

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313853402>

Micro-rayon Living – Everyday Life Strategies and DIY Practices in the Post-soviet Micro-rayon

Research · February 2017

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.12757.63203

CITATION

1

READS

754

17 authors, including:



[David Gogishvili](#)

University of Lausanne

45 PUBLICATIONS 602 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



[Christian Ersten](#)

Amsterdam University of Applied Arts

13 PUBLICATIONS 27 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



[Shauna Jin](#)

Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

9 PUBLICATIONS 10 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

MICRO— RAYON LIVING

GLDANI
TBLISI
GEORGIA

VESHNYAKI
MOSCOW
RUSSIA

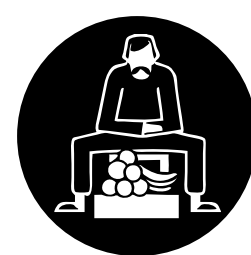
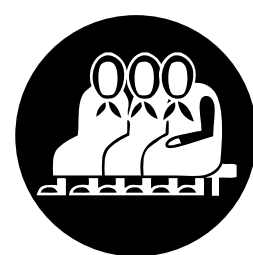
EVERYDAY LIFE STRATEGIES AND D.I.Y PRACTICES IN THE POST SOVIET MICRO-RAYON

After the Second World War the Soviet Union became a prolific producer of low budget social housing schemes. As in some Western European social democracies, social housing in the former Soviet Union used to be a public service. Under General-Secretaries Khrushchev and Brezhnev millions of high-rise prefab apartments were built according to similar standards all described in a catalogue. These so-called microrayons are still used in many of the nations that were once part of the Soviet Union.

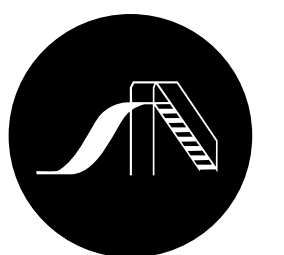
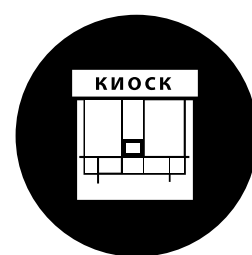
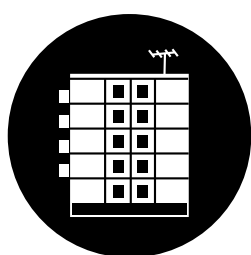
Although the design of these city quarters is identical, their realization and completion differed from city to city. Roughly speaking, it seems that the microrayons along the periphery of the Soviet Union were not as good as those in Moscow, the center of power. We decided to work with two local teams in the capital but also in a city on the edges of the former USSR. Comparing two 1970s microrayons namely Gldani, a suburb of the Georgian capital Tbilisi, and Veshnyaki, in the outskirts of the Russian capital Moscow, striking similarities and differences come to the fore. One of the differences is the degree to which residents adapt themselves to the architecture. The inhabitants of Veshnyaki adapted themselves more to their microrayon, whereas Gldani's users adapted the design to their preferences.

In both suburbs living conditions have changed quite a bit since 1989. The transformation from state regulation to market economy brought residents benefits, but also the risk of poverty, corruption and identity politics. Moreover, local project developers, architects and politicians have little love for microrayons. As a result innovative redevelopment is mostly concentrated on historic city centers. In the poorer cities of the former Soviet Union the construction of the microrayon has often passed its expiration date. On the upside, occasionally microrayons are able to preserve some of the idealism of their socialist blueprint. Local communalism is not as disintegrated by commercial interest as in city centers. In addition, since microrayons are of little interest to those in economic and political power there is space for experimentation.

Taking these observations as a point of departure, we started working on an inventory of user strategies for the microrayon. The ambition is to fight neglect by designing alternative social housing scenarios based on local habits, strategies and D.I.Y practices. Instead of approaching the renewal of the microrayons in a formal architectural way, we intend to focus on the human scale and learn from everyday life. Before coming to redevelopment scenarios a first step is to make an inventory of resourceful official and informal user strategies. We then plan to highlight those focused on cultivating, owning, socializing and trading. Thereafter we intend to develop a set of renewal scenarios for microrayon living that incorporate and leave space for these local practices.



AN INVENTORY OF USER STRATEGIES



COLOPHON

Editors : Christian Ernten, Edwin Gardner
Art direction: Onlab, Nicolas Bourquin, Thibaud Tissot, Christoph Gabriel.
Visuals: Shauna Jin, Yulia Kryazheva, Dimitrij Zadorin
Research: Vahram Aghasyan, Levan Asabashvili, Bart Blaauw, Christian Ernten, Edwin Gardner, David Gogishvili, Joost Janmaat, Shauna Jin, Nutsa Kandelaki, Yulia Kryazheva, Salome Mamrikishvili, Rusudan Mirzikashvili, Nutsa Nadareishvili, Inara Nevskaya, Lado Shonia, Liza Xundadze, Dimitrij Zadorin

Special thanks to: Bart Goldhoorn, Alexander Sverdlov, Sophia Tabatadze, Nana Qutateladze, Inara Nevskaya and Bolshoi Gorod. Generously supported by NCDO and IABR

Microrayon Living is a project by
partizan publik

partizanpublik.nl
 afterthesoviets.wordpress.com

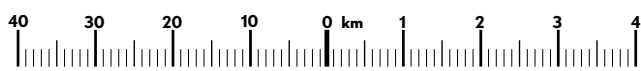
2ND MICRORAYON OF GLDANI



TBLISI

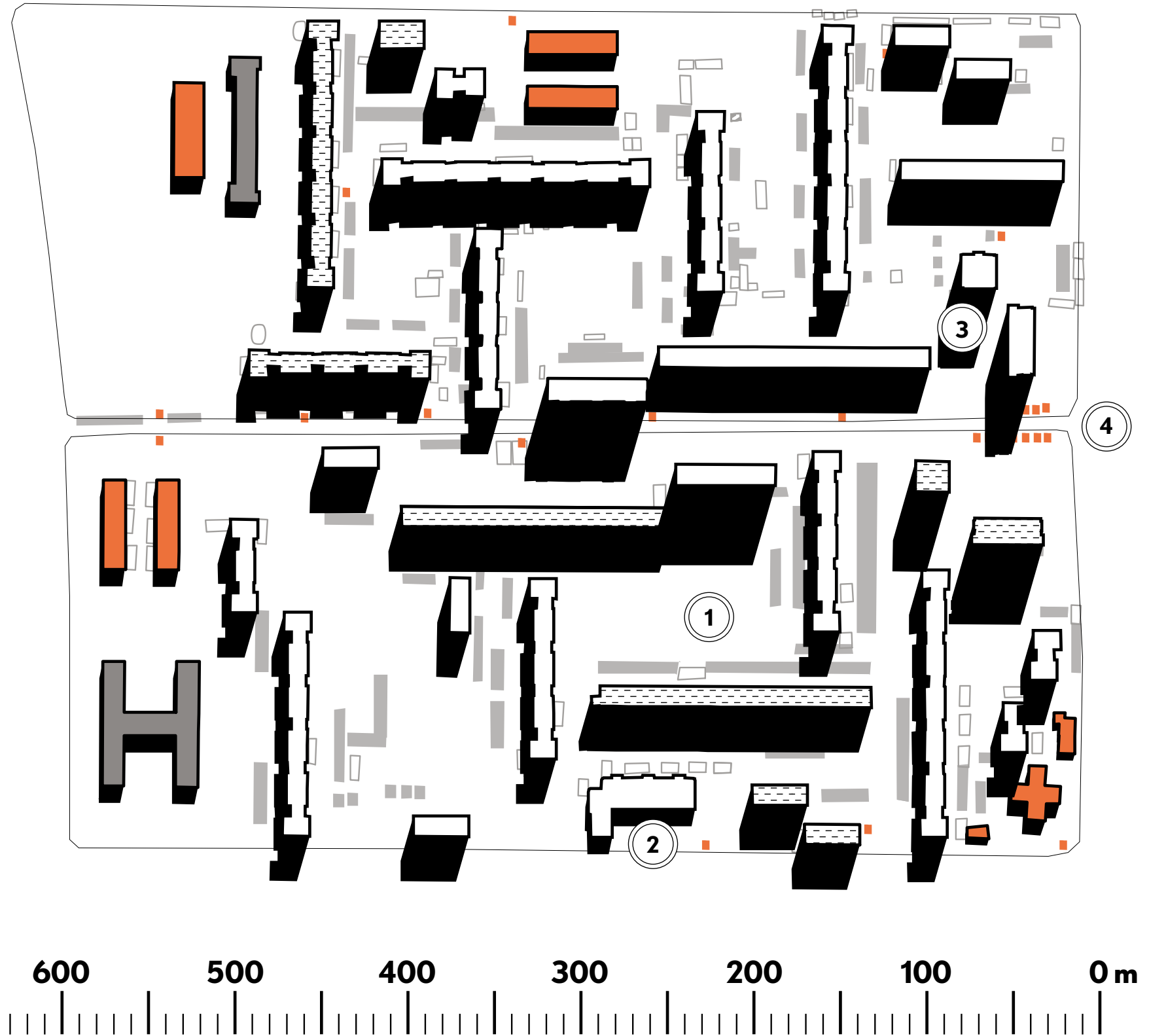


GLDANI



Built: 1968-1971
Architects: T. Bochorishvili
Population: 190,000 (designed for 147,000)
9 Microrayons: 20,000 inhabitants per microrayon
Housing: nine 16-story apartment blocks as well as schools, kindergartens and shops which are used as residences due to the influx of refugees (IDPs) from Abkhazia and Tskhinvali.

History: In 1970 the Soviet government drafted a new master plan for Tbilisi including the new residential districts to the north and northwest of the city. The plan was designed to contain urban sprawl and integrate the satellite towns of Mtskheta, one of Georgia's ancient cities (and its capital until the 4th century) and Rustavi, an industrial town constructed in the 1950s. Gldani was built on the location of an existing village after which it was named; parts of this village and its inhabitants are still there. The first people who came to Gldani in the 1970s were mostly people from different villages who were brought in to work in the factories. Others came from various neighborhoods in Tbilisi. Since 2003/04 offices, shops and other commercial activities have rapidly developed around the Gldani metro station.



1

GARAGES

While the microrayon catalogues presented various parking solutions, they were hardly ever built. Since the introduction of a free market economy, the inner courtyards started to flood with cars and their newly built shelters: garages. In Gldani most inhabitants illegally built their own garages out of whatever was available. In Veshnyaki there are fewer garages in the courtyards, as most have been grouped together outside the microrayon. There you don't build a garage yourself; you order the prefab garage after you get the permit.



2

SCHOOLS

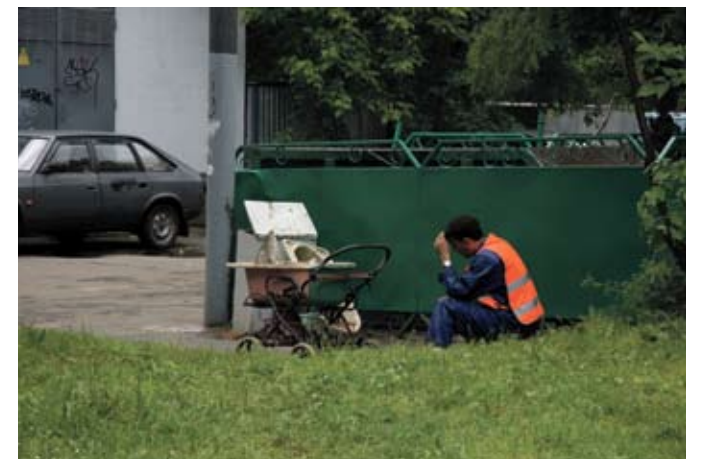
In blueprints of the microrayon there is always a school and a few kindergartens. In Veshnyaki the original urban plan functions almost exactly as intended, while in Gldani almost all amenities have been displaced from their original buildings by the influx of refugees in need for shelter. They have adapted the two story school building to their own particular residential needs.

