

ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH
COMPANION TO LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTURE

Edited by Ellen Braae and Henriette Steiner

First published 2019
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2019 selection and editorial matter, Ellen Braae and Henriette Steiner;
individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Ellen Braae and Henriette Steiner to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-1-4724-8468-0 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-61311-6 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo
by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

20

THE CASE TO SAVE SOCIALIST SPACE

Soviet residential landscapes under threat of extinction

Christina E. Crawford

After the fall of the Soviet Union in July 1991, privatization and disaggregation of state-owned property occurred at many scales throughout formerly socialist territories. National boundaries suddenly appeared on maps of the region; workers' clubs transformed into nightclubs. And yet, certain sites in the post-socialist sphere maintain spatial relationships established during the Soviet era. This essay explores the most salient of these site types: the typical mass housing complex constructed by the Soviet state in the 1920s and 1930s, and post-1950. These complexes, known in their time as housing combines (*zhilkombinaty*) or microregions (*mikroraiony*), were communities designed to meet residents' housing, educational, cultural, commercial, and recreational needs in all-inclusive precincts, as shown in Figure 20.1.

Their site plans are instantly recognizable due to the unusually capacious open space that flows between free-standing, standardized housing bars. Such porous planning flouts the most basic spatial expectation of capitalist real-estate development: site density. Building footprints in early *mikroraiony*, for instance, account for less than twenty per cent of overall site coverage. The remaining eighty per cent of the plan is a landscape that includes spaces and programmes of collective use: greenery and pathways, playgrounds, open-air theatres, fountains, benches, and even dedicated air-drying laundry zones, many of which remain in use today.

But now, more than twenty-five years after the fall of the Soviet Union, this exterior collective space that was a hallmark of Soviet socialist housing provision is under threat of extinction. In the spring of 2017, the Russian State Duma (parliament) took up a bill to demolish nearly 8,000 'decrepit' Moscow residential buildings, primarily the standardized five-storey concrete apartment houses from the Khrushchev era that constitute the architecture of first-generation *mikroraiony*.¹ There is little to recommend the 1950s buildings as architectural objects, and I do not strive to defend them here. Instead, I would like to make a case for saving the landscape that surrounds and supports these buildings, the remarkable eighty-per-cent-open site plan that would be nearly impossible to replicate under a fully capitalist land regime. While free-standing apartment buildings may be found in various contexts—Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), American urban renewal, and post-war European mass housing planning made certain of this—I will refer in this essay to the threatened *zhilkombinat* and *mikroraion* landscapes as 'socialist space', as this is how they are implicitly understood within their



Figure 20.1 Novye Cheremushki mikroraion, Moscow, 1959. © Rubanenko, B.R. Arkhitekturno-Planirovochnoe Upravlenie. 9-ĭ Kvartal: Opytno-Pokazatel'noe Stroitel'stvo Zhilogo Kvartala V Moskve (Raĭon Novye Cheremushki). Moskva: Glavmosstroi, 1959, (used with permission under UCC / Russian copyright law (published pre-1973)).

post-Soviet context. My intention is not to dwell on socialist space as an ideological topic—although I will introduce its ideological underpinnings—but rather to consider it as a distinct physical condition. In this essay, I seek to provide a clear definition of what socialist space is and how it works, and to argue for its maintenance as an alternative bodily experience to the enclosed and exclusionary spaces of neoliberal capitalism.

The 1971 book *The Ideal Communist City* offers a glimpse into how socialist space differs conceptually and physically from its capitalist counterpart. A diagram within it shows systems of relationships in communism (the ultimate, unattained goal of Soviet socialism) in which Man, Social Units, Spatial Forms, and Settlement Forms are bundled together in a ‘unified structure’.² The components that make up Spatial Form—our concern here—range from housing to education, production, and nature. Culture (the built) and nature (the unbuilt) are purposely conflated in this diagram of socialist spatial forms, which is to say that there is no strict delineation between ‘architecture’ and ‘landscape’, as is the case under capitalist development (the former being monetizable, the latter merely in support). Instead, in socialist space, all of the ingredients of Spatial Form flow together in a fluid continuum of common use. In terms of user experience, socialist space might also be characterized as Deleuzian ‘smooth space’, which is non-hierarchical, offers many entry and exit points, and allows infinite trajectories.³ When the last of the *mikroraiony* are demolished and replaced by the traditional ‘striated’ and ordered space of Central European perimeter blocks, as promised by the Moscow government, the lingering haptic experience of socialist spatial fluidity will disappear simultaneously.

To argue for the preservation of socialist space in the post-Soviet sphere, I begin by introducing theoretical spatial precepts that emerged in the years immediately following the Bolshevik revolution. Early Soviets advocated a dispersed model of development that gathered culture and nature under the broad umbrella of socialism. I then offer two constructed examples that exemplify socialist spatial potential: a 1930 *zhilkombinat* built adjacent to a tractor factory in Kharkiv, Ukraine, and a 1960s *mikroraion* in Baku, Azerbaijan. In presenting the theory behind and exemplary models of socialist space, I strive to equip the actors in Moscow’s current demolition drama with context for the condition that they may soon lose. The commonly traversable ground plane of Moscow’s remaining *mikroraiony* is a spatial remnant of a bygone society, a rare material environment that permits real-time reoccupation of an alternative to capitalist land organization. Once parcellized, sold, and developed, the liberated landscapes that move through these housing complexes cannot be, and will not be, reassembled (barring another socialist revolution).

How might we maintain such a historically and politically situated physical construct in the post-socialist era? I return to this question at the conclusion of this essay.

