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MOSCOW 1993: THE EMERGENCE OF HOUSING MARKET AND THE PROBLEMS OF INTRA-URBAN SEGREGATION

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Housing is one of the most acute problems in Moscow. In fact, before early 1993 housing distribution was normative. Up to now there have existed and continue to exist long lists for improving housing conditions. To be put into these lists was possible only in case the people lived in overcrowded flats with less than 5 sq.m. per person. The process of housing privatisation that had considerably developed by late 1992 started the market mechanism for „buy - sell“ of the apartments, creating conditions for the formatting of housing market in Moscow. The gradual expanding of the real estate market had brought about a relative price stabilisation by 1993. Location affects strongly the cost of a flat. For Moscow, under conditions of socially mixed population and a vague idea of what is a „prestigious“ dwelling zone like, a better location is associated with the city centre remoteness. In reality, the apartment value rate reflects not only the quality of the housing proper and its place on the city-maps, but the quality of life in the given blocks. The contrasts of the picture as it is draw attention in the first instance. The Central part of the city stands out sharply as to the price level. At the same time there are quite a number of blocks in outlying districts able to compete with the centre. It can be noted that there have emerged two poles of gravitation of well-off people, and alongside prestigious blocks of the historical part of Moscow similar blocks are arising in outlying districts. The functioning of housing market significantly enchanted social differences bringing about polarization of urban environment. The right of choosing the place of residence enjoyed by the population now, but so far accessible only to „the rich“, has led to re-distribution of the population in the city and segregation of different social strata. It turns urban environment into a source of permanent conflicts and social claims which are the more acute. Moscow's city authorities have not yet been fully conscious of these problems and in fact the latter are not discussed neither in mass media nor in scientific publications.

Key Words: Housing Market, Moscow, Apartment, Location, Price

Housing is one of the most acute problems in Moscow. Swift growth of the city's population has made this problems almost insoluble. To own "a Moscow flat" people would stop at nothing: fake marriages and divorces, family dramas, bribes and forgery. In fact, before early 1993 housing distribution was normative. Up to now there have existed and continue to exist long list for improving housing conditions. To be put into these lists was possible only in case the people lived in overcrowded flats with less than 5 sq.m. per one person.

No doubt there were plenty of ways to bypass the existing regulation either by making use of one's official standing or by paying a big sum of money. Thus, for example, in 1988, 105 thousand families and individuals improved their housing conditions, but only 54 thousands of them were really "ocheredniki", i.e. those on the list. By the end of 1988 those on the waiting list amounted to 378 thousand families. Permanent scandals flared up around housing distribution. A flat in the centre of the

city was considered as a privilege enjoyed only by high ranking officials. Simultaneous with mass housing construction, a selective housing construction was going on in the centre. Random "enclaves" of modern multi-storey housing blocks arose there. Their look and unceremonious invasion of a historically formed housing pattern irrevocably destroyed the historical milieu of the nicest corners of Moscow.

It is natural that on receiving a new flat people should be far from being always satisfied with it. Plenty of things did not suit them and in the first place finding themselves far away from the location they had lived before, and the rupture of all old ties. There would have been no way out of the situation but for the established practice of exchanging flats ("housing barter"), which arose as a result of semi-legal activities of the population. You couldn't buy or sell an apartment, but it could be exchanged on condition that the exchange was equivalent and neither of the sides worsened its housing conditions to the extent that it might become eligible for getting a new apartment. As a result, after revealing outstanding abilities to get things going, wasting lots of time, energy and money, the Muscovites could move to the block that met their demands. But of course not many could run such risks: only the most active and well off people. A long-term functioning of housing exchange market formed certain notions of the values of different city blocks and gave a unique chance to analyze territorial differentiation of urban environment¹.

The process of housing privatisation that had considerably developed by late 1992² started the market mechanism for "buy - sell" of the apartments, creating conditions for the formation of housing market in Moscow. The functioning of it took on a criminal shade as a result of the absence of a properly worked out housing law, protecting the citizens' rights to their own dwelling place, and the general juridical ignorance of the population as well. Thus, according to the Police Department of Moscow estimates, over 1993, 15,000 cases of eviction of citizens as a result of housing machinations were registered. Among them 1,500 were murdered, 6,000 found themselves homeless and joined the ranks of Moscow beggars. The rest were forced to abandon the city. The mechanism of housing deals is rather simple: poor and lonely people are offered various "benefits" - from considerable sums of money and housing in other districts of the city or the country to selling the apartment with the former owner retaining a life-long right to dwell there. The deal concluded, the "former owner" is of no interest to "the benefactor" and is thrown out into the street. The lonely old folks, alcoholics, children under age, drug addicts - the most unprotected layers of citizens - turn victims to this kind of swindling. In February, 1994, a criminal group was disclosed, who were involved in this kind of criminal activities. In their office, documents were discovered containing data about 2,278 apartment owners, in fact, potentially doomed.

The obvious profit derived from housing speculation gave a powerful spur to the development of multiple smaller firms and offices dealing with the evaluation of

realty, its speedy privatisation and selling (buying). At the lowest estimate possible, there are now 180 similar firms in Moscow functioning legally and specializing in operation with real estate, apart from numerous banks and stock-exchanges for which such activity is just work on the side.

In 1992, when the demand for housing in Moscow and for office considerably exceeded the supply, prices were fixed quite incidentally and might be unexpectedly low or unjustifiably high. But the gradual expanding of the real estate market had brought about a relative price stabilisation by 1993. It does not mean that the prices themselves don't change, they are rising as a result of general inflation but a stable enough correlation between the prices has been established, depending on the location of housing within the city, the infrastructure of the adjoining blocks, proximity to parklands and plenty of other factors.