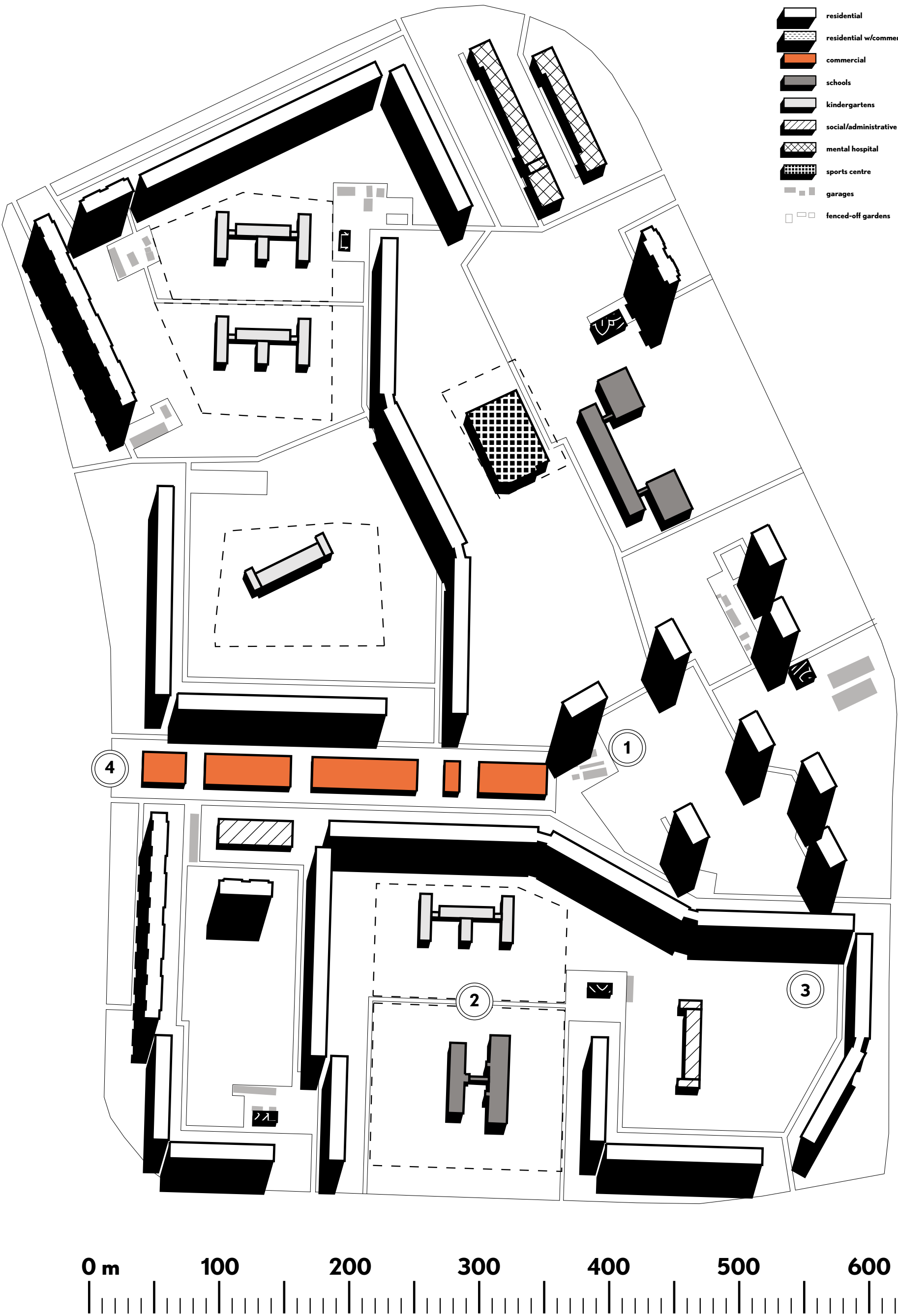


3

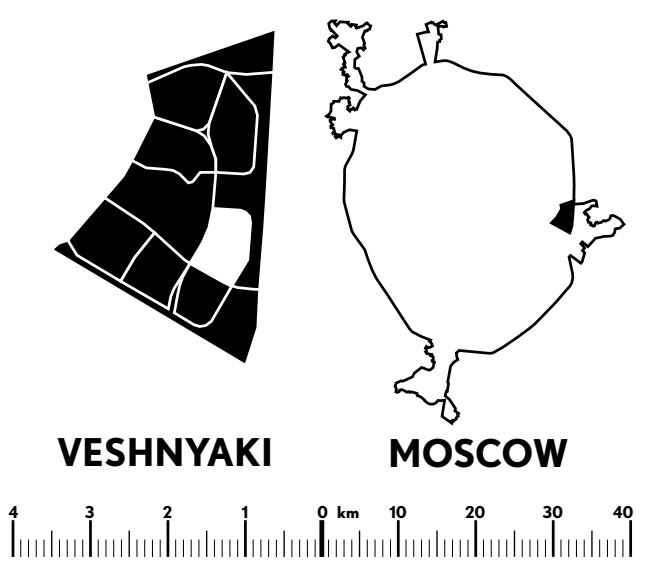
MAINTENANCE

Veshnyaki is part of affluent Moscow; the inhabitants aren't necessarily personally wealthy, however their surroundings are well taken care of. The 'dvorniki' (janitors) are mostly Asian immigrants and they keep the area clean and maintain the landscape. In Gldani this is quite different; it's one of the poorest neighborhoods of Tbilisi and there is no money for the service fees to maintain facilities. For some services, a user-pays system is used i.e. there is a charge of 10 cents per elevator ride.





79TH QUARTER OF VESHNYAKI



Built: 1970-1973 (design 1969)
Architects: V. Lebedev, P. Aranovich, M.Gasperovich
Population: 122,800 (designed for 120,000)
7 microrayons: 14,000-21,200 inhabitants per microrayon
Area: 692 ha
Density: 17700 inh./km²
Housing: 210 apartment blocks composed of 39,800 apartments providing 2,580,000m² (27.7 million square feet) of apartment space

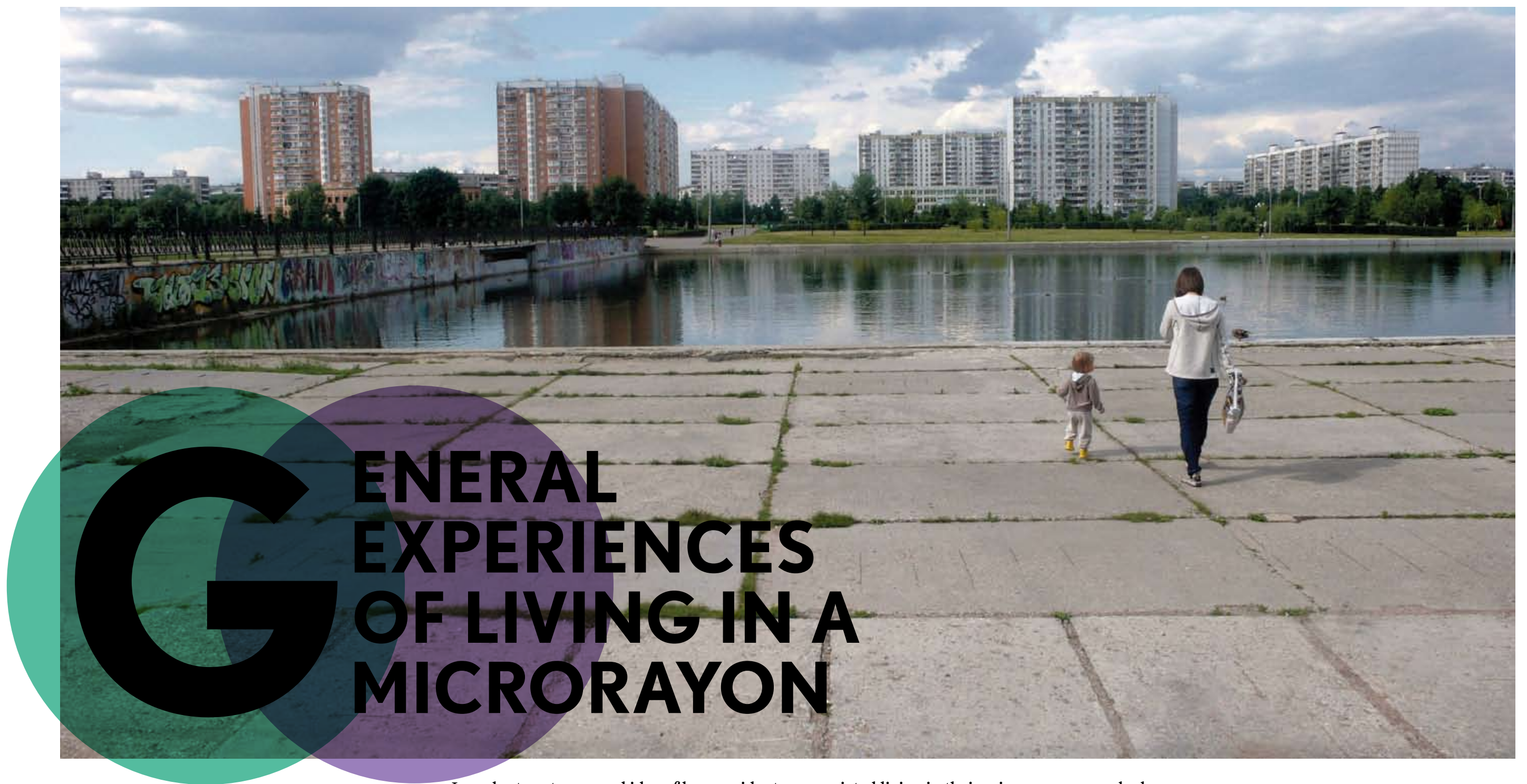
History: The residential rayon Veshnyaki inherited its name from a village east of Moscow. It was developed as part a part of a plan to improve living conditions of Muscovites who had moved from barracks and sheds in the inner city to new apartments in the outskirts. Veshnyaki was not surrounded by factories or connected to a certain industry and originally a high percentage of intellectuals lived in the rayon. The district was the first urban expansion to use nine-story high buildings as a minimum height. To prevent excessive monotonousness caused by a very limited selections of building types (two nine-story, one 12-story and one 14-story high buildings), the buildings laid out so as to create courtyards of various configurations. All seven district microrayons are served by strips with commercial and public functions located across the main road. Veshnyaki underwent some densification starting in the 1980s, but there have been no structural alterations.



4 SHOPPING

Located centrally in both microrayons is the neighborhood 'commercial strip.' In Veshnyaki it consists of a single story of shops lined along the promenade. In Gldani, shopping is similarly maintained along a central strip that is lined with kiosks and market stands, but furthermore includes shops that have been incorporated into the ground floor of adjoining apartment blocks.





In order to get a general idea of how residents appreciated living in their microrayon, we asked them a series of questions regarding their environment and their neighbors.



Just outside the apartment, next to the front door, some furniture is put in the stairwell. Together with a broom to keep the corridor clean. Gldani, Tblisi

FEELING AT HOME

Feeling at home somewhere is a cocktail of feeling safe in a space and feeling responsible for that space. You feel safest and most responsible in your own apartment, with the sense of home decreasing with every threshold you pass.

● GLDANI ●
FOR WHAT DO
YOU FEEL RE-
SPONSIBLE?

● VESHNYAKI ●
WHERE DO
YOU START TO
FEEL AT HOME?

Apartment
Corridor
Building
Microrayon

Apartment
Courtyard
Microrayon



Under the overhang of the entrance two sofa chairs are placed by inhabitants. Veshnyaki, Moscow



"I thought about leaving, but then I would miss my neighbors and friends, so I decided to only leave if they would leave with me" Gldani, Tblisi

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

Inhabitants strongly identify with their microrayons. That they may look the same, and bear numbers instead of names doesn't change this. The majority of people living in the microrayons have done so for more than 15 years.

● GLDANI ●
DO YOU WANT
TO MOVE OUT?

● VESHNYAKI ●
DO YOU WANT
TO MOVE OUT?

Yes
No

Yes
No



We asked if they wanted to stay in Veshnyaki after they finish their studies, the boys ardently answered: No, but the girls checked them by commenting, "hey, what are you saying?" Veshnyaki, Moscow



SECURING THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Safety is enforced socially and technically. The microrayon is safer for its inhabitants than it is for outsiders. Still, all is done to protect one's property by installing bars, locks and steel doors.

- GLDANI

DO YOU FEEL
SAFE IN YOUR
MICRORAYON
- VESHNYAKI

DO YOU FEEL
SAFE IN YOUR
MICRORAYON

Yes	Yes, very safe
	Yes, comparatively
No	No, not for outsiders
	No

Often the car is your most valuable possession, parking it out in the open isn't save enough, thus a cage is built. Gldani, Tblisi.



Sergey is an ex-marine who now works as a mechanic in the Moscow subway. He is well connected in and well informed about what goes on in the neighborhood. Social control is strongly enforced here; people keep an eye out for their neighborhood and strangers are quickly identified. Veshnyaki, Moscow



Everywhere in the Gldani courtyards canopies overgrown with vines have been constructed. These canopies provide a cool shade in the hot Georgian summer. Gldani, Tblisi

URBAN NATURE

One of the best features of the microrayon is its greenery. In between the apartment blocks there is space to play, rest, and talk or simply to enjoy nature in the city. At the same time these places are fragile, and can be easily disrupted by intruding developments, such as garages, that fragment open space.

- VESHNYAKI

WHAT CHARACTERISES BEST
YOUR MICRORAYON?

 - Green spaces
 - Good Maintenance
 - Local History
 - Location
 - All necessary functions
 - Quality of housing and apartments
 - Affordable

- GLDANI

WHAT IS IMPORTANT ABOUT
YOUR MICRORAYON?

 - Social networks
 - Green spaces
 - Public transport
 - Spacious apartments
 - Parking



Between apartment blocks spaces are abundantly green. The quiet, green courtyards are a pleasant place to walk around or sit and chat, but at night the greenery makes it hard to properly light the area. Veshnyaki, Moscow



To provide extra security, three neighboring apartments joined together and installed a steel door and doorbells in order to separate the hallway from the stairwell. Gldani, Tblisi

NEIGHBOR COLLABORATION

While everyone insists on their privacy, especially the Moscow-vites behind their steel front-doors, the stairwell is a no-mans land: neither private, nor public. Improvements to it can only be made collectively by inhabitants.

- VESHNYAKI

WHEN DO YOU WORK TOGETHER
WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS?

 - To buy something together
 - To build something together
 - To clean together
 - Never

- GLDANI

WHEN DO YOU WORK TOGETHER
WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS?

