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**FOOD SELF-PROVISIONING IN RUSSIA: CASE STUDY  
OF MOSCOW AND SARATOV**

**DOMÁCÍ PRODUKCE POTRAVIN V RUSKU: PŘÍPADOVÁ STUDIE  
MOSKVA A SARATOV**

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: doc. RNDr. Bc. Jana Spilková, Ph.D.

Prague, 2018

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V Praze 27. 7. 2018

Podpis .....

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I hereby proclaim that I wrote the bachelor thesis on my own and the references include all resources and literature I have used. This thesis or its fundamental parts have not been used previously for acquiring another university degree.

Prague, 27. 7. 2018

Signature: .....

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## **Food self-provisioning in Russia: case study of Moscow and Saratov**

### **Abstract**

The main goal of this thesis is to study what is the peculiarity of food self-provisioning in Russia. The thesis tries to capture the main features in a self-provisioning topic, focusing on differences between the capital city - Moscow - and the peripheral city - Saratov. In the theoretical part of the thesis, different views on food self-provisioning, especially in Europe, were considered. The research part of this work is based on semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 respondents, 10 from Moscow and 10 from Saratov. The research sought to find out what are the main reasons to grow food by yourself, what motivates people to do it in "Russian" conditions. The results confirmed the hypotheses that the reason to grow food depends on the economic situation in the area of respondent's residence. Also, climate and soil play an important role.

**Keywords:** domestic food production; self-provisioning; Russia

## **Domácí produkce potravin v Rusku: případová studie Moskva a Saratov**

### **Abstrakt**

Hlavním cílem této práce je zjistit specifika domácí produkce potravin v Rusku. Práce se snaží zachytit hlavní rysy v problematice "samozásobitelství", zaměřené na rozdíly mezi hlavním městem - Moskvou - a periferním městem - Saratovem. V teoretické části práce byly zvažovány odlišné náhledy na domácí produkci potravin zejména v Evropě. Výzkumná část této práce vychází z polostrukturovaných rozhovorů s 20 respondenty, 10 z Moskvy a 10 ze Saratova. Výzkum se snažil zjistit, jaké jsou hlavní důvody k tomu, aby si lidé pěstovali potraviny samostatně, a co motivuje lidi, aby se samozásobitelství věnovali v "ruských" podmínkách. Výsledky potvrdily hypotézy, že důvod k pěstování potravin závisí především na ekonomické situaci v oblasti pobytu respondenta. Důležitou roli hrají rovněž klima a kvalita půdy.

**Klíčová slova:** domácí produkce; potraviny; samozásobitelství; Rusko

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

**DNMEPM** – Department of Nature Management and Environmental Protection of Moscow

**MOSSTAT** – The Territorial service body of the Federal State Statistics Service in the city of Moscow

**RFSSS** – Russian Federal State Statistics Service

**ROSSTAT** – Russian Federal State Statistics Service

**SARATOVSTAT** – The Territorial service body of the Federal State Statistics Service in the Saratov Region



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## **1 Introduction**

As for my personal experience, I can say that I knew the concept of a dacha and growing own food from childhood. My family used dacha as a place for recreation and spending time in nature, for healthy leisure time. As for the cultivation of food, it was mostly the task of the older generation: grandmother and grandfather were engaged in gardening. I helped them many times, and often I was asked to dig and plow the land, to plant a new bush of raspberry or apple tree. That is why I decided to aim my thesis not only at the phenomenon of food self-provisioning but also at the "dacha" phenomenon in Russia.

### **1.1 The aims of the work**

I consider this topic an essential and worthwhile study because growing food was and is a vital phenomenon for human society. Aspects and parts of this phenomenon have been changing from its beginning to nowadays multiple times and in different ways. And of course, social and geographical context plays a significant role in how and why people grow food on their own. In my thesis, I analyze this phenomenon in the context of Russian reality for several reasons: I have lived most of my life in Russia and, unfortunately, this problem is not often discussed in academic literature, despite the fact that the "dachas" and the cultivation of one's own food is widespread throughout Russia.

Food self-provisioning in Russia has a long history with different traditions. Thus, the primary goal of this thesis is to study what is the peculiarity of food self-provisioning in Russia. This work tries to explain the causes of this phenomenon and shows the difference between the capital and a peripheral city. Also, the thesis attempts to reveal the reasons for these differences between cities. The key method used in work is a semi-structured interview. Thanks to this method, I was able to collect the necessary information in both cities and analyze it consequently. I had two research questions. First: "What is self-provisioning in Russia: a need because of poverty or a traditional hobby?" and the second one: "Are there differences between self-provisioning in Moscow and Saratov – i.e., between the center and the periphery?" My main hypothesis for the research in my thesis suggests that people in Moscow will have different self-provisioning practices to the people from Saratov, mainly thanks to the different lifestyle in these two cities, different standard of living and economic situation, different tradition of gardening on dachas and different physical conditions (quality of soils).

## **1.2 Structure**

The thesis is divided into four chapters including the introduction and the conclusion. The first part of the work is devoted to theoretical aspects of this phenomenon, especially what is food self-provisioning and how different scientists understand and explain the causes and prevalence of it.

The next part of the thesis describes the selected study areas and offers basic information about each city, thus Moscow and Saratov. Further, the meaning of the term "dacha" in the Russian realities is explained. Finally, I write about the method on which this work is based – a semi-structured interview.

Next, an empirical part follows, in which I describe in detail the responses for every question of the semi-structured interview, and I try to summarize on each issue. At the end of the thesis, I discuss the findings of my case study about food self-provisioning in Russia and try to answer the main research questions presented in the introduction.

## **2 Theoretical part**

### **2.1 Food self-provisioning**

Humanity has been engaged in agriculture since ancient times. Agriculture is one of the main branches of farming production, based on the use of land for the purpose of growing crops. In the process of farming development, the concept of "agriculture" changed, and in the early period of its history, it was identified with farming production as a whole. Later, when livestock was separated into an independent industry, agriculture was understood as crop production in the broad sense of the word (Musaeva 2016).

At the present stage, agriculture as a science develops techniques for the most rational use of land and increases the effective fertility of the soil for obtaining high yields of crops and maximum yield of high-quality products from each hectare of arable land.

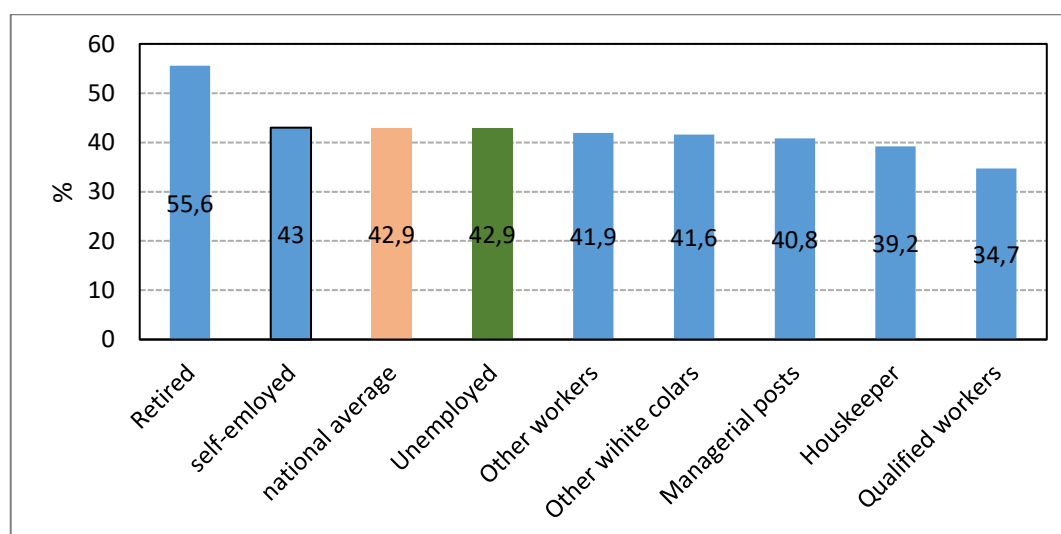
With the development of society, the economy and the behavior of consumption, the cultivation of food has become a unique phenomenon, the reasons for which are not as evident as they seem at first sight. Many factors affect people's motivation for growing their food: from an economic situation, climate in the country to traditions and values of an individual.

There are several studies on the causes of food self-provisioning. For example, Alber and Kohler (2008) in their work focused on two questions: How widespread is the informal production of food in the member countries of the European Union, and to what extent is informal food production a coping strategy for making ends meet? They came to four main conclusions concerning informal food production. First, this type of food production "is more frequent in the former command economy of Central and Eastern Europe than in the traditional market economies of the West." (Alber, Kohler 2008, p. 125). The second conclusion is that the informal production of food is mainly practiced by poor people in communist countries, while it is more uniformly done by all income groups in the prosperous market economies. The last two findings deal with the fact that informal food production has a significant positive impact on subjective well-being in former command economies, but not in traditional market economies and mitigate the effects of low income in the post-communist new member states but not in the affluent old member states of the European Union.

Jehlička, Kostelecký and Smith (2013, p. 233) claim in their work "that household food production in Czechia is not predominantly practiced by poor people, but is an activity more uniformly followed across all income groups." Their work is based on rethinking the above-mentioned paper of Alber and Kohler (2008) and newly commissioned survey data. They reveal that "a fresh look at the data they were working from, demonstrate that rather than being motivated by poverty, these widespread practices serve as a hobby and as a way of accessing

‘healthy food’”. For example, figure 1 shows the share of food self-provision practices within different social groups in Czechia in 2010.

