Kyiv, Ukraine - Revised Edition
Adrian Cybriwsky, Roman

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11 The Defenders of Kyiv

11.1 Hero City

The title of this chapter and “Hero City” are terms that are not to be taken lightly, because in history the city has faced the worst of demons and many heroes have sacrificed their lives to defend it. The time of World War II is indelibly etched most strongly in the narrative of Kyiv, as the suffering at the hands of Nazi aggressors was unprecedented, and the defenders who fought against them in the “Great Patriotic War,” as the struggle is known in the Soviet/post-Soviet sphere, are remembered forever with reverence and thanks (recall Figure 5.2). These heroes encircled the city with rings of defenses and held strong for seven weeks before the Nazis eventually took over Kyiv, were deliberately starved during German occupation, and then fought valiantly to retake the city on November 6, 1943. Hundreds of thousands of citizens gave their lives in the fight for just this one city, earning Kyiv the Soviet designation as “Hero City.” There are great monuments in Kyiv to these heroes that are much beloved, most especially the Museum of the Great Patriotic War that is capped by the dramatic 62-meter-tall stainless steel statue of Batkivshchyna Maty (Mother of the Fatherland) (Chapter 5). Other memorials are Park Slavy (Park of Glory) with its obelisk honoring the heroes of the Second World War and eternal flame to the Unknown Soldier; another tall obelisk on Prospekt Peremohy (Victory Avenue) that honors Kyiv as a Hero City; and various Soviet tanks on pedestals throughout the city and statues of generals, soldiers, and sharpshooters. Still more remembrance is via street names (e.g., Prospekt Peremohy; Prospekt Heroiv Stalingrada [Heroes of Stalingrad Avenue] in Obolon), names of subway stations (e.g., Heoriv Dnipra [Heroes of the Dnipro]), and annual holidays, parades on Khreshchatyk, and staged events in Independence Square (e.g., November 6 is the day for honoring the 1943 liberation of Kyiv). We see aging heroes on the street sometimes, men and some women, proudly wearing their medals. Their honorable service may have been in the defense of Kyiv or it may have been elsewhere in the war; regardless, other citizens offer smiles and sometimes nod or a bow of appreciation.

With full respect to these heroes, living and dead, and also to those who defended Kyiv and other Ukrainian lands from the brutality of Stalin's assaults on religion, history, and Ukrainian nationhood, we can now speak about a need to defend the city once again with new heroes. This time the enemy comes from within, sings songs of money, and assaults Kyiv by raids against buildings, parks, squares, and courtyards in residential
developments that it covets, as well as against hilltops, hill slopes, and riverfront property, and against individual businesses, institutions, communities of residents. Their weapons are corruption, intimidation, and connections to power, all of which individually or in combination have the ability to destroy. They are the demons in this book. Fortunately, the weapons for the defense of the city can also be powerful. They include courageous journalism and well-documented exposés, solid academic research, good friends in high places, and educational programming about the issues for the general public. There are also the tools of public protests, mass gatherings, and if need be, civil disobedience.66 Once at a protest rally I encountered an older gentleman whose T-shirt caught my eye. He allowed me to photograph him. The message on the shirt was in Ukrainian and read: *Nasha zbroya intelekt*, roughly “Our best weapons are our brains.”

11.2 The Grassroots

It is fair to say that most Kyivans do not think very much or often about the problems that are described in this book. They simply go on with their lives. Some of them are doubtlessly satisfied because for them life has been good. On the other hand, many others are simply too busy with the struggle of making a living to consider wider questions about the condition of their city or society, and to become involved. There is, however, an energized grassroots as well, and a fair representation of Kyivans who care deeply and make time to become activists. It is to them that we now turn.

We begin by positioning grassroots activism in Kyiv within a wider context. Most importantly, I do not mean to suggest that it is only now, 20-plus years after the fall of the communist state, that Kyivans (or other citizens of the post-Soviet world) are beginning to speak up about what is wrong around them. Not only were there the famous dissident leaders in Ukraine, Russia, and other republics who openly challenged the Soviet state beginning in the 1970s and earlier and whose actions contributed mightily to the landmark events of the late 1980s and early 1990s (e.g., Browne, ed., 1973; Chornovil, 1968; Kolasky, ed. and trans., 1974; Pavlychko, 1992; Kuzio and Wilson, 1994), there were also apparently some less visible and less commonly reported challenges in late Soviet times by groups of neighbors and

66 Natalia Moussienko, a friend and mentor in Kyiv, has recently published an excellent article in English about the demons and the defenders of Kyiv (2013). I recommend it as a complement to this book.
other ordinary citizens at city and district levels against unpopular urban planning decisions. Much less is known about this dimension of protest, although it did exist, if only in specific circumstances. For example, once at a recent presentation of a newly released book about Kyiv in the 1970s, I heard its author, Stanislav Tsalyk (2012), respond to a question about protest from the audience by referring to the anger that many Kyivans expressed about the demolition of more than 700 buildings, including those with historic value and those in which they lived, in preparation for Kyiv’s role as one of the hosts of the 1980 Olympics (sometime referred to as the “Moscow Olympics”). I had not heard of this incident before, and Tsalyk acknowledged that the episode is fading into distant memory and needs to be investigated more closely.67

Second, I acknowledge once more that there have been true heroes who have given their lives since Soviet times for the cause of right, even if not about Kyiv land development specifically, and that monuments to them exist already. For example, in Chapter 4 we met the activist journalist Heorhiy Ruslanovych Gongadze who was killed near the end of summer 2000 almost certainly because of his reporting about corruption in Ukraine. He was the founder of the website Ukrayinska Pravda (Ukrainian Truth), which continues to report exposés about dishonest dealings in the country and which I have cited many times as a source in this book. Gongadze was awarded the posthumous title Hero of Ukraine by President Viktor Yushchenko in 2005, and in 2008 a monument to him and 11 other journalists who were killed since Ukraine’s independence was unveiled in a Kyiv park (Table 11.1). Like Gongadze himself, almost all of these victims lost their lives during the corruption-rife administration of President Leonid Kuchma from 1994 to 2005. None of their killers has ever been brought to justice. There is also the matter of Viacheslav Chornovil (born 1937), a prominent Soviet-era dissident and advocate of Ukrainian independence who then became a member of the Verkhovna Rada from the People’s Movement of Ukraine Party (often simply called Rukh [The Movement]) and was positioned to run for president against Kuchma until he was killed (along with his assistant Yevhen Pavlov) in a car crash in the outskirts of Kyiv on March 25, 1999. An investigation by the Ministry of Internal Affairs concluded that foul play was not involved in the accident, but many supporters disagree and continue to call for new investigations more than ten years later. Like Gongadze before him, Chornovil, too, received posthumous awards, including a fine monument in his honor in a prominent spot near the center of Kyiv in 2010.68