Now, what is the structure of the Moscow housing fund like? Houses built in Soviet time form its basis. Historical buildings are located only in the centre of the city, many houses having been removed from the fund for the reason of not corresponding to up-to-date notions of the necessary comfort standards. At the same time, they continue to maintain multistory rental houses, built early in the century, where people, as a rule, live in "communal" flats. A number of buildings have been reconstructed to meet the demands of a prestigious dwelling. In previous times they were offered to "nomenklatura", nowadays the latter have been replaced by the "new rich". But such houses definitely make up an inconsiderable part of the city housing fund.

Soviet housing, starting with the 20s, can be very well divided into clear-cut periods determined by the dominating urban-planning conceptions. In the 20s and 30s the principles of constructivism and functionalism were widely introduced into construction. Concrete is already widely used. The ideas of a "social (communal) hostel" bring about a sharp decrease of the useful space of apartments. Many household functions - cooking, washing, keeping food stores etc., are carried out beyond an individual dwelling place and the minimum space is left for these functions within the flat. Compact housing blocks in accordance with the principle of "factory-settlement" prevail in that period.

From 1932 up to 1958 the dominating idea is the "facade-line" housing construction in Moscow, which was meant as a sort of window-dressing. Individually designed blocks of houses were built along all city avenues, the principal arteries of traffic. These brick houses, richly decorated, had apartments corresponding to their outer look. A portion of these apartments was occupied by those belonging to privileged layers of the population, "the working aristocracy" included, while in the remaining part two-three families lived in one apartment, that is, the "communal principle" was observed. Construction carried out by such methods couldn't solve the housing

problem - the key problem of the city. The gap between the living standards of higher and lower layers of the population became dangerous.

Transition to mass housing construction has begun since the sixties, when the building industry came in place of individual methods of construction. Concrete has taken the place of brick, 8-9 story houses are replaced by 5-story ones. Making cheaper the construction becomes a leading principle. As a result, not only architectural extravagances, but even lifts are given up. The task of providing the greatest possible number of Muscovites with housing was being solved to great extent at the expense of increasing the number of compartments in every house. That's why the living space per family, as well as the height of ceilings, were sharply cut. At present, almost the whole 5-story housing fund of Moscow is in such poor state that it is beyond repairing.

The middle of the 70s marks the beginning of a new stage in the urban planning history of Moscow. Changes are introduced into the mass planning of prefabricated houses, widely practiced before. Year after year the number of stories has been growing from 9 to 22, the lay-out improving and the useful space increasing. Buildings put into operation in the late 80s almost do not differ from houses of the 50s as to the size and amenities of apartments. Of course, they are much inferior to the latter as far as quality of the buildings is concerned, as well as their architectural design and the amenities of surrounding urban milieu.

The concentric development of Moscow conditioned the consecutive lay-out on the city-map of the blocks constructed at various times. They are easily discerned visually. But the picture, uniform at first glance, has its nuances connected not only with the time of housing construction but with houses representing different kinds of property. It is necessary to note that, though real estate couldn't be owned privately (individually) in Soviet time, some kinds of collectively owned property were still allowed, in particular: department property (i.e., belonging to the collective of a certain state enterprise, ministry, office or corporation) and cooperative property (i.e., owned by an association of individuals). As a rule, departmental and cooperative houses are of better construction quality and have improved compartment lay-out. In addition, the dwellers of these houses are more social homogeneous. Departmental and cooperative housing construction was carried out at random, within the blocks, and never on mass scale. Though departmental and cooperative houses are dispersed all over the city, one can easily pick out the blocks where they are mostly concentrated.

Let's look at maps (Figure 1, 2, 3.). The greatest volume of housing in Moscow is municipal (state property), but its share considerably varies by districts. Municipal buildings are located in the first place in the central part of the city, in the zone of historical housing, where we find former rental houses and private mansions, once

expropriated. Then we see the areas of 5-story housing and former suburbs standing out very well on the map (Figure 1). They mainly occupy the space in between the city traffic arteries, its inner districts. If we compare the area of the prevailing concentration of municipal houses and the underground line network, it will become evident that it is the above territories that are least of all provided with the underground transport, which is the key one under Moscow conditions. The residents of these districts are forced to use the surface transport, which is slow and much more reliable.

The picture will be quite different if we take departmental houses (Figure 2). Most of them are located:

- in settlements constructed around bigger industrial units, the airports (for example, in the settlement of the airport "Vnukovo" 96% of housing is departmental and the population is employed by this enterprise), the water-power plant etc.;
- in the central part of the city, in the blocks selected by high party and state officials;
- in the blocks constructed in Stalin's time, which adjoin Moscow avenues and are well provided with kinds of transport.

Cooperative houses (Figure 3) are mainly concentrated in the outskirts of the city, in the area of mass housing construction of recent years, but here the trend for territorial selectivity is also evident. As construction of cooperative housing suggested the investments by individual citizens, many factors were taken into account when choosing the building site. They were the following: transport facilities, proximity to parkland, the provision of social infrastructure etc. Thus, other things being equal, the residents of cooperative houses were certain to find themselves in the better position.