Foundations of socialist space

In 1914, Vladimir Lenin, future Soviet premier, wrote that the socialization of labour would lead to ‘redistribution of the human population (thus putting an end both to rural backwardness, isolation and barbarism, and to the unnatural concentration of vast masses of people in big cities)’.⁴ On 26 October 1917, in their second official act, Lenin’s triumphant Bolshevik Party adopted the ‘Decree on the Land’. In the name of workers, soldiers, and peasants, it proclaimed that ‘private ownership of land shall be abolished forever [...] All land, whether state, crown, monastery, church, factory, entailed, private, public, peasant, etc., shall be confiscated without compensation and become the property of the whole people.’⁵ In one fell swoop, the patchwork of land holdings across the former Russian empire dissolved.

The main asset of the newly socialist state was its magnificently large landmass—one sixth of the world, as the West was frequently reminded—to be harnessed in the service of collective production goals.⁶ Socialist space was boundless space (*neob’iatanyi prostor*), a commonly owned and roamed surface unimpeded by the boundaries of private land ownership.⁷ Revolutionary poet Vladimir Mayakovsky envisioned newly Soviet citizens as ‘conquerors of the space of the seas, the oceans, and the continents’, free to move, colonize, and disperse over the horizontally extensive surface that stretched from Europe to the Pacific Ocean.⁸ As Mayakovsky and other revolutionary intellectuals of his generation made clear, wild nature—seas, oceans, continents—could be gathered conceptually under the same category as industrial cities. All belonged to, and could be equally celebrated and exploited by, Soviet socialism. Early Soviet economists cognized this newly aggregated territory as a single building site that coincided with the continental scale, and spatial planners were tasked to organize this space to maximize productivity, equality, and collectivity.

Leonid Sabsovich, economist for the Supreme Soviet of the National Economy, was one of the first state actors to bring economic, social, and spatial concerns together in an actionable theoretical model. He proposed to create a socialist society through decentralization, effectively instantiating Lenin’s prognosis of diffuse spatial organization under socialism.⁹ Sabsovich envisaged that, starting with the first Five-Year Plan for industrial development from 1928 to 1932, new industrial-residential settlements would replace existing cities and villages altogether. Technology was the key to enacting this decentralized spatial model:

The condition that will assist us in realizing the objectives [of the Plan], is above all the ‘victory over distance’ [*pobeda nad rassstoianiem*] [...] With] the vast number of large power plants and the possibility to transmit energy over long distances, we can to a large extent free ourselves from the attachment between industry and the fuel base [...] We will build new factories, scattering them over a wide area, closer to nature.¹⁰

While Sabsovich conceded that general plans for electrification, transport, and communications were far from complete, these infrastructural systems would eventually make dispersed settlement possible. The rails, roads, and telephone/telegraph wires that criss-crossed the geographical expanse of the union would connect far-flung nodes.

Spatial diffusion of industry and population was the means to an end, namely to instil socialism among the proletariat and peasantry. Sabsovich stressed repeatedly that transformation of the everyday life (*byt*) of Soviet citizens had to proceed in tandem with industrialization: changing

stubborn daily habits through carefully designed domestic environments was as important to the cause as constructing steel plants. 'Without the socialist transformation of the everyday *byt*, we will not be able to efficiently manage the millions of trained workers who are instrumental to our grand economic development, which is necessary to build socialism in our country,' he wrote in 1930.¹¹ The built environment had the capacity and the responsibility to change habitual behaviours. Stalin's first Five-Year Plan, the hyper-industrialization drive to Soviet economic self-sufficiency, tested Sabsovich's socialist spatial theory in practice. The map of the plan dispersed industrialized agriculture and machine-building factories widely across Soviet territories in a diffuse pattern that took advantage of the USSR's continental scale.

Sabsovich tackled the problem of the industrial-residential settlement—the dispersed node itself—in his 1930 book *Socialist Cities*. He argued that these nodes must be not only productive, but also designed to inculcate socialist relations. The elements of socialist space took shape in Sabsovich's text when he wrote:

In the socialist city [*sotsgorod*], homes should be located among the green and must be sufficiently distant from each other (this mandates the destruction of existing city blocks, where buildings are side by side). There should be large parks, stadiums, places for engaging in water sports, etc. The residential quarters should be sufficiently separated from the industrial zones by a wide green area and connected to it by convenient means of transportation [...] We must take into account that *in a socialist city, public life and the collective private life of the population will be developed on an immeasurably larger scale than the space available in our cities.*¹²

Sabsovich's textual description, replete with italics, sets up certain spatial relationships to be installed in future *zhilkombinaty* and *mikroraiony*. First, all constructions are to be located among 'the green' (nature, broadly construed). Second, residential buildings are to be set sufficiently apart from one another (free-standing). Third, to encourage increased collective life, recreational and cultural programming is to be increased and freely distributed in the common landscape owned and used by all. Here is the recipe for socialist space.

Housing combine/*zhilkombinat*

It its earliest iteration from the early 1930s, the building block of the socialist city was a housing combine or *zhilkombinat*, a self-sufficient planned unit for 1,500 residents of all ages. It was composed of apartment buildings standing free in a shared landscape, plus expansive communal services such as public canteens and laundries, libraries and sport facilities, educational institutions and commune-run round-the-clock childcare to allow Soviet mothers to enter the workforce. The *zhilkombinat* block was to be replicated in a rational grid across the territory of the socialist city until the demographic target needed to support on-site industry was reached. Sabsovich provided ample programmatic recommendations but almost no visual documentation for his scheme. Experimentation with both socialist city and *zhilkombinat* spatial organization occurred on specific sites, such as the one designated for the Kharkiv Tractor Factory (KhTZ) in 1930.