67 June 7, 2012, at the bookstore Ye.
68 There is also a prominent monument to Chornovil in L’viv.
As I edit this book, I learn that yet another journalist is in danger, this time because she had been asking too many questions for too long about a questionable development plan near Kotsiubynske at Kyiv’s western outskirts. The tract is public land in the Bilychansky Forest, and measures some 4,000 hectares (nearly 10,000 acres). Developers want to cut the trees and build. In a corrupt system, access to the land and permits for construction can easily be had by someone with the right connections and enough pocket cash. In this case, STB Channel investigative journalist Iryna Fedoriv apparently got too close to uncovering details about the development. As reported by Oksana Faryna (2012c), the land has a potential value of US$2 billion, so for the developers a lot is at stake. “You are covering the wrong topic. Drop it,” Fedoriv was told by an unknown voice on her cell phone. “I know you have a lot of influential friends and acquaintances but they won’t always be with you and your family,” the voice continued. “I hope that you will sleep well tonight.” The journalist and her family have gone into hiding, while her supporters and activists for the preservation for the forest have turned to placard-waving protest at the office of President Yanukovych, asking that he chase the developers away by declaring the forest to be a national park. This is quintessential Kyiv: corruption and lawless development; gangsterism; unspecified and broad presidential powers to do both good and bad; citizens caught in the middle.

Table 11.1  Journalists Killed in Ukraine, 1995-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Death</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Place of Death</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 1995</td>
<td>Volodymyr Ivanov</td>
<td>Slava Sevastopol</td>
<td>Sevastopol</td>
<td>Found hanged in an abandoned building after writing exposé articles about mayor of Luhans and Ukrainian Security Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1996</td>
<td>Ihor Hrushetsky</td>
<td>Kyivskiye Vedomosti</td>
<td>Cherkasy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 13, 1997</td>
<td>Petro Shevchenko</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kyiv</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 11, 1997</td>
<td>Borys Derevyanko</td>
<td>Vechernaya Odessa</td>
<td>Odesa</td>
<td>Shot twice and killed while on way to office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 16, 1999</td>
<td>Ihor Bondar</td>
<td>AMT television station</td>
<td>Odesa</td>
<td>Shot with automatic weapon while driving in residential area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 16, 2000</td>
<td>Heorhiy Gongadze</td>
<td>Ukrainyinska Pravda</td>
<td>Kyiv oblast</td>
<td>Kidnapped; found beheaded in forest; investigated corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Death</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td>Place of Death</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 24, 2001</td>
<td>Oleh Breus</td>
<td>XXI Vek</td>
<td>Luhansk</td>
<td>Shot outside his home after threats were received by his weekly magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 7, 2001</td>
<td>Ihor Oleksandrov</td>
<td>TV and radio station TOR</td>
<td>Slovyansk</td>
<td>Killed in his office by four men with baseball bats; he had been reporting about corruption and organized crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 27, 2002</td>
<td>Mykhailo Kolomiets</td>
<td>Ukrainian News Agency</td>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>Found hanging from a tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 14, 2003</td>
<td>Volodymyr Karachevtsev</td>
<td>Kuryer newspaper</td>
<td>Melitopol</td>
<td>Found at his home hanging from the handle of his refrigerator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 3, 2004</td>
<td>Yuriy Chechyk</td>
<td>Radio Yuta</td>
<td>Poltava</td>
<td>Killed in mysterious car crash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2010</td>
<td>Vasyl Klymentyev</td>
<td>Novyi Stil</td>
<td>Kharkiv</td>
<td>Is missing and is presumed dead; he had been investigating corruption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Committee to Protect Journalists and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgiy_Gongadze

Third, I emphasize that protest is now commonplace in Ukraine, not just in the capital but in other cities as well, and that reasons for citizens’ anger include not just scandalous construction projects like those that threaten the forest outside Kotsiubinske, but also a great many other topics, both admirable and not. The Orange Revolution, for example, was focused on dishonest elections and the need for a fair vote for president. Other issues that have brought Ukrainians out in numbers include economic concerns such as onerous taxes and bureaucratic regulations on small, private enterprises (Figure 11.1); issues about pension payments for retired persons; political repressions including very centrally the mean-spirited imprisonment of Yulia Tymoshenko and other political opponents of the current presidential administration; declining freedoms of the press; political and business corruption, including the allegedly widespread corruption that has accompanied preparations for the Euro 2012 football tournament; support for the arts, museums, and cultural institutions that are underfunded or threatened with eviction; various issues of women’s rights and freedoms such as protests in favor of abortion choice; and protests against racism, homophobia, and sex tourism, among others. There have
also been protests from the other side such as marches against abortion, against homosexuality, against immigration to Ukraine by people of color, and against participation in Ukrainian football by players from Africa and South America. There is anti-Russian bigotry, too, sadly under the banner of Ukrainian patriotism.

A Kyiv-based NGO called Tsentr Doslidzennya Suspilstva (the Center for Research about Society) monitors protest events in Ukraine. The group is made up largely of faculty members and graduate students at the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy. Their website (http://cedos.org.ua) publishes quantitative summaries by category of protest as well as write-ups about individual protest events and the issues at hand. With respect to anti-development protests, specifically such as those that we have concentrated on in this book, a printed publication by this organization indicates that there were at least 278 such events in Ukraine as a whole between October 2009 and September 2010; 10.3 percent of the protests nationally, with Kharkiv leading the list with 43.2 percent of all such protests (Tsentr Doslidzennya Suspilstva, 2011, pp. 29-33; also Dutchak and Ishchenko, 2010, pp. 102-103). Some part of this high figure is attributed to a particularly

Figure 11.1 Photo of angry citizens in demonstration. The sign reads, “If you don’t like Ukrainians, get out of Ukraine.”
virulent protest campaign against the construction of a particular highway through a city park (Verbov, 2010), and to the presence in the city of an especially active NGO concerned with human rights, the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group. Kyiv was second in numbers of anti-development protests with 16.2 percent of the total, followed by L’viv with 9.4 percent and Odesa with 7.2 percent, adding up 76.0 percent of protests having taken place in just four cities.