When speaking of structure and quality of the Moscow housing fund, one should mention that the housing situation differs in various districts. The average living space provision varies from 8 to 30 sq. m. per capita (Figure 4). The situation is the worst in the districts where there is still much old residential housing, i.e., in the inner-city and in the areas where bigger urban and semi-urban settlements of former suburbs of the capital are still preserved. There are many "communal" apartments. Things are much better in the blocks of Stalin's time construction. In spite of the existence of "communal" apartments, the high quality of the housing and vast flats provide the residents with better living space.

Figure 1 Share of Municipal Housing in Moscow (1993)

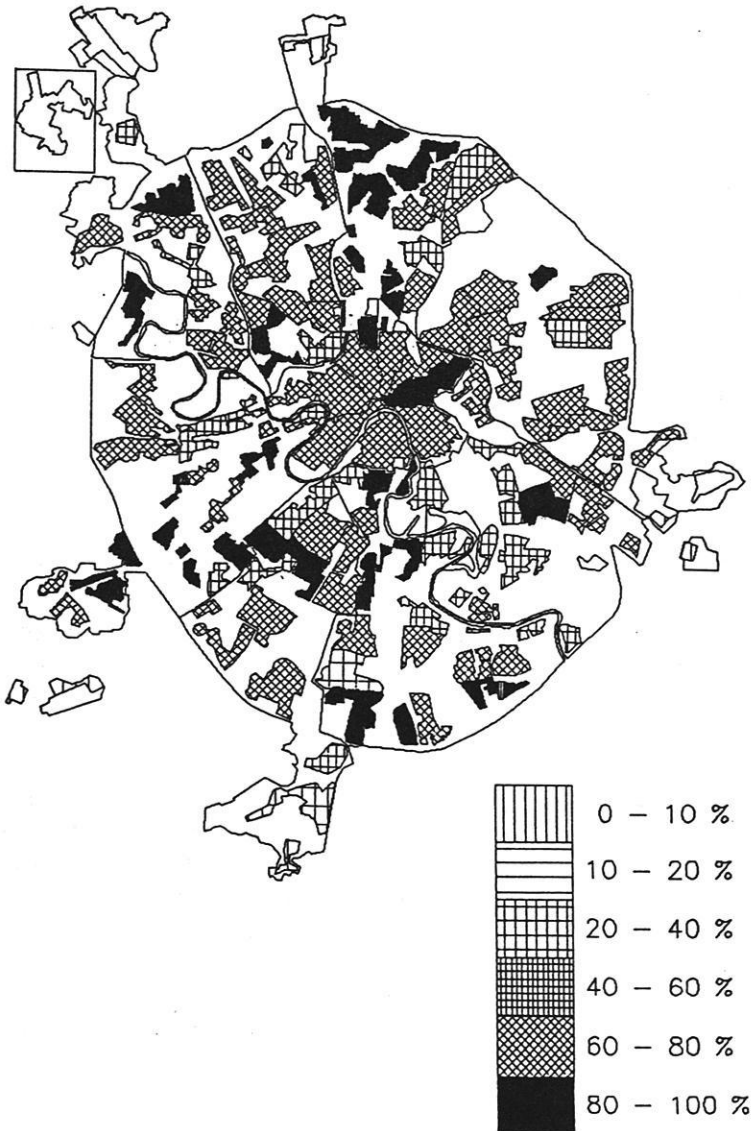


Figure 2 Share of Departmental Housing in Moscow (1993)

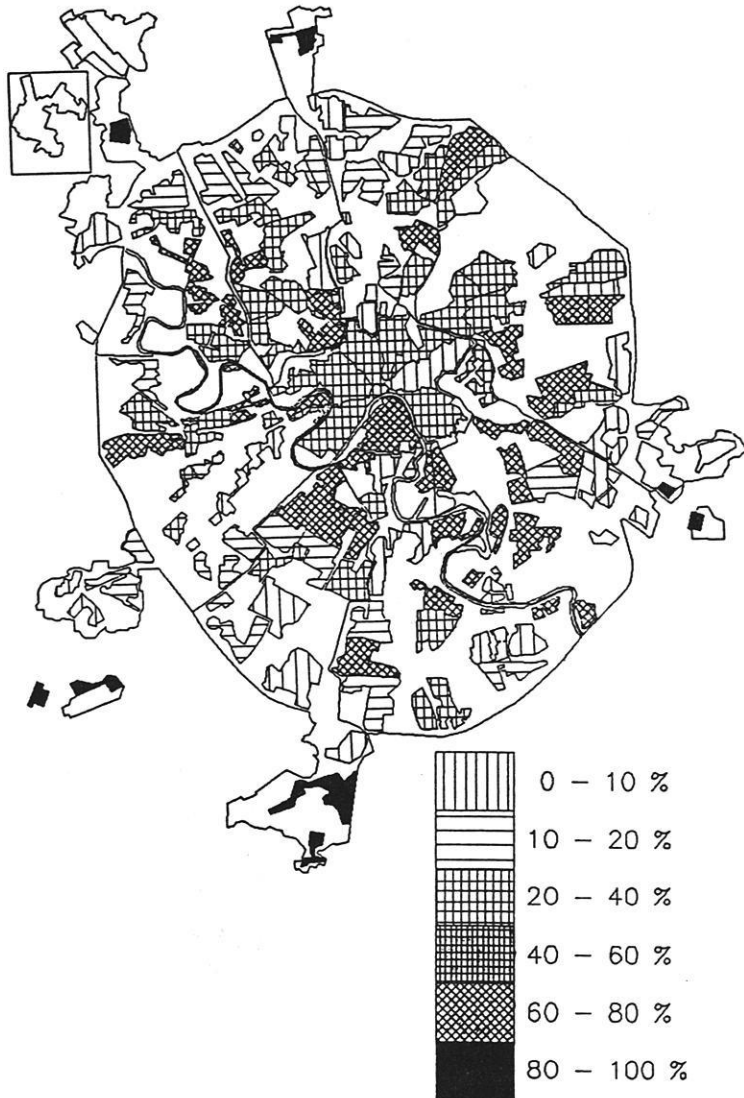


Figure 3 Share of Cooperative Housing in Moscow (1993)