**Figure 1: The share of food self-provision practices within different social groups in Czechia in 2010**



**Source:** Jehlička et al. 2013

Another significant study of food self-provisioning in Europe was made by Vávra et al. (2017). Their goal was an international comparison between five EU countries: Scotland, the Netherlands, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. They summarized that all states have a common feature and this is "the tendency of lower income groups to participate more often in food self-provisioning" (Vávra et al. 2017, p. 458). Another important conclusion that although the distinction between east and west is an important criterion, some similarities, such as a lower income effect, also distinguish the Czech Republic, Germany, and Hungary from the Netherlands and Scotland which implies that a general geographic location, cultural space, and history that includes the common communist era may be the determining criterion. In table 1 we can see the results of their work.

**Table 1: Percentage of food self-provisioning in selected European countries**

	Scotland		Netherlands		Germany		Czech Republic		Hungary	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Share of FSP <sup>a</sup> (%)	30.6	52.2	13.4	27.0	32.1	57.5	34.7	56.6	49.4	44.8
Chi-squared	23.05***		13.49***		35.03***		24.31***		1.037	
N	482		468		537		500		499	

Note: All results of chi-squared test are on the level of 1 degree of freedom.

<sup>a</sup>FSP = food self-provisioning.

\*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

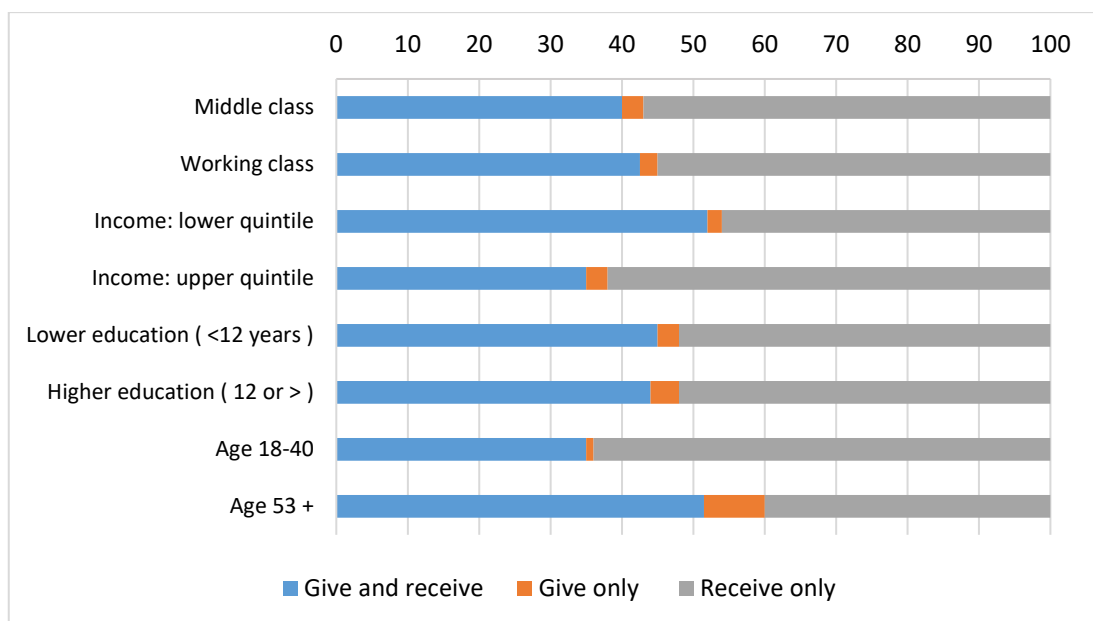
**Source:** Vávra et al. 2017

Also, the authors (Vávra et al. 2017, p. 450) claimed that: "Living in one's own property, living in a rural area, having a partner, or being retired, a homemaker, or unemployed all significantly increase the probability of self-provisioning of food." and it seems logical.

That is why I think that the study of food self-provisioning in Russia is interesting. First, it is the country of the so-called Eastern socialistic block, which undoubtedly influenced the behavior and motivation of people in growing food. Second important fact is that Russia is economically a very heterogeneous country, differences vary in every region, and it also means various motivations for producing food. It's worth starting to explain who, where and how to grow food by themselves. Also, I have not found any latest research on this topic. The last one was made by Rose and Tikhomirov (1993). They found a wide diffusion of self-provisioning practice by both rural and urban households in Eastern Europe and by urban households in Russia. They based their findings on an extensive survey of Bulgarian, Czechoslovak, Polish and Russian respondents and revealed that that most people in the post-Soviet realm consume the food that they produce. Nevertheless, the Russian Federation has gone through many changes since that time ranging from important economic and social to political transformations.

Another research concerned homegrown food sharing in Czechia by Jehlička and Daněk (2017) was aimed to study how this phenomenon is widespread and what is its practice in Czechia nowadays. They make a lot of conclusions, first, is that in most cases growing food is not motivated by primary economic reasons and the main reason is "the desire to obtain fresh and healthy food" (Jehlička, Daněk 2017, p. 290). Next result is presented in figure 2. It shows how the practice of sharing of home-grown food is divided into three groups: 1- Give and receive, 2 - Give only, 3- Receive only.

**Figure 2: Involvement of social groups in three types of sharing interactions**



Source: Jehlička and Daněk 2017

My work is directed to the study of this phenomenon in Russia, using the example of two cities of different context to understand the main differences between them. Growing of own food in Russia is most often practiced by people who have so-called “dachas”. That is why the next chapter is devoted to this phenomenon.

## 2.2 Dacha

The origin of the word "dacha" has Russian roots - "gift" - a gift and is associated with the verb "give". The first dachas in Russia appeared in the era of Peter I - it was the estate near St. Petersburg, which the tsar gave generously to his entourage for his services to the country (Shchepetkova 2013).

Dacha in Russia in the 17th century is a lease of housing for a summer period in an area that is fashionable for a particular estate - the middle class of merchants, civil servants, philistines, teachers of educational institutions and other estates who directly or indirectly belong to the intelligentsia. It was the nobles who were called to the service from the villages, began to acquire dachas to compensate for the disadvantages of living in the capital with its unfavorable climate. It was then that dachas-palaces and country estates began to appear. By the XIX century, the dacha became an attribute not only of representatives of the elite but also of less well-off people - all segments of the population, including shopkeepers and clerks, rushed out of the city. Not only have your own dacha, but the process of leaving for someone's dacha has become not only a fashionable and prestigious event but also an effective way to maintain the necessary social contacts during the summer holidays (Birzhakov 2006).

The Soviet government made an apparent stratification into the ranks of dacha's residents. State dachas of the highest Soviet leadership, particularly close and honored workers of different professions, as before, resembled palaces, and the primary task of the working class dacha cooperatives that emerged from the second half of 1920 was to reduce the acute lack of housing space in cities. After the war, the distinguished officers of the high command for combat services were given land plots for the construction of dachas, and the size of the plots was imposing – up to 4 500 square meters. Later workers of the largest industrial enterprises, who distinguished themselves on the labor front, were given plots for gardening to six hundred square meters, and in some places even less. Thus, the majority of modern dacha owners received suburban land parcels according to the same principle as four centuries ago. Just like under Peter I, dachas are located outside the predominantly large cities and have a private owner. Also, the distinctive features were same: a multiple increase in the number of dachas, the organization of large dacha settlements; but the main change that has occurred with dachas in the Soviet period touched the shift of their function - from recreational to agricultural (Shchepetkova 2013). It's no secret that the distribution of garden plots among the working class was an attempt by the Soviet leadership to solve the lack food problem by feeding the population with their own food.

Nefedova (2012) distinguishes five types of modern plots in the countryside: classical dachas, gardens, vegetable gardens, rural houses of townspeople and cottages.

“Classic dachas” are the oldest type. They were and remain a phenomenon of the suburbs of the largest centers, primarily the metropolitan centers. Mass construction of wooden two-story dachas on lands allocated by various departments took place in the 1950-1960's. They always had considerable plots (1 200-2 000 square meters), but their agricultural use, growing since the 1950s and 1970s, was not particularly intensive. Many of them entered the city limits. Statistics do not include such dacha plots in the category of agricultural lands and do not precisely know their total area.



"Gardens" - the most massive type of agro-recreational land use, developed after the war and became a symbol of the surroundings of any city. In the 1950s there were 40,000 members in horticultural cooperatives and 3 million in 1970. In 1990, 8.5 million families had garden plots, by the end of the 2000s - about 14 million (almost 40 % of the townspeople). Treivish (2015) claims that today in Russia the number of dacha sites is between 17 and 20 million. On "Gardens" it was possible to build a building, the size of which was also controlled. The transition in 1967—1969 for two days off made the authorities relax the norms of house-building in the garden plots. But around the cities have already emerged arrays of something between dacha and barn, without facilities, fire security measures and sanitation. In the new garden associations that have arisen already in the 1990s, the houses differ little from the summer cottages.

"The vegetable gardens" are smaller, there were no residential buildings allowed, and the land, unlike the classic dachas and garden, was not given for ownership. Hence the vegetable gardens are less popular among the Russians. They, located near the houses, are typical of small towns and villages.

"Rural houses" inherited or bought by townspeople in the village (sometimes in a small town) are the fourth type of Russian dachas, which are spreading more and more. It is hard to measure how many of them are in Russia. Unlike gardens and vegetable gardens, there is no official statistics of these objects in Russia. Detailed surveys of settlements are needed for their study.

"Mansions, villas or cottages" - the fifth, the newest type of dachas, is characteristic mainly for the suburbs. It has to be explained that the word "cottage" exists in the Russian language, but has a little different meaning. Russian understanding of the cottage is, basically, a stone two-three-story house. This type of dacha has actively begun to emerge from the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet regime.