Who are the protestors? To be sure, their numbers include regulars who come often to aktsii (actions, demonstrations) wherever they occur in the city, including “professional” community organizers and activist-volunteers affiliated with NGOs such as Save Old Kyiv (see below) that take lead roles in staging events and drumming up a turnout. I know quite a few such individuals personally, and have heard some of them speak at rallies several times. In addition to the colorful Olena Zhelesko with her entertaining, extemporaneous politically charged poetry (Chapter 1), I am sure that I can mention by name the examples of Inna Sovsun and Ihor Lutsenko, lead personages with the Save Old Kyiv organization who are often at the microphone at anti-development rallies and in the front line of protest marches; Oleksandr Bryhynets, a poet, writer, and member of the political party headed by Yulia Tymoshenko who heads the Kyiv City Council’s committee on culture and tourism; and Maria Lebedeva, a journalist and committed activist, and organizer of some of the programming at protests. My friend Vladyslava Osmak is another ubiquitous presence; another Kyiv activist described her to me as “the conscience of Kyiv.” There are also assortments of Kyiv historians and history buffs, experts from local universities, and a procession of speakers affiliated with vote-seeking political parties. When the protests are at specific sites that are being contested, there are local experts and neighborhood leaders who speak from the microphone and give interviews to journalists. At the “Theater at Teatralna” site (Chapter 2), for instance, one always sees Natalia Moussienko as a central figure, while at Andriyivskyi Uzviz (Andrew’s Slope) and in the heart of Podil (Chapter 6), it is often Osmak who, among others, has the microphone. Journalists protest, too: for example, the Stop Censorship group has posted a handsome map of corruption in Kyiv on its blog at wordpress.com and has printed it in English on one side and Ukrainian on the other for free distribution.

There are regulars as well among the placard-waving public who face the speakers (Figure 11.2). In contrast to some of the Party of Regions-managed

70 http://stopcensorship.wordpress.com/.
rallies that were discussed earlier (Chapter 4), no one is paid to attend and no one takes attendance. These protestors come of their own volition out of conviction. I know many regulars personally and we have had good conversations. A close friend who is herself a regular at both the megaphone and as a rally participant insisted that as I write this section, I do not neglect to mention the demographic diversity that characterizes Kyiv’s protestors. I would have done so anyway without the advice, because, indeed, one is struck by the range of people who turn up in support of the city. It is neither men nor women who run the rallies, but both genders who work together. Nor is it just the firebrand young who are seen front and center, but there are also many people of middle age and many oldsters as well. As a senior citizen, I did not feel at all out of place at any of Kyiv’s rallies. There are also mothers and fathers with small children, and sometimes rally speakers with children in hand. Many gays and lesbians know to keep a low profile in Kyiv (Chapter 8), but one also sees many of the recognized leaders of the city’s the LGBT community who are open about their sexuality as supporters at anti-development protests. Ukrainian is the main language at the microphone, but Russian is heard often and both languages are respected. I also recognize many of the same journalists who cover protest after protest, as well as members of the plainclothes security forces of both Kyiv and Ukraine who watch from the side. Their photographers document everything and everyone, and zoom in on individuals’ faces. More than once I have zoomed my camera onto the lens of one tracking me and offered a wave of greetings to a never-smiling counterpart.

The main objective of anti-development protests is to gain a greater voice in decisions about changes in land use and other aspects of city planning. To this end, activists are learning how to organize and fight back, how to

Figure 11.2  “This city is not for sale!” (right), “Keep your hands off of my city!” (center), and “Hostynyi Dvir – A Space for Culture” (right) (Right image courtesy of Vladyslava Osmak)
make use of courts, legal documents, and trusted connections in politics to press against unwanted development, as well as how to work with the media and with experts on architecture, history, and city planning. They gather signatures and email address at protests, and then spread the word electronically about new issues and upcoming events. Various NGOs, including Save Old Kyiv, Kyiany Peredusim! (Kyivans First!), the Visual Culture Research Center that was once affiliated with the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation (see below), operate professional quality websites that are updated regularly and offer links that help readers understand the issues and know how to help. Members of these NGOs and other grassroots organizations are learning to work together to support one another’s specific goals, because, in the end, they all have the same goal: a voice in the city and the right to the city. For example, we increasingly see activists from feminists’ groups, the LGBT community, arts advocates, and others at anti-development protests, and return support by urban activists for social and humanities causes. There are also advances in guerilla tactics: how to dismantle a security fence and knock it down, how to climb to the summit of a construction crane and post a sign, and how to occupy a site to prevent or delay illegal or unwanted construction. I have spoken personally with some of the “nighttime” operatives of the anti-development movement, and am impressed as well with their knowledge about how to fight at the margins of what is legal. They have learned by experience and from the study of people’s movements around the globe.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation has been an especially helpful organization for promoting dialogue in Kyiv (and also across Ukraine, in Russia, and elsewhere). The organization was founded by the German writer Heinrich Böll, and is affiliated with the German Green political movement. It opened its office in Kyiv in 2008 from which it administers its programming across Ukraine. Activities include speakers and roundtable discussions, public meetings about planning issues, and publications that present viewpoints about social issues and city planning by multiple authors. The stated objectives are to support democracy and political education, the protection of human rights, the promotion of gender equality, and the protection of the environment. I have attended quite a few events that the organization has sponsored, beginning with an impressive program in German and Ukrainian that was held over several days on a stage in the center of the street on Andrew’s Descent where speakers, panelists, displays on poster

71 In the order of how they are listed in the text, see their websites: http://saveoldkyiv.org/, http://www.peredusim.kiev.ua/, http://vcrc.org.ua/, and http://www.ua.boell.org/web/40.html.
boards, and passersby all exchanged opinions about how to renovate the street. The attendance was enormous because of heavy pedestrian traffic on this popular street, and I was impressed at how eagerly Ukrainians took to debate and the democratic process. Afterwards, I attended a dozen or more roundtable discussions and panelist presentations that were held most often in the Building of Architects or in the National Academy of Sciences. There, the programs centered on proposals for renewing places such as Kontraktova Ploshcha in Podil, Pochtova Ploshcha, or Evropeyska Ploshcha at the head of Khreshchatyk, the Kyiv Plan for 2020, and other planning issues. Speakers included various experts, most often architects and students who presented architectural renderings of what might be, as well as an assortment of the Kyiv activists described above, and quite often, representatives of the Kyiv government and construction/development companies. I have also been on the program as a speaker.

These events were normally quite well attended and lasted into the evening longer than planned, and commentary from the audience was generally animated, plentiful, and rich with difference of opinion. Like with the protests, many of the same faces came again and again, including a number of the individuals who have been helping me most with this book. Perhaps because they had learned by experience that they would be subjected to criticisms and anger by urban experts and members of the public, representatives from government and the building industry who were on the program often did not turn up or would leave the proceedings with an excuse about schedule conflicts after making their own presentations. One of my favorite moments at one of these events was when a speaker from the Kyiv government about traffic problems said that he had just returned from a conference in Moscow where he had heard new ideas about building roads and bridges to ease congestion and was ready to apply what he had learned to needs in Kyiv. He spoke in Russian. Immediately after he finished, a young person from the audience, about half the speaker’s age, commented in Ukrainian, making two brief points that delighted the room but sent the government representative packing: (1) “Since when has there been anything good for Kyiv coming from Moscow?” and (2) “Don’t you know what has been learned around the world that the only way to beat traffic congestion is to provide alternatives to motor vehicles, and that planning for more motor vehicles only always makes matters worse?”

