

Green and smart city: citizens, developers and authorities power balance

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1. Misbalance of citizens and developers rights in territories development

Different groups of citizens have different opportunities to fulfil their preferences and interests in the area of living. In Russian cities, there is a problem in huge misbalance of power and interests between citizens, developers and authorities.

There is no transparent procedure for fair and honest discussion between citizens and developers on what profit developers are about to get from the project, what would be the negative consequences for citizens and what compensation they will be provided with. Regulations of interaction between citizens, local authorities and developers should be transparent, so that developers would be presented with the consolidated views and interests of the city and community before they start investing in the project.

For example, in Moscow, the majority of citizens are denied to have an opportunity to reveal their views towards the city environment and to actively participate in forming the comfortable city space for living. Citizens are not able to protect their environment as a historical or ecological value. As a result, their interests towards city development weaken and atrophy. Constructive dialog is replaced by protests, which citizens organize to show their indignation because of public spaces - pedestrian, green, recreational - are diminishing and deformed. Immense pressure on the territory, produced by pedestrians and traffic, aggressive street trade and advertising, leads to public activity penetration to each and every "pore" of the city - it crawls to the backyards, violates the privacy of residential areas, worsens the ecology.

2. Public spaces dystrophy and citizens apathy

For the last decades in Russia, we see the tendency of public spaces dystrophy, which is caused by two major factors.

Firstly, there is a growing indifference and disgust to anything, which does not represent anybody's private property. Few are eager to invest their money, time and effort to develop and improve the public territories and spaces.

Secondly, public spaces dystrophy is caused by major drawbacks in city development management. Improvement in real estate and housing does not directly mean a major qualitative shift in public environment improvement yet. This shift could be accomplished by public spaces construction and development.

However, ecology policies of city authorities often contradict with interests of citizens. In Russian cities, greenery is protected, first of all, from citizens. From ecologists and authorities point of view, greenery should be kept "under hood": citizens would better admire it from a distance, know that there are some parks and conservations in the city and, sometimes, only when permitted, visit them to slowly stroll by the walk paths, enjoy and leave, not entering the lawns.

Meanwhile, interests of citizens are completely opposite: they prefer to actively use the parks and city landscapes. They would like to keep the constant contact with the greenery and be surrounded by the trees and flowers in the city. It is crucial to properly regulate the greenery plantations such as public gardens, parks and city forests. Urban development is the most problematic part of the city environment, which is proved by results of numerous surveys held in several cities of Russia. However, the problem here is clear - it is both lack of local authorities resources and citizens infantilism.

3. Ecological view: saving and wasting

Saving energy, water and other types of natural resources in big cities is one of the key factors of their functioning. Not only because lack of resources, but also because of the fact that balanced development requires rational and economical infrastructure. Balancing the interests of the present and the future generations is a nontrivial task. We need a new concept of ecological city development based on smart technologies, shifting the city development towards making city environment more diverse, making more ecology-conscious decisions and diminishing costs of infrastructure functioning.