

URBAN AGENDA

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MOSCOW — THE MEGACITY ON A HUMAN SCALE

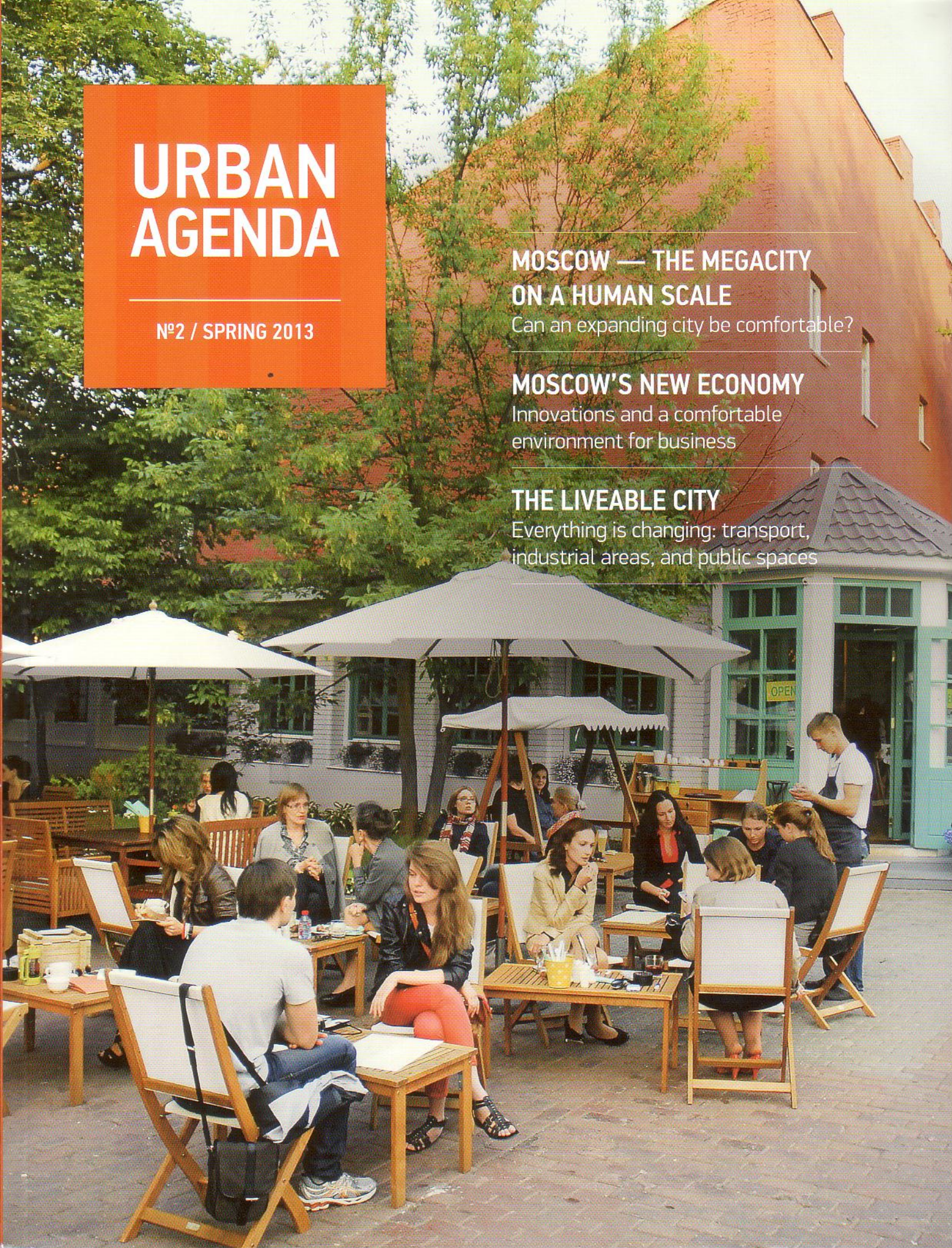
Can an expanding city be comfortable?