 - For maintenance work
 - For throwing parties
 - Communal space improvement
 - Safety concerns
 - Never

- VESHNYAKI

WHEN WOULD YOU CONTACT
YOUR NEIGHBORS?

 - In emergencies
 - To borrow things
 - Look after plants/animals when I'm away
 - Help with heavy objects
 - Childcare

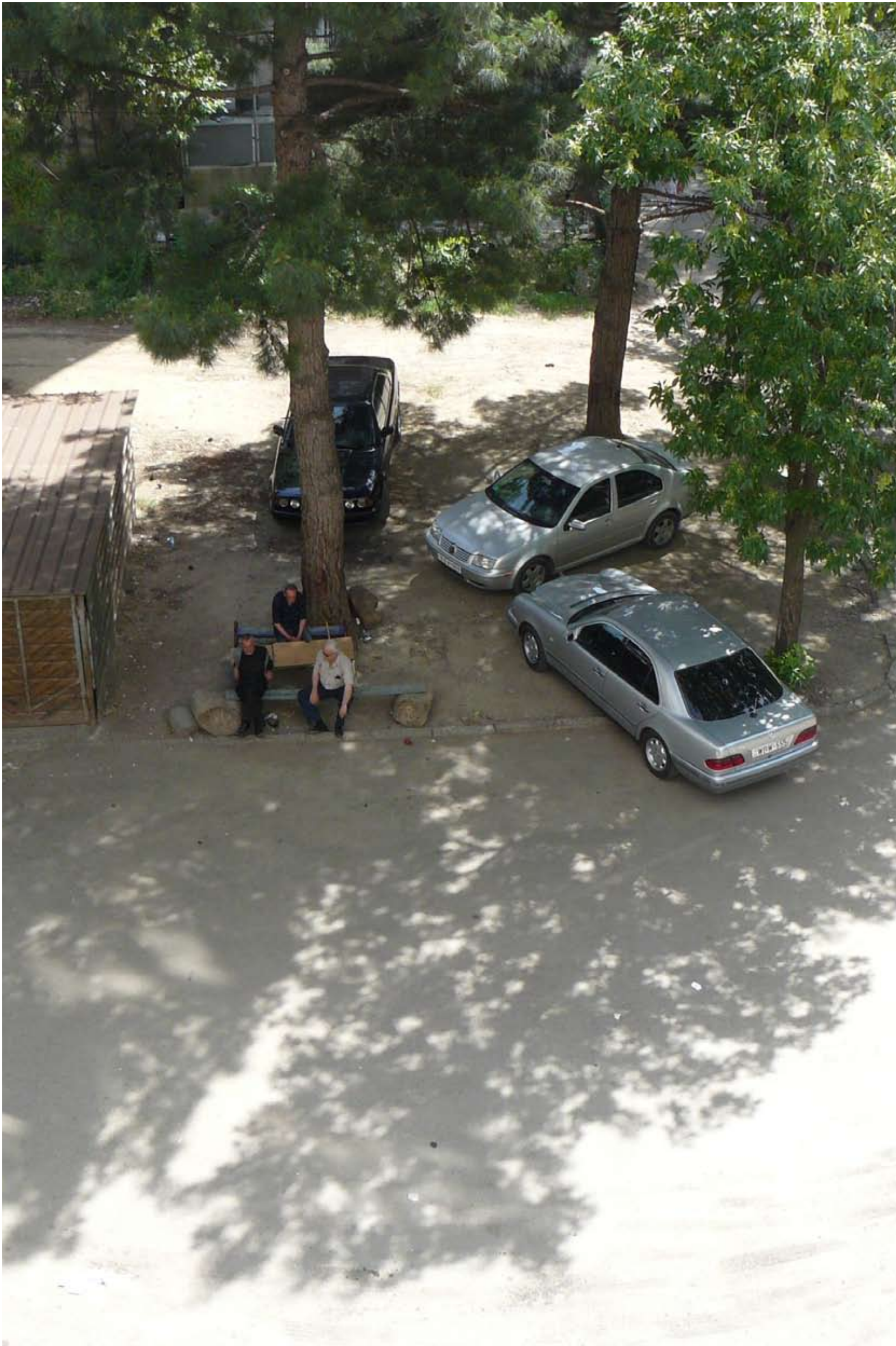
- GLDANI

WHEN WOULD YOU CONTACT
YOUR NEIGHBORS?

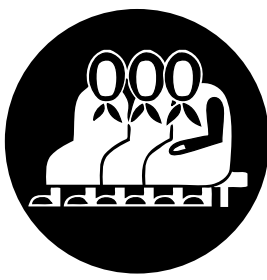
 - In emergencies
 - For maintenance work
 - To borrow things
 - Childcare
 - Never



Moving the refrigerator together. Veshnyaki, Moscow



Meeting in the courtyard. Gldani, Tbilisi



SOCIALIZING

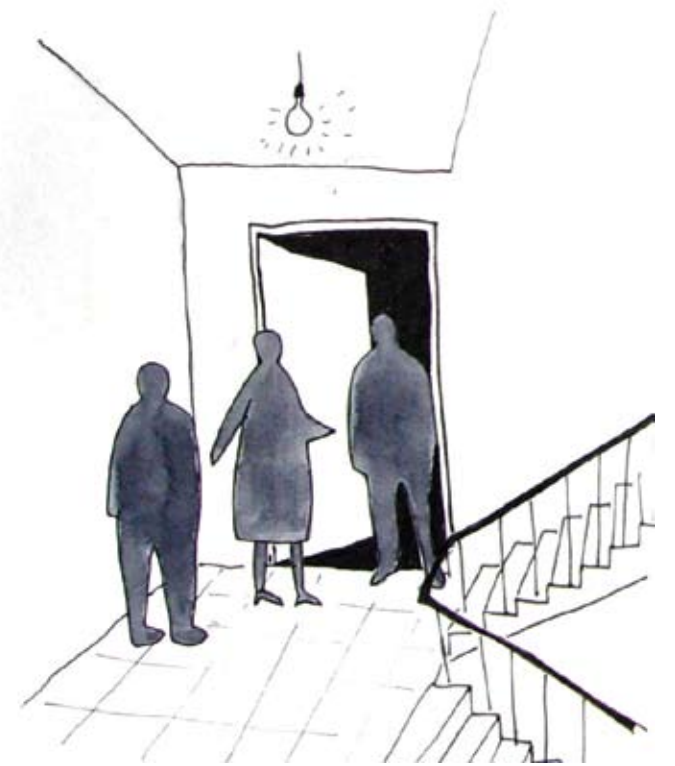
Family and social ties are still strong within the microrayon; extended families often live together in a single apartment. In stable microrayons, networks of everyday life are strong and based on belonging to a specific apartment block or its immediate neighborhood. Elderly women have a special status as they're the most knowledgeable about what's going on. Entertainment facilities for young people are thinly spread, but every microrayon has some central attractions. In response to the lack of functional social space, in some microrayons residents resourcefully invent simple constructions for meeting places and social space. Often neighbors intensify their contact when the government proves unable to provide the necessary services and security.

A GUIDE INTO MICRO-RAYON'S SOCIAL NETWORKS

1

FIRST AID

If you need a doctor but do not have enough money, you should know that there is almost always a doctor in your neighborhood who can give you first aid. You can visit him or her and explain that you are a neighbor in need of help. If you don't know him/her personally and feel uncomfortable approaching him or her directly, you can also find a neighbor who knows the doctor to introduce you. Just to be nice you can bring some sweets or whatever you can give as thanks for their assistance, but this is not obligatory.



2

ELECTRICIAN

If you have a problem with electrical installations in your apartment there is always someone in the neighborhood who understands electricity and can help you fix the problem. Moreover, he might have his own secret method of how to stop the electric meter or an alternative connection to the cable system. If he trusts you he might even help you with these things. Remember, this secret is not between you and him only. This is a neighborhood secret; other neighbors also have used the same technique. So be careful. If the officials find out, it may become a problem for the whole neighborhood. There is also a chance that someone will rat out the inventor of the trick. It's much appreciated if you invite the generous electrician over for dinner or for a beer after he is done with his work. A few of the neighbors enjoying his invention might also join.



3

MOTHER

Young mothers typically share their experiences with other young mothers rather than taking advice from consultants, who are paid by baby food companies to advertise their products and are thus not reliable. If you don't have such friends, neighbors or relatives, a local church can be a right place to connect with other young mothers. A local park or a playground are similar such places. Such an encounter may start a friendship, so don't be too specific regarding the subject.



4

"LOTTERY"

If you want to buy a household good that costs much more than your monthly income you can easily avoid bank loans. Initiate a neighborhood "lottery": every month each person contributes a certain amount of money to a "bank" and the collected sum is loaned to the person in need. This way each member receives the total amount of the money in the "bank" once or more, depending on the length of the "lottery". Such a loan does not require interest and is more flexible in terms of repayment.



5

“NISIA”

If your income is unstable you can still find a way to get food and necessities in hard times. You must negotiate with the local shop where you often do your shopping. If you trust the shopkeeper you can ask for a “nisia” if your income suddenly drops. This means you can continue shopping there with the promise that you'll pay back the money as soon as you have it. In this situation, try to buy the same goods as in normal times, you usually do in order not to make such that the shopkeepers does not feel you have abused by your the privilege. Try to pay back money on the promised date. This will enable you to continue your good relationship with the shop.



6

BEST FRIENDS

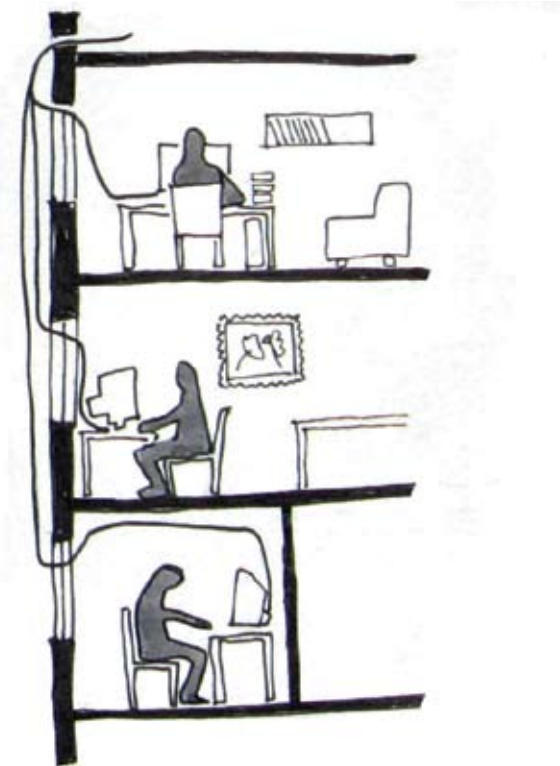
If you are a housewife who does not often have the chance to go out for entertainment you can distract yourself from your daily routine by inviting your housewife neighbors over for coffee. This needs no special occasion, but often happens in conjunction with a freshly baked cake or cookies. If your close friend's family lives on the next stairwell, on the same floor and your apartments share a wall with the apartment of a close friend's family, you can make have a door built between the apartments. This saves time in going up and down different stairwells every time you visit each other, especially because the elevators are rarely in order. It also saves you from passing things from balcony to balcony. Be sure not to damage the building's supporting structures!



7

INTERNET

It is quite expensive for low income families to connect to the internet individually. If you are a teenager and want cheap internet access, you can find other young people in your apartment block to join your network. There might also be a network in operation to which you can connect.



8

ENTERTAINMENT

If you are an adult man you can spend your evenings where the local men gather. There you can chat with neighbors and play cards or dominoes, followed by a few drinks or even a small party. Drink responsibly or else you will lose your neighbors' respect!



If you are an elderly person and do not find these evening parties appealing you can find a place where elderly people gather to play chess and discuss everyday life and global politics. Such places are often located in more central areas such as the main square or park of the microrayon. Walking there is also good exercise.

9

CLEANING COMMUNAL SPACES

If you live on the ground floor of an apartment block you will be annoyed by the dirt and dust coming in from the street. You should not blame your neighbors for abusing your entrance mat. You had better take the initiative and organize small groups of neighbors to clean the communal spaces every week such that one person from each family participates in cleaning once every two months or so. If this does not work you can also hire someone to clean the communal areas every weekend. To pay the cleaner you should collect money from every neighbor each month. It also contributes to the finances of the local who assumes this duty.



10

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

When someone passes away in the neighborhood or especially in your apartment block you are expected to help the mourning family financially. The sum is never fixed and your contribution may be very small, but it still counts. You do not need to give the money to the family member personally. There is always a neighbor who will collect the money for the family. The same rule applies to weddings but these are less important and you can give them your present personally.



11

APARTMENT RENOVATION

Ask your neighbors' advice when planning apartment renovations. Some will definitely recommend good, cheap construction workers. One usually provides them a workers dinner.

