaya Presnya and Usachevka. When choosing these estates, I looked for those matching three requirements: a large number of houses and social amenities (suggesting a higher degree of accomplishment of the original architects' and planners' ideas), not in a dilapidated state (meaning that the residents are not faced with the prospect of rehousing, except for those on the municipal housing waiting list), and historical and architectural significance (either listed or considered valuable by experts). The chosen housing estates will be described in more detail in Chapter 4.

Having picked out these areas, I had to decide on how to study the lived experiences of their residents. Initially, I was keen on doing a more longitudinal study which would trace lifeworlds of residents throughout the 20th century until today, cutting through the Soviet and post-Soviet epoch. During my first fieldwork in Moscow, I spent time working with archival material; while I could access professional periodicals of the 1920-30s, looking for early-Soviet-era written evidence and memoires which could give me some cues about people's lives in avant-garde housing proved to be extremely labour-intensive and time-consuming, so I gave up on this idea. I therefore had to resort to acquiring the living, oral, accounts of long-term housing experience in the chosen study areas. This confronted me with the

challenge of finding informants who were born before the Russian Revolution of 1917 (and hence remembering moving into the avant-garde-era housing), and willing (and being able) to talk to me. Given these constraints, I finally decided not to limit my scope to only the lifelong housing stories and instead pursued the accounts of both short- and long-term residents. In so doing, I hope I managed to gain both the insights into the experience of inhabitants of avant-garde houses and also more general accounts of everyday life in post-Soviet, capitalist housing.

Research methods and empirical material

As I mentioned before, the choice of qualitative methods for this study is motivated by their capacity to register human meanings, feelings, perceptions and attitudes which is aligned with the overall phenomenological outlook. Qualitative methods provide the necessary tools and optics for elucidating human environments and social processes as well as individual and collective (social, cultural) knowledge of these (Winchester & Rofe, 2010). As such, qualitative research enables the inquiry into both the smaller-scale individual lived experience and the larger-scale societal structures conditioning this experience. The possibility of analytically connecting the two across the multitude of scales renders qualitative methods as compellingly well-aligned with the theoretical framework chosen for this thesis. Within housing research, application of qualitative methodology has also been noted to yield an understanding of the relationship between subjective everyday experiences of housing and wider social, economic and regulatory forces influencing these experiences (Perkins et al., 2008).

The research methods used in this thesis include two different types of interviews (more conventional sedentary interviews and walking interviews) and the accompanying observations, as well as supplementary methods (a survey, studies of the archival material and media analysis). The empirical material underlying the analysis was collected during two fieldworks in Moscow in July-August 2016 and May-August 2017 and over the course of shorter visits to Moscow throughout 2016-2018. What follows is an integrated discussion of methods and the empirical material that has been generated, processed and analysed with the help of these methods.

Interviewing

This thesis primarily builds upon the interview material. It is through various types of interviews that I could contextualise and understand the experiences of those living in avant-garde housing estates in Moscow. In total, I conducted 42 interviews, out of which 31 interviews with local residents in five study areas and 11 interviews with architecture historians and preservation activists. The interviews with residents lay down the phenomenological foundation for the study, while the interviews with activists and experts on residential avant-garde architecture provide additional context information, helping to link meaning and structure in the analysis.

Interview methodologies usually aim for depth and detailed understanding rather than breadth and coverage and are therefore often associated with case study approaches (McDowell, 2010, p. 158). However, the main motivation for relying so heavily on this particular methodology in this study is due to the fact that interviews are crucial for grasping people's lived experiences and meaning-making of their social worlds:

> [T]he aim of an interview is <…> to understand how individual people experience and make sense of their own lives. The emphasis is on considering the meanings people attribute to their lives and the processes which operate in particular social contexts. (Valentine, 2005, p. 111)

Since interviews can register a variety of emotions, meanings and experiences, this method is instrumental in producing 'thick' narratives and descriptions and also leaves room for interpretive work in a phenomenological fashion.

Interviewing is also a responsive method as it provides an interactive platform for dynamic social exchange helping to mould and adjust questions or research focus and scope in general, from one interview to another or even in the very process of interviewing. From a methodological viewpoint, an interview allows the researcher to explore social worlds in a less predetermined way, reflecting respondent's meaning structures rather than researcher's own (Aspers, 2009, p. 8). The questions or topics discussed during an interview are necessarily guided by the theory that the researcher has chosen as a frame of reference. However, instead of having a strictly defined structure which might impose too many constraints and limit respondent participation and collaboration, an interview in a phenomenological inquiry is usually of a more open-ended, semi- or non-structured character. This leaves a great deal of openness in order to prompt reciprocal and interactive character of the encounter, so that

the "interview exchange is more of a collaboration rather than an interrogation" (McDowell, 2010, p. 162). This also makes it easier to adjust the questions on the go, hence reflecting and reacting upon the interview situation; something I came to appreciate when conducting the fieldwork.

In collecting the data, I relied mainly on semi-structured interviewing, both when conducting sedentary interviews and walking interviews. Before going 'into the field', I developed an interview guide that touched upon the topics in line with the overall theoretical outlook (see Appendix A). I followed and continuously updated the guide in course of my fieldwork, especially after I realised the need to also address the topics of tenure and property against the backdrop of the unfolding citywide housing development initiatives (see Chapter 4 for background information). In my experience, I appreciated semi-structured interviewing for being a very flexible form of exchange stimulating creativity both on interviewer's and interviewee's part. For instance, I could reshuffle the order of questions depending on the interview situation, and I could also come up with additional, improvised questions if I wanted the respondents to clarify something or immediately react to the details in the built environment or social life we noticed on the walks in the housing areas. Furthermore, a more conversational and responsive nature of semi-structured interviews encouraged the respondents to share their experiences of housing and highlight what was important personally to them even without me directly asking about that.

The place where an interview is conducted can have important implications. By attending to interview locations, the researcher can gain valuable insights into the everyday lives of respondents since "interview site itself produces 'micro-geographies' of spatial relations and meaning, where multiple scales of social relations intersect in the research interview" (Elwood & Martin, 2000, p. 649). Interview location can therefore provide an important contextual information and be in itself of analytical interest. I took photographs of the houses and neighbourhoods where the interviews took place,[33] which later on served as reminders and facilitators of analysis, and are also used as illustrations in the text. Throughout my research, the role of the interview setting and environment appeared to be especially relevant in case of walking interviews which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

[33] Pictures in respondents' flats were taken with their permission. Interestingly, the pictures I took using my mobile phone camera were georeferenced by default, so I could easily locate the interview situations, which aided my analysis.

The 'micro-geographies' of interviews have to be considered not only due to their analytical value but also in relation to the interview situation as such. As per usual, I tried to make the respondents feel at ease and let them choose of an interview location. While the interviews with experts and activists took place either at cafés or at their workplaces, interviews with residents were mainly conducted at their homes or, given that I conducted the second fieldwork in the summer of 2017, outdoors in the courtyards – unless a walking interview was agreed upon. Talking to people at their homes can facilitate a more relaxed conversation and allows to observe the respondents in their own environment (Valentine, 2005, p. 118). Given the focus of this thesis on the experience of housing, meeting the respondents where they live – either in their flats or in the housing area – allowed me to get a better understanding of respondents' spatial attitudes and meanings embedded in the context of their everyday lives. This was achieved by various means, be it by respondents showing me documents and photos from their family archives, sharing anecdotes and information in relation to particular design and architectural features of their flats and houses, commenting on the view from the window, or giving me a tour of their flats during which I could pose questions in a more spontaneous manner.[34] On a number of occasions, the respondents gave me a tour of their housing estates, in which case the interviews were conducted on the move.

Walking interviews

Besides the more traditional sedentary interviews, this study took advantage of a more experimental technique: walking, or go-along, interview. Walking interviews enable engaging with respondents 'on the move' while being physically situated in the studied area. This simultaneous interaction and emplacement 'in the field' has been said to facilitate the researcher's understanding of local social and environmental context and also provide better insights into the meanings of place in everyday experiences and practices of respondents (see Anderson, 2004; Carpiano, 2009; Kusenbach, 2003). Moreover, in a walking interview, respondents tend to focus more on the spatial and physical features of place, and to do so with less prompting by the interviewer – in contrast to a sedentary interview (Evans & Jones, 2011). A walking interview also allows the researcher to establish the

[34] During one of these tours, the interviewee showed me around the communal flat and explained the inner-workings of shared use of kitchen, bathroom and corridor. During another tour, the respondent and I managed to explore the now uninhabited dormitory part of the building which still kept some traces of the original design of the late 1920s.

relationship between what people say and where they say it, thus balancing between the respective personal, humanistic accounts of certain places and the spatial, locational data associated with the interpersonal exchange (ibid.). In this view, walking interviews enable probing into the people's lived experiences as grounded in place. This thesis makes use of this method in order to further explore the situated, place-based understandings of residents' housing experiences in the chosen five avant-garde housing estates in Moscow.

In total, 10 out of 31 conversations with the local residents took form of walking interviews; of these, three started as walking interviews and ended as sit-down interviews. Two interviews with preservation activists were also conducted on the move while exploring two of the housing estates. I did not deliberately pursue this particular type of interviewing, suggesting only that I would be happy to meet with the respondents for either a sedentary or a walking interview – as long as they would introduce me to their housing area and their experiences of it. As a result, some respondents agreed on answering my questions while walking, whereas others offered me a guided tour of their housing estates on their own initiative. In both cases, this mode of interpersonal exchange seemed very natural as we were present in the environment while discussing its qualities and experiences. These place-based discussions were led primarily by the interviewees (similar to the 'hand-off' approach used by Evans & Jones, 2011), and I would only follow the interview guide while we were transitioning from one location to another. As a rule, I would primarily follow the direction of the conversation given by the informants and only ask for clarifications when needed.

During the walking interviews, respondents referred to different elements and features in the built environment of their housing estates, for example, highlighting the social amenities they (used to) frequent, acknowledging or complaining about the examples of good/bad maintenance and infrastructure, pointing to the architectural and design elements they found remarkable, and so on. In all these instances, the informants would share personal anecdotes and other miscellanea including childhood and/or adulthood memories, references to neighbours, reflections about neighbourhood activism – all of which provided me with a 'thick' contextualisation of their housing-related experiences. Just as in case of the sedentary interviews, during the walking interviews I used a voice recorder, articulating the addresses in the recording for geo-locating the interview points and mapping them for my reference and further analysis (see Figure 1). The combination of both conventional sit-down interviews

and walking interviews enriched my understanding of meanings and experiences that the residents associated with their housing areas. In this sense, physically situating the conversations in the study context allowed for a place-based and place-informed exploration of residents' lifeworlds.

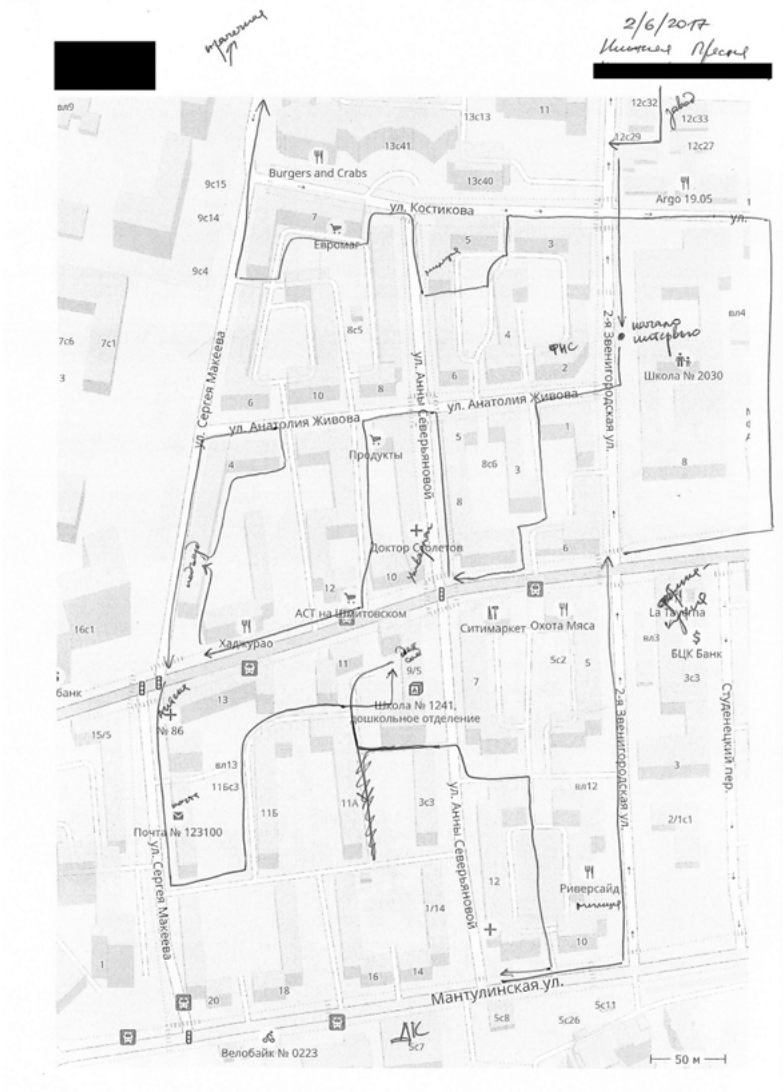

Figure 1. A sketch map of a walking interview in Nizhnyaya Presnya estate. Source: author's own.

A note on sampling

During the first fieldwork in Moscow in summer 2016, I aimed at getting acquainted with the phenomenon of residential avant-garde architecture and also deciding on the case study areas. At that stage, I got in touch with Alexandra Selivanova, curator at the Avant-Garde Centre and Museum, who I met at a free guided tour of Usachevka estate in July 2016. Alexandra introduced me to a number of architecture historians and preservation activists, and also gave me advice on where I could find relevant information on the type of housing I was interested in. Around the same time, I also contacted *Arkhnadzor*, an independent heritage preservation watchdog, which was resisting the demolition of Pogodinskaya housing estate earlier that year, asking for more contacts. With the help of these referrals, I managed to conduct seven interviews with experts and activists and did archival studies accompanied by the site visits – all providing me with the rich context information. It also enabled me to shortlist the five housing areas that I came back to during the second fieldwork.

In the following summer of 2017, I came back to Moscow to perform the main, phenomenological study of the chosen avant-garde housing estates. I purposefully utilised the network of contacts I established during the previous visit in order to get in touch with the residents. Later on, I recruited new participants through the social networks of those previously interviewed, utilising the snowball sampling approach. Besides that, I met new respondents at the opening of the permanent exhibition at the Avant-Garde Museum in Shabolovka on 7 June 2017 and at the meeting of local residents of Danilovsky District of Moscow the following day; on both occasions, I recruited respondents living in Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate and the adjacent constructivist quarters. Additionally, I approached two interviewees simply in the street: one when conducting the survey and another while waiting for a scheduled interview. Finally, I found one of the respondents in Nizhnyaya Presnya estate through a local residents' group on a popular online social networking service.

When applying the snowball sampling, the ambivalent role of gatekeepers has to be considered. They can be both obstacles and facilitators providing access to and increasing acceptance among the potential participants (Campbell et al., 2006). During my fieldworks I managed to experience both the advantages and limitations associated with relying on gatekeepers. Speaking of the advantages, my contacts at *Arkhnadzor* and the Avant-Garde Museum helped me to get in touch with residents in the housing areas that I was not familiar with. Speaking of the limitations, one example is illustrative: a respondent

in Dubrovka estate who introduced me to other participants admitted that he sympathised with people who were in favour of staying put and that he barely knew people from across the road (that is, from the listed part of Dubrovka which is protected from demolition and relocation), while acknowledging that this could potentially bias the representation of my sample. In order to control for this, I had to recruit additional respondents on my own.

My final comments on the qualities of the sample concern its composition and size. When recruiting the residents for interviewing, I selected only those living specifically in the avant-garde-era houses. I also conducted interviews with both short- and long-term residents (the duration of residence in my sample varies between 2 and 85 years). Other criteria for selection of respondents, such as gender, age and class, were not intentionally pursued (yet, of course, I was aware of these), which nevertheless still allowed me to achieve what I perceive as a rather balanced sample, including a variety of perspectives (see Appendix B). Two other criteria that I did not deliberately account for when designing the study concerned the proportion of homeowners and tenants as well as communal flat residents in my interview sample. Out of 31 respondents, 28 owned their flats, and while this suggests a significant (90 percent) overrepresentation of owners over renters in the sample, it still corresponds to the high homeownership rate in Moscow as a whole at 80 percent in 2017 (*Zhilishchnoye khozyaystvo v Rossii*, 2019). Furthermore, I only managed to interview three residents in communal flats; although this accounts for less than 10 percent of the sample, it is still proportionately higher than the Moscow average at 2.9 percent of the population, according to the 2010 Census (*Vserossiyskaya perepis' naseleniya*, 2013), and is on par with the results of the survey I conducted (15 percent on aggregate in all five studied estates – see more on the survey below). Yet still, while the resulting sample may be at least partially representative of the general population of Moscow, it reflects, at the same time, the prevailing narratives of homeowners living in separate (as opposed to communal) flats, which will be evident particularly in Chapter 6.

As far as the interview sample size is concerned, there seems to be no blueprint to follow in qualitative research in human geography (Hitchings & Latham, 2020). The common appeals to data 'saturation' in social sciences for justifying the presented sample size have been criticised for overlooking other criteria such as adequacy and appropriateness of collected data (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Within humanistic geography, the issue of sample size has been resolved in favour of discovery rather than verification and replicability; in this

sense, having a small number of participants enables the depth of insight into the phenomenon even if at the cost of the breadth of generalisation (see Rowles, 1978, pp. 186–187).[35] Resolving to stop collecting the empirical material having conducted 31 interviews with the residents, I went by the realisation of achieving a reasonable amount of knowledge and experience – and hence understanding from within the context – as well as more down-to-earth time constraints considerations. Either way, I hope that I managed to fulfil Smith's criteria for adequate and logically consistent communication of experiential insights gained 'in the field' for those who cannot experience them first-hand (see S. J. Smith, 1981, 1984). Attentive readers can thus make judgements for themselves regarding the quality of the sample.

Working with the interview material

All the interviews were conducted in Russian and recorded with permission. In order to guarantee the anonymity of the respondents, I do not refer to them by their real names in the text. The recorded interviews were transcribed following the fieldwork, and the resulting textual material was analysed with the help of Atlas.Ti software. Aware of both the advantages and limitations of employing a qualitative data analysis software, while aiming to carry out a phenomenological study, I confined myself to only using it for the purpose of a more convenient storage and organisation of the interview data. As such, I read the interview transcripts, listened to the original interview recordings and read over the transcripts again – in order to identify a set of themes (in concert with the overall theoretical outlook of my thesis) and to select quotations in support of the narratives underlying the three empirical chapters. The chosen quotations were later on translated into English.

Having collected, organised and reworked the interview data into a set of themes and associated quotations, I started developing the empirical chapters. The very process of writing can be approached as a method of qualitative research in itself: it "leads not just to the reporting of research results, but to new understandings of what it is the research reveals, understandings gleaned while we write" (DeLyser, 2010, p. 344). In this sense, the writing process involved constant communication and mediation between the text and the empiri-

[35] Rowles (1978) also mentions the issue of self-selection of participants stemming from the difficulties in conveying the intentions of a phenomenological inquiry, which could further limit the enlisting of respondents and, ultimately, negatively affect the resulting sample size.

cal material which helped me to sharpen the focus and scope of the thesis in general, define the themes of each empirical chapter reflecting the corresponding research questions, and decide on the most interesting and illustrative quotations to be included in the text. The active feedback between the text and the empirical material, by way of writing, aided the interpretive work and the elaboration of description pursued in the phenomenological study. Finally, writing also enabled the integration of supplementary data with the main interview material.

Supplementary material

Although this thesis primarily builds upon the interview material, it also relies on extensive supplementary empirical material collected through the survey and the analysis of archival and media sources. In what follows, I will briefly describe these various data. I will not, however, go into much detail about the analysis of this additional information as it mainly serves the purpose of better contextualisation of the primary, interview-based, empirical material and does not underlie the phenomenological inquiry per se. At the same time, this supplementary material was key to understanding the historical and contemporary context of the studied areas which corresponds well to the associated Lefebvrian outlook of my study.

In order to get more background information about the five housing estates chosen for the study, I collected descriptive statistics on the building stock and the tenure structure (see Appendix C). These data are publicly available from the Housing and Utilities Reform Fund website (https://www.reformagkh.ru) and from the Unified State Register of Property Rights and Transactions (https://rosreestr.ru). For a more 'quantitative' glimpse of the population of these housing estates, I conducted a survey consisting of 18 questions about the residents' perceived housing conditions, spatial and vernacular features of neighbourhoods, uses of space, and socio-economic indicators (see Appendix D for the questionnaire form and Appendix E for the aggregated results). The survey was carried out in several stages: a pilot street survey in Dubrovka estate in August 2017 (by myself), online survey in Budenovsky estate from August 2017 until May 2018 (the questionnaire was published on the online blog managed by a group of residents), and a street survey in Nizhnyaya Presnya, Usachevka and Khavsko-Shabolovsky estates in May 2018 (by a field assistant). In total, the survey yielded 271 answers; this corresponds to a 95 percent confidence level (the probability of an

accurate representation of population) and a confidence interval (the range of deviation of the population's responses from the sample's) of approximately 6 percent – considering the total population of five estates is about 25 thousand people. The survey results provide supportive evidence throughout the thesis.

My first fieldwork in summer 2016 was concerned, among other things, with collecting material in order to frame the historical background of my project. In doing so, I studied the early Soviet professional periodicals at the Russian State Library and the Central Scientific and Technical Library for Construction and Architecture in Moscow. In total, I studied 11 titles (including the renowned *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* [Construction of Moscow] and *Sovremennaya Arkhitektura* [Contemporary Architecture]) spanning years 1923-39, taking notes and scanning the plans, sketches and images of the avant-garde housing estates that I would visit later on. I additionally visited the photo archive of the Schusev State Museum of Architecture in July 2017 to work with the historical pictures of my study areas. These data were used as a reference material helping me to better contextualise the studied cases and providing illustrations for the historical background chapter (Chapter 4). Before, during and after the fieldworks, I also stayed updated about the current developments in Moscow concerning the constructivist housing estates by monitoring the thematic online news media and also the local residents' groups on various online social networking services. This helped associating the phenomenological insights and understanding I gained from the interviews with the citywide situation at a more structural level.

Reflections on researcher positionality

The discussion of methods used to collect, organise and analyse the empirical material would be incomplete without a consideration of the researcher's subject position in these processes. As was shown above, his thesis relies heavily on interpersonal exchange as a primary mode of knowing. What this implies are various – and inescapable – context and power effects stemming from the embeddedness of the researcher and research participants in a wider field of social relations (Burawoy, 1998). In this sense, an interview has been contended to be not a transparent, straightforward exchange of information but "a complex and contested social encounter riven with power relations" (McDowell, 2010, p. 161). Furthermore, the researcher is always necessarily socially situated, which means that all knowledge is condi-

tioned by a particular combination of a researcher and a social context s/he is embedded in (Jensen & Glasmeier, 2010). Somewhat paradoxically, this very situatedness is precisely what enables the researcher to delve into the subjectivities of human life and gain insights into its everyday workings. Realisation and acknowledgement of one's positionality is necessary, however, in order to ensure the integrity and credibility of research.

The production of knowledge is very much contingent on the subject position of a researcher. In my case, being a Russian national employed at a Swedish university and doing research in my hometown in Russia calls for reflection. My subject position 'in the field' was characterised by a certain degree of in-betweenness: as a 'returning researcher' carrying out a study 'back home' I never found myself being a complete outsider but rather a half-insider (see Mandiyanike, 2009; McFarlane-Morris, 2019; Zhao, 2017, for related discussions concerning other global contexts). The ways in which I might have recognised myself as an insider or an outsider in certain social situations because of my international academic affiliation could have differed, however, from how I was seen by the subjects of my study. Awareness of researcher positionality should therefore involve not only a self-reflection of one's own position but also a critical assessment of the "perceived position" one possesses in the field 'in the eyes and minds' of respondents (Borén, 2009, p. 106). The importance of this point becomes very relevant when considering the fact that my study was unfolding right in the midst of the debates about the citywide 'renovation' program announced earlier in spring 2017.

On the one hand, this situation might have affected the ease of getting hold of informants; in fact, one interviewee suggested that the degree of tension and mistrust towards the outsiders (that is, non-residents) had increased since the announcement of the program. On the other hand, even those who agreed to participate could have considered me speaking either on behalf of the city government (and pushing in favour of the program) or on behalf of the opposition; hence on a number of occasions I was confronted with questions like "who sent you to talk to us", "what are your goals really", "who ordered your study" and the like. The highly politicised atmosphere, which I was not really expecting prior to going into the field, has also at times provoked deliberately exaggerated responses such as "these houses are great", "I would never want to live in a newbuilt house", "we are ready to go to the barricades" etc. It is still unclear to me whether I received these reactions only because I was considered as

an outsider or an insider. Either way, I believe that since the participants in my study were readily sharing their accounts with me, it was indicative of a certain degree of trust that they felt towards me.

* * *

As was mentioned in the introductory chapter, the aim of this thesis is to explore the social meaning and function of avant-garde housing estates in Moscow from the perspective of their residents. I have so far outlined the theoretical and methodological framework designed to achieve this aim. However, before proceeding to the description and analysis of the empirical material, the readers need to immerse themselves into the context of Moscow. The following chapter will therefore present the necessary background information which will help in understanding the origins of avant-garde housing and its Soviet and post-Soviet geographies.

4 Setting the scene: avant-garde housing estates in Moscow, 1920s through 2010s

Avant-garde architecture is a truly unique phenomenon. Conceived during the fervent early years of the Soviet Union, it aimed at promoting a new, socialist way of life by means of particular aesthetics and functionality. Many of its examples which include administrative and industrial buildings, engineering constructions (such as the famous Shukhov Radio Tower) and workers' clubs are celebrated as landmarks nationally and internationally. However, its residential version, while more ordinary in terms of form, played perhaps an even more important ideological role by reaching out directly to the level of everyday life. Moreover, being the first instance of modern(ist) housing construction in Russia's history, avant-garde estates were an attempt (although a short-lived one) to improve the living conditions of the working class in particular. This, as well as the orientation to foster a collective ethos among the residents, distinguished Soviet avant-garde housing construction from similar functionalist developments of that time elsewhere (such as Bauhaus in Germany, *funkis* in Sweden as well as public housing projects in the Netherlands and in Red Vienna, Austria) that were aimed at cultivating enlightened and rational, albeit socially conscious, individuals. The post-Soviet trajectory of avant-garde estates in Moscow is, however, hardly different from other housing styles and types as it represents a rather familiar story of property privatisation and fragmentation since the introduction of a market economy in 1991, following the collapse of state socialism.

This chapter presents the historical and contemporary context for the study of lived experiences of residents in five of Moscow's avant-garde housing estates. The first part of the chapter presents the history of housing in early Soviet Moscow, the role of the avant-garde developments in it, and discusses their specifics. The second part of the chapter briefly describes the late Soviet perspectives on avant-garde housing. The chapter then introduces the five studied estates. The final part of the chapter provides contextual information on the post-Soviet housing market in Moscow and concludes with the dis-

cussion of two major housing development and improvement programs unfolding in 2017 as a backdrop for my second fieldwork.

Housing in Moscow during the first Soviet decades

The 1917 Russian Revolution and the Civil War that followed had manifold repercussions for all aspects of urban life in the beginning of the 20th century. As much as anything else, housing was severely affected, not only in terms of decline in absolute numbers of housing units due to devastation, but also in terms of depopulation and degradation of the remaining housing stock. In the wake of the Revolution, the population of Moscow halved, falling from two million people in 1917 down to one million in 1920, while the housing stock declined by one third, from nearly 14 million square metres in 1915 to 9.4 in 1920; by 1925, the population recovered and kept on growing, while the housing stock reached the pre-Revolutionary volumes only in the early 1930s (Popov (Sibiryak), 1926, pp. 2–3; Zheyts, 1928, p. 1). An enormous problem for the authorities, the acute housing shortage in Moscow[36] was further exacerbated by the unfolding industrialisation that, on the one hand, propelled urbanisation (and hence overcrowding), and, on the other hand, diverted capital from housing into other, more prioritised, sectors of the economy.

Initially, during the first years following the Revolution, the housing problem was solved by means of housing redistribution. Already in 1918, private property in cities was abolished and the right to urban land and buildings was transferred to the jurisdiction of municipalities. As of 1920, 70 percent of all housing stock in Moscow was municipalised or nationalised, and as of 1923 – 79 percent (*Statisticheskiy Yezhegodnik Moskvy*, 1927, pp. 136, 146). Housing redistribution triggered by the municipalisation involved either eviction of former landlords (mainly nobility, bourgeoisie and intelligentsia) from their properties or – for those allowed to stay – concentration (*uplotneniye*), meaning the confiscation of excess living space in favour of the proletariat. As a result, housing redistribution led to the formation of communal flats (*kommunalki*) where several families or unrelated individuals shared kitchen, toilet, bathroom, hallways and corridors. The life in communal flats, where space was shared by people from differ-

[36] Living space per capita declined from 7.4 square metres in 1913 to 6.8 in 1923, 5.3 in 1926, and further down to 4.15 in 1932 (Sosnovy, 1954, p. 112).

ent class backgrounds,[37] was both conflict-ridden and characterised by the atmosphere of camaraderie and mutual aid (Gerasimova, 1999). As of 1923, 71 percent of all flats in Moscow were communal (*Statisticheskiy Yezhegodnik Moskvy*, 1927, pp. 140–141).

Overcrowding and overexploitation of housing stock coupled with the lack of its municipal maintenance and current repairs because of the economic hardships exacerbated the housing crisis. In 1920, 75 percent of occupied flats were unsuitable for living due to the problems with heating, roof damage and non-functioning plumbing (Sosnovy, 1954, p. 39n10). In response to this dire situation, Vladimir Lenin wrote in a letter to the Soviet government in summer 1921 that housing had become "filthy" (cited in Lebina, 2015, p. 95). Therefore, although housing redistribution generally improved the living conditions of workers (see Lopyalo, 1932, p. 10) – even though mainly thanks to the low base effect – by the mid-1920s, the Soviet authorities realised that the housing problem could not be solved solely by means of redistribution of existing facilities and that the construction of new housing stock was necessary (Gurevich, 1924; Shmidt, 1929). In ideological terms, the new residential construction was to become an antithesis to the capitalist mode of housing provision for workers which was deemed as historically insufficient and unsatisfactory (Kozerenko, 1928, p. 255) and something that the young Soviet socialist state aimed at reversing.

New houses for the new way of life

In terms of new construction, early Soviet housing saw a consecutive transition from mainly private forms to municipal and departmental ones. During 1921, the government issued a number of decrees that granted cooperative associations and individual households the right to build and manage housing under the municipal supervision. However, since the mid-1920s the public sector gradually assumed responsibility for the construction of most new accommodation. This shift was motivated by economic, organisational and technological as well as by political and ideological considerations. On the one hand, individual housing forms were considered uneconomical and inefficient due to the higher cost of construction and the suboptimal ratio of residential to non-residential areas of the dwelling – as opposed to

[37] Communal flats were characterised by the diversity of backgrounds of their tenants, particularly in the municipal houses; tenants in the houses managed by the industrial enterprises and state departments usually came from more homogeneous backgrounds (Sosnovy, 1954, p. 210n4).

socialised, collective forms where non-residential areas would be shared by many (Vegman, 1927; 'Zhilishchnoye Stroitel'stvo i SA', 1926). On the other hand, the Soviet state could not tolerate the existence of a large part of a housing fund outside of its control (Sosnovy, 1954), while at the same time municipal and state housing was instrumental in management of the proletarian masses (Meerovich, 2018). Moreover, ideologically, individual housing forms (such as a detached one- or two-storey house with a plot of land or a separate flat in a garden city project) were deemed to foster a petit-bourgeois way of life alien to the proletariat (Dokuchayev, 1926; Pasternak, 1927). Consequently, most new residential construction took the form of multi-storey blocks of flats (called in parlance simply 'new houses') often organised in complexes nearby factories and enterprises.

Housing was new not only in terms of simply being newly built, however, but also in terms of being conducive to promoting the new, socialist way of life (*byt* in Russian). This implied, ultimately, the encouragement of collective behaviour and consciousness in individuals, who were expected to put the public good above their own personal interests. Furthermore, the espoused socialisation of life involved a departure from the vestiges of the old, pre-Revolutionary system (such as philistine lifestyle, keeping housing in a dirty and unhygienic condition, engaging in alcoholism, hooliganism and domestic abuse) to a more cultured outlook, rational and healthy leisure activities, commitment to cleanliness and hygiene, and increased social awareness in regards to, inter alia, gender roles (Attwood, 2010, p. 26). The central role of housing in cultivating this new *byt* was premised on the Marxian assumption that the restructuring of the material world would engender social change (Buchli, 1999). New houses accordingly received particular interior design and were also accompanied by an extensive system of social amenities and services.

Two issues were crucial for the promotion of the new way of life: the alleviation of housework (primarily home cooking and laundry) and the development of public childrearing (Kozhanyy, 1924; Vilents-Gorovits, 1930). In this sense, the transformation of daily life was seen as instrumental in the emancipation of women from the domestic chores. The system of public amenities, including canteens, laundries, crèches and kindergartens, was introduced to "really emancipate a woman, in practice reduce and eliminate her inequality with a man in regards to her role in the social production and public life" (Lenin cited in Khazanova, 1980, p. 17). Socialisation of life was therefore both ideological and practical: it would not only promote

emancipation of women from the household drudgery, but also draw them into productive labour and thereby offer them economic independence.[38] At the same time, the shift from individual housekeeping to the socialised one could provide opportunities for the intellectual growth and physical well-being of citizens at the lowest possible cost for the society (Bliznakov, 1993, p. 87).

New houses and the new way of life they embodied were characterised by formal and spatial solutions significantly different from the pre-Revolutionary Russian Revival and *Modern* (Art Nouveau) styles of architecture. Being particularly responsive to the radical changes brought by the Revolution, the avant-garde architects of the 1920-30s believed that architecture and planning would no longer produce mere buildings but could create structures that fundamentally transform the society. A slogan in the first issue of *Sovremennaya Arkhitektura* magazine (which translates as 'contemporary architecture') in 1926 tellingly read: "Contemporary architecture should crystallise a new socialist way of life" (*Sovremennaya Arkhitektura,* 1926 (1), p. 15). For Soviet avant-garde architects, a broader societal change was to be achieved by building 'social condensers' that would break with an individualist consciousness in favour of a more collective social behaviour. The notion of a social condenser "signifies that although architecture is (or rather ought to be) a reflection of society, it is equally its mold and a tool for social transformation" (Kopp, 1970, p. 96).[39] Housing, through the medium of architecture, was expected to play a major role in this transformation.

