

Will the Russian Dacha Survive?

Post-Soviet Trends in the Second Homes' Developments

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1 Introduction

The practice of dacha subdivision, and garden plot allotment in particular, spread widely during Soviet times, not only within the Russian Federation, but also to other Soviet Republics and even other socialist countries, whose capital towns by the 1990s also saw their environs becoming a patchwork of small plots of vegetable gardens and houses. The restitution to private property in post-socialist countries caused an essential transformation in the housing market and a restructuring of the urban space occurred (Kovacs, 1999). Suburban areas were not excluded from these transformations. Along with the formation of the new housing developments, second homes that grew in the city environs became active players in these transformations in the countries of Eastern Europe (Stanilov, 2007; on Sophia see Hirt, 2008; on Budapest see Dingsdale, 1999; on Poland see Tasan-Kok, 2007; on Estonia see Sykora, 2008; Leetmaa, Brade et al., 2011; on former eastern Germany see Nuisl & Rink, 2005). Estonia had probably the oldest tradition of second homes, located by the Baltic Sea, which attracted summer dwellers from the second half of the Nineteenth century, which has now evolved into intensive transformation of the second homes that developed under Soviet power, including garden-plot type allotments. Leetmaa, Brade et al. (2011) reveal a rapid suburbanisation process within second-home settlements in the Tallinn Metropolitan Area. The lifting of property and purchasing restrictions brought dachas into the suburban real-estate market, where they now play an important role in the provision of residential stock since the mid-1990s.

In Russia legally, since 2008¹, it has been possible to turn any second home into a permanent residence as long as it is located on residential land and its construction quality meets the standards for a 'residential house'. Naturally, a new suburban dweller has to rescind his or her urban registration. Examples of such transformation are still rare in Russia (there

¹ The Constitutional Court issued on 14 April 2008 a resolution № 7-P "On the Constitutionality of the second paragraph of Article 1 of the Federal Law on gardening, vegetable gardening and dacha nonprofit associations of citizens' replying to complaints of the citizens", that registration is allowed in residential buildings, located in garden plots, allocated within the residential settlement.

was a case in Krasnodar, which was the reason for the decision of the Constitutional court in 2008).

While in the environs of the many-socialist cities, second homes are actively included into the real estate market and housing supply, Moscow's suburbs demonstrate their loyalty to the established tradition of seasonal migration between the city and the countryside. The total area given over to second homes and the plots of urbanites in the Moscow Province is more than twice the size of the city of Moscow. Considering the fact that at least half of the Muscovite population has already developed tight and old bonds with regard to suburban housing in that they are owners of summerhouses (FOM, 2007), the role of 'dachas' in regional urbanization process could not be neglected².

This study³ seeks to address the question how do the shifting from socialist to market economy impact the dacha life-style of the Muscovites and to look into dynamics of the changes in the relations between the city and hinterland since the collapse of the socialist state from dachas' point of view.

1.1 Dacha for the Russian-Soviet urbanites, and for others

The origins of the dacha phenomenon are discussed or touched upon by many authors. A number of theories have been applied to different characteristics of dacha-life, but still it is difficult to find 'the only one'. Second-plot ownership in Russia during its history has undergone a number of changes, such as the transformation of property status or land use and its main functions from recreational to solving housing problems and food shortage, returning to recreational and housing provision in current times.

But Russia is not unique in its obsession with second homes and countryside living among urbanites. "The popularisation and proliferation of second homes is essentially a post-1945 phenomenon, resulting from the combination of sufficient income for non-essential items and sufficient time away from work to allow this income to be spent on leisure-time activities... As earlier, ... second-house occupation was a privilege reserved for a small and affluent section of society." (Clout, 1974, 102).

² According to other estimations, virtually around 70 per cent of urbanites have property in the suburbs (Treivish, 2007).

³ To understand the changes in second home settlements of different periods and approaches to living, a number of the fieldwork surveys have been conducted in dacha settlements of Udelnaya, Meshcherskiy, Mamontovka, Saltykovka, Kratovo, Michurenets, Peredelkino, Sadovod Dzerzhinets and Relog in Moscow Province along with 25 interviews with its residents.

The processes of low-density development based on the ‘*nouveaux village*’ and the spread of ‘*pavillons de banlieue nouvelle manière*’ was named ‘*rurbanisation*’ (Bauer and Roux 1976) and ‘*la périurbanisation*’ (Dezert and al, 1991). As European urbanites have grown wealthier, they, like their American counterparts, have used more space (Holcombe and Staley, 2001).

In the 1970s, the area of weekend suburbanisation of Parisians extended over 160 kilometres from Paris to other municipal jurisdictions, in which summer houses constituted more than 75 per cent of the entire housing stock (Clout, 1974, 111). The number and extent of secondary residences reached nearly 400,000 within the Parisian basin outside the Ile de France by 1990, which accounted for about 10 per cent of the entire housing stock in the area (Louchart & Ronsac 1991; Holcombe and Staley, 2001).

In the United States, the number of second homes increased during the post-war period, along with well-known suburbanization trends. The Historical Census of Vacation Homes, provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, shows slight growth in the second homes ownership from 2.0 per cent in 1940 to 2.3 per cent in 1950, followed by a rise to 3.5 per cent by 1960. In the next decade, the number of vacation houses fell to 2.9 per cent in 1970, and has remained about 3 per cent since 1980s (1980:3.2%, 1990: 3.0%; 2000: 3.1%)⁴.