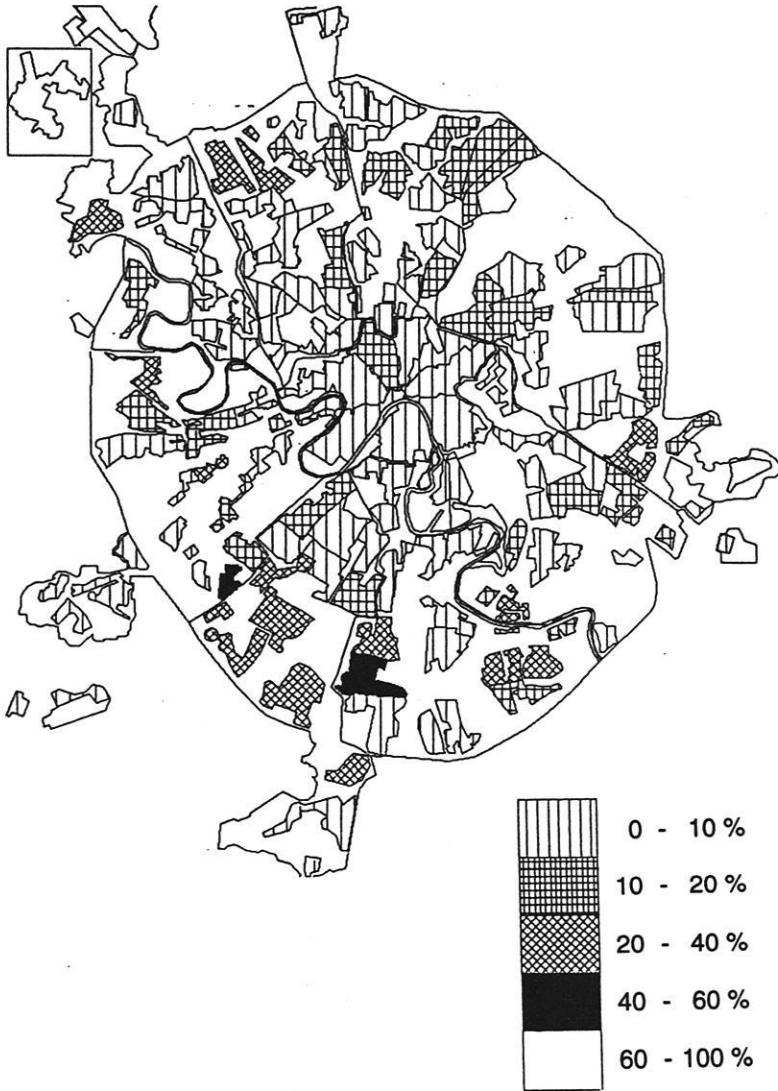
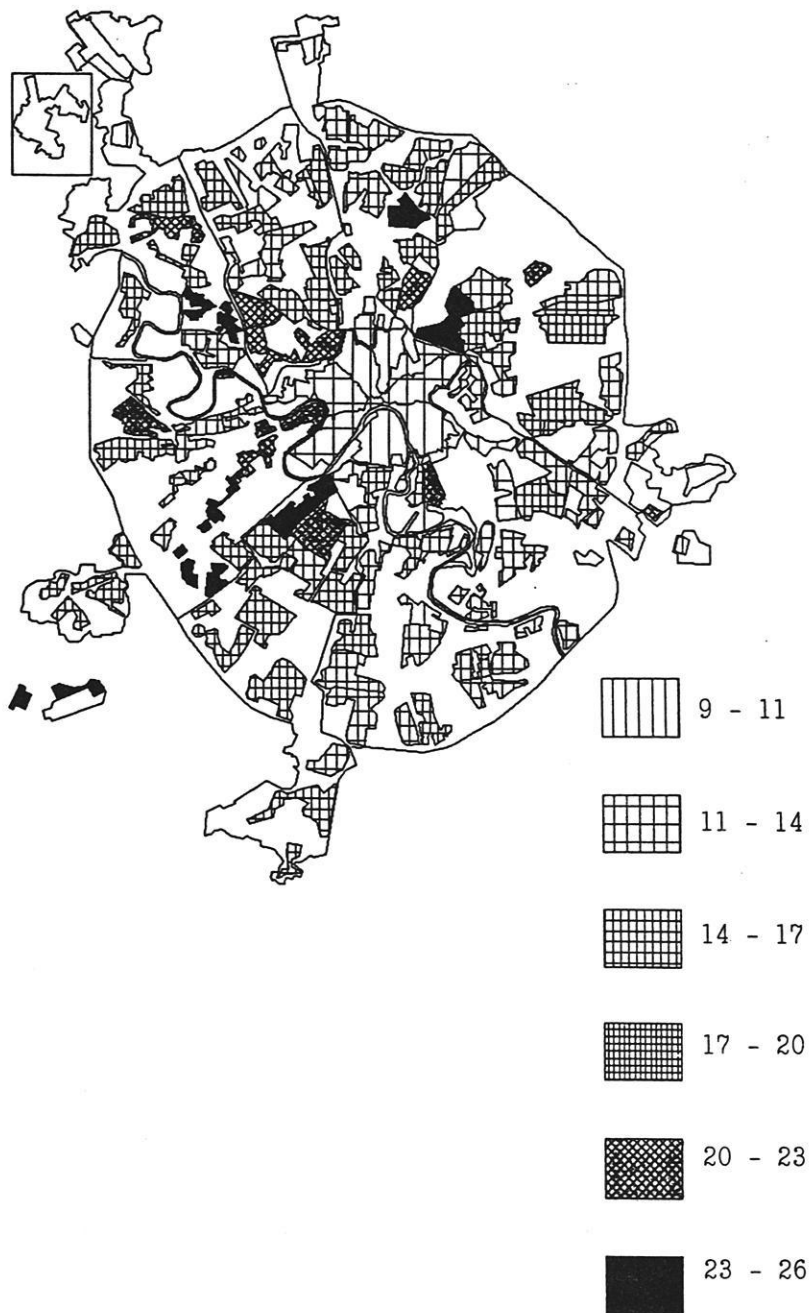