There were two main artistic trends within the wider avant-garde movement: constructivism and rationalism. Constructivism, the more prominent trend of the two, is often used interchangeably with avant-garde. Constructivists, as the name suggests, were mainly concerned with the technical design and "the heightened expression of structure as an end in itself" (Khan-Magomedov, 1971, p. 13) rather than artistry. They pursued functionalism and efficient, rationalised methods of construction (involving standardisation, industrialisation and pre-

[38] The most radical theorists of the time (spearheaded by Alexandra Kollontai) accordingly envisioned that family as a patriarchal institute would be replaced by the collective and hence cease to exist as a private economic unit (Khan-Magomedov, 2001, pp. 304–305).

[39] Interestingly, Kopp remarks: "Never had [the avant-garde Soviet architects] implied that merely to inhabit the new city was to be renewed, an idea that frequently comes to the surface in Le Corbusier's writings. They consistently emphasised the decisive importance of a socialist transformation of the economic basis of society. It is nonetheless true that they rightly believed that social transformation is not a one-way street and that the environment also plays a part, that architecture and city planning have a formative and educational influence" (Kopp, 1970, pp. 115–116).

fabrication). Constructivists, who formed the Organisation of Contemporary Architects (*OSA*), were in a constant creative competition with rationalists with their very own Association of New Architects (*ASNOVA*). In contrast to constructivists, rationalists' output was far less applied as they focused mainly on the theoretical work concerned with the psycho-physiological effects of architecture. They were determined to develop new artistic forms, use new building materials and techniques, and experiment with colour and spatial layout in order to emphasise the rational expression of structure over its function. Rationalist designs were supposed to affect people's visual perception of and navigation in space and thereby "evoke desired feelings and emotions, promote action, and change human behavior" (Bliznakov, 1993, p. 97). Despite the differences, projects of both movements drew on the synthesis of social and technological progress, a feature pivotal to avant-garde architecture in general.

Typology and features of avant-garde housing

Construction of new houses in early Soviet Moscow in the 1920-30s was aimed at solving the housing crisis while simultaneously transforming the way of (everyday) life of their residents. Moreover, new housing had to be habitable, well-lit and well-ventilated, and hence hygienic. Housing projects also stipulated provision of public amenities in order to improve workers' quality of life and to promote gender equality. Two main tendencies in house building of that period can be distinguished: construction of single houses and construction of housing estates. In the former case, a house would either be a single structure or consist of a system of interconnected blocks including living units as well as a kindergarten, canteen, club etc. The first tendency was manifest in house-communes and houses of the transitional type. In the latter case, housing would be spatially organised in a rationally planned residential block or estate with detached public amenities. These two housing types are discussed in what follows.

House-communes

The new, collective way of life was probably most radically introduced in the so-called house-communes. Reminiscent of the utopian idea of a phalanstery,[40] this form of housing was, however, not par-

[40] Phalanstery was a type of housing for a self-contained community of up to 2000 people that included a complex of buildings combining residential, communal and manufacturing functions. The concept was conceived by a French socialist thinker Charles Fourier in the beginning of the 19th century.

ticular to the avant-garde movement as it emerged already at the turn of the 1920s during the housing redistribution;[41] house-communes, with their outspoken revolutionary spirit, were particularly popular among young people and students (Meerovich, 2008, pp. 20–21; see also Willimott, 2017). During the avant-garde period, and in accordance with its formal and functional principles, this housing type was reinvented to promote the socialisation of housekeeping by means of providing a multitude of common, public spaces at the expense of private, family spaces. A preface to the Mossoviet's[42] competition for a house-commune project in 1925 read:

> The duty of the technical thought, the duty of architects [is] to embrace the new demands for housing and, as soon as possible, to produce a project of such a house with a socialised economy that would turn the so-called hearth from a cramped, boring, and at times oppressive cell, especially for a woman, into a place of a pleasant and free leisure. (Popov (Sibiryak) cited in Venderov, 1926b, p. 1)

Accordingly, a house-commune would consist of a sleeping block with a minimum set of facilities (including standardised furniture, toilet and a small kitchenette) and a public block with a wide range of social amenities (such as a canteen, kindergarten, laundry, club, reading and study rooms) to encourage the collective pastime of inhabitants. House-communes were moreover notable for the introduction of self-service and self-management. As such, a house-commune was envisioned as an autonomous urban community with all necessary services and facilities (Bliznakov, 1993, p. 96). This housing type was supposed to bring together people who had consented to collective values and the new way of life. The cooperative that built the first house-commune in Moscow in Khavsko-Shabolovsky lane (now Lesteva street) in 1929 (see Figure 2) introduced the following rules for its future inhabitants:

> All people moving into the house undertake to completely switch from an individual kitchen to dining in the canteen. <…> All residents of the house-commune take on the obligation to participate actively in the social, cultural and household work as well as in the management of [communal] economy. <…> All members of the commune are required in the strongest terms to fight against [illiteracy,] alcoholism, rudeness and bad manners, religiosity and other manifestations of the old way of life. (Livshits, 1929, p. 11)

[41] In Moscow, 865 such houses were registered by the end of 1921 (Bliznakov, 1993, p. 86).
[42] Mossoviet is the abbreviation of the Moscow Soviet of People's Deputies, the municipal administration of Moscow during the Soviet period.

It is fair to say that the first house-commune never offered a fully collectivised living as its design included, apart from 213 dormitory-type one- or two-room living units, also 40 flats of a more traditional kind with separate kitchens and bathrooms (which was criticised by the radical theorists of the time). Transition to the collective way of life was further limited due to the lack of social amenities (which were never built in full according to the project) and their eventual conversion into residential space amid the acute housing crisis (Lyubimova, 1962, p. 240).[43] Despite the challenges, the avant-garde house-commune in Khavsko-Shabolovsky lane incarnated a more socialised way of life and paved a way for few other collective houses, including the House-commune of the Textile Institute, a student dormitory built in 1931.

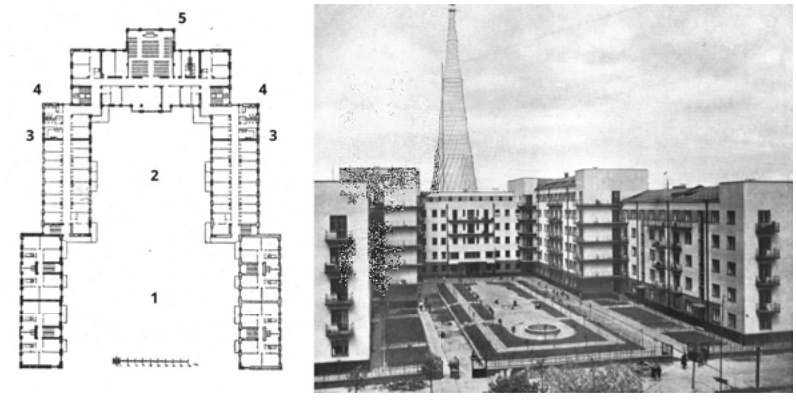

Figure 2. House-commune on Lesteva street. Left: plan of the second floor (1 – separate flats, 2 – dormitory part, 3 – kitchens, 4 – bathrooms, 5 – club). Source: *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy*, 1928 (2), p. 16. Right: general view of the house-commune in the 1930s with Shukhov Radio Tower in the background. Source: Solovieva & Tsareva (2012, p. 422).

Concurrently, since 1928, a group of architects in the Standardisation Section of the Construction Committee of Soviet Russia led by Moisei Ginzburg had designed several types of living units to be prefabricated and combined in one multi-storey residential building. Being essentially individual flats equipped with in-built kitchens and bathrooms, these living units were devised to stimulate a more gradual and 'natural' socialisation by accommodating private (family) life

[43] The project of the house provided for a multitude of public functions: two cloakrooms, a canteen, a club with meeting and reading rooms, a gym, a crèche and a kindergarten, as well as a flat roof fitted with a sun terrace and an open-air cinema. The dormitory-type communal part of the house, unlike the part with separate flats, is no longer inhabited today.

alongside the communal spaces for joint activities within a building. Proponents of this 'transitional' type of housing claimed that the radical shift to the collective way of life promoted in house-communes was producing negative results due to the lack of readiness of the people (Ginzburg, 1929). It has been noted (Vasil'yeva, 2015, p. 137), however, that houses of the transitional type would accommodate mainly skilled workers and intelligentsia who, while submitting to the narrative of the new way of life, simultaneously set high demands for the housing conditions which were at odds with communal living. In total, six houses of transitional type were constructed: four in Moscow and one in Sverdlovsk and Saratov each. Probably the most prominent example of this type of housing is Narkomfin House in Moscow (1930) designed by Moisei Ginzburg and Ignatiy Milinis for the employees of the Ministry of Finance (see Buchli, 1998).

House-communes embodied both architecturally and socially revolutionising ideas aimed at a partial or total collectivisation of life of their inhabitants. However, with the end of NEP[44] and the rise of Stalinism, this housing type came under fire as utopian and ignoring the unreadiness of the population for a rapid socialist transformation of the way of life (and particularly for the collective childrearing and dining, as well as the elimination of family relations) and hence potentially discrediting the very idea of such transformation. According to the decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 16 May 1930 'On the work on the reconstruction of the way of life' (*O rabote po perestroyke byta*), the proponents of communal living were castigated for promoting

> unreasonable, semi-fantastic and hence extremely destructive attempts… to overcome 'in a single leap' all the obstacles to the socialist transformation of the way of life stemming, on the one hand, from the economic and cultural backwardness of the country, and on the other, from the necessity to concentrate all the efforts on the fastest possible industrialisation of the country. ('Postanovleniye TsK VKP(b)', 1930, p. 3)

In a similar vein, the advocates of house-communes were vilified as 'left' opportunists – as opposed to 'right' opportunists who backed individual housing forms (Kholodny, 1933, p. 22). It has to be noted, however, that the very idea of promoting the new socialist way of life

[44] The New Economic Policy (NEP) was a quasi-market-oriented economic system in the Soviet Union during 1921-1931 which combined elements of small private capital and large state enterprises. It replaced War communism system that had been introduced during the Russian Civil War.

was never discarded but instead had to be realised through the housing types that offered a more gradual socialisation of life and hence deemed less radical, such as the aforementioned houses of transitional type as well as residential estates.

Housing estates

Despite the prominence of ideas concerning rapid and total collectivisation of life incarnated in the house-communes, most housing in the 1920-30s was constructed in a more conventional form of blocks of individual flats organised in housing estates[45] with a supporting system of social amenities (this corresponded with an idea of a socialist reorganisation of urban space as a whole). According to the Mossoviet's requirements, the construction and maintenance of new houses ought to be cost-effective while ergonomically planned according to the hygienic standards as well as mass-produced (Venderov, 1926a). Geographical locations of these estates were determined by their proximity to industrial plants, factories, research and educational institutions. The names of the estates were linked with either the respective enterprise or local toponymy and are still used today in mass media and in professional and public discourses. This section will outline the main features of avant-garde housing estates in terms of building layout, design, architecture and spatial planning.

The early Soviet residential construction in Moscow took as its architectonic starting point an urban block of three- or four-storey buildings comprised of two-to-four standard dwelling units approved by the Mossoviet in 1925-1926. The first standard dwelling unit from 1925 consisted of four two-room flats (or two two-room flats and two three-room flats on the shorter sides of a building) that opened up onto a common staircase landing (see Figure 3). Each two-room (36-41 square metres) and three-room (45.5 square metres) flat had a small kitchen with a pantry (8.5 square metres) and a toilet (1.5 square metres) but lacked a bathroom as the residents were supposed to use public baths; the ceiling height was 2.92 metres (Nikolayev, 1925). Laundry rooms were located on top of the staircases whereas the house administration offices, boiler and storage rooms were situated in the basements. Flats were fitted with the in-built furniture which was in line with the functionalist ideals. In 1926, the corner sections were introduced which allowed for more flexibility in the spatial layout of urban blocks. The standard dwelling unit from 1926 also in-

[45] Note that some housing estates (including those studied here: Dubrovka, Nizhnyaya Presnya and Usachevka) included dormitories which presented a more socialised type of housing compared to blocks of flats (Vasil'yeva, 2015, p. 141).

cluded washrooms (or bathrooms in corner sections) and cooling compartments (larders) below the windows in the kitchens instead of pantries; laundries were located in separate, specially designated buildings (Nikolayev, 1926). 25 percent of flats were fitted with balconies to reduce the uniformity of the facades (Meshkov, 1928). Bathrooms were later installed in many flats by means of kitchen space rearrangement. Another feature of 1926 housing construction was the introduction of local district heating with heating plants located within housing estates. In order to optimise exploitation costs, the construction of commercial premises such as grocery shops, pharmacies, hairdressers, post offices, savings bank branches, artisan workshops and so on was permitted on the ground floors of the houses (Khazanova, 1963, pp. 65–66).[46]

Figure 3. Mossoviet's standard dwelling units 1925-1927 (left to right). Source: *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy*, 1927 (10), pp. 6-9.

Starting in 1927, the Mossoviet only built five-storey houses and, in some instances, also six- or seven-storey buildings equipped with lifts (N.N., 1928). The standard dwelling unit of 1927 was composed predominantly of three-room flats (40-46 or 60-64 square metres, depending on the room size) and less commonly of four-room flats with ceiling heights of 2.9-3.2 metres. Only two flats opened up onto one staircase landing due to the natural, or cross, ventilation and insolation (sun exposure) requirements in compliance with the sanitary and hygienic standards.[47] Half of the new flats were equipped with bathrooms ('Blagoustroystvo Novykh Domov', 1928), and most had gas stoves installed. Despite the official policy aimed at the provision

[46] Later on, as the residential and retail functions were to be separated, small shops on the ground floors were considered impractical, and since 1930 the construction of larger department stores was given a priority ('Khronika Stroitel'stva', 1929).

[47] This type of ventilation supplies to and removes air from the indoor space without using any mechanical systems. It is created due to air draught in flats occupying the entire width of a building with windows on its either side.

of individual flats, in order to solve the housing crisis, residents were often de facto allocated only individual rooms in flats (thanks to a relatively large size of rooms of about 25 square metres) meaning family-per-room, rather than family-per-flat, occupancy, and, as a consequence, the formation of communal flats (Khan-Magomedov, 2001, p. 339). Family-per-room accommodation was further promoted by the fact that the flats had no walk-through rooms as all rooms were isolated and had separate entries from the hallway (Zheyts & Manevich, 1927). On the other hand, three- and four-room flats obtained higher standard equipment such as kitchens with an increased floor space as well as separate toilets and bathrooms. In 1930, three-room flats with bathrooms would make up 50 percent of all new-build housing stock, whereas four- and two-room flats (with and without bathrooms, respectively) would correspond to 35 percent and 10 percent each (Krasin, 1929, p. 25).

The effect of new housing construction on the living conditions of the working class was rather ambiguous, however. On the level of the entire country, despite the slight increase in the absolute size of dwelling space per worker between 1923 and 1928 (4.79 to 4.98 square metres), it was still below the Soviet urban average at 84.3 percent (Sosnovy, 1954, p. 119). Data for 1929, nevertheless, showed that the proportion of workers in new houses averaged 56.7 percent in the entire Soviet Union (ibid., p. 125). In Moscow, just as in other cities of the country, the position of workers on the housing market was still worse-off compared to skilled workers, professional intelligentsia and bureaucrats. According to a survey of 6.000 worker families conducted in 1935 by the Central Statistical Directorate, only 6.1 percent of families in Moscow occupied separate flats in the houses built in 1932-34, while the rest occupied only one room or part of a room (*Trud v SSSR*, 1936, p. 346). Although being a rather rough approximation for the situation in particularly the avant-garde housing, this data suggests that the construction of new houses could not entirely suffice the demands for housing, or at least provide family-per-flat occupancy, for the majority of worker families. Workers' living conditions in new houses were nonetheless better compared to old houses. Despite the minimum sanitary norm being rather low (nine square metres of living space per capita), the new avant-garde housing estates offered modest yet ergonomically designed flats that met entirely different living quality standards compared to the pre-Revolutionary ones with big windows, a decent sound and thermal insulation, natural ventilation, separate kitchens (often with gas stoves), an access to

central heating, hot running water and sewerage, and in many cases also bathrooms.

The imperative of cost-effectiveness determined the choice of the building materials and the interior and structural designs of the new houses (see, for example, Krasin, 1927b, 1927a). That being said, housing construction in the 1920s was mainly based on manual labour and proven, reliable building techniques inherited from the pre-Revolutionary decades which was in stark contrast with the avant-garde visions of formal expression and functionality (see Frampton, 2020, Chapter 21). This by no means implied that the early Soviet housing construction was of poor quality. In terms of materials used, the load-bearing walls were made of bricks, stones and concrete blocks which guaranteed structural integrity, whereas other components were in mixed materials: according to the fire safety regulations, staircases had reinforced concrete framing, while elsewhere wood was utilised as the primary material for beams (Vasil'yev, 2015, p. 113). Inexpensive reed-fibre and straw boards were used for thermal and sound insulation but never as structural elements.

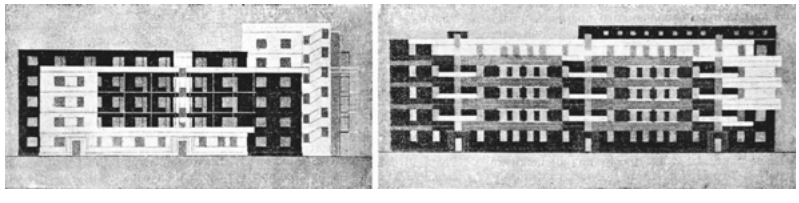

Figure 4. Design of facades in Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate. Source: *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy*, 1928 (1), p. 15.

Despite the rationalisation and streamlining of construction with the introduction of standard dwelling units, new houses were not without the expressive formal features particular to the avant-garde architecture. For instance, in order to create a dynamic exterior pattern, the facades were elaborated with balconies, loggias and bay windows; the contrasting colour schemes and materials (mainly exposed versus plastered brickwork) were utilised to create a rhythmic order and to emphasise the horizontality – alluding to the idea of ribbon windows – and verticality of glassed staircases and plastered corner sections (see Figure 4). The verticality was also accentuated due to the increased number of storeys in the corner sections of houses and by the deep vertical recesses of the end walls, creating an illusion of fortress towers (E. Ovsyannikova & Vasilyev, 2009, p. 155). Plenty of balconies and vast glassed surfaces offered panoramic views over the city, as did in some cases also flat roofs fitted with sun terraces and roof

gardens (Bronovitskaya, 2012, p. 192). This reflected the main aesthetic principle of the residential avant-garde architecture: an absence of non-functional decoration and a somewhat more modest formal expression as compared to administrative and industrial buildings and workers' clubs of the same period (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. General view of Nizhnyaya Presnya estate. Source: *Zhilishchnoye tovarishchestvo*, 1929 (35), p. 23.

Along with the formal expression, the rational spatial arrangement and functional structure of housing estates was also an important means of communicating the artistic and social messages of the early Soviet, avant-garde, architecture. The space of socialist housing estates had to be carefully planned and as such stand in contrast to the pre-Revolutionary capitalist urban space deemed as unbridled and chaotic and hence detrimental to the proletariat's health and well-being.[48] Planning meant spatial order, and with that it reflected the new social order in which the subject was involved in the uniform system of collective social relations. At the first *OSA* conference in 1928, Moisei Ginzburg cited Le Corbusier, who claimed that "without the plan, people are left with nothing but the unbearable feeling of the formless, meagre, unsettled and random" (Ginzburg, 1928, p. 144). Planning was therefore considered to be a crucial part of the avant-garde architects' artistic toolbox.

The spatial layout of an urban block in the new construction followed certain geometrical principles: a thought-out balance between courtyard and street space, perimeter-block or ribbon development,

[48] One author described pre-Revolutionary workers' houses as coffins and urban quarters as cemeteries (Kozhanyy, 1924, p. 32).

landscape design with plenty of greenery, rhythmic alteration of buildings of different volumes, as well as multiplicity of views and perspectives unfolding as one moves through the built environment (see Figure 6). The resulting dynamic silhouette and spatial layout of new housing estates reflected the new, contemporary type of dwelling that was at odds with the bourgeois settled and static lifestyle. Interestingly, avant-garde architects paid considerable attention to the formal pattern of the plan not least because the cityscape at the time was supposed to be perceived both at the ground level but also from the airplanes and airships' windows (Solovieva & Tsareva, 2012, p. 58) – see Figure 7.

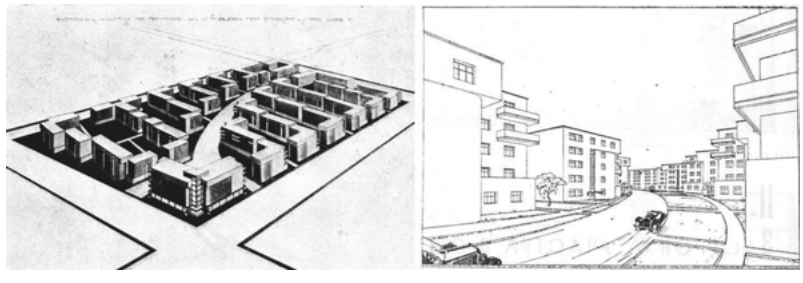

Figure 6. Budenovsky estate. Left: axonometric projection. Source: *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy*, 1928 (1), p. 1. Right: perspective view of the intra-block passage. Source: *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy*, 1928 (3), p. 17.

Figure 7. Aerial view of Usachevka estate. Source: *SSSR na stroyke*, 1931 (9).

The plan for each housing estate stipulated provision of amenities and landscaping. According to the Mossoviet's regulations issued in

1925, each residential block incorporated a courtyard, green public space, and its width ought to be no less than the height of the house, while its total area ought to be no less than three times the building footprint area (Khazanova, 1963, p. 63). The resulting urban environment was human-scaled but at the same time having an optimal building density (Solovieva & Tsareva, 2012, p. 18). Courtyards were equipped with sports- and playgrounds as well as the infrastructure for social gatherings including outdoor stages for collective listening to the news, lectures, concerts etc.[49] Furthermore, courtyards were landscaped with benches, fountains, flowerbeds and, in some cases, the elements of monumental propaganda, such as, for example, statues of Lenin (see Figure 8). The design of the courtyards promoted the feeling of community where neighbours would know each other which in turn would create a feeling of safety and security. Social amenities for the inhabitants of housing estates were located either within the block or in its immediate vicinity (especially larger objects of social infrastructure such as schools, kindergartens, clinics, canteens, laundries, public baths, department stores and workers' clubs). In some instances, smaller public facilities were situated on the ground floors of houses.

Figure 8. Courtyards of the new houses. Left: summer library with benches and tables in Dubrovka estate in 1935. Source: https://goskatalog.ru. Right: statue of Lenin in Nizhnyaya Presnya estate in the 1930s. Source: Solovieva & Tsareva (2012, p. 88).

By the end of the 1920s, as the avant-garde movement as a whole had started to fall into disfavour, its residential architecture was also increasingly under attack. Standardisation of housing construction was condemned for the pursuit of "pseudo-rationalisation experiments"

[49] It was noted that the provision of infrastructure differed between municipal and cooperative houses: sometimes the landscaping was incomplete or neglected in the former, while the latter boasted their well-kept sports- and playgrounds as well as public events often organised by the members of the cooperative (Tsaryova, 2015, p. 129).

which led architecture to the "extreme oversimplification and contrived lifeless functionalism" (Korchagin, 1934, pp. 27, 30) and to the repetitive reproduction of "concrete monsters," "boxes" and "barracks" (see, for example, Cherkasskiy, 1932; Mostakov, 1929). *Izvestia*, Soviet newspaper of record, wrote on 5 September 1929: "One can avoid reading a bad book, one can avoid looking at a bad painting, but one cannot avoid living in an ugly house, seeing an ugly urban landscape" (cited in Mostakov, 1929, p. 9). Simple, rational forms with minimum decoration characteristic of the avant-garde architecture were therefore charged with being too dull, ugly and unwelcoming to the proletariat – in contrast to the nascent monumental and neoclassical forms of the early 1930s.

The attack on avant-garde was not based on sheer aesthetic or practical allegations only; it harboured a deeper ideological shift. Avant-garde architecture in general was dismissed as idealistic and utopian; its "abstract aesthetics" (Frampton, 2020, p. 244) was considered to be too complicated for the masses to relate and respond to. Avant-garde architects and planners were accused of being too distanced from the ordinary people who were deemed incapable of appreciating new architecture and the way of life it embodied. The creative work of *OSA* and *ASNOVA* was labelled as bourgeois art that was revived during the NEP years (Khazanova, 1970, p. 134), while the extensive professional contacts by Soviet architects with their counterparts in the West and their appeals to an international socialist culture became at odds with Stalin's policy of building socialism in one country (Frampton, 2020, p. 203). As such, the end of the avant-garde architectural movement was marked by the decision of the Construction council of the Palace of the Soviets[50] from 28 February 1932 which stressed the necessity to revisit the best examples of classical architecture with its monumentality and decorative value of architectural design; the rationality and functionalism of avant-garde were thus brushed off. Furthermore, in housing construction, according to the decree of the Mossoviet from 14 July 1932 'On the type of residential building' (*O tipe zhilogo doma*), each house or a group of houses had to have a unique individual architectural appearance as the designing of "dull uniform facades" was no longer permitted

[50] Unrealised project of an administrative building in central Moscow on site of the demolished Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. Architectural design competition for the Palace of the Soviets attracted numerous international modernist architects including Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Erich Mendelsohn and Albert Kahn. The winning project of Boris Iofan (1933) heralded the neoclassical turn in Soviet architecture.

('Postanovleniye o Tipe', 1932).[51] The demise of avant-garde also signalled the retreat from the socialised way of life (an early sign of which was the disapproval of house-communes described above) as the individual, single-family flat accommodation was proclaimed desirable – even if not necessarily followed in practice (see Attwood, 2010, p. 107). The shifting aesthetic and social priorities induced by the rise of Stalinism since the end the 1920s reflected a larger cultural and ideological change of which the rise and fall of avant-garde was one vivid example.[52]

Avant-garde housing since the 1930s onwards

Following the neoclassical turn in Soviet architecture in the 1930s, the avant-garde administrative and industrial buildings as well as workers' clubs built in Moscow during the first Soviet decade were left largely intact, whereas many residential developments underwent adaptation and alteration in order to better correspond to the requisitions of the new ideological paradigm. In some cases, housing estates were fenced off from the streets and highways by new buildings constructed in line with the new aesthetic imperative; in other cases, the already existing houses were retrofitted and decorated according to the monumental and neoclassical formal standards (see Figure 9).

The avant-garde estates otherwise survived both the devastation of the Second World War and the Stalinist regime. Published on 4 November 1955, the decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union 'On eliminating the excesses in design and construction' terminated the period of monumental neoclassicism and heralded the turn to the functionalist standardised prefabricated mass housing. Since 1958, the Soviet government decreed the construction of multi-storey blocks of flats (named *khrushchyovki* after the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev who came to power after the death of Joseph Stalin) which resembled their avant-garde predecessors in terms of aesthetic principles and social focus (see Buchli, 1997; E. B. Ovsyannikova, 1994). Indeed, the

[51] Most recently, architecture historians Alexandra Selivanova (2019) and Danilo Udovički-Selb (2020) have argued that the architectural avant-garde ideas persisted throughout the 1930s – contrary to the popular narrative of a total rejection of avant-garde ideas under Stalin.

[52] Architecture historian Vladimir Paperny discussed the shift from the avant-garde to neoclassical architecture in terms of the sequence of Culture One (1920s) and Culture Two (1930s) with the associated set of antagonistic characteristics: internationalism/nationalism, (spatial) democracy/hierarchy, collectivism/individualism (Paperny, 2006).

architects working in the postwar period (many from the marginalised avant-garde movement) were said to have taken inspiration from the 1920-30s tradition of minimalist designs and rational spatial planning while adapting to the minimum living space standards and the official party line that prescribed single-family flat accommodation (Harris, 2013; Reid, 2006). Spatial layout of the new functionalist residential districts (or *microraions* in Russian) also took after the avant-garde housing estates with their extensive network of social amenities. In the meanwhile, residential estates built during the first Soviet decade continued to be largely ignored and neglected for most of the 1950s and 1960s.

Figure 9. A house in Nizhnyaya Presnya estate that was extended in height and decorated with rustication and cornices in the mid/late-1930s. Source: author's own.

The postwar Soviet professional housing literature discussed the avant-garde movement as an ambitious and pathbreaking yet a controversial, if not failed, experiment (see, for example, Rubanenko, 1976; Zhukov & Fedorov, 1974). It was not until the 1970-80s (and, in some instances, the 1990s), however, that many avant-garde housing estates were paid attention to as they underwent major overhauls. As a result of the renovations, most of the four- or five-storey houses got additional storeys which, in some cases, flattened their dynamic silhouettes as the raised corner sections were no longer articulated. The houses with fewer than six storeys were fitted with external lift

shafts (as only houses with six or more storeys were initially equipped with indoor lifts) which marred the facades. Moreover, parts of the facades initially left as exposed brickwork were plastered and/or painted in pastel colours which evened out the previously contrasting elements of the colour schemes.[53] In addition, the wooden beams were in part replaced with reinforced concrete ones, and often the layout of flats was changed, too (E. Ovsyannikova & Vasilyev, 2009). The dormitories in certain estates (namely, Dubrovka, Nizhnyaya Presnya and Usachevka) were converted into houses with flat layouts. All in all, despite the interventions during both the early and late Soviet periods largely contorted expressive forms and interior designs of the avant-garde houses, it is still possible to discern the signature characteristics of this style of residential architecture in the present-day landscape of Moscow.

The spatial layout of most of the residential estates of the 1920-30s is still mostly intact being moderately distorted by the additions to existing buildings, infills, and demolition or renovation of social amenities and public facilities. Some of these amenities have survived up till now (for example, kindergartens, grocery shops, pharmacies, hairdressers, post offices and savings bank branches) while others were transformed but kept the social function at least in part (as, for instance, the former community centre in Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate which was functioning until the end of the 1980s when it was converted into a house and nowadays accommodates a library and an art gallery on the ground floor). Department stores are still found in the vicinities of some of the estates: for example, in Dubrovka, Khavsko-Shabolovsky, Nizhnyaya Presnya and Usachevka estates; the latter also boasts an operational public bath. Although the social infrastructure of the housing estates has not survived in its entirety until today, its remaining legacies are nevertheless still informative of the material and functional basis the aspired socialisation of life was supposed to rest upon.

[53] Budenovsky, Nizhnyaya Presnya and Usachevka are the only housing estates that partially retained the original contrasting colour schemes from the 1920s.

Introducing the five studied estates

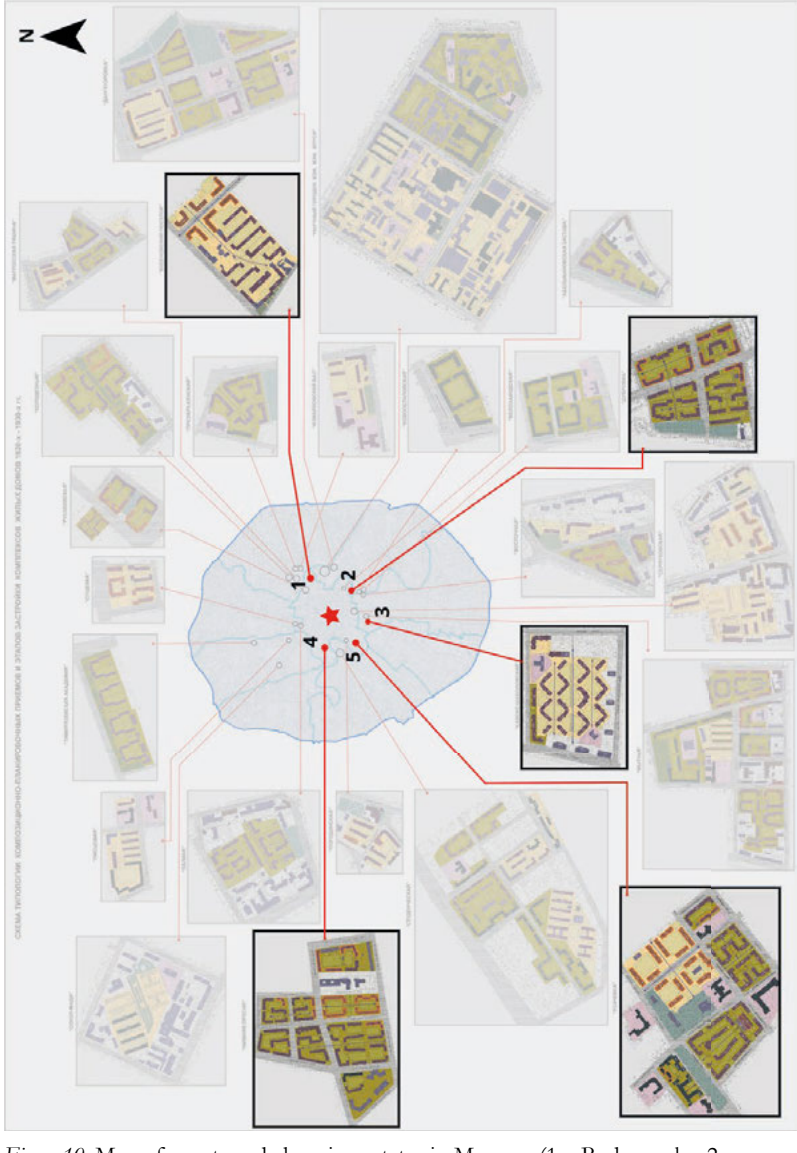

Figure 10. Map of avant-garde housing estates in Moscow (1 – Budenovsky, 2 – Dubrovka, 3 – Khavsko-Shabolovsky, 4 – Nizhnyaya Presnya, 5 – Usachevka). Source: based on https://genplanmos.ru.

According to a study conducted by the Genplan Institute of Moscow, there were 26 housing estates dating back to the avant-garde period as of 2012 (Solovieva & Tsareva, 2012). Previously located on the industrial outskirts of Moscow, most of these estates are today in

close proximity to the centre of the 12-million metropolis. All of the avant-garde-era housing areas are at least partially inhabited, which provides a wide choice of cases for the present work. Among these, five estates stand out as the most representative and well-preserved examples of residential avant-garde architecture and were chosen as the empirical foci of this thesis: Budenovsky, Dubrovka, Khavsko-Shabolovsky, Nizhnyaya Presnya and Usachevka (see Figure 10).

The chosen estates are distinguished by a large number of houses and social amenities (which suggests a higher degree of accomplishment of the original architects' and planners' ideas) and are not in a dilapidated state (which means that the residents are not faced with the prospect of rehousing, except for those on the municipal housing waiting list). All five estates have been recognised for their historical and architectural value. Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate and the adjoining house-commune is a cultural heritage site of regional importance. In Dubrovka, one half of the estate has a status of an identified heritage site, which, at least for the time being, protects it from demolition. Noteworthy is that the non-listed part is located within the boundaries of the prestigious Central Administrative District of Moscow, while the listed one is a part of the South-Eastern Administrative District. Other estates were granted protection from demolition by the decisions of an authorised Moscow government commission in 2012-2013.[54] However, as the case of Pogodinskaya demolition has demonstrated, these can be easily revoked. In what follows, I will briefly introduce the five estates explored in this study. The summary of building stock characteristics and tenure structure, as well as descriptive data from the survey, are provided in Appendix C and E.