Second home ownership had undergone a revival by the last decades of the twentieth century, and not only in Northern European countries. Northern European countries like Finland, Norway and Sweden have similar climatic conditions to Russia in terms of seasonal interchanges characterized by a longer cold and white period, and a rather short, warm, green summer. Such climatic conditions naturally stimulate the desire to make the most of the summer by heading out of the city to surround oneself with a natural rather than an artificial landscape. However, countries of milder climate, like Denmark, the United Kingdom and France, also have a high percentage of second homeowners among their urbanites.

In Denmark, second-home—*sommerhus*—developments increased markedly from 1950 to 1970. But when in 1970 second-home development was restricted to recreational areas only, construction declined and it changed its character to offer overnight accommodation to tourists, mainly from Germany. By 2002 there were 218,453 second homes in Denmark, located primarily along the western coast and playing a serious role in the prosperity of commercial tourism (Tress, 2002).

⁴ Data source: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/census/historic/vacation.html>

Norway, which also had a long tradition of second homes, experienced intensification in the growth of second homes from 1970 to the mid-1980s. Since the 1980s, it has slowed down, although the number of second homes is gradually increasing around small residential centres in particular (Overvag, 2004). Overvag compares second-homes and urban growth in the Oslo area (2009) and the characteristics of connection. He identifies that urban growth, which seems to be the main factor that pushes the location of second homes further, plays only a minor role in the Oslo area, while governmental regulations and land use planning have a more direct impact on second homes' construction and use.

Second home ownership in Europe has been connected to suburbanisation process, first by Clout (1974; 1977), and then in the works of other authors (Bauer & Roux, 1976; Sieverts, 1997, 2003; Holcombe & Staley, 2001; Gallent & Jones, 2000; Gallent et al., 2005).

A wish to live in a small house with a garden rather than an apartment, and the lack of such ability, could provoke the growth in second homes, as was the case in France during the 1970s, when 80 per cent of the French population wished to live in an individual house with a garden (Bauer and Roux, 1976). The intensification of suburbanisation with its opportunities to gain a permanent residence with a garden, which took place during the 1980s in France, slowed down the process of urbanisation (Prud'homme et al., 2004).

1.2 Terms and definitions

The modern classification of residential settlements in Russia was formed during the Soviet period, with some post-Soviet innovations. The type of settlement—rural or urban—is distinguished according to the primary activities of its residents: farming or not farming. In fact, the status of a settlement does not necessarily reflect the primary activities of its residents, as in the Russian empire there were villages where residents specialised in crafts, and during industrialization, a number of 'fabric villages' were developed in Moscow Province and other regions.

Criteria that distinguish an urban settlement from a rural one are still based on the criteria developed in the Soviet Union (Town-Planning Code of the Russian Federation, 1998) and based on the primary type of activities, if 80 per cent of the residents are involved into non-agricultural activities this settlement could be considered as urban. Another criteria is a size of its population. According to Russian town-planning regulations, a settlement could be considered as a town if its population is above 12,000 and 85 per cent of its residents are

involved in non-farming activities. There are three major types: rural settlements, town-type settlements and towns. These three types of settlements are divided into the smallest, small, medium, large and the largest according to population (Table 1).

Classification of settlement by size	Population number in persons	
	urban	rural
smallest	<20 000	< 50
small	< 50 000	<100
middle	50 000–100 000	200–1000
big	100 000–250 000	1000–5000
large	250 000–1000 000	>5000
largest	1000 000–3000 000	
mega-cities	>3000 000	

Table 1. Russian residential settlements classification (Data: Town-planning code of Russian Federation, 1998, Article 5).

Dacha settlements and garden association settlements are officially out of this list. Old dacha developments are usually located on residential lands, but garden settlements do not often even belong to the residential area classification, but to agricultural lands.

What is it dacha and garden association from legal point of view?

The most comprehensive explanation of contemporary second home ownership in Russia can be found in the Federal law on “Garden’, Vegetable Garden’ and Dacha ‘Non-profit citizens associations No 66-FZ of 15 April 1998” (O sadovodcheskih, ogorodnicheskih i dachnih nekommercheskih ob’edineniyah grazhdan)⁵. It clarifies the varieties of dacha property according to the right to build a residential house, and to the chief use of this property. House and function serve as key identifiers for second plot varieties. A Garden plot or site (*sadovyi uchastok*) is intended for the ‘...cultivation of fruits, berries, vegetables, melons and gourds, or other crops and potatoes, as well as well as for the recreation (with the right to build a residential building)’; a vegetable garden plot is only ‘...intended for the

⁵ The latest amendments to the law dated to 2008 year.

cultivation of diverse cultures without right to construct a residential building'; a *dacha* is a plot 'provided to a citizen or acquired for recreational purposes (with the right to build a residential building) [...] and with the right to grow crops'. There are three main type of second property owned by citizens in Russia: dacha, garden plot, and vegetable plot, that are identified by the dwelling and the main function of the plot.

Generally, people, who spend their days on a dacha are called '*dachniki* (plural form from '*dachnik*' in Russian), while garden association members are commonly referred to as *sadovody* or gardeners. Lovell (2003) uses a term '*summerfolks*' in his monograph on dacha history, adopting it from the play written by Maxim Gorky in 1904 and translated by Nick Dear in 1999. Also the play '*Dachniki*' was translated as '*Summer People*' (by Nicholas Saunders and Frank Dwyer in 1995). In the present paper, the terms '*summerfolks*' or '*summer dwellers*' will be used in cases when there is no need for the specification of activities and in cases when the difference between the types of dacha and garden residence is emphasized by the term *dachinik* (the singular form) or *dachiniks* (the plural form) which apply to owners of a dacha-plot, while the term *gardeners* will apply to members of a garden association.