Figure 4 Variety of Average Living Space Provision in Moscow (sq.m. per capita)



But it is not only the physical size of the apartments that matters. The demographic structure of families residing in different parts of Moscow considerably differs. Where several generations, that is, a young family or grown-up children live with parents, the provision of living space is much lower. Such situation is typical for the city centre and former workers' settlements. Where children and parents live separately (i.e., in new blocks), the living space provision is much better. However, the highest rates for Moscow are characteristic of the blocks where a great number of lone persons live and the percentage of elderly residents is high. It is just this circumstance, as well as the existence of "communal" flats, that creates the prerequisites for redistribution of population in the city.

Let us dwell now on specific features of housing market functioning in Moscow. The analysis of the dynamics of the apartment prices in 1993 shows that the market development brings about stabilization of prices, which become more or less predictable. Of course, we faced great difficulties when collecting reliable information. Mediation service offices dealing in buying and selling flats keep secret the results of the bargains made by them. Thus advertisement booklets publishing apartment sale offer are the only source of information on housing in Moscow. For this reason, we have chosen a specialized publishing house owned by a reputable realty office, which has a number of experienced brokers on the staff. We applied to the editorial office with a request to provide us with the firsthand information at their disposal received from private persons. It should be noted that before being stored in the database, "prices" of flats fixed by their owners undergo an expertize by a broker who is well familiar with a certain district of Moscow. He determines to what extent the price corresponds to the feasibility of selling the flat for such a sum. That is why we had no doubt that the received information was reliable. Besides, this office published the fullest information about the flats offered for sale including their location in the city and transport facilities. Though we had taken into account all indices, two factors - "the size of the flat" and "location"-turned out to be predominant. As for their significance, they by far exceed the influence of all other characteristics. Therefore, when analysing spatial differences of the urban environment of Moscow, which came to light as a result of the housing market functioning, the main attention was paid to correlation between those very factors and the apartment price.

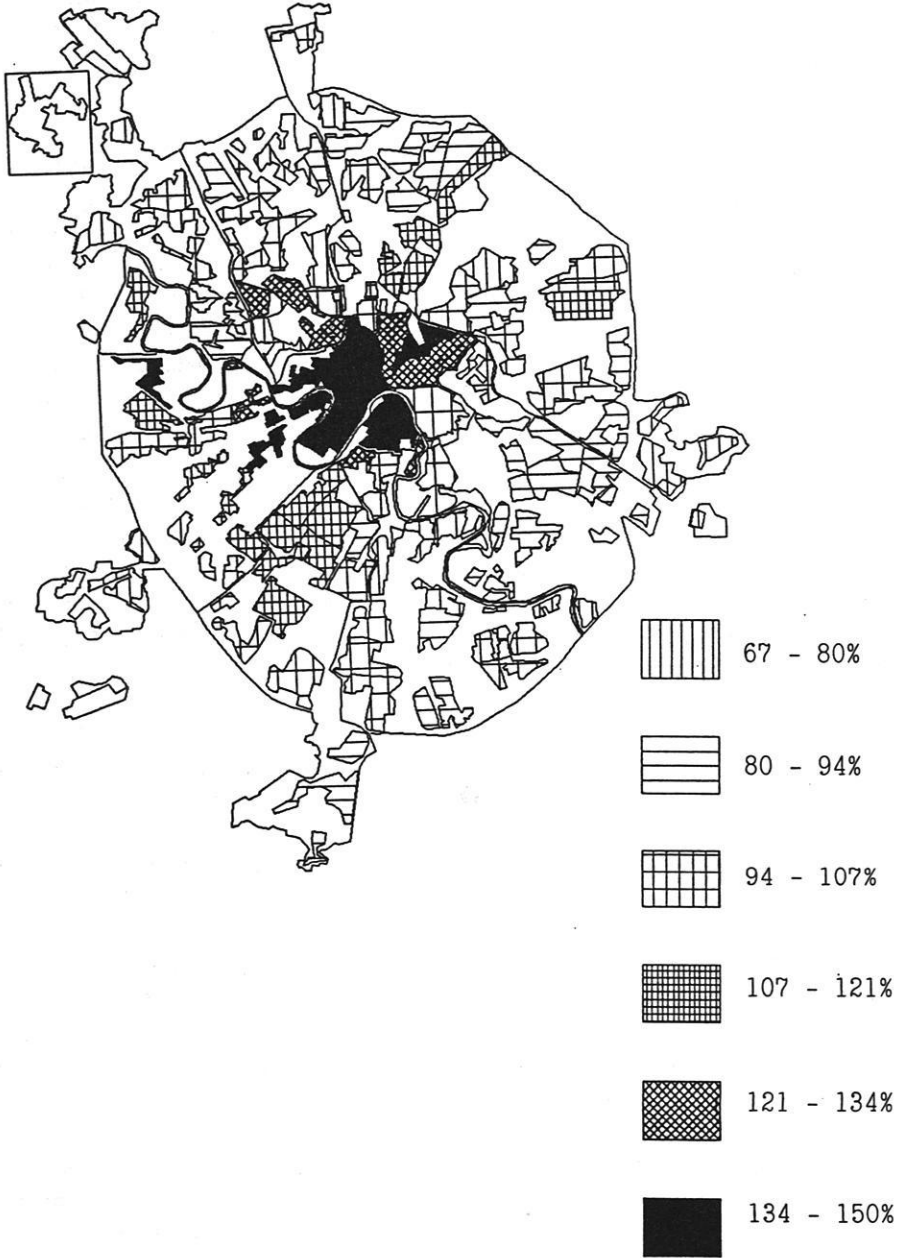
In the first place, it turned out that the cost of one square meter of housing is not the same for flats with different number of rooms. Thus, approximately up to the middle of 1992, one-room apartments were in highest demand, and the average cost per one square meter in such flats was much higher than that in others. By the end of the summer of 1993, the situation had radically changed. Demand for smaller flats went down, the cost per one square meter of one-room and two-room flats evened out, but at the same time the cost of three-room flats greatly increased. This trend had increased towards the beginning of 1994. With the cost per square meter in

