

Tectonics of Affective Atmospheres.

Analysis of socio-spatial habitus of Moscow's Microrayons.

Ilia Anisimov - 210063

39,457 characters

69,092 characters including
captions, contents, bibliography, list
of illustrations, appendix

December 2022



Royal
Danish
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Urbanism &
Societal Change

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Paper Summary

Abstract

This paper explores the complexity of socio-spatial identity in the context of Moscow panel housing areas called microrayons. Through the deconstruction of lifetime of microrayons into four major states, this paper attempts to register and analyse a major shift in its socio-spatial composition. These shifts are reviewed through the lens of anthropology, encompassing the concept of affective atmospheres and their role in the formation of a sense of place. By reviewing standardised spaces of microrayons from this perspective, this paper attempts to understand how emotional connection with the space relates with the collective socio-spatial identity.



Figure 1. A view of Mariono Micraron, South-East of Moscow.

Microrayon

Introduction

Although modernist housing estates are present in many cities, they are particularly relevant to post-Soviet countries where the concept was elevated to its extreme in the form of Soviet “Microrayon.” A microrayon - (microdistrict in Russian) is a Soviet urban block based on functionalist principles of late modernism. Microrayons are housing areas which consist of multiple pre-fabricated housing buildings, usually with a central axis of services, educational and healthcare facilities, abundance of green space between the buildings, all bound by a set of highways connecting one microrayon to another and to the city centre (Snopek, 2015, p.14).

At first glance, a microrayon shares same characteristics of typical western modernist neighbourhood, commonly found in French or Dutch contexts. Yet the degree of repetitiveness, regularity and scale makes it stand out as a connecting urban tissue of post-Soviet cities, rather than singular satellite dormitory suburb. At the same time, the possibilities of the Soviet planned economy and totalitarian state allowed this typology to be implemented universally in all cities since the 1950s (Gunko, 2018, p. 290). As a result, today more than half of the Russian population lives in apartments in panel blocks which form microrayons built in the second half of the 20th century (Grigoryan et al., 2013, p. 238). Thus, with such a large number of people living in this typology

in Russia, the future of its cities will also depend on how microrayons will evolve.

Moscow microrayons particularly stand out due to city’s exceptionally big population of 15 mil. people and area of 2,511 km². Such conditions predisposed sizes and urban forms of typical Moscow microrayons, with most areas having their own population of 100k-200k people. Today almost 80% of Moscow housing stock consists of prefabricated panel blocks (Grigoryan et al., 2013, p. 258) forming microrayons (Figure 1).

Numerous research papers were conducted on the topic of renewal and rehabilitation of microrayons both in the Russian context (Erixon et al., 2012; Grigoryan et al., 2013) as well as in Eastern European countries (Monclus & Díez, 2016; van Kempen, 2005; Turkington et al., 2004). Most of the reviewed works on microrayons seems to cover spatial, economic, social and political aspects. This paper will attempt to analyse microrayons from a somewhat unusual perspective of emotions and connection with the space. By looking at microrayons through lens of anthropology, the research will try to record and evaluate links between emotional and spatial characteristics. Understanding these links may help guide towards reinforcement of the local identity and the sense of place¹ in microrayons.

1 - Sense of place is a particular emotional experience of a person stimulated by the spatial constraints of the person’s immediate surroundings (Steele, 1981, p. 11).

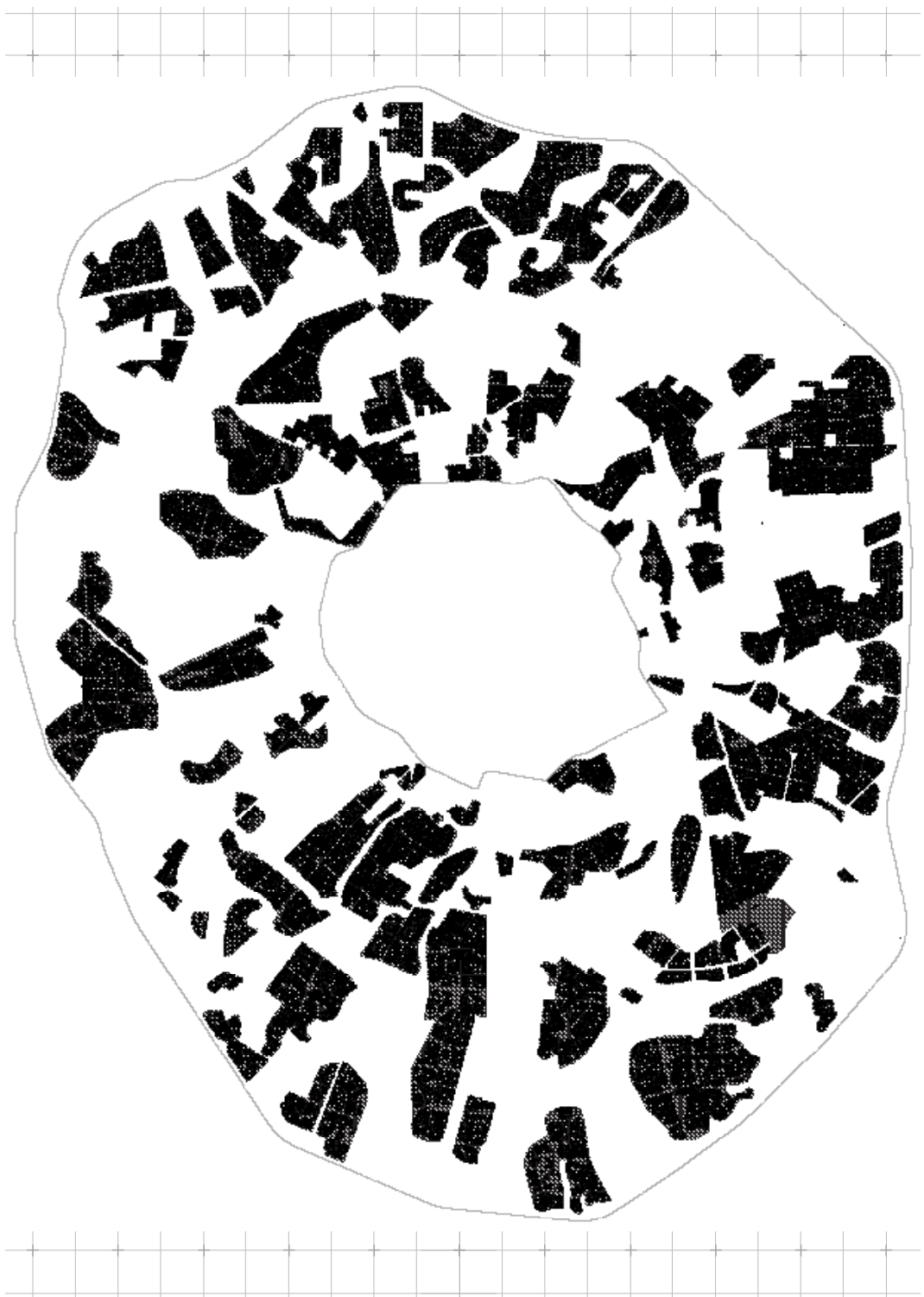


Figure 2. A map of panel block housing in the Moscow periphery
(Source: Grigoryan et al., 2013).

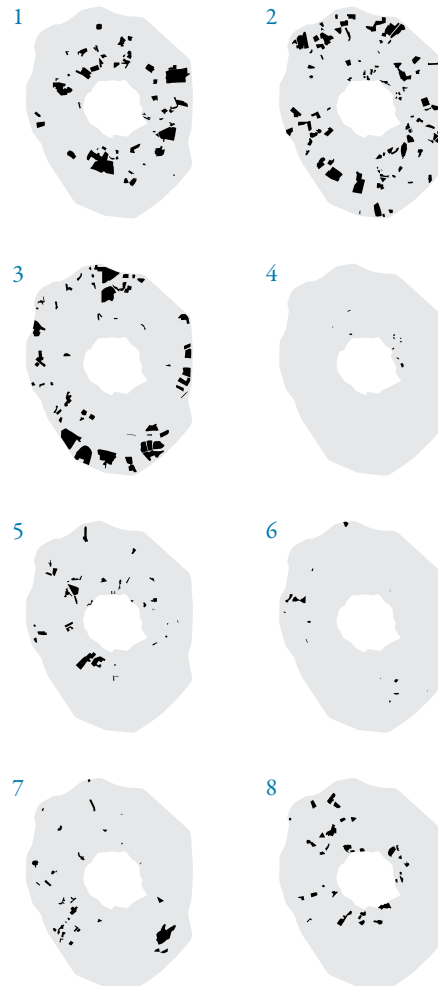
Moscow Periphery

Context

Landscape of the Moscow periphery is generally characterized by what local citizens call a “Sleeping District.” A sleeping district is an informal term for microrayons. It is used for a residential area of the city (usually in large metropolitan areas or in their suburbs), whose residents daily go to work in the city centre and return home to spend the night (hence the name).

At the end of the 20th century, the Moscow periphery was actively developing, resulting in dozens of microrayons being built on the site of demolished villages, which became part of the city from 1960 onwards. They were built up with standard panel houses from 9 to 22 floors high. Today, the prevailing housing typologies in this area consists of early-Soviet housing called ‘khrushchvkas’, as well as early and late series of panel housing, which together account for almost 80% of the housing stock (Grigoryan et al., 2013, p. 258).

Another important characteristic of the Moscow periphery is that 74% of the open space is largely available for the citizens in the daytime (Grigoryan et al., 2013, p. 248). This can be explained by large distances between microrayons as well as large number of transitional spaces within housing areas.