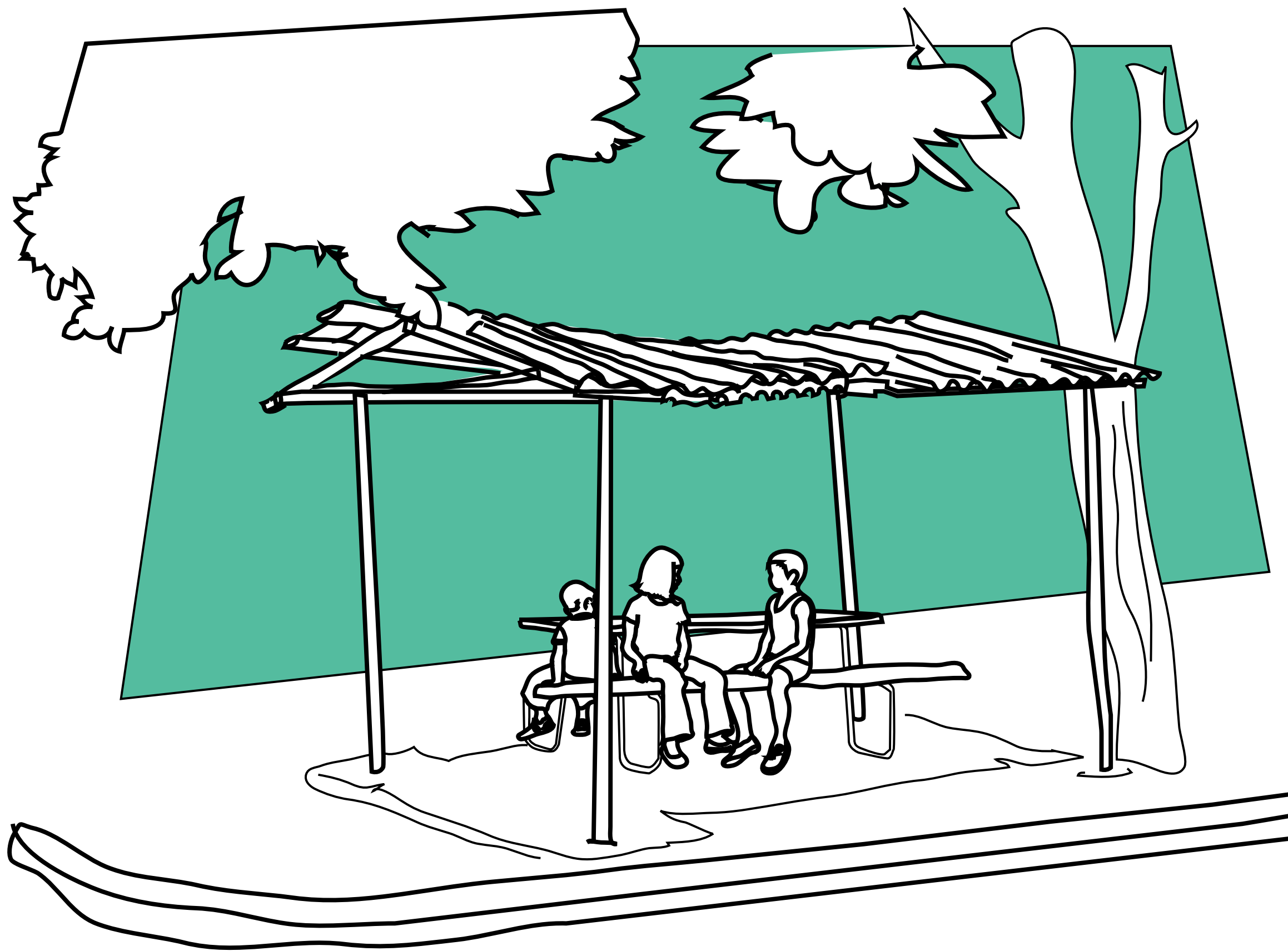


!

FINAL CLAUSE

You should always repay the help people offer you. This doesn't mean inviting them for a beer or paying for a dinner in a restaurant. You should be one of the links in the complex chain of the social network existing in the apartment blocks, neighborhoods, districts and the whole city. Being one of the links means being reliable and open to any kind of help you can offer to others.

MEETING UP



1

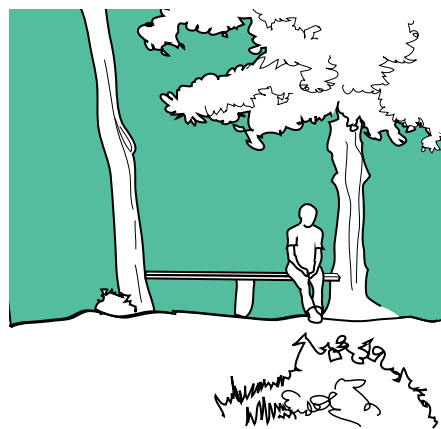
LOG PICNIC AREA

To make: cut some trees into appropriate sizes for benches, chairs and tables

Possible usage: sitting, drinking, hanging out, games

Distinctive qualities: the logs can be rearranged into other configurations

Similar strategies: 2, 4, 6



2

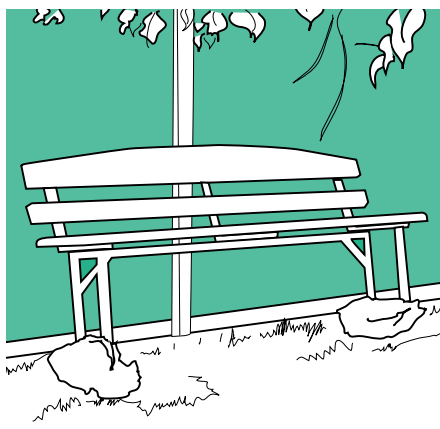
BENCH SUPPORTED BY TREES

To make: scavenge for scrap material and assemble it yourself, using the tree for support

Possible usage: sitting, napping, meditating, smoking

Distinctive qualities: the trees can function as back rests and provide shade from the sun

Similar strategies: 1



3

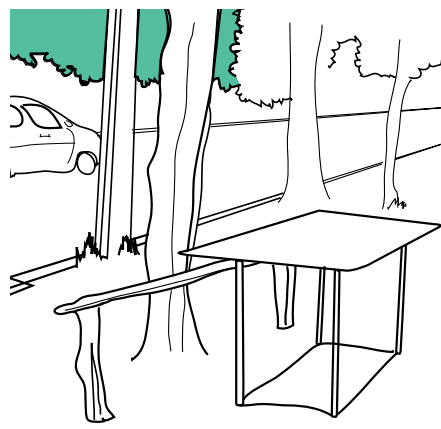
BENCH

To make: take a factory-made bench, dig two holes in the ground and pour concrete around the bench legs in situ to keep it secure

Possible usage: sitting, people watching, resting

Distinctive qualities: semi-mobile, rocking chair

Similar strategies: 2, 8



4

BENCH AND TABLE

To make: assemble a bench from scavenged wood and make a table by welding a metal plate to legs. Reinforce the legs by welding thin steel rods around the base

Possible usage: sitting, eating, drinking, playing games

Distinctive qualities: bring extra chairs to sit around the table

Similar strategies: 1, 2, 6



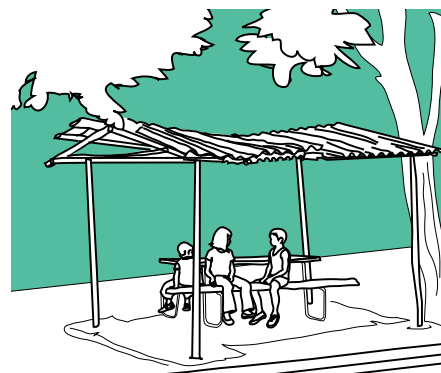
5

GARAGE

To make: for a robust and secure garage, scout out an appropriate space and begin building your garage from materials from your local hardware store

Possible usage: parking space, getting away from your wife, storage, workshop, hang out, stage an illicit drinking party

Distinctive qualities: intimacy and privacy



6

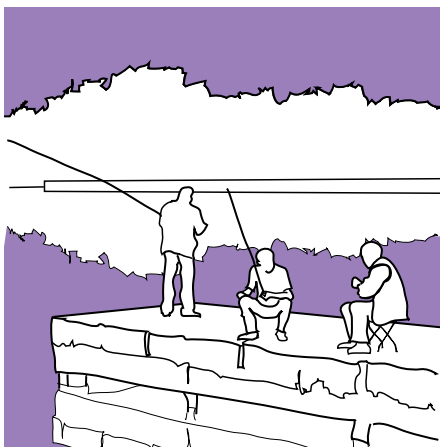
COVERED PICNIC TABLE

To make: choose an ideally located picnic table and install a covering from scavenged metal tubing and corrugated roofing material. Use poured concrete and a nearby tree for support.

Possible usage: sitting, eating, drinking, gathering, playing games, shelter from rain and sun

Distinctive qualities: enjoy the sound of rain on a summer day

Similar strategies: 4, 10



7

RAINBOW LAKE PIER

To make: wait for the city planning department to convert local river area into a massive artificial lake

Possible usage: sitting, fishing, enjoying the sunset

Distinctive qualities: the view and proximity to the water

Similar strategies: 12



8

PLAYGROUND BENCH

To make: made in a factory, wait for maintenance to install or replace

Possible usage: sitting, keeping an eye on your kids, drinking

Distinctive qualities: proximity to playground, be careful where you sit, because the paint might not be dry

Similar strategies: 1, 3



9

PLAYGROUND

To make: wait for the local authorities to install these factory made playgrounds in your courtyard

Possible usage: playing, sitting, drinking

Distinctive qualities: central location in courtyard

Similar strategies: 11



10

GAZEBO

To make: wait for city planning to install a gazebo in your courtyard

Possible usage: shelter from the elements, hanging out, sitting, eating, drinking

Distinctive qualities: intimacy within the public space

Related strategies: 6



11

SPORT CAGE

To make: installed by city planning

Possible usage: athletics, hanging out

Distinctive qualities: an enclosed place in which to exercise

Similar strategies: 9



12

RAINBOW LAKE PROMENADE

To make: installed by city planning

Possible usage: athletics, hanging out

Distinctive qualities: an enclosed place in which to exercise

Similar strategies: 9



YOUNGSTERS ON MICRORAYON RIVALRY AND VKONTAKTE

Nikita and his friend talked about the rivalry between Northern and Southern Veshnyaki. The Northern part defines itself as the 'true Veshnyaki,' while the southern part sometimes calls itself Vykhino. Nikhita also proudly told us that though the name Vykhino carries criminal connotations and guys from that area are actually weaker than shy guys like himself and his friends from Quarter 78.

Nikita then gave us two examples of past battles between adjacent Quarters 77 and 78. The first battle was initiated when one of Nikita's friends

was injured by someone with a knife. In retaliation, they unleashed terror in Quarter 78 and 'all of the people who were connected to the incident were punished'. Since then, the perpetrators are no longer allowed to cross the border to Quarter 78. The heaviest battle that ever took place occurred after guys from Quarter 77 harassed a girl from Quarter 78. This battle did not proceed according to normally accepted street rules, but was a free-for-all with everyone bringing all manner of weapons. Nikita explained that all of this is done to maintain control over the territory and preserve safety in the microrayons. However this

implies that inhabitants are required to behave in a proper manner; for residents from rival microrayons, even proper behavior does not guarantee safety. Though there are police, they are not sufficient. In neighborhoods with so much greenery, it is too easy for gangs to hide, so actually the police cannot infringe on gang relationships.

Finally, Nikita told us a bit about his Vkontakte initiative. This Facebook style forum was started for fun just over a year ago. Quickly it started attracting people: first friends joined, then friends of friends, and finally strangers. Three months later, the first Veshnyaki meeting took place with 70 people in attendance, mainly from the 16-28 age group. They had some drinks together and gave short introductions. The intensity of the forum slowed after the first meeting and the consequent meetings attracted a bit smaller groups. Nowadays, there are about 8-10 hits per day, and the forum is primarily used for personal messaging. This main consequence of the forum has been new friendships. The people they didn't know, they now know. They have plans to join the official Veshnyaki administration's website; this would be a new step in communication between the real people and the administration.



BABUSHKA ALEKSANDRA PETROVNA

Alexander Pertovna is an elderly woman, becoming more and more a babushka. She has lived in the worst building of Quarter 79 since 1971 (Veshnyakovskaya street 27/1 on the 5th floor). She took care of her paraplegic mother for 20 years and she has one daughter and a grandchild who have moved out of Veshnyaki. Before her retirement, Aleksandra Petrovna worked at a Ministry of Paper industry.

Aleksandra complained about her building and the yard (9 story building with 8 porticoes, a total of 287 apartments of around 700 residents). She mentioned that her building should have been run by a collective, but from the beginning the construction was so poor that the collective refused to take responsibility. She explained that this building was built on swamp land, which is why the foundations are so unstable. From the very beginning, the roof has leaked, and residents had to clean the gutters on the roof themselves. Additionally, the floors are uneven, they have cockroach and rat problems as a result of malfunctioning garbage chutes. In the building next door, the portico is detaching from the main building. Nobody knows if there will be renovation and all documents confirming the dangerous state of the building are lost.

She has no hope for renovation. Despite all this, there are plans to build a 22 story dwelling with 3-understorey for parking. Aleksandra thinks this is ridiculous and could make the situation in her building even worse.

Aleksandra moved here from the very center of Moscow (next to the Kremlin). She had to move to Veshnyaki because her building was destroyed in anticipation of a visit from the American president Nixon. In return she was given an apartment in Veshnyaki at the end of the world. Back then the area looked more like a village with a small river with quiet green surroundings, now transformed into the artificial lake, Rainbow.

As for the current state of the yard, it is a hotbed for rabble. Drunks from the surrounding area gather here in the evening. The sound of their women screaming echoes through yard. On occasion they drink themselves to death and in the morning the remnants of the night's activities can be witnessed from syringes and bottles that litter the yard. Almost all of the apartments here have been robbed multiple times. One of the most dangerous places of the yard is the passage between two buildings where robbers hide in the stairwell to the basement. Last week a boy had his iPhone stolen there. Previously, some young people had tried to steal her daughter's wages.