72 Contract Square, Post Office Square, and European Square.
11.3 Save Old Kyiv

Among the NGOs that have been most active in Kyiv’s anti-development protests is an organization called Zberezhky Staryi Kyiv (Save Old Kyiv). The organization was established in September 2007 in response to a plan by builders to construct a high-rise building at a place called Peyzazhna Alleya (Landscape Lane), a protected green zone on a hill near the site of Desiatynna Church (Chapter 3) and other historical sites, and from there it branched into actions against illegal construction activity around the city. Arguably, it has since become the best-known and widest-reaching of several grassroots organizations in Kyiv that are concerned with local ecology, historical preservation, and citizens’ rights to urban space (Dutchak, 2009). I have seen Save Old Kyiv in action many times and know a number of its principals, and acknowledge that what I learned from this organization has influenced both the content and the tone of this book. The group’s logo, an image of a bulldozer with a red circle-slash atop it, summarizes quite effectively what the group is about, as do some of the text banners that often accompany the logo: “Save Old Kyiv: Join us in the streets and recoup your city” and “Are you still destroying Kyiv? Then we are your opposition.”

As spelled out in the group’s website (http://saveoldkyiv.org/), Save Old Kyiv is made up of ordinary people of various ages, of various professions, and with diverse interests. What they have in common, the “Who are we?” part of the website continues, is a sense of care about the city. The organization is nonpartisan politically, receives no funding from political parties, and as must be necessary to point out in a society where protesters are often paid for their time, its activists are not paid for their efforts. Moreover, in a society where Mafia-like tactics in business and politics are not unusual, the activities of Save Old Kyiv are not part of any blackmail scam against builders to provide them with reprieves from bad publicity or costly protests and delays. Citizens come out only because they support the aims of the organization: to stop the ruination of the city’s architectural fabric, monuments, and scenic landscapes; to stop the raiding of museums, galleries, theaters, publishing houses, children’s centers, bookstores, and other aspects of cultural life; and to stop assaults by developers against urban greenery, public squares, children’s playgrounds, and common spaces adjacent to residential buildings. Again according to the website, what Save Old Kyiv favors is renovation of old buildings whenever possible, allowing new construction when it accords with regulations and approved plans, the development of more parks and open spaces for the public, diversification of land uses in residential zones to provide more employment and recreational
opportunities, regulating access by automobiles to the city center and keeping them off sidewalks, and making the city more friendly for bicyclists. These are mostly green goals and accord with sustainable city principles.

The Save Old Kyiv website is worth a close look not only because it defines the group and announces coming events, but also because it reflects in its professional quality the high level of sophistication that grassroots organizing has attained in Kyiv. We see that Save Old Kyiv builds coalitions with other organizations that have similar goals. For example, there are hot links to the websites of Zabudovi.NET (a loose translation is Intrusive Buildings: No!); Forum Spaseniya Kiev (Russian: Forum for the Saving of Kyiv), whose banner shows an iconic photograph of Kyiv’s golden domes and the Dnipro River under the protection of a photoshopped image of the Archangel Michael; and Zelyonyi Front Kharkova (Russian: Green Front of Kharkiv). There are links as well to readings and discussion groups about community organization in general, the history of Kyiv, urban environmental topics, relevant law and bureaucracy requirements in Kyiv and Ukraine, and so forth. The website also publishes a “black list” (chorny spysok) of companies and organizations that are accused of irresponsible development in Kyiv, as well as of specific individuals. The former list has more than 30 names, while the number of individuals on the black roll is about two dozen. Clicking on company logos or on the photos of black-listed people opens pages with additional information.

The centerpiece of the website is a log of “hot button issues” (haryachi tochky) in Kyiv. There are 40 or so at this writing, and for each we can click on separate pages that provide location maps, background information and explications of issues, photographs, contact information for local activists who are most engaged with that particular battle, information about the developers who are said to be at fault, and running updates about what is newest and upcoming events. The center of that centerpiece is an impressive map of Kyiv with color-coding to define historically and ecologically protected zones of Kyiv and color-coded “pins” that mark the location of the 40-plus hot button issues and categorize them as to just how “hot” they are. Table 11.2 provides a selection from those that concern Save Old Kyiv at present.

Table 11.2  Examples of Save Old Kyiv Hot Button Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Billa supermarket</td>
<td>Trostyanetska</td>
<td>under construction</td>
<td>The site is in a residential zone on the Left Bank and was previously a park and playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Plaza Kiev</td>
<td>Khreshchatyk 5</td>
<td>planned</td>
<td>48-story, 160-meter-tall high-rise that will alter Khreshchatyk and mar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>iconic the view of Kyiv from the river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamond Hill</td>
<td>Mazepy 11^b</td>
<td>under construction</td>
<td>Elite residential tower that takes from parkland and mars iconic view of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kyiv (Chapter 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofitel</td>
<td>Kruhlouniversytetska 9</td>
<td>under construction</td>
<td>Trees and children’s playground removed for upscale hotel site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresco Sofia</td>
<td>Honchara 17-23</td>
<td>under construction</td>
<td>Elite residential building within St. Sophia historical zone; UNESCO is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>opposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhovtneva likarnya</td>
<td>Shovkovychna 39/1-a</td>
<td>canceled</td>
<td>17-story, 100-meter-long building proposed on a slope beside a medical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadyba Murashko</td>
<td>Mala Zhytomierska 12</td>
<td>planned</td>
<td>Threatened demolition of historic building; see “Oleksandr Glukhov’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Apartment” below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teatralna Metro Station</td>
<td>Bohdana Khmelnytskoho 7</td>
<td>completed</td>
<td>Museum of Kyiv history (see “Theater at Teatralna” in Chapter 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peyzazhna Alleya</td>
<td></td>
<td>canceled</td>
<td>Defeat of proposal to build a high-rise in a green zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’vivska Ploshcha</td>
<td>L’vivska Ploshcha 8-b</td>
<td>under construction</td>
<td>Shopping center being built in place of square and fountain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^a Russian-version spelling of Kyiv, as with advertisements for Diamond Hill (see Chapter 6).
^b Developer uses the preindependence name for the street, January Uprising Street, instead of Vulytsya Mazepy. (Source: http://saveoldkyiv.org.)