Figures 3.1-3.8. Distribution of housing typologies in the Moscow periphery (Source: Grigoryan et al., 2013).

- 1 - The 1st series of 5-storey ‘khrushchevkas’ (%) 22.1
- 2 - Early series of panel houses, 9-12 floors (%) 28.1
- 3 - Later series of panel houses, 14-22 floors (%) 27
- 4 - Workers settlements 1920–1930 (%) 0.4

- 5 - Stalin era housing (%) 7
- 6 - Villages — individual dwellings (%) 1.4
- 7 - Modern residential complex (%) 6.3
- 8 - Mixed-use (%) 7.7

The Sense of Place

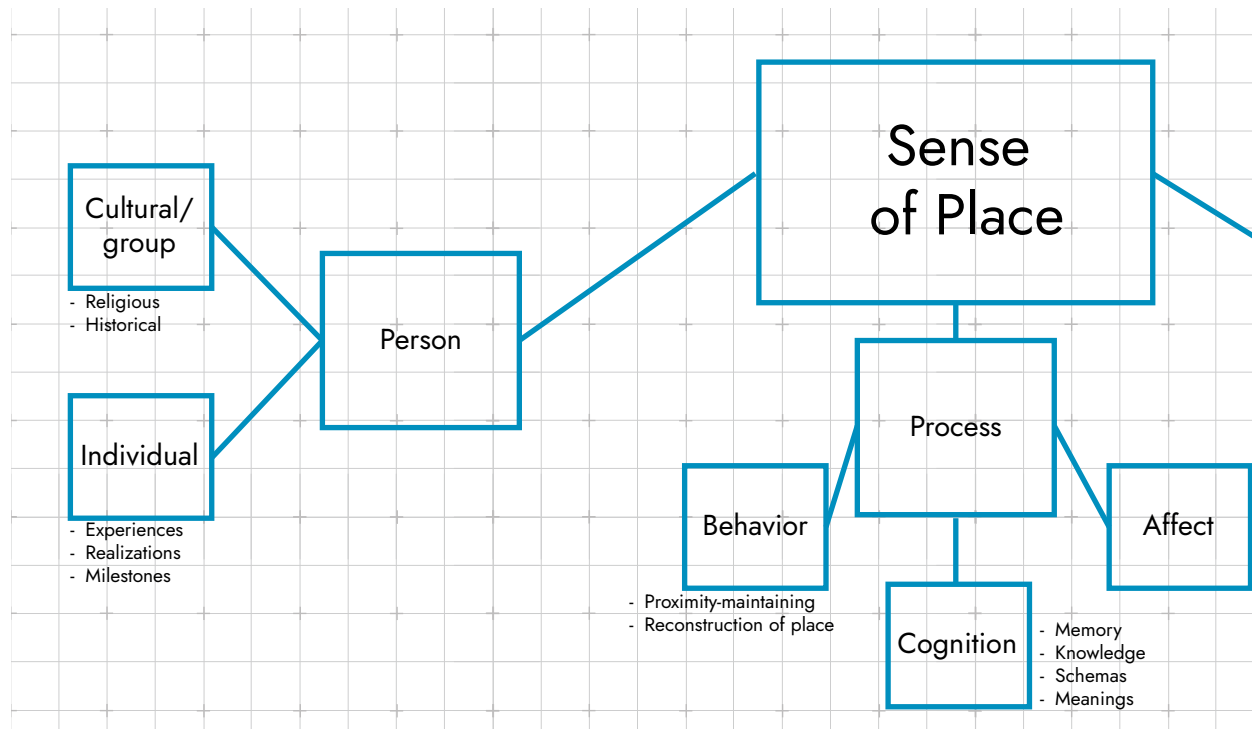
Research Problem & Theory

Moscow's microrayons have seen numerous transformations of the socio-spatial organization: from pre-Soviet villages to Soviet standardised housing; from spaces of planned economy to spaces of market economy; from declining Soviet buildings to contemporary high-rise towers. The research hypothesis assumes that these transitions, driven by various social, economic and political forces, had an integral effect on transformation of the sense of place within microrayons.

The sense of place has a particular importance to standardised spaces of microrayons.

Due to their uniformity and spatial anonymity, it is specifically the subjective projection of the cognitive perception which infills these standardised spaces with meaning (Snopek, 2015, p. 111).

A researcher and scholar of physical settings and behaviour change - Fritz Steele, in his book "The Sense of Place" theorises sense of place as a particular experience of a person in a particular spatial setting. Like this, the sense of place comprises of physical characteristics and cognitive and perceptual factors. The relationship between the physical characteristics and



cognitive perception (Figure 4) is what constitutes the sense of place (Steele, 1981, p. 12).

German philosopher in the fields of aesthetics, and philosophical anthropology Gernot Böhme theorises this relationship as affective atmospheres. The atmospheres, as he describes, are affective states of being and perception, stimulated by socio-spatial constraints in which they are situated (Böhme, 2017, p. 6). Like Steele, Böhme explains: “Atmosphere is what relates objective factors and constellations of the environment with my bodily feeling in that environment. This means: atmosphere is what is in between, what mediates the two sides” (Böhme, 2017, p. 2). Since atmospheres mediate between objective and subjective, material and immaterial, they are thus subject to a change due to transformation of social and spatial contexts. Like this, atmospheres can be produced, reproduced, and

replaced both intentionally and unintentionally. The production of atmospheres is driven by stimulation of cognitive patterns by specific spatial constraints in which the physical body is situated (Böhme, 2017, p. 130).

This research attempts to identify and register the socio-spatial drivers which stimulated production of atmospheres at various points of microrayons lifespan. By registering the changes in atmospheres, the research will then attempt to evaluate the effects of these changes on the collective sense of place.

Analysing immaterial qualities such as atmospheres and sense of place can be seen as a vague practice and thus requires clear explanation of methodology (Abusaada 2020; Kung, 1977; Muminovic, 2015). Direct analysis of atmospheres per se seems to be unachievable, as some authors mention that affective atmospheres fall beyond any measurable or liable shape (Hasse, 2014). Due to the dichotomy of the concept of atmospheres mediating in between subjective and objective, the research will use both social and spatial analysis. Social analysis will evaluate societal shifts in the context of microrayons. This will be done via a review of historic documents as well as interviews of current and ex-residents of a selected case study. Spatial analysis will cover transformations in physical conditions throughout the lifespan of microrayons.

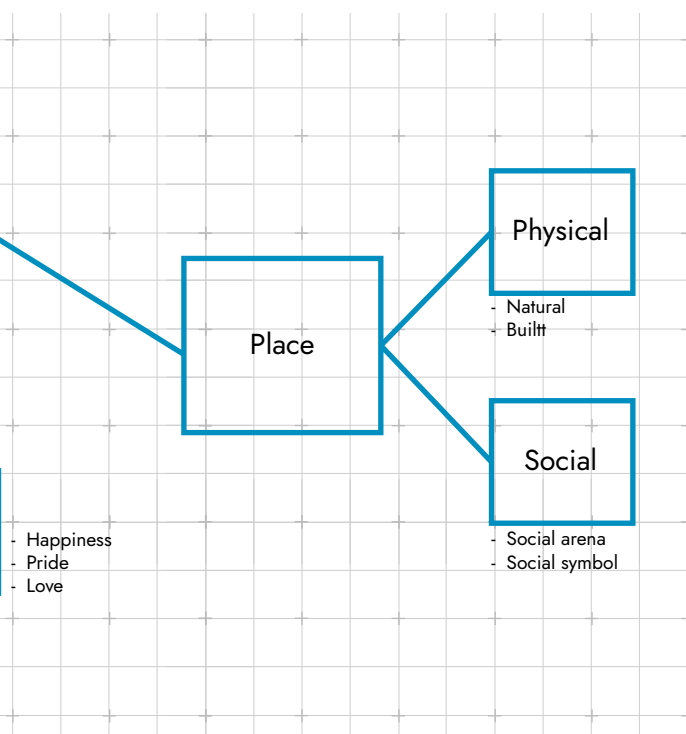
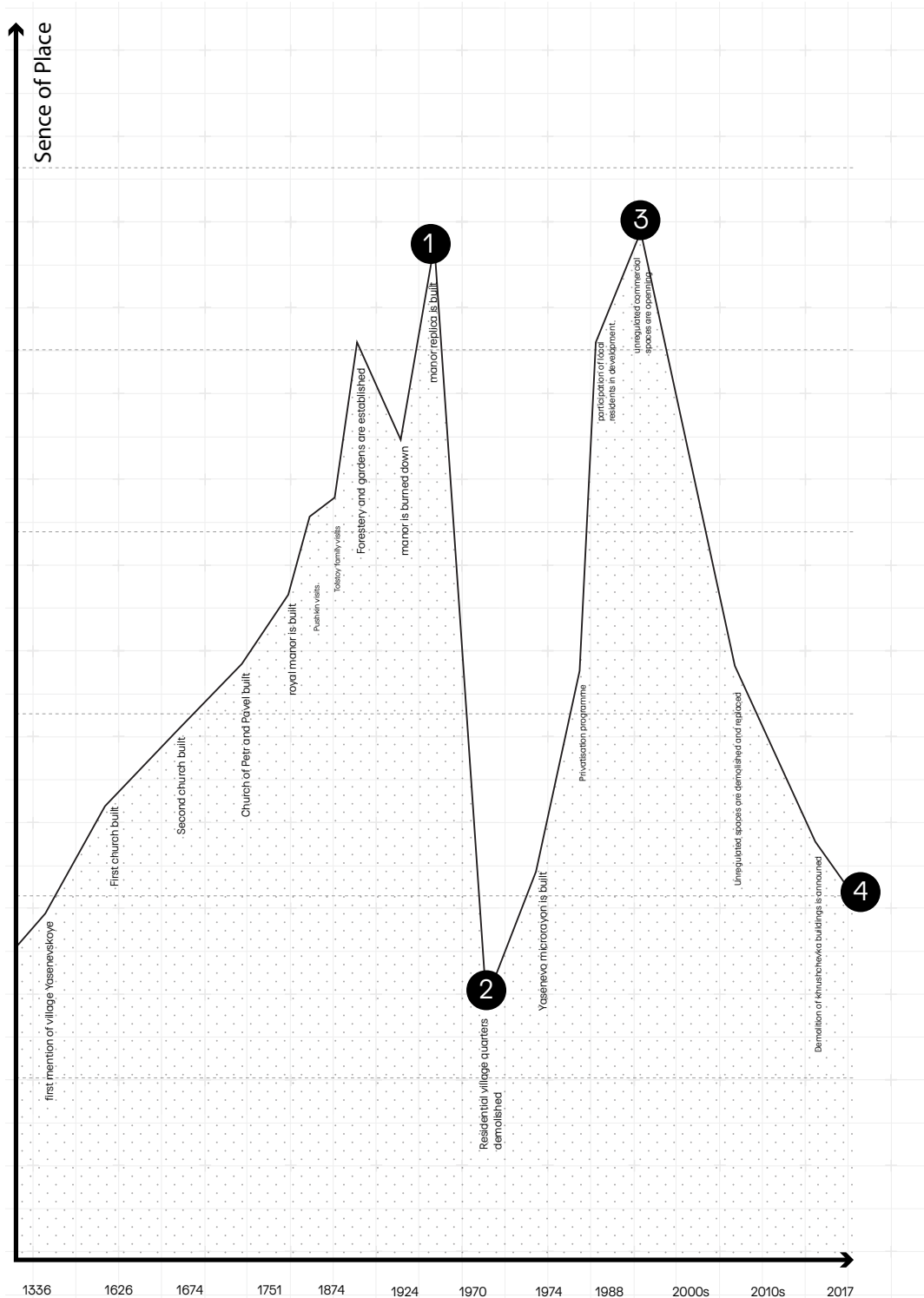