RUSSIA HAS WORLD'S MOST ENGAGED SOCIAL NETWORKING AUDIENCE

Vkontakte.ru Ranks as Most Popular Social Networking Site in Russia with 14 Million Visitors

LONDON, U.K., July 2, 2009 - comScore, Inc. a leader in measuring the digital world, today released a study of the social networking category in Russia, based on data from the comScore World Metrix audience measurement service. The study found Russia to have the world's most engaged social networking audience, with visitors spending 6.6 hours and viewing 1,307 pages per visitor per month.

TWO-THIRDS OF GLOBAL INTERNET USERS ACCESS SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Of the 1.1 billion people age 15 and older worldwide who accessed the Internet from a home or work location in May 2009, 734.2 million visited at least one social networking site during the month, representing a penetration of 65 percent of the worldwide Internet audience. The Russian social networking audience had the highest engagement among the 40 individual countries reported by comScore, with an average of 6.6 hours and 1,307 pages consumed per visitor. Brazil ranked close behind at 6.3 hours, followed by Canada (5.6 hours), Puerto Rico (5.3 hours) and Spain (5.3 hours).

"Social networking has become a popular online pastime not only in mature Internet markets like North America, but also in developing, high-growth Internet markets such as Russia," said Mike Read, SVP & managing director, comScore Europe. "In a country as geographically large as Russia, social networking represents a way of connecting people from one corner of the country to the other. The highly engaged behavior of social networkers in Russia offers significant opportunity for marketers and advertisers seeking to reach these audiences."

SOURCE: COMSCORE.COM

THE SOUND OF THEIR WOMEN SCREAMING ECHOES THROUGH THE YARD



At the top floors, out of reach of strangers that could come up the first few flights of the staircase, inhabitants tend to use the stairwell space more. They dry their laundry, put out furniture, and socialize. Gldani, Tblisi



OWNING

The microrayon’s private living spaces are privately owned; the communal spaces – the hallways, elevators, rooftops, porticos and balconies – are the shared responsibility of each building’s residents. In actuality, legal ownership is not necessarily the limit of the private realm. In many cases ownership can be earned through usage or the practices of those who feel responsible. Indeed, ownership is a privilege for those who manage to get organized or who take matters into their own hands. It comes down to the fact that if your family apartment is too small, family members naturally spill out into the hallways. Or alternatively, if your portico is dirty, you clean it. As such, practicing ownership can unite individual interests into a common cause as well as decrease communality.

EXPERIMENT MEET THE NEIGHBORS

TEXT BY IGOR SADREYEV
ILLUSTRATION BY MASHA KRASNOVA-SHABAEBEVA

They always were, are and will be the most unpleasant space in the urban environment. They are always unsafe, dark, dirty and smelly, even if it is a portico (the Russian word for the stairwell + entrance hall) on Tverskaya or Ostozhenka. Perhaps the reason for this neglect is unclarity about who is responsible for taking care of this space – it is not yet the street and neither the apartment – or does this condition have its roots in the habit of Russian’s not knowing, not meeting or visiting their neighbors in order to do repairs or maintenance. Igor Sadreyev decided to break this tradition.

From my childhood I was taught to hate neighbors, and I became good at it. My father was convinced that our family was always surrounded by assholes. The woman living on the right was always underhandedly playing pranks. The man living upstairs played accordion when he was drunk, trying to drown out the ghost of Stalin. Our dacha neighbors were stealing our manure.

According to the officials, the stock of apartments in Moscow last year numbered 3,766,770. Within which live an innumerable army of people, whom at best lazily eavesdrop on some one’s scandal from beyond the wall, but usually don’t even know the names of neighbors sharing their landing.

None of us consider the portico to be our territory. We make order in our own apartments, and maintenance takes of the yard. City hall tries to “take care of the streets”. As for the portico, nobody is responsible. The portico is the most unpleasant and unwelcoming place, even in houses run by cooperatives of residents and even in the so called, “elite” houses.

Soon it will have been one year since I moved to Kolomenskaya street. Mundane, dirty, ownerless portico of a mundane Moscow apartment block; 12 stories with 4 flats each. During this time, I bumped into my neighbors just a few times. First I flooded the downstairs neighbors, then a bearded woman announced that I tap ashes onto her sheets. The culmination was an evening when Mosenergo (Moscow energy company) switched off my electricity because it was not paid on time - according to a notice written on the door, two witnesses were named. From now on, I consider my neighbors, Mikhaylova and Prihodko my personal enemies, though I have never seen them with my own eyes.

Before, when I was coming back from abroad, like many others, I could already sense in the airport that I was back in the motherland. Now that airports are modernized, I get this feeling only when I enter the portico. I would never be able to take responsibility for the cleanliness of the airport, but at a certain point I could no longer be reconciled with the horror of my own portico.

The following plan materialized: to get to know my portico neighbors, to understand who is capable of what, to invite them to a party and together try to transform our portico, if not into the hall of the Empire State Building, then at least into something that would look like a living space. A space where you don’t have to watch your step or hold your nose.

APARTMENT NR. 503 NINA GRIGORIEVNA, PENSIONER

Unfortunately, during all the time living on Kolomenskaya, I only developed human relations with my right neighbor, a healthy active pensioner. On the day of my housewarming, I dropped by to ask for a knife and consequently got to know her giant striped cat Marusya. This thoughtful old lady - the name of whom I still don’t know - fattened that cat to the size of a basketball. Marusya often strolls around the portico.

co. This babushka also feeds another homeless cat, which is always howling in the portico, with sausage and fish. She lives with her grown son. She is always happy to talk. That’s why I visit her first to check out apartment building situation. The formal excuse to start a conversation: it’s the third week since our intercom has malfunctioned, but nobody has fixed it.

Our portico is ownerless, there is no leadership, and nobody needs anything,” she reports sadly.” This intercom is always broken, and the postboxes are always stuffed with spam. But you know all this.”

How long have you lived here? Sorry that I don’t know your name.”

Nina Gregorievna. I’ve lived here 27 years. We were in line as a young family to get this apartment, we got help from work, so we got two rooms. Our son was 8 years old back then. Before moving in, we were living at our parents’. I am a native Muscovite.”

Nina Gregorievna lives a typical retired life. She spends all of her time in front of the TV, she loves Mayor Lushkov because of the extra stipend she receives, she does not go further than the local shop, complains about prices, doesn’t have a dacha, and does not gossip on the bench in front of the portico. Marusya and Barsik - the meaning of her life. Her apartment has become permeated with the smell of cat piss. The shelves in the corridor are filled with books with spines familiar to all Soviet families: three green volumes of Pushkin, a dirty yellowed collected works from Chernenchevsky, and a decomposing series of Classics and Contemporary Writers.

“Did you work as a teacher in school?” I nod towards the bookshelf.

A department chief in a milk factory. Even now I can tell good from poor butter. Today butter is not healthy, it’s just chemistry, and the books...there was a time when everybody was collecting books. Though, I like to read.”

To strengthen our relationship and to provide an excuse to come back, I borrow What is to be Done, by Chernenchevsky, from Nina Gregorievna.

APARTMENT NR. 500 VERA MICHAILOVNA, NURSE

Once someone rang my doorbell at 5am in the morning. It was an old lady, suffering from insomnia, who was screaming that her apartment was flooded. In the morning another neighbor came from one floor down: a woman of indeterminable age who looked like an accountant. She also had water leaking from her ceiling. Everyone somehow blamed me, though my bathroom was totally dry. In the end, I gave up and called the plumber, wrecked all of my tiles, and found out there was a loose pipe under my bathtub. A half year has passed since then, but the formal reason to visit has remained.

I ring the door and smile into the peephole, explaining three times who I am and what I want; our people (Russians) in general, are hesitant to open their doors to strangers. I improvise that I have just finished renovation and want to check if the recent flooding had caused them a lot of damage.

“No, no. I didn’t even have to fix anything. The concrete dried by itself.”

Our conversation died out. I understand what you have to say when you want to get acquainted with a girl on a street: jokes, compliments, something about the weather. But I can’t say to a 50 year old woman who stands in front of me in her bathrobe and slippers that she looks lovely today and that her dye job suits her compulsively looking for a reason to be invited in.

“Oh, by the way, do you have a metal saw, the kind with small teeth and looks like a ruler?” With that, Vera Michailovna immediately invited me in.

Her husband died from a heart-attack two years ago. I slowly rifle through the box of tools on her balcony: hammer, wire cutters, nails and screwdriver. There had been no maintenance on the corridor and kitchen for about 20 years, a very old gas oven range, Elektron, had not been changed since they moved in nor had the soviet blue tiles, bathroom suite and leaning kitchen shelves. This is a typical one room apartment which Moscow realtors call, “cozy and clean” and for which they would have asked for 25,000 rubles/month half of a year ago. Her son is a manager in a construction company and lives separately with his wife and daughter. They visit grandma normally on the weekends or during lunch. She, herself works as a nurse.

I didn't find a saw but Vera Michailovna suggested I visit a neighbor from apartment 501, ex-military and DIY expert.

3

APARTMENT NR. 501
SERGEY ANATOLIEVICH, DACHA LOVER

The saw was found and an excuse to visit Sergey Anatolievich again was established.

The attempt to establish contact didn't really work out: it seems that he loves his dacha much more than people. The window ledges in his room and kitchen were full of sprouting seedlings. My poetic commentary about a type of Indian tomato (which my parents grow at their dacha) didn't help, and the owner subtly edged me out of his apartment.

DEAD END

After three successful visits, I ran into a dead end: it was not clear who to visit next. At 11pm all the windows are already dark, old ladies are absent from benches, and there aren't even any drinking parties outside. We have a very sleepy portico.

There were a few times I tried to initiate conversation in the elevator but people gave short answers and kept staring at their feet. Four unproductive days passed. Just ringing doorbells did not work: on the second floor a strong handsome man in army boots opened the door with the expression on his face that if he could, he would give me a pie in the face. The old woman from the sixth floor, the one who was the first to knock on my door during the flood that night, now decided not to open her door at all: she asked four times who was there and then silence. I asked to borrow 100 rubles from the lady in 506 as I didn't have cash, explaining that I needed to get cigarettes from a kiosk nearby and that nearest cash machine was near the metro. She used the economic crisis as an excuse not to lend me money.

4

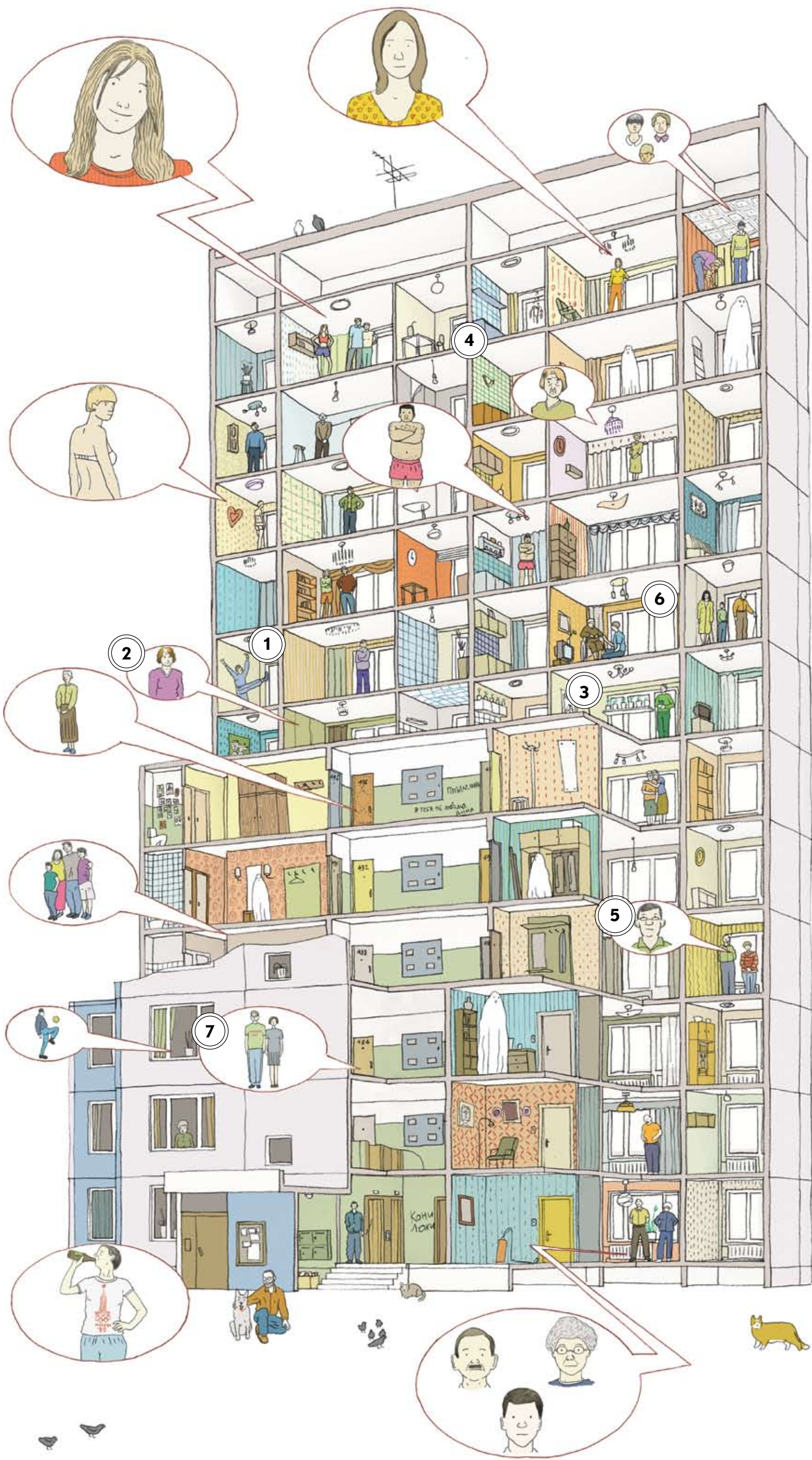
SIX MORE APARTMENTS
OLGA VIKOTORONMA,
ELENA NIKOLAEVNA,
AN ALCOHOLIC,
A TIMID STUDENT,
THE GEORGIAN IN HIS UNDERWEAR,
AND A SYMPATHETIC GIRL IRA.