Nefedova (2015) says that concerning distance from cities, there are three types of dachas:

1) Near dachas - mostly suburban within the vicinity of large towns, administrative areas or within agglomerations.

2) Medium distance dachas - for Moscow it's dachas on the outskirts of the Moscow region or in neighboring areas, usually within a radius of 250 km, which still allows visits for the weekend.

3) Distant dachas - which cannot be reached in the mode of a "two days off" weekend.

In my thesis, I consider studying "near" type of dachas.

In the functioning and organization of "dachas" villages, Birzhakov (2006) distinguishes the following features:

1) location mainly in rural areas, close to rural settlements, often the dacha is a village house located directly in the village;

2) the primary occupation of summer residents is the cultivation of agricultural products and recreation;

3) the owners of dachas are mostly urban residents;

4) organized holiday villages are located on transport suburban highways (the more types of transport routes are found in the same direction, the more organized holiday villages are located near them);

5) the largest concentration of summer cottages is recorded in the 50-kilometer zone around large cities;

6) flows of summer residents form seasonal and weekly migrations of the urban population and load on the road network;

7) dacha is not an essential source of regular income;

8) the use of the dacha has a pronounced seasonal character and other specific features.

Without a doubt, the phenomenon of "dacha" is the Russian analog of the concept of "holiday cottage" or a "second home". The term "second home" has been used in professional literature for several decades and is usually understood not only as a collective label for individual recreation objects (chalets and cottages) but also for a summary of the phenomena and processes associated with them. In its content, it illustrates the importance of the phenomenon where, for many households and families, it is the additional home to a permanent residence (Vágner and Fialová 2011).

As a result, we have a dacha phenomenon, which, depending on the owner, is either a place of recreation, a place for the food self-provisioning or a place for both.

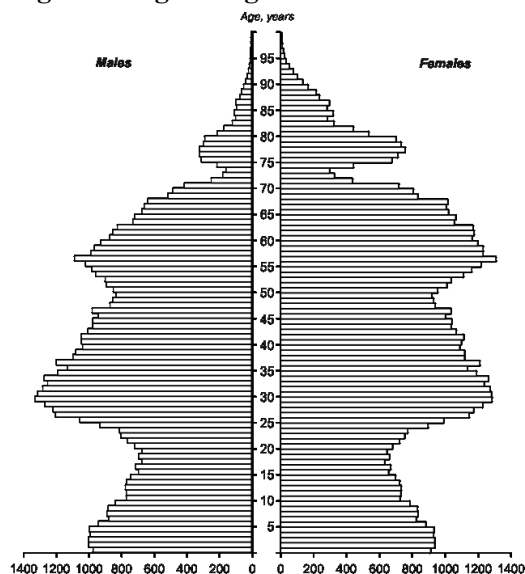
## 2.3 Selected study area

For a better understanding of the problem, I have to describe both case study cities from economic, demographic and climate perspective. It will help with understanding reasons for differences between the behavior of people from Moscow and Saratov.

### 2.3.1 Russian Federation

First, I consider necessary to demonstrate the primary indicators of Russia. Demographical data reveal the number of 11.5 born per 1000 inhabitants in 2017 and 12.4 deaths per thousand inhabitants, and therefore the natural decrease was -0.9 per 1000 inhabitants (RFSSS 2017).

**Figure 3: Age and gender structure of the population in Russia in thousands in 2017**



Source: The demographic yearbook of Russia 2017

The next important indicator is the age structure of the population concerning economic activity and the unemployment of the population. Following table shows this structure.

**Table 2: The age structure of the population in Russia**

<i>Age</i>	<i>Absolute number</i>	<i>%</i>
0—15	27 254	18,56
16—59	82 264	56,01
60 +	37 362	25,44

**Source:** Russian Federal State Statistics Service 2017

The official unemployment rate in Russia, as of September 2016, according to Rosstat, was 5.2 % of the economically active population (labor) or 4.0 million people.

The population density is 8.58 people per km<sup>2</sup>. The population is extremely unevenly distributed: 68.36 % of Russians live in the European part of Russia, which is 20.82 % of the territory. The density of the population of European Russia is 27 people per km<sup>2</sup>, and on the contrary, the density of population in the Asian part of Russia is only 3 people per km<sup>2</sup> (RFSSS 2018).

Agriculture in Russia is divided into two main groups: crop and livestock production. Because my work is aimed at studying the concepts of "food self-provisioning", I consider the crop production group. The following table shows what percentage of the entire agricultural activity of the country and studied regions is the crop production group by type of enterprises. The dacha is in the group of household enterprises. However, the problem is in the impossibility of accurately counting the amount of food grown at the dacha.

**Table 3: Crop production in % of all agricultural products.**

	All types of enterprises	Agricultural enterprises	Household enterprises	Peasant (farm) enterprises
<b>Russian Federation</b>	<b>53,6</b>	<b>48,3</b>	<b>52,0</b>	<b>80,4</b>
Moscow region	52,1	30,8	82,1	61,3
Saratov region	73,9	80,6	48,8	94,6

**Source:** Russian Federal State Statistics Service 2017

### 2.3.2 Moscow

Moscow is the capital of the Russian Federation and the largest city in Russia with the population of 12 500 123 people (FSSS 2018). Moscow is located in the center of the European part of Russia, in the interfluvium of the Oka and the Volga, at the junction of the Smolensk-Moscow Upland (in the west), the Moskvoretsko-Oka plain (in the east) and the Meshchera lowland (in the southeast). The territory of the city as of January 1, 2017, is 2 600 km<sup>2</sup> (RFSSS, Brief statistical guide 2017).

**Figure 4: Moscow and Moscow region in Russian Federation**

**Source:** own elaboration in ArcMap

According to the mode of reproduction of the population of Moscow, it is close to European capitals, but the size and density of the population are close to congested metropolitan centers of developing countries. By area, Moscow is close to Berlin, New York, Greater London and Greater Paris. The density of the population of Moscow is comparable with Tehran, Kinshasa, Manila and less population density of Mumbai, Bogota, Lima (Kirillov, Makhrova, 2012). A significant change concerns the territorial boundaries of Moscow. Due to the accession of 148 thousand hectares of land in 2012 in the south-west of the Moscow region the area of the city has increased approximately 2.4 times.

**Table 4: Basic demographic data for Moscow in 2017.**

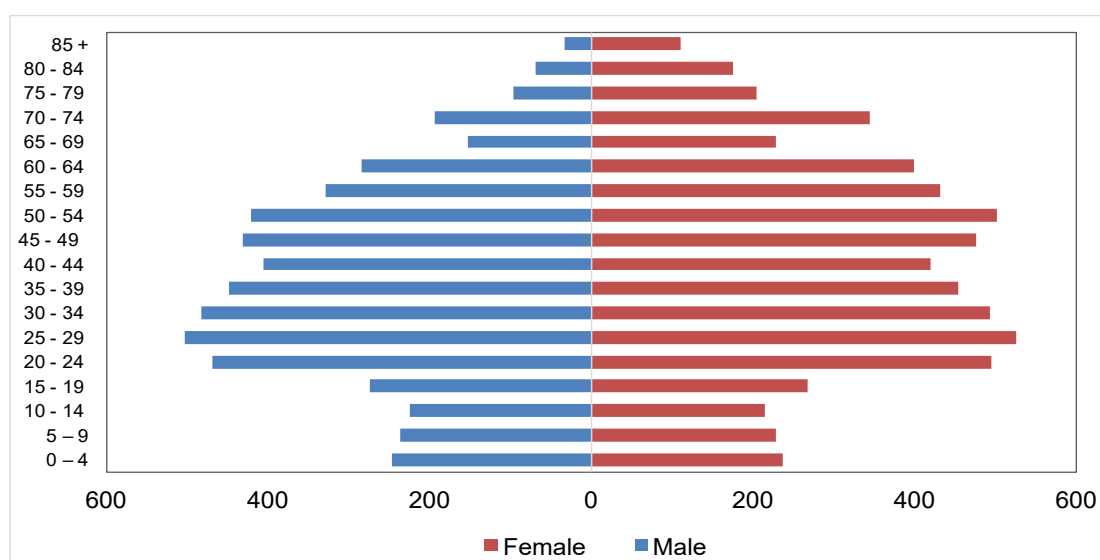
	<i>Per 1000 inhabitants</i>
	<i>for 2017</i>
Births	10,8
Deaths	9,6
including children under the age of 1 year	5,6
Natural growth (+), decrease (-)	1,2
Marriages	7,3
Divorces	3,6

**Source:** Territorial service body of the Federal State Statistics Service in the city of Moscow 2017

In October—December 2016 the economically active population was 7 251 thousand people (98.3 %). The number of unemployed, according to data for the same period, was 122.2 thousand people (1.7 %) (RFSSS 2017).

In comparison with 2015, the most significant increase in the number of employees was noted in organizations that carry out operations with real estate - by 26 500 people; in the organizations that carry out financial activities - by 21 700 people, construction - by 7 100, wholesale trade - by 12 200 thousand people. The decrease in the number of employees was observed in educational organizations - by 6 000, science - by 12 200 people. According to the Department of Labor and Social Protection of the Population of Moscow, at the end of December 2016, 47 100 people had no classes and were in search of work, of which 36 900 were officially recognized as unemployed.