KhTZ sat ten kilometres outside the then Ukrainian capital of Kharkiv, on an open, rural site ripe for experimental design configuration. The project team were given basic demographic benchmarks, programmatic parameters, and an extraordinarily short time frame in which to complete their design. The designers, led by Ukrainian architect-planner Pavel Aleshin, based the organization of their socialist city upon the linear city model proposed by Nikolai Miliutin,

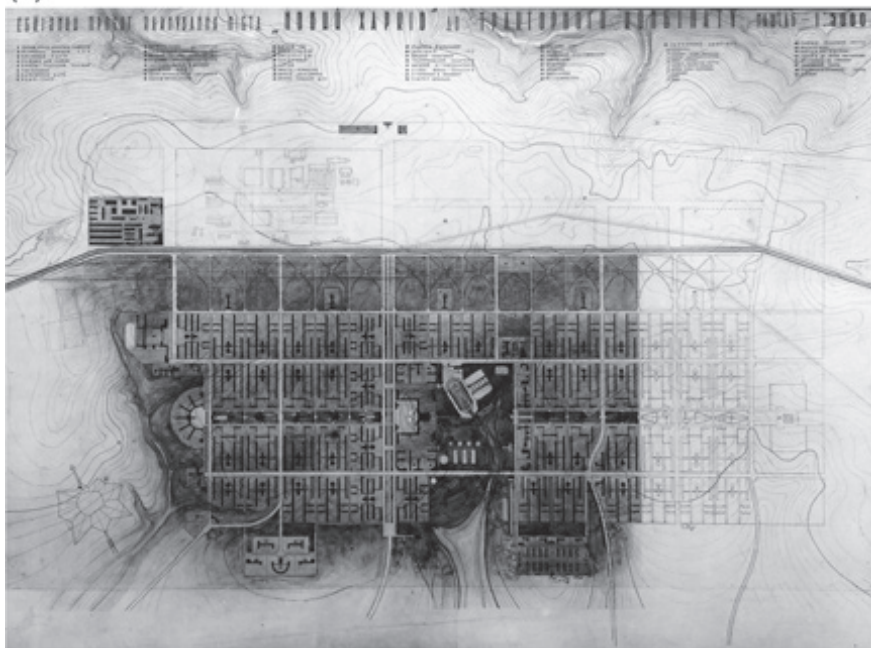
A. Zelenko, and others around 1929. In his explanation of the model, Miliutin equated the productive city with the factory assembly line to arrive at an efficient ‘flowing’ plan concept. He wrote: ‘the residential sector of the settlement must be set up parallel to the productive zone and must be separated from it by a green belt no less than 500 meters wide.’¹³ The green belt was intended to act as the lungs of the project, to filter any stray industrial particulates that might drift from the factory toward the residential zone. The benefits of the parallel layering programme included the relative proximity between the factory and its settlement, so that each worker would have a short walk to work from his or her residential unit to the factory. In addition, the green zone structured rational linear growth of the sectors in either direction along its length while maintaining the optimal distance between them. The expansion possibilities of the scheme were virtually boundless: one could imagine sinuous lines of such development snaking across the map of the USSR.

The KhTZ site plan reveals this exact linear organization of programmatic sectors (Figure 20.2). It is divided into parallel zones: heavy rail swings to the north, with the tractor factory just below. A 500-metre-wide green band cuts through the middle of the plan, and the residential settlement comprising repeated *zhilkombinat* blocks—each a tall rectangle populated with residential and social infrastructure—marches south from the green strip and faintly but insistently eastward, in promise of further colonization of the countryside.¹⁴ Residents of even the southernmost *zhilkombinat* block had no more than a twenty-minute walk to the factory.

Once the socialist city site plan was set, the designers exerted their efforts on the standardized *zhilkombinat* blocks. Long thin housing bars run along a north-south axis. Like their German brethren, the *zeilenbau*, these bars are heliotropic: aligned to offer their broad facades east and west to maximize solar exposure within the residential units.¹⁵ At KhTZ, this orientation also ensures that the prevailing grain of each *zhilkombinat* block privileges the long north-south view to connect factory, green buffer, housing, and countryside. Clear lines of sight and passage charge the open field of interaction between programmatic zones. Communal service buildings such as the workers’ clubs and canteens, the public laundries, and the school buildings are the only ones permitted to flout the north-south grain of the plan. Regardless of programme, each building stands free of its neighbours to allow circumambulation on any given *zhilkombinat* block and between blocks. Pedestrian connectivity is emphasized by the amount of open space provided, which tops eighty per cent in the typical *zhilkombinat* at KhTZ.

A hand-drawn aerial perspective demonstrates the lived interaction between housing, social services, and landscape in the first *zhilkombinat* block constructed. Narrow six-storey bars hold dormitory-style living cells for singles, while six four-storey bars hold multiroom family units. A workers’ club, replete with communal dining hall, library, multipurpose recreational rooms, and a mechanized laundry, sits centrally at the edge of the block, and is distinguished volumetrically through idiosyncratic form. Four educational buildings—elementary schools, kindergartens, and nurseries—line the back of the block. The project brief stipulates that ‘all rooms in the residential sector must be connected between themselves and the premises of the socialized sector by warm corridors.’¹⁶ In design perspectives, those lines become second-floor glassed-in skyways sitting atop thin columns to permit the ground plane to remain freely traversable along the dominant north-south axis. While these skyways were never built, the project as constructed permitted even greater freedom of movement on the ground plane. The common landscape was designed with pedestrian pathways and tree-lined boulevards, and was stocked with benches and dedicated play zones for the neighbourhood’s children. In this *zhilkombinat* example on the Ukrainian steppe, topographical variation on-site was limited, which provided pedestrians with long views along a flat, easily traversable ground plane. By all accounts, the fluid spatial relationships between realms of work, housing, and leisure worked as projected, with each family