Budenovsky estate is located 5.3 km northeast of the city centre. Built in two stages in 1926-1927 and 1928-1930 by order of, respectively, the United Construction Workers cooperative and the Mossoviet, it is notable for its dynamic site plan, designed by *ASNOVA* members, which has survived almost unchanged until today (see Figure 6). The centre of the spatial composition of the estate is a curved intra-block passage that "provides within this confined space a series of perspectives of the corners of buildings, which the architect accentuates and architecturally elaborates in a certain rhythm" (Mostakov, 1929, p. 10). Following the studies of psycho-physiology of visual perception of the built environment, the facades combined dark-

[54] Interestingly, Budenovsky estate was granted protection from demolition based on the results of a written survey of 1182 residents, of which 990 spoke out against demolition (*Vlasti Moskvy soglasilis'*, 2013). The survey was arranged by the municipal council in December 2012.

coloured brickwork with light-coloured plasterwork (see Figure 11). The plan of the estate included grocery shops, playgrounds, a sportsground, a crèche and a kindergarten, a dormitory with a canteen (unrealised), as well as a central boiler house with a laundry and showers. There was also a club in the basement of one of the cooperative houses (built in 1926-1927) which included, among other things, draughts and chess tables, a library, a small stage for amateur actors and lecturers and speakers, a Lenin's corner and an atheist's corner for propaganda purposes, as well as a loudspeaker which was taken outside on Sundays so that the residents would have an opportunity to listen to concerts and the latest news (L.R., 1928).

Figure 11. A view of the intra-block passage in Budenovsky estate (bld. 15 in the background). Note the contrasting colouring of facades. Source: author's own.

Dubrovka estate is located 4.2 km southeast of the city centre. It was built in two stages in 1926 and 1927-1930 by order of the Mossoviet for municipal housing. In 1932, the First State Ball Bearing Plant was opened in the vicinity. The initial stage of construction included a kindergarten, a 'red corner' club (for Soviet propaganda and recreation), a library and a steam boiler house. The later construction provided, a canteen, a dormitory, a grocery shop and a cinema (all located in a gateway corner house no. 8/12), as well as another kindergarten, playgrounds, a summer library and an open-air stage with a movie booth (Balikhin, 1935, p. 46), while the houses were more

architecturally elaborated with a variety of distinctive corner section designs emphasised by corner balconies on the top floors and plastered strips on the lower storeys (Solovieva & Tsareva, 2012, pp. 334–335) – see Figure 12.

Figure 12. Corner sections of the houses of 1927-1928 construction years in Dubrovka estate. Source: author's own.

The Khavsko-Shabolovsky housing complex is located 4.3 km south of the city centre. Built in 1928 by order of the Mossoviet, the estate was surrounded by pre-Revolutionary industrial enterprises, such as the Goujon's (Simoneau's) silk mill, the Bromley brothers' metal-working plant, the Mikhelson's electromechanical plant and the Brocard's perfume and soap-making factory. Across Lesteva street from Khavsko-Shabolovsky lies the House-commune of the First Zamoskvoretsky workers' cooperative association which was mentioned earlier in this chapter. In the vicinities of Shabolovka street, which gave the name to Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate, there is a number of other avant-garde-era buildings, including more housing estates, as well as the House-commune (student dormitory) of the Textile Institute and the Shukhov Radio Tower. Similar to Budenovsky, Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate was designed by the architects of *ASNOVA* and incarnated the rationalist architectural and design principles: creating a rhythmic sequence of volumes charged with dynamism and tension which is meant to shape people's perception of space as they move through it. According to the original plan, the estate comprised of 24 houses and a community centre with a crèche, a kindergarten and a workers' club (now converted into a house), as well as a boiler house; laundries and storage rooms were located in the basements. The facades combined exposed brickwork with large planes of plaster covered in contrasting light-coloured paint that accentuated bay windows and the upper floors (Solovieva & Tsareva, 2012, pp. 458–459).

Figure 13. Aerial view of Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate in 1930. Source: http://oldmos.ru.

Figure 14. View of the courtyard and a playground in Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate, as seen from the intra-block passage. Note the building corners and angles. Source: author's own.

Inside the urban block of Khavsko-Shabolovsky, L-shaped five-storey houses (with six-storey corner sections) are positioned at 45° to the existing street network, while the houses at the periphery (realised only on the northern side of the block) parallel the streets (see Figure 13). Taking sun exposure into consideration, kitchens and

bathrooms are facing north and the living rooms with balconies are facing south (Balikhin, 1935, p. 42). Given the shapes and angles at which buildings connect, semi-enclosed courtyard gardens are formed in front of the houses (Lavrov, 1928). The spatial layout unfolds as one moves through the estate: the courtyards and the corners of houses form a series of alternating perspectives (see Figure 14).

Nizhnyaya Presnya estate is located 4.2 km west of the city centre. It was built during 1926-1930 by order of the Mossoviet and the Tryokhgornaya manufactory workers' housebuilding cooperative association. Apart from the Tryokhgornaya (Prokhorov's) manufactory, the oldest textile factory in Moscow, other industrial enterprises in the vicinity of the estate included the Danilovskiy sugar refinery, the Mamontov brothers' chemical plant and the Smith's boiler and hardware factory. Nizhnyaya Presnya is comprised of 8 urban blocks and is the largest avant-garde estate with 34 houses. The southern part of the estate (south of Shmitovskiy lane) was built first and is primarily made up of the earlier four-flat standard dwelling units and has less architecturally elaborated facades (except for Shmitovskiy 13 with its prominent yet low-cost rhomboid ornamentation in brick – see Figure 15). The visual design of the northern part built later is more advanced with corner balconies as well as vertical and horizontal strips painted in contrasting colours. The plan of the estate included a central boiler house, kindergartens and a grocery shop, a post office and a pharmacy (all currently functioning). Two schools, a public canteen and a laundry were situated nearby.

Figure 15. Shmitovskiy 13 in Nizhnyaya Presnya estate. Left: facade design. Source: *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy*, 1929 (4), p. 5. Right: contemporary view with the ornamentation painted in one colour. Source: author's own.

Usachevka estate is located 4.5 km southwest of the city centre. Textile mills and the Kauchuk rubber factory were situated in the vicinity. Built in three stages in 1925-1928 by order of the Mossoviet, Usa-

chevka is one of the first examples of the early Soviet large-scale new housing construction for workers which utilises a perimeter-block development principle. The houses of the first construction stage stood out for their simple facades and were extended in height and decorated in the neoclassical style at the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s. The houses of the second stage form a more complex perimeter layout with a system of courtyards that flow one into another; the facades were smoothly plastered and painted white with contrasting dark brown rough finish to the top floors. The plan of the estate included a kindergarten, a combined dormitory and laundry building, two boiler houses, a post office and a hairdresser. A canteen and a club, a department store and public baths were located in the immediate vicinity of the estate. Usachevka, and especially the houses constructed earlier in 1925-1927, was heavily criticised in the press for poor transport connections to the city centre and the lack of grocery shops, pavements, greenery and landscaping (M., 1927; Ovcharov, 1928; Vladimirskiy, 1928) – see Figure 16. In the 1930s, the central courtyard of the estate was decorated with flowerbeds and a statue of Lenin; an outdoor summer library and stage for performances and lectures were also erected (Balikhin, 1935, p. 46).

Figure 16. A view of a courtyard in Usachevka in the late 1920s. Note the absence of greenery and landscaping. Source: *Sovetskoye foto*, 1930 (4), p. 118.

Post-Soviet housing trajectories in Moscow

Any historical journey through the avant-garde estates would remain incomplete without considering the contemporary, post-Soviet context of housing and urban development in Moscow. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the associated socio-economic, political and ideological shifts had dramatic repercussions on housing provision, stock management and maintenance, tenure structure and so on; these, in turn, have profoundly affected everyday live in Russia. In what follows, I will show that the urban property structure in Moscow is extremely fragmented, which in the study areas is further amplified by an unclear tenure dimension. Finally, two major housing development and improvement programs, serving as a backdrop for my second fieldwork, will be introduced.

Contextualising tenure and property in Moscow

Urban private ownership in Soviet Russia was abolished in 1918, launching a wave of nationalisation and municipalisation of urban land and buildings. By the end of the Soviet period, the vast majority of urban housing stock and an even higher share of new construction was brought under state control. As of 1990, nearly 85 percent of urban housing in Soviet Russia was owned by the state and municipalities (*Narodnoye Khozyaystvo RSFSR*, 1991, p. 211), the share in Moscow even reaching 90 percent. Soviet citizens who were allocated state-owned flats enjoyed much more stability in housing than tenants under capitalism due to low and stable rents, strong (lifetime) occupancy rights and the right to pass by inheritance (Harris, 2013; Marcuse, 1996; Urban, 2012, Chapter 7).[55]

In line with the tenets of perestroika (the political and economic restructuring of the Soviet system initiated by president Mikhail Gorbachev), the first housing stock privatisation initiatives in Russia were taken in 1988 with the transfer of fully paid-off cooperative units to ownership of their residents, and extended to state and municipally owned units following the 1991 law of privatisation (N. B. Kosareva,

[55] Historian Mark B. Smith (2008, 2010) has argued that despite the predominantly public provision of housing and the *de jure* abolition of private property, Soviet citizens could still exercise a type of individual ownership through a decommodified *personal* property (mainly in relation to self-build housing outside of the large cities) but also over housing they rented from the state, municipalities and enterprises (due to the strong tenancy rights).

1993).[56] From this point onwards, Russian cities displayed rising rates of private homeownership (Kalyukin & Kohl, 2020). In Moscow, privatization of flats to sitting tenants was authorised already in December 1990, but due to political resistance of the municipal government, it had not really kicked off until early 1992 (Ruble, 1995, pp. 45–46). In 2018, 87.6 percent of urban housing stock in Russia was in private ownership; in Moscow the share was slightly lower at 80.2 percent (*Zhilishchnoye khozyaystvo v Rossii*, 2019).

Privatisation of housing was intended to afford more financial independence to the citizens while easing the state and the municipalities' burden of maintenance and repair of their housing stock (see Berezin et al., 1996). Interestingly, despite the transfer of units to the sitting tenants being nominally free of charge, as in, for example, the case of Moscow (N. Kosareva & Struyk, 1993), some residents are still unwilling to acquire difficult-to-maintain units and hope to receive municipally renovated or new alternative housing. These people still keep social tenancy contracts and keep paying relatively low rents and avoid bearing the costs of major repairs and overhauls (however being responsible for minor repairs). Against that backdrop, for many in Russia, housing retains a status of a fundamental social right that should be guaranteed by the state (Zavisca, 2012). In Moscow, 76.4 percent of flats that were eligible for privatisation in 1989 were privatised as of 2018 (*Moskva v 2010-2018*, 2019, p. 36). Free privatisation of state and municipal housing stock was set to end by March 2005 but was extended six times after that, before it was indefinitely extended in February 2017.

The socio-economic effects of privatisation of housing have been ambivalent. On the one hand, the support for homeownership and the privatisation of housing has been strong in Russia, while property ownership seemingly "encourages people to feel more like stakeholders in society and gives them a stronger sense of civic responsibility," that spans beyond their flats and includes also the entire block of flats and its courtyard (Attwood, 2012, p. 925). On the other hand, privatisation also led to growing disparities in housing[57] as some people did not have flats to privatise and had to rely on self-provision, while others were able to obtain additional properties which they could rent out, hence embracing housing as a commodity as well as a dwelling

[56] As a general rule, neither land nor common spaces of a building, such as cellars, staircase landings and so on, were privatised and stayed in the state or municipal ownership.

[57] Strikingly, early analyses of housing privatisation already warned that it could result in a distribution of housing assets that is more inequitable than existed prior to 1991 (see N. Kosareva & Struyk, 1993).

(ibid.).[58] Therefore, privatisation benefitted those tenants who occupied larger, more centrally-located and more prestigious flats, while those who lived in substandard housing or were not registered in their flats (that is, had no *propiska* – internal residence permit) were the biggest losers. Moreover, many households who privatised their flats came to discover that they were unable to afford the full financial burden of homeownership (Puzanov, 2013). In that sense, privatisation meant that the owners became responsible for the cost of maintenance, and those with lower incomes simply could not afford to invest even in the most basic repairs (this will be discussed in Chapter 6).

It is difficult to estimate the extent of housing privatisations in the study areas since ownership information in Russia is only accessible through the State Register of Property Rights and Transactions for registered residents in a block of flats. A survey conducted in the studied estates nevertheless provides a basic insight into this. In general, in all five estates, 64 percent of respondents have privatised their flats, 8 percent have not, and 28 percent did not provide any information on that matter. The highest rate of privatisation has been reported in Budenovsky estate, 85 percent.

While the Russian housing data provides information about the forms of property ownership, it is largely silent about the more commonly used types of housing tenure: owner-occupancy, tenancy (public housing and private rentals), cooperative etc.[59] The State Register of Property Rights and Transactions does not provide information on tenure either, so conducting a survey was the best way to get a neighbourhood-level glimpse. According to the survey, 6 percent of respondents in all estates live in rental flats and 15 percent live in publicly allocated housing (state, municipal or enterprise). At the same time, 32 percent answered that they inherited their flats or have been living there since birth, which does not pertain to any tenure form.

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[58] Those people who had no flats to privatise have been encouraged to take out mortgages to purchase housing on the market, but high interest rates and the widespread aversion to mortgages has led people to rely rather on the extended family networks in order to solve their housing problems. At the same time, many Russians harbour a sense of entitlement to affordable housing provided by the state. As sociologist Jane Zavisca explains, this disposition has its origins in the Soviet times. For Russians, she has argued, "long-term and inalienable usage rights are intrinsic to ownership" (Zavisca, 2012, p. 5), and in a mortgage they see a risk of foreclosure that is a threat to these rights, a "debt bondage" (ibid., p. 9). As a result, in Russia, a unique system of "property without markets" has developed, in which most housing has been privatised but never fully commodified (Zavisca, 2008).

[59] In 2009, 16 percent of housing stock in Russia fell under the category of public housing, according to Puzanov's (2013) estimates.

The extent of privately rented flats is particularly hard to grasp as many are rented out semi-legally in Russia; that is, tenancy contracts are not registered with the tax office. The participants in my study often mentioned rentals being quite widespread but could not be more specific as to how many flats are rented in their staircase or house/estate. In view of this, living arrangement of people, communal or separately occupied flat, is the only available proxy for tenure in this study.

As was shown above, due to the acute housing crisis in the first Soviet decades, tenants were mainly allocated with individual rooms in flats even in the newly built houses, which led to the formation of communal flats. Until 1958, communal flat constituted the most common type of urban dwelling unit (Andrusz, 1984, p. 143). Since the end of the 1950s, Khrushchev's mass housing construction program aimed to resolve the 'housing question' by relocating people from the overcrowded communal housing into separate, single-family flats, which became a new norm (Harris, 2013). The system of communal living gradually declined since then, and according to the last Soviet Census in 1989,[60] only 7.6 percent of the urban population lived in communal flats in Russia; in Moscow, the share was 13.2 percent (Ruble, 1995, p. 35). By 2010, this share went down to 2.6 percent (2.9 percent in Moscow), according to the 2010 Census (*Vserossiyskaya perepis' naseleniya*, 2013). According to the same census, only 1.9 percent of all the stock of flats in Moscow was communal.

The studied avant-garde housing areas have substantially higher shares of communal flats compared to the city average (see Appendix C). For one, nearly 18 percent of all flats in all five studied areas are communal (excepting Budenovsky estate, where the data was not available); the share of the communal flats is the highest in Nizhnyaya Presnya (28.2 percent) and the lowest in Khavsko-Shabolovsky (11.9 percent). According to the survey, 15 percent of respondents live in communal flats, with the highest share recorded in Budenovsky (25 percent) and Dubrovka (19 percent).

It is hard to speculate about the number of communal flats in the study areas during the Soviet era and whether this number has significantly decreased since then, given the absence of available data. However, based on the aggregated responses from the interviewees, it is quite probable that there are fewer communal flats in the study areas today than there were before. Some communal flats ceased to exist because better-off residents could purchase the rooms from their

[60] No earlier data is available as the 1989 Census was the first one since 1926 to enquire about housing conditions of the Soviet population.

neighbours and establish the ownership over the entire flat as one unit. In other cases, residents on the municipal housing waiting list received separate flats elsewhere and moved out.[61] Still, communal flats persist in the studied areas for two main reason, it seems: first, due to the path dependencies in allocation of municipal housing in individual rooms within flats (that is, people stay on, unable to improve their housing situation by choice or still awaiting for public authorities to fulfil their duties on rehousing into separate flats), and second, due to the incremental growth of families. The latter situation is quite common in multi-generational families when children do not leave home once they reach adulthood, but continue living with their parents even after they start their own families – a reflection of what has been termed as a particularly Russian 'familial' type of housing provision (Zavisca, 2012).

Many communal flats in the studied housing estates were eventually privatised after the fall of the Soviet Union. However, in some cases privatisation did not imply that the flat would be transferred into ownership as a single property. For instance, each room could be privatised separately which would denote the transfer of municipal property into private ownership, yet the flat would still, at least in a legal sense, stay communal. Still, some communal and municipally owned flats have not been privatised, which results in a situation when there are units in both private and public ownership within one block of flats. In such mixed property situations, Russian housing statistics measuring private ownership as a share of square metres of total floor space does not provide a nuanced enough account of homeownership. Moreover, the situation at the level of separate living units (flats) can also prove extremely complicated as some rooms in communal flats may be privatised, while others may not. For instance, one of the respondents maintained that in the beginning of the 2000s, his family privatised the rooms they occupied, but they still do not have the ownership over the entire flat as their neighbour occupying the third room is a tenant with a municipal housing contract. Another respondent described the fragmentation of property both at the level of the block of flats and also in the only remaining communal flat in her house, where both living rooms were divided in half and each of the halves was privatised.

Looking at the avant-garde housing estates in central Moscow, there might hence not only be a mix of ownership in a given block of

[61] According to the Program for the phased elimination of communal housing stock in Moscow (1998-2006), residents of communal flats were allocated separate flats, while rehousing into new communal flats or parts of a dwelling was prohibited.

flats, but also a fragmentation of property within separate flats. In this sense, despite high urban homeownership rates on the city level, the complicated issue of mixed property ownership in Russia is further amplified by the tenure (or living arrangement) dimension. Indeed, as will be discussed hereafter, it is rather the living conditions of people and not the type of tenure of property form that became most salient in the discussions regarding two citywide housing development and improvement programs that were unfolding in Moscow in 2017.

'Renovation' and major repairs programs in 2017

The Moscow 'renovation' program[62] and the major repairs program, both unfolded in 2017 in parallel to my second fieldwork campaign. Announced in February 2017, the 'renovation' program became an important backdrop of my field study. This program was widely referred to and talked about by many respondents when I brought up questions about living arrangements, property rights and future prospects of their houses. The 'renovation' program proved to be highly controversial and brought thousands of Muscovites to the streets in protests in the late spring of 2017. While initially aimed at demolishing the postwar blocks of flats of the first wave of industrialised housing construction (1957-1968) and rehousing their residents – all in the name of improving the living conditions of people and renewing the urban environment (*Postanovleniye Pravitel'stva Moskvy*, 2017), – the program eventually came to include some multi-storey houses that were built before the Second World War, including three in Budenovsky estate.

The broad public opposition to the program led the city government to modify its terms. By late spring it was announced that relocation of residents would only occur within the same administrative district of the city. Previously this was not clear and many homeowners were afraid that relocation would imply leaving central parts of Moscow for the outskirts, a common practice during the Soviet-era renovations. Rehousing of people would entail moving them into newly-built high-rise blocks of flats and into equally-sized properties. Residents were also allowed to vote for or against joining the program. A house could be included in the 'renovation' program if two thirds of the homeowners and tenants voted for it; conversely, if one

[62] The name 'renovation' program is a literal translation from Russian (*programma renovatsii*). Although it has been referred to as 'relocation' program on the English-language version of the Moscow Mayor's official website, I will use the literal translation throughout.

third of the homeowners and tenants voted against (with 50 percent voter turnout), the house would be excluded from the program. The vote took place online and offline between 15 May and 15 June 2017, resulting in a majority of 90 percent of residents favouring renovation plans. Importantly, in May 2017, the city hall officially announced that according to the program, the avant-garde housing estates would be exempt from demolition (*Renovatsiya ne zatronet*, 2017). After all the amendments, the program now encompasses 5,174 blocks of flats, home to more than one million people.

The 'renovation' program seems to have revealed the divide between residents of the studied housing areas along the lines of their living conditions. In short, those who live in communal arrangements and in public housing tend to be in favour of the programme; by contrast, homeowners with single-family living arrangements oppose the program. In this regard, it is important to note that the 'renovation' program stipulated the provision of separate flats to those Muscovites who resided in communal flats. While some residents opposed the 'renovation' program (even though some concerns could have been put to rest by the announcement that avant-garde-era houses would be exempt from it), others were still eager to join the program in order to improve their housing situation and living conditions. Since it was possible to join the program even if the house was not initially shortlisted, residents of three houses in Budenovsky estate decided to do so by the majority of votes.[63]

Another citywide process that has provided an important backdrop for the study was the ongoing regional program of major repairs of blocks of flats. These repairs are financed by homeowners themselves who pay a monthly fee proportioned to the size of their flats into the regional repair fund.[64] The money from this fund is then distributed to finance repair work on the blocks of flats according to the plan drawn by the Moscow government for the years 2015-2044. The Housing Code of Russia regulates that the major repairs cover engineering systems, foundations, facades, and roofs of multi-storey houses. Importantly, major repairs do not include the replacement of wooden beams, a common constructive feature of houses built in the 1920-30s, as this work is only carried out during the larger renovation

[63] For more information about the program and for the map of houses that joined the program, see: https://www.mos.ru/city/projects/renovation/

[64] As of 1 January 2019, in Moscow the minimum monthly fee is set to 18.19 roubles (approx. €0.25) per square metres. This fee can be increased by an agreement of the general meeting of homeowners and tenants of each block of flats. This system was introduced in Moscow on 1 July 2015. Tenants of public housing are exempt from the payment.

of a house. Major repairs do not require the resettlement of residents, while renovation can only be carried out if the house is empty of tenants. The regional repair fund proposes the timeframe and a list of works to the general meeting of homeowners and tenants of a multi-storey house, who need to approve or reject the proposal. As will be detailed in later chapters, these proposals, as well as the perceived quality of repairs, have been met with criticism by some residents. A number of houses in the studied avant-garde estates have undergone major repairs since 2015. This work, however, is not done systematically (that is, involving all the houses in a given housing estate at a time) but rather sporadically; hence all five housing estates stand as a patchwork of newly painted and dilapidated facades.

An important precursor to the present-day citywide housing development and improvement programs could be the renovations carried out in late Soviet period in Moscow. During the 1970-80s, some houses went through a major overhaul resulting in a complete reshuffling of the population. These renovations involved changing the floor beams, where wooden beams were replaced with reinforced concrete ones. This could not be done without resettling the inhabitants at least for the period of renovation. The residents could still negotiate and choose between a certain number of rehousing options, but those would all be located in the newly constructed high-rise housing estates (Borén & Gentile, 2020). The intensive housing construction of the time meant that it was feasible to relocate people to the new residential areas located on the outskirts of Moscow. When the renovation works were over, completely new residents moved in. In a sense, these renovations forced out the population who had been living in the neighbourhood for almost 50 years. Old social ties were broken and with them also the everyday life and patterns of living in this place. Thus, when residents were relocated for temporary renovation of one block of flats of the Usachevka estate in year 1980, only two families returned back to their flats. Cases like this were surprisingly common.

* * *

If, as Lefebvre usefully insists, everyday life cannot be divorced from historical development, then it is essential to grasp the long historical record of changes in avant-garde housing estates. By providing the historical and contemporary context of housing development in Moscow in general, and in the five studied avant-garde estates in particular, this chapter has set the scene for my presentation and analysis of

the collected empirical material. In the three chapters that follow, I will discuss how the residents make sense of the avant-garde spatial elements and design features of housing estates, how they experience and navigate the social space of their neighbourhoods, and, finally, how they perceive the lived qualities of houses as experienced in the course of their everyday lives.

5 Making sense of avant-garde places

Few will argue with the fact that avant-garde, having appeared at the very outset of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and early 1930s, is a unique style of architecture. Its artistic and technological ambitions resonated with the socialist ethos of the new Soviet state, yet the scale of the resultant material output did not match these ambitions. In today's Moscow, however, the legacy of avant-garde is quite prominent both in terms of landmark and ordinary architecture, including residential architecture. Whereas the avant-garde-era housing at first sight comes across as rather unremarkable, the awareness of its early Soviet origins and the associated aesthetic and social traits helped me to appreciate this architecture even without any special architectural background. When conducting first the preparatory and then the main fieldwork in five avant-garde housing estates, I found them interesting and enjoyable both for studying and simply spending a substantial amount of my time in. But do the residents of these estates themselves know what kind of housing they live in? And what is their perception and experience of the particularly avant-garde characteristics of their dwellings; do they appreciate these?

This chapter seeks to understand how the lost and surviving spatial elements and design features of avant-garde housing estates are made sense of by their residents nowadays. The aim here is to describe the residents' experiences and perceptions (past and present) in relation to specifically built environments. Although this chapter, which is informed solely by phenomenology, does not attempt to provide an account of the effects that structural forces exert on residents' sense-making of their residences, it nevertheless reveals that their (un)selfconscious awareness of the geographies of their neighbourhoods indeed reflects these 'higher level' structures (cf. Buchli, 1999). At the same time, the chapter discusses the role of the built environment in people's emotional and experiential relationship with places.

The material and social settings of avant-garde neighbourhoods have changed substantially since their construction, not least due to the dramatic ideological, political, social and economic shifts

throughout the Soviet and post-Soviet periods – as well as due to the normal wear and tear over time. The chapter reflects these changes through a progressive focus on, firstly, the past and, secondly, the present experiences of social and material spheres of housing estates. The third part of the chapter stresses the importance of attending to avant-garde housing not in its historical or cultural heritage status but rather in its ordinary-yet-meaningful kind. In other words, meaning of housing is intricately linked with the residents' lived experiences within it.

Remembering avant-garde: bygone social and material spheres

The avant-garde era is long past its prime, but it certainly is not forgotten. As was previously discussed in Chapter 4, every avant-garde housing estate was designed to include a number of public amenities conducive to socialisation and alleviation of everyday routines – all in order to promote the new, collective, way of life. While this infrastructure had been partially phased out already during the 1930s with the rise of Stalinism and later on in the aftermath of World War II, some amenities continued to function throughout the whole Soviet period and ceased to exist only in the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union. Merely a fraction of these facilities in the studied areas remain today in their original design and function. However, although the avant-garde estates by and large have been stripped of their social infrastructure, residents still keep memories of these now defunct amenities, eagerly mentioning them when asked about their long-term experiences of the neighbourhoods. This section is set to demonstrate the inhabitants' lingering awareness of the new-way-of-life features that were particular to this type of housing and that are not in use today due to irrelevance or physical loss.

Two types of social amenities could be distinguished based on the accounts of the participants in my study: stationary, permanent facilities and more temporary, outdoor ones. In contrast to the latter, the former can often still be seen in the built environments of the estates even despite the loss of their social functions. A very common example falling under the first category is a kindergarten. Not an avant-garde facility per se, kindergartens had become integral to residential areas in the 1920s, and the residents in all five estates either recalled attending these kindergartens themselves or mentioned people they knew who attended. One particular feature of these avant-garde-era

kindergartens was that they were built into the ground floors of the houses – as opposed to a later kindergarten model located in a separate building, often a few urban blocks away (or even within a commuting distance) from home. Nowadays, functioning kindergartens on the ground floors can still be found in Dubrovka, Nizhnyaya Presnya and Usachevka estates; the kindergarten in Budenovsky estate had been converted into a dormitory, in Khavsko-Shabolovsky it had been replaced by a library and an art gallery, and a second kindergarten in Usachevka had been converted into a hostel.

Another example of a social amenity – which in line with avant-garde principles used to help residents with their everyday chores – is the detached laundry building in Budenovsky, referred to by one of the interviewees as a "significant place" within the estate (Interviewee BE). This now defunct laundry occupying one of the courtyards was seen as an essential part of the neighbourhood, as another local resident recounted:

> This whole building [between no. 11 and no. 18] was a big dry-cleaning and laundry centre. Still in the 1980s we went there, handed over the bed linen… Well, many people dried [their laundry] in the courtyard, but [here] the bed linen was handed over, washed, dried, and received back clean and ironed. You see, in the flats… especially in communal flats, you don't feel like drying [your laundry] and living under the sheets [just like under the ship] sails… [My family] used [the public laundry]; it worked until the very end [of the Soviet Union], until the mess began in the early 1990s, when all of a sudden it got separated from the rest of the [housing] estate once the new owners by fair means or foul took over it. (Interviewee BD)

The outsourcing and industrialisation of washing was crucial not only for the alleviation of household chores but also for the optimisation of the use of scarce living space. Moreover, as an interviewee in Dubrovka explained, few did laundry at home because in the Soviet times washing machines were not widespread. With the fall of the USSR, the 'steaming and smoking' laundry building was leased out (just like many other publicly-owned assets) and lost its original function, hosting first a tailor shop and, most recently, a student centre. The closure of laundry reflects the redefinition of space and its functions in post-Soviet capitalism and the subsequent distortion of habitual socio-spatial practices of local residents.

More examples of stationary infrastructure cited by the informants included a travellers' club and a 'red corner' club (propaganda reading and recreation club), as well as a library pick-up point in Nizhnyaya Presnya, all located either on the ground floors or in the basements of houses. Nowadays, most of these are replaced by small private busi-

nesses such as grocery shops and cafés. In Dubrovka, all of the interviewees who grew up before the 1990s recalled that in the gateway corner house (no. 8/12) used to be the two-screen Mayak cinema and a children's library. In the beginning of the 1990s, the house was abandoned and was standing empty before it was purchased by a private investor in the early 2000s who renovated it, adding two-three storeys on top, and sold the flats for profit. As a result of such a large-scale intervention, the house lost its historical value and was removed from the list of heritage buildings. Another example came from a long-term resident in Usachevka, who guided me to the building of nearby public baths (see Figure 17), located across the street from the now demolished Kauchuk rubber factory (for the convenience of workers after the shift). Still accommodating baths, parts of the building have been rented out since the 1990s to incorporate also a bank branch, a betting office, a clothing shop and a bar.

Figure 17. Public baths near Usachevka. Source: author's own.

The location of permanent social amenities within estates served the purpose of socialisation of everyday life, as was discussed in Chapter 4 and is corroborated by the accounts of the long-term residents. An elderly respondent in Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate cited her mother's and her aunt's recollections about the neighbourhood life in the 1930s revolving around the community centre and the nearby house-commune:

> In the centre of the housing estate, there was a library. On the ground floor there was a kindergarten and a nursery, and on the second floor there was a library. Kids from communal flats loved to go there to do lessons. There were thematic clubs with very good teachers, and everyone went to these clubs with pleasure. Here, in the [nearby] House-commune, there were also clubs for the residents and a cinema. That is, people were taken care of not just formally, but there were free clubs, there were libraries and so on. And my aunt who lived [in Khavsko-Shabolovsky housing complex], she told me there was also an enthusiastic gymnast who came in the mornings and exercised with the local kids. (Interviewee SC)

This vignette suggests that social life in avant-garde neighbourhoods went on both indoors and outdoors. Accordingly, these housing estates also included more temporary facilities within the courtyards. One common example of such a facility is an outdoor stage for performances, lectures and dancing; it was mentioned by respondents in Dubrovka, Usachevka and Khavsko-Shabolovsky estates. For instance, a respondent from Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate remembered an open-air stage and library that used to be open during the summer time until the end of the 1970s:

> There was a small wooden booth in the neighbouring courtyard [where the newspapers and magazines were stored]; it has not been preserved. And behind it there was a small table and wooden benches. And the lecturers from the Knowledge Society[65] came and gave lectures. I remember once I accidentally got to listen to a lecture there, quite an interesting one, by the way. I thought: let me sit down and listen for five minutes. I was maybe 13 or 14 years old then. <…> This was infrequent and only in summers. But, to my amazement, anyone could come there, pick some newspapers or magazines and flip through them sitting on a bench. It was really cool! And this all ended… Yes, in fact, this ended quickly, already at the end of the seventies, and never returned. (Interviewee SH)

The decline of the outdoor amenities seems to have coincided with a certain weakening of socialisation and neighbourliness which could be associated with World War II and the Soviet-era major overhauls (this latter point will be discussed in Chapter 6). The war brought devastation to the constructivist courtyard infrastructure even in the absence of street battles and bombardments: according to a long-term resident in Usachevka, those who were not evacuated from Moscow and stayed, used the street furniture and the greenery for heating (Interviewee UE). The years following the Second World War saw a revival of social amenities and socialisation, which lasted up

[65] Knowledge Society was a Soviet education and propaganda organisation engaged in giving lectures and publishing popular science literature.

until the late Soviet period. A younger informant in Usachevka cited her conversations with long-term residents and their memories of the social environment in relation to the postwar era:

> We used to call [the courtyard in the centre of the estate] the Lenin garden: there was a statue of Lenin, and there were fountains. The local grannies told me that back in the days a movable cinema would come here and show movies, and all the residents would come. And they also used to dance to a gramophone. Such was social life here. (Interviewee UB)

After the Second World War, some design elements of the estate were restored: for example, the outdoor stage, the fountains and the statue of Lenin – all seen also in the prewar postcard (Figure 18). At the same time, other amenities were lost or entirely changed their original function. Thus, the building of a canteen in Usachevka was converted into a hospital during the war and has kept this function ever since.

Figure 18. The central courtyard of Usachevka estate. Postcard from 1936, photo by Shul'kin. Source: https://goskatalog.ru.

The above quotation also introduces the local toponymy that harks back to the early Soviet years. The name "Lenin garden" refers to the statue of Lenin that could be found in Usachevka; similar statues or busts of Lenin installed in the courtyards were recalled by informants in Budenovsky and Nizhnyaya Presnya estates (in the latter case, one respondent remembered seeing the bust until the mid-1990s). Anoth-

er striking example of the lingering toponymy was mentioned by a respondent in Nizhnyaya Presnya, who recounted that even during his school years (that is, in the early and mid-1990s) the housing complex was known under a common name 'new houses', alluding to the way avant-garde estates altogether were called in parlance back in the 1920-30s.

All in all, despite the irrelevance or sheer loss of most of the social infrastructure today, the vast majority of the informants demonstrated their awareness of this infrastructure, either through their own previous direct involvement or from the accounts of other residents. While the social function of some of these amenities was lost already during the Soviet period, others ceased to exist with the fall of the USSR. Either way, the material artefacts of avant-garde's socialisation program continue to persist only in the minds of residents, providing a frame of reference for the more recent, capitalist-era developments in the neighbourhoods and the city as a whole, even if currently exerting only a marginal impact (or even none whatsoever) on the daily lives and routines of the locals.