**Figure 5: Age and gender structure of the population in Moscow in thousands in 2017**



Source: Territorial service body of the Federal State Statistics Service in the city of Moscow 2017

**Table 5: Distribution of resident population by age and gender in Moscow**

	Total	%	Men total	Men %	Women total	Women %
Total	12 380,7	100	5 718,7	100	6 682	100
younger than working age (0—15)	1 824,3	14,7	936,1	16,4	888,2	13,3
working age (16 – 59)	7 246,3	58,5	3 734,9	65,3	3 511,4	52,7
older than working age (60 +)	3 310,1	26,8	104,7	18,3	2 262,4	34

Source: Russian Federal State Statistics Service 2017

(in thousands)

The newest demographic processes observed in the Russian capital, on the whole, repeat the all-Russian dynamics. However, the growth rates of the main indicators noticeably allocate

Moscow against this background. In Moscow, compared with most regions of the country, the aging of the population is less accentuated, while the working-age population in the capital continues to grow. However, in the next decade, the process of aging of the age structure of the population will lead to a reduction in the number of Moscow's working-age population. On the whole, the relatively high and still growing dynamics of fertility and life expectancy, due to the relatively high standard of living in the Russian capital, are gradually bringing the demographic situation in Moscow closer to the West European model, which provides for a constant "feeding" of the middle-aged cohort due to migration growth. In addition to increasing the influx of migrants, the most likely way to mitigate the consequences of a reduction in labor potential may be to reduce the death rate of the population in working age (Kirillov, Mahrova 2012).

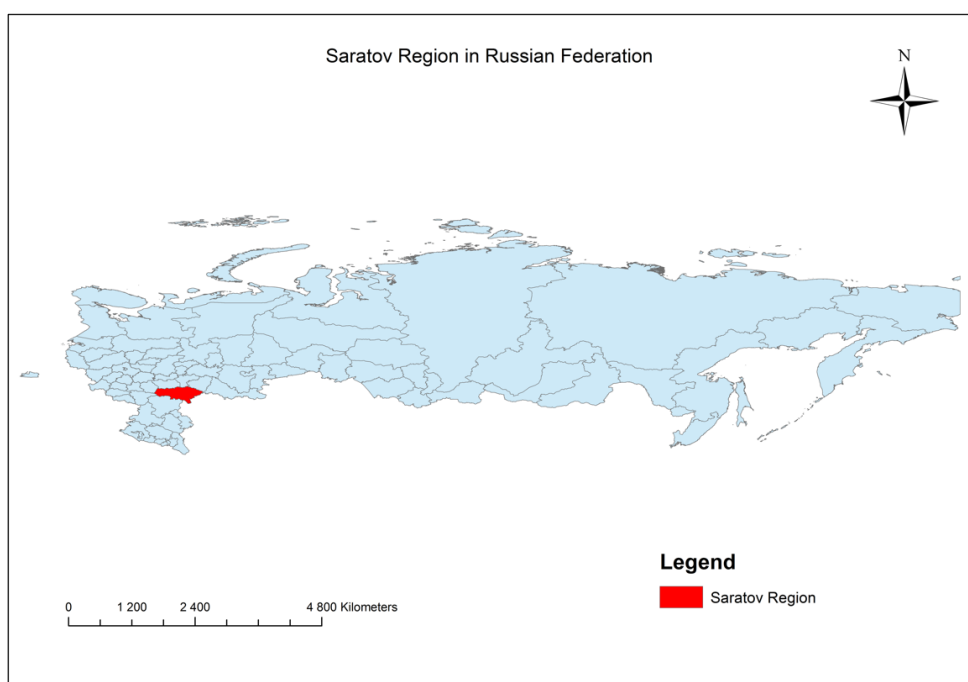
The climate of Moscow is moderately continental, with a clearly expressed seasonality. During the year 600-800 mm of atmospheric precipitation falls in Moscow and the adjacent territory, most of which falls on the summer period. The level of rainfall varies in a relatively broad range, and possibly as a large number (for example, in July 2008 – 180 mm of precipitation), and small (for example: in July 2010, only 13 mm of precipitation fell out) (Hydrometcentre of Russia 2017)

Urban soils predominate in the soil cover of the city - soils with a disturbed profile structure, uncoordinated horizon occurrence, the presence of anthropogenic horizons with a high degree of contamination with heavy metals and organic substances, and construction and household garbage. The stony soil in the city is about 70 %. High stony and the presence of gravel inclusions adversely affect the growth of plants. (DNMEPM, 2018).

### **2.3.3 Saratov**

Saratov is a city in the southeast of the European part of Russia, the administrative center of the Saratov region, which is not included, forms a municipal entity in the city of Saratov with the status of a city district (Official site of the Saratov City Duma). As of January 1, 2017, the town was on the 17th place out of 1 112 cities of the Russian Federation with a population of 850 300 people (RFSSS 2017).

As of January 1, 2014, according to official statistics, the population of the Saratov region was 2 496 552 people. Since 1996. The process of depopulation is observed in the whole region. Over this period, the region's population decreased by 8.77 %. For comparison, in the Russian Federation, the process of depopulation, which began in 1995, stopped in 2008, from this period there is an increase in the total number of the population (Dolayeva et al. 2015).

**Figure 6: Saratov region in Russia**

**Source:** own elaboration in ArcMap

The average density of the population in the region is 24.66 people per km<sup>2</sup>. According to data for 2014, the gender ratio in the Saratov region as a whole is consistent with the overall Russian: 54 % is female and 46 % male. From the age and sex structure of the population, it is evident that in the region the share of people of older age groups is higher than in Russia as a whole. For the region, as for the whole of the Russian Federation, a regressive type of the age structure of the population is characteristic. The share of the economically active population of the Saratov region has been gradually decreasing since 2007. As of January 1, 2014, it accounted for 58.46 % of the total population (RFSSS 2015).

**Table 6: Distribution of the population of the Saratov region by age groups 2017**

	Population	%	For 1000 men there are women
<i>All population</i>	2 479 260	100	1 184
<i>Age groups</i>			
0 – 4	140 715	5,7	940
5 – 9	131 639	5,3	951
10 – 14	117 095	4,7	963
15 – 19	111 027	4,5	944
20 – 24	135 930	5,5	939
25 – 29	196 102	7,9	989
30 – 34	198 023	8	986
35 – 39	180 252	7,3	1 050
40 – 44	173 645	7	1 106
45 – 49	162 681	6,5	1 109
50 – 54	174 357	7	1 173
55 – 59	188 968	7,6	1 262
60 – 64	167 756	6,8	1 440
65 – 69	140 667	5,7	1 653
70 +	260 403	10,5	2 388

**Source:** Territorial service body of the Federal State Statistics Service in the city of Saratov 2017

Dolayeva (2015) make a short conclusion on the assessment of the demographic situation of the Saratov region. In the Saratov region, so in the Russian Federation as a whole, there is a negative natural increase in the population – -4,1 (RFSSS 2017). The proportion of the population in older age groups in the Saratov region is higher than in Russia. The number of women of childbearing age is rapidly decreasing. The indicators of infant and maternal mortality are lower than the average for the Russian Federation.

According to the sample survey of the population on employment in the average for 2014, the number of economically active population aged 15-72 in the Saratov region was 1 261.1 thousand people. The level of economic activity of the population in 2014 was 65.5 %. The unemployment rate in 2014 was 4.6 % (Territorial body of the Federal State Statistics Service in the Saratov Region 2015).

The climate of Saratov is moderately continental. The city is characterized by a long (about four months), somewhat cold winters and hot, often dry summers. The coldest months are January and February; the warmest is July. Precipitation falls evenly throughout the year, less in the spring. In winter, especially in late January - early February, there are frosts down to - 20 – - 30 ° C. The summer lasts from the beginning of the last decade of May to the middle of September, the winter from the end of November to the beginning of the previous decade of March (Hydrometcenter of Russia 2017).

Chernozem and kastanozem soils dominate the territory of the Saratov region. The structure is dominated by clayey soils, and sandy loam soils are less common. Through the region flows the Volga River, which divides the region into two parts: the Left Bank and the Right Bank. In the north of the Right Bank (Pravoberezje) in the forest-steppe zone are fertile chernozem – the most fertile land in the region (Shabanov 1973).



## **3 Empirical part**

### **3.1 Methodology**

In the research part of my thesis, I decided to use qualitative research. Flick states that "qualitative research is oriented towards analyzing concrete cases in their temporal and local particularity and starting from people's expressions and activities in their local contexts" (Flick 2009, p. 41).

My thesis is a case study, in which I use semi-structured interviews. A case study is a research strategy aimed at a deep, complete and sophisticated analysis of the social-geographical phenomenon by the example of a separate empirical object or case (Kozina 1997). The logic of case study assumes the following stages of scientific research: 1) preparatory phase, 2) data collection in field (natural) conditions and their primary processing, 3) data analysis and verification of results. One of the essential features of the case study is the comprehensive use of data collection methods. Interviewing, questioning, document research, collection of artifacts, (included) surveillance and other methods can be used (Sorokina 2011).

As the primary method, I use a semi-structured interview that is an interview in which "the researcher has a list of questions ..., but there is flexibility in how and when the questions are put and how the interviewee can respond." (Edwards, Holland 2013).

My interview had 14 questions with open answers. To begin with, I learned the basic information about the respondents, such as age, marital status and the presence of children, next, questions were related to the research aims of the thesis. After, I structured the received answers into categories and visualized them in graphs.

There was an opportunity to interview owners of dachas from two different "villages" in the Moscow region. One from the eastern part of the region and one from the north-western part. Interviewees from Saratov were collected all over the city. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in October 2017 in Moscow and in November 2017 in Saratov. Altogether, 20 respondents were interviewed, 10 in the region of Moscow and 10 in Saratov. Three persons from Moscow refused an interview, and five owners of dacha did not grow food at all. They used this place only for recreation purposes, 2 of them, however, reported some gardening, but cultivated only flowers.

