

## **Urban Policy in Russia**

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Russia is expressing high level of urbanization. More than 73% of population live in cities. There are 1097 cities of different sizes. 13 cities has the population of over one million inhabitants. Cities play an important role in the economic, political and cultural life of the country. But at the same time most of the problems are concentrated in cities. In spite of city differences in size, location, economic functions and other parameters, many of urban problems have common roots.

Urban policy is implemented to help cities to cope with different problems; to raise their competitiveness and prosperity; to enforce their roles as centers of economic, social and cultural life; to provide citizens with high quality of life. But in spite of broad usage of this notion, still there is some uncertainty in terms of meaning and paradigm.

We interpret urban policy as a purposeful, institutionally shaped activity of all level of government and other internal and external actors, which is focused on urban problem solution and urban development. The economic changes within the city are determined partly by external forces which are beyond the parties influence on the city itself, and partly by decisions and actions that can be taken by these parties.

Different levels of government often have different objectives to implement urban policy. Urban policy at the national and regional levels often directs towards resources distribution between different types of cities, an at building minimum standards of living in all settlements. But at the same time the national and regional urban policy could focus on creating individual growth centers in the country or in the region or on

solving the problems of a particular settlement. Urban policy which is carried out by local authorities is often called “urban management”.

But the list of the urban policy actors has to be extended. For example, city unions and associations can have impact on urban policy in Russia.

Urban policy may be reactive or proactive. Reactive urban policy just responds to arising urban problems and some trends of urban development. Proactive urban policy tries to foresee urban problems and to prevent different crisis situations in cities. An effective urban policy should not only be based on cities needs and problems, but should also reinforce their competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Urban policy can also be divided into explicit and implicit. The explicit urban policy is a declared policy which is implemented by particular government or non-government structures within the framework of some officially approved documents. The implicit urban policy is a contradicting result of all other politics (housing, transportation, social etc.).

Analysis of the urban policy development and implementation on the extent (role) of the different actors allows to construct a Russian city typology. The types differ with regards to various kinds of relations between the actors; their involvement in the urban policy development and implementation.

We try to estimate the level of the urban policy explicitness, carried out by different actors, using the legal documents, different programs and activity in the sphere of urban policy.

There are several criteria for considering the level of the urban policy explicitness:

- clarity of aims and tasks (for example, to be presented in the different documents, programs and conceptions);
- presence of the urban policy mechanisms;
- availability of different resources for the declared aims and tasks;

- presence of particular organizations, divisions or structures which implement urban policy (for example ministry, department committee).

This classification of the city types is based on our own interviews with the mayors, deputies and executives of the regional and local authorities as well as on the analytical survey “Urban Management in Modern Russia”, carried out by the Urban Economics Institute (Moscow) in 2004.

Here is a brief characteristic of each of six types of Russian cities, build on the urban policy shape and “architecture”.

**Type 1. Federal-oriented policy.** All types of actors are present, but the federal government is a key player. This type can apply to Moscow and Saint-Petersburg because of their status as entities within the Russian Federation. Federal and regional governments take key decisions about these cities’ development, approve long-term development plans and strategies. The municipal government plays a minor role, carrying out day-to-day tasks (garbage collections, water and sewage providing etc.). We could also place Sochi in this group due to the Federal strategy to create the 2014 Olympic game city.

The federal program “Sochi Development as a Mountain-climate Health Resort (2006 - 2014)” was approved by the Federal government. The overall amount of financing is 313,887 billion rubles (12.555 billion dollars), including 185,822 billion rubles from the federal budget (about 60% of the total)<sup>1</sup>. “Sochi 2014 and the entire nation are committed to bringing the visionary and realistic plan for the 2014 Olympic Winter Games to life and delivering once-in-a-lifetime Games to the Olympic Movement<sup>2</sup>”.

**Type 2. Balanced type.** Main types of actors are involved in the urban policy development and implementation. Most large Russian cities are of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://fcp.vpk.ru/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://sochi2014.com/>

this type (Yekaterinburg, Perm, Nizhniy Novgorod, Samara and others). Presence of the many strong stakeholders in these cities doesn't allow them to occupy the leading role in the urban policy. Undoubtedly there is a specific balance of economic and political power in each city, but it is still a balance.