standard one-two-and three-room flats being even, demand has greatly increased for the dwellings whose size exceed the size of standard Moscow flats. In this case, the bigger the flat, the higher is the price per 1 sq.m., sometimes 1.5 - 2 times higher. Incidentally, such changes testify to the pace of initial investment accumulation by "nouveau riche", as well as to a change in the notion of an "adequate living standard" and "social equality" etc.

Location affects the cost of a flat even more. For Moscow, under conditions of socially mixed population and a vague idea of what is a "prestigious" dwelling zone like, a better location is associated with the city centre remoteness. The proximity of parks and parkland corrects the established common idea only in a slight degree. It is this approach that has affected the formation of territorial rental zones for Moscow, according to which the land-tax rate is determined. However, evaluating an apartment, its owner, by intuition, when using the word "location", means much more than just how far it is from the centre or the proximity of parkland. In reality, the apartment value rate reflects not only the quality of the housing proper and its place on the city-maps, but the quality of life in the given blocks. When fixing the price, the owner makes use of his own experience. Everything is taken into account: the neighbours (above all their socio-cultural level, then their income), supply of shops, the availability of schools, polyclinics, kindergartens etc., their service level, the level of local criminal activities... In other words, all that man encounters in everyday life and that can either complicate it or make it easier. That is why the character of spatial distribution of the housing cost rate enables us to judge of qualitative differences of urban environment (Figure 5).

The contrasts of the picture as it is draw attention in the first instance. The central part of the city stands out sharply as to the price level. At the same time there is quite a number of blocks in outlying districts able to compete with the centre. It can be noted that there have emerged two poles of gravitation for well-off people, and alongside prestigious blocks of historical part of Moscow similar blocks are arising in outlying districts, especially in locations with various sporting facilities, such as mountain-skiing, tennis and sailing. However, these two poles exist under different social conditions. The Moscow centre is compact enough. It certainly cannot be called homogeneous, but still the policy of evacuating the old residents to urban periphery and moving to the centre and the adjacent blocks the "nomenclatura" has led to creating here a considerable stratum of people whose living standard is higher than that of the rest of population. The process of privatization and formation of housing market has considerably increased the number of well-to-do people in the Moscow centre. And though the sharpest contrasts are peculiar to this part of the city, such situation is considered natural here and does not give rise to strong protest on the part of the needy population. Things are quite different in the outskirts of Moscow, where prestigious blocks are in absolutely different surroundings and represent sort of enclaves of prosperity against the background of general poverty.

Figure 5 Spatial Distribution of the Housing Cost Rate (% in average price 800\$)



Residents in these blocks are obliged to spend big sums of money to protect their own security and well-being. This naturally affects the cost of apartment.

One of the reasons for this sharp polarization of urban milieu is the low quality of housing and the fact that urban environment has not been formed yet and has not been taken proper care of. In spite of the current opinion that flats in Moscow are sold at fabulous prices, exceeding those in Vienna, Paris and other European capitals, the bulk of housing is sold at an average price, about 700-800 \$ per one sq.m. It is this price that is the base one for Moscow. However, one can suppose that this price is somewhat too high due to the fact that the housing market has not yet taken the proper shape and the demand exceeds the supply. A uniform enough picture of housing price distribution is broken only in the blocks where the percentage of cooperative and departmental housing is high (Figure 2, 3), as well as in blocks constructed in Stalin's time. Here, prices increase by 10-20%. On the contrary, the cost of apartments located in inner, placed within the city sectors, blocks, where municipal housing prevails, is below the average by 20-30%, with the exception of the south-west sector of the city.