Experiencing avant-garde: remaining architecture and design elements in use

Avant-garde architecture flourished intensively yet briefly at the very outset of Soviet Russia. Its brevity, combined with the shortage of resources and technological advancements, limited the material output in the form of housing estates and related social amenities. Moreover, as was discussed in the previous section, the majority of the realised infrastructure disappeared throughout the Soviet and the post-Soviet periods and persists today only in the local residents' memories. The houses, by contrast, are still standing, having kept the original residential function in all five studied areas (with the exception of one house in Nizhnyaya Presnya estate that got converted into a Federal Tax Service office). Under such circumstances, questions arise concerning the residents' awareness and experiences of the remaining, tangible avant-garde features, namely the architecture, design and layout of both neighbourhood space and the interior spaces of the houses and flats.

Tracing residents' attitudes and perceptions: exterior and interior spaces

The built environment of residential areas is a phenomenon that the local inhabitants directly engage in a variety of ways, ranging from merely fleeting to more profound, from unselfconscious and routinised to selfconscious and deliberate. In this section, I describe the attitudes of inhabitants to the particularly avant-garde features of their housing environments. This, I argue, can demonstrate the people's understanding of their residences as informed by a more general awareness of the historical material conditions of the studied areas. By bringing up the particular spatial and design qualities of the estates in the interviews, the respondents discussed the overall lived qualities of their neighbourhoods and houses.

Besides its explicit socialisation ethos, avant-garde architecture, even in its subdued, residential iteration, aspired to a certain aesthetical expression and functionality. Nowadays, despite the Soviet- and post-Soviet-era additions and alterations (mounted lifts, added storeys and balconies, recoloured facades, to name just a few), the basic architectural, planning and design features can still be seen in all five estates. Among the respondents, a few were working as professional architects and therefore could give a slightly more nuanced account of their housing estates not only from a resident's standpoint, but also as experts (even if not specialised in avant-garde architecture). For instance, one interviewee in Budenovsky discussed specifically the aesthetical aspects of her estate, referring to avant-garde housing as modest yet well-designed and visually appealing, and therefore evoking positive feelings:

> Thanks to the layout, planning and architectural solutions, it's a very comfortable environment here. I've got used to it now, but in the first year after we had just moved in, I was so glad [every time I was] walking home. It's [a feast for the] eyes because of the design, the contrast in heights, even if minimal, because of the lines, balconies. This architecture is modest, not ostentatious, no-frills, but the details, these small nuances, they please you every time. (Interviewee BA)

Strikingly, not only professional architects acknowledged the visual appeal of the avant-garde; some other respondents also turned out to be aware of this architectural style and its early Soviet origins. For instance, a local activist living in Budenovsky estate eloquently described his view on avant-garde features in colloquial language, echoing nevertheless the more expertly formulated account above:

> The light, the bricks; all of this is very coherent. Something about this [housing] is dazzling; I don't know, there is some kind of a [coherent] environment here. Also, you know, some kind of historicity; all these perks of all kinds, all these bends, lines, transitions… Nowadays, no one bothers with construction as much as back then. Here, everything was thought out from the very outset, in such a way that the [exposure to] sun had to specifically highlight this and that. Well, I like the thoroughness of all this stuff, its wholeness. In general, I like these [facade] colours, I like that [the architects] somehow thought about this when they were designing [houses]. I also like, of course, this thing with the walk-through staircases, and it's a pity that this was not implemented [in our house]. <…> I like that it's extremely quiet and calm here; [a place where] you really feel great. It's somehow very comfortable to be here. (Interviewee BB)

Both quotations reveal that the residents' positive attitude toward the avant-garde pertains not only to specific architectural and design elements or 'historicity' of houses, but also includes the perceived comfort of the built environment in general. In this sense, the interviews with the locals registered a more experiential dimension in their descriptions of housing areas. In Dubrovka, a respondent, too, highlighted the visual and ambient qualities of her estate but admitted that other avant-garde (constructivist) housing areas did not evoke the same feelings:

> I got curious about the constructivism era at some point. I can't say that I'm fascinated with this architecture, but, paradoxically, our residential complex gives me an absolutely incredible feeling of delight… I've lived here since I was born. Every day I walk my dog and look up at these buildings. I love them: I find them infinitely harmonious. I see some amazing architectural traits in them. I realise that none of them is like any other: each is an [individually authored] project. And at the same time, they all create this one single architectural ensemble. It has a truly unmatched atmosphere. I'm a big fan of our particular housing estate. On a different note: when I visit other constructivist estates, I don't feel the same admiration. Perhaps it's because this is my [place]. (Interviewee DB)

The contradiction in the quotation above is a curious one: the interviewee claimed that she was not really fascinated by constructivism as a special architectural style, yet expressed a strong affection particularly for her housing estate. In this case, it seems that the appeal of avant-garde features is intertwined with the more general feeling of attachment to home place, and that it can be difficult to distinguish between the two sentiments. Place experience involves thus both the perception of the built environment characteristics (lying in the domain of human cognition) and more affective attitudes to the inhabited place itself irrespective of its physical properties.

Besides the visual qualities, avant-garde estates also stand out in terms of spatial design principles. One respondent from Usachevka with a background in architecture described the avant-garde housing environment through both her childhood and professional perspectives, stressing particularly the socialisation potential in these areas:

> It was a standardised mass housing, but you won't find two identical estates; they are all completely different. But they have a common basic principle – the creation of a closed space of courtyards which smoothly flow from one into another. And this is very cool, I felt it when I was a kid, because we [the kids] thought the space was infinite: we could hang out here, there and everywhere. And I still know who, say, lives at the [opposite] end of my courtyard. And this, it seems to me, is the unique quality for a modern city dweller because [today] this is generally impossible. Nowadays people don't even know who lives next door on the same floor. But in these neighbourhoods, you know the grannies who live somewhere in the back of the courtyard, and they know you, too. (Interviewee UB)

Similar to accounts of others, here, too, the avant-garde is not confined to a purely aesthetical (architectural and design) category, but is seen as providing conditions for comfort and sociability which are arguably hardly found in a contemporary city. Paradoxically, it is in this regard that the avant-garde legacy seems to be the strongest: the function (as a dwelling place and as a comfortable social milieu) persists along with the physical form (altered but essentially unchanged), and this balance has remained intact for almost a century. Given the turbulent history of the past century in Moscow and Russia at large, this situation indeed seems remarkable.

Apart from the exterior spaces, the interior spaces of the housing estates were also endorsed by most of the informants for being well-thought-out and comfortable for living. While some of the houses underwent major repairs in the 1970-80s, entailing a complete overhaul and re-planning of the interiors (see Chapter 4), still in the majority of cases[66] the original layouts have persisted to this day. In those cases, local residents often pointed to a number of interior design features inherited from the 1920s that they considered positive. For example, the generous height of ceilings (3.20 metres on average) was brought up by a few respondents as an example of such a positive characteristic, often contrasted with the ceiling heights of postwar mass-produced *khrushchyovki* where the ceiling height is normally 2.5-2.7 metres. A resident in Budenovsky estate highlighted the associated health benefits, claiming that "ceilings that are lower than

[66] That is, 56 percent of houses as of 2017, if judged by the original material of floor beams – wood (data from https://www.reformagkh.ru).

this [3.20 metres] – it's somehow strange, it's really psychologically difficult" (Interviewee BD). High ceilings are indeed conducive not only to good hygiene (as they provide for a larger volume of indoor air) but, in the view of the respondent, also psychological health.

Another health-related feature that was introduced in the constructivist housing was the natural, or cross, ventilation. This type of ventilation enables air circulation without using any mechanical systems, which made it a very cost-effective means of basic disease prevention. Still nowadays, some mentioned they valued this option as yet another proof denoting an overall high quality of construction. A few drew parallels with the contemporary building standards, as, for example, a respondent in Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate who expressed her attitude by declaring: "It's only in modern barbaric times one can build a house without natural ventilation" (Interviewee SE). I perceive this recurring and favourable comparison with housing from later periods (postwar through post-Soviet) as a way of highlighting the positive aspects of the avant-garde in an attempt to argue that older housing does not necessarily mean lower quality housing, and that the lived qualities do not necessarily deteriorate with age as such, but rather with the lack of maintenance. I will return to this comparative argument below and in subsequent chapters.

Figure 19. A staircase in Budenovsky estate, outside and inside view. Source: author's own.

Two more examples of appealing interior design arrangements related to general conveniences instrumental in the daily exploitation of flats. In some cases, residents pointed to a window in the toilet, as well as a

smaller window between the toilet and the bathroom, both helping in saving electricity thanks to the daylight entering the flat. On a similar note, the generous glazing of staircases was also highlighted by many inhabitants (see Figure 19). Furthermore, larders (cooling cabinets built into the walls of kitchens) were mentioned as once handy devices; however, one resident admitted using it today as a general storage rather than as a space specially designated for groceries (in this way the larders were used probably until the late 1950s – before the fridges became widespread). An account of such design elements by a resident in Usachevka estate is illustrative in this regard:

> Compared to modern houses, these 80-year-old [avant-garde houses boast] a very high standard: ceilings that are 3-3.20 metres high, thick brick walls, larders… Since not all people at that time [back in the 1920-30s] owned fridges, there were these cooling compartments built into the walls. And there, I remember from my childhood, my grandmother kept all kinds of jams. It's a cool thing, in principle, and we still use it. Another very cool thing that still surprises me: all my life I've lived with a window in the bathroom. This is such a rarity for Moscow flats, but for us it's a norm: to have a window in the bathroom. So that the daylight naturally gets into the space of the flat. (Interviewee UB)

Not all attitudes to the avant-garde environments were universally positive, however. For instance, a respondent in Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate talked, on the one hand, about the cosiness and human scale of the houses and the spaces in between, but, on the other hand, also stressed the fact that today's housing standards and demands have changed, and that avant-garde-era houses might not always satisfy the residents' needs. Furthermore, she admitted that the heritage status of Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate did not promise any changes:

> Given that we live in a historical zone, we are ready to tolerate [some drawbacks]. After all, the flats are not very comfortable by today's standards, because they are without storage rooms, without balconies. We've been all cluttered up with stuff since long ago. Previously, perhaps, people had a minimum of things, but now we have a lot, and this [layout] is inconvenient. We have nowhere to store bicycles! (Interviewee SF)

Despite a certain discontent with the living standards, the resident is clearly aware of the historical conditions underlying the construction of her house. In this sense, by pointing to the lack of storage space and the absence of balconies, the interviewee actually hinted at the fact that in the 1920-30s the standards regarding the amount of material possessions were much lower than today, while the balconies

were considered crucial mainly for the sake of formal expression of buildings.

In all fairness, some of the respondents, when asked about the appeal of their neighbourhood, attributed the features that are not necessarily particular to avant-garde housing. For example, an interviewee in Dubrovka estate expressed her positive attitude to the exterior and interior space of the neighbourhood in rather broad terms, and should we not know the context, we could have easily associated her description with postwar *khrushchyovki*:

> [Things that] I certainly appreciate [about my house]: cosy and quiet, green courtyards, good location relative to the city centre, [good] transport accessibility. Since these are five-storey houses, the population density is much lower [compared to] high-rise buildings built on the [similarly-sized] plot of land. This is regarding the environment. <…> As for the interior design, [I appreciate] the high ceilings, comfortable flat layout. Today, 40 years after [we moved in here after the major overhaul in 1975], it may not be as modern as the new houses: there is no guest room, no separate bedroom, no double bathroom. All these things are missing but, in general, everything is very convenient and well-planned for a small family. (Interviewee DG)

The use of such a 'generic' language with little reference to particularly avant-garde features may, on the one hand, stem from the fact that the respondent did not know much about the history of avant-garde residential architecture in general and of her housing estate in particular. On the other hand, it could also be due to her family moving in already after the Soviet-era major overhaul that altered the interiors and affected the social life. It seems, however, that the narrative maintained by the interviewee in the above quotation can be associated with the overall routinised perception of housing by its long-term inhabitants, in which significant features (in the eyes of outsiders), such as expressive balconies, corner sections, glassed staircases and so on, may be missed and not considered as important – as opposed to the more ordinary and habitual ones, such as the human scale of built environment, convenient flat layout and so forth.

Experiencing the experiment: the case of Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate and its unique spatial layout

If for some in the estates the salient avant-garde exterior and interior features might have gone off the radar in course of dwelling, for the residents of Khavsko-Shabolovsky housing complex its unique spatial layout was a set subject in the interviews. As was described before in Chapter 4, this housing estate was designed by Rationalists, a group

of architects whose desire was to shape people's perception of space through rational planning and architectural form. In Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate, the architects proposed an experimental plan consisting of L-shaped buildings disengaged from the existing street network (see Figure 20); this plan was implemented only partially, but it nevertheless still determines the overall spatial articulation of the neighbourhood. The unusual layout of the housing estate prompted me to take a closer look at residents' perception of its space.

Figure 20. A view into the Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate from Lesteva street. The houses in the foreground are parallel to the street. Source: author's own.

While hoping to discover whether the architects' ideas have come into effect, when doing the interviews in Khavsko-Shabolovsky, I did not specifically ask the inhabitants to reflect on their perception of the built environment of the estate. To my surprise, all but one local resident elaborated or at least touched upon the area's unique layout. One common narrative was the difficulties navigating the neighbourhood since the houses, and consequently, the footpaths, were not parallel to the streets. As one resident put it: "Here we can see that the architect makes a fool of a man" (Interviewee SE). The built environment of the housing complex was said to be confusing for both insiders and outsiders:

> SE: I'm just used to [navigating the layout] here. Even if I get confused, I know that there are only a few layers…

AK: Three or four?

SE: Yes, here are four squiggles [sequences of L-shaped houses] … Once, a friend of mine came by car to visit me. We had a drink, so she had to leave her car behind. The day after, she came to pick up her car. Laughably, she [couldn't find it]: around every corner opened exactly the same familiar [triangular] courtyard… She didn't ask me for help, but even [if she did] I wouldn't be able to help her: I didn't know where she left her car. Well, in the end, she found it. This is how it is here: a bit confusing.

Another respondent living in a former house-commune across the street from the estate also highlighted the sense of confusion with its spatial layout, claiming it has a labyrinthine character:

> Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate is, of course, a stunning labyrinth, which from the very beginning scared me more than attracted me. I'm very conscious when I'm there because I still get lost sometimes. Absolute disorientation with these houses! That is, if you go there in the evening, you need to look for a lot of reference points. And since, after all, there are many courtyards, and they are all different, its overall atmosphere feels a bit blurry. (Interviewee SG)

In both examples above, the locals pointed to the feeling of confusion even if admitting that they could navigate the space relying on the knowledge of local geography they gained in the process of dwelling. However, the residents' espoused sense of confusion stood in stark contrast with the architects' intention to create a built environment that would be perceived as dynamic with its successively unfolding spatial structure.

The informants' sense of (occasional) confusion can probably be associated with the fact that they both moved in the 1990s, which is recent compared to the age of the housing complex. A long-term resident in Khavsko-Shabolovsky, by contrast, seemed to be aware of the peculiar spatial layout of the estate but asserted having no problem with it, claiming that she learned how to navigate the space already when she was a kid:

> We played Cossacks-and-Robbers [a variation of tag] here. We were running around these courtyards and hiding, and I therefore know very well the [spatial] configuration of these triangles [courtyards] and check marks [L-shaped buildings]. (Interviewee SH)

The long-term residents' experience of place has more substance compared to the shorter-term residents' one since it may include the knowledge acquired through games. This dimension of place experi-

ence is available at a certain age (most often, childhood and early adolescence), and the developed perception of space thereby is qualitatively different from other types of place experience one may have in other moments in life. In other words, the duration of place experience is instrumental in the development of one's deep and multifaceted sense of place (cf. the notion of geographic sensibilities in Bunkše, 2004), especially in cases of intricate built environments.

From my conversations with local inhabitants in Khavsko-Shabolovsky, it became clear that the benefits of the spatial layout anticipated by the Rationalists are not part of people's consciousness and awareness today. As such, the L-shaped houses and their position at 45° to the street network did not render the residents' perception of space dynamic and rhythmic – as initially intended by the Rationalists. Neither was the differentiation between the northern and southern facades of houses (and hence the sun exposure between the utility and living rooms) mentioned as being of any significance. By contrast, when residents did comment about their perception of the estate's unique built environment, they did so rather in terms of navigating and finding way in space. These accounts revealed the residents' prevailing utilitarian attitude to space and their mundane, everyday experience of it, something that apparently does not sit well with the architect's experimental vision.

Residents' awareness of intra-estate differences

While each housing estate constitutes a coherent spatial entity, the presence of certain differentiation between its buildings should also be acknowledged. Avant-garde housing estates were often built over the course of a few years, which meant that the projects evolved together with the implementation of technological advancements (for example, the annually revised standardised dwelling units). Different buildings were also constructed and managed by different actors, such as worker's building cooperatives, state departments and ministries, enterprises and the municipality. These and other factors (such as multiple architects responsible for the design of individual buildings) contributed to the resulting variation between the houses of a given housing estate; the lingering legacies of this variation had been translated in the ways the respondents explained the perceived quality of their own houses as compared to neighbouring houses within the same estate. This section will briefly dwell on this intra-estate comparative perspective deployed by some of the interviewed inhabitants.

It was not uncommon that the respondents, when sharing with me their experiences of dwelling, pointed to other flats or houses in their estates. They demonstrated thereby the knowledge not only of their own residencies, but also a more general awareness of the qualitative differences within the estate, and, as such, a deeper understanding of the geography of their dwelling places. For example, one of the residents in Budenovsky estate showcased her knowledge of flat layouts in her own and the neighbouring houses:

> Unlike most other houses, the layout [in our house] is different because we have mainly large [three- and four-room] flats. There are small flats only in the first and the last entrance. And this layout was designed for a family, for a large one, unlike the modules that were [built] a little later, reduced in size and unified as, for example, in [the neighbouring house]. From the very beginning everything [was well-planned] here: separate bathroom, toilet, pantry with a window, and two [full-sized] walk-in closets. (Interviewee BD)

Similarly, in Nizhnyaya Presnya, a respondent acknowledged that each house in the housing estate was built according to an individual project, which had created a great variation not only among the houses, but even among flat layouts in one given house or a staircase. In this respect, she described the layout of her flat, located on the top floor, as being more modest compared to the flat located immediately below her own:

> The top floor is smaller by a section – who would have thought! The flat below [ours] has a nice big bathroom and a big kitchen. We have a kitchen and a toilet in which we have installed a bath – above the living room [of the flat below], and we are always afraid that it would leak, although we did all [the waterproofing] needed. <…> Each staircase has its own individual layout. The public bathhouse was not far away, so why install a bath [in our flat] on the top floor? (Interviewee PC)

Apart from revealing the residents' good knowledge of engineering and interior design details in relation to their houses, the two quotations above are also illustrative of the fact that the locals do not perceive the qualities of their own houses in isolation from the rest of the estate. Therefore, it can be said that inhabitants tend to recognise the whole housing area as one spatial entity – even if it is characterised by some internal differentiation. The command of local geography involves a deeper understanding of the internal structure of place with its technicalities and practicalities that may not, at first sight, directly affect one's lived experience but will certainly inform it though a heightened awareness of the surrounding environment (cf. Tuan, 1977).

What is also noteworthy, in recognising the differences between the houses of a given estate, some residents made connections to the historical conditions as laying the foundation for the differences which could be experienced even today. For instance, residents in Budenovsky estate often referred to six houses of the first stage of construction (1926-1927) on Novaya Doroga street as being of better quality – compared to the rest of the estate (built in 1928-1930) that varies in quality and design solutions. This difference can be traced back to the division along the construction and management lines: the former part of the estate was developed by the United Construction Workers cooperative (and handed over to the defence and fuel industry ministries in the 1930s), while the latter was a part of the Moscow soviet's municipal housing. In the Soviet Union, the cooperative forms of housing construction and management (along with the enterprise and state ones) used to be of a higher quality compared to the municipal ones and attracted primarily the higher-paid, skilled workers who could afford about ten percent down payment and relatively high monthly costs (see Andrusz, 1984; DiMaio, 1974). In Budenovsky estate, too, the cooperative houses enjoyed a higher housing standard compared to the municipal houses, according to Interviewee BA: there was more living space on average (due to family-per-flat as opposed to family-per-room occupancy), flats were better-planned (including separate bathrooms and kitchens), and the building materials were of a better quality (clay brick as opposed to slag brick). In a similar vein, a respondent in Usachevka estate cited the historical differences (such as the presence or absence of bathrooms and lifts) as an important feature distinguishing between her own and the neighbouring houses:

> UF: I live in a staircase that is envied by the residents of the rest of the house, because there are six floors, and since there are six floors, we are provided with a lift, according to a standard. So, we have a lift in our staircase while others don't. All the other houses are also envious because of that. And the house no. 7/8 and opposite to it, no. 12/16, these are basically outsiders. You know why, yes?
>
> AK: Why?
>
> UF: There are no bathrooms [in flats]. Still no bathrooms. They weren't [included in the original design]. Well, there is some sort of a corner where some people have installed temporary baths, or they put a shower in the kitchen. But there is no such thing as a separate bathroom. <…> And so, initially, our house was designed with large bathrooms, separate toilets. Why so? Because [our] house was intended for the authorities, and [those] in the courtyard – for the workers. Well, why do you think bathrooms were here

but not there? For a good reason: the Bolsheviks had introduced the social differentiation, as simple as that.

Such differences in the provision of utilities and infrastructure between houses located within the same block, however, may not be so easily explained by the intended social differentiation, because the larger and better-equipped flats in the respondent's house were at the same time more likely to be used for communal accommodation, as was shown in Chapter 4. Moreover, from what I gathered talking to elderly residents in Usachevka, the estate initially housed a mixed population consisting of workers from the nearby Kauchuk rubber factory as well as public servants and other non-manual workers. It seems that the fact that the blocks of Usachevka were built in three stages over the course of 1925-1928 may account better for the variation in houses as conditional on the gradual implementation of the revised dwelling units.

I interpret the fact that the respondents often employed the intra-estate comparative view as being indicative of an in-depth, situated geographical knowledge they have accumulated and developed in the process of dwelling in a given housing estate. One of the dimensions of this knowledge is the awareness of the material history of a given estate, which the informants revealed in comparative discussions of the inherited differences in the qualities of houses – even when not asked directly about these. In this view, the awareness of the quality differences between various houses is also illustrative of a good sense of place that some residents have in relation to their housing estates.

Whither avant-garde heritage: distant past, unremarkable present?

Although local residents readily shared their experiences of architectural and design properties of housing estates with me, very few discussed their residences in terms of historical value or cultural heritage. Initially, when conducting my first fieldwork in Moscow in summer 2016 and talking to experts and activists, I got the impression that the avant-garde housing estates were largely given up on – either as heritage objects or as dwellings. As such, this type of housing was said to be neither recognised as valuable nor as of no value, going largely unnoticed by ordinary citizens (Interviewee AF). Moreover, the avant-garde layer was argued to be entirely absent from the commonly accepted Moscow housing market timeline, in which pre-

Revolutionary houses are immediately followed by neoclassical Stalin-era ones, that are, in turn, succeeded by postwar mass-produced panel buildings and by post-Soviet-era suburban townhouses and business-class residences (Interviewee AA). Inhabitants of avant-garde estates themselves, by and large, were also believed not to perceive their houses as heritage objects. As one preservation activist put it: "A certain share of residents is, of course, aware of the [cultural and historical] value, but, as a rule, for the majority this is just a comfortable housing" (Interviewee AB). The second fieldwork period in Moscow in summer 2017, when I interviewed exclusively local residents in five avant-garde estates, provided me with a more nuanced account of this awareness. This section is therefore set to discuss residents' attitudes and perceptions of their housing areas in terms of particularly the architectural heritage aspect.

For many informants, the avant-garde background of their dwellings seemed to have become a somewhat distant category tracing indefinitely back in time. This was especially common among younger inhabitants who had commenced living in the studied estates long after their construction. For instance, a respondent in Dubrovka born in the mid-1980s (that is, in the last Soviet decade) had no memories of avant-garde-era amenities except for a grocery shop located on the ground floor of the gateway corner house (no. 8/12) – probably because these amenities were long gone by the turn of the 1990s and the arrival of post-Soviet times. Similarly, the same respondent admitted she never really felt the 'working-class spirit' of the housing estate and was not aware of its avant-garde pedigree until she learnt about its history from a neighbour. At the same time, this interviewee claimed to appreciate the greenery, the social environment and the low population density in the area – all the features commonly associated with a good quality housing but not necessarily pertaining only to avant-garde-era estates. In this sense, the appreciation of a very special history of avant-garde housing seemed to be an important but insufficient factor in residents' overall valuation of their home places.

For some, however, the revelation of the particular avant-garde past of their housing estate offered an opportunity to see their houses in a different light. A resident in Usachevka (also born in the mid-1980s) shared her experience of accidentally discovering the history of her own house – a remarkable eye-opener that would not have occurred if not for the respondent's architectural education:

> It never really bothered me – well, okay, a five-storey house, there are lots of these. For me, it wasn't such an outstanding architecture, just a house. And then I entered an architectural institute, and during the first year I had an as-

> signment (I don't remember what we were studying in particular). So, I went to the library. I still remember that moment: I was turning the pages of a book and suddenly saw a picture of my house with a caption "Usachevka." And I started reading [further], and I realised that I never noticed this [historical] layer. It struck me at that moment that, my God, this is a sort of an architectural landmark that has existed for many years, that there are lots of such [houses in Moscow], and that it was some kind of a trend, a method that architects proposed 80 years ago. And I realised it was a very interesting [architecture] only because I was, by chance, immersed in a professional environment. But 90 percent of residents still aren't aware where they live. And they will never learn about [the place] they live in. And I think this is the biggest problem; the popularisation of this heritage is a very important task. (Interviewee UB)

Such a revaluation of one's residence from a professional viewpoint also brought about an awareness of the privileges of this perspective inaccessible to non-professionals. Towards the end of the quotation above, the respondent claimed that the vast majority of residents (even the long-term ones) were not aware of the cultural and historical importance of avant-garde housing. However, according to my survey conducted in 2017-2018 in five estates, 83 percent of residents were indeed aware of the historical significance of their estates, with their share in Usachevka in particular reaching even higher, at 89 percent (see Appendix E). Moreover, as I demonstrated in previous sections, the avant-garde past constantly revealed itself in indirect ways in the accounts of residents, pertaining to an understanding of avant-garde housing estates as imbued with certain memories and characterised by certain (inherited) material conditions. This awareness of the past is qualitatively different from the awareness of cultural and historical (that is, officially or formally valued) heritage since it stems from one's lived experience in place and the knowledge one has obtained in the process of dwelling. Personal awareness of the past, although indirect, does more to the residents' valuation and appreciation of their home places than a formal (and let us admit, at times rather arbitrary) category of architectural heritage.

While the past of avant-garde housing may come across as rather muted, its present status, too, seems to be quite unremarkable, mainly because it stands out as a rather modest architectural style. In this regard, one of the architectural historians remarked that in the public perception, "constructivism … is something very similar to *khrushchyovki*" (Interviewee AD). Such comparison is, of course, unfavourable for the avant-garde as it likens its original architecture with the mainstream, mass-produced one. In the interviews with local residents, however, I rarely heard negative reviews of avant-garde architecture

per se. Even when one respondent in Dubrovka was critical of the exterior look of her house located on the outskirts of the housing complex,[67] calling it an "ugly box," she immediately added that, by contrast, she found other houses in the estate "rather pretty" (Interviewee DD). The majority of the informants still appeared to be rather indifferent towards the aesthetical appeal of avant-garde residential architecture. It seems that the reason why this architecture may go unnoticed is its overall minimalist visual presentation with the lack of facade decoration, which does not make it visually immediately distinguishable compared to the pre-Revolutionary Russian *Modern* (Art Nouveau) or Stalinist neoclassical one.

In those cases when the respondents did elaborate on their view of avant-garde architecture, they stressed that tacit beauty of these houses is what, in fact, makes them stand out as compared to other housing types and styles. In this sense, from a vantage point of today, avant-garde architecture can be deemed modest but nevertheless remarkable. A previously quoted resident in Dubrovka, explained this paradox as follows:

> In fact, [Dubrovka] is really very interesting from the architectural point of view, because at first glance it [appears to be], in general, rather tacky, plain and grey. It's not outstanding, but if you look closer, it's actually very interesting. (Interviewee DB)

Still, for this resident, avant-garde architecture per se was not as significant as the lived qualities of her housing area. Moreover, although she claimed she deliberately became familiar with this architectural style in her spare time, it was only her estate that she felt attached to – unlike other estates from the same period and of the same style.

In the eye of an architect, the great aesthetic appeal of avant-garde housing is indisputable – notwithstanding the at times visually rundown state of the buildings due to under-maintenance. For a professional architect living in Dubrovka, the cracks and the crumbling plaster on the facades were merely "cosmetic issues" which nevertheless could not overshadow the understated beauty of the houses of his neighbourhood:

> What do I, as an architect, really like about these buildings? All of them are obviously assembled from stylistically identical elements, but if one looks [closely], certain things differ. One can see that there was no [blueprinting] or haste; there is variance everywhere. For example, such a wide window won't

[67] This house was completed last in Dubrovka estate in 1931.

> be found in any other house [except for no. 18A] … They also decided not to plaster the horizontal elements here. (Interviewee DA)

By pointing to the subdued diversity in the appearance of houses, the resident challenged the common view of avant-garde houses as identical to the postwar mass-produced *khrushchyovki*. In this view, avant-garde residential architecture can be deemed ordinary but by no means unremarkable, regardless of its further historical and cultural significance.[68] The official narrative of blueprinting and mass-production denying the avant-garde its historical and cultural value therefore finds no support in the stories of people boasting first-hand experiences of it.

Appreciating the modesty of avant-garde residential architecture requires a careful attention to the details of houses. Not all the inhabitants seemed to pay such close attention, however; but this did not mean that they could not appreciate the place of their residence. According to a respondent in Usachevka, the uniqueness of avant-garde housing is associated not only with the aesthetical appeal but also with the lived qualities of this housing:

> I've never reflected on what this architecture is, and why it's unique. Perhaps, if you look at it, well, just with the eyes of a passer-by, it's quite banal, yes. But five floors, such a three-dimensional spatial composition – it's this scale that allows one not to feel oppressed in space. Well, this is the most comfortable urban environment. (Interviewee UB)

The above quotation suggests that the valuation of housing by the inhabitants is not necessarily linked with their awareness of its design and visual properties or its historical and cultural significance; it can as well be associated with other qualities that they appreciate implicitly in the course of living in and using residential space. In this sense, the formal, outsider view of the avant-garde past as heritage is very different from the experiential, insider view which is grounded in the inhabitants' everyday lives and appears to be rather ordinary but immensely meaningful (cf. the discussion of outsideness and insideness in Relph, 1976).

[68] Such a characterisation of avant-garde architecture puts it in stark contrast with its successor, postwar modernist architecture, which has often been seen as a mere modification of an interwar style that kept its essential forms: "standardised units in look-alike blocks and slabs arranged in orderly ranks" (Relph, 2016, pp. 111–112).

Concluding remarks: the past in the present

Despite being long past its prime, the avant-garde is certainly not forgotten, at least for as long as the residents living in this kind of housing are aware of (even if often implicitly and unselfconsciously) the material features that are either no longer in use (amenities) or still in active use (houses). In this sense, the avant-garde is both a past and a present phenomenon, if by a phenomenon we understand something that appears in people's experience. The physical (infra)structures of housing estates reflect the past as much as the present since they accommodate residents' everyday lives and also evoke memories of their own lives or the lives of others. The avant-garde history of these housing estates is always tacitly present in people's sense-making of their home places; my interviews with the residents recorded a plethora of emotional and experiential links they had to their neighbourhoods, which clearly transcended the here-and-now of my 2017 fieldwork period. The avant-garde past of the 1920-30s could therefore be revealed in the present through long-term place experience, in the historical geography of the early Soviet-era housing areas still used and inhabited today.

That the avant-garde, as a unique form of architecture, has been credited heritage status (although notably by experts and activists but not the city officials), comes as no surprise. What is more surprising is that the majority of residents, despite knowing about the historical background of their housing areas, did not describe their houses in terms of heritage object and landmarks. For them, the historical and cultural significance of avant-garde housing is less important than its utilitarian functionality; similarly, the aesthetical qualities of housing per se are less important than the lived qualities. Moreover, the past revealed through personal accounts of residents (by contrast to the more official notion of heritage) allows for a more multifaceted appreciation of avant-garde features of studied areas. In this sense, the avant-garde is not just an architecture but is also lived through the concrete practices of people, as well as through their memories of and attitudes to material conditions. Avant-garde houses are first and foremost lived places and not heritage objects, simply because they meet a social need as shelters and a personal need as domains of care and attachment (cf. Heidegger, 1971; Tuan, 1977). Seen this way, the avant-garde legacy is in fact reinforced as the houses keep their initial functions despite the fact that the avant-garde period is long gone.

Places change throughout time, and this may reflect changes on other, extra-spatial levels. Even though this chapter has been deliberately informed by phenomenology, the narratives of how the social

amenities become redundant can arguably be seen as indicative of the power that structural forces exert over the built environment and everyday lives of people. As such, the residents' memories of social amenities no longer in use, convey changes in the experience of place, and reflect the changes of place itself (cf. Malpas, 2018). Recording and understanding these changes of place can be a starting point for understanding the ways in which social and political constructs shape people's experiences of and attitudes to places. In our case, the changes in people's everyday lives brought by the abandonment of social amenities (such as public laundries and baths) are symptomatic of the fundamental spatial changes throughout the state socialism regime (mainly the Stalinist and postwar eras) and eventually the post-Soviet neoliberal capitalist transformations.

A final reflection concerns how a planned built environment becomes an experiential place: avant-garde housing is not a passive repository of architectural and design elements, but rather an actively lived-in place that gets its meaning from people who dwell in it. Houses that have been experienced by residents in the process of dwelling can no longer be considered as just physical structures with particular properties, but rather need to be regarded as homes. Paraphrasing Bachelard's (1964, p. 47) notion that "[i]nhabited space transcends geometrical space", it can be argued that inhabited avant-garde transcends architectural avant-garde: the meaning, or rather meanings, of this kind of housing are revealed and created through the residents' lived experiences of it rather than through the architects' plans or the accounts of experts, activists or city officials. By the same token, the scholarly critiques of modernist urban development that denounce its placeless character (Relph, 1976), lack of strong spirit of place, or genius loci (Norberg-Schulz, 1980), while focusing primarily on an architectural and spatial form that is arguably plagued by standardisation and uniformity, seem to neglect precisely the lived dimension of housing. Seemingly unremarkable, avant-garde housing estates are homes for their inhabitants who have had first-hand experiences of the concrete architectural and design elements (as well as material conditions in a more general sense) that avant-garde housing is professionally known for. In other words, the experiential dimension of place transcends any arbitrary categorisation, be it 'place-ness', heritage or lack thereof. Seen in this way, avant-garde housing estates are made sense of primarily as homes for their inhabitants. While the avant-garde pedigree of houses may nuance the quality of place experience (and hence also this sense-making), it is not the primary factor in this experience. The awareness

of avant-garde past, albeit implicit, matters in place experience, and therefore, avant-garde is more timeless than it first appears to be.