(a)



(b)

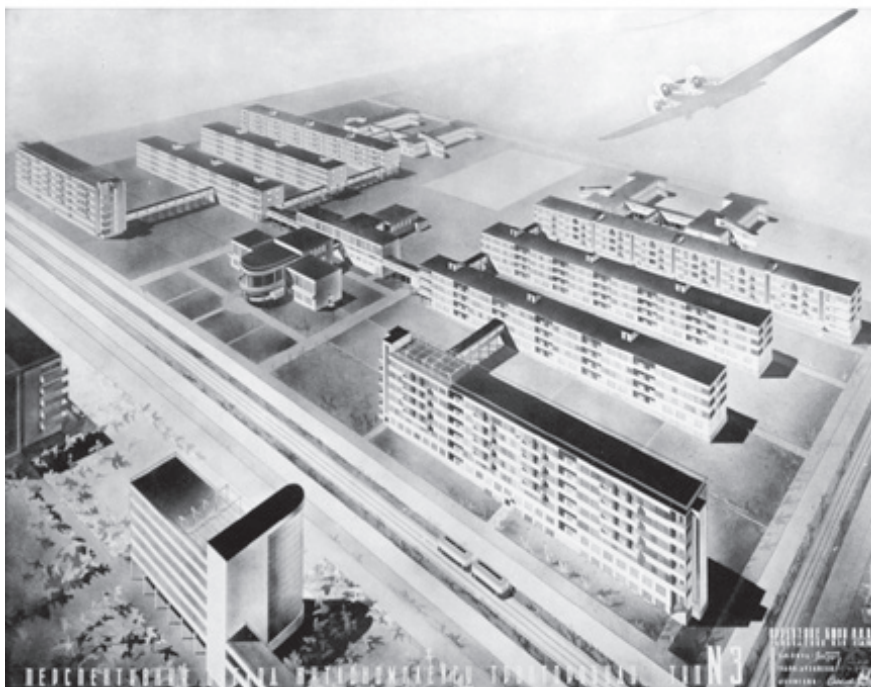


Figure 20.2a,b Kharkiv Tractor Factory *zhilkombinat*. Kharkiv, Ukraine, 1930. © Central State Archives and Museum of Literature and Art of Ukraine, TsDAML.M.

member able to walk to his or her daytime occupation: the child to his or her school integrated into the *zhilkombinat* block, the parent through the green buffer to work at the tractor factory.

Experimentation with such novel spatial configurations to instil socialist values largely ceased upon the appointment of Stalin's right hand, Lazar Kaganovich, as First Secretary of the Moscow Committee. With Kaganovich at the helm of Moscow's planning efforts, the Central Committee issued a resolution denouncing 'utopian' urban theories and projects in favour of replanning efforts in existing cities.¹⁷ In a mid-1931 speech, later published as *Socialist Reconstruction in Moscow and Other Cities in the USSR*, Kaganovich held up Moscow as the sole model for all future Soviet urbanism. To do so, he had to elide the issue of urban form, and assert that means of production alone made a context socialist: 'There are at present many who decline in every possible declension the formula, "we must build a socialist city." They forget one little trifle: that the cities of the USSR are already socialist cities. Our cities became socialist from the very moment of the October Revolution.'¹⁸ This pronouncement signalled a shift in the state's priorities, from envisioning new spatial models to working within the traditions of urban planning from previous epochs. Moscow was a city of perimeter blocks, and this, Kaganovich implied, would be the model for Soviet housing going forward.

Microregion/*mikroraion*

The two decades between the end of the first Five-Year Plan and Josef Stalin's death (1932–53) saw the Soviet state abdicate responsibility for addressing the severe gap between housing need and capacity. Monumental state building projects, such as construction of the Moscow Metro in the 1930s, were given priority over the more mundane residential sector. Widespread destruction of Soviet urban fabric during World War II only exacerbated housing shortages, such that by 1951 each single-family apartment in Leningrad housed 3.3 families on average.¹⁹

In December 1954, newly installed Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev spoke to the National Conference of Builders and Architects to acknowledge the housing shortage and to announce his campaign to address it. 'We have an obligation to significantly speed up, improve the quality of, and reduce the cost of construction,' Khrushchev proclaimed to applause. 'In order to do so, there is only one path—and that is the path of the most extensive industrialization of construction.'²⁰ In the span of eight years, from 1956 to 1964, fifty-four million Soviets—a quarter of the population—moved into the new five-storey prefabricated residential buildings that emerged from Khrushchev's industrialized construction campaign.²¹ These standardized houses typically sat within a socialist superblock or *mikroraion*. Like the *zhilkombinat*, each *mikroraion* was designed as an all-inclusive pedestrian-centred superblock that provided the requisite commercial, cultural, educational, and recreational facilities within walkable distances. Unlike its 1930s predecessor, however, the *mikroraion* was almost always, and only, a residential enclave. Access to public transport was provided for these housing regions to connect to places of work, many of which were quite remote from the *mikroraion*.

The Novye Cheremushki district in south-western Moscow was the first experimental prefabricated housing precinct built in 1956, and it set certain standards for *mikroraion* site planning. Slim, rectangular, free-standing residential buildings were arranged in a staggered pattern that allowed diagonal view corridors across the site and freedom of pedestrian passage throughout the shared public zone. The buildings' entryways flipped and alternated to activate open spaces on all sides of the site plan, and provided easy access to services and amenities built into the block. The slang appellation for the standardized houses themselves—*khrushcheby*—was a play on the phonetic consonance of the name of the premier who had envisioned them with *trushchoby*, the Russian word for slums. Indeed, the prefabricated concrete residential buildings from the

first phase of Khrushchev's mass housing campaign were poorly constructed, and the residential units extremely small.²² Even promotional photos from the period invariably reveal misaligned concrete apartment units held together with sloppy lines of trowelled grout. The combination of unremarkable exterior architectural expression and cramped interiors put heavy stress on all other components of the residential precinct, especially the common ground plane between the buildings.