Figure 4. Sense of place diagram showing relation between social and spatial dimensions. (Source: Scannell and Gifford, 2010, edited by author)



Four States of Microrayon

Analysis

The hypothesis of this research assumes that major changes in socio-spatial organisation of Moscow's microrayons had a direct effect on the collective sense of place of its residents. The analysis part will evaluate this assumption based on a case study of a selected Moscow microrayon - Yasenevo. Figure 5 illustrates research hypothesis based on this selected case. Major socio-spatial transformations of Yasenevo microrayon are mapped on two axis of time and sense of place. It is important to state that this figure should be seen as an illustrative demonstration of the research assumption and not as a representation of qualitative or quantitative data.

The analysis will look closer at four major instances of microrayon in four subsequent chapters. Each of these chapters will address a major transformation of socio-spatial organisation of microrayons and thus a major transformation of a sense of place.

The first chapter "**A space of Preservation**" will cover a brief overview of the pre-Soviet history of Moscow microrayons. This chapter will evaluate socio-spatial characteristics of villages which were later replaced with microrayons.

The next chapter "**A space of Standardisation**" will cover Soviet principles for establishing new socio-spatial habitus via mass construction of pre-fabricated housing and socialist order in society.

The third chapter "**A space of Privatisation**" will look into the transition from Soviet state-owned housing to privatised housing in post-Soviet market economy. This chapter will evaluate the effect of privatisation on residents' attachment to the place and their involvement in spatial practices.

Finally, the concluding chapter "**A space of Regulation**" will look into contemporary measures, which are being implemented in microrayons. This chapter will investigate contemporary spatial practices guided by new legislations and regulations.

Figure 5 (Left). The research hypothesis diagram showing 4 points of major states of a selected case study - Yasenevo microrayon:

- 1 - **A Space of Origination** - Pre-Soviet village state
- 2 - **A Space of Standardization** - Early Soviet microrayon state
- 3 - **A Space of Privatization** - Late Soviet microrayon state during privatization years
- 4 - **A Space of Regulation** - Post Soviet microrayon state during current days regulations



Figure 6 (Top) - Prospekt Mira, near the house 173, 1963

Figure 7 (Bottom Left) - Plowmen of the village of Semenovskoye against the backdrop of new buildings on the street of Architect Vlasov, 1965

Figure 8 (Bottom Right) - At the Trinity Church in Konkovo, 1969

A Space of Origination

State 01: Pre-Soviet Period

Moscow microrayons stand out as unique cases since most of them inherited their geographical location as well as their names from pre-Soviet villages located in the periphery of the city. The most active redevelopment of these lands started in line with the construction of Moscow Ring Road (MKAD) in the 1960s (Gunko, 2018, p. 289). Residents of villages were offered apartments in newly built panel housing and vacant wooden barracks were then replaced with prefabricated concrete housing (Figures 6-8). The density of such areas thus dramatically increased from around 1000 residents per village to 100 000+ residents per microrayon.

This chapter will evaluate socio-spatial characteristics of a pre-microrayon state of Yasenevo by reviewing historic mentions and analysing its spatial conditions.

Yasenevo village was located in a rural landscape outside of old Moscow. First mentions of the village date back to the 13th century. Yasenevo appealed to the tsars and since 16th century it accommodated a royal manor (Korobko, 2014, p. 21). For many centuries the manor was owned by rulers and members of their families (e.g. Ivan IV the Terrible, Boris Godunov, Peter I (Korobko, 2014, p. 21)). It was first mentioned in the spiritual charter of the Grand Duke of Moscow Ivan Danilovich Kalita dated 1338, in which, according to the division of property between his sons, the "village of Yasinovskoye" went to the third, youngest son. In the document, the property is mentioned as a village, which means there was

a church in it (Kuchkin, 1989, pp. 221-222).

According to the census book of 1646, there was a single-domed wooden church, "a boyar yard covered with boards, a stable yard, a cattle yard and 26 peasant yards ... 65 male souls" (Kuchkin, 1989, pp. 221-222). By the middle of the 19th century Yasenevo was one of the largest Russian villages. In 1874 there were 119 households, and ten years later - one and a half hundred with 639 inhabitants (313 males and 326 females). There were men's and women's schools, six peasant shops, and a small brick factory (Korobko, 2014, p. 47).

In the middle of the 17th century, the village was considered large and rich. Yards of the village Yasenevo were distinguished by good quality and good condition. But it was the gardens that gave them their real value. What kind of gardens these were can be judged from the description of inventory of the beginning of the 18th century: "On both sides of the manor's fence, a huge orchard with an area of 3.5 dessiatines with ponds... 1800 apple trees of all kinds, hundreds of plums and cherries. In the orchard there is a small flower garden planted with currants on four sides." (Korobko, 2014, p. 53). Architecturally Yasenevo Manor was a baroque monument with its characteristic splendour, but also a certain traditionalism (Korobko, 2014, p. 53). This is evidenced by the French regular, park (now heavily overgrown), and the composition of the "court d'honneur" - an artistically arranged manor front yard.

Overall, Yasenevo village along with other

adjacent settlements exhibits a long and fairly rich history both culturally and spatially. Numerous parks, gardens, farms and orchards along with small manufacturing facilities and hundreds of peasant yards - all formed a unique spatial character of the place. At the same time, a strong association of this place with multiple royal families which owned it throughout its lifetime constitutes its social and cultural habitus.

Thus, Yasenevo socio-spatial characteristics can be summarised as ones of productive agriculture, royal families' presence, traditional parks and gardens, religious practices and architecturally rich character of churches and the manor.

Yasenevo village over the time of its exist-

ence accumulated a range of socio-spatial characteristics which constantly enforced its sense of place. Its geographical location stimulated a development of spacious parks, farms and orchards. Architectural qualities of the royal estate in Yasenevo and adjacent villages determined spatial atmospheres of these areas. At the same time, numerous peasant yards formed a spatial atmosphere of residential quarters. Social character was heavily determined by association of the place with numerous royal families. Overall, socio-spatial characteristics of Yasenevo village accumulated over 7 centuries constituted its history and identity. Both spatial qualities and cultural projections of actors who accommodated the lands formed a specific sense of place.

Figure 9 (Bottom). A view on residential quarters of the Yasenevo village next to artificial lakes.