2. The evolution of function and perception of dacha: case-studies in Moscow Province

A meaning, and a motivation for dacha living have been changing through the centuries, as well as its acquisition, property status and main functions.

The period dated to the pre-1800s, which is associated with the formation of the modern Russian urban society didn't know a summerhouse of the urban dweller, and defines dacha as some property allotted by Sovereign unrelated to its location (in suburbs or somewhere else). Though, from the 1830s the suburban element as a key to location of the dachas was included into its context. Thus the formation of the dacha-living tradition could be derived from this 1830s, however, as the consumers of the dacha were limited to the high-class, dacha phenomenon was not belong to the mass urban culture.

The culture dacha-living spread to the Moscow middle class around middle of the nineteenth century, in particular after 1860s, when urban population increase rapidly due to the economic reforms. While there are many sub-periods in dacha's culture evolution, it is possible to start a counting out mass-dachas from the 1850s, when dacha gradually spread

wider in numbers of consumers and kilometers (as expanded from 5–10 km to 40 km for a period from 1850s to 1910s).

Until the 1850s, the Russian dacha developed along the same routes as European second homes, which served as a calm escape from the industrial city for the middle class, but since the second half of the nineteenth century, when more and more citizens were involved in dacha-commuting, renting and living, dacha gradually started to play a role not only as a temporary escape from the bustle of the city to the countryside, but more as escape from poor living conditions for the masses of the urban population in the capital cities: hygienic and overcrowded apartments and rooms. It was a serious motive for the dacha boom among citizens of St. Petersburg (Malinova, 2006), and Moscow demonstrated the same initial reasons for a seasonal suburbanisation.

In fact for many years second-home settlements in the nearest environs up to 50-km radius from Moscow play the same function as residential suburbs western cities, where ‘those employed in the city might retreat when day’s work are done’ (Harris & Larkham, 1999). Besides such feature, which attracted Russian urbanites to their dachas and garden plots, as contact with nature and increasing of the private domesticity are also related to the suburban ideals closely (Burnett, 1986).

Very rapidly dacha settlements have been started to accumulate functions of the residential suburbs since 1900s following the population growth. Soviet system, which gave a priority to public over private, to industry over services, and to centralized planning based on large-scale apartment blocks over private detached housing construction, put little attention to the peripheral areas at the edge of the city until they were not included into its borders (as it happens in 1960s and 1980s). Many of the pre-revolutionary dacha-settlements have already undergone a process of increasing of their permanent residents. In the first half of the Twentieth century there were three waves of ‘suburbanization’, triggered by housing shortage due to the population growth inside the city: in 1910, when population increased rapidly; in the mid-1920s, when many residents moved to new capita; and in 1930s, when construction site inside Moscow requires new workers, who have been settled in the suburbs. Yet same settlements preserved its dacha’s functions even now.

2.1 Pre-revolutionary dacha-settlements: symbiosis of dacha and suburban living

The time between 1900 and 1917 was the period of the most intensive growth in dacha settlements, predominantly in the form of the developments by the railway lines. On the one hand, the construction of the railways and the birth of the suburban rail service, which permitted easy commuting between the city and its environs, promoted these developments, but on the other hand, the dacha development boom promoted the construction of new stations in the Moscow environs. Many of the settlements dated to this pre-revolutionary period were already part of the built-up areas that stretch from Moscow along its railways and were turned into residential suburban settlements, including, for example, popular dacha sites of the pre-revolutionary period such as Malakhovka, Perlovka, Saltykovka, Udel'naya, Mamontovka and many others⁶. Nevertheless, some of them still preserved the functions of the dacha settlement, as by springtime, the classified advertisements were full of the offers of rooms or houses 'for summer rent in the nearest suburbs' in the 'old dacha settlements' (*starodachnye posjolki*).

For example, Meshcherskiy settlement, that is located 15 km from the centre of Moscow close to the Kiev railway, is already included in the Moscow city administrative area, but still contains dacha houses. The typical dacha low-rise building environment is still in evidence, although new construction sites are appearing. Settlement was developed as the Knyaz'-Meshcherskiy dacha settlement between 1903–5, and was named by the landowner—prince (*Knyaz*) Sergey Borisovich Meshcherskiy (1852–unknown).

The affordability of transportation and the area's natural attractiveness (thanks to its forest and water basins) make this a popular dacha location, and by 1910, there were 108 households (and its summer population could be estimated as about 400). During the Soviet period, Meshcherskiy was named 'settlement of workers' (*rabochii posylok*) and as old residents recall, in the 1930s, around half of the houses were already being used as permanent housing. The population grew gradually: by 1926 it was about 200 persons, by 1939–2000, 1959–4400, and then remain rather stable. Still in spite of its status of an 'urban area' Meshcherskiy preserves its dacha-settlement appearance—low-rise detached houses surrounded by gardens. There are no high-rise buildings even among the new development sites in Meshcherkiy—the new buildings are a maximum of four storeys. There are detached

⁶ On suburbanization in Moscow region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and its correlations to transformations in dacha-settlements and suburban villages see a comprehensive study conducted by A.V. Belov (2005).

houses or villas, terraced houses as in “Park-Palace ensemble Meshcherskiy”, built on the site of the Soviet sanatorium, and a newly built area consisting of detached houses and apartment houses. New residential developments of the 2000s appealed in their advertisement to dacha charm of this place. Among the attractive features that developers advertise are the water basin, low-rise housing in the neighbourhood, excellent highways and the ecological merits of being close to the forest, as well its ‘dacha’ historical background’. In other words, dachas has even made into a selling point or key feature of its identity as a settlement. But new residential developments in Meshcherskiy are targeted to high-income consumers only.