The activities of Save Old Kyiv are the subject of a reflective article in the sociological journal *Spilne* by Oksana Dutchak and Volodymyr Ishchenko (2010). The conflict over the proposal to build a high-rise building at Peyzazhna Alleya gets particular review, because the conflict was extra intense and was a landmark case in propelling Save Old Kyiv to prominence. The conflict was also significant because it resulted in a victory for citizens. Instead of an intrusive monster, the site was cleaned up and artists put in street sculpture, artsy benches, and a creatively designed playground for children, converting a once-neglected space into a favorite spot for Kyivans and a new entry in tour books for visitors. The site became a rallying point for Kyivans who had had enough of the city’s real estate development corruption, illegal construction projects, and raiders’ incursions onto parkland and historical landscapes. The winter of 2007-2008 saw numerous protest activities at Landscape Lane and demolition by protestors of protective
fences that builders had erected. This was followed almost immediately by the remaking of Peyzazhna Alleya by the grassroots into a new public space. The actions had an unmistakably anti-capitalist tone, with protestors flying a flag of Che Guevara and displaying a portrait of Karl Marx in a Zorro mask with the words het’kapitalizm (capitalism out) below. Thus, we see this protest as yet another example of conflict that can be framed in the context of Kyiv’s transition from socialist city to one where the market economy, accompanied by boundless corruption, holds sway (Figure 11.3).

11.4 The Republic of Hostyny Dvir

The most recent (2012-2013) hot spot for Save Old Kyiv and many other activists, including a fast-emerging new NGO called Pravo na Misto (The Right to the City), has been a place called Hostyny Dvir (roughly, The Welcome Courtyard or The Hosting Place) (Figure 11.4). Since early in the 19th century the building has served as a commercial center where craftsmen and traders from other cities could come to Kyiv and have a place to set up workshops or studios and to sell their wares. The structure is located

![Figure 11.3 A controversial new construction site. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kyiv Patriarchate, is building the new office building that is shown on the billboard in an historic part of the city, on the site of old buildings that had been taken down. The Jesus Christ with thorns placard reads, “Dear Lord, help us to save Kyiv from illegal construction.”]
in the heart of Podil, where it is a prominent local landmark for locals and visitors alike. At issue is that a development company has recently received approval from Kyiv City Council to reconstruct the building into a modern office building and shopping center. From the standpoint of local residents and Kyiv anti-development activists, this plan came out of nowhere and did not include input from the public. According to critics, approval by Kyiv government means nothing because that decision was made without transparency and the public was not consulted. The protestors want the construction to stop, at least until a decision about Hostynyi Dvir becomes a democratic decision, and undertook a bold new tactic for Kyiv activists – round-the-clock occupation of the site and simultaneous remaking of Hostynyi Dvir into a public, community space. The situation is current and continues to evolve (Butkevych, 2012; Zawada, 2013), although as we will see below, the protestors have been evicted and the occupation is now by the builders.

The background is this. First, Hostynyi Dvir is indeed in the very center of historic Podil (Chapter 6). It is near the Kontraktova Ploschcha Metro Station that serves Podil, and is surrounded on all four sides of its rectangular footprint by other major landmarks. Its immediate neighbor to the north, in the direction of the subway station, is Kontrakova Square and its landmark statue of Hryhoryi Skovoroda. To the south is a companion square that is centered by another landmark statue, that of Hetman Petro Sahaidachnyi

Figure 11.4   Kyivans encircling Hostynyi Dvir in a symbolic action to defend the building from developers (Photo courtesy of Viktor Kruk)
in heroic pose on horseback. The two squares were once one until the 1808 construction of Hostynyi Dvir divided them into two. To the east, in the direction of the Dnipro River, is the campus of the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy, with the main administration buildings and the oldest buildings where the school was founded being directly across the street. A set of stone steps on the side of Hostynyi Dvir opposite the university has been a place for students to sit and read or to socialize between classes. Directly across the street to the west, where Hostynyi Dvir faces the base of Andrew's Descent and the lofty Upper City, is the historic 12th-century Church of Our Lady Pirogoshcha that the Soviets had destroyed in 1935 and the post-Soviets rebuilt in 1998. The Fountain of Samson is also just across the street in this direction. It was built originally in 1748-1749 under the direction of architect and NaUKMA graduate Ivan Hryhorovych-Barskyj (1713-1785), a leading proponent of the Ukrainian baroque style, as an element in Kyiv's water distribution system, and was then destroyed in 1934 or 1935 by the Soviets for spite. The present structure, which like the first features a statue of Samson and the Lion, was reconstructed in 1981.

The building itself covers what is essentially a full city block. It has a sizable rectangular open space, the dvir or courtyard, in the center. This is the space that the protestors occupied. The dvir is invisible from the streets, has open sky above, and can be entered via gates that open toward NaUKMA in one direction and the Church of Our Lady of Pirogoshcha in the other. The building itself was designed in 1808 by Italian-Swiss architect Luigi Ruska (1762-1822), and features a classical style with thick Doric columns and covered porticos on all four sides, along both the exterior and interior. The site is sloped down toward the river, so the building is perched at an elevation above the surroundings in that direction, and the aforementioned stone steps are required to enter. At its peak around the end of the 19th and start of the 20th centuries, there were about 50 shops and studios in the structure. Ruska had planned two stories for Hostynyi Dvir, but initially only one was built. The second story that we see now was added in 1980-1982, at the same time as the Fountain of Samson was rebuilt, as part of a wider fix-up of Kyiv on the occasion on the city’s 1,500th anniversary. The history of the site, including details about architecture and the history of construction and reconstruction, the range of businesses and crafts that operated there, the tragedy of pogroms (e.g., in 1905) that were waged there against Jewish merchants, and the use of Hostynyi Dvir as backdrop for period movies, has been told engagingly and with illustrations in the periodical Istoriychna Pravda (Historical Truth) by the respected Kyiv historian Mykhailol Kalnytskyi (2012).
Hostynyi Dvir is in much worn condition. Until recently, it housed a commercial bank, as well as the V. H. Zabolotnyi Government Library of Architecture and Construction, a popular cosmetics and beauty store, and one or two cafés. There were some other businesses and offices, too. The structure had been allowed to deteriorate, probably in preparation for redevelopment, and the courtyard was mostly closed to the public and was becoming a dumping place for trash and abandoned vehicles. The first official sign that change was coming was on August 15, 2011, when the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, in decree No. 1380, unilaterally removed the structure from the list of historically registered landmarks. This was followed by a handover by the Kyiv government to a well-connected company with the ironic-seeming name Ukrestavratsiya (Ukraine Restoration) of rights to remake the building into a modern office and shopping center. Adding to the irony is that “Ukraine Restoration” is 91 percent owned by a company registered in Cyprus, Afridreko Holdings, Ltd. The deal was announced on May 26, 2012, but the terms were not disclosed. Most business in the complex closed about August 15, 2011, but the bank and the library held on for some time afterwards until the winter of 2012-2013. The courtyard was trashed with broken furniture, display cases, advertising posters, and other equipment from departing tenants.