6 Social space of housing estates

The avant-garde movement was not only aiming at developing a particular architectural and spatial expression, but also set out to change society with the help of it. The promotion of a new way of life in the young Soviet state, based on ideas of socialisation and, ultimately, collectivisation, was aided by new formal and planning solutions for physical and social space. Today, nearly 90 years later, we can almost certainly state that the avant-garde experiment has failed as far as the increased socialisation in housing estates is concerned. As Chapter 5 revealed, most of the social amenities planned and built in the estates are now lost or simply irrelevant, with only the houses still retaining their original, intended residential function. The failure to achieve societal change via the medium of architecture and built environment gives rise to a question about what influences people's experience of housing; do only the physical structure and personal lifeworld situation matter, or are there wider structural and societal forces at play, too?

This chapter seeks to understand how the social space of avant-garde housing estates is experienced and navigated by their residents. The aim here is to discuss how structural categories, such as tenure and property, condition residents' meaning-making and engagement with(in) their residential space. Tenure and property, understood here as living arrangement (communal or separate, own, single-family flat) and ownership status (private or municipal), respectively, form part of a wider web of housing relations. According to Lefebvre (1991), social space underpins social relations, or, in this case, housing relations, and the connection between the two call for analysis. By attending to the processes of change, social mobilisation and conflict in the social space of avant-garde estates, this chapter tries to understand the effects of housing relations on perception and experience of socio-spatial environments.

The chapter consists of three parts. The first part describes everyday life by focusing on the issues of socialisation and neighbourliness, while the second part is concerned with social mobilisation in the face of two citywide housing development programs presented earlier in

Chapter 4. The third part of the chapter discusses the tentative 'return of communality' with allusion to the 1920s and the associated possibilities and limits of the formation of tighter, community-like ties between the residents in the wake of mobilisation around the 'renovation' program.

Socialisation and neighbourliness

Inhabitants of housing estates do not live lives on their own. Their contacts and interactions with immediate neighbours and the wider community of other dwellers comprise an integral part of their everyday experience of their estate. As Chapter 4 demonstrated, the architecture and spatial design of avant-garde housing areas was intended to promote if not collectivization, then at least increased socialisation of lives of its residents. However, the brevity of the avant-garde period and what followed – the rise of Stalinist neoclassical architecture since the 1930s with its initiatives to improve the built legacies of the 1920s, World War II with its mass destruction and depopulation, and Soviet-era major overhauls of the housing stock, mainly in the 1970-80s – all left imprints on the social space of avant-garde housing estates. The post-Soviet period has entailed fundamental ideological, political and economic shifts that brought about dramatic societal transformation. In what follows, I will focus closely on how these changes have played out at the level of residential areas. Given that the promotion of socialisation was an imperative of avant-garde design and planning, this part of the chapter will delve into this particular aspect of daily life: the perceived quality of the more casual social interactions between the contemporary residents.

The material arena for the social: avant-garde origins of socialisation?

Architecture and planning play an important role in how people go about their everyday lives. For avant-garde architects, societal change in the early Soviet era required transformation of the built environment, as it was claimed that "architecture and city planning have a formative and educational influence" – even if it was simultaneously recognised that only building new types of houses was not sufficient to that end (Kopp, 1970, pp. 115–116).[69] Although an inquiry into the

[69] Interestingly, Lefebvre was critical of the efforts of Soviet avant-garde architects to achieve societal change, noting that "[a] lesson to be learned from the Soviet con-

relationship between built and social environments appears tempting (or, rather, a critique of the determinism encapsulated in such a perspective), this exercise lies outside the scope of this thesis. What is accounted for here, instead, is the perceived degree of socialisation by the inhabitants in the studied housing estates and how they may themselves associate it with particular spatial avant-garde features.

One characteristic of the built environment that was mentioned by many of the interviewees was the relatively small, human scale of avant-garde housing areas expressed in the low height of the buildings and the absence of lifts in most of the staircases. Even though a smaller scale is not an avant-garde feature per se and can be found in housing built both before and after the 1920-30s, it was still suggested as conducive to sociability and neighbourliness, meaning friendly and helpful relations between neighbours. As a resident in Budenovsky estate pointed out:

> I sort of know people in my house. Of course, somehow this [environment] presupposes that, because there are five floors and no lift, and in one way or another you know who lives where. Before, I lived in the Moscow region, in a P-44 series [multi-storey] house, and I didn't even know who the neighbour on the same floor was. I lived there for two years – I never got to know him at all. You meet people in a lift there, but you don't really meet them; as a matter of fact, you don't know who they are at all… Here [in Budenovsky estate], in general, people seem to know each other; well, somehow, the communication happens anyway. (Interviewee BB)

As implied by this quotation, the respondent ascribed being acquainted with neighbours and the increased socialisation to the particular features of the built environment of his housing area. Notably, however, he made his point not by referring to the avant-garde features specifically but rather by contrasting his current house with a previous one, a high-rise of a series that has been mass-produced since the late 1970s and averaging 14-17 storeys. In the previous chapter, we have already seen similar favourable comparison of avant-garde hous-

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structivists of 1920-30, and from their failure, is that new social relationships call for a new space, and vice versa" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 59). In this view, new social relationships are to be associated with new spatial amenities and living spaces "supplied by the agencies of political power and by their mechanisms of control" (ibid.) which epitomises nothing more than a variant of colonised everyday life within an abstract space. Lefebvre saw modern architecture of the 20th century (including avant-garde) as being "in the service of the state, and hence a conformist and reformist force" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 304). Therefore, Lefebvre failed to recognise the existence of social program in modern architecture, being convinced about its essential links to both postwar state capitalism and state socialism with their shared logics of bureaucracy and productivity (see Stanek, 2011, pp. 148–149).

ing with housing from the postwar period, as respondents seek to stress the positive aspects of the former. In this case, it seems that the interviewee, too, perceives the more human scale of avant-garde housing as enabling more socialisation, even without linking this to avant-garde per se.

Some interviewees specified that their local social networks in the neighbourhood still relied on the secondary school connections. Schools were built in close proximity to all five studied housing estates in the 1920-30s or later on, and they were attended by most of the interviewees who spent their adolescence there. As one respondent growing up at the turn of the 1990s in Usachevka recalls:

> We all went to the same school. In our time, it wasn't very common to look for special schools: all were the same, except for, well, maybe if a person had mathematical skills, they would go to a specialised school. <…> A good school is one that can be reached on foot. Accordingly, the whole neighbourhood studied either in school no. 54 or in school no. 171, and so everyone knows each other. (Interviewee UC)

The continuity of social ties with former classmates was also corroborated by a respondent in Dubrovka (Interviewee DG) who mentioned her secondary school connections at the core of the initiative group mobilised when facing the 'renovation' program (more to come on this in the second part of the chapter). Interestingly, two respondents argued that not attending the nearby school could have negatively affected their acquaintance with neighbours: a respondent in Usachevka claimed that attending a lyceum located at a distance and not the nearby school prevented her from socialising with the people from her neighbourhood (Interviewee UF), while another respondent in Budenovsky estate lamented decreased socialisation because of her daughters not attending a nearby school which consequently prevents her from getting to know other parents from the neighbouring houses (Interviewee BA).

As with the example of a smaller scale of houses, it is important to recall that the relative proximity of schools is not an avant-garde feature per se (even though it is in line with its principle of the local, functional concentration of social infrastructure). It would therefore be a far cry to ascribe the increased perceived sociability to avant-garde features of the studied estates (or, for that matter, to the overall avant-garde spatial and design vision for a neighbourhood/city). However, the very fact that the residents could elaborate on the perceived sociability in their housing areas suggests it is something they value and care about. The quality of present-day sociability is, of

course, very different from the one that avant-garde architects envisioned back in the 1920s, and will be further explored in the following sections.

Changes from the late Soviet Union until today

Over the course of nearly 90 years, the social sphere of avant-garde housing estates has undergone substantial change. The possibility of a longitudinal account of this change and the changes in lived experiences of residents was, however, ruled out early on during the first fieldwork in Moscow in the summer of 2016 (see Chapter 3). Despite that, some scarce anecdotal evidence of what social life looked like in early Soviet Moscow can still be grasped from the periodicals of that time. For instance, an essay in *Smena* magazine published in 1929 describes how, in the absence of social amenities immediately after the completion of Khavsko-Shabolovsky housing complex, the residents nevertheless socialised by way of engaging in idle talk and gossip, sitting on the benches and chairs they brought out of their flats into the courtyard: "People are driven out of their flats by the sociability that is characteristic of human beings" (Krasnostavskiy, 1929, p. 15). While denouncing the shortcomings of social transformation in a newly built avant-garde estate, this essay also revealed the occurrence of more casual social exchanges between the residents, even if these were not necessarily in line with the new, socialist way of life and heralded rather the remnant of the old, bourgeois regime.

In the decades following their construction, the social life of avant-garde estates took on a number of severe shocks, first during Stalin's repressions[70] and later on during the Second World War. Substantial evacuations in wartime Moscow led to a citywide depopulation affecting also the estates in question. According to a long-term resident in Usachevka, who was 12 years old when the war began, out of three flats on the floor, only his family's was still inhabited, and he estimated that at most one third of flats in the entire estate remained occupied by 1943 (Interviewee UE). Following the war, the estate was gradually repopulated by those returning from the evacuation or the front and by new residents in place of those who perished in the war.

In the postwar decades, according to a long-term resident in Dubrovka, social life in the estate was characterised by the atmosphere

[70] The Memorial Society's database (https://mos.memo.ru) contains information on 224 politically persecuted persons in the five studied housing estates who were purged between 1930 and 1952 (the vast majority in 1937-39).

of neighbourliness as inhabitants socialised more and knew each other better – compared with today's situation:

> In the 1950-60s, at the time when several generations used to live in the same flat, social engagement looked quite different [from today]. [The neighbours] knew everything about each other: the whole house would know who was visiting whom, who got married, who had divorced, who was giving birth. It was taken for granted that grannies were in the courtyard with their grandchildren. Nowadays, of course, it's not like that anymore… There's a different quality [of social interactions]. (Interviewee DE)

When the shift intimated in the quotation above happened is hard to pin down. However, the ample references to Soviet-era major housing overhauls of the 1970-80s and the associated relocation of inhabitants, particularly by those interviewees who witnessed them during their life course but were lucky to stay put, suggest that the transformation of the social sphere in the studied housing estates began well before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Interestingly, Soviet-era overhauls did not concern avant-garde estates in their entirety and only involved some houses in the neighbourhood. The overall spatial and architectural structure of the estates remained relatively intact. The same cannot be said about the social environment, however: these overhauls rarely implied a return of former inhabitants. For instance, a long-term resident in Usachevka recalled that after the repairs in the opposite house in 1980, only residents in two flats returned while the rest were newcomers (Interviewee UE). Similarly, a respondent in Khavsko-Shabolovsky housing complex remembered the loss of childhood connections in the wake of the major overhaul in years 1979-80:

> There are several houses here that underwent a major overhaul with the eviction of all residents. The houses were entirely renovated inside, and completely new people moved in. And we stayed put, because our house and the neighbouring one weren't repaired as much… And so, all the people who lived here, with whom I was friends – all those kids had left, and I never meet any [familiar faces] here, because quite different people had arrived afterwards. (Interviewee SH)

As follows from the quotation above, the resident negatively perceived the effects of the overhaul of a nearby house on her personal social network, because her friends and local acquaintances moved away. In this sense, interestingly, the negative impact of the major overhaul and the subsequent eviction of people can be observed not only for those displaced (cf. Fried, 1966; Fullilove, 2004; Porteous & Smith, 2001) but also for those who remain in the neighbourhood

but lose the already established social connections with their neighbours (cf. discussion of displacement in Davidson, 2009).

Among the residents of avant-garde estates, the perceptions of the current quality of social life varied a lot. On the one hand, in the interviews, there was a general sentiment that contemporary city life is characterised by certain estrangement and atomisation of people, as well as the impression that only the older, long-term residents have kept the memories and traditions of camaraderie and neighbourliness. As such, when asked about the presence of any community in their estate, some respondents claimed that it was comprised of local pensioners who would gather in a courtyard to chat and have a breath of fresh air – something that has been true at all times. The following remark of a resident in Dubrovka is illustrative in this respect:

> Everyday life [here] is, well, just like in the rest of Moscow. In general, people are quite atomised, and only those who have lived their entire lives here know each other. <…> Long-term residents communicate with each other, and somehow these people know more about each other, I'd say. (Interviewee DC)

The duration of residence is seen, accordingly, as conducive to socialisation and neighbourliness, and in this regard the long-term elderly residents really stand out. A number of respondents from other estates shared this reflection, as pensioners were said to communicate more with individuals within their age group, while residents of other ages were said to be less sociable. One can observe, therefore, a certain generational difference in socialisation that cannot be directly associated with the bigger systemic societal shift.

On the other hand, the perceived level of neighbourliness and socialisation can also depend on whether one is actively seeking social contact with the neighbours – or not. For example, a respondent in Usachevka estate admitted that he deliberately acquainted himself with the neighbours, even if only in his own staircase, when he moved in a few years ago (Interviewee UA). In another instance, a respondent in Dubrovka, who went door-to-door collecting signatures against the 'renovation' program, confessed that while he sought to establish good rapport with all fellow residents, on a small number of occasions he was still met with hostility (Interviewee DA). Such diffuse accounts are in themselves indicative of the differences in the perceived sociability from person to person, which makes it hard to draw any generalisations about social life in the studied housing estates. It could seem that the perception of socialisation and neighbourliness really only depends on each individual's willingness

to participate in the social life of one's housing estate. In this case, the degree of one's sociability would be associated with one's decision to hang out with people of the same age group, to get acquainted with the neighbours in the staircase or nearby houses, or to indulge in shared pastime with them by, for example, playing football or supervising kids on the playground.

The quality of social life depends, however, not only on the individual's choices regarding participation in it. Experiences of it can be shared in the face of imminent (external) change. For one, in the interviews, the fall of the Soviet Union (and the broader socio-economic changes it entailed) was mentioned almost unanimously, even if only implicitly, as a major factor in the transformation of social life. What is interesting here, is that the perceived sociability was considered not only from the individual perspective, but also talked about in structural terms, such as, for example, tenure arrangements and property rights, which links individual lived experience with social realities lying outside of one's intentionality. In other words, while sociability may be seen as a function of one's lifeworld situation from a humanistic/phenomenological viewpoint, it necessarily also reflects one's interaction with the social and material world around. The following quotation from an interview with a long-term resident in Dubrovka is illustrative in this respect: even if the interviewee did not explicitly associate the perceived loss of neighbourliness and camaraderie with the fall of the Soviet Union, the contrast between 'before' and 'now' speaks for itself. When asked about his view of social life in the neighbourhood, he recounted:

> I hardly know anyone here. There are several people in the staircase that I'm more or less familiar with, which stems from earlier on. I can say this: before, I had friends on almost every floor in the staircase, and almost everyone naturally knew each other. Nowadays, I don't know [my neighbours] that well. Residents here have changed several times already: some move in, some move out, some are renting. There are people who greet each other, but it's nothing like before, when we would come to each other to borrow a piece of bread, a spoonful of salt or a box of matches. Now this is no longer the case, but before this was common. This didn't surprise anyone. <…> All the previous social ties have been broken. People used to spend time in the courtyard, play dominoes, celebrate something with their neighbours – nothing like that now. Now everything is [confined] within one's flat. Sometimes something of that kind happens, but in principle, this is an exception rather than a rule. (Interviewee DE)

The respondent's frustration can not only be attributed to a sense of weakening social ties and nostalgia about the bygone Soviet times that is perhaps common among the elderly. The interviewee's grumble

about not having many friends left in the staircase (or not having the same relationship with the neighbours as before) also conceals an important remark about population change in the house, not least due to the incidence of private renting. Elsewhere in the interview, he estimated that most of the flats in his house had been rented out on short-term contracts since the 1990s. Similarly, population turnover was lamented by an elderly resident in Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate, who told me that people constantly moved in and out of the house, while there were only few long-term residents left (Interviewee SD). It was not only the elderly residents, however, who ascribed the perceived lack of sociability to the spread of private renting. Another respondent in Dubrovka in her late forties, too, contrasted Soviet-era social life in the neighbourhood with the present day:

> In recent years, many flats have been purchased specifically for renting… That is, people who buy flats here, they buy them not for living, but mainly for some sort of commercial use [for renting out as flats or office spaces]. <…> So [there is a] permanent rotation [of residents]: flats are constantly being sold, bought, and we know very little about any of our neighbours. Previously, it was like a club; all the neighbours here in these houses knew each other not only by face but by names, they knew the history of each family. They knew everything about all the children, grandchildren, fathers, mothers, grandparents, and so on, and they all communicated with each other. And, of course, at the benches by the entrances there was always a lot of grannies who kept an eye on the youth. <…> Today, unfortunately, this is history. Although, perhaps, the grannies remain somewhere, but for some reason it's, alas, no longer like it was [before]. And it was great. (Interviewee DB)

In the quotation above, the respondent linked the perceived quality of socialisation and neighbourliness to particular tenure arrangements. In this view, the turnover of inhabitants and declining sociability can be associated with housing privatisation since the early 1990s and consequent property fragmentation (hence creating the mishmash of tenure forms), while the 'club-like' social life, characterised by a strong sense of community, can be associated with the prevalent Soviet-era municipal housing. The more permanent composition of residents was replaced by the more temporary, transient one as housing was in some cases converted into commercial property with a high turnover of short-term renting residents who tend to be seen as less acquainted with long-term residents. As the same interviewee explained, buying-to-let has become incredibly popular in Dubrovka estate because there the purchase prices remain relatively low in comparison to newbuild or Stalin-era neoclassical housing in similar locations, while the demand for this housing and subsequently

asked-for rents are high, making it "a very successful commercial property" (Interviewee DB). The perceived lack of sociability voiced by the respondent is one example of many "situations where the pursuit of profit in housing is coming into conflict with its use for living" (Madden & Marcuse, 2016, p. 17). In this sense, the long-term resident's espoused view of housing as her home stands in sharp contrast to the one of those who seek to exploit dwelling space for profit (private renters being unwittingly complicit in this while consuming a flat's use value).

Following the demise of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the neoliberal capitalist housing market, avant-garde estates have seen the paradoxical shift from a very high use value (that is, housing as home, shelter and social asset) to a very high exchange value (that is, housing as a commodity). Just like many other legacies of state socialism, the legacies of avant-garde, therefore, have been subsumed today into the very logic of capitalism and neoliberal ideology and have become an infrastructure of its expansion (Golubchikov et al., 2014). This does not rule out the appreciation of use value of avant-garde housing by the residents, however, as, for instance, the same respondent quoted above was cited expressing fascination with her neighbourhood in Chapter 5 (this point will be further developed in Chapter 7). The transformation of social life in avant-garde estates can nonetheless be associated with the changing tenure and property arrangements, in which exchange-based values dominate over use-based ones, which, in turn, translates in the more general feeling of estrangement and atomisation among the residents.

The special case of communal flats: inconvenient or heart-to-heart living?

Dating back to pre-Soviet Russia, the communal flat is a particular living arrangement that can be still found today in all five studied housing areas in Moscow (see Chapter 4). Although the formation of communal flats peaked in the first Soviet decade, this phenomenon never entirely disappeared during the postwar Soviet years. It survived throughout the mass production of blocks of flats launched by the Soviet government since the late 1950s to improve living conditions of the population, and lived on well into the post-Soviet decades. The phenomenon of communal living has been examined extensively in both international and Russian research (see, for example, Boym, 1994; Gerasimova, 1999, 2002; Utekhin, 2004), and this section serves to just briefly introduce it by giving voice to those few

interviewees who have first-hand experience from living under such conditions.[71]

Never simply positive or negative, experiences of living in a communal flat varied significantly among the interviewees. While some praised an atmosphere of cooperation and camaraderie, others berated the need to share living space with strangers whose lifestyles, habits and personalities came into conflict with their own, and still others had mixed feelings about communal living. For instance, a respondent in Nizhnyaya Presnya claimed that he did not mind living in a communal flat, pointing to both downsides and upsides with it:

> The communal flat is a normal environment for me… But for someone who has no childhood experience from it, this is indeed a rather terrible system. Well, of course, it happens that [neighbours] live heart-to-heart, but it's rare and it's better [to live] separately. But we didn't have anything too horrible. It happened that our neighbour got drunk. The most shocking event, my mother told me, even before I was born, was when our neighbour got drunk, turned on all the gas burners [without igniting them] and went to bed. She [my mother] was restless, so she got up and went to have a look… Yes, that kind of thing [could happen], of course, no one is immune to this. <…> Before our first neighbours moved out it was very convenient indeed – they picked us up from school [in the afternoons]. Later on [when we grew up], we went to school on our own, of course, but they could accompany us to the sports school. They would do it one day, my parents another day, taking turns. It was very convenient for us, because my sister and I were about the same age as their children, so we were four kids in the flat. So, we grew up under quite normal conditions. (Interviewee PA)

For this respondent, communal life was predestined when his mother was allocated a room in a three-room municipal flat in the 1970s – a common situation at that time. Conversely, communal flats could also be formed due to the natural growth of families (resulting in multiple generations living under the same roof), when children grow up but stay with their parents even after they have started families of their own. For a respondent in Dubrovka who is sharing the flat with her brother, this unavoidable closeness within a few available square metres negatively affected her perceived quality of life, ultimately pushing towards a relocation into a separate flat:

> My brother occupies one room and my family occupies the other two rooms. Well, of course, when the kitchen is 7.5 square metres, and when there are two families and each cook separately and not together, then this is very inconvenient. <…> Of course, I'd like to improve [my living conditions]. Es-

[71] At least one quarter of the participants in my study (8 out of 31) have experienced living in a communal flat. Of these, three currently still live in communal flats.

> pecially since we live in totally different rhythms; that is, we are so loud, noisy, [stay up] late, and my brother needs to go to bed early and demands that everyone is silent and that he's just left alone. I understand that he is the way he is, we get in his way, he gets in our way, so, of course, we want to live our separate lives. <…> Sure, the layout here is cosy, but it would be nice to live as one family in a [separate] flat. (Interviewee DD)

As follows from this quotation, for the interviewee it was not due to the physical, material qualities of her neighbourhood, house or flat that she wanted to relocate; it was rather the discomfort of living in cramped conditions and sharing the living space with other tenants that spurred her desire to move into a separate flat, and therefore improve her living conditions. In this sense, the social seems more important than the physical and material in terms of lived qualities of housing, but it is through the latter that the former issues are thought to be solved. In another illustrative case, a resident in Budenovsky estate grew up in a room in a communal flat and managed to stay on until today, eventually taking over the entire flat (Interviewee BD). Despite recalling occasional tensions between the flatmates, the same respondent found communal living generally comfortable, but still admitted that her family pursued ownership over the entire flat. The social problems, although seemingly of less importance to the informant, were solved by improving the material conditions and breaking away from communal living without moving out. For many communal flat dwellers, however, the prospect of relocation remains the only means to improve their housing conditions, which comes into conflict with the plans of those who live in (and own) separate flats and intend to stay put (more on this below).

This brief account of the experiences of communal flat residents presented above provides some insights into the living conditions associated with this particular housing arrangement and also serves as a background to a discussion of its role in the construction of social space of the studied housing estates. This construction, often ridden with conflicts along the lines of divisive tenure forms, will be in the spotlight of the next part of this chapter.

Production of residential social space vis-à-vis Moscow housing development programs

The announcement of the 'renovation' program in Moscow in February 2017, right in the midst of preparations for the second fieldwork, came as a surprise to me and led to an adjustment of the study focus.

In the months that followed, the uncertainty regarding the terms of the program and its extent raised concerns among many regular Muscovites, as well as activists and experts, that any of the five-storey houses akin to *khrushchyovki* in the city, including some of the avant-garde estates, could be subject to demolition (see, for example, Semendyaeva, 2017).[72] Although the city government backtracked in early May 2017 and promised that the 'renovation' program "would not affect a single constructivist building" (*Renovatsiya ne zatronet*, 2017), I still decided to include a related question into my interview guide (see Appendix A). Remarkably, the references to the 'renovation' program nonetheless permeated all my interviews even when seemingly unrelated topics such as living conditions, architectural features or social environment were discussed. Very often, these discussions touched upon the issues of tenure and property, as well as maintenance and responsibility for it, thereby revealing the ways in which phenomenological categories such as place and home are intertwined with social structure and material environments. Another citywide program concerning the major repair of blocks of flats did not receive an equal amount of attention, but was still prominent in the interviews (in fact, it was often mentioned alongside with the 'renovation' program) as most of the respondents seemed to be taking a critical stance on any city initiative that could have an impact on their dwellings.

While the previous part of the chapter examined the more casual interactions at the lower social and spatial levels in avant-garde housing areas, this part will focus particularly on the changes brought about in the everyday lives of the residents by the two aforementioned housing development programs. In what follows, I will focus on how structural categories of tenure and property tap into the life-worlds of residents and permeate their sense of belonging to and engagement with(in) dwelling places. This part draws primarily from the accounts of homeowners who were not only overrepresented in my sample, but also more eagerly shared their concerns about the city initiatives, and the changes in the social space these have brought about.

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[72] According to the initial formulations that were later on incorporated into the final version of the Moscow government decree from 1 August 2017, the 'renovation' program included "blocks of flats from the first period of industrial housing construction" (that is, *khrushchyovki* built between 1957-1968) and other "structurally similar blocks of flats" not higher than nine storeys, by decision of residents (*Postanovleniye Pravitel'stva Moskvy*, 2017). The latter formulation, in the absence of a clear technical or chronological definition, could be attributed even to avant-garde-era houses.

Residents' mobilisation in the face of the citywide programs

So far, the description of the daily life in the avant-garde estates has suggested a perceived decreased socialisation among their inhabitants; however, every time the topic of the 'renovation' program surfaced in the interviews, the residents' accounts of the social space of their estates often became animated pertaining to the occurrence of much livelier and more active socio-spatial relations there. Some respondents perceived the 'renovation' program as a direct threat to their homes, likening it to the early Soviet housing appropriation. In reaction to its announcement, and particularly due to the initial absence of clear conditions of the program available to the public (cf. Trumbull, 2014), some residents managed to mobilise to oppose a possible rehousing.[73] The most common forms of mobilisation to that end were social media activism (respondents cited online groups and chats in a popular messaging app where the locals would exchange information and coordinate actions), spontaneous signature collection campaigns, petitioning various governmental and municipal bodies, and a general meeting of homeowners and tenants.

The anti-renovation campaigns which started independently of each other in two avant-garde housing estates, Dubrovka and Usachevka, when some residents decided to collect signatures against relocation, seem to have been instrumental in bringing the neighbours together.[74] Those involved in the signature collection campaigns spoke of a shared sense of unity and solidarity among the activists and sympathisers. As one respondent put it: "Unfortunately – I don't have another word for this because the reason is so sad – the 'renovation' program has united the neighbours" (Interviewee DF). In this, the resident expressed his regret that the neighbours got to know each other better and gathered around their common interests in response to a clearly negative agenda. Another resident in Dubrovka recalls the strong feeling of indignation and injustice dur-

[73] According to the survey (which was conducted after the announcement that the avant-garde housing estates would not be affected by the 'renovation' program), 72 percent of all the respondents did not want to move (see Appendix E).

[74] There were simultaneous campaigns in Budenovsky, Dubrovka, Nizhnyaya Presnya and Usachevka estates in support of the 'renovation' program. However, with the exception of Budenovsky estate, these campaigns were not successful. In Budenovsky, three houses were included in the program by the request of the majority of residents. The rehousing of residents in this estate will not start until 2025-2028, while the houses at the time of writing this were not subject to demolition but were rather to be "adapted for cultural and educational activities" (*Doma «Budenovskogo gorodka»*, 2017).

ing the anti-renovation-program campaign, not least because it concerned a very intimate matter – living spaces of people:

> There was a very astounding emotional uplift, and I believe that we managed to do the impossible in two weeks [to collect 400 signatures against the 'renovation' program]. <…> Because this is mine [my house]. Such a real feeling: I won't let go of this, this is mine, and no one [from the outside] will impose order. I live here. Why would someone decide for me where I should live? There was such a demand for justice and an incredible uplift! <…> People just united and stood up for their homes, their houses, their habitat [living environment]. (Interviewee DG)

This activism, in spite of its intensity, was however a rather short-term response to the perceived threat of demolition and relocation. As an interviewee in Dubrovka admitted, as soon as the threat of displacement passed, she went back to life as usual; that is, unwilling to be engaged beyond the front door of her flat:

> I was the only maniac who went [door-to-door] in all three house staircases and collected signatures [against the 'renovation' program]. I thought I was going to die. I couldn't possibly imagine that I would be leaving this house, because, at first, we didn't know at all where we would be relocated, no matter within the same city district or not, and in what kind of houses. <…> I met with all the inhabitants of our house, I spent hours talking to them in the kitchens, I explained [the conditions of the 'renovation' program], I spent a lot of my time. I collected their signatures, I went to the district prefecture, I went to the municipal administration, I was in touch with [the municipal management company] *Zhilishchnik* all the time. I wrote requests to the Moscow City Architecture Committee, I [sent petitions] to the Prosecutor General's Office… At that moment, when I realised that we probably won this time [and would not be affected by the program], I got back to life within the boundaries of my flat. That is, I'm ready to do something [for my house], if I really can. I understood that there would be no one else except me. And since this [house] is such a significant thing for me, naturally I had to take everything in my own hands. And I coordinated with the residents of other houses, of course, we all were in touch by phone, we sent documents to each other, we joined [relevant online] groups. (Interviewee DB)

The 'renovation' program was perceived as a pressing issue of personal importance by at least some of the respondents who became the drivers of the anti-renovation mobilisation. In this sense, faced with the external threat to the course of their private lives (that is, rehousing), these individuals took to the public sphere in order to resist this prospect. While some of the local activists expressed their readiness to continue engaging in local matters after the displacement pressure was over, others, like the interviewee quoted above, admittedly seceded back to the confines of their private worlds. This latter

tendency to be involved only insofar as matters of personal interest are concerned, while otherwise being detached and insulated from the public space and sphere, has been observed elsewhere in postsocialist Central and Eastern European contexts and discussed in terms of turning inwards of lives, privatism, and fencing and barricading in (see Bodnár, 2001; Hirt, 2012; Trudolyubov, 2018, respectively). What seems to be a common trait in both these outward- (mobilisation) and inward-oriented processes is their negotiation of space via the category of property and the right to stay put in a house.

It was not only the 'renovation' program that brought about a joint action of residents, of course. In one example, an ongoing citywide work on the major repair of blocks of flats was cited as instrumental in mobilising the concerned residents. A respondent in Nizhnyaya Presnya recollected how he refused the pipe replacement in his flat in early 2017 contending that the old plumbing from the 1920s had no signs of rust and wear and that the replacement pipes were of lower quality (Interviewee PD). He then went door-knocking to collect the signatures of his neighbours in the staircase against the overhaul and thereby managed to put it on hold before the residents could renegotiate the extent and quality of repairs with the municipal management company. In this instance, residents sought to keep the city authorities accountable for the quality of services and utilities maintenance. Otherwise, the locals that I spoke to in all five studied estates told me that they could also find common interests in various smaller-scale initiatives happening in the immediate vicinity of their houses, such as: installing the boom barriers in the courtyards to control car parking, campaigning against the closure of a nearby hospital, engaging in historic preservation activism, filing collective complaints against poor maintenance of houses by the municipal management company, dealing with the excessive presence of pigeons in the courtyard, solving water leakage damages in the flats, but ironically even evicting homeless people from the staircases in winters. All these initiatives bringing the residents together (although some resemble NIMBY[75] reactions) demonstrate the potential of mobilisation in the face of the external threats to the established local order of things.

[75] NIMBY (an acronym for 'not in my backyard') refers to an opposition by residents to such initiatives and developments in their local areas and neighbourhoods that are considered unwanted.

The conflict of interests: tenure and property form as a mirror of class division

Local activism, however, never comes without a conflict. The estrangement between neighbours that was discussed in the beginning of this chapter has been reflected in the diverging subjectivities when it comes to people's attitudes to the quality of housing and (potential) relocation. The issue of the 'renovation' program seems to have been particularly divisive and incited animosity among the residents along the for/against divide. One resident in Dubrovka estate recalls that there were two door-to-door signature collection campaigns for and against the program, and after she refused to put a signature for the program, a campaigning neighbour gave her the cold shoulders every time they would meet in the street or staircase (Interviewee DD). Similarly, a respondent in Usachevka estate mentioned a neighbour from one floor up who she knew well and referred to as a friend but with whom she had fallen out (because of her campaigning against the program), so that the two would not greet each other anymore (Interviewee UF). Ironically, these two neighbours initially got to know each other through a social activism campaign aimed at collecting signatures against the closure of a nearby hospital.

These diverging subjectivities arguably pertain to class differentiation. As such, class here can be associated both with the general socio-economic position and also one's living arrangement (communal or separate, own, single-family flat) and/or ownership status (municipal or private flat). Two major factors related to the specificities of post-Soviet housing development in Russia preclude a more clear-cut view of this: the fragmented property structure even at the lowest spatial levels (that is, within separate multi-storey houses or even within separate flats, as described in Chapter 4) and the fact that despite the high concentration of low-income households in social tenancies, there nonetheless remains a considerable portion of higher-income households (Puzanov, 2013, p. 231). What crystallised in the interviews (of which, as we remember, the majority was conducted with homeowners) was rather a cross-cut view associating lower classes with communal housing arrangement (irrespective of property status) and middle and upper classes with private ownership of separate flats.

The absolute majority of interviewees, when asked about the socio-economic composition of their housing areas, insisted that the population is very diverse or mixed, "from very rich people to communal flats," as one of the respondents in Nizhnyaya Presnya put it (Interviewee PD). According to another respondent in Khavsko-

Shabolovsky estate, in Soviet times, the local population was also very heterogeneous with residents of different classes, especially in the municipal houses that did not belong to any department, ministry or industrial enterprise, whereas nowadays the population has become more stratified and differentiated (Interviewee SD). The avant-garde estates, nevertheless, seem to be rather socially mixed, which corresponds with the general post-Soviet urban trend with only mild recorded patterns of socio-spatial differentiation and residential segregation at the district/neighbourhood level, not least due to the lasting dampening effects of state socialist legacies (see, for example, Axenov et al., 2006, p. 10; French, 1995, Chapter 6). As an interviewee in Usachevka estate remarked, while its population is extremely mixed, the differentiation between the residents is revealed through the tenure/ownership dimension:

> Take people who inherited a flat or [a room in] a communal flat here from their relatives and didn't invest [in repairs or maintenance]. And take people who lashed out 16-20 million roubles [€225-280k] [to buy] and extra 5-7 million roubles [€70-100k] for repairs. These are a priori two completely different crowds. (Interviewee UF)

As such, the presence of various tenure forms within each given estate and the separate houses within it signals not only diversity of its residents as regards their class, but also harbours a potential conflict of interests. The attitudes of many interviewees to the 'renovation' program were illustrative of this. In short, the homeowners tended to be opposed to the program, expressing their desire to stay put, while suggesting that people in communal flat were strongly and unanimously in favour of rehousing. Inevitably, perceived contrasting positions of two groups of residents became conflictual. For instance, a homeowner in Nizhnyaya Presnya estate accused a communal flat tenant of pushing for the 'renovation' program using illegal means:

> Tenants [of communal flats] don't move out [by choice], they vote for the 'renovation' [program] and falsify the meeting [of homeowners and tenants] minutes! Our neighbours on Kostikova 3 found out their house was subject to 'renovation' [program]. They found the minutes of the general meeting. It turned out that one of the employees at [the municipal management company] *Zhilishchnik* lived there in a communal flat. So, [she] falsified the minutes and sent them [to the city government]. (Interviewee PD)

Such a view of communal flat tenants imputes to them the reluctance to willingly move out in order to improve their housing conditions and their complete reliance on public authorities fulfilling their duties

on rehousing into separate flats.[76] Homeowners, especially those already living in separate flats, in turn, arguably lack motivation to upgrade their accommodation with the help of the 'renovation' program and see it as a violation of their right to stay put in places they are generally content with (and where a few of the respondents moved to deliberately). In this regard, a resident in Khavsko-Shabolovsky housing complex explained the discrepancy between these two groups of inhabitants as follows: "There are two antipodal perspectives: some dream of moving out of communal flats, which are a lot here today… while others don't want to leave the city centre" (Interviewee SF). Framing the conflict of interests in this way suggests that the discrepancy between those living in dire, communal housing arrangements and those who are satisfied with living in a separate flat conceals, in fact, class differentiation. To be more specific, there is a discrepancy between the subject positions of, on the one hand, people who are unable to fully appreciate the use value of their houses and, on the other hand, people who see socio-economic benefits of living in a flat of their own in central Moscow and thus are able not only to recognise its use value but are also fully aware of its exchange value. This latter group of inhabitants was said to appreciate the location of their residencies and was worried (given the uncertainty regarding the 'renovation' program terms) that the replacement accommodation would be situated further away from the city centre, meaning a depreciated housing value.