Very similar situation could be found in Udelnaya dacha-settlement, which is located 28 km from the city centre, and has been developed along the railway to Ryazan through Kazan, during the early 1900s. Quite the same as in Meshcherskiy, since the 1920s dacha in Udelnaya have provided dwellings for workers from Moscow and for newly constructed industrial enterprises in the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, some dacha functions are preserved here too. Its dual status is clearly seen on maps. While Russian map named Udelnaya has been recorded as an ‘urban-type settlement’, at Google maps service, it is labelled as ‘dacha-settlement Udelnaya’ (*dachniy posyolok*). In spite that there are a few high-rise apartment buildings not far from the station most of the houses are one- or two-storey detached houses, surrounded by gardens. More than that There are still some houses that can be dated to the first period of Udelnaya’s development in the 1900–1920s. Some of the houses dated to the beginning of the twentieth century are well preserved by their owners, while others have had no repairs for a long period. Unfortunately, dacha buildings are not usually regarded as architectural monuments: thus such rebuilding and construction is not under the jurisdiction of any cultural preservation officials. All works on rebuilding or demolition have to follow the Russian Building Regulations Code and property laws, but not historical preservation laws. This has led to a significant decrease in the number of original dacha buildings in the settlement during the last decades, but there are still about fourteen dacha-buildings (Sineokova, 1994) that were built through the first decades of the twentieth century. But as they are all private property, it is likely that in a few years, these old wooden dacha will be replaced by concrete and brick houses.

Generally the life in the suburban houses requires more energy and expense for its daily maintenance, than apartment in the city. Nevertheless while the purchasing of the suburban house is much more affordable than inside the city, it became a prime reason for increasing of the permanent residents in such settlements recently, exactly in the same manner

as it was in 1920–30s (when Moscow-city had its rapid population increase due to migration). Thus first reason is based primarily on the economic situation, with a secondary reason is linked to ecological reasons and willingness to change an urban environment to a suburban one.

Besides, there are many ‘pseudo-suburbanites’, like some of the respondents in Meshcherskiy and Udelnaya. The official status of their house (or part of the house sometimes) is ‘summer house’, in other words dacha, but the families are using it as their prime house, while leasing an apartment in Moscow. And this situation is very typical for the dacha-settlement in the nearest suburbs of Moscow. For this reason the number of summerhouses retrieved from data provided by Census or other official statistics basing on citizens registration status doesn’t display a real picture correctly.

Dacha settlements, which lay inside a radius of 20 minutes commuting by suburban train, are undergoing an increase of permanent residents (even not officially), while dacha-settlements that are located 45 km from the city are regarded as ‘inconvenient’. A psychological perception of possibility to get a sufficient access to cultural and social activity of the city is very important.

For example, Mamontovka settlement is an old dacha settlement developed in the 1890s by Mamontov, who actually built a railway to connect Moscow and Sergiev Posad, and built a dacha for himself in the middle of the route. It is located 45 km to the north-east of Moscow, and is now part of a built-up protuberance that stretches along the railway from Moscow. It is quite densely built up mostly by detached houses with small plots and gardens. During the mid-1990s summer settlement was popular among artists, students, and other categories of citizens, who were not obliged commute to work daily, or were not able to pay for Moscow room. There are houses that provide comfortable living conditions quite similar to urban life (electricity, water and gas, and central heating based on water boiler system). The food supply is good, thanks to the market in Pushkino (nearby town), with local and provincial providers. However, there was a great ‘but’—the distance from the city, which provides one of my respondents to return to the city, and finally purchased an apartment in the nearest suburbs. They explained: ‘Everything was different... It was a strange feeling like we were living in some “zone of alienation” (*zona otchuzhdeniya*). And it is such a sad feeling during the winter.’

2.2 Are the Soviet dachas the last ones?

A new Soviet dacha developments have been started by Soviet authorities as purely recreational facilities for a thin layer (comparing to the workers and peasants) of the new Soviet elite. The number of these dacha-settlements didn't impact the situation in Moscow suburbs, in contrast to post-war garden plots distribution.

Second homes were used as a tool to control the loyalty of the people by Soviet authorities, along with other types of housing. Meerovich (2008) argued that the housing shortage that accompanies Soviet life, particularly until 1960 and mass construction, was a complex mechanism developed by the Soviet authorities to maintain the loyalty of their subordinates at all levels from workers to members of the Central Committee, and granting housing in a form of an apartment or second home was and instrument of control.

Looking for dacha developments belonging to the Soviet period, such names as Peredelkino, Nikolina Gora, NIL and Mozhinka came up. However, difficulties in overcoming the borders of the private plots and involving residents in the interviews were encountered most frequently in the Soviet dacha settlements. Old dacha are usually completely hidden by trees, screened from the view of passers-by, and it is impossible to address anybody from the street; while taking photos close to newly constructed objects could cause an unpleasant intervention by the buildings' guards. The survey becomes only possible through personal acquaintance with the residents of the settlements, and such acquaintances were found in Kratovo⁷.