My respondents' selection was purposive, they were contacted through my connection with them, and others were consequently approached by the snowball method. My first respondent was my grandmother, and the next five were interviewed in the same location – eastern part of the Moscow region. In the north-western region, I contacted a colleague of my grandmother, and the next three respondents have dachas in the same village. Respondents from Moscow were from her dacha's village, and my first respondent in Saratov was grandmother's brother. All

respondents from Saratov were connected similarly. After I finished my interview with each respondent from Saratov, I asked for help in finding the next respondent for an interview.

The duration of the interviews was 40 to 45 minutes. The conversations were recorded and after rewritten into Microsoft Excel, where they were analyzed. The primary purpose of this research was to learn the motivation of people to grow food on their own and to uncover the main differences between the capital city and a peripheral city.

### 3.2 Results

#### *Basic demographic and economic data.*

The figure 7 shows the representation of respondents by gender and table 7 shows the age of respondents.

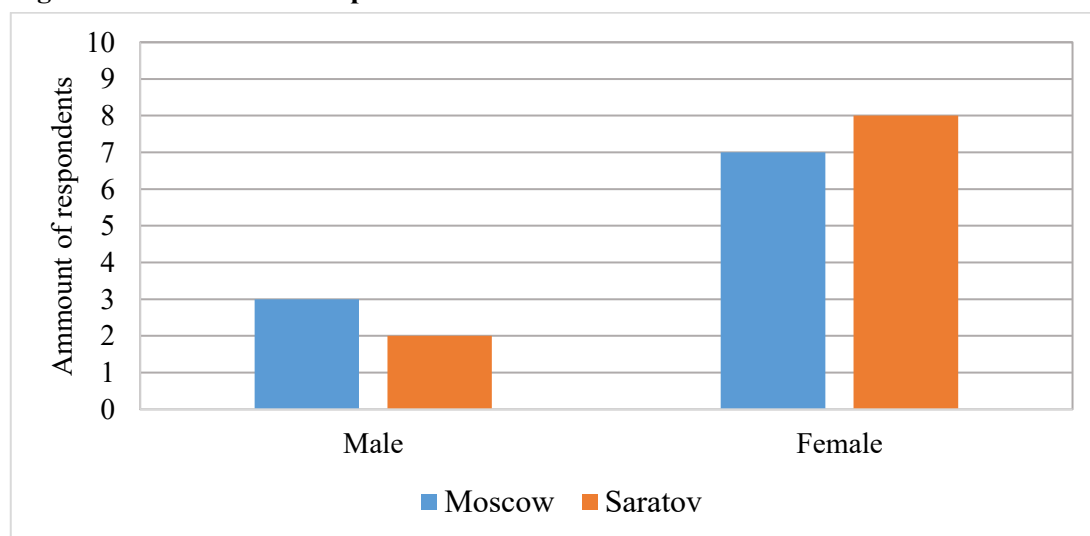
**Table 7: Age of the respondents**

Respondent	Moscow	Saratov
1	58	60
2	45	58
3	64	57
4	60	54
5	52	65
6	64	59
7	49	59
8	65	62
9	61	64
10	57	56
Average age	57,5	59,4

Source: own research

Respondents' age ranges between 45 and 65. The average age in Moscow is 57,5 whereas in Saratov it is 59,4. The average age of respondents is 58,45. It shows that respondents' generation is between 1953 and 1973. Unfortunately, there is no official statistics about the age of dachas' owners, which I could use to compare with my results.

**Figure 7: Gender of the respondents**



Source: own research

Ideally, I would have to interview five men and five women from every city, but because of the snowball method, I could not control the number of men and women. And in the end, 25 % of the respondents were men, and 75 % were women.

**Table 8: Number of children**

Respondent	Moscow	Saratov
1	2	2
2	1	2
3	2	3
4	3	1
5	2	2
6	1	2
7	3	4
8	2	2
9	2	1
10	1	2
Average	1,9	2,1
Mode	2	2

**Source:** own research

Table 8 shows the number of children for each respondent. As the results show, the number of children from respondents from Moscow and Saratov is practically the same. The average number of children in Moscow is 1,9 and in Saratov is 2,1. The mode in both towns is 2.

**Figure 8: Profession of the respondents**



**Source:** own research

Figure 8 shows us the profession of respondents. We can see that in Moscow more senior experts (manager) were approached than in Saratov. Most of the respondents from Moscow are the middle-level expert (experts that need university education), in Saratov biggest group are in the lower expert position.

**Table 9: Average salary in Moscow and Saratov in 2017**

2017	Moscow	Saratov
average salary	68 000 ₺	24 400 ₺

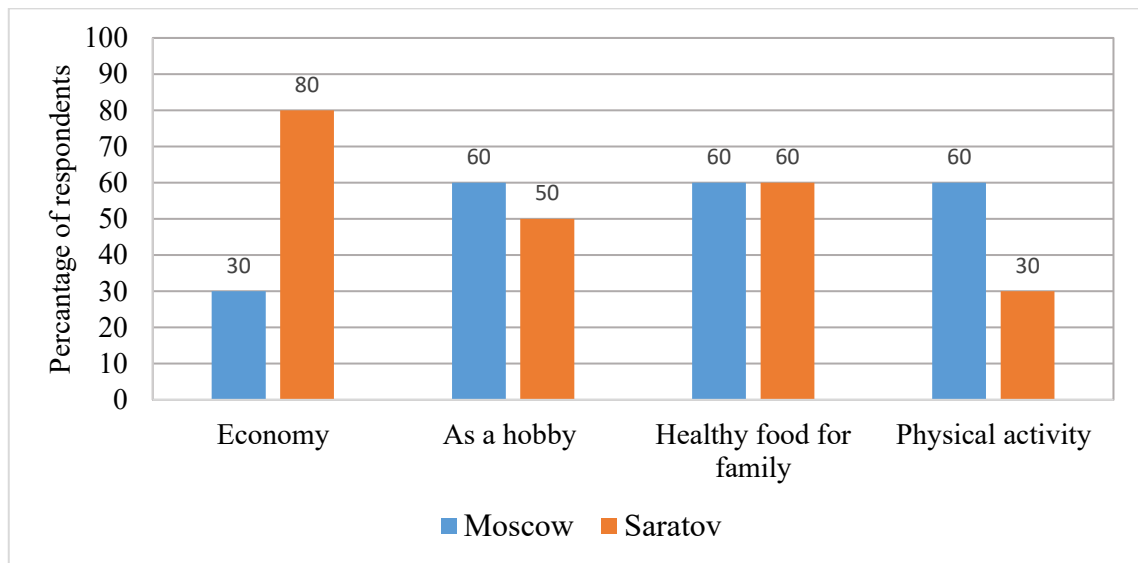
**Source:** RFSSS 2017

Table 9 shows the average wage in the two cities. As the results show the average salary in Moscow is 2.7 times higher than the average salary in Saratov.

#### *The reason for food production*

First question (shown in figure 9) for those who reported growing their own food in my semi-structured interview was: “Why do you grow food? What is the main reason for your home food production?”. There were four types of answers: 1) Economy, 2) As a hobby, 3) Healthy food for a family, 4) Physical activity. Each respondent could state more than one reason, some of the respondents chose three from four options.

**Figure 9: “Why do you grow food?”**



**Source:** own research

As we can see from the results, Moscow and Saratov differ mainly in the economic reason for saving money, respondents from Saratov have more financial problems than people from the capital. Reasons such as “hobby” and “healthy food”, however, are relevant for nearly 60 % of the respondents. Reason to produce homegrown food for “physical activity” is chosen more often by people from Moscow. I also need to mention that the answer: “as a hobby” was explained by some of the respondents as a need to have something to do, some reasonable activity during retirement.

*“I think that it is really good when you have what to do in retirement. And growing my own food helps me in different ways. First of all, it keeps me moving, being more physically active. Second, it is of course again connected with health, the food that I grow is healthier, and also, I think it is very important, that it psychologically helps me – I mean, that I do what I love to do and it makes me happier in a certain way.”*

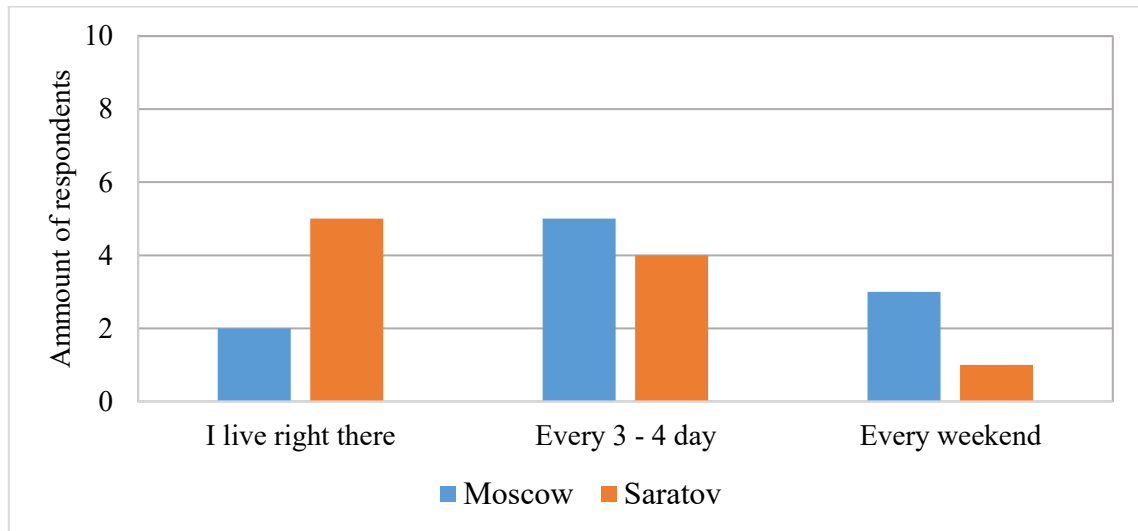
Next, I asked every person about environmental reasons for self-provisioning after asking the first question about reasons for this activity. No one in Moscow nor Saratov answered that gardening and self-provisioning would, according to them, help to higher sustainability and better

ecological conditions in the given place. Although everybody admitted that it is an important aspect, this idea as motivation for one's own food production did not come to them by themselves.