MOSCOW'S NEW ECONOMY

Innovations and a comfortable
environment for business

THE LIVEABLE CITY

Everything is changing: transport,
industrial areas, and public spaces



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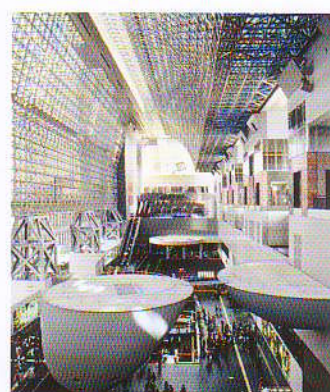
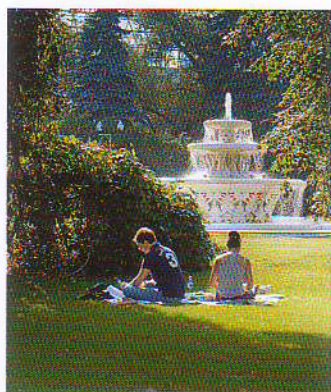
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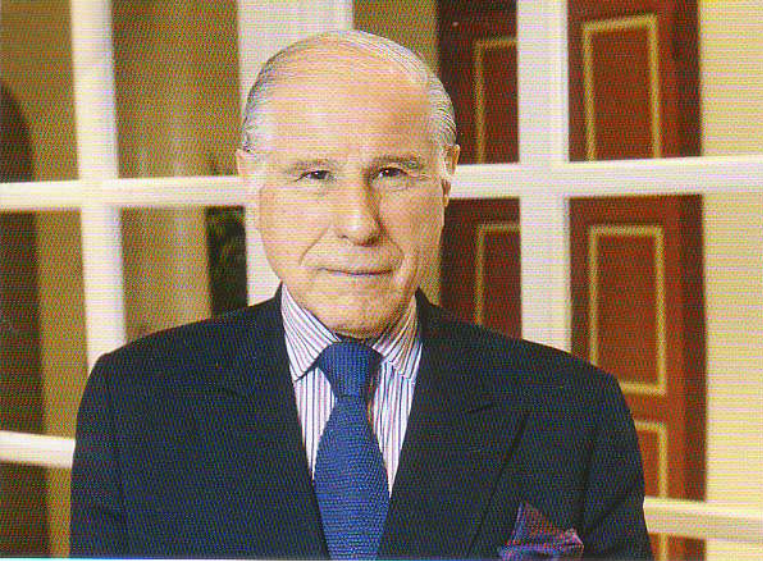
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“ONE CAR EQUALS 100 PEOPLE”

Pierre Laconte, Belgian urbanist, jury member of Lee Kuan Eu World Cities Prize, former president of the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP), and former president of the Fund for the Urban Environment, believes that Moscow's integration with its suburban areas as well as the large urban projects occurring in these territories, should instigate a reorganisation of the entire system of public transport.

— In recent years, the agglomeration of Moscow has faced immense traffic problems. How are similar problems handled in other countries?

— It is known that car-users take up about 20 times more road space than passengers on public transport. Additionally, cars need parking spaces. The space taken by one car is almost 100 times larger than the space that is used by a pedestrian over the same period of time. According to the findings of the British Standing Advisory Committee for Trunk Road Assessments, compiled as early as 1995, the more roads the city has, the more traffic jams it gets. More, not fewer. The reason for this is that an increase in the number of roads leads to an increase in the number of vehicles. Why then are authorities more willing to invest in the development of the road network, rather than in the development of public transport? Because they tend to overrate the significance of vehicles, as was noted by the SocialData organization in a research paper prepared for the International Association of Public Transport. This research compares the preferences of citizens and officials. Zurich, for example, found a reasonable, though political, solution to

the problem of traffic jams. Cars entering the electoral part of the city are entitled to free parking for 90 minutes. After 90 minutes, they must find a parking meter. This decision gave the Mayor of Zurich a convincing victory in the following election. This was unsurprising as the electorate was made up of city residents, not of the drivers and their passengers who commute to the city every day to work.

— Moscow has a radial structure; all its roads lead to the centre.

How could the situation in our city be improved?

— Beijing tried to follow the United States' example by increasing the number of ring roads. It required substantial spending and, ultimately, led to an increase in the number of vehicles and thus, traffic jams on the roads. Beijing has become a smog-wrapped city. Shanghai, however, decided on a different strategy and chose Singapore as its model. It introduced monthly auctions for the right to receive car licence number plates. This sets a limit on the number of licence plates issued each month. Moscow once tried to go the same way as Beijing and began to build ring roads, but now it has doubts, and not without reason, on whether to continue with the same strategy. The one ring road built is the new circle line of the Moscow Metro that connects the far-flung parts of the city to the centre. It is necessary to build new high-speed rail lines, using existing fly-over crossings and railway lines. The development plan of the Moscow Metro includes the construction of the Chord lines and new intersections. This is not a bad idea.

— How to make public transport more appealing to car users?

— Everyone wants to have their own car, or at least to use one. People get pleasure from driving if the space needed for this is provided to them free. All the benefits of driving your own car can be nullified by the time lost in traffic jams and the unavoidable rise in fuel prices, associated with the rising cost of oil production. This is why appreciation of public transport in the major cities is growing rapidly. All these reasons should convince the city officials to choose in favour of investing in city railways. ■