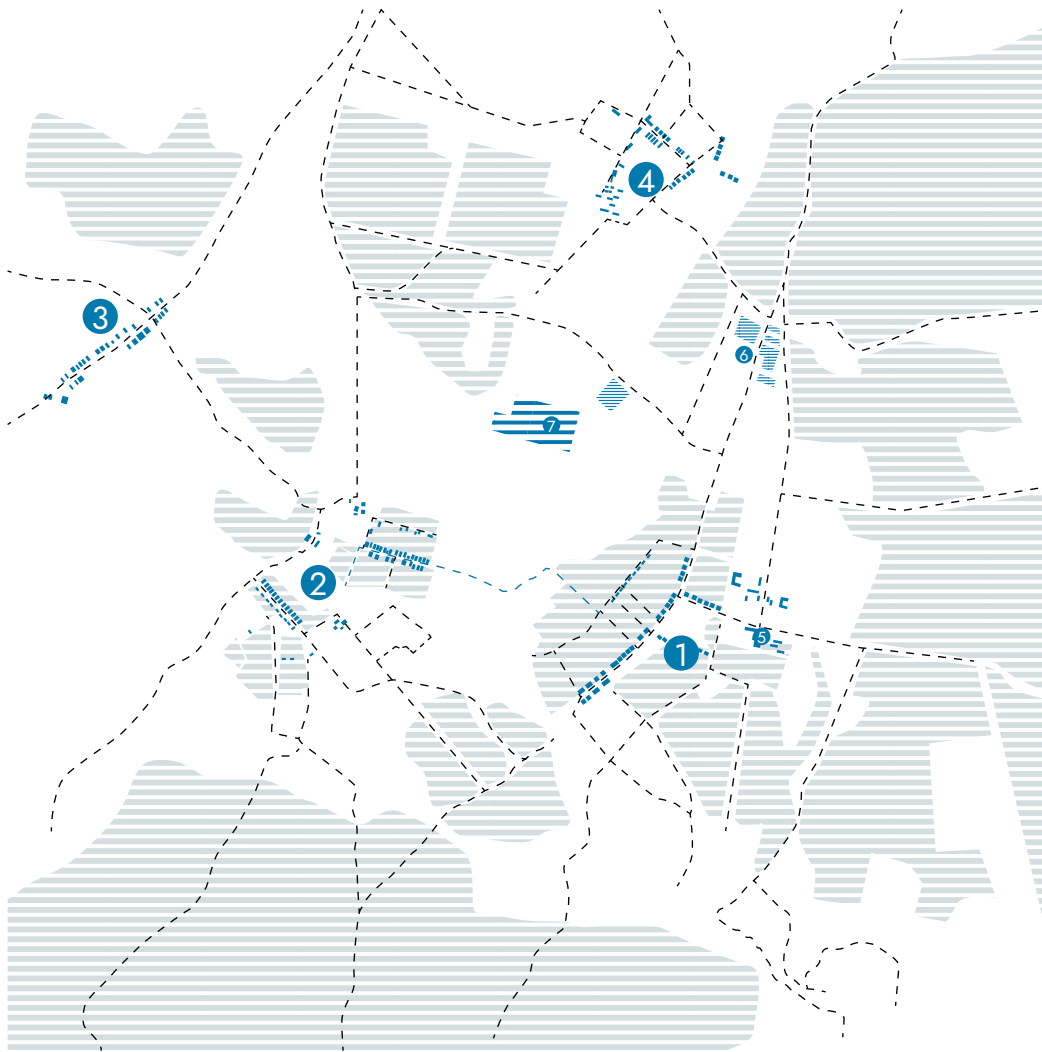


Figure 10 (Top). A diagram map of Yasenevo village 1950s showing its spatial organisation.

- 1 - **Yasenevo village**
- 2 - **Maloye Golubino village**
- 3 - **Tepliy Stan village**
- 4 - **Uzkoeye village**
- 5 - **Yasenevo manor**
- 6 - **Brick factory**
- 7 - **Manufacturing facility** (Unknown function)

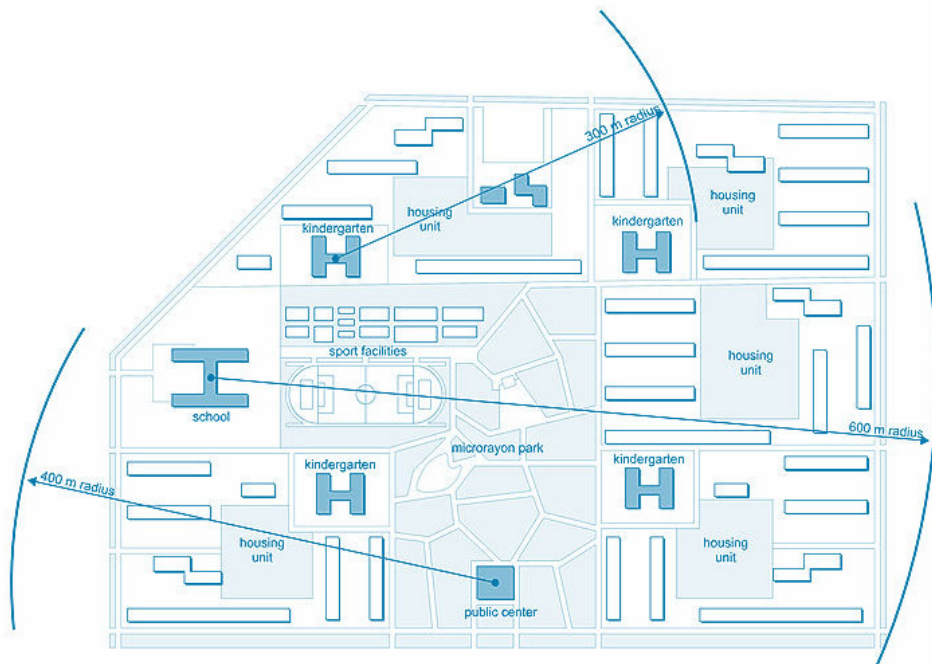


Figure 11 (Top) - Scheme of a typical Soviet microrayon.

Figure 12 (Bottom Left) - Construction of "Khrushchevkas" in Moscow, 1960s

Figure 13 (Bottom Right) - View of Yasenevo microrayon.

A Space of Standardisation

State 02: Early-Mid Soviet Period

In the first years after the revolutions of 1917, the first noticeable transformation of Soviet housing stock began with a “housing redistribution” programme. All rich apartments, which were considered those where the number of residents was less than the number of rooms were requisitioned (Attwood, 2012, p. 903). Most of social and financial barriers were removed and industrialisation policies were intensified. This led to more people moving into cities from suburbs. Like this, around 500 000 new people were relocated to Moscow city centre and the percentage of working families within the Moscow central area raised from 5 to 50% in just 3 years from 1917 to 1920 (Isayev, 2009, p. 228). The existing housing stock did not fit the new social conditions, rich apartments which made up a significant part of the living space, could only be inhabited on a communal basis (multiple families sharing one apartment). At the same time, new mass construction required high costs and technical solutions, which were not yet developed. Thus, communal apartments (kommunalki) became a major part of housing stock in cities.

Early Soviet housing experiments were focused on ways of developing new forms of social and spatial organisation which would fit the direction of the socialist principles of Soviet order. Like this, perhaps the most notable example of that approach was the Narkomfin building by M. Ginzburg. The building was designed to test new ways of habitation to adapt to the transitional period from a cap-

italist society to the socialist one. The principles infused into its design were meant to create new atmospheres of communal living. Like this, socio-spatial qualities of the building were focused on promoting a gradual transition from self-centred individualistic lifestyle to new and progressive communal socio-spatial organisation. Narkomfin building is considered an embodiment of the concept of “Social Condensers” of early Soviet architecture. Social Condensers were meant to socio-spatially transform a “self-centred individual of capitalist society into a whole man, the informed militant of socialist society” (Bowlit & Kopp, 1985).

Like this, early Soviet housing architecture was focused on transformation of the social habitus by producing new affective spatial character which was meant to gradually transform the lifestyle of the past. This strategy was applied not only to the city centre, where most of the new experimental housing solutions were implemented, but also to the city periphery later on. However, the early attempts of intentional programming of new social organisation via architectural design, were not so evident in later years.

The growth of the country’s population by almost 40 million people, the continuous influx of labour into the cities, the need for the ongoing replacement of the old housing stock required mass construction. Although, standardised mass construction inevitably transformed the social habitus of the places where it was implemented, it had a more evident effect

on transformation of the spatial organisation.

Pre-Soviet villages used to develop naturally over hundreds of years. The socio-spatial qualities of these places, as covered in the previous chapter, determined a specific sense of place perceived by the residents and the visitors. The mass construction programme of the later Soviet years was driven by forces of industrialisation, standardisation and prefabrication. This meant that the accumulated socio-spatial habitus of pre-Soviet villages had to be replaced with a habitus of a new socialist society and standardised built environment.

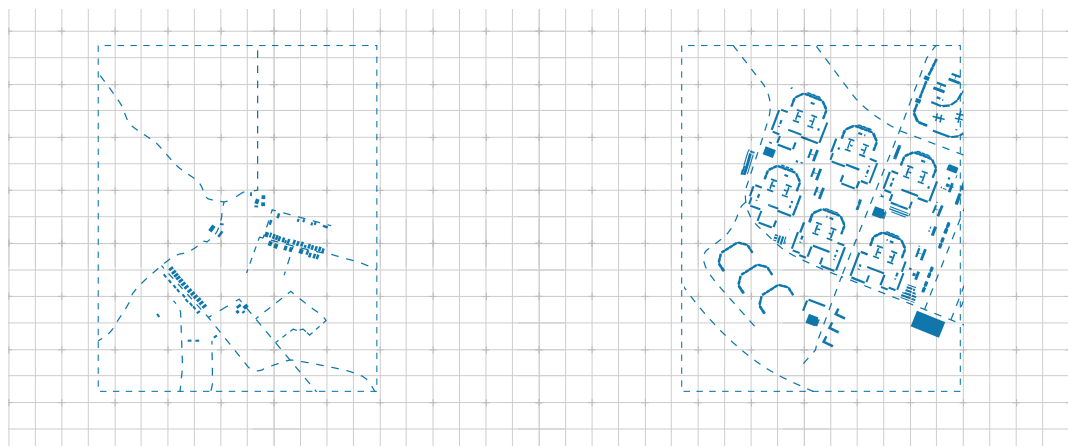
Yasenevo microrayon is an example of late Soviet mass construction of the outer periphery of Moscow. The project design of the area completely redeveloped the built form, infrastructure, and population density. Its geographical conditions were on the other hand incorporated into its design. Like this, natural hills, forest areas and multiple artificial lakes were mostly preserved. Yet, the dominant part of the built structures was demolished and replaced with panel block housing. Only the most important architectural objects were preserved, like the royal estates of Yasenevo and

Uzkoe villages. However, the sense of place of the entire area changed dramatically. Orchards and parks around the estates today accommodate high-rise panel blocks and car parking.