Kratovo presented a classic case of a railway dacha development that, according to the local legend, was proposed by V. Lenin as a resort for the old Bolsheviks, i.e. those who entered the Bolshevik party before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Whether or not this is true, by the early 1930s, the subdivision of land close to the Kazan was started. This land was located only a few stations beyond the well-known dacha developments of the 1900s, such as Kraskovo, Malakhovka, Udelnaya and Bykovo. Unlike such well-known dacha-settlements as Nikolina Gora or Peredelkino, where artists, writers and famous scientist lived, residents of Kratovo cooperatives represented all kinds of Soviet officials and intelligentsia—from old Bolsheviks like Kaganovich to movie makers like Pudovkin and engineers from Moscow research institutes.

⁷ Personal acquaintances among local residents are preferable during any survey, but while in the garden associations such acquaintance could be found at the site, dacha settlements rarely give such opportunities.

Kratovo ('town-type settlement') is located 40 km from the city centre. Its present total area is 2200 hectares, and the population, recorded by the most recent census, is 6868 (2009). As well as the eighteen dacha cooperatives, there is a state sanatorium for children and adults, summer camps for children, and residential blocks for service employers and doctors. There are also garden plots to the north, which were distributed to Kratovo' residents in the 1970s and 1980s consists of eighteen dacha cooperatives and villages that lie in its environs.

Comparing to pre-revolutionary dacha-settlements and post-war garden plots Kratovo is a settlement of very low density—about three persons per hectare (nearby Zhukovskiy, on the opposite side of the railway, has 22 people per hectare). During the summer, the population increases, but not much, as the average size of the plot in Kratovo is about half a hectare per family.

Most of the houses, in spite of having a heating system or *pechka* (stove) are not appropriate for winter living. Some of residents, as Tatiana (51 years old), said that this 'is the greatest pity that I cannot live here when I retire'. Main reason is a love for gardening: 'I love working in the garden, I like it very much, and especially flowers—I have hundreds of them here. Other plants don't grow well in this soil'. The sandy soil in Kratovo, which is very good for the spruce and pine woodland that forms the area's unique climate, is not suitable for vegetable cultivation. Nevertheless, there are some vegetable beds in the most of dachas' gardens, and usually a lot of berries bushes and flowers.

There are newcomers, whose residents are notable for the solid and high fences that surrounded the newly built residence of the new owners constructed from brick, concrete and metallic aluminium, are quite opposite to the old-style wooden fences of dachas. Still the most of the residents are inherited their plots and there are still many houses dated to the initial period of development in 1930s.

However, in contrast to pre-revolutionary settlements, Kratovo preserves its initial subdivision pattern of low density and preserves its seasonal character. First of all, because of price for the plot. Initial dacha subdivision is still prevail and a half-hectare plot is accessible only to high-income consumers, who are more interested in dacha atmosphere of the place, than its residential potential. From the other side, most of the summerfolks of Kratovo also live there only seasonally, partly due to the tradition, partly because the dacha-houses built in the 1930s in Kratovo cannot be used during the cold season because of its construction quality. And finally, the transportation problem prevents dacha residents to turn their summer houses

into permanent. Those who use cars complain about traffic jams on the suburban highways and inside the city; while those who use suburban trains have to face overcrowded carriages during the morning and evening rush hours, as Kazan railroad has the most intensive traffic in the region.

As a whole, the dacha lifestyle in Kratovo has not undergone great changes, except that the cultural life in the form of the cinema and library has moved from the dacha-settlement to the nearby towns. Another evident change is an upgrading of living comfort, primarily through introducing gas water-heaters for bathrooms and central heating. In contrast to some of the other dacha-settlements in Moscow Province (see Akselrod, 2002), which have had gas supplies and sometimes sewage systems as well as electricity and a cold-water supply since at least the post-war period, Kratovo got its gas lines only in the mid-1980s, and households have to connect to them at their own expense.

2.3 Is there still a need for garden associations?

The post-war period brought a slight release to the housing situation, along with democratisation of life during the '*ottepel'*' period. The allotment of garden plots to the masses and the almost simultaneous introduction of the prefabricated panel house as a model for mass construction permitted people to increase their living space, not just in one house, but in two—the urban home and the suburban garden plot.

Garden plots, which gradually increased, have been allotted by the State, as well as pre-war dachas, but the layer of recipients has been wider, it included virtually all-working urban dwellers. It's quite another matter that not all of the urban dwellers were looking forward to gain such plots. Whereas there are examples of the land cultivating (in a form of vegetable gardens in major) inside the Moscow city by the dwellers in 1950s and 1960s, the increase on acquisition of the garden plot dated to 1970s.

Besides the political factor (1) such as indulgence on land possession and private housing construction under Brezhnev rule (General Secretary of the Communist Party 1966–1982), there were other possible factors.

While food provision has become better considered to the post-war time, the quality of the vegetables in state shops was so low that where it was possible citizens tried to avoid them. The desire to enrich daily diet by fresh vegetables along with limitations on the cultivation of the land inside the city stimulated citizens to acquire suburban plot.

According to the survey the majority of respondents believed that ‘...in the event that the welfare standards of citizens improves considerably, there will be no need for these plots.’ (FOM, 2001 August 2). Is it true?