#### Allotted time

Next two questions were about time that people spend growing their food. First was: "How often do you go to the dacha?" (figure 10) and the second one: "How much time do you spend working on your garden?" (figure 11). Answers to these questions relate to the growing season: from the middle of April until the middle of November.

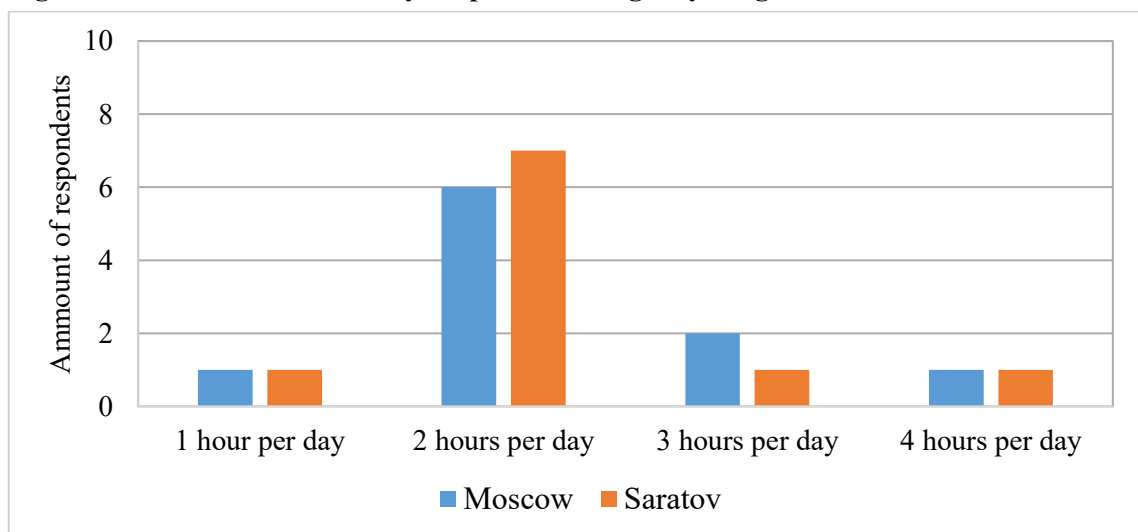
**Figure 10: "How often do go to the dacha?"**



**Source:** own research

People from Saratov mainly separated into two groups: First – live right there and second – go to the dacha every 3–4 days. But in Moscow, people prefer to go to their dacha in time intervals of 3–4 days or every weekend. Two respondents from Moscow, who live on their dacha, are pensioners.

**Figure 11: "How much time do you spend working on your garden?"**



**Source:** own research

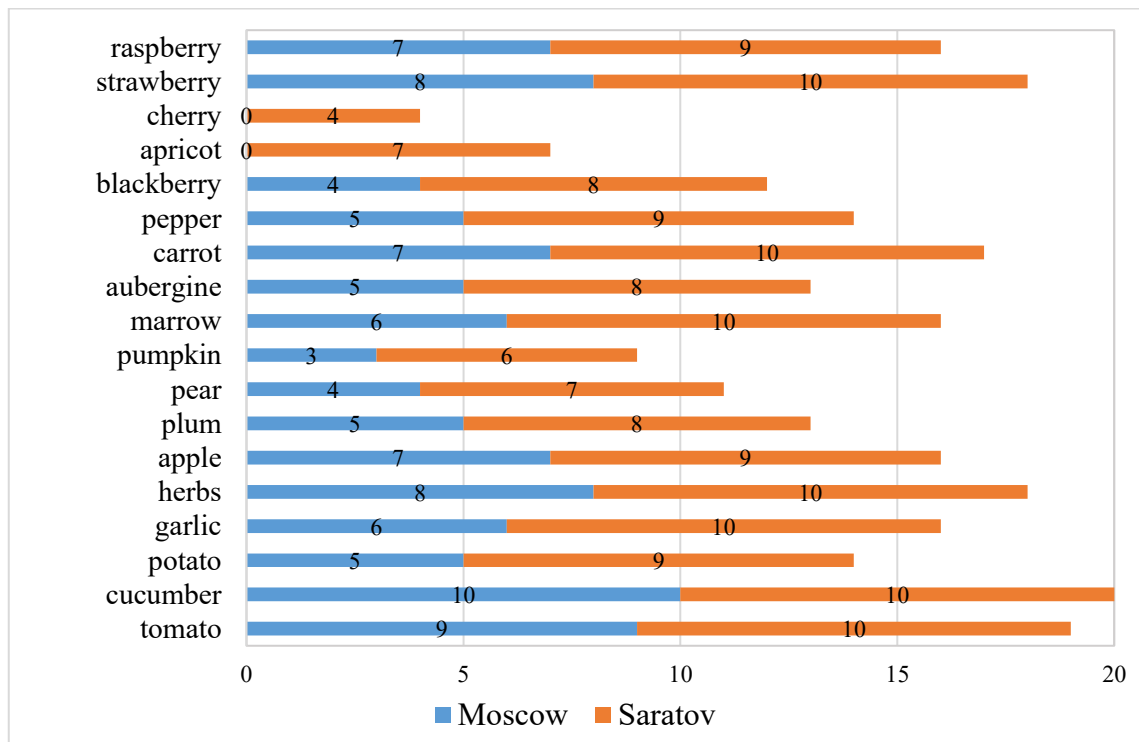
The majority of respondents reported working on their garden for 2 hours per the day they are present on dacha. Almost no difference was found between Moscow and Saratov.

*“Usually, I spend 2 hours per day, when I am here, but of course, it takes more time at the beginning of the season. I have to clean up after winter.”*

*Food grown on gardens*

In figure 12, it is shown what crops respondents grow on their gardens. Mostly, basic types of vegetables are grown, together with fruit trees, berries and herbs.

**Figure 12: “What do you grow?”**



Source: own research

This chart shows that in Saratov people grow more kinds of food in general, whereas people from Moscow are more limited in their production. This situation may be the result of worse soil quality. Almost every respondent from Moscow mentions that it is a big problem to grow some kinds of food because of bad soil. They say that plants do not take roots.

Moscow respondents:

*“To grow you have to buy the best soil, fertilizer, and spend a lot of time to care and still it does not promise that the vegetables or fruits will grow.”*

*“I always try to grow something new, but not always it works out. Most often it turns to grow other varieties of the same fruit and vegetables that already were growing on my dacha.”*

Saratov respondents:

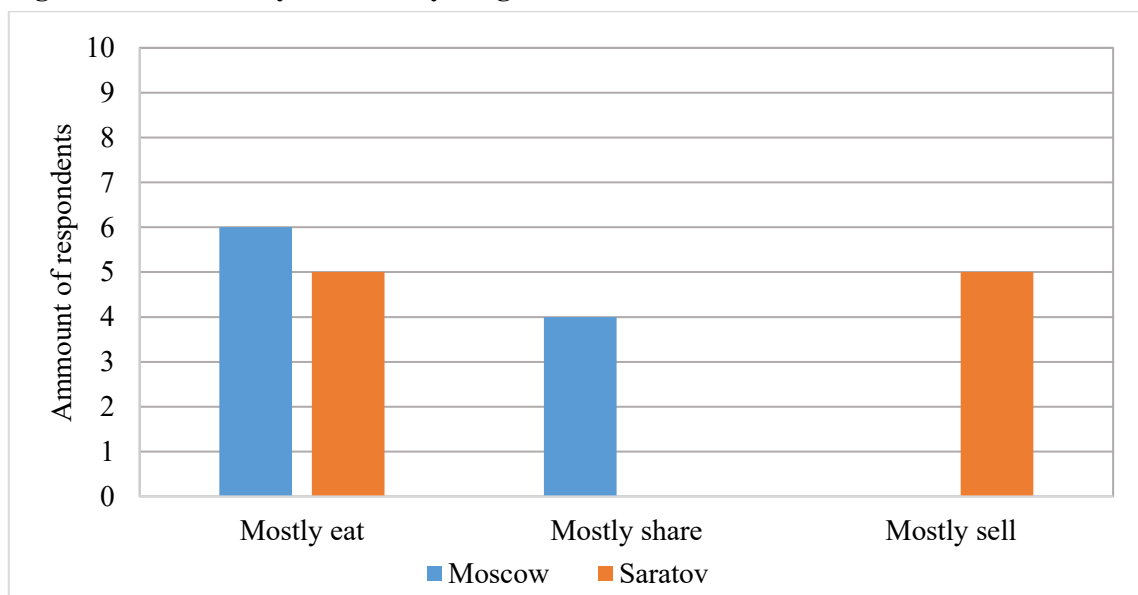
*“In general, on my dacha everything I tried to grow succeeded, now I grow mostly what me and my family like and what sells well.”*

*“I think that with proper care in Saratov we can grow almost anything, the land really allows it.”*

#### *Use of homegrown production*

Next part of my semi-structured interview was dedicated to what people do with their food after they successfully plant it. Respondents gave me three types of answers: 1) Mostly eat, 2) Mostly share, 3) Mostly sell.