Individual elements in the Yasenevo microrayon still have a capacity to remind of the previous spatial habitus. The artificial lakes which were dug in 18th century close to the residential axis of the village still remain in place (Figures 15,16), yet without knowing its history, it is impossible to say that this place was once a social core of the village.

Overall, the result of mass construction was almost a complete loss of socio-spatial habitus of pre-Soviet villages. New standardised built form was yet to be populated with hundreds of thousands of new residents, who would then produce new atmospheres via their presence in this new spatial environment. These new atmospheres would then shape a new sense of place, which will however, not necessarily represent the socialist ideals which were intended in its conceptual design. What was once seen as “social condensers” meant to stimulate communal living, in the late years of Soviet planning became standardised individual housing.

Figure 14. Typology comparison of Yasenevo village and Yasenevo microrayon.



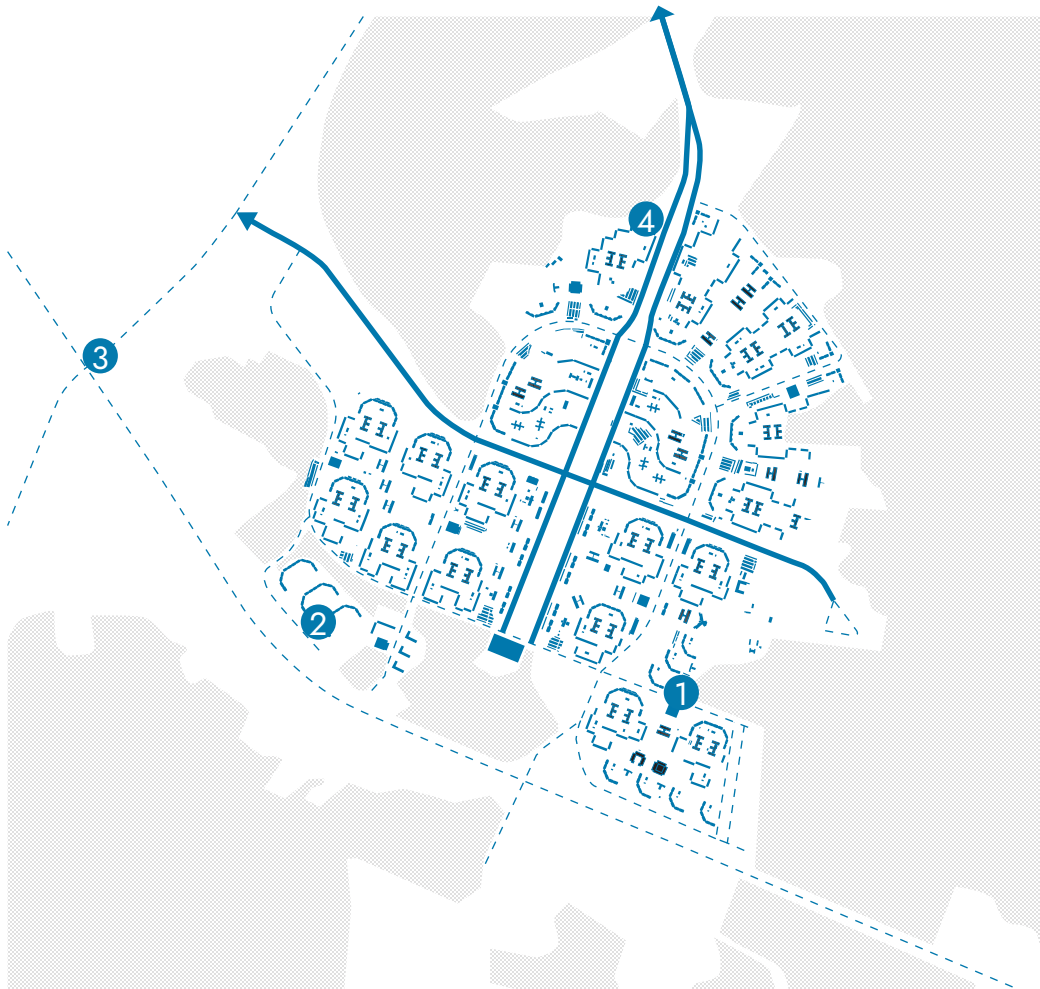


Figure 15 (Top). A diagram plan showing spatial organisation of Yasenevo microrayon.

- 1 - **Yasenevo village** - now Paustovskiy St.
- 2 - **Maloye Golubino** - now Golubinskaya St.
- 3 - **Tepliy Stan village** - now Profsouznaya St
- 4 - **Uzkoye village** - now park Uzkoeye



Figure 16 (Left). A view on residential quarters of the Yasenevo village next to artificial lakes.

Figure 17 (Right). A view on residential quarters of the Yasenevo microrayon next to artificial lakes.



Figure 18 (Top) - Moscow in spring. Subbotnik on the street, 1963



Figure 19 (Bottom Left) - Students plant trees during subbotnik, 1984.



Figure 20 (Bottom Right) - Subbotnik in Moscow. Schoolchildren and teachers plant trees in the park, 1964

A Space of Privatisation

State 03: Late-Soviet Period

The transition from Soviet socialism to post-Soviet market economy brought many changes to the housing market. One of which was the process of privatisation of housing. In the Soviet era, 80% of housing was state owned, yet in less than a decade this became almost 85% of housing becoming privately owned (Attwood, 2012, p. 903). The majority of new owners acquired their property free of charge due to the government's decision to transfer the ownership from the state to tenants. There were numerous effects of the privatization on people's perception of their living environment (Attwood, 2012, p. 903), yet it is important to look into preconditions of this change first.

An architect and a city planner Oscar Newman developed a Defensible Space Theory in 1972. According to his theory, various actors should be clearly aware of their areas of responsibility within a living environment. Residents are responsible for their private spaces (dwelling, private gardens), plot owners are responsible for building blocks and common yards, municipalities are responsible for local commercial and civic infrastructure, public network and so on (Figure 21). When the area falls in-between of these realms it becomes un-

certain for all actors who should be responsible for its maintenance (Newman, 1976).

Spaces of Moscow microrayons, like any of other large housing estate found elsewhere in the world, faced problems of falling in between of areas of responsibility. Large unprogrammed open spaces faced a risk of becoming what Newman calls no-man's land - a space which neither residents nor dwelling owners associate with (Newman, 1976). Yet, what differentiated microrayons from typical western large housing estates, was the socialist societal order in which they were situated. Even at the dawn of Soviet era, people participated in communal activities, like planting trees, growing gardens and cleaning streets. People would gather together during subbotniks (days of volunteer unpaid work of upkeeping public spaces) to clean their yards, plant trees and do other activities for maintaining their living environments (Figures 18-20). This chapter will investigate main drivers for residents' involvement in spatial practices as well as its effects on formation of the sense of place within the newly formed spatial fabric of microrayons. The following text is partly based on an interview with the resident of Yasenevo microrayon who moved there shortly after its construction.

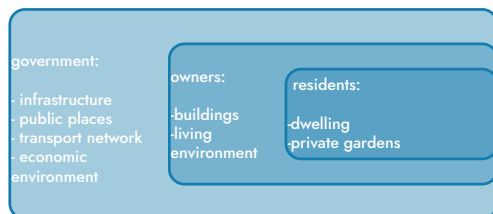


Figure 21 (Left) - A conceptual diagram of the Defensible Space Theory showing three areas of responsibility in the living environment. (made by author).



Interview extracts - Respondent 01: ex-resident of Yasenevo microrayon, female, about 70 years old, lived in Yasenevo since 1970-2000s

What was the situation when you moved in?

When we moved in there was only the first block, and ours. Here, there was nothing else, everything was still being built. There was clay and mud everywhere. There was a supermarket, but there were no kindergartens, nothing had been built yet. And in the fall, the fifth block was already built across the road, and a kindergarten was opened there.

How much did you know about the village that was there.

This is what I don't know. Nothing was left during construction. There was one house, across the road into the forest. But when we moved in, there were no more houses there. And we never met any locals.

How has social life changed in the area since you moved there?

Gradually everything changed. As the infrastructure began to be built, it got better and better every year. Clubs, cinemas appeared, a department store was built.

Did the people themselves try to build things around?

We gathered on subbotniks, planted trees. In our yard we planted all the trees back then. There was an alley [planted by municipality], but we planted the rest.

When first residents started to move in the newly built Yasenevo microrayon there was almost no amenities and public places in the area (Respondent 1). Many spaces were still under construction and there was not much left of the old village. Most of these undeveloped areas fell into a “no-man’s land” according to Newman’s categorisation. These places usually end up being areas of desolation since it is unclear who should be responsible for their maintenance. Yet, from the interview of an ex-resident, who moved to Yasenevo shortly after its first block was built, it becomes clear

that unlike usual scenario, these undefined spaces became a scene for communal involvement. As she describes, local residents grouped up and contributed to the development of their yards during subbotniks.

Another study of the socio-spatial organisation in the context of Yasenevo shows same findings. Alarushkina S. et al. describe in their paper “To see the invisible: In search of local identity of Yasenevo area in Moscow.” that a large number of children who moved with their parents to the newly built district, in the process of growing up gradually symbolically

appropriated the district for themselves. This is supported by the interview extract: “We built our own sandboxes, benches, swings - all with our own hands. No DEZ [municipality], no one helped us. It was very dear to us, we always took care of it” (female, about 60 years old, lives in Yasenevo since 1978. (Alarushkina et al., 2019, p. 150).