The issue of rehousing under the 'renovation' program, and in particular the mechanism of the replacement accommodation allocation, often came up in my interviews with the homeowners. In this regard, a resident in Usachevka estate alluded to the relocation of some of his acquaintances from the city centre to the suburbs during the Soviet-era major overhauls: "Muscovites… have a memory that they can be evicted somewhere, and this is a disaster" (Interviewee UC). While drawing such parallels between the Soviet overhauls and the 'renovation' program may appear rather far-fetched as the latter guaranteed equivalence of the replacement accommodation in terms of floor space or even a compensation in cash or in kind – as opposed to the former (see Chapter 4), – the majority of the interviewed homeowners nevertheless believed that they had more to lose than to gain from

[76] According to the Program for the phased elimination of communal housing stock in Moscow (1998-2006), communal flat tenants were to be gradually rehoused into separate flats while the room-type occupancy was no longer permitted in the municipal housing (social tenancies). Announced in 2017, the 'renovation' program also stipulated the provision of separate flats to those Muscovites who resided in communal flats and whose houses were subject to demolition.

the 'renovation' program and therefore objected it. For instance, some respondents were concerned that an equivalent replacement accommodation, despite being located within the same district, could effectively mean moving much further away from the city centre (given the geography of administrative divisions of Moscow), while others would like the program to guarantee equivalence of the replacement accommodation both in terms of floor space and property value. Ultimately, the picture got ever more complicated after I discovered that even among the communal flat dwellers there were some who, in principle, wanted to be resettled into flats of their own, yet not on the premises of the 'renovation' program, citing uncertainty concerning the alternatives for rehousing and also the dissatisfaction with the sheer fact that the authorities "decide everything for [the homeowners]" (Interviewee DD). The latter example is illustrative of the implications of the property rights conundrum that plagues multi-storey housing blocks in Moscow and other Russian cities, where the residents in communal flats can equally be the owners of the rooms they occupy (as was the respondent cited above) and hence have different rights and interests compared to those residing in communal flats on social tenancy contracts. The bottom line here is that the question of rehousing under the 'renovation' program seemed to be very clearly differentiating the subject positions of better off residents (who were eagerly opposed to its terms) from those worse off.

Commenting on the replacement accommodation, some of the interviewees maintained that its quality was generally inferior compared to avant-garde housing; in light of this, they insisted they could not wish to improve their current housing situation under the conditions of the 'renovation' program. On the other hand, as a homeowner in Shabolovka claimed, the tenants in communal flats were insensitive to the qualities of both their current houses as well as the replacement accommodation, something that stood in contrast with the subject positions of the occupants of separate flats:

> The separate, single-family flats are, of course, against the 'renovation' [program], because, well, what's the point? What do they need to improve when they are already doing well: a great location, a brick house? What could be better than a brick house? And those in communal flats, they, of course, all got excited [about the rehousing], as if it would be better in a new place… But why would one want to move from a brick house into a [multi-storey, reinforced-concrete] panel building? (Interviewee SC)

The quotation above suggests that the differentiation between the subjectivities of the owners of separate flats and the dwellers of

communal flats is, in essence, revealed through the discrepancy between the perspectives that emphasise, on the one hand, the quality of housing (that is, its structure, design, layout and so on), and, on the other hand, the quality of life, or living conditions, in it. For the interviewee quoted above, the quality of life seemed to be conditioned primarily by the good quality of the avant-garde housing itself. Such an account, however, overlooks the potential negative effects on the lived experience that can be conditioned by one's life situation (such as, in the case of communal flat tenants, the need to share the living space with strangers, the inability to afford a flat of one's own, or the long wait for the rehousing). The differing emphases on different kinds of dwelling qualities, once again, relate to class differentiation among the residents who espouse conflicting interests for/against rehousing.

The mobilisation of homeowners in order to resist the prospect of relocation seems to have come not only as a response to what they saw as a hostile initiative of public authorities, but also as an attempt to oppose the perceived interest of communal flat tenants to improve living conditions with the help of the 'renovation' program. From the homeowners' point of view, the communal flat tenants' right to rehousing came in conflict with their own right to stay put, as the 'renovation' program implied resettlement of entire houses where two thirds and more of residents were in its favour. In reaction to this, a resident in Usachevka estate engaged in campaigning against the program in the neighbouring house where communal flats make up almost half of all flats:

> In spring, I was engaged in stopping [the house on Dovatora 11 bld. 1] from entering the 'renovation' program. By, of course, purely vested interest, because I know: if their house will be demolished, then the whole quarter will be demolished. And I managed to stop them. There is a group of homeowners who are against [the 'renovation' program] and they make up more than one third of the house [population]. If they are mobilised, they can block the general meeting of homeowners and tenants. The rest of the residents are in favour [of the program], as their house, they say, is old and in a poor condition. I once stopped by; I've never seen anything like that in my life. The feeling was that the flats haven't been repaired since the time of construction. That is, you walk there, and the floor boards just cave in under your feet. I'm sure that these residents believe that this is the end, and [the house] must be demolished. (Interviewee UF)

Towards the end of the quotation, commenting on the motivation of some of the residents to move out, the interviewee touched upon an issue of poor housing conditions and the lack of maintenance. As we

have seen before, such an account suggests that the propensity to oppose/support the 'renovation' program reveals a social differentiation pattern along the owner/tenant divide. To be more precise, here, the ability and willingness of residents to make home repairs and conduct maintenance by themselves was named as an important indicator differentiating homeowners from tenants.[77] The latter suffer from the living conditions while being reluctant (or unable) to independently improve them. As one of the respondents in Dubrovka estate claimed: "Among the dissatisfied [with their housing], there are mainly [residents of] communal flats or those who never did repairs" (Interviewee DA). Another interviewee in Budenovsky estate put it rather adamantly: "People who live in communal flats, really live in crappy conditions, and they, of course, want to be rehoused" (Interviewee BB). However, as the previously quoted respondent in Usachevka suggested, even among the homeowners there could be those who supported the 'renovation' program as they were unable to afford to repair their flats, which came in conflict with the subject positions of better off owners:

> There are always secretive groups of residents with opposing interests, and they will by default be opposed regarding the 'renovation' [program]. Take a property owner who repaired his flat, invested 2-3 million roubles [€30-40k] and doesn't want to leave. And take another owner whose two-room wonderful flat hasn't been repaired for 50 years, and, all of a sudden, it's possible to move into a brand new flat where there will be a chrome towel dryer [in the bathroom], [his] lifelong dream. (Interviewee UF)

From this perspective, cash-poor (although asset-rich) homeowners, as well as social tenancy and/or communal flat dwellers, unable to afford to do basic maintenance of their dilapidated residencies, were in favour of the 'renovation' program which promised them rehousing into newbuilds and, as such, a significant improvement of their living conditions. In each case, importantly, class positions of residents were seemingly connected to their subject positions in relation to the 'renovation' program and potential rehousing.

The issue of (insufficient) maintenance cannot be only associated with the ability and willingness of residents to make self-sufficient repairs, however. At least two interviewees in Nizhnyaya Presnya and

[77] According to Articles 672 and 678 of the Civil Code of Russia, tenants are responsible for maintaining their dwellings in good conditions, and this applies to municipal housing (social tenancies) as well. This includes minor repairs such as painting walls, ceilings, radiators and window frames from the inside, as well as replacing door and window fittings and repairing wiring and water distribution systems. Major interventions, such as overhauls, lie within the responsibility of municipal authorities.

Usachevka estates maintained that some tenants in communal flats did not repair them not only because they could not afford that, but also due to the uncertainty about the relocation plans related to the previous experience of late-Soviet-era overhauls. For instance, an interviewee in Usachevka recalls visiting a schoolmate's communal flat at the turn of the 1990s; the flat was in a rather decrepit state but the tenants still did not intend to repair it – with reference to the looming possibility of a major overhaul of the house:

> They said they were waiting for a major overhaul [of their house]. <…> The flat was in a poor condition, with some stained wallpaper. And they told me: "We can't do anything. We'll put up the wallpaper – and here starts the overhaul." And what did the Soviet overhaul imply? It could be anything: rehousing, relocation. For as long as I can remember, they lived there and didn't do any repairs. And everyone waited for an overhaul that never happened. (Interviewee UC)

The uncertainty about the future of houses and entire estates, coupled with the general socio-economic turmoil in the wake of the Soviet Union dissolution, left many tenants in limbo awaiting rehousing without investing (or being able to invest) even in basic repairs of their flats. The municipality's underinvestment was reflected in neglected maintenance of the housing stock.[78] A respondent in Budenovsky recounted that during the early post-Soviet period the estate was largely given up on by both the public authorities and the residents; for the latter, this was captured in a particular 'suitcase mood' which implied a lowered sense of attachment to the place of residence and a readiness to relocate in an absence of maintenance initiatives:

> There was a period of neglect [in the 1990-00s] … You know, no one did anything, because there was an idea that everything would soon be demolished. Therefore, why invest [your own money and efforts] … Suitcase mood indeed. No one cared. (Interviewee BB)

The implications of this 'suitcase mood' bring to mind Davidson's (2009) discussion of displacement as a phenomenon not necessarily associated with out-migration. In this sense, the lack of care for houses (that is, neglect of maintenance) is indicative of the lack of place attachment which is exacerbated by the uncertainty about the loom-

[78] According to the survey, 57 percent of respondents in all five housing estates answered that their house either needs cosmetic repairs or is in a state of disrepair, while only 20 percent perceived the condition of their houses as good (see Appendix E).

ing socio-spatial change in the neighbourhood (that is, major overhaul). Along similar lines, a respondent living in a former house-commune in Shabolovka argued that the discomfort and discontent that plagued the lived experiences of particularly the residents of communal flats (a group the respondent initially belonged to herself before she managed to consolidate the flat into a single property room by room) is connected to a more general socio-political setup of the post-Soviet housing system and its particular spatiality:

> People suffer from all these housing reforms, the constant threat of eviction, relocation, all this mess with property rights. And this is felt very strongly in communal flats… When you see the run-down state in which people leave their flats behind, then you understand that, in principle, this is an inhuman space, and people don't identify themselves with this house. They are forced to live here, and for them it's a burden, [as] they don't like this house. (Interviewee SG)

The respondent's own previous experience of living in a communal flat presumably aided diagnosing the ills of the housing market that could be related to by particularly lower-class households. Their lowered sense of at-homeness, a symptom of such ills, has been attributed to residential alienation as a product of capitalist housing systems (see Madden & Marcuse, 2016, Chapter 2). The awareness demonstrated by some of the interviewed homeowners in regard to the experiential and structural reasons (as well as their nexus) for the communal flat tenants' desire for rehousing is quite remarkable. At the same time, the subject positions of homeowners, including their concern with property rights and socio-economic benefits of living in separate flats in central Moscow (ultimately, their concern with exchange value of their housing), also, even if indirectly, pertain to residential alienation. As such, although some homeowners may sympathise with the housing precarity of other residents (mainly communal flat tenants), their perceived interests in relation to rehousing are nevertheless contradictory and reveal differentiation along the lines of class division in the sense that some residents are able while others are unable to improve their housing situation by choice.

Responsibility, 'post-Soviet mindset' and the 'renovation' program

While the diverging subjectivities of residents in regards to the 'renovation' program could indeed be attributed to class, the accounts of the participants in my study (mostly homeowners) also often suggest-

ed the differentiation between the supporters and opponents of potential rehousing along the lines of politics/ideology. As such, in the discussions revolving around the categories of tenure and property, some of the respondents raised an issue of individual responsibility and reliance on welfare as dividing the residents. This section presents these discourses to further illustrate the contemporary politicisation of residents in the avant-garde estates in the wake of the 'renovation' program announcement.

Among those who objected the 'renovation' program, some maintained that their neighbours who were in its favour still expected the same level of welfare support as in Soviet times. These residents were casted as "relying on the government and its paternalistic position towards them" as far as the provision of housing is concerned (Interviewee DA). From this perspective, residents (many of whom were tenants living in communal flats) were described to have seen the 'renovation' program (and thus the opportunity to improve their housing conditions) as part of the welfare system. This comes as no surprise, however, since housing in Russia still largely retains the status of a social right essential for human dignity, while the vast majority believe that the state should control the housing market (Zavisca, 2012). Along similar lines, a respondent in Shabolovka set the inhabitants of her house, who allegedly relied solely on the municipal authorities, in opposition to those residents who took on individual responsibility for maintaining their flats and house at large:

> [Some residents have] a post-Soviet mindset here; that is, [they think that] someone [from the government] owes them something: giving them a new flat, doing repairs, sweeping the streets, painting in the staircases, and so on… At least [this is true for] the older generation, they really bother about this. Young people are more relaxed; they understand there is nothing to expect from the municipal management company. They made the repairs themselves. Well, they do their best. They live here and now, unlike a Soviet citizen who is always waiting for [handouts]. (Interviewee SG)

As follows from the quotation above, the respondent suggested there was a generational divide between the residents who were raised and/or born before and after the fall of the Soviet Union and accordingly held different views on the responsibilities of an individual and the state. In this, the subject positions of the 'older generation' were dominated by welfare expectations while 'younger people', by contrast, were more receptive to the new post-Soviet reality in which the state and its welfare apparatus was withering away in parallel with the property privatisation and the associated emphasis on individual responsibility for housing maintenance of a nascent class of owners.

Indeed, many other respondents spoke of the turn of the 1990s as a watershed that marked the beginning of a noticeable social differentiation; housing tenure was one of the domains in which this differentiation was especially pronounced. For instance, a respondent in Budenovsky estate contended the demise of the Soviet Union engendered an apparent division between homeowners occupying separate flats and communal flat tenants:

> In the 90s, when everyone adapted to the new times as much as they could, some embraced private homeownership and accepted responsibility for at least their own flats. Those who couldn't adjust, they continue to live with a nasty communal [flat] mindset, especially if they were unlucky with their neighbours and didn't match with them psychologically … I can understand that these people have a very hard time, but the fact that they live this way [in communal flats] will not make it easier for them. (Interviewee BD)

It follows from the above that communal flat living pertains to a decreased quality of life as opposed to owner-occupancy which is a more preferable tenure form as it allows residents to have agency over their housing situation. While the respondent had previously lived in a communal flat herself (and claimed that experience was generally comfortable), she still praised homeownership which her family pursued following the introduction of market economy in the early 1990s. In a similar vein, a respondent in Shabolovka drew a line between responsible homeowners and welfare expectant residents (who could be either tenants in communal flats or owners) neglecting the maintenance of their flats and hoping to be rehoused:

> We are protesting now because this ['renovation' program] is not about the five-storey buildings, not about *khrushchyovki*, not about the improvement of the quality of life. <…> This is about abolishing private property in the Russian Federation – again, just like in 1917. Obviously, in 1991, a class of owners appeared. Crippled, awry – because without land [ownership] it is not formalised, but these are owners. These are the people who understand that, besides the fact that they own something, they also assume some responsibility. <…> Some people seem to have realigned; they understand [the ideas of ownership and responsibility] and try to maintain and improve [their homes] … And other people still live with a mindset that everyone [society and the state] owes them… Under the principle of "grab and share" [Bolshevik maxim]. (Interviewee SB)

All three homeowners' accounts above distinguished between people who embraced the market economy in the beginning of the 1990s and the rest who still subscribed to the Soviet-era housing allocation and maintenance principles in which the state played a leading role.

Such a framing of social differentiation in the studied estates implies not only class division; the reasoning in terms of homeownership and responsibility (as well as their nexus) highlights also a political/ideological line that differentiates the positionings of residents either espousing or renouncing the post-Soviet capitalist ethos. The widespread acceptance of homeownership as a social, political and economic norm reflects the ideological imperative of such reorganisation of housing system that assumes self-reliance, increased financial risks of households, commodification of home and so on (see Ronald, 2008; S. J. Smith, 2015). It is furthermore remarkable that in the discussions about responsibility, some residents were castigated for being incapable of taking care of their flats in particular and failing to accept the rules of the capitalist housing system in general, while the public authorities' responsibilisation[79] was almost taken for granted. Such discourses conceal the problematics of housing commodification, deregulation, privatisation, underinvestment, diminishing welfare and other implications of the introduction of capitalist housing market following the demise of the Soviet Union.

Another noteworthy observation from the conducted interviews is that the owner/tenant binary was not as pronounced as one may expect in light of the discussion above. Instead, the group of homeowners itself came across as quite heterogeneous as far as their attitudes to the issue of rehousing were concerned. Differentiating the subject positions of residents were rather their living arrangements – communal or separate flat residence – which transcended the conventional owner/tenant-occupied and private/public housing dualisms (hence the previously mentioned cross-cut view of the social division). An account of a resident in Shabolovka is illustrative in this regard. Living in a house where all flats are privately owned but more than half are communal, she lamented the fact that their residents were not attached to their dwellings and wanted to move out:

> Perhaps twenty people from the whole house, out of 200 residents, would say that they would feel sorry about rehousing… The rest considers [their flats] just as living space, square metres, that's it. <…> On the one hand, some say [we live in a] market economy, but, on the other hand, [communal flat tenants] were allocated [flats] here, and later they will be allocated somewhere else. Well, there's such a consumer attitude: [tenants] will be allocated flats no matter what… This is why they have such an attitude to the houses. They don't care, they don't take initiative to do something to improve their lives independently: they are waiting [to be rehoused]. <…> In fact, that

[79] The transfer of responsibility from higher authorities to individuals who are then expected to take an active role in resolving their own problems.

> should be of concern, because after all, one is in owner-occupancy [if one] lives here, and one must sense one's home. But there's no such sense, it hasn't been cultivated, unfortunately. (Interviewee SC)

In the above, the respondent suggested that while some residents were allocated housing during the Soviet times and were able to privatise it as sitting tenants free of charge, they did not fully embrace the homeownership and self-reliance culture since they lived in communal flats and were entitled to rehousing into separate flats under the 'renovation' program; this, she implied, was conducive to their lowered (or absent) sense of home place. What this equally indicates, however, is that homeownership does not necessary translate into sense of place, which concurs with Madden and Marcuse's (2016) argument that residential alienation can be experienced irrespective of tenure form. In this view, the perceived differences between owners are ideologically driven as a form of false consciousness.

It seems that even though the perceived tensions between the residents' subject positions regarding the 'renovation' program can indeed be associated with the class and/or ideological divisions (as seen through the prism of tenure and property), they pertain, essentially, to the residents' living conditions in a particular housing situation. Tenure and property forms constitute housing relations and underlie the socio-spatiality of housing markets, but their separate effects on the individual and group experiences are not easily singled out. For instance, ownership, on the one hand, may promote less social inequality and more security in home occupancy and a stronger feeling of attachment to place of residence (see Kohl, 2017, pp. 4–5, for an overview of literature); this, however, does not follow from the accounts of the participants in my study. On the other hand, since tenants in Russia have very strong occupancy rights (Puzanov, 2013), the differences between residents' experiences in different tenure forms may not be as significant as one could expect. Similarly, the private/public housing dualism seems to be less pronounced when it comes to the issue of rehousing as both private homeowners (particularly those asset-rich but cash-poor) and social housing tenants may be willing to take the opportunity offered by the 'renovation' program to improve their living conditions. Indeed, for many in Russia, housing retains a status of a fundamental social right that should be guaranteed by the state (Zavisca, 2012), and with the 'renovation' program many Muscovites saw the chance to exercise that social right (that is, the right to be given a new flat) even if this implied relinquishing their property rights and the right to stay put (Trudolyubov, 2018, p. 203). It is then the living conditions (and the associated ex-

periences, intentionality and attitudes of residents towards moving out or staying put), tied up into the wider web of housing relations through the socio-spatial categories of tenure and property, that underlay the diverging subjectivities of residents in relation to the 'renovation' program and animated social space of the studied housing estates.

The (unlikely) return of communality?

So far, the chapter has presented a picture of social life in the avant-garde estates that is relatively bleak: its first part narrated the post-Soviet atomisation and estrangement of residents, and the second part extensively engaged with the divisive issue of the 'renovation' program, mainly from the homeowners' perspective. This part is set to complement the perspectives of the previous two as it discusses the tentative revival of communality, which alludes to the early Soviet mode of socialisation and the associated possibilities for and limits to the formation of tighter, community-like ties between the residents in the wake of the citywide housing development programs.

One of the pillars of communality seems to be the informal small-scale private services that neighbours offer each other. Among the residents, there are hairdressers, photographers, service mechanics, private tutors and others become known through the interpersonal networks and the word of mouth. As a respondent in Budenovsky estate recounted:

> We have an illegal [informal] private business [in our housing estate]. Cheap haircuts, stuff like that. Those who know each other use this [opportunity]. Someone could repair a car. I offer guitar lessons. Everyone knows that I have students. They [learn how to] play the guitar; [a lesson costs] 500 roubles – excellent. I do not go out of the house and earn money; in addition, I talk to the younger [generation], find out what they are thinking about [life], what is the latest cool [computer] game they are playing, and so on. (Interviewee BC)

Similarly, a resident in Usachevka estate mentioned a hairdresser who lived in the same staircase and offered haircuts to the locals (Interviewee UA). Such an informal, social economy has always been an integral part of social fabric in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia insofar as it is "connected to sociality, kinship relations and a continuity of everyday life tactics" preceding the collapse of the Soviet Union and based on the distancing (or even withdrawal) of ordinary people from the state–society relations (Morris & Polese, 2014, p. 9;

see also Borén, 2003; Williams et al., 2013). Informal social practices and networks not only are forms of resistance to neoliberalism but also constitute, more generally, an important part of everyday life for inhabitants of post-Soviet cities (A. Smith, 2007).

Additionally, a few interviewees told me about the nonmonetary forms of exchange between the neighbours. A resident in Dubrovka estate gave an example of such mutual free-of-charge help exchange: the respondent offered babysitting and, later on, tutoring services to a neighbour's child; in turn, nowadays this neighbour is tutoring the respondent's child as a gesture of gratitude (Interviewee DG). In another example, a resident in Shabolovka mentioned looking after an elderly neighbour and helping her around home:

> There is a lonely old woman living in the first staircase, I help her when she needs to hang a duvet cover on a line after washing, when she needs something else, say, to open a tin can [that] she cannot, she does not have enough strength to open a tin can. Things like that, I come and help. Sometimes I come to visit her and talk with her, and I ask her to tell me about the old days. (Interviewee SC)

While the described forms of exchange (sometimes informal) between residents depend primarily on the interpersonal networks of given individuals or households, they enable, nevertheless, a greater level of place-based inclusion and care and are thus conducive to the atmosphere of sociability and neighbourliness. Whether such exchange networks are central to the revival of communality is still questionable; however, the absence of these local networks would certainly not aid that revival either.

The politicisation and mobilisation of residents brought about by the citywide programs, and particularly the 'renovation' program, offered the opportunities for, but also exposed the limits to, socialisation and the formation of local communities in the studied estates. One of the social effects of the 'renovation' program, it seems, was the increased awareness of the socio-spatial integrity of a housing estate. For instance, according to a respondent in Nizhnyaya Presnya, the perception of the housing estate as one unit was widely shared among the residents: "Everyone is aware of the fact that if one house is to be renovated then the whole neighbourhood will come down" (Interviewee PD). A previously quoted interviewee in Usachevka similarly claimed that a threat of demolition to one house posed a threat for the entire quarter or neighbourhood (Interviewee UF). Moreover, since a housing estate is often perceived as one spatial entity, the experience of a (looming) displacement may be shared by

all the residents in the area. As one of the respondents in Budenovsky estate explained:

> If there will be a displacement, it will affect everyone. There is such an indestructible [feeling of] communality, because no one talks about individual buildings. Never. Everyone is like: "We'll all be knocked down, we'll all be resettled, we'll all be left alone." So [people think] only in terms of "all of us." (Interviewee BA)

The communality that the respondent spoke of here differs from the more common understandings of the term as a feeling of group solidarity, however. While, on the one hand, some residents may indeed be united in this 'all-in-one-boat' sentiment that all the houses in the estate can be subject to demolition and therefore all residents may be relocated, on the other hand, this does not presume any stronger community ties as not everyone is readily involved in displacement resistance. In fact, according to the survey, in Budenovsky, half of the respondents would like to move houses (see Appendix E). Nevertheless, the formulation of questions and the possibility to answer them elaborately in a survey is limited compared to an interview situation, and I cannot be sure that the respondents would have answered differently to the question of moving when considering the loss of social ties.[80]

A general meeting of homeowners and tenants was mentioned by a few participants in my study as a forum bringing the residents together. For instance, a respondent in Usachevka claimed that one of such meetings to discuss the ongoing major repair works on his house became a turning point for the intensified communication between the neighbours concerned by a common issue:

> There was an interesting case: in the opposite flat lives a woman who I've never talked to. And so, we gathered for a residents' meeting concerning the major repairs, and this was for the first time in more than 30 years that I had heard her voice… So, if not for these major repairs… <…> Interestingly, those people who I thought would never talk to each other, started discussing the ongoing overhaul. They stand [in the courtyard], look at the facade [repairs] and talk about what they see… One man bought a flat on the ground floor three years ago… He would never really talk to anyone, not even return my greetings. And now this man chats with everyone monitoring the facade [repairs]. (Interviewee UC)

[80] It is important to note also that only 3 respondents in Budenovsky out of 44 who replied that they wanted to move houses explicitly indicated dissatisfaction with the social environment of the estate as the reason underlying their answer.

The account above not only suggests that citywide programs triggered cooperation between the residents which engaged even those who would not seem to be socially active otherwise. It also indicates that the residents want to have a say in the maintenance of their houses vis-à-vis the municipal management company through a collective action, especially given the fact that the major repairs are financed by the owners of flats themselves (see Chapter 4).

Along similar lines, the opposition to the 'renovation' program also stemmed largely from the desire of residents to exercise their right to stay put and their right to decide on the organisation of the built environment. According to an interviewee in Shabolovka:

> When this 'renovation' law appeared, people somehow got united. Well, I don't mean those who are in favour of demolition, because it's clear that this program, after all, promises and regulates something [rehousing]. But the group of people who are against demolition, they indeed rallied around a common idea of preserving their houses and courtyards, and this could be the impetus for the emergence of some kind of a local social movement. Because for a long time, people have been accustomed to the fact that the [city] authorities decide everything for them; that is, for example, where benches will be installed and so on, so [people] don't need to worry, as there is a janitor or a management company who must solve this. And if they don't like something, they can complain. But people stopped going out and painting these benches themselves, like it was in the 1930-50-60s. And now, when they've realised that this has gone too far, and that the [city] government decides not only whether a bench will be installed, but also whether a house will stand on its place tomorrow at all, then, yes, people didn't like that. And so now they are trying to regain some rights and to decide, too, where they will be living and how. This could be the impetus for the return of this social activity and the construction of [people's] own environment – if it works out. (Interviewee SA)

The respondent saw the politicisation and mobilisation of residents prompted by the 'renovation' program as a stepping stone for the formation of a local community who would exercise its civic rights in relation to the surrounding built environment beyond their flats. This politicisation of residents in post-Soviet Russia has been notably associated with privatisation and responsibilisation as homeowners tend to feel they have a stake in society (Attwood, 2012). As seen elsewhere in Moscow, the initial act of exercising the right to participate in the decision-making with regard to urban space is followed by a process of sustaining place-related agency materialised in the residents' neighbourhood grassroots initiatives to protect their quality of life from the profit-seeking initiatives of state and business actors (Fröhlich, 2020). At the moment of the second fieldwork period in

summer 2017, however, it was impossible to see whether the initial politicisation of residents due to the 'renovation' program would lead to a formation of local community, or if the activism of residents would be of a one-off character (although some of the respondents indeed suggested that they would not continue being engaged in the local initiatives).

Irrespective of the citywide programs' repercussions, in all five studied estates the number of residents who do or do not participate in the local social life is almost equally divided. According to the survey, 44 percent of all respondents said they did not take part in any activity (65 percent in Khavsko-Shabolovsky and only 28 in Usachevka), while 45 percent participated in the meetings of homeowners and tenants, and 16 percent were engaged in volunteering and activism (see Appendix E). At the same time, according to the survey, when asked whether they were ready to take part in local initiatives related to neighbourhood improvement and cultural life in the future, half of the respondents replied positively, and another one third said they might participate. Therefore, while the more casual socialisation between the contemporary residents may be limited, the potential for their coming together in order to solve practical issues regarding houses and estates, to the contrary, is reportedly rather high. As such, the residents are readily mobilising in reaction to the negative rather than positive agenda that affects daily lives of a significant number of people. As an informant in Usachevka estate explained:

> In general, speaking of the neighbourhood communities and good neighbourliness: people really do come together to solve problems. They won't gather to just drink coffee – that's absurd. Not if you're a seventy-year-old granny, of course, then it makes sense to gather, drink coffee. But if you are a young or middle-aged person, why will you need this? You won't spend time with your neighbour simply because this is your neighbour. You have friends, hobbies, clubs and so on… But people really get united because of the problems. (Interviewee UF)

Indeed, today the collective pastime of neighbours is very uncommon, not least due to the absence or decline of most of the infrastructure that promoted socialisation according to the original plans of the estates. While the communication between the residents seems to occur mainly due to some common concerns and on a one-off, ad-hoc basis, the social networks of individuals can still involve some of the neighbours (for example, parents with kids meeting at playgrounds, local hairdressers, long-term residents and so on). Still, these individual local ties do not necessarily amount to the formation of a community. Similarly, although a better general knowledge of neigh-

bours (thanks to either the meetings of residents or simply due to the smaller scale of avant-garde houses) is instrumental in the feeling of neighbourliness, it does not presuppose collective pastime or any other form of increased sociability/socialisation, let alone more co-operation, unless in the face of external or internal challenges. Moreover, the social life of people depends also on the extraterritorial connections (that is, connections that transcend physical places, such as networks of friends and relatives as well as hobby and interest clubs mentioned by the respondent above), which may also hinder the formation of a place-based community. However, the politicisation and mobilisation around dwelling places in the wake of citywide programs in Moscow discussed here suggests that place still matters to residents, regardless of their networks in or beyond their courtyards. Additionally, while the potential for mobilisation on the positive agenda is indeed limited (not least due to privatism and the likes, as was argued above), this does not mean that local community cannot emerge later on, especially if more residents would feel the need to resist the state- and capital-led commodification of urban space.

Concluding remarks: the social construction of constructivist housing estates

It would be unreasonable to expect the same level and quality of socialisation in avant-garde housing estates today as when they were conceived and built at the dawn of Soviet Russia: not only did most of the social amenities that were conducive to collectivisation vanish, but social relations have also dramatically transformed throughout and since the fall of the Soviet Union. Nowadays, a new kind of socialisation, reflecting capitalist housing relations, has developed, characterised by its own specific qualities, conflicts and hierarchies. Following Lefebvre (1991), these new social relations, always being dialectically intertwined with space, lend meaning to and are grounded in the new, post-Soviet socio-spatiality. Therefore, social space of the avant-garde housing estates calls for analysis since it reflects large-scale societal changes and how these are intricately linked with everyday social life. The material presented in this chapter offers evidence of how such relations can play out empirically.

Lefebvre (1991) insisted, following Marx, that the space of capitalism is a concrete abstraction that becomes reified in social, economic, political practice, and materialised in the built environment. In this sense, housing estates conceal commodified real estate, houses con-

ceal functionally abstract housing, and residents represent a multitude of owners, tenants, communal flat dwellers etc. In this chapter, I tried to understand these abstractions in their concrete guise, and as such, to recognise the social as simultaneously spatial, and vice versa, while also connected to place. In doing so, the phenomenological outlook of Chapter 5 was extended to enable the analysis of the links between lived experience and the wider social, economic and political conditions. This approach helps to understand, among other things, why the social fabric of the avant-garde housing estates (with their smaller scale environment potentially promoting socialisation, since it is easier to meet and to get to know people there) is characterised not only by sociability and neighbourliness but also by the perceived estrangement and atomisation of residents. Although the latter can arguably be linked to individual lifeworld situations, it is also associated with the socio-economic shifts that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Likewise, whereas the residents' stories of lived experience of housing estates accounted for in the current chapter revolved around the discussions of, for example, the everyday sociability or the qualities of built environment, they necessarily included accounts of structural categories such as tenure and property. Given that they are deeply social relations, tenure and property relations are tied to space and are negotiated through it. As such, the potential spatial change induced by the citywide housing development programs accentuated divisions between the residents along the lines of class and politics/ideology – divisions which, as was argued above, have just as much to do with the concrete living conditions of people as with structural relations of tenure and property. These divisions are emblematic also of the differentiation, fragmentation or 'pulverisation' of capitalist space which nevertheless retains coherence by means of, among other things, commodification and consumption (cf. Lefebvre, 1991).

The concrete living conditions of people associated with a particular housing situation or arrangement (communal or separate, own, single-family flat) have a bearing on their everyday lived experiences (cf. Schmid, 2008). These experiences are spatial as they relate in various ways to the occurrence of structural changes in the built environment, housing development programs, shifts in the composition of residents, and so on. Spatial changes, therefore, shape the ways individuals experience and construe housing estates as homes and lived places (again, echoing Chapter 5), and, by extension, also shape individual motives regarding the choice of staying put or moving out.

In this respect, the mobilisation of residents opposing the 'renovation' program is fascinating as it reveals how differently the social space of housing estates was politicised back in the 1920s and nowadays: it reflects a complete reshuffling in which the private/individual motives, or interests, dominate the public/communal ones. This, in turn, exposes the contradictions that a post-Soviet capitalist housing market is riddled with, not least concerning a discrepancy between privatised property, associated with speculation and consumption, and public housing allocation/provision; the conflicting perception of housing as a commodity and as a social right; the dialectical opposition between exchange value and use value in housing, to wit between property and appropriation (see Lefebvre, 1991, p. 356).