**Type 3. Regional government oriented policy.** The cities in Republics, which are entities of the Russian Federation belong to this type. In republics the organization of local government and self-government is strongly controlled by the regional government. For example, the head of the local government has to be appointed by the regional government in Ufa (Republic of Bashkortostan) and some other Russian republics. We also include in this group small and medium-size cities with declining economy, which could survive only with financial help from the regional budget (regional subsidies and subventions). Due to lack of their own resources the local government is absolutely (in economic and political sense) dependant on the regional government decisions. The local community is passive or degrading. The urban policy of the regional government often exploits budget and programming tools to redistribute regional resources.

**Type 4. Corporate players oriented policy.** This type has formed in small and medium-size cities which growing economy is based on metallurgical or mining industries. The main corporate actor often becomes a leader of the urban policy. Sometimes expenses from corporative funds exceed the city budget expenses on social needs. In the majority of such cities the city Duma (legislative authority) often consists of representatives of corporate business/

**Type 5. National interests oriented type with strong local community.** The federal authority implements the urban policy in the cities, which are the objects of the state interests. The difference from type 1(**Federal-oriented policy**) is presence of a strong local leader and active

local community. Closed cities could be an example of this type. The social structure of the population is characterized by high level of education that leads to creating a particular type of local community that actively participates in the urban life. But the every-day life in such cities fully depends on the federal decision, even the city budget has to be approved by the federal authorities.

**Type 6. Local government and local community oriented policy.**

These cities are the leaders of the urban policy, generators of the best practice in this sphere. Presence of the strong charismatic leader makes these cities distinctive incubators of the ideas and management tools. Very often these cities don't have economic and resource potential, but induces active search of external resources for economic development, creation of the strategy and marketing. These cities are the active grant seekers (both national and international). The process of the local community involvement in urban management is developing very slowly in Russian cities. It is estimated that only 10-15% of Yekaterinburg citizens express regular interests in the problems of city development or would like to participate in designing and implementing programs and projects. At the same time local authorities don't have enough experience and desire to co-operate with population.

During a meeting of the Public Council affiliated with the Ministry of Regional Development in 2007 it was emphasized that the local authorities keep staying "closed", or unapproachable, for the citizens who don't have free access to information; the process of decision making is not transparent<sup>4</sup> the procedure of population participation in the urban planning process is very formal<sup>3</sup>.

The new Federal Act "On common principals of local self-government organization" (#131) is changing the situation due to an increase in the number of municipalities and a decrease their own

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.minregion.ru/>

potential. The role of the Federal and regional players could be even raised in the urban policy.

The Russian urban policy is characterized by the following features.

1. Unlike in the EU and the USA, in Russia urban policy is rather unformed on the federal level. If in the EU urban issues are moving up to the European policy agenda through the Structural Funds, the national idea of urban policy in Russia is still unknown. The federal urban policy is mostly implicit and it is a sum (and very often a contradictory one) of the housing, transportation, environment, social and other policies. Objectives and targets of urban policy have changed. If one of the targets in the middle 1990ies was small and medium-size cities (several federal programs were implemented), today the focus is on creating cores of economic growth. Firstly, the transport strategy of the Russian Federation includes creation of 8 international transport hubs in such cities as Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Krasnoyarsk, Krasnodar, Novosibirsk, Samara and Habarovsk. Secondly, the Russian Ministry of Regional Development considers an idea to consolidate 14 of the Russian cities by merging them with surroundings settlements. The first step to "metropolisation" of Russian cities is co-ordination of the strategic plans of the nearby territories. As a result, it might be very complicated to estimate the effectiveness of the implicit Federal urban policy.

2. The most important legal document regulating urban development is the Town-Planning Code, which was introduced in 2004. This document generates some principal changes in the procedure of town-planning regulation. For example, all pieces of land must be distributed only through auctions. Moreover all documentations must be discussed during the public hearing. And finally, it is absolutely necessary to have the package of territorial planning documents.

3. If urban policy in the USA always was connected with racial problems, in Russia these problems are underestimated. But today

many Russian cities are faced with migration flows which form isolated groups in the city space. This space localization could become a factor of instability. This sphere of the urban policy will be the agenda of the nearest future.

4. The shift from the Soviet tools of urban policy to the market-oriented ones is almost accomplished, but sometimes methods of American or European urban policy is transformed completely in the Russian reality.