A few days later, I found a reason to visit my neighbors: people from maintenance came to exterminate cockroaches and tried to ask for 200 rubles for extra maintenance costs. I visited 7 apartments above me. A couple of lonely pensioners on the 10th floor, Olga Viktoronma and Elena Nikolaevna, organized an unpretentious landing meeting: complaining about electricity tariffs, the smell from the garbage chutes, and recent news. I learned that a year ago there were some people going around our portico collecting money for extermination services, but then they disappeared. With difficulty, I got acquainted with an alcoholic of indeterminate age and a timid student. Also, there was a Georgian in his boxers, the one who parks his white Mercedes on the lawn. Also, this sympathetic girl Ira who works in a shop.

5

APARTMENT NR. 490
ANATOLY MIKHAILOVICH, CHIEF OF A GARAGE COOPERATIVE

Unexpected fortune. I met Anatoly Mikhailovich, the head of a garage cooperative, on the fourth floor. Not tall, portly, always wearing his cabbie hat with narrow reading glasses. I get the feeling that he is serving time in his apartment and takes every opportunity to escape from his wife to the garage, to his social work. The garage doors are open almost every day and everyone passing by can see a beautiful interior: inside Mikhailovich did something that is called evroremont (renovation in the “European style”). He installed curtains, put veneer on the walls, glued wallpaper, installed and varnished the wooden floors, and installed an electrical furnace, refrigerator and a table. Whenever you pass by there is always half a bottle (of vodka) and some nicely arranged snacks on the table. The desyatka (VAZ 2110 automobile) is always polished to a brilliant shine. You cannot such find order in his house. The life of the portico is even less interesting for him. Out of all the neighbors he is in touch with Sergey, the fan of his dacha. I also found out that the pride of the yard live somewhere in the neighborhood: hockey brothers, Stepanovi from Kazan's Ak Bars. I wanted to pay the garage fee up to three months in advance but Mikhailovich asked me to come to the garage later because he left his notebook there.



6

APARTMENT NR. 505
LIDIYA FEDOROVNA, SISTER OF A PARAPLEGIC LADY

I cleared everything up with the bearded woman. Lidiya Fedorovna, one of the two witnesses. Prihodko (Lidiya Fedorovna Prihodko), moved here four years ago to take care of her paraplegic sister. The universal nightmare: diapers, food, complaints, tantrums, bed sores and damnation. If the window is open, it's too cold, if it's closed, then it's too stuffy, turn up the volume on the TV, turn down the volume. For breakfast only chocolate butter, for dinner only smoked mackerel.

We laughed about the notice from Masenergo. “My doorbell rang. I was asked to sign and witness that the energy meter of this incorrigible debtor was blocked. So I signed it.”

“But the debt there was only 2,000 rubles. Then they took 1,500 rubles more to remove the seal from the meter. I was without light and electricity for the whole weekend, my refrigera-

tor defrosted, and all the products went bad. A lot of expenses,” I say.

It seemed that she felt a bit uncomfortable: “Crooks are all around!”

7

APARTMENT NR. 484
ANDRE & ANYA, DOCTORS

A young couple my age. They moved from Perm a year ago, attending post-graduate courses in medicine. Andre's father lives in Moscow, but they still decided to rent an apartment. He wears glasses and is not tall. He works on the side as a resuscitation specialist with the EMT at Sklif (one of the main Moscow hospitals), and he gets 15,000 rubles. She studies endocrinology. They wake up at 5am every morning, come back from work at 4pm in the afternoon, and go to sleep at 9pm.

They are very romantic: when asked, how it's going, they tell you about a car accident or a stabbing and then will invite you to launch paper airplanes from their balcony.

They are the only neighbors out of the others who are ready to make friends: they almost don't know anyone here, don't go out, only sometimes for a walk in Kolomenski Park or to visit the cinema. They don't have extra money, only for food. For the most part they are at home. One evening, we gather to drink beer, we find two topics in common: extra weight and skiing. Anya is now seeing patients with obesity problems and is prescribing diets. They calculate my BMI for fun, it turns out to be 23, the highest value within normal body weight. About skiing: they went to Bulgaria on vacation in February. We successfully discuss skiers' hatred for snowboarders; I just started snowboarding this March. We decide to go to the mountains together next year. They want to go to Cheget.

INVITATION

The context was studied, it was time to start acting. I decided to set a date to celebrate my initiative, on Saturday, 6pm.

I went around the 16 apartments with the words, “come for tea, if we are neighbors we

have to make friends, plus we will discuss the future of our portico.”

Half of the invited refused outright. The guy in army shoes looked at me as if I was crazy. The Georgian told me to fuck off, but seven people, were so surprised they promised to come.

But honestly, I had no idea what to do with all these people: couple of young doctors, pensioners, the garage chief and old nurse. Definitely not play monopoly. They know me a bit, but they don't know each other, and furthermore, they have no idea what kind of shenanigans I'm getting them into. The only thing bringing them together is sharing one shit hole of a portico. If they were living there for so many years without taking action, would I be able to rouse them?

The menu was made as if the queen was visiting.

First the drinks. I thought that vodka would make the atmosphere excessively intimate and is not suitable for acquaintances, I have to build a team of peers avoiding drunk soulful conversations, so I decide to get a few bottles of wine. As an option, fruit and cheese. It is stupid to order a pizza or Osetian pies: at the end this is not a charity dinner on veteran's day. I get some buns to go with tea.

The next question is where to seat them all? Making a table in a room would be too much like a wedding party, making a buffet - 70 year old babushka's would not be able to stand for so long. At the end I decide to set up in the kitchen. I can borrow chairs from Nina Griegorievna.

On Friday I suddenly had the thought that this would be the most awful evening in my life. They will get together silently, sit down, drink a glass in uncomfortable silence and will start looking at me. I will make an inciting speech. Of course they will like the idea to live like human beings and to make order in the portico, and they will choose me to be responsible for it. What you propose, you have to carry out.

RESULTS

Anya and Andre arrived earlier. In the last few weeks we became good friends, even went to the cinema together to watch Gran Torino. I told them in advance why I was organizing this party, and they promised to support me.

Then came Nina Griegorievna, all her attention was immediately given to my cat Shpuntik.

Our garage supervisor, Anatoly Mikhailovich rang the door very persistently, this week I came to give him money for the garage and once again reminded him about the meeting. I was sure Vera Michailovna would show up, she is definitely starved for company. Altogether five people showed up. Not a lot, but for an initial group, just enough.

During introductions, we had to give our apartment numbers as if they somehow characterized us. The neighbors didn't really react on this information: there were not enough apartment numbers represented to build a conversation. Everyone refused to drink to new acquaintances.

So we made tea. Andre decided to break the tension and started to tell some medical anecdotes. That was an excellent idea: our company definitely lightened up. Right after the weather, conversations about health are the most universal.

The now friendlier guests started to ask about the apartment: how much I pay for rent, who is the real owner. The owner bought it last May, before that Misha, a businessman always in a tie, and his wife Lena were living here. Then came a wave of memories: how Lena was always walking with a stroller, how the young father was running to the shop, how they renovated the place, and that when the second child was born, they bought a bigger apartment. In half an hour, logically all topics were covered, Vera Michailovna started to get ready leave. To postpone the conversation was pointless.

“Before this, I lived very nearby on Nagatenskaya embankment,” I started to lead up. “There were flowers growing in our portico, paintings and a mirror hung on the wall and we had a sofa. We even had certificate for being the best portico in Moscow. This all started when two babushkas decided to clean up and collected 100 rubles from each resident. It would be great to renovate our portico, but it is impossible to collect money for that. So let's do it with our own strength.”

The guests were shocked by my proposal, though they had already endured official Soviet Saturdays (people gathered on Saturdays during Soviet times to clean up their common spaces), special orders and documents issued by maintenance, even regarding delinquent residents who were throwing their dirty diapers into the streets. They were shell-shocked with my announcement that I would donate my old carpet as a doormat for the entrance, to keep the dirt at bay. I also volunteer to place a box next to the postboxes to collect spam. I continue my offensive with the following, “Who has flowers at home? Let's put a few around.”

“What is the sense of that? They will be spoiled or stolen. There are too many strangers in the portico.”

“We will take care of it! We will guard it!” Nobody believed me.

I felt that I was a lobbyist going around the public with the appeal to vote for a certain candidate who promises to build a playground in the yard. Nina Griegorievna saved me. Distracted from the cat, she promised to donate a birch sapling. Vera Michailovna nodded when I said that I saw empty pots on her balcony. The ledges in the portico are very narrow, so we need to extend them, we can definitely find an old cupboard from someone.

Then Mikhailovich joined the conversation: he had extra paint. We can paint the entrance walls, or at least cover some of the graffiti made by football fans. The guests left senselessly satisfied.

I even drank with Mikhailovich at the end.

RESULTS

The next day I put out a box for garbage and spam, which I mentioned to the neighbors. Now everybody throws their junk mail just short of the box.

In a few days I laid out the carpet: in the middle of the destroyed portico, it looked like a golden toilet bowl in a village city hall. But it didn't work out with the flowers yet. Vera Michailovna gave the pot, in which Nina Griegorievna planted her sapling, but nobody found a cupboard.

The decision was obvious, I will have to go to IKEA next weekend. I am also in charge of fixing the intercom.

That's alright. I will start, somebody might join. At least now I know my neighbor's names.

большой город

This contribution is presented in collaboration with Bolshoi Gorod. (Big City) www.bg.ru



CONCIERGE LUDMILA NIKOLAEVNA

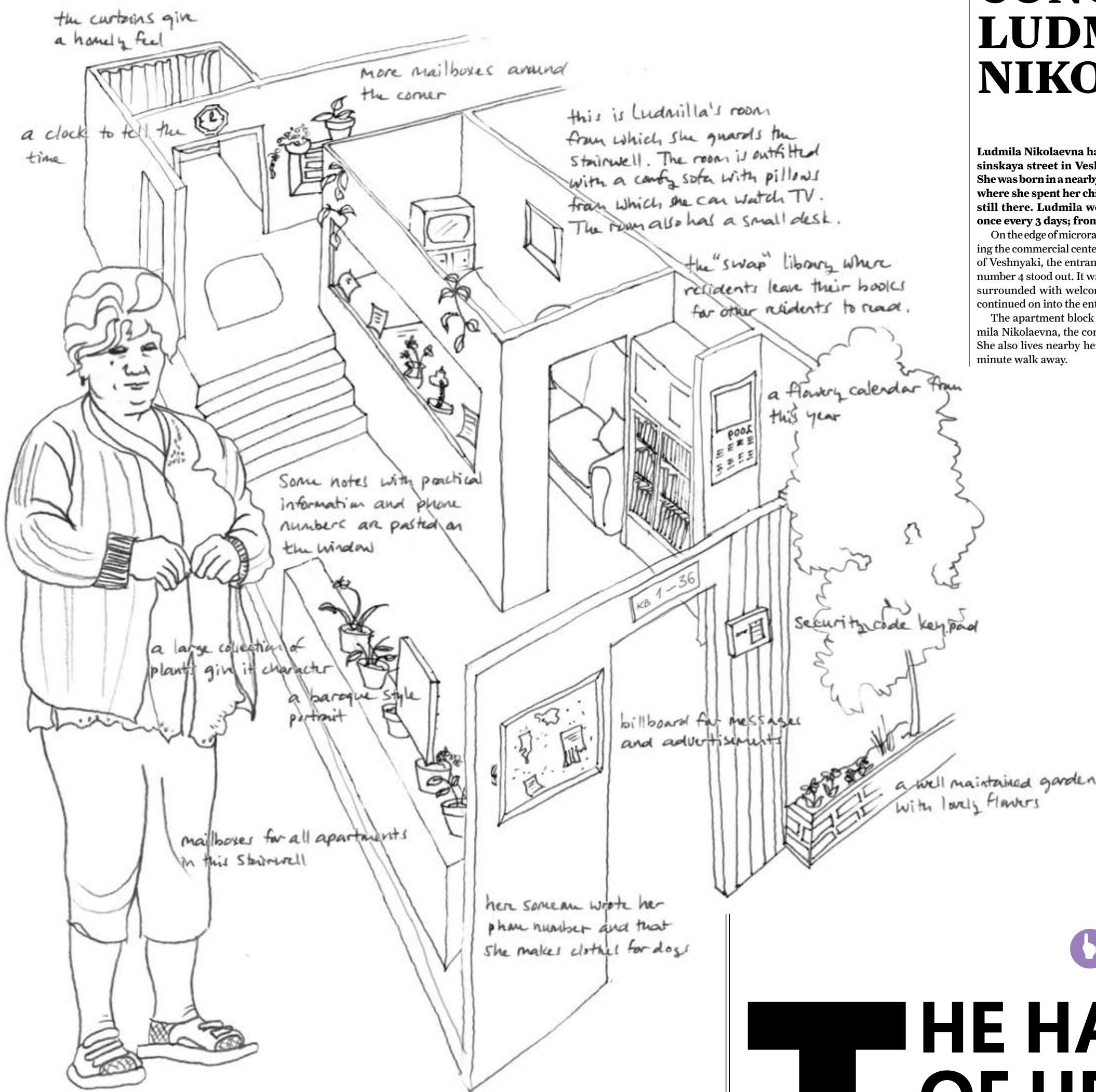
Ludmila Nikolaevna has been living on Kosinskaya street in Veshnyaki for 40 years. She was born in a nearby rayon: Tekstilchiki, where she spent her childhood. Her heart is still there. Ludmila works a 24 hour shift once every 3 days; from 9am to 9am.