**Figure 13: “What do you do with your grown food?”**



**Source:** own research

Here we can see that there are two groups in Moscow and two groups in Saratov. In Moscow, people mostly eat their products and also share it. In Saratov, the equal proportion of respondents eat their own products and sell it. As one respondent from Moscow states, sharing is often a good strategy to prevent wasting the overproduction:

*“Sometimes when it is a very successful year, I mean a successful harvest, it turns out that a lot of products simply cannot be eaten by one family, and therefore I often share with neighbors and friends. For example, last year I had about 200 kg of apples, which I shared, and 150 kg of cucumbers – half of which I had in cans and I just had to share them or throw them away. (Almost all people with dacha conserve vegetables in glass jars for the winter – author's note)”*

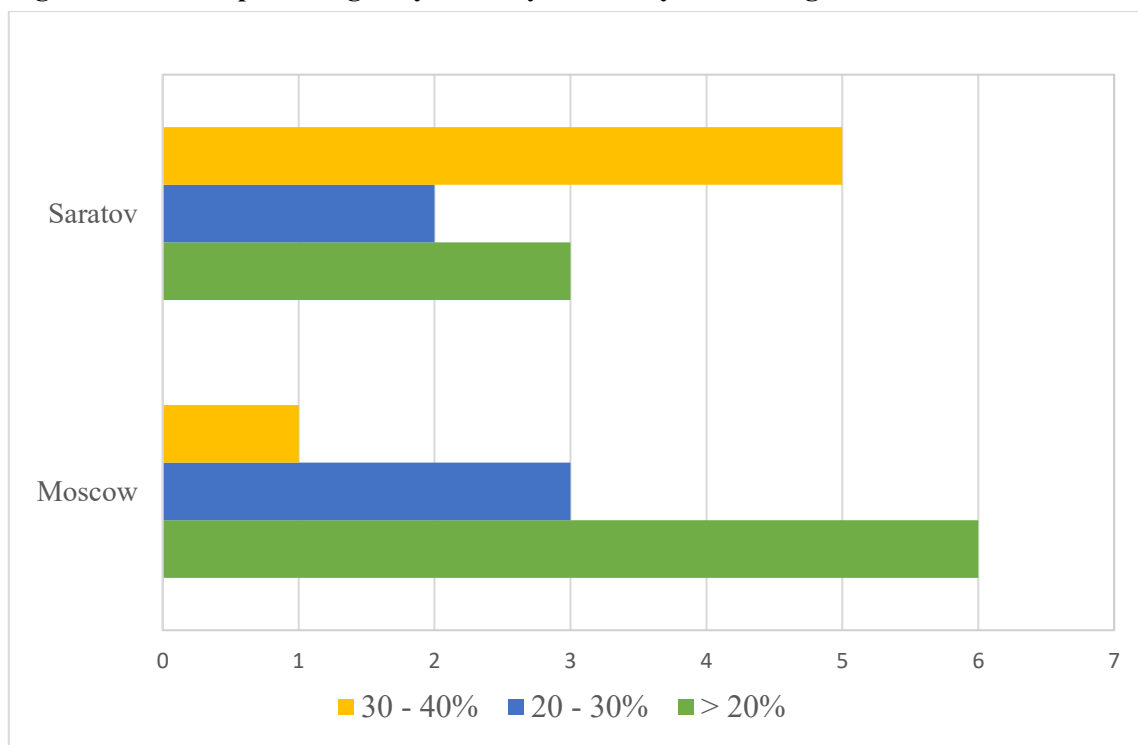
On the other hand, people from Saratov that sell their food, acknowledge selling of the fresh and processed products as a successful enterprising with high demand.

*“Many of my friends, like me, sell something, most often it's berries in the season and different vegetables, by the way from berries we often make alcoholic tinctures, which we also sell, people buy because everything is natural, without different additives.”*

#### *A self-provisioned proportion of food*

In the next question, I was interested in the daily ration of respondents, actually “What percentage of your daily ration is your home-grown food?” We can see the results of this question in figure 14.

**Figure 14: “What percentage of your daily ration is your home-grown food?”**



**Source:** own research

Here again, we can see the difference between the capital and Saratov. People from Saratov who have their homegrown food in daily ration between 30–40% and at the same time sell their food, mentioned that with the money gained from sales, they buy another food like meat, milk and other which they cannot produce by themselves. Most people in Moscow reported less than 20% of the ration proceeding from their own food production. Another part said that they eat their own food even less often. For the Moscow respondents, the homegrown production has an obviously complementary function.

#### *Parents and children*

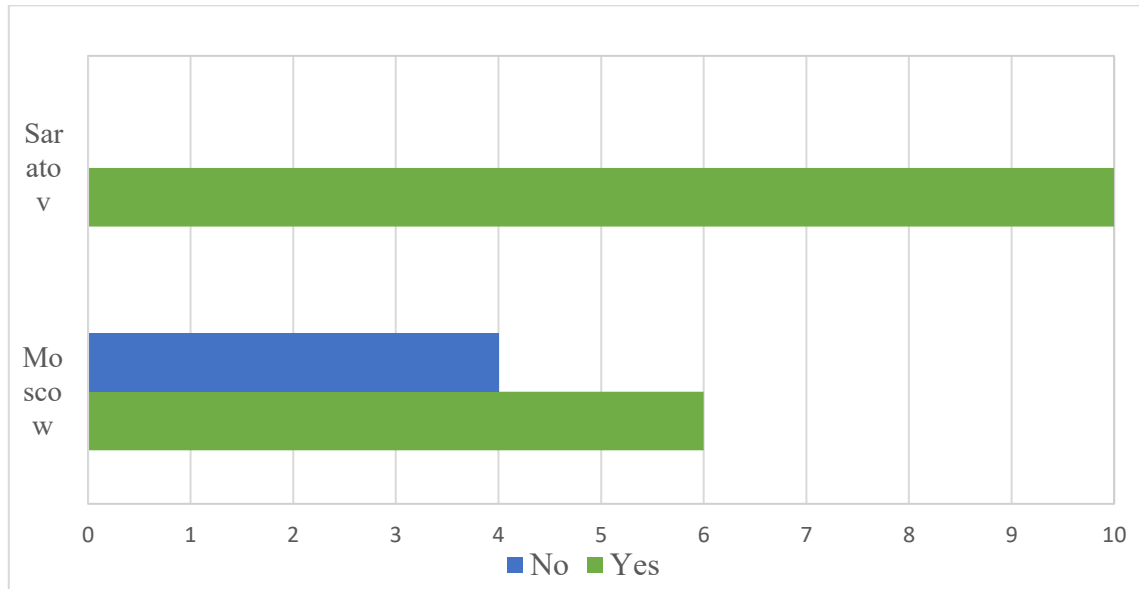
Last two questions were devoted to parents of respondents and their children, mainly if there was any tradition in gardening, self-provisioning, knowledge transmission, etc. As I



mentioned in part “Basic demographic data” each respondent has at least one child or more children. The first question was thus: “Have your parents engaged in gardening?” (figure 15) and the second one: “Do your children help you with growing food?” (figure 16).

These questions again can show differences between two cities and also explain how older and younger generation refers to the cultivation of own food.

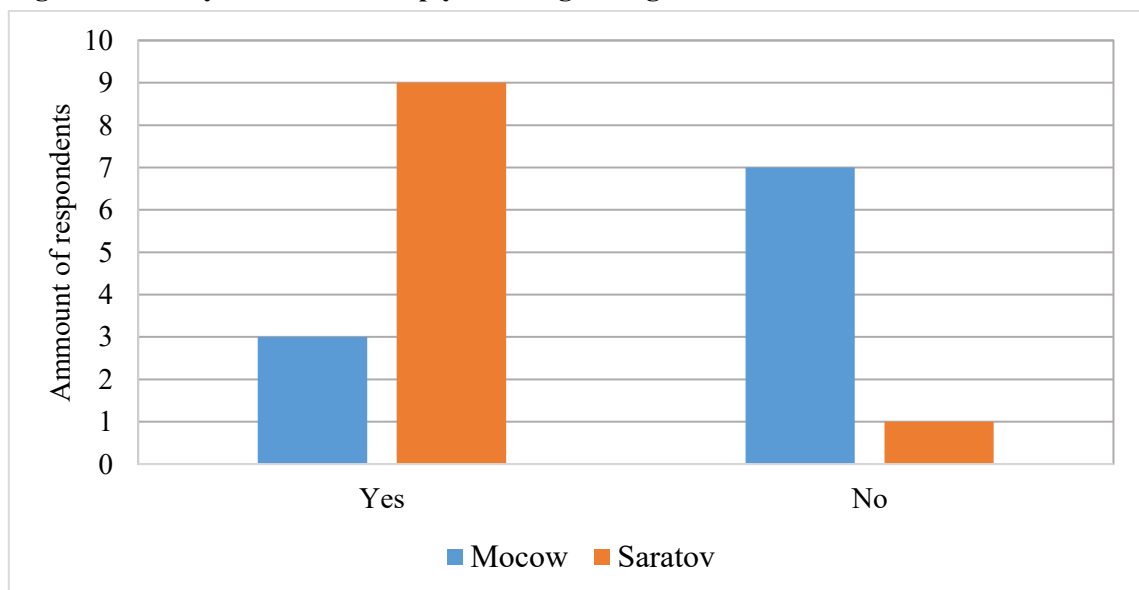
**Figure 15: “Have your parents engaged in gardening?”**



Source: own research

In Saratov, all the respondents’ parents were engaged in gardening. Whereas, in Moscow, four respondents answered that there was no experience of gardening by their parents, however, one of them replied that her parents had dacha, but they were not interested in growing food. Rest of the parents from this “No” group did not have dachas.