It is not quite clear to what extent the proximity of vast tracts of greenery influences the cost of housing. In fact, though expected to the contrary, they do not change the picture as it is, and only when they become a real component of urban environment adapted for urban life and the citizens' needs, they play their role. It turns out that the availability of vast tracts of greenery as they are in the urban environment is not enough to cause an increase of apartment cost; a man-made landscape should be created imitating all kinds of various natural conditions and possibilities and even visually differing from a usual mid-Russian paysage opening up beyond the Moscow Periphery - the official city border.

However, it is not merely the quality of housing and proximity to tracts of greenery that play a decisive role in determining the price level. In most blocks in the outlying districts of Moscow and in its middle part as well, there are uniform houses which are under comparatively equal conditions as to their distance from the city centre and provision with social infrastructure and transport facilities; nevertheless the apartment cost differs there. There are other factors which come into force here, in the first place, the social structure of the resident population. Unfortunately we do not have available official statistics, which would allow us to characterize the population of different Moscow blocks according to their social and economic status, education and income levels. The last census of 1989 gives a very generalized information on 34 former administrative districts. Therefore, to confirm the idea that the population social structure really affects the level of housing cost, we shall make use of indirect data.

Subscription is one of such indicators. The type of periodicals, the people subscribe to, especially, if these publications have a clear-cut trend, as to the subject they deal with, can give an idea of social and cultural characteristics of the population. An analysis of subscription was made by the author in the cooperation with S.S. MICHEYEV in 1990. Post offices were taken as units of the territorial division. More than 150 publications which cannot be considered as mass ones were of greatest interest to us. They are "Literaturnaya gazeta" (Literature-news) and "Sovetskaya Cultura" (Culture-news) (Figure 6). It is quite evident that the public reading these newspapers reside in the blocks where the housing cost level is significantly higher than the average.

On the other hand, in the same year of 1990, the liberalization of access to information made it possible for us to get data about the crime structure in Moscow, the number of various criminal categories and the addresses of their residence. It enabled us to compare this information, the visual image of which you can see in Figure 7, with the results of the subscription analysis (Figure 6). These maps present a diametrically opposite picture. Hardly any other indicator could so clearly reflect the actually existing stratification in the society and the segregation of various social strata in the city space. It is all the more striking, because the idea of social equality has been propagated and put into practice for many years.

The functioning of housing market significantly enchanted these differences bringing about polarization of urban environment. Indeed, blocks with best amenities, where relatively well-to-do population lives, occupy a merely insignificant part of Moscow. Apart from the compact main body of the city, they tend to reside within the three principal sectors: the south-western, north-western and north-eastern ones. Here, the demand for housing and office space is the greatest and prices - the highest. It is this part of the city that has been rapidly changing its look and that attracts all the "new" urban functions, and here the resident population is most dynamic and involved in the process of economic and social changes. The rest of the blocks find themselves at different stages of their evolution. Among them the blocks of north, west and south outskirts of Moscow, which are kind of suppliers of the city criminal elements, give rise to grave apprehensions about their social problems and rapid degradation. The situation is aggravated by the fact that there are numerous hostels of big industrial enterprises here and in addition refugees from the regions of ethnic conflicts, who partly find shelter in Moscow, are mostly located in these blocks.

Figure 6 Residence of Subscribers of "Literaturnaya Gazeta" (Literature-News) and
"Sovetskaya Cultura" (Culture-News)