On the edge of microrayon, in Quarter 79, facing the commercial center and the 'main-street' of Veshnyaki, the entrance of apartment block number 4 stood out. It was painted in pink and surrounded with welcoming greenery, which continued on into the entrance hall-way.

The apartment block was guarded by Ludmila Nikolaevna, the concierge of this portico. She also lives nearby her workplace, a brisk 7 minute walk away.

The hallway of her apartment block was practically a small living room with carpets, a sofa, armchairs, a television, paintings on the wall and an abundance of plants on the postboxes. Another amazing feature was the mini-library on the bookshelves next to the entrance that hosted a book-swapping facility for the inhabitants of the 48 apartments in this portico.

The perfectly maintained, safe and pleasant atmosphere of this portico is the result of the cooperative that runs apartment block 31. Ludmila explained that the president of this cooperative puts a big effort into organizing everything regarding this block in her own particular way; this results in a lot of pink and flowers.



THE HALLWAY
OF HER
APARTMENT
BLOCK WAS
PRACTICALLY A
SMALL LIVING ROOM



THIS PARTICULAR BUILDING HAD BEEN A COOPERATIVE SINCE THE SOVIET TIMES.

COOPERATIVE SUBCONTRACTOR ALEXANDER IVANOVICH

Alexander Ivanovich is an engineering systems sub-contractor. He lives 1.5 hours away from Moscow by train in the small town of Orekhovo-Zuyevo. Alexander works as a sub-contractor working for a cooperative.

Alexander Ivanovich was the first that mentioned that the general population of Veshnyaki consists of highly educated people such as engineers and teachers. He also mentioned that there is a large representation of Armenians in Veshnyaki. These Armenians are largely responsible for commercial activities within the neighborhood. In addition, Alexander explained that this particular building had been a cooperative since the Soviet times. In Veshnyaki about 30% of buildings are and have been owned and maintained by cooperatives; a large percentage compared to other rayons. This is historically tied to the educated demographic present in the rayon (select intelligentsia had a chance to participate in joining collectives).

Today, municipalities in general are trying to encourage the growth of a new kind of cooperative or association of owners to take the burden of maintenance off of their shoulders. These new collectives can consist of multiple buildings, unlike the Soviet model. Residents are hesitant to accept this responsibility because of the poor state of the buildings, i.e. poor insulation or electricity installations. Thus, to encourage the creation of these associations, the municipality offers immediate major renovation, rather than by 2015.

However, the functioning success of such associations is heavily dependent on the persons in charge. In the unlucky example of this particular building, which Alexander indicated was run by a '70 year-old woman who does not understand much.' As a result, the residents are not motivated.



Cooperative garden with straw details. Veshnyaki, Moscow



The pigeon house was build 30 years ago. The person who took the initiative to build the pigeon house was a school teacher who had to go through a lot of bureaucracy to be able to obtain the permit to build the little house. It was realized only due to the fact that he knew some people in the authorities at the time. Veshnyaki, Moscow



CULTIVATING



Garden canopy construction. Gldani, Tblisi



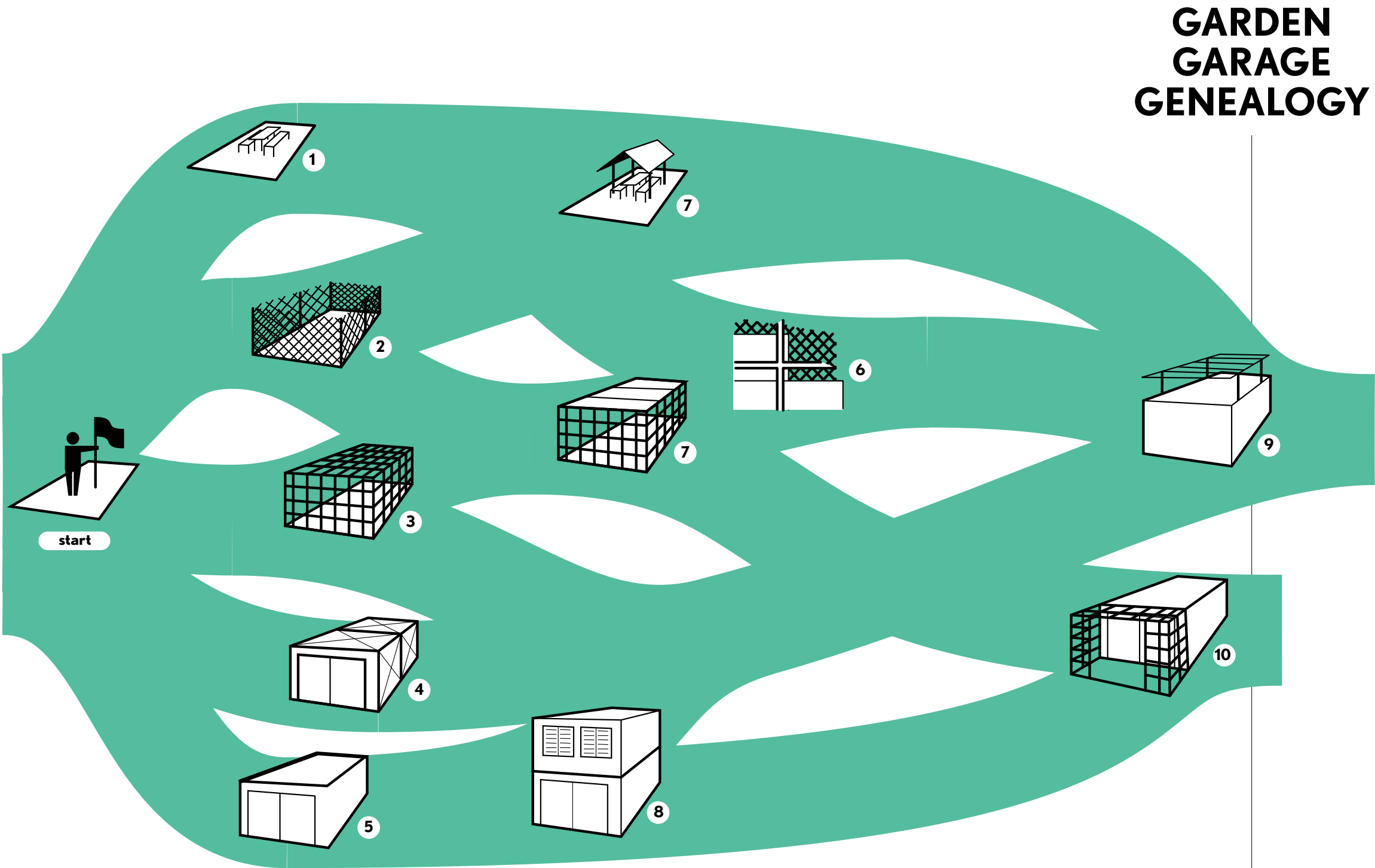
Garage agglomeration in a Gldani courtyard. Gldani, Tblisi



Just outside the microrayon there is garage compound that allows for more informal usage of space than in the microrayon courtyards of Veshnyaki. Here garages are used as workshops or evolve in more permanent dwellings. Veshnyaki, Moscow



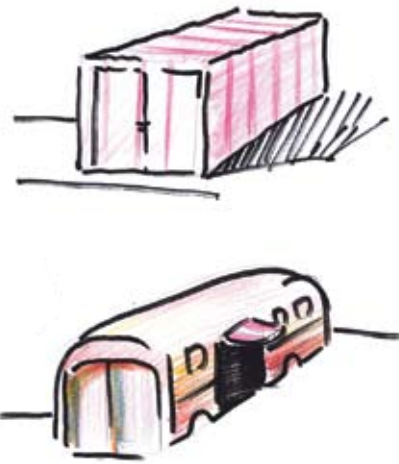
The microrayon hosts many services and trades as well as public spaces to create a pleasant, everyday life. Yet residents also desire to shape their environment in their own ways. They desire to garden, to create a place for family intimacy or a shelter from the sun. Others do not want their cars to be out in the open or wish to keep pets. The user strategies focused on claiming and redesigning public space in the microrayon in private ways is largely based on individual choice and desire to cultivate, beautify and shelter. The degree to which residents cultivate grows in relation to the boundaries of local policy.



GARDEN GARAGE GENEALOGY

4

METAL PREFAB /
OBJET TROUVÉ
TYPE



Most garages are prefabricated and come in one piece or as kits of metal plates that are assembled on site. Other prefabricated enclosures are objet trouves; in their previous lives they were a part of trucks, busses or train cars. These metal structures protect against sun and rain, keep things out of sight and can be locked. The majority of garages are of this type.

5

STONE / CONCRETE
TYPE

Stone garages are built individually by people themselves or through a contractor. Cooperatives or planning departments also built stone garages in rows. The advantage of the stone garage is that it can be extended with a second story later.

6

FILL UP
MUTATIONS

Fencing is added to make the cage openings smaller, or metal and plastic sheets are woven through the steel bars completely enclosing a structure.

7

COVERING
MUTATIONS

Protection against rain and sun is accomplished by putting a roof over picnic tables or by putting plates on top of the cages.

8

2ND STORY
MUTATIONS

If one has built a stone garage, the structure should be solid enough to support an additional story on top. This provides extra storage space, an extra garden or the whole structure can be converted into a small residence.

9

CANOPY
MUTATIONS

Canopies covered with vines can be attached to practically any structure providing shade to the garages and gardens. Even if structures already have a roof, these cool the garages below it down.

10

HYBRID
MUTATIONS



Various hybrids are also possible. For example, a small courtyard or garden can be added in front or back. The garage can serve many other functions: workshop, bar, store and can even evolve into a home. In a way these garage agglomerations are villages in their own right.



CLAIM
START

Appropriation of a piece of land by use. If someone has been using a spot to park in for a while then that space begins to belong to them.

1

BENCHES + TABLE
TYPE

Regarding a physical structure, like a picnic table and bench, one moves from ownership by use toward a structure that is collectively owned in the form of a 'right of use'.

2

FENCING
TYPE



Fencing a piece of land claims it for individual use. Light fencing is usually enough to create a private garden. The fence prevents others from walking across the land, thus protecting plants and crops. The fence also keeps animals in, like chickens or pets. An additional quality is that it provides a structure which is at first transparent and over time turns green. Metal meshwork provides a perfect structure for plants to easily grow upon, providing privacy as well as shade while not becoming extremely massive and closed.

3

CAGE
TYPE

The cage garage is more secure as the steel bars are thicker and usually the top of the cage is closed by bars. The cage is suitable for storing a car and other, more valuable belongings. While these are not directly protected from the sun or the rain, the cage can be locked and is hard to break into. Like fencing, the cage garage is still relatively transparent.

EXTENSION CATALOG

1

CLOSING BALCONIES

INTERNAL EXTENSION

A loggia or balcony is welcome additional space to an apartment. Such space is already owned by the resident, but when it is protected from rain and frost it's use value is increased appreciably.

2

STAIRWELL APPROPRIATION

INTERNAL EXTENSION

Stairwells are usually open and have generous dimensions. As they are adjacent to the apartment they provide an easy opportunity for extension. Depending on the floor plan of the block, these stairwells can function as dwelling or storage spaces.

3

ATTACHED GARDEN

GROUND FLOOR EXTENSION

Ground floor apartments have the disadvantage of being darker than those higher up, but ground floor residents are sometimes compensated with attached gardens. Windows are replaced by doors and steps are added to provide direct access from the apartment to the garden.

4

GROUND FLOOR

GROUND FLOOR EXTENSION

Bolder than an attached garden is the extension of the apartment outwards, adding a significant amount of space. There is also considerable freedom in design: one or two layers can be added, a front door entrance is an option, a terrace or space for a shop or professional practice.

5

STILTS

GROUND FLOOR EXTENSION

If one lives on the second floor, an extension can be put on stilts with an optional set of stairs to provide an additional entrance to the apartment.

6

EXTENDING BALCONIES

FACADE EXTENSION

If one does not live on the ground or first floor, one must be bold when extending living space. The cantilevering concrete floor plates of existing balconies provide the basis for construction. On top of these the extensions can be made.