Like this, the new sense of place was establishing in microrayons. Unprogrammed green spaces, gradually started to produce new qualities as a result of local residents volunteer participation in their upkeep. As a result, anonymous and standardised streets, yards, and other transitional spaces started to fill with small communal artifacts. Some people would start a garden by their window, others would make makeshift playgrounds, some would plant trees. Most of these activities were not regulated, yet due to a lack of provided social infrastructure, products of these activities were not removed or restricted.

With time, residents’ participation in developing their yards resulted in production of varying qualities for these spaces. Most yards would have some unique spatial artefacts. These artefacts, such as gardens, drying racks, self-made dovecotes, would define anonymous spaces between the buildings with a meaning for local residents. Overall, years of privatization were not only limited to a formal transition from state-owned dwellings to private ownership. During these years residents actively participated in informal privatization of outdoor spaces.

It is also specifically at this period of time when microrayons saw the most amount of social movements. Kuba Snopek in his book provides an example of a Bulldozer Demonstration in Belyaev micro rayon. The demonstration against a battle with formalism and abstract art under Khrushchev regime took place

in Belyaev in 1974. It was immediately destroyed by militia and bulldozers and it then acquired a strong symbolical meaning for Belyaev (Snopek, 2015, p. 34).

The research of Moscow Periphery by Meganom similarly suggests that “representatives of the creative class” have a capacity of infilling anonymous spaces with unique values. The chapter “Static and Fluid in the Moscow Urban Fringe” by Alexey Levinson argues that “This kind of social formation exists only within those moments when people collectively venture to go beyond the political routine and create an action like demonstration, physically fill the city space” (Grigoryan et al., 2013, p. 350).

Overall, it can be argued that the period of late Soviet years was crucial for the formation of a new and strong sense of place in microrayons. It is at this point in time when local actors started to inhabit the originally standardised spaces. Communal work, creative movements, demonstrations and informal privatisation resulted in a reinforced attachment to the place.



Figure 22 (Top) - Dismantling of kiosks in Moscow

Figure 23 (Bottom Left) - Demolition of dovecote in Beskudnikovo, Moscow

Figure 24 (Bottom Right) - Demolition of early series of "khrushchyovkas" in Moscow

A Space of Regulation

State 04: Post-Soviet Period

In the last decade Moscow microrayons saw a noticeable influx of new investment for maintenance, renewal and new developments. These new measures cover a wide spectrum of procedures, starting with replacement of unregulated kiosks (Figure 22) all around the city and ending with a demolition of thousands of panel buildings which are now experiencing a physical decline (Figure 24). Yet, the result of these regulations was not only that new public amenities were being provided in microrayons, but also that spontaneous artefacts of socialist society as well as privatisation years are being removed and replaced. Like this, makeshift playgrounds built by residents started to get replaced with new playgrounds, similar to those found in any other microrayon subject to renovation. Unmaintained areas started to redevelop, neglecting communal artefacts left from previous socio-spatial habitus.

Overall, Moscow microrayons saw yet another change of their socio-spatial habitus, this time due to an attempt to regulate the spaces, bring them to same design codes and get rid of unregulated makeshift structures. This strategy perhaps works very well in the context of the historical centre, where the products of cultural heritage should not be obstructed by chaotic advertisement, numerous kiosks and poor-quality street furniture. Design code is a common solution to regulate places where there should be little to no obstruction to the culturally significant spaces and buildings. Yet, when applied to microrayons, design codes result in an even stronger standardisation of the

spaces. Once anonymous yards and streets of microrayons were infilled with communally produced objects during late-Soviet years. In recent decades, new regulations aim to standardise these spaces once again, and by doing so, they often neglect the naturally built character.

This is not to say that every makeshift bench, every illegally constructed kiosk should be kept as is. On the contrary, it is clear from conducted interviews of current residents (presented later in the chapter) that the physical condition of these aging communal spaces was deteriorating and as time passed, people were no longer feeling responsible for the areas outside their homes. Increasing actions of municipalities meant that the no-man's land which was once claimed by residents, now is being maintained and developed by state bodies. As a result, local residents were not participating in microrayons' development as much as they used to a couple decades ago.

Although state participation in microrayon developments resulted in less active participation of its local residents, the physical quality of the spaces clearly improved. What was once an unprogrammed, overgrown field now became a park with pavement. What was once a chaotic market/bazaar became a mall. Understandably new regulated spaces brought with them security, better maintenance and improved cleanliness of physical spaces. However, not much attention seems to be focused on what was lost in the process of regulation and what effect this loss has on microrayons' sense of place.

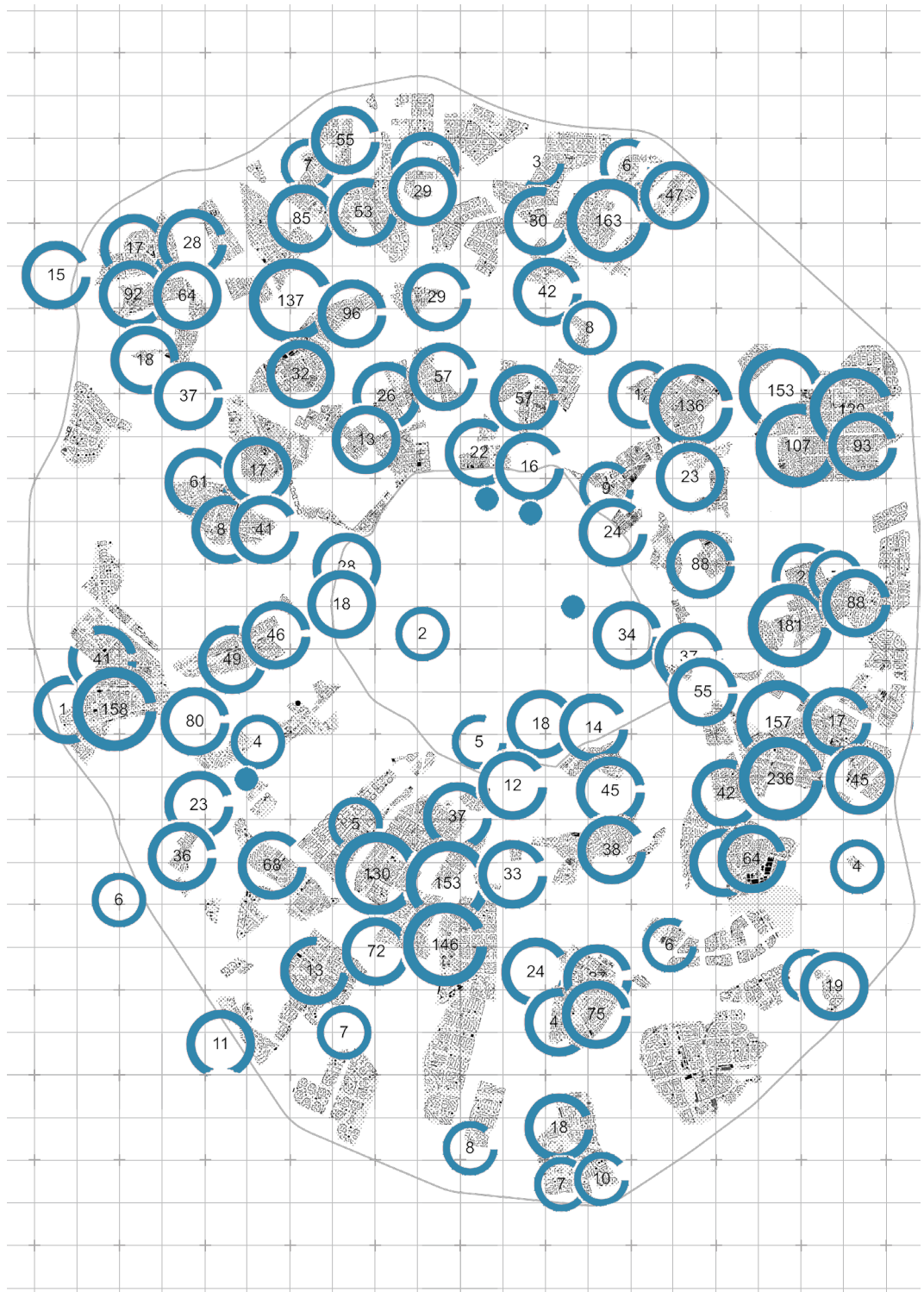


Figure 25 (Top). A map showing plans for demolition of panel block housing buildings in Moscow (Base map Source: Meganom, Archeology of the Periphery, 2013; Edited by author)

When measures are applied universally, it is likely that some places will largely benefit from new regulations, yet some will be irrevocably damaged. In the case of Yasenevo multiple objects and buildings which constituted a communal character were lost in the process of new regulations. One example of this is a small dovecote in one of the Yasenevo courtyards (Figure 26). It was constructed by local residents and was maintained by its owner for many years. Yet, this building was demolished

and the land it occupied is now an over-grown field, which nobody uses anymore (Figure 27). This one dovecote probably did not have a big significance to many people in the whole microrayon, yet it was an important landmark for residents of adjacent buildings and for people involved in its maintenance and construction. And when each courtyard starts to lose its own significant object, the whole area loses its accumulated social qualities.



Figure 26. A dovecote in one of the Yasenevo courtyards before demolition.



Figure 27. Location of the dovecote after demolition.