As intense architectural standardization took hold, the site plan of the *mikroraion* became virtually the only means for Soviet architects to engage in design as such, and the landscape surrounding the *khrushchevki* became imbued with creative expression. In plans for Moscow's Novye Cheremushki, the architects went to great lengths to qualify and quantify landscape elements for each programme within the neighbourhood unit. Particular attention was paid to the design of exterior spaces for children. The landscape of the typical kindergarten, for instance, covered 4,600 square metres, and included dedicated spaces for general, group, and sport play; a learning garden; a 'corner for young naturalists' (*ugolok imnykh naturalistov*); and an exterior space just for teachers in addition to a generous area of open, multifunctional green space.²³ The designers prepared similar charts to set landscape prescriptions for nurseries, schools for older children, and the *mikroraion* as a whole, which in many ways was designed for children as a respite from the chaos of urban life. Designers surrounded play areas with low hedges to mark out a safe precinct that also maintained visual connection to the wider common space. Near these play areas, integrated seating at each shared residential entryway hosted the grandmother-minders who socialized with each other—and marked comings and goings—as they looked over the hedges and low retaining walls toward their small charges. Photos from original publications about Novye Cheremushki show squealing children clambering over a rocky island in the middle of the neighbourhood pond, with no adults in sight. The inclusion of such common spaces that cater to the youngest residents demonstrates that in socialist residential landscape design children's needs were taken seriously. Contrast these images with the play spaces of neoliberalism, adjacent to shopping districts or viewable but locked to public use, which cater to parent-consumers more than to the children themselves.

To widen the geographical scope of this discussion, I introduce the first *mikroraion* built in Baku, Azerbaijan, from the early 1960s, designed after major kinks in Soviet architectural standardization were resolved. The designers of the first Baku *mikroraion* took the buildings as fixed types to be composed creatively within the residential precinct. The eighteen-hectare *mikroraion* for 6,500 residents was located in close proximity to the traditional urban core of Baku, and was bordered on its western side by a major vehicular thoroughfare.²⁴ The original site plan, first published in *Architecture of the USSR (Arkhitektura SSSR)* at the end of 1964, shows the majority of the residential bars oriented latitudinally along the east-west axis, so that the shortest ends of the buildings abut the busy street, and the long sides face the common open spaces of the *mikroraion*, as can be seen in Figure 20.3.

Like the KhTZ *zhilkombinat*, the first Baku *mikroraion* had a spatially fluid character created by the staggered, parallel siting of regular thin housing bars—here standardized five-storey apartment buildings known as the Series 460-AN. Two scales of open space resulted from a skipping site pattern. Pairs of bars placed close together created intimately scaled spaces, while between each set of pairs a larger space held a kindergarten and its dedicated play spaces. The Baku *mikroraion* navigated a significant grade change as it climbed from south to north. Each of the regular open spaces, captured between the long sides of the buildings, were graded flat. Short flights of steps and ramps connected these terraced zones. Each north-south strip of buildings and open spaces was repeated along the east-west axis, then shifted up, so that pedestrian movement was never impeded transversally. The designers for Baku set other types of planning rules to ensure the

(a)

Планировка микрорайона № 1. Бакипро-
гор. Архитекторы М. Товмасян, Т. Сады-
ков, А. Сурнин

1 — пятиэтажные четырехсекционные жилые дома; 1а — пятиэтажный шестисекционный жилой дом; 2 — девятиэтажные башенные дома; 3 — дом гостиничного типа; 4 — школа на 920 учащихся; 5 — детский сад на 90 мест; 6 — блокированное здание (столовая, аптека, мебельный магазин); 7 — кооперированное здание (почта, сберкасса, КБО и парикмахерская); 8 — продовольственный и промтоварный магазин; 9 — домоуправление и ремонтные мастерские; 10 — кафе-закусочная; 11 — столовая; 12 — продовольственный магазин; 13 — прачечная самообслуживания; 14 — гаражи для индивидуальных машин; 15 — газогенераторная; 16 — трансформаторная подстанция