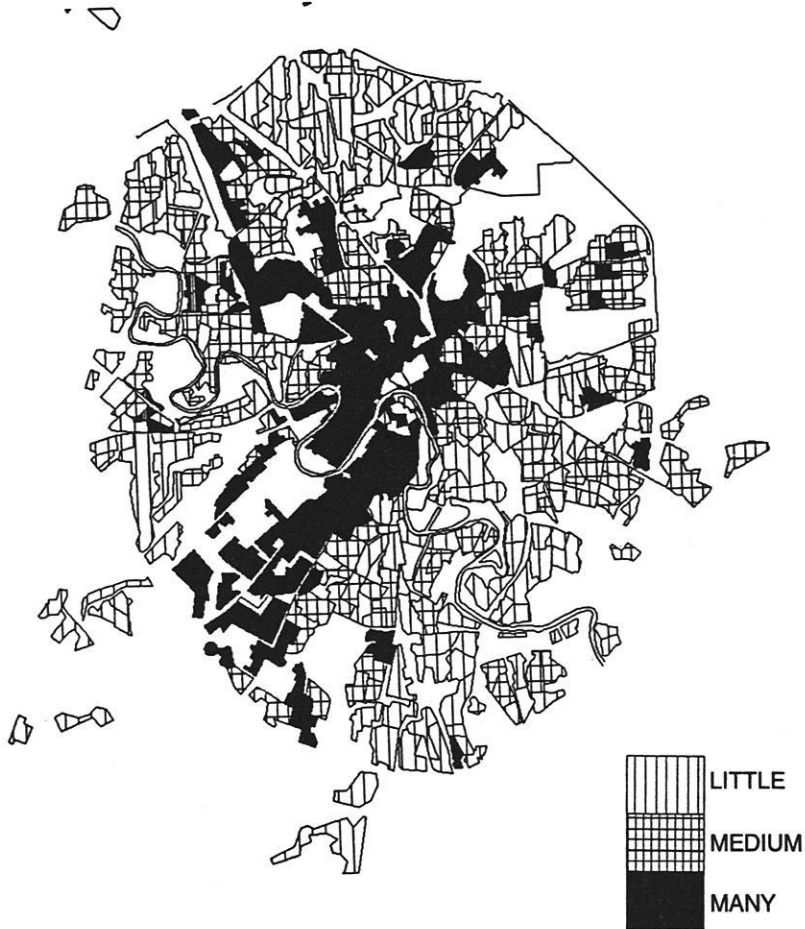
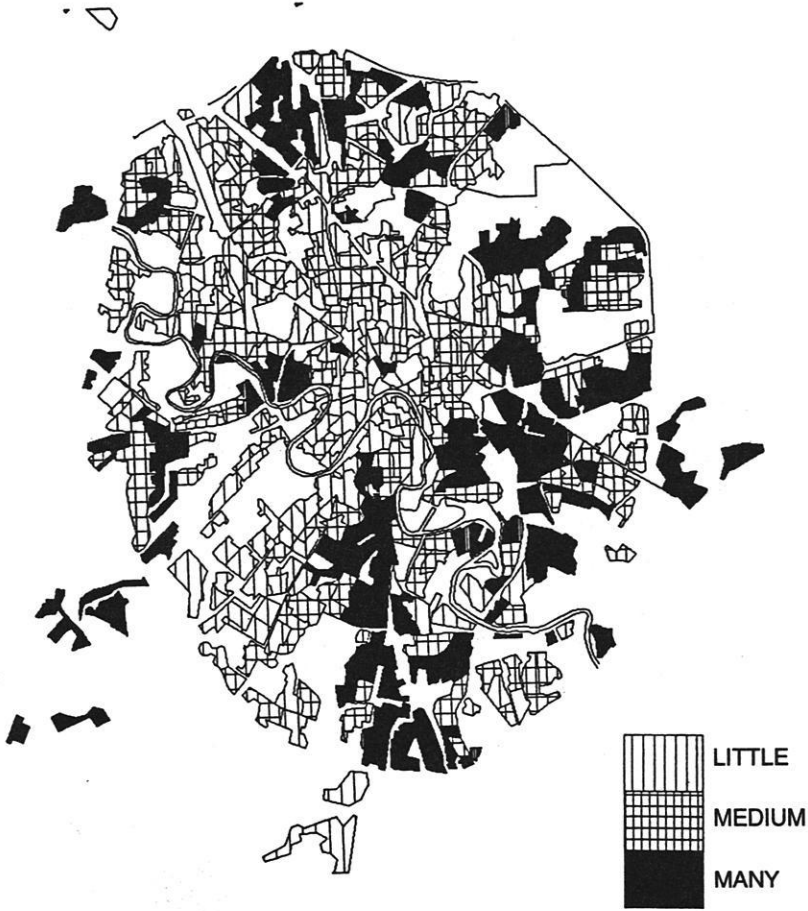


Figure 7 Residence of Criminals in Moscow (1990)



CONCLUSION

Thus, even the first steps in the development of housing market in Moscow have revealed an exceedingly disturbing trend for social self-isolation. We have already discussed the fact that urban environment of Moscow's periphery has not been adequately formed and that in spite of multi-storey housing, Moscow's outskirts have many peculiar features that are characteristics of rural areas and the rural mode of life. Close neighbourhood of the poor and rich is one of these features. Very often they live in the same houses, use one and the same social infrastructure, transport and other facilities, their children go to the same schools. More well-off people, however, definitely prefer to live in more homogeneous neighborhood of the same or higher social status. The right of choosing the place of residence enjoyed by the population now, but so far accessible only to "the rich", has led to re-distribution of the population in the city and segregation of different social strata. In addition to self-isolation of population due to difference in their property status, there exists a forced age segregation, as a result of the urban policy pursued over a number of years, as well as "ideological" isolation of party and state functionaries.

Moscow's city authorities have not yet been fully conscious of these problems and in fact the latter are not discussed either in mass media or in scientific publications. But the functioning of housing market has been revealing these problems so fast that not a trace will soon be left of social equality of the past years and Moscow, like all the largest cities of the world, will be confronted with a most complicated problem of the existence of slums. World practice shows that segregation of the population's residential parts of city results in segregation in other spheres of life. It turns urban environment into a source of permanent conflicts and social claims which are the more acute the deeper rooted in the people's conscience is the notion of social equality as "the equalizing right" and of the duty of the State to secure an adequate living standard to everybody.

NOTES

- ¹ A number of studies on urban ecology, carried out in the 70s under the supervision of J.V. MEDVEDKOV, are devoted to this subject. The book by N.B. BARBASH *Methodology of Studying Territorial Differentiation of Urban Environment*. M. IGAN, 1986, gives a most generalized description of the results of these studies.
- ² At present from 5-50% of flats have been privatized in different city blocks. This figure has averaged 24% in Moscow (by January 1, 1994).
- ³ The notion of prestigious houses, where party functionaries or high-ranking officials resided at one time does not correspond to reality. In fact, such houses have formed neither a block nor a district or zone, as a rule (in most cases). Coming out of a guarded entrance of such a house, its dwellers faced the same urban environment not-taken-proper-care of, the same garbage cans, fences and trampled lawns as the residents of neighboring houses did. This special "privileged" world existed behind the closed doors revealing itself only by small symbols: light-colour brick in the house's design, a small well-looked-after lawn and a blue fir-tree at the entrance; a low fence and a militiaman without fail. Of course, such houses were sure to make an impression of the blocks being prestigious as a whole, but in fact their influence spread over very insignificant part of the city.