Irina and her husband have a garden plot in in ‘Sadovod Dzerzhinets’ that was founded in 1957 as a garden association for the workers from one of the central districts in Moscow. It belonged to Irina’s parents. Irina and her husband work in the garden too, but as more than half of the site is now grass and flowers instead of crops, it does not require such intensive care. The grow vegetables like carrots, lettuce, cucumbers and herbs for their daily summer diet, and they have plenty of apple trees, a few cherry trees, red and blackcurrant bushes as well. Among their favourites are sea-buckthorn trees, which are a source for jams that are also used as a home remedy. They also have a small pergola covered in grapes, and Irina plants different flower-bushes like jasmine. They regard their gardening more as a form of rest and exercise, along with attractive opportunities to go to the forest and the river.

“Our parents put all their hearts into this plot, their work wear was kept in respected places, clearly seen, as they were worked hard and were proud of it. Now our work wear is hidden in the wardrobe,”—Irina, explained the main transformation.

Not only the plot layout is undergone a notable transformation, but the house as well too. The original house’s central room and part of the present terrace that was built by Irina’s parents in 1957, is now totally extended and renovated inside. ‘My parents built this house themselves. They carried everything from Moscow or Dmitrov [about 100 km from Moscow] by themselves, and at first they had to find materials, like everybody in the Soviet Union. The structure was installed by workers, but all finishing was done by my parents, and it took about a decade in total’ said Irina. The original one-storey wooden log was 6x4.5 m, with a terrace of 11.4 sq. m (total floor area 35 sq. m.) developed through the years into a two-storey structure with a kitchen and a large terrace (although according to its documents, it is a one-storey house with an attic, as the upper floor is not heated). The old veranda was extended in early the 1990s; in the early 2000s Irina built a new kitchen as an extension to the house instead of the old separate summer kitchen. As well as many their neighbours, they have recently rebuilt the bathhouse and installed a shower-cabin with an electric water-heater and a toilet.

Other respondents afrom the same settlement admitted that in general they started to work less on their plots.

Among the reasons why there was less work were: first of all the increase in transport costs, which makes the cultivation of vegetables unprofitable; and secondly there were new opportunities to find more efficient ways of generating income, especially for the younger generation and to buy necessary food. Observations of dacha and garden-plot settlements in Moscow Province from mid-1990s and during the late 2010s shows that a proportion of these, who use their dacha or garden plots is primarily for recreation is notably increasing. Lawn instead of vegetable garden is not regarded as an 'unusual' as it was in 1970s, but instead as a model plot.

The Agricultural Census also supports conclusions from observation: plot use is under transformation. According to the Census estimations, the grass and flowers occupy about 50 per cent of garden plots. While vegetables grown is very modest: they occupied about 17.5 per cent of garden plots, almost the same as buildings (16.3 per cent); trees and bushes occupy 16.2 per cent on garden plots (Sokolin (Ed.), 2008, v.3).

Even if garden plots are not able provide enough quantity of food for a year, it brought other important things. For example, privacy and it helps to increase the living space per capita. Even though the housing conditions were improving slightly in terms of space per capita and facilities, as people have been moved to newly constructed apartment buildings since 1960s, the urban alienation increased as well as urban stress caused by increasing commuting time from the new apartment in suburbs to the work place in the center. While garden association suggests a living within bicycle' distance to the nearest grocery shop and communicating with community.

Garden plots, as well as dachas, but even more gave an absolutely different living environment, to the urban dwellers. They get an opportunity not only to change their apartment to the private house, but also to be busy with 'rural' activities, which enrich their urban life.

2.4 An example of the post- Soviet garden-plot in Moscow province

By 2005, 47 per cent of Muscovites had a dacha or garden plot. Survey, conducted by FOM, supports the idea that garden plots and dacha in general is not only about food supply: 75 per cent of Muscovites named as the main reason for dacha-living "...a contact with nature and recreation " (FOM, 2005).

What is the scale and features of second-plot ownership in the post-Soviet Moscow Province? In 2006 in the Moscow Province, the total area making up the second plots of Muscovites and citizens of the Province was 1,258 sq. km—it amount 2.7 per cent of the total area of the Moscow Province.⁸

The garden association settlement where Olga and Zhenya purchased a plot in 2000 is located 100 km from the centre of Moscow, or about 80 km from Moscow ring road. It is located a long way from Moscow, but is nevertheless convenient in terms of transport, both public and private. It is just between two of the railway stations of the Riga' (Rizhskaya) railway line and Novorizhskoe shosse (highway), which runs directly from Moscow to Volokolamsk. There are also local roads that run parallel to highway. Location and affordability of transport were key factors when searching for a second-home in this area: as Olga said, 'It takes about an hour and a half by car or by train to get from Moscow to there. We live in the north-western part of the city, so we usually go straight to the highway.' They had a plot in a garden association settlement, which had belonged to her grandfather and was located exactly on the opposite side from Moscow—to the East, but it took at least three hours to get there by car. So it was decided to sell the old plot and to buy a new one somewhere in a more preferable direction. Thus they were looking for an inexpensive plot, and the garden association could provide such an opportunity.

They found a garden settlement not far from Chismena station, which is named for a nearby village. There are a few villages and twenty-two garden associations in the neighbourhood. There are no cottage developments, because of its remote character. Initially, land for gardeners was allotted to the employees of the Research Institute on Chemistry in Moscow in the early 1990s. It is not a large settlement: there are about thirty plots of 1000 sq. m and it is still not fully developed.