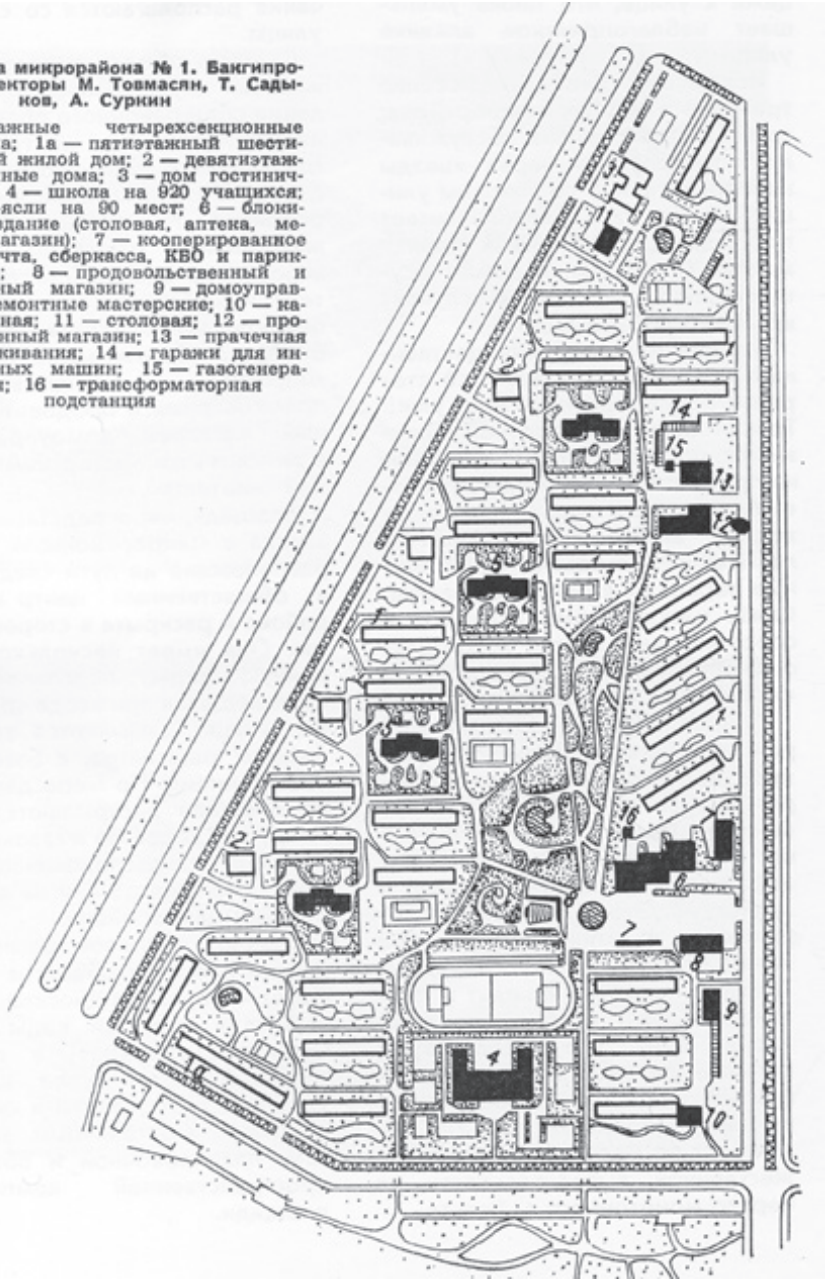


Figure 20.3a,b First Mikrorayon. Baku, Azerbaijan, 1964. © Mkrтчian, R. "Osebnosti Zastroiki Pervogo Mikrorayona V Baku." *Arkhitektura SSSR*, no. 12 (1964): 31–36, (used with permission under UCC/Russian copyright law (published pre-1973)).

(b)



Figure 20.3a,b Continued.

‘rhythmical spatio-volumetric composition’ of the ensemble; for instance, the distance between a building’s short ends could be no greater than its height, and its broad sides no closer than twice that height. In addition to the experiential variety that such a plan provided to residents, the designers asserted that the staggered massing pattern created favourable conditions for the ventilation and insulation of the buildings.²⁵

These compositional and climatic justifications must also be contextualized within the logic of industrial construction techniques. Unlike the buildings of the *zhilkombinaty*, which were constructed of masonry or poured-in-place concrete, the standardized residential buildings constructed after 1954 were composed of factory-made panels trucked to and lifted into place on-site. The vacant space between the buildings bears the footprint of their means of production: the construction crane. Whether a standardized house was built by a stationary tower crane or a mobile crane on rails, the technological logic of assembly required space around the building.²⁶

Like the Moscow example, the first Baku *mikroraion* was designed to accommodate the needs of its children. One upper school for 920 children anchors the bottom of the plan, and four kindergartens for 90 children each are planted diagonally across the precinct in the large

regular gaps in the site plan's pattern. Each of these schools had an exterior precinct of its own comprising open play areas, shaded pavilions to shield the children during the hottest months of the year, learning gardens, and play structures. The fluid landscape of the *mikroraion* as a whole was initially solely pedestrian, to allow children to walk unaccompanied from home to school without crossing a vehicular street. In the original design, commercial amenities such as a grocery, canteen, laundry, and communal services building (including post office, telephone exchange, and hair salon) sat on a plaza on the eastern edge of the *mikroraion*, facing a fountain and exterior amphitheatre for community activities *en plein air*. Most importantly, the large green central park was 'free and open, like a natural landscape'. According to its designers, there were 'no main entrances or formal, geometrically planned gardens', but rather a 'picturesque' composition that was achieved through the use of polychromatic, loose plantings of various heights and volumes.²⁷ This bucolic urban landscape, populated by free-playing children who owned the paths, water features, and dedicated playscapes during the working day, is at the centre of all of the photographs in the inaugural 1964 article. The shared landscape holds the foreground in the images, and slides back and up into perspective to fill all of the gaps between the unremarkable standardized buildings, which are shown only in glancing views.

Socialist spatiality in the post-socialist period: What is to be done?

The designs of the KhTZ *zhilkombinat* and the Baku *mikroraion* were intended to instantiate communally minded behaviour by providing residents with unbounded, variegated landscapes open for common use.²⁸ The objectives of predictive planning, however, become fainter with time, and must jostle with the lived experience of the place and the aggregative memories of the past near-century. The Soviet state, with its desire for convenient access between working, living, and recreation sectors, was replaced in 1991 by free-market independent states. We cannot turn back the clock to reinstall the socialist condition in which the KhTZ *zhilkombinat* or the Baku *mikroraion* were built, but we can make an argument, as designers, for the unique qualities of these integrated residential landscapes. To do so, it is necessary to be clear about what so-called socialist space is, how it operates, and finally, what makes it worth preserving, as I have attempted to do here. As originally designed, the KhTZ *zhilkombinat* and the Baku *mikroraion* were spatial experiments that sought to erase the distinction between culture and nature. Their designers conceived of architecture and landscape, the built and the unbuilt, as belonging to a common category of shared space that had the capacity to offer a fluid haptic and social experience. This was, of course, a desire that could only be fulfilled under a wholly public property-ownership regime. So, what is to be done with these spaces now?