**Figure 16: “Do your children help you with growing food?”**



Source: own research

Next chart again shows the “mirror” situation between Moscow and Saratov. Most of the Saratov respondents have children who are involved in gardening and participate actively, on the other hand, only in one case in the Moscow region, the children of respondents were helping with gardening on the parents’ dacha. I can assume that the young generation in Moscow and Saratov shows this difference because of the worse economic situation in Saratov and more “urban” mentality of Moscow based people.

Moscow respondents:

*“My children do not grow food with me, because they have their worries: family, career and so on. They come to me for the weekend and of course, can help with the garden business, but mostly they use the dacha for recreation.”*

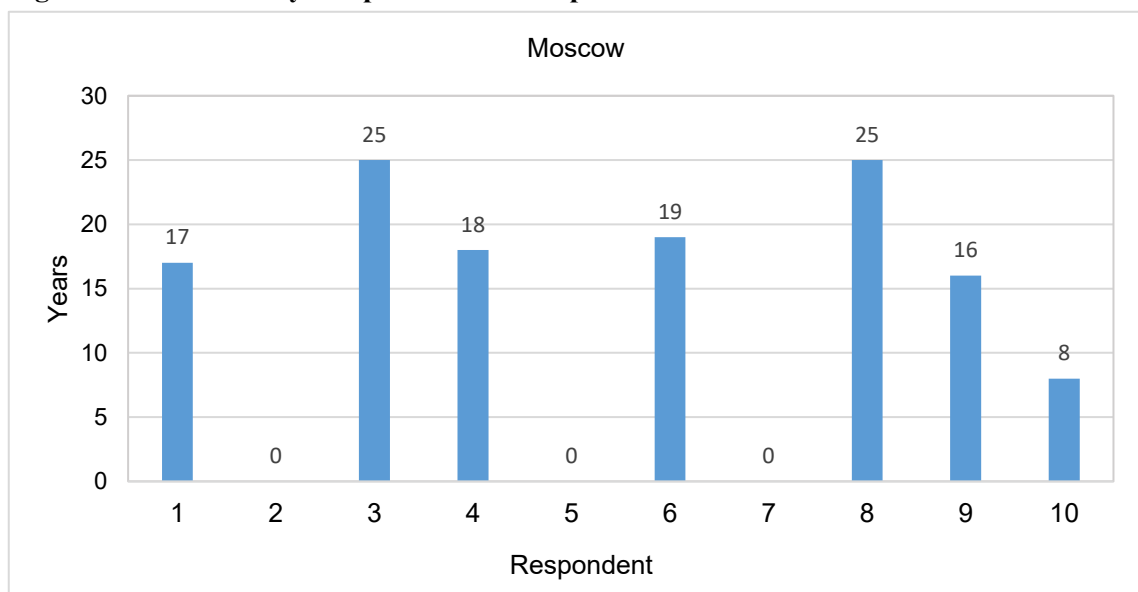
Saratov respondents:

*“Of course, the children help me with the garden. Together we do a lot of work, also collect vegetables together. Along with my parents, as well as my children with me, I helped a lot with the garden when I was a child.”*

*Possession of the dacha*

Next question was about the time of owning the dacha. First I asked if respondent bought a dacha or got it in some other way. The result shows that three respondents in Moscow and two respondents in Saratov get dacha as an inheritance, all other respondents bought the dacha. And those who get dacha as an inheritance were connected with their dacha from early childhood, that is why I do not include them into next figures. In the following two figures show for how long each respondent possess dacha from the time of purchase.

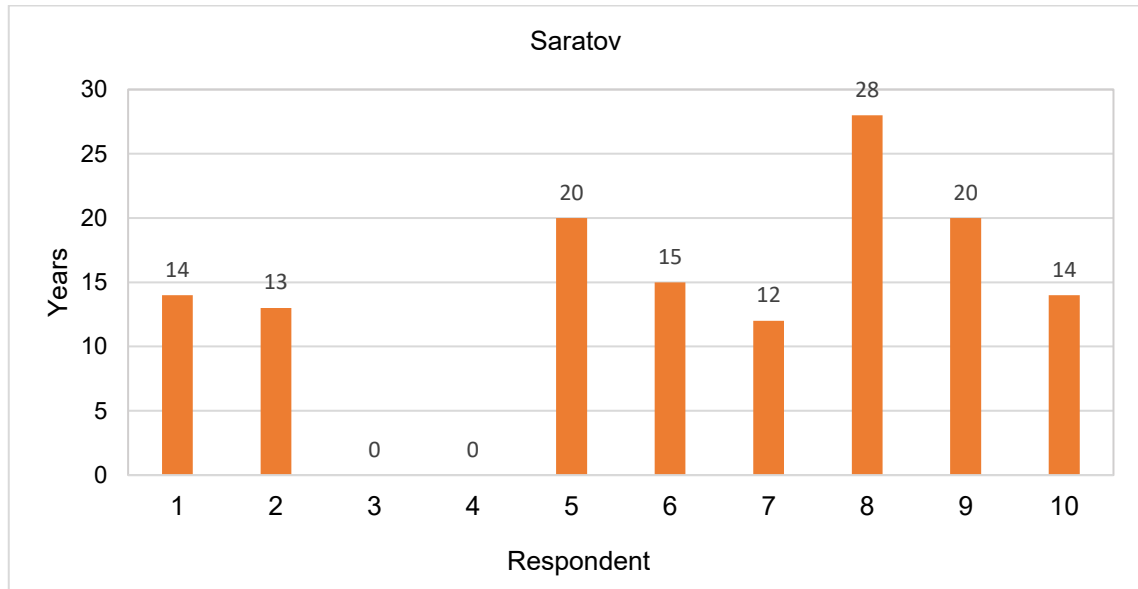
**Figure 17: Number of years passed since the purchase of the dacha in Moscow**



Source: own research

Results show that in Moscow time of owning is between 8 and 25 years. Thanks to this information I was able to calculate the average age when respondent bought a dacha. And the result shows that in Moscow it is 43 and the average time of possessing dacha in Moscow is 18,3 years.

**Figure 18: Number of years passed since the purchase of the dacha in Saratov**



**Source:** own research

The result in Saratov shows that time of owning after purchase is between 12 and 28 years. The average age when respondent bought a dacha in Saratov is 43,38 years and the average time of possessing dacha in Saratov is 17 years. In this aspect, the two selected cities are comparable.

After analyzing the duration of ownership and the self-provisioning practices, I concluded that in both cities the time of possession of the dacha influences the variety of food grown. In Moscow, this trend is even stronger than in Saratov, where this influence is less visible, but still existing.

Moscow respondent:

*“Of course, when you just buy a dacha, in your plans there is a small garden with some fruit and vegetables, but eventually you want more variety of grown products.”*

Saratov respondents:

*“I think that it did not play a significant role, I certainly added or changed seeds, but in general, I can say that the volumes and diversity have not changed much.”*

## 4 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to learn about the phenomenon of growing food in the Russian context, using the example of two different cities. The results of the study show the difference in food self-provisioning between Moscow and Saratov.

Reading and analyzing the theory of "dacha" we see that this phenomenon is closely connected with the phenomenon food self-provisioning. It has its long history, and it is still prevalent and alive in Russia nowadays.

Raising the theme of the differences between the studied cities, first, the difference in the economic sphere is evident, starting from wages, ending with the fact that respondents from Moscow mainly work in higher positions than respondents from Saratov. There are also differences in the reasons for growing food. In Moscow, most people do this for three main reasons: hobby, healthy eating, and physical activity. Whereas in Saratov the main reason is economic – people save on purchased food while growing their own. Other reasons why people do food self-provisioning in Saratov are to obtain healthy food for family and, also as a hobby. Next, people from Saratov more often than Muscovites live in the dacha during the season, however, in the end, respondents from both cities spend the same amount of time working on their garden.

The big difference between Moscow and Saratov, of course, is in the amount and variety of grown food. Respondents from Saratov grow more varieties of fruits and vegetables, and most likely this is due to better climatic conditions and more fertile soils. One of the most apparent differences between these cities is how people use the food they grow. Fifty percent of respondents from Saratov sell their home produce, whereas, from the interviewed Muscovites, nobody sells the home-grown food.

Based on the responses in the survey, it is clear that respondents in Saratov are more involved in the phenomenon of food self-provisioning than respondents from Moscow. Starting from the fact that in Saratov people eat more of their grown food, it represents most of their daily ration. Also, there is a stronger tradition of self-provisioning: all parents of respondents from Saratov were involved in informal food production. Ending with the fact that the younger generation in Saratov today is more involved in food self-provisioning than the young generation from Moscow.

To sum up, I conclude that the study by Abler and Kohler (2008) and work by Jehlička, Kostelecký and Smith (2013) is valid for current Russia, although they seem to contradict each other. I think that in the context of Russia the role of both traditions and economic necessity, as well as a hobby activity undoubtedly plays an important role. As shown by the results of my research, I suppose that there is a specific economic trait or border that distinguishes Moscow from Saratov, and it also encourages people to engage in food self-provisioning more to avoid the

harmful effects of the economy. It is worthwhile to study informal production and self-provisioning in Central and Eastern Europe, as this study reveals interesting (and sometimes) contradictory findings. Nevertheless, for a more accurate understanding of the whole picture, I think it is necessary to conduct a similar study with a larger number of case study cities and a higher number of respondents.

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