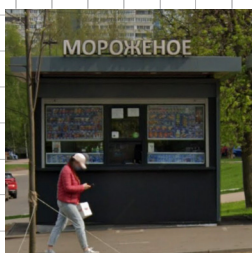
1.1



2.1



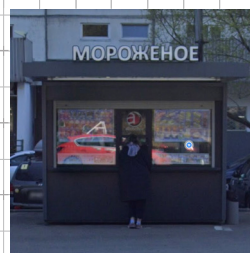
3.1



1.2



2.2



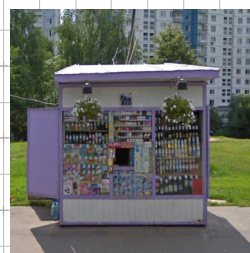
3.2



4.1



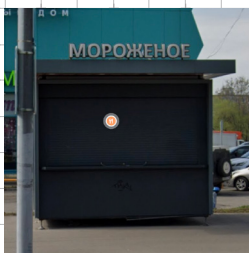
5.1



6.1



4.2



5.2



6.2



7.1



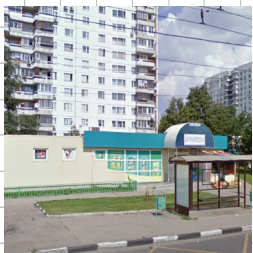
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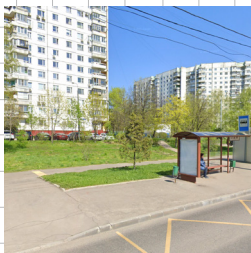
8.1



8.2



9.1



9.2



10.1



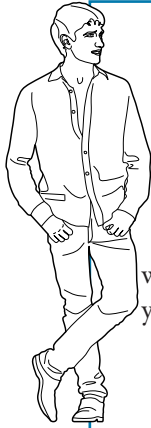
10.2

A spatial overview of Yasenevo microrayon showed a tendency for similar measures being implemented universally. Some objects, like kiosks, were kept in place, yet their appearance was heavily standardised, removing any unique characteristics (Figures 28[1.1 - 6.2]). The new design almost intentionally makes them look anonymous by using black colour and strict simplified shape. Some other commercial buildings were completely demolished. Multiple small grocery stores which perhaps operated in a grey regulatory zone before were removed and the space stays vacant today (Figures 28 [7.1 - 10.2]).

These small grocery stores were a common destination for residents of adjacent buildings as well as a business which provided work places. These stores also produced a specific character for the site which they accommodated. The store at Figure 28.9.1 was the only place to buy groceries in a 10-15 minutes walking radius. It was located at the periphery of the microrayon at the bus stop which is used by students of two adjacent schools. This place was once a meeting point for the students and a place to go after school for snacks (Respondent 2). This perhaps insignificant quality is what created a sense of place at this specific bus stop. When every bus stop loses its meeting point, similarly to the missing dovecote in courtyards, the sense of place of the whole microrayon gets damaged.

Figures 28[1.1 - 6.2]. A catalogue of kiosks transformations. Views from year 2011 top, current views bottom.

Figures 28[7.1 - 10.2]. A catalogue of unregulated commercial spaces. Views from year 2011 left, current views right.



Interview extracts - Respondent 02: current resident of Yasenevo microrayon, male, 25 years old, lived in Yasenevo since 1998

What do you like about Yasenevo?

Firstly, I like that we have a very green area, a lot of forests. And it seems to me that we have a fairly well-maintained area, that is, in our area there is everything you need, you can practically not get out of it, there is a bowling, a cinema, we have about 10 gyms.

What do you dislike about Yasenevo?

Well, the first thing is the location, if I have to go to work it takes an hour and 40 minutes. Many houses look very dull. There are also a large number of homeless and antisocial people on the streets.

Which unique characteristics does Yasenevo have that distinguish it from other areas?

I think the main thing is the number of forests. Yasenevo is one of the greenest districts of Moscow.

Are there places in Yasenevo that mean a lot to you? Why?

The skatepark, because I spent a lot of time there, in general I liked to skate there and chat with friends. I would also like to say about the forest next to my house, I went there when I was small, I rode down the hills there, emotionally it is quite close to me.

A number of conducted interviews with current residents of the Yasenevo microrayon showed a general appreciation of the current tendency of new developments. All interviewees mentioned that new parks, roads, malls and other public amenities are a great addition to the area. It was also a common point that everything is close, meaning that there are many public functions for recreation and commercial purposes. Yet, the main disadvantage was noted to be the satellite location of the microrayon and that it takes a long time to get to the city centre.

When asked about unique qualities and characteristics of the area, a common answer included its natural qualities, landscapes, access to green areas and overall good ecological state. Some significant places included local forests and parks. Two interviewees also mentioned a local skatepark as a place of a symbolic significance of friendship and connection.

Overall, the main focus of respondents in their answers was on practical qualities of the area, mentioning access to public amenities and recreational areas as one of the main assets of Yasenevo.



Interview extracts - Respondent 03: current resident of Yasenevo microrayon, male, 25 years old, lived in Yasenevo since 1997

What do you like about Yasenevo?

I like the hilly landscape. This slight hilliness creates some comfort. Well, if specifically now, then I like how everything is developed, there is a nice park now on the way to the metro. There are many playgrounds, if you start a family, then this is a big plus. I also like the convenience of the area, everything is at hand, a lot of things are nearby, it's convenient.

What do you dislike about Yasenevo?

Location of the area, it is far from the center. In addition, there are many marginalized people, homeless people, alcoholics, and so on in the area.

Do you know any unique stories about Yasenevo?

No, I don't know, probably, just some personal stories.

Are there places that mean a lot to you?

Our skatepark. It is associated with many cool moments when we gathered, spent time there. It is where our company of friends began to form. Probably the skatepark is such a symbolic place for our group of friends.

The observations from the conducted interviews show that the residents are generally satisfied with the current state of development. Nonetheless, when asked about unique qualities, places and other practices, the general answer was rooted in very practical aspects. This shows that even though the physical state of the area is improving, its social identity is in stagnation. It is worth mentioning that the interview sample was relatively small, and for this argument to be reliable, a more in-depth social review must be conducted.

Yet, still it can be observed that the inter-

view of an ex-resident from previous chapter tends to cover much more of the social aspects of the life in microrayon, than interviews of current younger residents. This, of course, can be due to many factors. The shift from socially driven development of privatisation years to state-led development of current days could play a role in this change. The replacement of socially significant spaces/buildings covered earlier in this chapter could also add to this transition. Overall, the current state of Yasenevo shows improving physical qualities, yet stagnating social character.

A Constant Search for Identity

Discussion

As shown in analysis part of this paper, Moscow microrayons experienced multiple changes of their socio-spatial habitus, due to multiple transformations of their social organisation as well as spatial order. Each of the four analysed states of microrayon showed a unique set of socio-spatial characteristics relevant to the specific period of microrayons' lifetime. Pre-Soviet village spaces showcased qualities of rural landscapes and royal presence. Soviet standardised housing represented individualism and standardisation. Late-Soviet state of microrayon produced collaboration and par-

ticipation in communal upkeep. Finally, contemporary state of microrayons is focused on regulation and state-led development. These observed qualities are clearly not the only relevant products of multiple transformations of microrayons. Yet, the four analysed states of microrayon should be seen as an illustrative example of the assumption that Moscow microrayons are situated in a constant search for their socio-spatial identity.

It is important to mention however, that these changes do not necessarily affect the quality of socio-spatial transformations. As



Figure 29. A facade art on of the building in Belyayevo microrayon is a result of a public-private partnership with local artists. The art is a tribute to a local writer Dimitry Prigov representing one of his Poetrygramms.

current residents said numerous in conducted interviews, new changes and developments are of a good quality and clearly increase the quality of life in the area. New parks, renewals of streets, construction of new commercial and civic facilities are undoubtedly beneficial for the living conditions in microrayons. Thus the focus of this paper is not specifically on the practical quality of implemented changes, but rather on the constant emotional disconnection happening in a result of these changes.

Like this, it is evident that the quality of living in newly built microrayon housing blocks was exceeding the quality of living in early-Soviet communal housing and pre-Soviet barracks. The quality of new contemporary parks, playgrounds and streetscapes is clearly better than the quality of makeshift structures made by first generation of residents during first decades of its lifetime. New malls which replaced chaotic and unregulated markets is also seen by residents as a change for good. Overall, this paper does not attempt to argue that these artefacts of the past must be kept or brought back to replace new developments of a better quality. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate that as more replacements of preceding socio-spatial organisation happen in microrayons, the more difficult it gets to establish a socio-spatial identity.

Each analysed state of microrayon produced affective atmospheres via the subjective bodily presence of its users in the objective spatial constraints of its time. These affective atmospheres are thus what emotionally define the space for its users. By replacing the spatial constraints, the subjective bodily presence thus finds itself in a new objective context and the established emotional definition becomes fractured. At the same time, the replacement of social constraints has the same effect on spatial definition. When the social organisation

changes, the same spatial constraints which produced atmospheres before, will lose their capacity to produce same atmospheres again. In other words, every new social orientation in a local society will bring new affective atmospheres to the space it is situated in and every new spatial orientation will also produce new atmospheres.

Although the change in social and spatial orientations is unavoidable due to natural evolution of local societies and spatial practices, the way of incorporating preceding orientations into a new direction of development appears to be crucial. Moscow microrayons, numerous replaced socio-spatial habitus of the past, with little to no attempt to incorporate preceding socio-spatial orientations in its new ways of development. As seen from chapters "A Space of Standardisation" and "A Space of Regulation" microrayons numerous employed strategies of replacement of the accumulated socio-spatial character. Although these replacements usually have a better quality and are commonly appreciated by the residents, it is important to highlight, that by doing so the accumulated sense of place is being neglected in the process.