As the promised demolition of the Khrushchev-era housing blocks in Moscow has revealed, privatization is an unfinished project in many former Soviet states. Although the living units are by now largely privately owned in such residential communities, the land underneath the buildings remains controlled by local government. The legal implications of this ownership structure should be immediately obvious: if this land becomes desirable, there is no need for the government owner to resort to eminent domain to clear it. The government can simply break the lease on its land, compensate the apartment owners in some minimal fashion, demolish the buildings, and redevelop. Individual unit owners have no recourse.

These are sites fraught with the weight of multiple, conflicting expectations, and they are also sites written and rewritten through daily experience. A 2010 national newspaper poll named KhTZ one of the ten most dysfunctional residential communities in all of Ukraine.²⁹ Closure of the tractor factory at KhTZ, and the remote location of the *sotsgorod* in relation to the city centre, has left it economically vulnerable, and locals are quick to note that unemployment in

this sector of the city is unusually high, as is per capita crime. But negative local perceptions of this experimental site of socialist space-making are difficult to disentangle from pervasive disappointment with the failure of Soviet socialism. A visit to the former tractor factory region on a beautiful summer day, to determine the legibility of the original spatial conditions, refutes these blanket claims of dysfunctionality. The open green spaces between residential buildings are filled with tended flowerbeds. Newly painted wooden play structures see heavy use by the children of the neighbourhood, whose parents and grandparents sit on nearby benches under the shade of now mature trees. Pedestrians moving through the residential precinct—though now joined by vehicles—still enjoy spatial liberation.

I close with three possibilities of how to approach these disappearing remnants of socialist space. In the first case, as with KhTZ, where the model spatial condition persists and yet the economic base is gone, heritage preservation status might offer a second lease of life. Such status would highlight the historical and spatial uniqueness of the site, and might provide justification for restoration funding. Kharkiv is stocked with young, well-educated residents (the city's universities and technical schools are renowned) who are primed to snap up inexpensive live-work spaces in a creative enclave like a revised KhTZ. In the second case, as with the first Baku *mikroraion*, which enjoys proximity to the city centre and has adjusted well to its post-socialist circumstances, a strategic plan for growth and change might permit adaptation while ensuring conservation of a large percentage of the landscape for common use.³⁰ Finally, in extremely attractive development sites such as those under threat in Moscow, the original buildings will invariably be demolished. New buildings could be designed, however, that respect the footprints of the originals or at minimum retain the spirit of the original site plan, replete with high percentages of shared open spaces to be owned and maintained collectively. In all cases, the design of quality exterior spaces for children should be a priority.

Socialist spaces are being dismantled as I write. They will disappear altogether without strong advocacy by historians and design professionals. Together, we must devise strategies that maintain the spirit of openness and collectivity of the residential landscape, while recognizing the exigencies of the economic system in which they now sit. Their spatial uniqueness within the context of the now-capitalist land development regime—fluid and targeted to the needs of a safe childhood, versus enclosed and targeted to those who can pay—is their greatest asset, deserving of preservation for future generations.

Notes

- 1 If the bill is approved, this demolition programme will displace ten per cent of Moscow's population, or 1.6 million people.
- 2 A. Baburov and A. Gutnov, *The Ideal Communist City* (New York: G. Braziller, 1971), 27.
- 3 Smooth space is 'a space of affects, more than one of properties, [and] haptic rather than optical perception'. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 479.
- 4 V.I. Lenin, 'Karl Marx: A Brief Biographical Sketch with an Exposition of Marxism', 1914, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/granat/ch04.htm>. Used as the opening epigraph in L.M. Sabsovich, *Goroda Budushchego I Organizatsiia Sotsialisticheskogo Byta* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe tekhnicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1929).
- 5 V.I. Lenin, 'Decree on Land/Peasant Mandate on the Land', 1917, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/oct/25-26/26d.htm>.
- 6 For example, Dziga Vertov's film *One Sixth of the World* (*Shestaia chast' mira*) from 1926.
- 7 E. Widdis, *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 3.
- 8 Vladimir Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 34.