Most of the present gardeners have no connection to the Research Institute, as it happened that through the 1990s, most of the employers who were given plots could not build a house even of the shed type. Household income has become an important reason for using and cultivating or non-using their plot, in particular plots with a second-house like in a dacha cooperatives or a garden association. 'So in a few years a new enterprise already worked there as a prime developer'. Olga explained the purchase mechanism: they bought an empty plot for an exceptionally low price, about \$400, as its owner any way had neither the will nor the means to work there. Then the developer built a house there, which was small and modest, but

⁸ Data source: All-Russian Agricultural Census 2006 (Sokolin (Ed.), 2008, v.3).

nevertheless allowed them to sell the plot as 'built-up land' and the price was 'not \$400, but much higher'.

They bought a plot and rebuilt the house by the next year in 2001. The house is only for summer living. The house was built from timber, which is cheaper than a log house, and covered with plastic sliding, which is popularised on every construction market and magazine as a cheap and effective means to protect wooden walls from damage. Its total floor is about 100 sq. m; it is nominally a one-storey house with an attic, but it has a spacious loggia and classic dacha-style veranda, which is the centre of summer life.

The construction of modest dacha house is not cheap, but affordable to people with permanent work. It could cost from 500 000 to one (sometimes two) million roubles. The annual fee for electricity, water, security guards and their dogs, and other expenditure on the maintenance of the settlement requires from 10 000 to 40 000 roubles per year. On top of this, the garden annually costs about 30 000 roubles for plants and twice or three times for fertilizers and tools. If you buy all the plants in the breeding nurseries it cost about 200 000, Olga explained. In fact maintaining a garden-plot could be very time and money consuming enterprise. That is why dacha ownership is not an option for low-income urbanites. In post-Soviet society second-home possession is turning into a middle-class benefit.

FOM's surveys show the number of people who regard their plots as a recreational facility is gradually increasing (FOM, 2005 June 30; 2009 June 25; 2010, May 20). Among the categories associated with recreation are the following: "contact with nature", "socializing with friends" and "move children from the city during the school-holidays".

Olga says, 'Here plots are quite empty, with almost no vegetable cultivation. I'd like to start, but a vegetable garden requires daily care. I plant zucchini just for amusement. We both are working during the week, and usually come here only during weekends, or sometimes for a week during a vacation, but we prefer to divide our vacations between dacha and travelling. We have no time to spend a whole summer here. Flowers and bushes are my main plants'.

Garden plots purchased and cultivated by modern urbanites are primarily 'grass and flowers', with some bushes and trees. But the main reason for the absence of vegetable gardens is not a lack of will to grow vegetables, but a shortage of time. People who are buying a new second plot now are primarily hard-working middle class individuals of about 30-40 years old, and time is their major problem. Besides, gardening is considered as a hobby now, not an obligation, as it was during Soviet times.

2.5 Villa rustica as a new model

While purchasing a house in a garden association or dacha cooperative is popular among urbanites, it does come with some difficulties. In old dacha developments, the price of plots is the main reason why people of medium income cannot purchase a dacha there, as spacious (and even less spacious) plots in dacha settlements like Kratovo or Peredelkino, which already have a developed infrastructure and are usually located within a 20km radius from the Moscow border with easy access to highways and railways, are priced exceptionally high (a dacha plot could be priced from \$500 000 to a few million dollars). Meanwhile, new garden plot communities have a modest infrastructure and are located a considerable distance from the city. Furthermore, there are no guarantees that the land will not be restored into agricultural resources at some point.

As the price of real estate decreases as the distance from Moscow increases, the remote areas attract Muscovites and resident of towns in Moscow and other Provinces. In addition, houses in the old villages might be more than a hundred years old, and many are very spacious, especially to the north of Moscow. As one, as belong to a family of Muscovites in their early 40s (a couple with two children and three pets). They owned a house, which is located 450 km from Moscow and takes at least six hours to get there by public transport or around five hours by car, depending on the traffic. Its location is not convenient for a weekend stay, so as its owner, Ekaterina, explains, ‘We usually spend about two or three weeks there during the summer, sometimes come again for a week, and usually spend a week during the school holidays in October’.

House is located in Opechenskiy Posad—a settlement of the Borovichi district of Novgorod Province. Ekaterina came here during the 1990s, when her father, an artist, purchased a house in this remote place, where he could devote himself to landscape painting. Unfortunately the house’s exact construction date is unknown, but according to its documents, it was before 1954. The house and a shed/garage (total of 1502 sq. m) are located at the front of the site facing the road. The front fence starts at the front wall of the house, and the site is located just beside the house. The site behind the house was intended initially for a vegetable garden and primarily for cultivating potatoes, and thus has no trees.

Since 2010 when the house was linked to the gas public supply, family is coming there during winter vacations. The present house building (total area 144.6 sq. m; floor area 169.1

sq. m) consists of the two log houses: the original house at the front and an extension to its rear that was built in 2000 by Ekaterina's father. The internal surface of log are left uncovered, and there is also a wooden ceiling that is reminiscent of country-style cabins and recreates a 'village-style' but in the dacha tradition. Among common peasants, uncovered wooden walls were considered more a sign of a modest income or temporary living in hunters' huts than a sign of a particular taste. The interior of the initial volume looks very different: logs are hidden under planks covered by wallpaper to recreate a common residential interior.

Similar cases of transformation of a village house into a dacha house not only in terms of its function, but also through its forms of building and through its exterior and interior design could be found through all area from about 150 km to 500 km from Moscow.