Wider 'macro' socio-spatial changes relate to the experiences of housing on an individual 'micro' level. These can be very profound, as has been elucidated elsewhere too, in literature on displacement and the loss of home (see Fried, 1966; Fullilove, 2004; Porteous & Smith, 2001). While people's experiences discussed in the current chapter remain unique, they still resonate to a large extent with the findings of such studies from other contexts. Since spatial processes and their social consequences are enacted and negotiated through place (Davidson, 2009), it probably comes as no surprise that the accounts of lived experiences of residents of the avant-garde estates reflect this larger socio-spatiality. If, following Lefebvre, the constructivist (avant-garde) housing estates may be said to be socially constructed (produced), the social fabric of the housing estates remains ultimately entangled in diverse social meanings as homes and lived places.

7 Lived qualities of everyday life in avant-garde houses

Avant-garde estates are architectonically distinct from other types and styles of housing present in Moscow. Some of these estates (including all five studied here) have even been granted varied heritage statuses by the authorities. Avant-garde housing also stands out as the first example of modern(ist) residential development in Russia aimed at improving the living conditions of the broader population, and particularly the working class. First and foremost, however, housing serves in the most basic sense as a shelter and a residence for its inhabitants, and it is with their experience this thesis has been primarily concerned. Previously, Chapter 5 has explored how the residents make sense of the avant-garde features of their housing. Chapter 6, in its turn, has focused on the social space of the estates in question, and particularly on the reverberations of two citywide housing programs within it. But what about the more mundane, everyday experience of housing? If we take the level of everyday life as a basis for inquiry, what are the themes and issues that emerge when the residents of avant-garde estates are asked to reflect more generally on living in their houses and neighbourhoods?

This chapter seeks to understand the lived, everyday qualities in avant-garde housing estates from the perspective of their residents' experience. The aim here is to discover which aspects of the built environment and social space of the estates (often concealed in everyday life's apparent banality) pertain to the inhabitants' understanding of housing as a dwelling place and, ultimately, home. In order to achieve this, I draw on both a humanistic/phenomenological place-based analysis and Lefebvre's critique of everyday life. Attending to housing as a phenomenon, the meaning of which is revealed in the course of daily lives of its dwellers, this chapter offers a more qualitative rendering of housing as home in its inherently social function, hence transcending its abstracted conceptualisation as an exchangeable real estate.

The chapter consists of three parts. The first part echoes Chapter 5 in its focus on the built environment of the estates, but rather high-

lights its everyday qualities without emphasising the avant-garde properties. The second part alludes to Chapter 6 as it discusses how the effects of the wider structural and societal forces are negotiated and resisted by the local residents, which suggests a high level of their political and civic awareness. Finally, the chapter describes how the inhabitants (re)discover the historical underpinning and (re)value avant-garde estates as homes by way of their accounts of the lived qualities of this housing type.

Beyond architecture: everyday characteristics of housing estates

Tenure forms and ownership statuses, number of square metres and the height of ceilings, the cost of purchase and maintenance, proximity to metro stations and/or the city centre, heritage status – those were just a few characteristics mentioned by residents when talking about their houses and neighbourhoods. Some also commented on the very avant-garde-ness of their houses and estates, pointing to the specific architectural and design features and formal and spatial properties. However, for most of these people housing definitely meant something more than just those very concrete and tangible characteristics. Moreover, and notably, among those participants in my study who were not long-term residents, none moved into the avant-garde housing exclusively because of its avant-garde pedigree or properties. One resident in Budenovsky estate, while being aware of this style of architecture as a professional architect, admitted that the main consideration when moving in was the average price per square metre that happened to be one of the lowest among the inner-city neighbourhoods of Moscow (Interviewee BA). Still, in the process of habiting, the more qualitative characteristics of estates can be discovered and come to the fore, as houses in their ordinariness can be experienced by the inhabitants as their homes.

Sense of place, attachment and at-homeness

As follows from the accounts of residents in the preceding chapters, not all of them positively perceived the current material qualities and housing conditions in the studied estates, while the aesthetical appeal of avant-garde residential architecture was met largely with indifference. Despite this, some of the respondents expressed a feeling of nostalgia towards their housing estates and subsequently the desire of

it being preserved in some way or another, even in case they moved out. Indeed, the long-term residents of a housing estate may develop a wide range of sentimental values and symbolic meanings associated with it being, for instance, a birthplace, a place where childhood was spent, or a place imbued with memories of their parents. The narratives of nostalgia appeared already in the previous chapters (for example, in Chapter 5 in relation to memories and awareness of the historicity of the built environment, and in Chapter 6 in relation to the former social ties and the sense of community), but in this case their particular association with personal histories of residents is important for the ways they make sense of their homes as immensely intimate and emotionally laden places.

Similarly, some residents characterised their perception and lived experience of the estates in notedly positive terms suggestive of 'topophilic' bonds with their home places (cf. Tuan, 1974). For instance, a respondent in Dubrovka described her housing area as emanating a sense of security and comfort associated with at-home feeling:

> When you get out of the metro and walk here, you already feel at home. Everything around is yours, your home. What is home? It's a feeling of some security, calm and comfort. Here you get this feeling not only in your flat, staircase or in the house [itself] but in this very place [housing estate]. (Interviewee DG)

Such a strong feel, such sense of place, importantly involves the estate as a whole, which is suggestive of its perceived integrity as one spatial unit. Moreover, a feeling of familiarity, especially after spending significant parts of one's life in a place, can be conducive to belonging, a sort of emotional appropriation of space that one frequents on a daily basis. Familiarity and belonging seem to be associated with a feeling of comfort and safety. Along similar lines, a respondent in Usachevka talked about the very special atmosphere in his housing estate linked with camaraderie and the duration of dwelling:

> AK: Is there any spirit of this area? Can you characterise it?
>
> UC: For me, of course there is.
>
> AK: What is it?
>
> UC: The fact that I grew up and live here. It's a home place. Not that there's any sort of spirit [of this place]. There is just simply nothing like this anywhere else in the world. I find it extremely interesting everywhere, take Stockholm, for example. But it's absolutely foreign [there]. The spirit here is

> so calm and relaxed. In our staircase, in particular, people haven't changed much. Just a few flats were sold, someone has moved out, but, in principle, it's full of people whom we've known for a very long time. And we treat each other well, like old friends. Where else will you find something like this today?

While the interviewee did not want to associate his feelings with any particular spirit of place, he clearly referred to the uniqueness of place, in a manner often asserted in phenomenological studies (for example, Norberg-Schulz, 1980). The descriptions of a housing estate as a place permeated with sentimental values and associated with the atmosphere of security, comfort and calm evoke Heidegger's (1971) discussion of dwelling and Bachelard's (1964) poetic notion of home. Importantly, while such a rendering of housing may be considered as overly romantic and introspective, it equally witnesses that housing can be experienced as a profound centre of human life, hence revealing its existential and social importance. Moreover, accounts of how the avant-garde estates are experienced as home places by at least some of their residents, suggest that these houses, despite being early modernist developments, are far from placeless (cf. Relph, 1976).

Meanings and values of place are often not brought to one's consciousness unless they are threatened (Buttimer, 1980). In my conversations with the residents, it became clear that at least for some, the 'renovation' program and the potential rehousing posed a threat to the habitual course of their everyday lives in the estates. This threat (although never materialised) made them reflect on the values and meanings that they attach to their homes, as was intimated by a resident in Dubrovka:

> For long I couldn't accept [the prospect of] moving out from here. I wouldn't call myself conservative, I love [experiencing] something new, and I don't mind even living somewhere else. But just [a thought] that this house where I live, where I was born and grew up, that this house would suddenly be demolished and cease to exist… It was some kind of a shock for me: no way, it couldn't be true. (Interviewee DA)

As follows from the resident's account above, the valuation of housing may not only be influenced by the direct eviction pressure but even just by its possibility. Davidson (2009) has maintained that it is through place and experience that the socio-spatial relations are enacted and negotiated in the space/place dialectic. In this case, the realisation of the wider socio-spatial reality as threatening the experience of a particular place (a house or an estate) amplifies and brings

this experience to the fore and highlights the personal and social value this place is imbued with.

Routinisation and trivialisation of housing

The course of habiting is instrumental in developing one's sense and understanding of place. At the same time, for some, living in the studied estates for a prolonged period seems to trivialise one's perception of place. Interestingly, this applies even to its perceived negative features, as a resident in Dubrovka recounted:

> When you live in one place for a long time… I personally get used to something and start liking it, even its drawbacks. They just get out of my range of vision; my eyes don't notice them… The first thing that comes to my mind boils down to 'cosmetics' [visually unsightly state of facades] and [lack of leisure] facilities… (Interviewee DA)

For this resident, the duration of habitation in the estate has made him blind to many of its material drawbacks. With time, the 'cosmetic' issues he initially noticed have paled in significance, as his sense of place, probably brightened in its routinised familiarity, has grown.

As was described in Chapter 6, a relative decline in the sense of attachment to place of residence since the 1990s (following the demise of the Soviet Union) can be attributed to the fact that the houses were undermaintained and consequently generally treated as a commodity of a lower range. They were also at times perceived as banal and rather ordinary by residents. For some, the familiarity of these houses, rather than increasing their appeal through routine, dampened their appreciation for the characteristics of the built environment. This was especially true where the residents had not experienced other housing arrangements before:

> In the 1990s, people began selling the flats, because they thought that it was generally an illiquid real estate, and no one really cared about it. I know a granny who has lived here ever since she was born in the 1930s and who really thinks these houses are an old rubbish. Well, she has never lived anywhere else, and she says: "I'd like to have a bigger kitchen." For her, of course, this isn't a remarkable landmark building but just a normal, regular house. (Interviewee BB)

Indeed, from this quotation we can observe that use and historical value may not be recognised in a routinised, long-term everyday dwelling. For the elderly resident mentioned above, her house seems to have become so banal and trivial that its unique qualities are hardly

recognisable. This comes as no surprise, however, as the standard of housing at stake was low given the post-Soviet decades of neglect. This observation also brings attention to the importance of restoration and regular maintenance of housing as a way to revive and reconcile use and historical value in the ordinariness of everyday lives of residents.

The neglect of maintenance notwithstanding, the sheer age of the studied estates suggests they are well lived-in places. A resident in Shabolovka maintained that the avant-garde estates are today "no longer perceived as a ground-breaking, experimental housing, but rather as a cosy courtyard space with its own way of life traditional for Moscow" (Interviewee SA). In view of this, throughout the generations of residents' experiences of dwelling and the associated meanings and values attached to houses, the avant-garde estates are today often rendered vintage and 'traditional' rather than novel and revolutionary places. Vintage here does not necessarily connote heritage, however, but rather implies familiarity and banality and even, in some cases, indifference of inhabitants to the architectural and design properties of the built environment they have become accustomed to through habitual practices and routines. For instance, a respondent in Nizhnyaya Presnya emphasised the fact that even the long-term residents sometimes would not be aware of the material, built features of the houses they lived in:

> A while back a woman came. There was a kid who lived one floor below us, and he threw all sorts of things out of the windows, mainly paper. And she came to us to complain. I told her that it was [not us but a flat] on the fifth floor: we have no windows facing the courtyard. She had lived here all her life and she didn't even know that there were five floors facing the courtyard and six floors facing the street. I was 30 years old then, and she was around 70, which means she [must have lived] here perhaps from the beginning. She didn't even know such a simple thing. So, she had lived her whole life in this house, and she didn't even count the number of floors. (Interviewee PC)

On the everyday level, then, the residents may not be aware of the particular features of their houses, not to speak of the specifically avant-garde features. In a way, the experience and valuation of housing as a space for living (or simply a shelter) may occur irrespective of not only the length of residence but also its architectural and design properties (such as the difference in the number of storeys in a house). This illustrates how everyday life goes on in a way that does not alert a dweller to certain characteristics of the built environment, but that shows how these characteristics are often taken for granted as a part of the familiar and the 'ordinary'. This also brings to mind

the argument made in Chapter 5 about the precedence of the experiential dimension in meaning-making of places over the preconceived notions of formal/official cultural and historical heritage. Following Lefebvre (1971, 2014), despite its apparent ordinariness and triviality, everyday life presents itself as full of meaning; in turn, places of everyday life are made sense of through the most mundane routines and habits (cf. Buttimer, 1976; Seamon, 1979a). Despite their seeming familiarity and banality then, avant-garde housing estates may still be experienced as meaningful centres of people's daily lives.

Quality of housing and quality of life

The ambition of avant-garde architects and planners was to promote a new way of life through, among other things, the reorganisation of residential space and the material conditions of dwelling. Today, nearly 90 years after the construction of the avant-garde housing estates, these material conditions have changed (not least due to varying maintenance efforts throughout the Soviet and also the post-Soviet periods). As became clear over the course of this study, the living conditions of residents (and hence also their quality of life) are indeed intricately linked to the quality of housing itself. However, the quality of housing structure does not necessarily determine one's housing situation (for instance, living in a communal flat). Similarly, people's perceptions of housing standards vary (as some might appreciate certain layouts or designs over others), which makes it impossible to infer any singular, objective quality of housing from the multitude of people's subjective lived experiences. This was explained by a resident in Budenovsky estate:

> Before we moved in here we lived in a typical five-storey house [*khrushchyovka*]. There too, once the trees have grown, the environment becomes quite pleasant. Well, obviously, [there is a difference] if there are ten people living in one flat, or if there are two people… Also, not everyone needs… Why should everyone [want to] live in a 150 square metres [flat]? This is not really necessary. I think that for living, these [square] metres and this small kitchen is quite enough. No problem at all. (Interviewee BA)

As follows from the quotation above, the quality of one's life is linked to one's sense of place of residence; in case of this respondent, she appreciated the green, not overcrowded and modest, ergonomic living environment of her estate. Moreover, the respondent maintained that the avant-garde, constructivist estates were not necessarily perceived as incarnations of a particular architectural and ideological movement, as buildings representing cultural and historical value, but

rather as a regular type of residential architecture with comfortable and liveable spatial design and flat layouts. The respondent hence expressed her appreciation of particularly the lived qualities of her estate:

> I am not some ardent fan of constructivism. I appreciate it, I know that this is our expert period in architecture. I am aware of all this, but here it turns out that one thing is when you're happy [knowing about the particular history], and another thing is that it's just really pleasant to live here. Therefore, I appreciate particularly the design. It's [thanks to] the talent of these architects who designed it. Well, constructivism is great. But it's a coincidence: I've never lived in a constructivist house before. And, in fact, when you look at this architecture, some doubts arise whether it's comfortable and cool [to live here]. I mean, all these experiments with housing [are questionable]. It's unlikely that I would [like to] move into a house-commune. But I don't have any questions at all about the [competences] of [constructivist] architects. <…> And so, you appreciate, you just see… how well-planned [the houses are], how [architects] thought about [the design]. (Interviewee BA)

As a professional architect, the respondent quoted above was very knowledgeable about the history and the formal, design principles of the avant-garde/constructivist architecture, and how these were translated into the concrete, built environment of the estate. However, while such a well-informed account can be seen as rather an outlier, the accounts of other respondents, as was shown in Chapter 5, too, demonstrated a clear awareness of the historical and architectural value of houses, regardless of their attitudes towards them.

That being said, the positive experience of living in the avant-garde estates was not universally shared by all residents as some of them wanted to be rehoused through the 'renovation' program (see Chapter 6). According to a respondent in Budenovsky estate, it is necessary to distinguish between the living conditions (and hence the quality of life) and the quality of housing itself as the decisive factor behind the desire to move out:

> Many people who would like to move out actually take issue not with their houses; by and large, they take issue with their status in life and their quality of living [in these houses]. For residents of communal flats… I mean, [their] problems aren't related to houses as such. When you try to understand this, people usually say that their houses are falling apart… In fact, it turns out that, for example, there are rotten floor lags but not the beams. Beams are made of thick logs of resinous wood species. I don't really know what has to be done in order to make these logs rot. (Interviewee BB)

The quality of life is closely linked to the living conditions, but the latter, in turn, cannot always be directly attributed to the qualities of

residential architecture and design per se; it also depends on people's accommodation arrangement and the status of house maintenance. Along similar lines, another respondent in Budenovsky estate talked with sympathy about the people living in communal flats who wished to improve their dire housing conditions, while also stressing that such desires remain unrelated to the architecture or design of buildings:

> At all these meetings [of tenants and homeowners], there was a girl who lived in a communal flat; she had children. And this ['renovation' program] gave her a ray of hope that she and her children could get out of this communal flat somewhere [nicer]. But this has nothing to do with the architecture anymore, nor with the quality of the environment. (Interviewee BA)

The quality of housing does not depend solely on the architectural and design properties. These can, of course, be instrumental in improving the residents' quality of life, but may not be sufficient if the maintenance of housing is deficient or if the accommodation arrangement (that is, communal flat living) is not comfortable. Importantly, all these factors are external in relation to the perceived quality of life in housing and may hence circumscribe it. Importantly, their effects are reflected in place-based everyday experiences of residents. Place, therefore, is the medium within which the links between the quality of housing and the quality of life in it can be established.

The perceived dichotomy between the city and the citizens

While the preceding chapter explicated the differing subject positions of residents regarding staying put and rehousing in light of the 'renovation' program, the accounts of those opposing the program suggested there was also another dimension or spatial level in this dichotomy. As such, the residents perceived that the non-resident stakeholders (city government and the politically connected private developers) held views on the value of the houses and dwellings that were contradictory to those of the residents. Somewhat ironically, the current state-led initiatives to improve housing constructed by order of the state are met with a high degree of mistrust. Indeed, rather than seen as carrying out actions that improve the quality of life of the residents (which would be the matter of course during the Soviet era), the local authorities and the developers were more commonly described as powerful antagonists. This was highlighted when one of

the respondents lamented that the 'renovation' program did not focus on residents and intended only to extract profits from expensive land in central Moscow:

> This wonderful law about 'renovation' [program], which is now being adopted, aims to destroy not only our [housing] estate, but basically any five-storey house in the city centre, because they are not profitable. That is, it's more profitable to build a townhouse and sell apartments and rake in the money, than to keep some old grannies who are living out their days, the people who continue to live here, those who buy flats here, the young people, and so on. Well, [this happens] not only here but everywhere. (Interviewee PD)

The profitability narrative that the respondent referred to pertains to the conception of housing as a commodity in its exchange value. Strikingly, a few residents that I talked to contrasted this conception of housing with the more experiential, use-value-based one, highlighting the dwelling function of housing. At the same time, these two positions do not need to be mutually exclusive for the interviewees as they seemed to be well aware of the presence of both use and exchange value in housing.

As such, the 'renovation' program highlighted the problematic rhetoric of the city government that tended to overlook residents' interests and put emphasis on buildings as real estate, hence revealing the tensions between use value and exchange value in housing. That there is a discrepancy between the needs of the residents, on the one hand, and the priorities of the local government and the housing market, on the other hand, has been noticed by some interviewees, for example by a resident in Budenovsky estate:

> [City officials] never talked about the residents. If you read all their interviews – with [mayor] Sobyanin and others – they say all the time: "We'll keep these houses, we won't demolish them, we'll keep Budenovsky estate." But not in a single interview do they even mention what will happen with the residents. Later, after they were asked, they started to say: "If historic houses enter the 'renovation' program, then we'll resettle the inhabitants, but we won't demolish the houses." (Interviewee BB)

The respondent here saw ulterior motives of the city government as driven by a concern about houses as property and real estate and not as living places for inhabitants, even if the 'renovation' program was presented as caring about the accommodation of Muscovites. The pursuit of profit at the cost of people's needs is emblematic of a deepening neoliberal capitalist urban development in post-Soviet Moscow (for related critiques, see Brenner et al., 2012; also see, for

example, Büdenbender & Zupan, 2017; Kalyukin et al., 2015, for the Moscow context).

Some residents suggested that the prime location of avant-garde housing estates within central Moscow automatically puts them under the external pressure of redevelopment. Yet, this was also described as one of the characteristics that made the environment and atmosphere of the estates so appealing to residents (especially compared to the houses from the postwar period which are often located more peripherally). As a respondent in Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate explained:

> The quality of housing isn't very good by today's standards, because there are no storage rooms; the pipes are very old. The only thing that has value here is the expensive land. They want to demolish [the estate] and build high-rise buildings. But the courtyards are cosy; the usual Moscow atmosphere has been preserved here. This is an oasis, by and large. (Interviewee SF)

The quotation above highlights the discrepancy between the perceived view of housing from the residents' vantage point and that of the powerful actors referred to by the respondent under the collective 'they' (implying the city government and the developers). Furthermore, the respondent insisted that although the material quality of her housing area was not indisputable, the overall quality of life in that place was still high, thanks to the presence of valued environmental properties. These properties pertain, apart from the built environment, to the close proximity to the city centre, social infrastructure, as well as to the possibility of reaching the estate on foot. Hence, not only physical features but also geographical location can be deemed important by residents (which is an interesting transformation given that back in the 1920-30s, avant-garde housing estates were located on the outskirts of the city). Therefore, even if the respondent admitted that the quality of housing might not be the decisive factor in her desire to stay put, this desire is still framed as dependent on the residents' enjoyment of the prime location within the city and recognition of market pressures on their residences. Again, this demonstrates an awareness of the entanglement of use and exchange value within housing.

Other residents described housing disrepair as another contributing factor to the threat of demolition or redevelopment of the avant-garde estates. However, while the decrepit, unsightly state of the facades is lamentable, it does not determine the overall quality of houses. Many residents recognise the good quality of the structure of the buildings, and seem to be aware that the arguments used for

promoting structural renovation or demolition have nothing to do with the decreased habitability of the houses. Such arguments, these residents claim, rather signal a logic of profit-seeking in which the old housing is replaced with the new, often elite, one to maximise returns. Thus, the plastering may be flaking off the facades but this does not mean that the structural integrity is compromised and that the houses are crumbling, as a respondent in Dubrovka remarked:

> You can't look at [the facades] without [feeling] pain. They are absolutely dirty, peeling off and crumbling. It seems that all this will collapse really, although this is absolutely not true. <…> I have the impression that this house will outlive my great-grandchildren, if, of course, this is allowed by the city mayor (Interviewee DB).

Despite the facade maintenance issues, the respondent was convinced of high build quality and reliability of her house. Moreover, when the same interviewee was asked about the perceived reasons for these problems, her diagnosis was very clear:

> Look: the maintenance is absolutely horrible, but I think this has nothing to do with the architecture of our estate. This, of course, is a question for the prefecture, for the [district] administration and so on. Houses are in a horrible condition. (Interviewee DB)

Here, the resident reiterated that the maintenance of the housing stock lied within the responsibility of the public authorities who systematically neglected the necessary routine and general repair works. The respondent also dismissed the idea that the residents themselves should be responsible for taking care of their houses, especially given the fact that she regularly paid fees into the regional repair fund.

The neglect of maintenance has been associated with the lack of financial interest from the city and/or developers to bear the high costs of repairs and maintenance of the old housing stock. In this regard, a resident in Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate rhetorically asked: "Who in general likes restoring historical houses if one cannot make profit out of them?" (Interviewee SF). The respondent insinuated that instead of restoring, it is in the interest of the city and/or developers to rather demolish the avant-garde housing estates. Along similar lines, a preservation activist from *Arkhnadzor* claimed that the fact that the houses had wooden floor beams was often problematised to motivate the necessity of demolition, since the houses could be framed as dangerous for living: "These houses are considered titbits, because they are low-rise and have wooden beams, which are easily declared as dilapidated and fire-hazardous" (Interviewee AB). It is not

the houses that are titbits for the market interests, however, but rather the centrally located plots of land that they stand on. The potential for the redevelopment of these plots of land is extremely high, and so is the risk of the housing estates giving way for real estate. These two opposing views on housing as dwellings and as real estate informs the perceived dichotomy between the residents' and the municipality's attitudes to the avant-garde housing estates.

Resisting 'the city': the politics of everyday life

In the above, I have demonstrated that the place-based social relationships in contemporary Moscow are provided by a high degree of political and civic awareness of the residents (cf. Argenbright, 2016; Fröhlich, 2020; Trumbull, 2014). Particularly, as was discussed in Chapter 6, in the wake of the 'renovation' program announcement, the residents made attempts to mobilise and coordinate the efforts to oppose the demolition and displacement/eviction threat potentially brought about by the program. So far, mobilisations to resist and influence the housing-related initiatives, following the international patterns of housing activism, have been confined to discussions in online social media, spontaneous signature collection campaigns, petitioning, and meetings of residents. In all of these, not only the residents who were in favour of the 'renovation' program, but rather, and more so, the city government and the politically connected developers that were perceived as actors that needed to be resisted against.

Many residents in the studied estates expressed a strong desire to stay put and resist the imminent demolition and relocation threats even despite the widespread acknowledgment of the limits of their actions against the powerful state and private interests. An account from a respondent in Usachevka estate showcases how emotionally invested some became in the wake of the 'renovation' program announcement and the renewed perceived threat of demolition and rehousing:

> There is a really strong fear of demolition in these [avant-garde] quarters. My father has always been convinced that [our house] could be demolished at any moment, sort of: "Well, the state has decided so we will be knocked down." People just really take this for granted. All because they understand that the new elite quarters are closing in [due to the brownfield redevelopment]. Therefore, when the 'renovation' program was announced, there was such an upheaval in all these quarters with the signature collection against it… After I myself became an anti-renovation activist, when I'm reading [po-

> litical] commentaries claiming that constructivism is all tattered and it's time to demolish it, I get really infuriated… I lived in four different places in Moscow, and this is the best house of all, the best property, an elite real estate! And people get furious when they hear that their houses should be demolished. Because everyone understands that living here is good. (Interviewee UF)

Even though some residents may be resigned to the prospects of demolition and displacement, they are also prepared to resist as they appreciate the qualities of their homes, regardless of possible maintenance problems. The mobilisation of residents in response to the threat of renovation and relocation suggests that far from redundant (as measured in the economic valuations of land and property), this housing still holds significant meaning and value (both social and economic) for residents who wish to preserve its integrity as a place of residence.

Among those residents who opposed the 'renovation' program, some espoused a pragmatic view on resistance, recognising the difficulties in fighting against the state-led redevelopment initiatives. As one respondent in Dubrovka explained:

> You know, I understand that it is very difficult to argue with the powerful [players], if a strong-willed decision is made [to renovate and evict], and someone points a finger [at my house]. Well, the public opinion is unlikely to be able to stop this, although we will fight against this, I think. Not that I'm going to the barricades – of course, not. But, I think the residents will actively object to this. (Interviewee DF)

In this pragmatic view on resistance, therefore, the quoted resident would not pursue any radical action. Instead of that, he claimed, the resistance would rather take form of a collective protest among the neighbours. Without resorting to violent actions, the residents in Moscow were said to successfully use other means of mobilisation and resistance, including the already mentioned social media activism and signature collections, but also the municipally-organised public hearings. A respondent in Usachevka recalled a situation in 2011 when the local residents managed to halt the planned reconstruction of the estate by showing up en masse at the public hearings:

> There was a turning point in 2011, when there were [public] hearings regarding the demolition or renewal, and no one was warned. And I had this information from the informed sources. And I remember that I [passed this information on] to my friends, [they passed it on] to their parents, and so on, and as a result, a huge number of neighbours came to these hearings. No one was indifferent, and everyone argued furiously, and they actually managed to

> defend their rights, so that this [demolition] was reverted and nothing was done with their houses. (Interviewee UB)

While the organisation and moderation of public hearings is entirely up to the local authorities, which makes it a rather orchestrated and circumscribed platform for resistance, the resident's experience demonstrated that it could still be effectively used to oppose the redevelopment plans if attended in numbers.

Even though the residents often resorted to collective forms of mobilisation and resistance to various public and private initiatives, their motives could still be very much personal and individualist. This can be associated with the fact that the residents of owner-occupied, single-family flats were more readily supportive of resistance against the actions or initiatives that were deemed to violate their homeownership rights, as was shown in Chapter 6. For instance, while a respondent in Nizhnyaya Presnya expressed his belief that many residents will join resistance against potential demolition and rehousing, he still talked about the qualities of the housing estate that were of personal importance and values and that he would miss if he would be rehoused elsewhere:

> Here, residents will fight for the estate. Because it's impossible to find, in my opinion, such a small-scale, five-storey-high, quiet and very green place in the centre of Moscow. In summer, when you open a window, [you can hear] birds singing. This is impossible in the suburban areas. I even think there are no birds there. (Interviewee PD)

Here, the resident made clear that his desire to stay put in the estate had somewhat self-interested reasons. By contrast to this more subtle suggestion, a respondent in Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate did not subscribe to such sentimental and experiential motives when defending the residents' right to stay put. She was almost cynical when pointing out the more financial considerations for opposing the renovation and relocation:

> No one wants to lose a flat in the area. This is the main reason, not that everyone is so ideological or is fighting for some sort of [idea] … Everyone has a vested interest. It's all always about the money. (Interviewee SH)

Ironically, despite the fact that many residents were involved in the resistance against the profit-seeking activities of state and business actors, they themselves seemed to be at least partially complicit in and motivated by the same view of the estates as real estate. While the collective mobilisation pursued what was perceived as the common

good for the majority of (if not all) the residents, this action was often driven by the shared yet individualist interest in securing rights to the centrally-located property (which suggests a concern with its exchange value).

Paraphrasing Lefebvre (2014), everyday life in Moscow's avant-garde housing estates has been largely colonised by the forces of the authoritarian state and capitalist housing market. Still, residents can find ways to confront these forces in an attempt to decolonise it (even if only partially) as they also appreciate lived qualities of their residencies (which reiterates the concern with use value). In that sense, petitioning the authorities, collecting signatures, attending meetings of homeowners and tenants, going to public hearings, and even simply socialising with neighbours in the courtyard – everything matters as a means to an end of living a good quality life in a given housing estate and highlights the significance of these places to the lives of residents.

(Re)valuing avant-garde estates

Avant-garde architecture is a unique early-Soviet phenomenon that incarnated revolutionary social ideas together with the state-of-the-art design and spatial principles. Its residential version, however, has been largely seen as ordinary, particularly in light of the post-Soviet changes in the housing market. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed how throughout prolonged living-in the avant-garde estates, their material features have become familiar and mundane, blending into the broader daily lived experiences of residents, and as such often going completely unseen and unnoticed. Despite the routinisation and trivialisation of housing, residents still make sense of their estates as home places, and most are readily mobilised to resist the external redevelopment pressures. Therefore, whilst an everyday and ordinary phenomenon, housing conceals a deeper social and existential meaning. In what follows, I discuss how the inhabitants (re)discover the historical underpinning and (re)value avant-garde estates as homes by way of their accounts of the lived qualities in everyday experience of this housing type.

Discovering housing for the working class

According to the survey conducted in the studied estates, the vast majority of residents were aware of the cultural and historical signifi-

cance of their houses. Moreover, as Chapter 5 demonstrated, the avant-garde past constantly revealed itself in indirect ways in personal accounts of residents and in their descriptions of certain (inherited) material conditions. Most striking, however, was the fact that the consideration of the end users of their houses at the time of construction – the working class – seemed to be apparent and recognisable to many current residents. Even if not fully aware of the rational and social background of the construction of the avant-garde estates, residents often remarked on how diverse features of this housing type contributed to improved everyday experiences within them. These experiences hark back to the care invested in the constructions where a deeper recognition of housing in its basic functional qualities, and as a universal social right, used to be shared by citizens regardless of their social and class position.

Exemplifying this, one respondent emphasised the quality of housing that was constructed particularly for the working class and suggested that it was in some way superior to the standard of today: "Workers' housing has hardly ever been built by an individual project, but it was the case back then" (Interviewee DG). Therefore, not only was avant-garde housing built ergonomically and in accordance with high hygienic and sanitary standards of the time, but it was also well-designed and thought-out to improve the living conditions of the lower class. Similarly, a resident in Nizhnyaya Presnya shared his reflections on the background and the qualities of his housing estate, admitting that he got more interested in its history after the 'renovation' program was announced in early 2017:

> [We have] wonderful high ceilings. That was the way of building: not 2.20 m or so like in *khrushchyovka*, [but] 3.20 m, as far as I know. A window in the bathroom. That is, well, [the architects] somehow thought about it… I don't understand why they thought so much about the workers, that the workers would need a window in the bathroom. Well, probably, this is the [direction] that Vladimir Ilyich [Lenin] set that the workers [would be getting] all the best. <…> I also read that the estate was built considering the dominant wind directions and the movement of the sun. So, maybe the architects who worked here wanted to show that the workers would live well from now on. (Interviewee PD)

The quotation above demonstrates the awareness of the historical geography of the neighbourhood and the spatial and architectural/design principles in housing construction. These principles were conducive to the working-class people's wellbeing. Likewise, a respondent in Usachevka estate also recognised workers as the target audience of this housing while stressing the abundance of social

amenities available as a part of the overall spatial vision of avant-garde:

> You see how this neighbourhood was designed: here the bread was baked, here is the hospital, here are all sorts of shops and even a bathhouse – everything was provided for the unspoiled proletariat, somehow sensibly designed for a good living here. (Interviewee UC)

As in the preceding accounts, the respondent shared his admiration for the fact that housing for the average working class was built according to the highest standards possible for the 1920-30s. Personally, I find it quite telling that from today's vantage point it comes as a surprise that housing for lower classes (that is, workers), or even irrespective of class, could be designed and built with high standards and allow for a good quality life. It is arguably a sign of a historical shift in priorities attached to the relationships between housing and class. This shift began already with the rise of Stalinism in the 1930s when housing allocation became more privilege-based than universal (Matthews, 1978), which was somewhat reverted during the Khrushchev's postwar mass housing construction program. This shift was most sharply pronounced, however, since the fall of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the capitalist housing market with the associated widespread conception of housing not as a universal social right available irrespective of class but rather as a commodified, tradeable real estate. Despite the free of charge privatisation of housing to sitting tenants from the 1990s onwards, devised to grant them more economic freedom, the post-Soviet housing market is characterised by an unequal access to the high-standard accommodation as well as the insufficient role of the state in the provision, regulation and maintenance of housing.

Avant-garde homes

Despite the apparent familiarity and ordinariness within the habitual context of everyday life of residents, the avant-garde estates are nevertheless largely perceived and experienced as home places. The discussions of the meaning of housing in the world dominated by commodified property markets, likewise, are still permeated by irreducible narratives of personal and use value as well as good quality of life in dwelling. Illustrative of this, I believe the accounts of residents in this final empirical section speak for themselves.