- 9 Sabsovich, *Goroda Budushchego*, 60.
- 10 Ibid., 15–18.
- 11 L.M. Sabsovich, *Sotsialisticheskie Goroda* (Moscow: Gosizdat RSFSR ‘Moskovskii rabochii’, 1930), 41–42, italics original. For fuller discussion of the first Five-Year Plan and Sabsovich’s theories, see C.E. Crawford, ‘From Tractors to Territory: Socialist Urbanization Through Standardization’, *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 1 (2018).
- 12 Sabsovich, *Sotsialisticheskie Goroda*, 43, italics original.
- 13 N.A. Miliutin, *Sotsgorod: The Problem of Building Socialist Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974), 65; A. Zelenko, ‘Problema Stroitel’sтва Sotsialisticheskikh Gorodov’, *Planovoe khoziaistvo*, 12 (1929).
- 14 There are roughly thirty-eight *zhilkombinat* blocks in this site plan. If each held 1,500 residents, this plan would support a *sotsgorod* population of 57,000, a number well in excess of the original demographic target of 36,500.
- 15 For more on German *zeilenbau* see M. Swenarton, ‘Rationality and Rationalism: The Theory and Practice of Site Planning in Modern Architecture 1905–1930,’ *AA Files*, no. 4 (1983).
- 16 *Tsentral’nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchikh organiv vldy ta upravlinnia Ukrainy* (Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine), TsDAVO, f.5, o.3, d.2085, l.25.
- 17 Leonid Sabsovich was reproached by name. ‘O Rabote Po Perestroike Byta (Postanovlenie Tsk Rkp(B) Ot 16 Maia 1930 Goda)’, *Pravda*, 29 May 1930.
- 18 L.M. Kaganovich, *Socialist Reconstruction of Moscow and Other Cities in the USSR* (New York: International Publishers, 1931), 83.
- 19 B.A. Ruble, ‘From Khrushcheby to Korobki’, in *Russian Housing in the Modern Age*, ed. W.C. Brumfield (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993), 235.
- 20 N. Khrushchev, ‘On the Extensive Introduction of Industrial Methods, Improving the Quality and Reducing the Cost of Construction (December 7, 1954)’, *Volume 21*, no. 3 (2009): 26.
- 21 A. Bronovitskaya, ‘Open City: The Soviet Experiment’, *Volume 21*, no. 3 (2009): 20.
- 22 For an excellent discussion of minimum living spaces in Soviet housing, see S.E. Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life After Stalin* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2013), chap. 1 and 2.
- 23 B.R. Rubanenko, *Arkhitekturno-Planirovochnoe Upravlenie. 9-Ĭ Kvartal: Opytno-Pokazatel’noe Stroitel’stvo Zhilogo Kvartala V Moskve (Raion Novye Cherenushki)* (Moscow: Glavmosstroĭ, 1959), 20.
- 24 R. Mkrtchian, ‘Osebennosti Zastroiki Pervogo Mikroraiona V Baku,’ *Arkhitektura SSSR*, no. 12 (1964): 31.
- 25 Ibid., 33.
- 26 P. Meuser and D. Zadorin, *Towards a Typology of Soviet Mass Housing: Prefabrication in the USSR 1955–1991* (Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2015), 126–7.
- 27 Mkrtchian, ‘Osebennosti’, 34.
- 28 Other extant examples of socialist city/*zhilkombinat* designs can be found at the Stalingrad/Dzerzhinsky Tractor Factory (c. 1929), which sits in present-day Volgograd, Russia, and Uralmash (*Ural’skii Mashinostroitelnyi Zavod/Ural Heavy Machine-Building Factory*, c.1933) in present-day Ekaterinburg, Russia.
- 29 ‘Korrespondent Sostavil Top-10 Samikh Neblagopoluchnykh Zhilmassiv V Ukraine’, last modified 19 March 2010, <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/events/1058465-korrespondent-sostavil-top-10-samyh-neblagopoluchnyh-zhilmassivov-v-ukraine2010>.
- 30 Positive changes in Baku include lower-level apartments being converted into shops, but there are harbingers of wild development as well, such as infill towers under construction that are plugging some of the shared open spaces.

Bibliography

- Baburov, A., and A. Gutnov. *The Ideal Communist City*. New York: G. Braziller, 1971.
- Bronovitskaya, A. ‘Open City: The Soviet Experiment’. *Volume 21*, no. 3 (2009): 19–25.
- Crawford, C.E. ‘From Tractors to Territory: Socialist Urbanization Through Standardization’. *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 1 (2018): 54–77. doi:10.1177/0096144217710233.
- Deleuze, G., and F. Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Harris, S.E. *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life After Stalin*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2013.

- Kaganovich, L.M. *Socialist Reconstruction of Moscow and Other Cities in the USSR*. Williams College Propaganda Pamphlet Series, no. 159. New York: International Publishers, 1931.
- Khrushchev, N. 'On the Extensive Introduction of Industrial Methods, Improving the Quality and Reducing the Cost of Construction (December 7, 1954)'. *Volume 21*, no. 3 (2009): 26–34.
- Lenin, V.I. 'Karl Marx: A Brief Biographical Sketch with an Exposition of Marxism'. 1914. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/granat/ch04.htm>.
- Lenin, V.I. 'Decree on Land/Peasant Mandate on the Land'. 1917. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/oct/25-26/26d.htm>.
- Meuser, P., and D. Zadorin. *Towards a Typology of Soviet Mass Housing: Prefabrication in the USSR 1955–1991*. Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2015.
- Miliutin, N.A. *Sotsgorod: The Problem of Building Socialist Cities*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974.
- Mkrtchian, R. 'Osebenosti Zastroiki Pervogo Mikroraiona V Baku'. *Arkhitektura SSSR*, no. 12 (1964): 31–6.
- Paperny, V. *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Rubanenko, B.R. *Arkhitekturno-Planirovochnoe Upravlenie. 9-Ī Kvartal: Opytno-Pokazatel'noe Stroitel'stvo Zhilogo Kvartala V Moskve (Raion Novye Chermushki)*. Moscow: Glavmosstroĭ, 1959.
- Ruble, B.A. 'From Khrushcheby to Korobki'. In *Russian Housing in the Modern Age*, edited by W.C. Brumfield, 232–70. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993.
- Sabsovich, L.M. *Goroda Budushchego I Organizatsiia Sotsialisticheskogo Byta*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe tekhnicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1929.
- Sabsovich, L.M. *Sotsialisticheskie Goroda*. Moscow: Gosizdat RSFSR 'Moskovskii rabochii', 1930.
- Swenarton, M. 'Rationality and Rationalism: The Theory and Practice of Site Planning in Modern Architecture 1905–1930'. *AA Files*, no. 4 (1983): 49–59.
- Widdis, E. *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Zelenko, A. 'Problema Stroitel'stva Sotsialisticheskikh Gorodov'. *Planovoe khoziaistvo*, no. 12 (1929): 16–31.