The protests began as soon as the announcement was made to remove the building’s historical status. Not only were activists upset about the lack of democracy, they also feared the possible or likely loss of historical architecture in the center of Podil. If Hostynyi Dvir can be taken, what about all the other structures nearby that also make up the character of this historic neighborhood? Thus, on the same day that the unhappy May 26th announcement was made, someone broke the locks to the courtyard, and members of Save Old Kyiv and Right to the City, as well as other groups and individuals, came together in Hostynyi Dvir to say no. It was Kyiv Day that day, an official city holiday that is held annually near the end of May, and that is marked by concerts and fireworks at Maidan Nezalezhnosti. Here, the holiday became an “alternative” Kyiv Day gathering. There was music and speechifying, and much conversation, followed by a decision to stay put to protect the site. They began calling it the Hostynyi Dvir Republic, founded on May 26, 2012. A core group of activists took turns, several at a time, living and sleeping under the colonnade in the interior of Hostynyi Dvir, while during the day, they and others worked at cleaning up the mess. They collected funds contributed by supporters into a jar in the middle of the occupied site for the safe disposal of the debris, and began their own project of landscape architecture and planting in the open space. They also initiated
conversion of some interior space, namely the former site of a popular café, into an art gallery. For a time, it housed a display of photographs from Save Old Kyiv activities and photographs from the history of Podil.

Supporters of the occupation brought in tools and other equipment to aid with the restoration. A portable toilet was brought in and a jar was placed outside to collect funds for its maintenance. Some basic rules and a list of daily chores that need to get done were posted on a wall under the colonnade. Other supporters brought food for the sleepers and workers. In order to build public support for the cause, there was a rich array of programming every day (more so during good weather months), to bring people in. Large signs at the one open gate, the one across from the Church of Our Lady Pirogoshcha, announced that the courtyard was open and that the public is welcome. Another sign listed a schedule of events. In addition to the burgeoning art gallery, there were speakers about Kyiv history and architecture, musicians, lessons in English, lessons in Ukrainian (mostly for Russian speakers), concerts, nighttime film screenings against a stretched-out white sheet, picnics, and games for children, among other events. Protestors used their contacts in the media to inform the public about the cause and build support, as in the nicely illustrated newspaper article about the many public programming events that had taken place recently in Hostynyi Dvir by Maria Lebedeva (2012). In December 2012, when it looked like developers were set to bring in heavy equipment and a contingent of police turned up, the protestors responded with a strong man in a high place: Vitalyi Klitschko, world heavyweight boxing champion, leader of the political party Udar and a parliamentarian in the Verkhovna Rada, turned up with television cameras in tow and diverted what was apparently going to be an assault by tear gas.

We do not know what the future holds for Hostynyi Dvir. The republic grew stronger every day, but it was known all along that it could be crushed at any time and that reconstruction would follow. In a way, it would not be such a huge change to have an office and retail center in the center of Podil, because that is what Hostynyi Dvir has been all along. It might also help to have the architecture library in a different location, because Hostynyi Dvir is prime real estate with very high pedestrian traffic outside, almost none of which ever sets foot in the library. The defenders of Kyiv who occupy the Republic of Hostynyi Dvir made it clear that they did not oppose an office and shopping center at the site, nor renewal of the worn-out facility. What they want is for the people to decide what the site should be as opposed to a closed-door decision without citizen participation, and assurances that the renewed structure will preserve the historic architecture. They also
want respect for the library, citing the famous eviction of the Museum of the History of the City of Kyiv (Chapter 2) as an example of how cultural institutions get trampled in Kyiv’s aggressive land development process. There is an additional fear among activists that the two-story exterior of Hostynyi Dvir might remain intact along with its columns, colonnades, and stairs, but that the open space in the center will become the basis for construction of a steel-and-glass skyscraper. Such a structure would surely mess up the heart of an historic district, even if its mirror effects magically multiply the numbers of historic buildings in Podil. Such tricks have been effected by developers elsewhere in Kyiv and beyond, but the determined occupiers of Hostynyi Dvir are wise to them.

We now know more. While protesters were asleep during the night of February 8-9, 2013, a fire broke out on the second floor. It consumed a good portion of the roof and a number of rooms. The activists called the fire department but the response was slow, suspiciously so they said, and the firefighters seemed to work slowly once they arrived. There are reports that they did not have all the usual equipment with them when they respond to a fire. The cause of the blaze has not been determined, and is said by activists to be extremely suspicious. The occupation, however, did not cease, and activists continued to live in the portico of the courtyard despite the cold, the wet, and the smell of a fire-damaged building. Then, just ten days later, a large force of strong young men dressed in black broke through the gates, roughed up the occupants, and turned them over to police for arrest. To put it plainly, the raiders had come and the protesters were gone. So were their belongings, the speaker system, film projector, the works in the art gallery, and tools. Everything was gone and nothing was returned. The gates were locked anew, and a cordon of police was put in place to prevent reoccupation. Soon, the iconic high green wooden fence that says “land use transition in progress” was erected around the site. Construction equipment and construction workers arrived and, at this writing, have been chipping away at the stucco inside and out to expose the original brick. A very high crane is within the enclosure and is poised for big work. The protestors did what they could, but the builders succeeded in getting a court injunction against them that prohibits protest activities in the area. So, the Republic of Hostynyi Dvir is now in exile. Protests and public programming continue elsewhere, but there are also guerrilla strikes in the night: graffiti on the green fence, graffiti in the neighborhood nearby, and graffiti on an immobilized old truck that was left mysteriously near one of the gates. On May 25, Ihor Lutsenko (Save Old Kyiv) and a companion climbed to the top of the tall crane with a protest sign and were then arrested as they came
down. My friends say that the battle for Hostyny Dvir is not over, but what I see is a lot of construction going on behind a protected barricade. The fight seems to depend on the courts now and friends in high places.

11.5 Oleksandr Glukhov's Apartment

Oleksandr Glukhov lives at 12-A Mala Zhytomyrska Street, less than a hundred meters from the northern rim of Independence Square (Figure 11.5). That puts him squarely within the once-walled old city, in an historic district with potential historic ambiance. His building is one of those impressive sugar-era structures of Kyiv, a thick-walled, once-ornate five-story apartment building that was built in 1909. The structure was badly damaged in World War II but was handsomely refurbished afterwards, and then for nearly a half-century enjoyed a second life as a fine apartment address in a prized central location for lucky Soviet citizens. But now there are new owners of the land and 12-A Mala Zhytomyrska is endangered, as its site has been targeted for redevelopment. If the new owners, a company called Pantheon Investments whose true principals are not easily identified, succeed in emptying the structure of residents, they will erect something new, probably in conjunction with the site of the building behind, which has been rotting in ruins since it was consumed a few years back in an unexplained fire, and the structure next door, 14-A Mala Zhytomyrska, another ruin where only the façade remains standing. Put together, the three sites would make for an ideal location for a prominent bank or office tower, or for a new hotel. Indeed, it seems that Pantheon Investments has bought the land under not just 12-A and 12-B Mala Zhytomyrska and 14-A, but also at 14-B (the building behind) and on Mykhaylivska Street that borders these properties. 14-A is noteworthy in history as the former residence and studio of Oleksandr Oleksandrovych Murashko (1875-1919), a distinguished Ukrainian painter at the turn of the 20th century. The development project could potentially be truly huge. But 12-A Mala Zhytomyrska is an historically certified structure, and tearing it down would be in violation of historical preservation law.