7

CANTILEVER EXTENSIONS

FACADE EXTENSION

If you don't have existing balcony floor plates and all the loggias are closed up, one must build the entire extension construction oneself.

8

FRAME

FACADE EXTENSION

The most extreme extension are often referred to as 'vertical slums.' Built on frames installed by the state (between 1988 and 1992), inhabitants got the opportunity to extend their apartments at their own expense. The steel frame had the potential to increase the original apartment floor space by fifty percent. The safety of these frames vary; some are built without foundations which is necessary to support more than six floors.





Teimuraz Bochorishvili and Givi Shavdia, showing the dream version of a rayon plan on the right and what was executed on the left. Tblisi

THE MAKERS OF GLDANI

The architect of Gldani is Teimuraz Bochorishvili and the urban planner of Tblisi in the 70s when Gldani was built is named Givi Shavdia. Besides being an expert on the city's master plans from the Soviet era, Shavdia is also the architect of Tblisi's famous train station, currently redesigned by the Dutch office Zwarts & Jansma. And last but not least, he is the grandfather of Nutsa Nadareisvili, member of our research team.

Bochorishvili and Shavdia explained that Gldani was one out of 11 Microrayons built in Tblisi after the Second World War. Others were Vake, Saburtalo, Temqa, old Digomi, Mukhiani, Nutsubidzem Varketili, didi Digomi, Vashlijvari and Samgori. To give us an idea what this meant in terms of space, Shavdia presented us with some statistics: In 1968 Tblisi was inhabited by 863,000 people who were living on 7,843,000sqm. In 1985 the city was inhabited by 1,174,000 people who were living on 15,589,000sqm. Thus, the housing space almost doubled in 17 years! In 2000, finally, Tblisi was inhabited by 1,349,000 people plus 90,000 refugees from Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Chechnia. And the total housing space of the city counted 19,840,000sqm.

Bochorishvili and Shavdia showed us several masterplans of the Microrayon. Some were realized, others weren't. They explained that the space for their own creativity was limited to the green and social spaces, and the design of the street and transport system. The design of the buildings and the rules for a Microrayon were laid out in an 'album' or catalogue. The govern-

ment of the Soviet Republic of Georgia allowed very little or no artistic freedom to the architects. The rules for every Microrayon were that its size was 500 x 500 meters, it was bordered by streets, it had one middle alley, 1 school, 3 kindergartens, housing, green zones and social spaces. If an area did not contain these elements it was considered a 'block' instead of a Microrayon. Each Microrayon was supposed to house 12,000 inhabitants. According to the Soviet standards a nine storey building should have one elevator and a sixteen storey building should have two. The norms in the catalogue also specified the building materials.



Gldani just after it was finished

Gldani, built between 1968 and 1971 was a reaction to Saburtalo, an earlier Microrayon which consisted of many small houses. In addition, the masterplans took into account that fenced private yards are culturally very common in Tblisi. Moreover, in terms of design principles the transport system was very important. They realized a system with different

levels in which pedestrians were separated from public transport and other traffic through bridges which are connecting housing areas with social spaces. The area was meant to be inhabited by 47,000 people.

During the Soviet Union there were rules and norms which every architect in the whole union had to follow. But because of some regional originalities some of the norms could be changed by the local institutes (e.g. adding balconies to the houses) and afterwards sent to Moscow for approval. This was a centralized control system. All the projects were sent to Moscow for final approval. That's why all the masterplans of that period have Russian inscriptions.

DREAM VS. CATALOGUE

Architects Teimuraz Bochorishvili and Givi Shavdia told us about all the fights they had with the political regime of Soviet Georgia. During the communist era all citizens were considered equal and thus the creative voice of the architect was not especially appreciated in relation to the design of Microrayons. The rules of the catalog were followed very strictly.

Nevertheless, Shavdia explained that architects made attempts to convince the Soviet leaders of their creative skills and their ideas to improve the urban design. Personally, he made several alternative urban design plans for extensions to the city of Tblisi with circular curves and radials of which some were simply laughed off for being too expensive. Their dream scenarios remained paper fictions.

ALL THE PROJECTS WERE SENT TO MOSCOW FOR FINAL APPROVAL



Next to every apartment entrance there is a notice board where messages addressed to the apartment inhabitants are hanged. Veshnyaki, Moscow



TRADING

In the microrayon many types of goods and services are exchanged locally. These goods and services are closely linked to the needs, desires and conventions of the neighborhood and range from a loaf of bread to computer courses. Some exchanges are extraordinary: have you ever paid per elevator ride? Trading strategies go together with fairly simple communication strategies: posters with tear off phone numbers, the local radio station or newspaper. Informal kiosks provide seasonal services such as fruits and vegetables as well as ice cream.



Ice cream kiosk. Veshnyaki, Moscow



Variety kiosk made out of a shipping container. Gldani, Tblisi



Hairdresser's kiosk. Gldani, Tblisi



Tabacco kiosk. Veshnyaki, Moscow



Variety kiosk. Veshnyaki, Moscow



Bread kiosk. Gldani, Tblisi



Variety kiosk. Gldani, Tblisi



Ice cream kiosk. Veshnyaki, Moscow

POSTER ECONOMY

Dear residents

Many cars were put on fire recently. Please, don't ignore the parking rules: don't park on grass, next to the buildings and emergency exits.

Be alert!!! 

making clothes
for dogs
89261681772

"SKEPI" offers
We offer: restoration of "soft"
furniture, renovation according
to European design.

CHART	SHEET	SHEET	SHEET	SHEET	SHEET	SHEET	SHEET

WINDOWS -
setup,
installation of
antivirus
software



PRIVATE KINDERGARDEN

FOR kids 1-6 years

3568245

ANO

Kerosene
Shoe repair

COMPUTER ENGINEERING

WE ALSO TEACH INSTALLATION &
WORKING WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF
SYSTEMS AND SOFTWARE.

WE ALSO WORK ON SITE

898-397-392

WINDOWS PVC



TEL 589-432

WWW.VASTOKINA.RU

BILLPOSTERS

WANTED

WOMEN 30-60y.

daywork 200 post.

LAYING FLOORS AND
POLISHING

TEL: 639921, Mob. 899427979

-MAMUKA-

Only for Women

Varios types of depilation
High quality service
+ 100% guarantee.
No negative effects



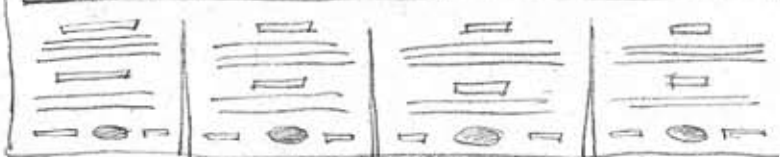
i-iceberg Whole Moscow

EMERGENCY REPAIR

WASHING MACHINES

• fridges • computers
• TV's • stitching machines

also 2
gokhje JVC



STEEL DOOR

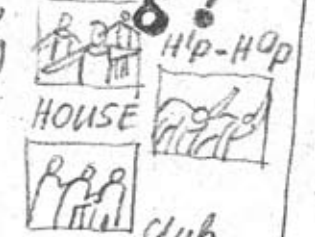


FIRE PROOF/
ENTRANCE/OFFICE
PORTICO/FENCES

Doors & Keys REPAIR

5081813 5081813 5081813 5181813
10:00-20: 10:00-20: 10:00-20: 10:00-20:

Spring! dancing!



club dance

Judicial

Help T. 8906-071-3

consultancy &
obtaining of
temporal **RESIDENCE**
PERMIT and

RUSSIAN CITIZENSHIP

UPHOLSTERING

OF FURNITURE

(495) 995 783

CHOICE OF FABRIC

RENOVATION

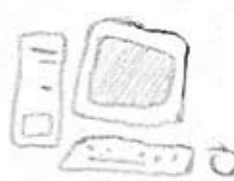
RENOVATION

WALLS FLOOR FREE
CEILING PLUMBING CHECK-UP
ELECTRICS

TEL: 926.30.40.305



**COMPUTER
HELP**



648-52-18

ON! ATTENTION! ATTENTION! ATTEN

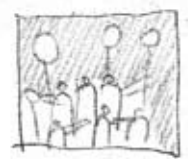


WE INVITE ALL RESIDENTS
to participate in our
festive activities

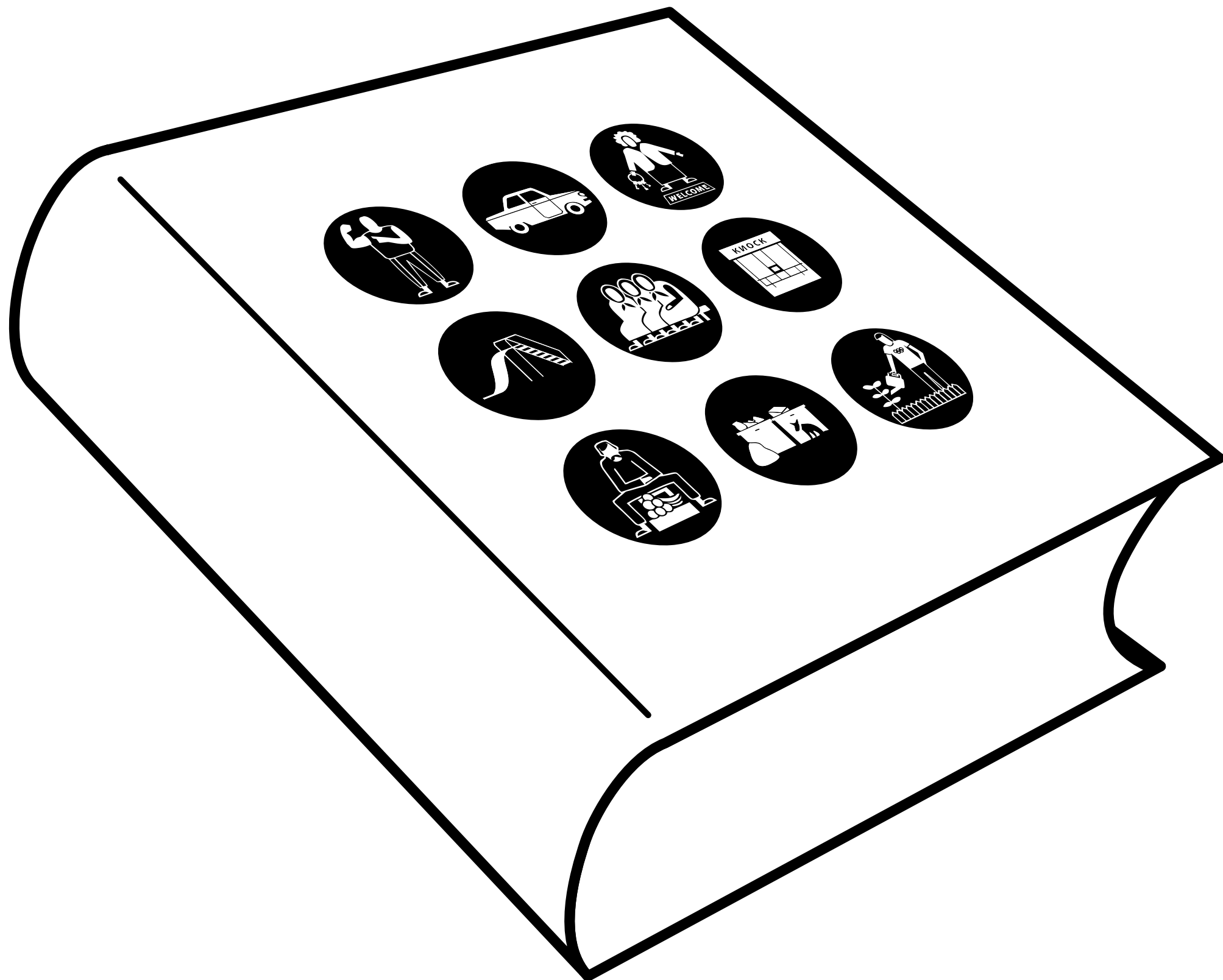
«Friendly little courtyard»

25th of June

Veshnyakovskaya
str, 9



MICRORAYON LIVING FROM AN INVENTORY OF EVERYDAY LIFE PRACTICE TO A SOCIAL HOUSING STRATEGY



NEXT STOP MOSCOW ARCHITECTURE BIENNALE 2010



Second Moscow Architecture Biennale: Modernisation

May 26 - June 25, 2010

In 2008, the first Moscow Architecture Biennale focussed on the question how to build new housing areas. Under the heading Kak Zhit ("How to live") it aimed at defining what the life in a new Russian Utopia should look like. Now both the financial crisis and the dangers of climate change have brought us back

to reality. Reality is that there is no money to pay for the vast investments in infrastructure that are needed to build new cities. Reality is that the existing Russian city is in bad need of repair, and will not become more sustainable by building a better city next to it. In the coming years or even decades, the task of architects and urbanists is not to build new cities on pristine land, but to deal with existing cities: cities that are often badly designed to start with, that are slowly falling apart, and that are inadequate for contemporary life. These are

wasteful cities - this is their major problem, but also the key to their revival. Modernisation can be financed by making the city more efficient: by reducing energy consumption, by increasing density, by restructuring open space and by developing a economical and social infrastructure that will create jobs and improve the quality of life. The Second Moscow Architecture Biennale aims at showing and discussing modernisation projects from other countries as well as strategies specifically developed for Russian cities.