3. Conclusion: A revision of 'dacha'

Generally, second-home developments in the Moscow region during the twentieth century played the role of retreat, even temporarily, from urban living conditions. They enabled people to save money in the 1900s, and to escape from communal apartments in the 1930–1950s. Interestingly, not all urban citizens were interested in dacha: some of them rejected them as being too labour-intensive, and they were not regarded even by urbanites as a survival strategy, as later research on the efficiency of garden plots in food provision shows (Clarke, 2002). In spite the time-intensive commuting the weekend or/and temporal summer relieve was high estimated.

In particular the most evident changes are visible among in the garden associations, which members changes their approach to gardening notably—it has become more rational, and at the same time more relaxed.

First, in the Moscow (as well as Saint Petersburg) region the area of the vegetable garden is shrinking while the gardening-time decreases too and vegetable-bed are moving to the backside of the plot. Garden-plots, which was defined initially as plots to help food provision for the urbanites actually could not play this role due to its modest size of maxim 1000 sq. m, which is not enough to provide plenty of crops for a winter. The recognition of this fact, supported by the improving food supply in a whole, changed approach to the garden work greatly: it is stop from being 'duty' and become 'leisure'.

Another tendency that is correlated to the firming of the urban life-style is improving of the living standards according to the urban model. Since 1990s, as new tools and resources

became available, residents in dachas and garden plots started numerous works on improving comfort levels of their dacha's life. They install electric water heater to have warm water at any hour, bathes, laundry machines, lavatory pan, which were regarded previously as elements of urban level of comfort associated with apartment building. It indicates also that the perception of the life in the second house (at the garden plots in particular) as something completely different from urban environment is decreasing.

Taken together, these transformations of the everyday habits and life-style inside garden settlements mark an important change in the perception of the garden-life among urbanites—it is becoming close to dacha culture with its recreational lifestyle, rather than hard work in the vegetable garden. Among other changes is a decrease of in the time spent working on the plot, as most of the respondents in the present survey confirmed. Nonetheless, the garden and vegetable garden define the pace of their life, but are regarded now as 'enjoyable work', as exercise and 'dynamic recreation'. Naturally, the post-Soviet remedy to the permanent food deficit (which characterised Soviet times) gave reasons to relax and to convert a duty to work in the vegetable garden to produce a food supply for the family into a recreational activity with benefits for body and diet. Still, the complete absence of a vegetable garden on a plot is quite rare, and is usually related to a lack of time or infertility of the soil.

While gardeners now tend to work on their plots less, dacha residents tend to work more than their predecessors. They grow vegetables with enthusiasm, flowers in large quantities, fruit trees and berry shrubs. The most active gardeners in dacha and garden plots are usually over thirty years old and often about fifty. They have enough energy and some resources in terms of money and time (not much, but enough to support their hobby). In other words, one current trend is a closing of the gap between dacha and garden plot lifestyle in terms of living standards and level of infrastructure development. What is most important is that there is evidence that the lifestyles in second-home developments are also converging, in spite of some differences in the form and size of plots and houses.

Besides, other forms of dacha possession are become apparent. Along with purchasing second-plots, a country houses in the remote villages became an attractive, while more and more urban dwellers own a car, which make the access to such villages much more available. First the clean environment and beautiful scenery attract new residents, which tended to advertise their new property and its settlement among their friends, and create some kind of new second-home communities inside such villages. The replacement of the country residents by seasonal residents, which occurred in the villages on the provinces adjoining to the

Moscow Province, is developing according to the centrifugal model, and very similar to case in other European countries (Clout, 1972; Louchart & Ronsac 1991; Holcombe and Staley, 2001), but besides income and time reasons there could be possible other factors like security from crisis through the land purchasing or relocation from the city by the housing reasons or the state of health could play a significant part, and devoted a separate profound survey.

The shifting from socialist to market economy didn't only bring a remarkable change to the land status in dacha's and garden-plot' settlements, which could be privatized and privately owned since 1991, but it impact also the dacha life-style of the Muscovites too. Second-home development in the Moscow environs has undoubtedly undergone a metamorphosis, but it has not been as serious as transformations in the second-home developments of the East European cities and in ex-Soviet republics.

During the post-Soviet period the number of plots didn't decrease, on contrary it remains stable in spite of all economic ups-and-downs. Presuming the fact that dacha lifestyle is a firm element of the Moscow region urban culture, it is possible to expect gradual increase in the second-home subdivisions for the citizens of Moscow and Moscow Provincial towns. If the municipal and governmental plans will not correspond with private subdivision for second homes, this will lead to profound increase of doubled suburbanization and significant degradation of the environmental conditions in the suburban area. Meanwhile as the garden plots or subdivision of the similar type for the middle-class consumer are pushed out further and further, the remote suburban areas will degrade too.

But, besides, the provision of food and a living space, second homes preserved its other, and possibly its main function—to expand everyday urban environment from the city to semi-rural, to relieve an urban stress (crowded, polluted environment, work, etc.), as all respondents emphasized and described their dacha-life as 'the life itself' and 'interaction with nature'.

In other words second homes preserved their function as retreat not only from urban pollution but psychological and probably metaphorical too, still there are definite changes in the perception of the living there. Dacha (in all its forms) and city (of all its sizes) in present Russia are inseparably connected. Second-homes settlements, present a complex set of different criteria that required a detailed evaluation. However, they have to be valued not only in the housing terms or their agricultural profit, but also as a social community and cultural and historical element, their role for the nearby rural communities in provision of services and

infrastructure have to be taken into consideration, as well as their impact on the life of urban citizens and effect on quality of life.

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