Glukhov is in his 50s and is a mathematics professor at one of Kyiv's well-known universities. He writes his name Glukhov instead of the Ukrainian Hluhov or Hlukhiv, because his name was always spelled the Russian way when he was growing up. In addition to his technical subject, he knows the law and the rights of citizens under the law, and understands the value of a carefully chosen fight for principle. He and his wife Tatiana are the last two residents of 12-A Mala Zhytomyrska Street. They have lived in
their unit on the second floor since 1992, and have indisputable proof of ownership. They have been to court and have won in proceedings against Pantheon Investments, but still the “owners of the land” persist and want the Glukhovs out. The inhabitants of the seven other units in the building took buyouts and left, or simply succumbed to harassment, and their apartments have been sealed with iron bars and iron doors to keep out squatters, but Oleksandr and Tatiana Glukhov have resisted the pressures and stay put. They could be more comfortable elsewhere, but for them the struggle is not just about their rights to the apartment they own, but also to save a fine old building from destruction. Indeed, their quest is to save historic Kyiv. They avoid eviction by not leaving the apartment untended. In their fight, they have had to endure periodic shutoffs of water, light, and gas, and threats from armed security personnel. Recently, Pantheon Investments has begun stationing guards at the entrance to the building 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to keep watch on the Glukhovs’ comings and goings, on their adult daughter who tends the place when both parents are out, and on visitors such as myself. It’s a standoff situation.

I have used the Glukhovs’ correct names and true address with permission. They have made their fight public and are quite well known in
“Save Old Kyiv” circles, so there is no violation of privacy involved. Indeed, they broadcast their struggle as widely as they can by periodically staging licensed protests with information signs in front of City Hall, and with a sheet-sized banner that hangs from the balcony of their apartment. In bold font it calls Kyiany! and then in smaller letters below reads Ne damo zruynuvaty budynok pam’iatku arhitektury! Vul. Mala Zhytomyrska 12-A (Kyivans! Do not allow the destruction of this architectural treasure building! 12-A Mala Zhytomyrska St.). Ironically, the balcony itself is crumbling and looks about to fall, while much of the ornate stone artwork that once graced the façade around the sign has already fallen or been lopped off. Just to the right of the sign, for instance, is a window-sized frieze of an eagle: its wings and feathers are intact, as are both claws, but the head is simply gone. At street level below the sign, two sheets of standard-sized A4 paper hang on the door to the building, just where the guards work. One is a photocopy of the 1982 designation of 12-A as an historical property, and the other a photocopy of the Ukrainian law that makes it illegal to destroy such structures. There had once been an official brass marker on the front of the building that had identified the building as historically certified, but that disappeared sometime in the mid-1990s (it was probably taken by “hooligans,” according to Glukhov). Passersby see the big sign above the balcony and then often pause to read the two A4 notices. I was doing just that and taking photos when Glukhov came out of his apartment and introduced himself. He was in a hurry, so he invited me to accompany him to City Hall a few blocks away to join his protest and hear the details. I went, of course, and wound up passing out leaflets for him. That started a friendship and opened doors for me to understanding other sites in Kyiv where monsters invade.

11.6 The Ordeal of Oleksandr Hudyma

Let us meet still another Oleksandr, one of several in this book, a good citizen who led protests against illegal evictions of neighbors, the demolition of their perfectly good apartment buildings, and the construction on the site of luxury housing for the rich. All this took place on Lesya Ukrainka Boulevard near where another of our Oleksandrs, Oleksandr Borysovych, had railed against Bentleys and oversized condominiums for government officials. The present Oleksandr is Oleksander Hudyma, a pensioner in his 60s, a former elected member of the Verkhovna Rada, and a founder of an activist group in his neighborhood. He introduced himself to me on May
14, 2011, in front of the Verkhovna Rada at a very angry “Day of Anger” rally against parliamentary shenanigans and the Yanukovych government and invited me to witness the continuation of his trial five days later in Pechersk District Court. He had been charged with vandalism to the private property of the land developer at 9 Lesya Ukrainka Boulevard and with physical assault against the security guard on the site, and thought that both his cause and my book would benefit from my presence. It was an eye-opener!

On the day I attended, the witness against Hudyma was the arresting police officer. The judge began by asking him to recount what happened on the day in question. He replied that he did not remember because the events had taken place months before. She prodded him again and again, and he always replied the same. Then, in exasperation, she read aloud the report that he had signed that specified the accusations of vandalism to the fence surrounding the construction site and Hudyma’s beating of the security guard. The report was long and she read rapidly, but still it took 10-12 minutes to get through it. I remember that the report was well-structured, and that it employed complex sentences and sophisticated vocabulary. I noted that because after I heard the “author” speak in microsentences and one-word utterances, I knew that he could not have written the report. The security guard who was allegedly assaulted was in the room and was about half Hudyma’s age and weighed considerably more. The judge asked if the report that she read was accurate and the policeman replied that yes, it must be because he had signed it. She then asked him questions about details that she had just read:

Judge: “Exactly where on the premises was the guard when the accused beat him?”
Witness: “On the other side of the fence.”
Judge: “How did the accused get to the guard?”
Witness: “He climbed the fence.”
Judge: “Did you climb the fence, too?”
Witness: “No.”
Judge: “Did you see Mr. Hudyma beat ‘Mr. Milov’ with your own eyes?”
Witness: “Yes. It says that in the report.”
Judge: “Then how did you see that Mr. Hudyma beat Mr. Milov if you did not climb the fence?”
Witness: “I don’t know.”
After yet another scolding of the witness for having a faulty memory and providing inconsistent testimony, the judge exclaimed to the courtroom in general: “If such idiots represent our police, then God help Ukraine. Who hired this guy anyway?” The back and forth then continued:

**Witness:** “I was wrong. He did not climb the fence. He tore it down. That’s how I could see him beating Milov.

**Judge:** “He tore the fence down?”

**Witness:** “Yes.”

**Judge:** “Are you sure? With what? How did he tear the fence down?”

**Witness:** “With his bare hands.”

**Judge:** “He tore the fence down with his bare hands? What was it made of?”

**Witness:** “Iron.”

There is audible laughter among Hudyma’s supporters, more than before, and a look of panic on the part of the prosecuting attorney, a dashing young man who looks to be on the rise professionally in his crisp beige suit. For some time he had been nervously fingering his pen, his mobile phone in its case, and all the papers within reach on his table directly across from the defense. At a key point, he looked quizically at the bench where representatives of the development company were also shrugging their shoulders. Meanwhile, the judge was red-faced with anger, perhaps because spectators were laughing, but certainly also because the witness was, indeed, an idiot. I couldn’t see his face because he stood facing the judge with his back to the courtroom. When he looked over his shoulder to make eye contact with other police officers who had also been called to testify, the judge screamed at him to look straight ahead. At one point, Oleksandr Hudyma looked directly at me to make sure that I was taking it all in; he seemed pleased that I was. Nearly three months after that amazing day, the trial was still proceeding, moving at a glacial pace perhaps because Hudyma can’t be convicted on the evidence, but also because he can’t be allowed to win vis-à-vis the development company. I thought that the judge seemed like a reasonable person who would make a reasonable ruling, but perhaps she was caught in something outside the reach of her courtroom. But then, what do I know? I was a just one-day spectator. What I know for sure is that I don’t want to be arrested in Ukraine. I imagined that charges were trumped up against Hudyma because he and his protestors were getting in the way of an expensive construction project, and that a less-than-bright
police officer had signed his name to an arrest warrant that he had little or nothing to do with. Its true authors probably never imagined that their little pawn would be called to testify. Pity the police officer, too, an expendable entity in an aggressively capitalist Kyiv.73

11.7 The Last Farmstead in Pozniaky

Pozniaky was a farmers’ and boyars’ village south of Kyiv on the Left Bank at least as far back as 1571, its first known mention. As Kyiv grew near the end of the Soviet period, the rustic aspects all but disappeared, as did those of neighboring villages, and vast tracts of new high-rise residential towers were built on the land. Because the water table was high and conditions were often mucky, enormous quantities of sand were piped from the Dniepro to raise the elevation of the surroundings by several meters. For a time, nothing grew, not even the new buildings, and the Left Bank looked like a flat Sahara. But then in the late 1980s, tall buildings began to rise from the sand, becoming apartment homes for displaced farmers, as well as for suburbanizing Kyivans and urbanizing Ukrainians. The Left Bank in general became a zone of generic Soviet mikroraiions, each with an allocation of just so many residential high-rises, so many floors per building, so many units per floor, and so many barely sufficient square meters per unit, all as if specified in a master manual. The Pivdennyi Mist (Southern Bridge) was constructed across the Dniepro in 1983-1990 and made these expanses much more accessible to Kyiv’s core, and then in 1993 the area became even closer to the center when the Green Line of the subway was extended to Pozniaky and beyond. Pozniaky became one of the stops on the Metro, and the road from the bridge became a busy highway, so now in post-Soviet times some part of the area is taken up by shopping malls and other commerce, strips of automobile dealerships and fast-food restaurants, and growing forests of billboards that promote postsocialist consumption.

Amid this suburban scene is the last farmstead in Pozniaky (Figure 11.6). It is about 10 to 15 minutes’ walk north west of the Pozniaky Metro Station near what was put through as Vulytsya Anny Akhmatovoi (Anna Akhmatova Street), named after the brilliant modernist Russian poet. The tract stands as a lone holdout from the past against a tide of suburban

73 For an account of the charges against Hudyma and other aspects of the proceedings in Ukrainian, see Gnap (2010). The dialogue presented here is my translation of what was said in Ukrainian at the trial as reconstructed from notes that I took while the speakers were speaking.
development. I have visited the site several times, always marveling at the contrast between this unusual small space (about the size of a football field) that the Yurchenko family still farms, and the vast scale of the tall buildings and thousands and thousands of citified new neighbors that surround it. It is the topography that is most striking, because the Yurchenko farmstead is, quite literally, in a hole. It sits five or so meters lower in elevation than the immediate surroundings because urban Pozniaky is built on thick layers of recently imported sand. When you approach the site from across the flat surroundings, the first thing you see is tree tops poking from below. The environment of the new neighborhood on sand is sterile, supporting little greenery except for some scrawny new trees and worthless patches of weeds, while the last farmstead in Pozniaky is on dark and mucky earth, and is thick with greenery and alive with wildflowers, roses, wildlife, and farm animals. There are birds and bees, as well as chickens, a dozen or more pigs, and several goats. In addition to the main residence, which is a typical old village farm house, there is another house as well and a mix of rustic outbuildings, including an outhouse, a greenhouse, a shelter for livestock, a workshop, and a sauna. Mothers from the city neighborhood bring their young children to the edge of the precipice to look down at the

Figure 11.6 The last farmstead in Pozniaky
wonders in the hole below, as do grandmothers and grandfathers with the grandchildren they look after. A flag of Ukraine rises on a mast from the roof of the Yurchenko house; like the tree tops, it just barely pokes above the base elevation of the surrounding neighborhood.

There are lessons to be seen everywhere. As we walk through urban Pozniaky to reach the Yurchenko property, we see that new owners of the now-privatized apartments in the area have been remodeling what the Soviets had built. Not only are there ads posted everywhere by contractors who want to furnish them with new windows or flooring, or with updates to kitchens and baths, there are also quite a few stores along the way that specialize in sales of materials for home improvement. But instead of getting a positive feeling from the upgrading, we note also that many of the weed-infested spaces between buildings are where thoughtless homeowners and their contractors have dumped old windows, toilets and other construction waste. The lesson is about an atomized society in the city, where people live in their own private spaces behind locked doors high up in tall buildings, and relate not at all to their surroundings. Even the Yurchenko property has been littered, as contractors have dumped waste onto the corners of their property from the edges of the urban precipice. As is normal for farmsteads, the Yurchenko property has a fence around it and a gate; what is unusual though is that the fence is not the plank fence that one sees in the countryside, but is one of old doors from the old homes of their former neighbors in Pozniaky village. In contrast to their citified neighbors, the Yurchenko household is tied to the land, as Ukrainians were throughout history, and remembers the past. Perhaps, too, the old doors are memories of neighbors who have departed.

One of my former colleagues at the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Oleksiy Radynski, has done some research on this particular place, and has reported that the Yurchenko family has experienced many pressures over the years to give up and get out. Builders would like to fill in their hole and put up new structures, but the Yurchenkos seem to be asking for a sum for their property that builders are not accustomed to paying. Their goal, according to Radynski, is not to stay put as farmers, but to get for their land the kind of compensation that accords with the levels of profits that the urban sector will realize once they are gone. That would mean that this Ukrainian family would exchange life on the land for a realistic nest egg to start life in the city. By contrast, too many other Ukrainians left the land poor and stayed poor after moving to the city. In the meantime, the Yurchenko farmstead has housed the homeless and other outcasts from the city in exchange for labor on the farm, and for a time until
they were deported, sheltered some undocumented immigrants to Ukraine from Georgia (Radynski, 2010, pp. 86-87). The essential story of this property is one of holding on to one’s right to the city in the face of powerful forces of urbanization and, simultaneously, demanding a fair share of the financial benefit that comes to those engaged in transformation of a socialist city to one based on a market economy.