The question which arises from this discussion can be formulated as followed. How can microrayons keep improving their socio-spatial qualities without compromising its accumulating sense of place? It was shown in the chapter "A Space of Privatisation" that the involvement of the residents in microrayon upkeep and development resulted in a stronger social character. Perhaps, in order to reinforce a stronger sense of place, microrayons could benefit from stronger public-private partnerships and providing more agency to its residents.

Residents agency as a leading force in building the sense of place

Perspectivation

The potential further research on the theme of social identity in microrayons can benefit from looking into strategies for reinforcement of communal participation in spatial practices. The research has shown that at the point when microrayons were provided to the residents (chapter “A Space of Privatisation”), the involvement was high. Yet, the social, political, economic and temporal contexts were different from the current time. Thus, new strategies must reflect on the current views of the residents and their motivation to be involved in microrayons development.

Multiple questions arise when talking about forming an identity for the area of more than 100,000 residents. New strategies will have to account for varying social groups which form local population, their interests and motivations. It will be also crucial to consider a general satisfaction with the current state-led developments happening in microrayons. Thus, new strategies must be incorporated into current trend instead of replacing it. Overall, the general focus of the further research may be on the ways of reinforcing residents’ agency via public-private partnerships.

Paper Reflections

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to reflect on the above writing by mentioning the limitations of the research and potential improvements from which it can benefit. This paper attempted to provide an insight into factors that shape emotional connection with spaces within microrayons, and how these factors affect the collective sense of place. The research looked into a complex problematic of identity in the context of microrayon by deconstructing its lifespan into four major states. Although this framework provides an understanding of major transformations of socio-spatial organisa-

tion of microrayons, the spectrum of factors that have other effects is considerably wider. At the same time, the concept of place identity is not solely defined by social and spatial qualities, but is subject to multiple internal and external influences. Moreover, a small interview sample provided a limited view of the current state of social organisation in the area. Hence, further research can benefit from a more thorough analysis of the place identity and social values via a broader interview sample. In general, a potential direction for a further research should be focused on a more in-depth analysis.

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Interview 01

Appendix

[Male, 25 years old, lived in Yasenevo since 1999]

How old are you and how long did you live in Yasenevo?

25 years old, 24 years lived in Yasenevo

What do you like about Yasenevo?

Firstly, I like that we have a very green area, a lot of forests, some expanses or something like that, I like it, or how we have houses far from each other, there is where to look. And it seems to me that we have a fairly well-maintained area, that is, in our area there is everything you need, you can practically not get out of it, there is a bowling, a cinema, we have about 10 gyms.

What do you dislike about Yasenevo?

Well, the first thing is the location, if I have to go to work it takes an hour and 40 minutes. Many houses look super dull, for example, along the Tarusskaya, or near the skatepark. I also wanted to add about a large number of homeless and alcohol-addicted people on the streets.

What would you like to be paid more attention to?

Sometimes you walk through the forest

and there is rubbish everywhere. Now in the forest opposite my house, the pond is also overgrown, it looks unsightly.

And in general, what is the situation in the district with respect to garbage?

Well, not much rubbish in general. There is not so much garbage in the area, there are more trash cans now, which makes me happy. They set to put more and the garbage is not so much lying around.

Also of the minuses is the repair work on the curbs. We constantly change normal good curbs. It happens two years in a row that the same curbs are changed, everything is dug up, repair work is carried out.

How well do you know Yasenevo? Where have you been?

Well, I probably wasn't in some gateways, but in almost all courtyards I was probably

How much do you know about the history of Yasenevo?

Well, I knew that this is a famous ancient village, that there was the estate of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, and it still stands, you can see it in the Bitsevsky Forest

Do you know any unique features about Yasenevo, as he is known outside his circles?

I once talked with a friend of my brother. He said I know this area, there are a lot of immigrants and crime. He says that the South-West is generally a dangerous area. But he probably lived here in the 2000s.

Do you think that Yasenevo has some unique characteristics that distinguish it from other areas?

I think the main thing is the number of forests. Yasenevo is one of the greenest districts of Moscow, and in general we have a huge Bitsevsky forest, which I have never completely gone through. The forest comes to my mind, but in general, nothing else.

Are there places in Yasenevo that mean a lot to you? Why?

Skatepark, because I spent a lot of time there, in general I liked to ride there and chat with friends.

What places are emotionally important to you?

(Pause)

I would like to say about the forest opposite, I went there when I was still small, I rode down the hills there, emotionally it is quite close to me.

Are there objects in Yasenevo that mean a lot to you?

Well, I can't say that it means a lot, but the stone [marking highest point in Moscow] at the entrance to Teply Stan

Do you often walk the streets or cut through the yards? Why?

I cut because it's faster. Firstly, it's faster, but secondly, it's more pleasant to walk there than along straight streets. If I cut, then I walk along the square, past the bike park, it's pretty nice there. And if I go in a straight line, then I will go past Pyaterochka, Avtokemp [general stores].

Interview 02

Appendix

[Female, 23 years old, lived in Yasenevo since 1999]

How old are you and how long did you live in Yasenevo?

23 years, lived in Yasenevo my whole life.

What do you like about Yasenevo?

I like good ecology, as far as I know, Yasenevo is the 3rd in terms of ecology [in Moscow]. I like that we really have a lot of things, there is a aqua-park, there are not so many of them in Moscow. The infrastructure is acceptable for me. Well, I like that the houses are not so close to each other. And I like what Yasenevo is doing now.

What do you dislike about Yasenevo?

I wanted to add that many houses need repainting. I am very annoyed that it is being repaired for a very long time, but this is probably not a minus of the district, but about the organization of repair work.

Do you often walk the streets or cut through the yards? Why?

Well, I walk the streets more often, because in the yards I can get lost. If I go along a new route, then I go along the streets, if in familiar places, then I cut off.

Interview 3

Appendix

[Male, 25 years old, lived in Yasenevo since 1998]

What do you like about Yasenevo?

I like the hilly, undulating landscape. This slight hilliness creates some comfort. Well, if specifically now, then I like how everything was arranged, that is, indeed, a nice pleasant park appeared on the way to the metro. There are many playgrounds, so I don't care, but if you start a family, then this is a big plus. I also like the convenience of the area, everything is at hand, a lot of things are nearby, it's convenient.

What do you dislike about Yasenevo?

Location of the area, far from the center. In addition, there are many marginalized people, homeless people, alcoholics, and so on in the area.

What would you like to be paid more attention to? What would you like to be fixed, improved, added?

I wanted to say that the paths should be placed where they are not, but they have already done that. But in fact, there is almost everything you need

How well do you know Yasenevo, are there places where you have not been?

I was everywhere, there are places where I was more often, but there are those where I was less often.

What do you know about the history of Yasenevo?

There used to be a village, but apart from that I don't know anything. It seems that the village was built a long time ago

Do you know any unique stories about Yasenevo? How is Yasenevo known outside its chapels?

No, I don't know, probably, just some personal stories.

What are the unique characteristics of Yasenevo?

Well, I don't really know other areas that well, but I would say a lot of functionality. As I said, everything is at hand here: two shopping centers, cinemas, a water park, gyms, bowling, paintball, there is even an aqua-park and so on. Lots of greenery too

Are there places that mean a lot to you?

Our skatepark. It is associated with many

cool moments when we gathered, spent time there. There, in fact, our company of friends began to form. Probably the skatepark is such a symbolic place for our group of friends. Kalita still [local mall]. I often went to the cinema there and in general I often go there.

Are there objects in Yasenevo that mean a lot to you?

The first thing I remembered was a bench

opposite the bike park. I associate it with a turning point in an important relationship with a friend and ex-girlfriend.

Do you walk the streets more often or cut through yards and paths?

Always through the yards. It's faster. If this is a walk, then you can walk along the streets. Usually, if I'm in a hurry somewhere, it's always through the yards.

Interview 4

Appendix

[Female, about 70 years old, lived in Yasenevo since 1970-2000s]

How did you move to Yasenevo, how did you get the apartment

Well, we lived in the town of the Moscow City Council, and someone bought that house, it was a five-story building, it was a good house. And they gave us a three-room apartment in Yasenevo, since we had two children. Our room used to be 16m², and when we arrived in Yasenevo it seemed like such a mansion.

When we moved in there was only the first block, and ours. Here, there was nothing else, everything was being built. Clay was everywhere and mud. There was one general store, there were no gardens, there were

no trees either, nothing had been built yet. And in the fall, the fifth block was already built across the road, and a kindergarten was opened there.

How has social life changed in the area since you moved there?

Gradually everything changed. As the infrastructure began to be built, it got better and better every year. Clubs, cinemas appeared, a department store was built

Did the people themselves try to build things around?

We gathered on subbotniks, planted trees. In our yard we planted all the trees back then. There was an alley [planted by municipality], but we planted the rest.

How did you organize it?

Well, we had an enthusiast there from the fifth floor, and so we organized.

What are the unique characteristics of Yasenevo?

Clean area, green. You could breathe well, there were no factories nearby.

Are there places that mean a lot to you?

Of course there are. It is the forest where we walked with our daughters, across the road, where then these skyscrapers were built. And probably our yard. Yasenevo meant a lot to me, although I later left there. I loved

Yasenevo. Of course, far from the center, but it suited us then. My children were small, and it was good to raise them in a green area.

Was there anything left from the village when you moved in?

This is what I don't know. Nothing was left during construction. There was one house, across the road into the forest. But when we moved in, there were no more houses there. And when we moved the locals were not met there as well.

