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Garage Days

Chişinău, Moldova Republic, 2019-2021

The following pictures are depicting the multiple social and cultural use of the garages built the the communist times in Chişinău/Moldova Republic. Later, in the transition years, they were joined by many other, illegally built ones. Huddled together in compact groups of several dozens to several hundreds or, in a few cases, even thousands, the garages outgrew their intended basic function and started to morph to adapt to each owner's needs. Today, few of them continue to be mere places to keep your car. People pickle cucumbers here, store various things that change with the seasons, make wine from grapes on climbing vines (sometimes grown on the roofs of the actual garages), hold spontaneous or long-planned parties. The Mayor of Chişinău, too, was photographed drinking in a garage while playing improvised instruments; in another garage, two kilos of uranium were found. You can visit a garage art gallery, a fresh fish store or a museum for old computers, with about 100 functional machines as exhibits.

Garages have seen a social life more intense than usual during the pandemic restrictions, while the cafes, restaurants and public spaces have been closed or restricted.

All the things you can't do at home or out on the town you can do at the garage. Garages are privately owned or rented out. In some neighborhoods, they got a second-storey extension and were fitted with saunas and everything you need in a small holiday home. The relatively low real estate pressure, the authorities' willingness to turn a blind eye to unauthorized construction, and the fact that they are detached and, most often, far from the blocks of flats all made Chişinău garages a space for residents' lives to overflow into, filling the small concrete cubes according to individual needs. Previous generations were more preoccupied with sustainability: the garages' first owners broke through patches of concrete until they hit soil, then planted grapevines, set up trellises and "greened" their garages and their roofs. Many arte facing demolition today, as in the big cities (specially in Romania) they almost vanished.



Family reunion at the garages, Chisinau 2021



A little girl which celebrates her birthday at the garage is lifted on the chair by family and friends. A local habit is that the celebrated person is lifted in the air the same times as the age gained. Chisinau 2019



A painted garage door, Chisinau 2019



A man is doing wine. Although in the past wine was made exclusively with the grapes grown around the garage, today the use rather bought grapes. Chisinau 2019



A family who recently rented a garage place is in the process of decorating it according to their need. Chisinau 2019



Party at the garages in Chisinau, 2019



Party at the garages in Chisinau, 2019



A man who had his birthday celebrated the day ago returns to the garage to clean the mess. Chsinau 2019



Party at the garages in Chisinau, 2019



Party at the garages in Chisinau, 2019



Kids playing outside while the parents are partying inside the garage, Chisinau, 2021



A man smokes a cigarette while his wife is cleaning the table, Chisinau, 2021