When compared to the more recent housing developments and high-rise, often suburban, blocks of flats, the avant-garde estates

fared well as some respondents highlighted their more humane, not-for-profit nature. For instance, as voiced by a resident in Dubrovka, in her experience of living in the estate, its particular spatial and built features came to symbolise a certain feel, an atmosphere of a place that was designed with first and foremost the comfort of residents in mind:

> I like these low-rise, by Moscow standards, five-storey houses, because the high-rises are suppressing. I lived for many years on the 12th floor in a 16-storey building, but in these [avant-garde] houses, there is a completely different perception of space and perception of life. Of course, one feels much more comfortable inside these low-rise houses and amongst them. And obviously all this was built with love. The windows [in my flat] face west, and in the morning when the sun is rising, the sun rays are reflecting from the opposite house. Somehow, it's designed, planned in such a way that the sun shines in my windows, too. In winter this is very pleasant. And one can feel, you know, that this was built for people. And nowadays – well, I don't want to scold modern times, but still – business [interests] determine everything; profits go first. And back then the priorities were different. (Interviewee DC)

While this rendering of houses as designed and built with care and love for the inhabitants, as suggested by the respondent above, alludes to a romantic view of home, the immediate awareness of the current, profit-driven, principles of the housing market further informed her appreciation of these houses as constructed with different social principles in mind. This also suggests that some residents are able to relate both the use- and exchange-based values of housing in the everyday lived experiences of it.

Interestingly, some respondents talked about the lived qualities of their houses in light of the 'renovation' program and the rehousing options that the city government offered the affected residents. Consequently, the threat of displacement effectively sharpened perception of the built environment of the avant-garde estates, as some of the residents talked particularly about such features of their estates that positively distinguished them from other housing types. For example, a resident in Shabolovka expressed that while she initially did not recognise her house as in any way remarkable, with time she got to appreciate not only its material characteristics but also the principles upon which it was constructed:

> It seems like there's nothing interesting [about this housing]. But as time went by, I began to notice, well, especially compared to the [multi-storey, reinforced-concrete] panel houses, that here is still a good layout, a nice rhythm of windows… Everything is very comfortable and well-thought-out [in these houses] here. Back then [architects] tried to arrange competitions

> and to discuss what kind of housing should be built. They approached the matter in a non-formalistic way somehow. Of course, there they were ordered from above that everything should be as cheap as possible, but nevertheless they tried to combine it all – the cheapness, the very strict sanitary rules, the insolation. And I don't think that the house is obsolescent [today]. (Interviewee SC)

Here, the avant-garde housing was said to be of high standard and quality despite the cost-effectiveness imperative at the time of building. More strikingly, it was perceived as not necessarily outdated or obsolete (only if partially due to the neglect of maintenance), notwithstanding the fact that these houses were built nearly 90 years ago. By comparison with the more recently built housing, the avant-garde estates were often favourable and provided for a better quality of life.

Beyond specific architectural ideas and features that constitute avant-garde housing, the social connections within these now old, 'traditional' Moscow neighbourhoods were argued to be significant forces in maintaining their character, or spirit, throughout the years. These social ties within the built structures have thus become as integral to avant-garde home places as the structures themselves. According to a resident in Usachevka estate, the tighter bonds and better social connections between the long-term residents helped to preserve the meaning and function of her estate:

> Surprisingly, this mediocre architecture has kept its function: people have been living here from the very outset until today, for 90 years, and it hadn't collapsed neither physically (the walls didn't collapse), nor conceptually. <…> Its original function [as housing] still works after 90 years. And the coolest thing is the spirit of [this] place. Precisely because in these constructivist estates the families have been living for generations, and they all love this place very much. [People] keep associations with their family, with their grandparents and so on, hence [they have] a very strong [place] attachment. And this energy, it keeps the physical structure, and the architecture doesn't collapse. (Interviewee UB)

The social fabric, primarily based on family networks and the associated place identification and attachment, was, for the respondent, the main factor that preserved the socio-spatial integrity of the housing estate she lived in. Beyond a functional abstraction as housing (as was originally planned), the avant-garde estates have also kept their social and existential function as homes and places of attachment. Thereby, the everyday meaning of the avant-garde architecture spans beyond its physical structures to include its core social purpose as housing: a shelter, an everyday living place, and a basic human right.

Concluding remarks: everyday meaning of avant-garde

As the label alludes, avant-garde housing points to something extraordinary, but from the perspective of everyday life, it should rather be seen as an ordinary phenomenon. The official valuation of these houses, mentioned in the introductory chapter, was stated by Moscow's deputy mayor for urban development, who referred to avant-garde estates as 'monuments of how not to build'. Throughout this and preceding chapters, I have shown that such a valuation is far from the views held by most of the residents as they perceived and experienced their houses and estates as homes.

Following Lefebvre's (2014) analysis of everyday life, understanding the true value of housing to people, is only possible by attending to the ordinariness of daily dwelling. The narratives in this chapter have suggested that the lived qualities of the avant-garde estates are indeed discovered in the course of the everyday lives of their current residents. While everyday life is colonised by capitalist forces, it is simultaneously an arena for 'moments' of unalienated presence (ibid.). In the case of the avant-garde estates, the accounts of their residents revealed a number of such 'moments' that cannot be abstracted from their lived experiences. These included, inter alia, residents' identification with and a sense of place as well as awareness of social ties and connections within place. These also included sentiments and memories about a bygone era when these houses were built – associated with narratives of decommodified and universally accessible, liveable housing. All of these 'moments', while invisible within the routinised course of everyday life, contribute to a meaningful experience of living in these estates. Thereby, an analysis of residents' experience of everyday life can bring to the fore the true meaning of housing as a dwelling place in the world dominated by exchange value and commodified property markets.

The routinised and habitual course of everyday life lends meanings and values to places in ways that are often pre-reflective and unself-conscious (see Buttimer, 1976; Seamon, 1979a). Taken-for-granted in the familiarity and ordinariness of everyday life, these place-focused meanings and values can be brought to one's consciousness if they are threatened (Buttimer, 1980; see also King, 2004). Likewise, in the case of housing, its lived qualities, obscured by familiarity and habituality, are not necessarily recognised by residents. It is only when these familiar dwelling places are threatened that residents realise the true significance that these hold for their lives. Accordingly, many resi-

dents in the avant-garde estates, when reflecting on their lived experiences, did so in light of the 'renovation' program which was considered a threat to their dwellings and their right to stay put. A threat of displacement, therefore, had prompted the residents' awareness and (re)valuation of the specific properties and characteristics of their estates, rendering them profoundly meaningful and even unique. Paraphrasing Lefebvre's argument that the global 'totality' resonates within, and depends on, the irreducible 'micro' level of everyday life (Lefebvre, 2014; see also Lefebvre, 1991, p. 366), it is at the level of the everyday that the capitalist housing relations play out and pertain to the experiences of, among other things, displacement pressure, living in an undermaintained housing stock and so on. Moreover, and importantly, it is also at this 'micro' level of everyday life that residents can then realise their resistance and mobilisation potentialities in response to the external, citywide initiatives that are perceived as a threat to the normal course of their daily lives.

Although everyday life is colonised by capitalism, it is nonetheless never entirely subsumed within it (Lefebvre, 1971, 2014). Indeed, as was revealed in the accounts of homeowners, while they may be driven by economic motives when opposing the 'renovation' program, they are in no way giving in to the 'illusion of a false consciousness', to use Lefebvre's words. That is, even though the homeowners are, to some extent, complicit in and driven by the view of their estates as real estate, at the same time, they also appreciate personal, use values attached to their houses. Furthermore, they are aware of the profit-seeking logic of the state and the politically connected private actors, and are readily mobilised to resist the spatial change seen as a threat to the quality of their lives. This double awareness and resistance are instances of the myriad of everyday acts that comprise what Lefebvre referred to as the 'power of everyday life' (Lefebvre, 1971, p. 35); the struggle and perseverance in everyday life as well as, ultimately, the possibility of its decolonisation.

How is this possibility of decolonisation imaginable? Two lessons from Henri Lefebvre (1971, 2014) seem relevant here: first, it is at the level of everyday life that an envisioning of an alternative society (and space) is possible, and second, everyday life cannot be divorced from historical development. As was shown above, while residents are aware of the particular spatial, architectural and design qualities of avant-garde housing, they do not necessarily perceive it only as officially casted heritage but rather see it as their home. Still, residents can (and some indeed do) realise the fact that this housing was constructed in an era at the very dawn of Soviet Russia when housing

was viewed mainly in its use rather than exchange value, as a universal social right rather than a commodity. Following sweeping historical changes that took place since the time of the construction of avant-garde houses in the late 1920s, what remains today, 90 years on, is a sense of place being designed and planned with people's needs rather than profits in mind. In this view then, the avant-garde estates should in no way be seen as monuments of how *not* to build; they should rather be seen as monuments (although avant-garde architects would perhaps reject this term) of how to envision an alternative approach to the production/provision of housing within which use value prevails and everyday life is decolonised (if only partially) from capitalist forces. Moreover, the rediscovery of the meaning of avant-garde housing is possible not only in the officially espoused heritage status, where it has been abstracted to something extraordinary, but also, and better, at the ordinary level of everyday life within it. It is in the ordinariness of the everyday that the avant-garde estates reveal their social meaning and function as home places of residents.

8 Conclusions: on studying housing humanistically

The 1920s were the heydays of avant-garde, or constructivist, architecture in the Soviet Union. The residential version of this architectural style, although not as celebrated as the more iconic administrative and industrial structures or workers' clubs, was an incarnation of specific ideals about the organisation of space and a more socialised way of (everyday) life for Soviet citizens. The avant-garde houses were characterised by modest yet ergonomically designed interior layouts, distinctive yet low-cost exterior designs, and a rational spatial arrangement with an extensive system of social amenities and services. Most notably, avant-garde housing was meant to improve the living conditions of particularly the working class.

By the 1930s, with the rise of Stalinism and an associated shift in aesthetic and social priorities, these ideals went out of fashion. The estates in question, meanwhile, remained largely intact. While they gradually lost some of the social amenities and underwent major overhauls in the 1970-80s, they eventually outlived the Soviet Union. It was not until 2016, when the demolition of Pogodinskaya estate sparked public debate, that the legacy of avant-garde was brought to the fore. In this debate, the remaining avant-garde housing stock was discursively casted as either functionally and economically worthless (on the part of the city officials), or as culturally and historically significant (on the part of experts and activists).

In my study, I have approached the avant-garde estates from a different perspective, as I have endeavoured to explore their present social meaning and function. The central objective has been to study the everyday lived experiences of the current residents, and their perceptions, in five such estates, while also attending to structural societal forces and historical changes occurring in the built environment. Although the remarkable architectural properties of these housing estates call for scholarly attention to design and aesthetics, I have considered them from a geographical vantage point as elements of the urban built environment, embedded within a wider web of socio-spatial relations that reveals itself as a collection of meaningful places

in people's daily lives. Therefore, my ambition has been to provide a critical and humanistic account of avant-garde housing as a more-than-architectural phenomenon, transcending the heritage narrative often associated with this style of architecture.

Throughout this thesis, I have described how residents in different ways made sense of their estates. Although the avant-garde blocks generally no longer offer their original socialisation infrastructure, the vast majority of their residents are nevertheless aware of its previous existence and function, either through personal experience, or from the account of other residents. By contrast to bygone social amenities, the houses are still standing, having retained their original residential function. In all of the five studied estates the basic architectural and design features, as well as the integrity of their spatial layout, have been kept more or less intact. These built features were constantly brought up in the interviews with residents, who discussed the overall lived qualities of their neighbourhoods and houses. It demonstrated their deep understanding of their residencies which was informed by an awareness of historical material conditions. Notably, this included the awareness of the intra-estate differentiation between the buildings of the studied neighbourhoods, which is indicative of an in-depth, situated geographical knowledge developed by the residents in the process of dwelling. The findings have also shown that residents, in relation to the spatial, architectural and design features of their estates, make specific sense of their residencies as home places, thereby transcending the official historical and cultural heritage narratives. With this, the avant-garde architecture per se was not as significant as the perceived and experienced lived qualities of the housing estates at stake. For most of the residents, then, the historical and architectural significance of avant-garde housing is less important than its utilitarian functionality; similarly, the aesthetical qualities of housing per se are less important than the lived qualities.

Furthermore, I have demonstrated that, associated with the restructuring of the housing markets in post-Soviet Moscow, the change in social (housing) relations has had a clear effect on the physical and social space of the estates, leading to novel patterns of place-based socialisation and politicisation. While, for some, the built environment of the avant-garde estates was conducive to sociability and neighbourliness (thanks to the smaller, more human scale of buildings), others lamented the post-Soviet estrangement and atomisation of residents. The quality of social life in a housing area, therefore, depends not only on one's choices regarding participation in it, but necessarily reflects one's interaction with the social and material

world around. Many participants among the residents of the avant-garde estates opposed the citywide 'renovation' program, announced in Moscow in February 2017, as they perceived it as a threat to their right to stay put. Consequently, the mobilisation and politicisation of residents uncovered the different subject positions of, on the one hand, the homeowners living in separate, single-family, flats and who did not want to move and, on the other hand, the tenants or owners in shared, communal, flats who saw the 'renovation' program as an opportunity for rehousing. As I have shown, this division not only pertained to the differentiation of residents along the lines of class or politics/ideology, but rather (and more so) to the residents' living conditions in a particular housing situation. Their living conditions (and the associated experiences, intentionality and attitudes towards moving out or staying put), tied up into the wider web of housing relations through the socio-spatial categories of tenure and property, underlay their diverging subjectivities in relation to the 'renovation' program that animated the social space of the studied housing estates. In regards to the current patterns of place-based socialisation of residents in the studied areas, the living conditions and wider housing relations arguably help explain the formation of local community of residents in the context of renovation and repair plans. Arguably too, the presence of an informal, social economy and the temporarily intensified communication between neighbours in light of the 'renovation' program and the ongoing major repair works, suggests the potential for increased cooperation between residents.

Looking at the apparent ordinariness and banality of everyday life, I have discussed the various ways in which the qualities of the built environment and social space of the estates tend to be both concealed and recognised. For many long-term residents, a feeling of familiarity of their estates was fundamental to their sense of belonging and at-homeness in the places of their residence. At the same time, the findings have shown that the residents may not be aware of the particular features of their houses on a daily basis, not to speak of the specifically avant-garde architectural and design features. Therefore, everyday life goes on in a way that does not necessarily alert a dweller to certain characteristics of the built environment, since these characteristics are often taken for granted as a part of the familiar and the 'ordinary'. The thesis has also demonstrated that the quality of life is closely linked to the living conditions of residents, but these conditions cannot always be directly attributed to the qualities of architecture and design per se; it also depends on people's living arrangement (that is, communal or separate flat living) and the status of housing

maintenance. Still, while the often dilapidated state of the facades may suggest the opposite, residents tend to experience their estates as meaningful places associated with good quality of living and personal, sentimental values. According to many residents, the valuation and appreciation of the lived qualities of the estates as dwellings was connected to the threat of potential rehousing and demolition associated with the 'renovation' program. The meanings and values of place brought to residents' consciousness vis-à-vis what they perceived as a profit-seeking scheme of the city government and the politically connected developers, prompted public mobilisation and resistance in an attempt to exercise the right to stay put. This suggests a high degree of political and civic awareness of many residents in the studied avant-garde estates. By extension, the thesis has also demonstrated how residents rediscovered the historical meanings and underpinnings of avant-garde housing in the course of their daily lives. If the avant-garde vision was about realising a particular sociality, the current residents displayed an awareness of housing as a fundamental social right built with human needs, not profits, in mind.

In view of the above, three interrelated points can be made. First, in order to comprehend housing in terms of the everyday lifeworld of people, we need to get beyond the official, heritage, framings of architectural style, design features and the built environment. Second, structural shifts in societal circumstances give way to novel forms of place-based social relations. Third, these shifts rouse a deeper recognition by residents of their positions as dwellers in a housing context where their rights are being debated, questioned or remade.

What are the implications of the chosen conceptual and methodological approach? This thesis has sought to study the lived experiences and perceptions of residents in avant-garde housing estates by drawing on phenomenologically informed humanistic geography, complemented by Henri Lefebvre's critical analyses of everyday life and social space. Bringing together these two bodies of work, and applying them in the field of housing studies, has enabled me to get an insight into the ways in which the experience of living in a residential area is intricately linked to the wider web of socio-spatial relations. Moreover, choosing experiential place as the primary scale of my research, and everyday life as the level of inquiry, has enabled me to delve into the phenomenon of housing as the lived, concrete and mundane matter I understand it is. At the same time, the chosen theoretical framework has helped me to avoid conceptions of space that failed to acknowledge the importance of people's sense of place in the context of wider socio-spatial transformations.

The humanistic approach, combined with the Lefebvre's Marxist analysis of everyday life and social space, was conceived to offer a more nuanced and perhaps more hopeful view on the small-scale context of social life – a contextual understanding that arguably cannot be captured by traditional analyses of capitalist urban restructuring (for example, along the lines of the critiques of neoliberal housing deregulation and financialisation). The chosen theoretical approach helps us to see the perils and limitations of the rational and objective view employed by the powerful agents of urban development. It also offers an alternative to the approaches of scholars who are critical of such development, yet fail to deploy a different language to communicate their criticisms. I would argue that if housing is to be defended, as Madden and Marcuse (2016) propose, an alternative, use-value-based view that recognises its existential and social functions is called for, as opposed to the dehumanising and alienating, exchange-value-based, view. Following Davidson's (2009) useful insight, this thesis has sought to stay clear of the abstract conceptualisation of space and to engage instead with the lived, first-hand experiences within residential areas, while at the same time accounting for the wider socio-spatial setup of which they partake. Studying people's experience of housing, no matter how banal it may appear in the realm of everyday life, serves the purpose of reinstating its lived, social and, ultimately, use value in (critical) housing scholarship, while simultaneously levelling a critique at market-driven conceptions of housing.

With this, I argue that it is precisely in the mundanity of everyday life that the subjective values and qualities of ordinary places can be discovered. Hence, it is necessary to attend to the lived aspect of housing, in order to understand its social and political meaning and to be able to plan and develop existing or new residential areas, as the humanistic writings of Anne Buttimer have shown (Buttimer, 1972, 1980; see also Ferretti, 2019). By studying the everyday experiences of housing, we can uncover use value as dominated but not succumbed within the capitalist socio-spatiality. In this view, the chosen mode of inquiry is not without social and political relevance. A phenomenological and humanistic analysis of place-based social relations can indeed recognise that place is necessarily interconnected with human agency, rendering place as a frame within which the ethical and the political could be located (see Malpas, 2018). I hope this thesis has pointed to the potential critical perspectives that humanistic and phenomenological geography can offer in order to complement and in-

form housing studies with a rejuvenated focus on residents' lived experiences.

We cannot study capitalist housing systems in abstraction from human experience if we want to gain a better understanding of their social consequences and the ways these can be challenged, resisted and counteracted by residents and others. Just as Henri Lefebvre remarkably noted: "When institutional (academic) knowledge sets itself up above lived experience, just as the state sets itself up above everyday life, catastrophe is in the offing" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 415). Humans (as residents or otherwise) should not, and cannot, be abstracted from their social and existential situation (including housing). We need to inquire into the lived, use-based values and qualities of housing, rather than approach it as an abstract phenomenon, thereby further alienating it. We need to look at human action within the complexities of everyday life to conceive ways of challenging, resisting and subverting alienating developments, and not approach them from the position of knowledge and scientific authority – no matter how pragmatic or radical our perspective on dis-alienation is. In relation to this, we need to recognise the subversive potentialities dormant in everyday life that could challenge existing housing market systems, even if these potentialities remain confined to the lowest level of place-based social relationships.

In terms of methodology, I consider the chosen phenomenological approach as offering fruitful and productive avenues for the study of people in their housing and built environment, simply because it allows for registering human experiences and perceptions. Moreover, and perhaps a bit surprising, this approach helped to capture the use/exchange value dialectic, which became more salient in the course of the analysis of my empirical material. This dialectic was reflected most tangibly in the interviews. Even though the societal trend towards seeing housing as real estate certainly did direct the respondents' perception to exchange value, they still talked about their dwellings in terms of use value. If not for the chosen methodological approach that brought to the fore first-hand accounts of residents through their narratives, I would not have been able to grasp such exchange/use value tensions as well as the related opposition of commodity and real estate to dwelling and home.

A fortuitous yet important circumstance for my investigation was the announcement of the 'renovation' program just months before my second fieldwork. It allowed me to observe the effects of a rising controversy about what was often perceived as an external threat, on the residents' appreciation of their houses and estates. At the same

time, I realise I did not interview enough people who lived in the communal flats. Their first-hand accounts of living conditions in response to the 'renovation' program and the potential rehousing could have been different from those who live in single-family flats and have ardently resisted the program.

When doing this research, I came to appreciate avant-garde housing myself. Yet, for all of its potential appeal I would argue that the retrospective view of these housing estates should refrain from ending up in nostalgia (as avant-garde in itself is all but nostalgic). It should rather be treated as a partial backdrop for efforts to envision the future of housing. Having said that, I am not advocating the preservation of buildings per se. My thesis rather taps into the critiques of the decline of the social meaning and function of housing (Madden & Marcuse, 2016). The residents perceived this functionality of housing as more important than its heritage status. Interestingly, such logic shows similarities with the ideas of avant-garde architects who emphasised function over form and historicity. Casting avant-garde housing as heritage suggests its abstraction to something extraordinary, when in fact it was designed as the rather ordinary, everyday phenomenon (and is still largely seen as such by its current residents). It is indeed in the ordinariness of everyday life that avant-garde values and meanings can be discovered. Put in admittedly more modest terms, then, I believe that there is great value in thinking about what can be learned from the history and stories of residents of these places, including what they can potentially teach us about building housing in the future. After all, imagining avant-gardes for the future requires looking back at the ones that were created in the past and how they live on in the present.

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Appendix A. Interview guide

1. Lead questions:
- How long have you (or your family) lived in this housing estate?
- How do you rate this area in comparison with others in which you have happened to live?
- What do you like and dislike about your housing estate?
- What do you know about the history of your housing estate, and is it important for you personally, for residents, for the city?

2. The past and the present of the housing estate:
- What was the social composition of the district's population in the Soviet times, in the 1990s, and what has it become now?
- How was the everyday life organised in the housing estate, and what does it look like today?
- What objects of social infrastructure (such as public baths, laundries, canteens, clubs etc.) were before in the housing estate, and what is left now? Did you (or your family) use this infrastructure?
- When were the last major repairs of the housing estate, and what exactly did they concern?
- When did this area change most, and what were these changes?

3. Everyday life:
- How well do you know your neighbours, how often do you interact and communicate with them?
- How much time do you spend in your housing estate and in its vicinity?
- How do you usually spend time in your housing estate? What is your daily routine here?
- Is collective pastime common among the residents of the housing estate (for example, hobby groups etc.), and is there a local community?

4. 'Sense of place':
- What is 'your' place/area for you, and what are the geographic limits of this?
- Do you feel involved/attached to the life of your housing estate/neighbourhood, and in what way?

- What features of spatial layout, architecture and social amenities do you find most attractive in your housing estate?
- What are the most vivid memories/impressions of living in here?
- Is there a special spirit/sense of this place, and how would you characterise it?

5. The condition of buildings, repairs and maintenance, property issues:

- How many flats are privatised, and how many communal flats are left in your house/housing estate?
- Have the original layouts of the flats been preserved to this day?
- How is the housing stock managed, is there a homeowner association? Who is responsible for the upkeep, maintenance and the repairs?
- What sort of issues are discussed at the meetings of homeowners and tenants?
- How did you and other residents react to the news about the 'renovation' program?
- What are your thoughts about the future of your housing estate?

Appendix B. List of interviewees

Architecture historians and preservation activists			
Interviewee AA	Architecture historian, city guide	>35 y/o	August 2016
Interviewee AB ♂	Preservation activist, *Arkhnadzor*	>30	August 2016, June 2017
Interviewee AC ♀	Architecture historian, Scientific Research Institute of Theory and History of Architecture and Urban Planning – NIITIAG	>25	August 2016
Interviewee AD ♀	Architecture historian, Avant-Garde Centre and Museum	>35	August 2016, May 2017
Interviewee AE ♀	Architecture historian, Moscow Architectural Institute – MArchI	>65	August 2016
Interviewee AF ♂	Architecture historian, Presnya Historical and Memorial Museum	>35	August 2016, May 2017
Interviewee AG ♀	Preservation activist, *Arkhnadzor*	>50	June 2017

Respondents in Budenovsky estate			
Interviewee BA ♀	Architect	>35 y/o	July 2017
Interviewee BB ♂	Telecom specialist	>30	July 2017
Interviewee BC ♂	Musician	>35	August 2017
Interviewee BD ♀	Freelance decorator and photographer	>30	August 2017
Interviewee BE ♂	Car repairman	>40	August 2017

Respondents in Dubrovka estate			
Interviewee DA ♂	Architect	>25 y/o	June 2017
Interviewee DB ♀	Unemployed	>45	August 2017

Interviewee DC ♀	Pensioner	>55	August 2017
Interviewee DD ♀	Pensioner	>55	August 2017
Interviewee DE ♂	Pensioner	>65	August 2017
Interviewee DF ♂	Journalist	>40	August 2017
Interviewee DG ♀	Manager	>35	August 2017
Interviewee DH ♀	Entrepreneur	>30	August 2017

Respondents in Khavsko-Shabolovsky estate

Interviewee SA ♂	Local historian	>40 y/o	June 2017
Interviewee SB ♂	Arbitration officer	>35	June 2017
Interviewee SC ♀	Pensioner	>65	July 2017
Interviewee SD ♂	Pensioner	>65	July 2017
Interviewee SE ♀	Journalist, civil rights activist	>55	July 2017
Interviewee SF ♀	Pensioner	>55	July 2017
Interviewee SG ♀	City guide	>45	July 2017
Interviewee SH ♀	Pensioner	>60	August 2017

Respondents in Nizhnyaya Presnya estate

Interviewee PA ♂	University lecturer	>35 y/o	June 2017
Interviewee PB ♂	Culturologist, activist	>40	June 2017
Interviewee PC ♀	Museum librarian	>65	August 2017
Interviewee PD ♂	Curator	>45	August 2017

Respondents in Usachevka estate

Interviewee UA ♂	Student	>25 y/o	August 2017
Interviewee UB ♀	Architect	>30	August 2017
Interviewee UC ♂	Freelance journalist	>40	August 2017
Interviewee UD ♀	Pensioner	>70	August 2017
Interviewee UE ♂	Pensioner	>85	August 2017
Interviewee UF ♀	Municipal deputy candidate	>25	August 2017

Appendix C. Building stock and tenure structure

	Budenovsky	Dubrovka	Khavsko-Shabolovsky	Nizhnyaya Presnya	Usachevka
Population, people	3840	4190	3933	7328	5488
Number of houses	18	23	25	33	32
Number of flats	971	1266	1189	1779	1561
Number of communal flats	n/d	157	142	502	223
Share of communal flats, %	n/d	12.4	11.9	28.2	14.3
Number of persons per flat	4	3.3	3.3	4.1	3.5

Source: Housing and Utilities Reform Fund (https://www.reformagkh.ru) and the Unified State Register of Property Rights and Transactions (https://rosreestr.ru), accessed June and October 2017.

The was no data on the number of communal flats in Budenovsky estate in the studied sources. Noteworthy, however, the share of communal flats and the number of persons per flat correlate strongly at 0.82 in 112 houses in the rest of the studied estates. This suggests that the share of communal flats in Budenovsky is comparable to one in Nizhnyaya Presnya. Indeed, according to one of the respondents in Budenovsky estate, the share of communal flats there is about 23 percent (Interviewee BB).

Appendix D. Survey questionnaire form

Survey questionnaire of local residents in <<_____>> estate

1. Address (street and building no.) _____
2. Since what year have you been living in your house? ____
3. Did you know that your house is a listed building / object of cultural heritage? (yes, no)
4. What features of your housing estate do you like and dislike? (dislike, rather dislike, rather like, like)

	dislike	**rather dislike**	**rather like**	**like**
landscaping and greenery				
layout and infrastructure of courtyards				
availability of parking spaces for cars				
distance to metro station				
number of storeys				
exterior of houses				
layout of flats				
condition of utility infrastructure				
social environment, contacts with neighbours				
availability of services (groceries, supermarkets, housewares stores, pharmacies etc.)				
availability of social infrastructure (state and municipal services centres, post offices, clinics, schools, kindergartens, libraries etc.)				
availability of leisure and entertainment facilities (cafés, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, community centres etc.)				

5. How much time during the day do you usually spend in your neighbourhood? (multiple answers possible)
   - ☐ more than half a day
   - ☐ several hours a day for household errands
   - ☐ several hours a day for leisure purposes
   - ☐ spend almost no time here (only overnight)
   - ☐ spend weekends
6. Do you feel safe here? (yes, no)
7. What is 'your' place/area/home for you?
   - ☐ only flat
   - ☐ staircase
   - ☐ house
   - ☐ house and courtyard
   - ☐ housing block
   - ☐ entire neighbourhood
8. How do you participate in the life of your neighbourhood? (multiple answers possible)
   - ☐ events organised by the district council (voluntary community work, festivals etc.)
   - ☐ hobby groups, amateur performance groups
   - ☐ volunteering/activism
   - ☐ meetings of homeowners and tenants
   - ☐ do not participate
   - ☐ other _____
9. Are you prepared to take part in local initiatives related to neighbourhood improvement and cultural life? (yes, no, maybe)
10. What sources of information do you use to find out about local news? (multiple answers possible)
    - ☐ local/district newspapers
    - ☐ groups/chats in online social media
    - ☐ ads/posters in the street, in the staircase
    - ☐ from the neighbours
    - ☐ none
11. What is the condition of your house?
    - ☐ good
    - ☐ needs cosmetic repairs
    - ☐ needs major repairs
    - ☐ state of disrepair
12. When was the last time that your house was renovated? _____

13. Type of your flat
    - ☐ 1-room
    - ☐ 2-room
    - ☐ 3-room
    - ☐ 4-room and larger
    - ☐ communal
14. How did you get your flat?
    - ☐ inherited / live since birth
    - ☐ allocated by the employer
    - ☐ allocated by the municipality
    - ☐ exchanged
    - ☐ purchased
    - ☐ private rental
    - ☐ other _____
15. If you moved in before 1991, have you privatised your flat? (yes, no)
16. Would you like to move houses?
    - ☐ no
    - ☐ yes: please indicate the reason _____
17. Age ____ Gender ____
18. Occupation
    - ☐ student
    - ☐ civil servant
    - ☐ worker
    - ☐ services and commerce employee
    - ☐ business owner
    - ☐ arts and culture employee
    - ☐ social worker
    - ☐ pensioner
    - ☐ unemployed
    - ☐ other _____

Appendix E. Aggregated survey results

	Budenovsky	Dubrovka	Khavsko-Shabolovsky	Nizhnyaya Presnya	Usachevka	Total
Number of answers	87	27	51	52	54	271
Year of moving in, %						
before 1945	0	0	0	0	0	0
1946-1970	6	7	4	0	7	5
1971-1991	39	48	35	29	33	36
1992-2010	34	26	30	52	30	35
after 2011	21	19	31	19	30	24
Heritage awareness, %						
yes	90	74	78	77	89	83
no	10	26	22	23	11	17
Age, percent						
18-35	26	45	37	41	41	36
36-55	54	22	37	42	31	41
56-99	20	33	26	17	28	23
Gender, percent						
male	39	56	49	52	46	46
female	61	44	51	48	54	54
Occupation, percent						
employed	72	56	63	69	63	66
unemployed	9	4	8	6	4	7
pensioner	15	33	23	13	24	20
student	4	7	6	12	9	7
Want to move houses						
yes, percent	51	26	10	23	17	28
no, percent	49	74	90	77	83	72

	Budenovsky	Dubrovka	Khavsko-Shabolovsky	Nizhnyaya Presnya	Usachevka	Total
Privatised flats, %						
yes	85	59	47	46	65	64
no	9	19	2	10	5	8
n/a	6	22	51	44	30	28
Live in communal flat, percent						
yes	25	19	6	15	7	15
no	75	81	94	85	93	85
Number of rooms, %						
1 room	9	7	12	0	6	7
2 rooms	16	30	49	21	24	26
3 rooms	40	52	31	48	48	43
4+ rooms	17	7	2	16	15	13
n/a	18	4	6	15	7	11
Got the flat through, percent						
inheritance/birth	32	33	31	33	33	32
allocation	14	19	21	11	11	15
exchange	10	22	10	9	13	12
purchase	39	19	16	29	30	29
private rental	0	4	12	8	9	6
other, n/a	5	4	10	10	4	6
Perceived condition of house, percent						
good	8	22	30	21	28	20
cosmetic repairs	8	26	35	31	26	23
major repairs	58	45	29	44	46	46
disrepair	26	7	6	4	0	11
'Your' place/home, %						
flat	17	4	2	12	2	9
staircase	2	4	0	2	4	2
house	4	4	2	0	0	2
house + courtyard	17	18	16	23	20	19
housing block	30	52	33	11	17	26
neighbourhood	30	18	47	52	57	42

	Budenovsky	Dubrovka	Khavsko-Shabolovsky	Nizhnyaya Presnya	Usachevka	Total
Pastime in neigh-bourhood, percent						
>half a day	55	56	55	58	61	57
few hours, errands	20	7	24	21	26	21
few hours, leisure	11	26	16	19	19	17
overnight	14	11	4	6	2	8
weekends	23	44	61	56	56	45
Feel safe, percent						
yes	72	93	100	92	91	87
no	28	7	0	8	9	13
Participation, percent						
municipal activity	7	19	14	27	13	14
hobby/DIY	3	0	8	6	11	6
volunteering	15	11	12	15	24	16
meetings	54	26	24	48	56	45
no	37	59	65	42	28	44
Ready participate, %						
yes	49	59	37	48	61	50
no	12	22	24	15	20	17
maybe	39	19	39	37	19	33
Source of local news, percent						
local newspapers	20	22	16	17	11	17
social media	76	19	25	42	54	50
ads/posters	43	19	41	40	46	40
neighbours	40	44	39	42	43	41
none	9	19	12	2	6	8
Attitude to… (%) …greenery						
positive	31	74	72	56	68	55
rather positive	44	19	18	32	22	30
rather negative	13	0	8	6	6	8
negative	12	7	2	6	4	7

	Budenovsky	Dubrovka	Khavsko-Shabolovsky	Nizhnyaya Presnya	Usachevka	Total
…spatial planning						
positive	24	52	61	54	56	46
rather positive	35	44	19	19	22	27
rather negative	18	4	8	17	17	14
negative	23	0	12	10	5	13
…number of storeys						
positive	59	63	96	96	98	81
rather positive	23	18	4	0	2	10
rather negative	9	15	0	2	0	5
negative	9	4	0	2	0	4
…exterior/façades						
positive	22	22	35	35	52	33
rather positive	26	41	25	23	22	26
rather negative	15	19	22	19	19	18
negative	37	18	18	23	7	23
…layout of flats						
positive	31	37	82	65	45	51
rather positive	18	33	8	12	24	18
rather negative	20	15	6	10	9	12
negative	31	15	4	13	22	19
…engineering/utilities						
positive	4	7	39	40	26	23
rather positive	13	22	20	13	17	16
rather negative	29	41	20	12	35	26
negative	54	30	21	35	22	35
…social environment						
positive	24	45	72	71	78	55
rather positive	29	26	22	19	18	23
rather negative	22	22	4	6	4	12
negative	25	7	2	4	0	10
…social amenities						
positive	43	78	92	83	69	68
rather positive	32	18	6	13	22	21
rather negative	15	4	2	4	9	8
negative	10	0	0	0	0	3

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