



## ORIGINAL PAPER



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# A Cooperative City. A Dream Come True

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## ABSTRACT

The article explores the process of creating a large cooperative housing complex in a district of New York. It highlights the unique circumstances that made the cooperative City project possible in the United States. The article also examines the efforts of European countries to foster urban residents' involvement in urban development. It provides examples of innovative solutions implemented by the population of various European cities. The article delves into the Russian experience of utilizing public initiatives to enhance urban development and improve the quality of life. It emphasizes that the promotion of cooperation in urban life is supported by both governmental authorities and individual citizens and local communities. The article highlights a new phase in this process – changes in urban planning, with the transition from general to master plans becoming part of federal policy.

**Keywords:** cooperative city; initiative from below; transport infrastructure; communal infrastructure; territorial public self-government; housing cooperative; general plan; master plan

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**T**he idea of a cooperative city is quite simple. If you can make a cooperative single house, then why not make a cooperative residential complex, a micro-district, a city district, or even transform them in an entire town into a cooperative town? Interestingly, initially the idea of a cooperative city was put forward by P.A. Kropotkin, almost a century before the first experimental urban area in the United States.

## THE FIRST CO-OP CITY

The Bronx was a US pioneer in this endeavor. This northeastern borough, which makes part of New York City, is one of the largest cooperative city (or co-op city) in the world: in 2010, nearly 44.000 inhabitants lived there.

In 1965, plans were announced for the development of housing on the site of landfill, marshland and swamps. Construction was started in 1966 and completed in 1973. It was associated with many corruption scandals, repairs and reconstructions, some of which are still ongoing. To implement the project the cooperative hired the management of

RiverBay Corporation. This non-profit entity with over 1.000-strong staff provided services at cost, however, with no markup.

The idea to create a cooperative city belonged to a Russian immigrant Abraham E. Kazan, who managed to solve the problem of improving living conditions for workers in garment factories of New York City. His Bronx project was supported by the US government. The chief architect was also an immigrant from Russia, Herman Jessor, who came to the United States as a teenager. Perhaps, this is why many Russians compare such American cooperative city with the Moscow district of Strogino.

The first members of this first US cooperative were mainly immigrants from Italy and Ireland. Now this is home for 20% white Americans, 25% Hispanics, and 55% Afro-Americans. Despite this composition, the Bronx co-op city is not like slums or poor areas at all. This has become a new US reality due to some of the following Bronx regulations.

The minimum number of rooms in each apartment is three, the maximum is six. Those who apply for cooperative membership will agree to

meet a special commission, who visits the family to check some aspects including the credit rating within or above the established standard and no criminal record of conviction in the restriction list of the cooperative.

School-age children are required to attend school. When the application is approved, such family is included in the waiting list. However, this expectation may last for more than one year.

It is impossible to buy an apartment in the Bronx: the cooperative provides only the right to rent housing. Anyway, one needs to make a down-payment upfront of at least 13500 USD, and then from 600 to 1200 USD each month to live in this apartment. If residents move to another place, the down-payment is reimbursed to them.

In addition to the management company, the cooperative city has its own public structure with such utilities as a boiler rooms, electrical power substations, a fire department and a centralized air conditioning system. Besides, the co-op has its own security service staff of guards, patrolmen, detectives and first aid specialists. Two weekly newspapers are published for the readers.

Residential co-op buildings occupy only its 20 per cent of the territory within New York City, the rest of space make lawns, trees and bushes, sports or playgrounds, as well as numerous pedestrian paths. There are separate buildings erected specially for citizens aged over 60, so that over 8.000 senior citizens live there.

Half a century has passed since the settlement of this co-op city, which is quite enough to consider this project seriously. Nevertheless, such initiatives have not become widespread, neither in the United States, nor in other countries of the world. Why did this happen?

In my opinion, the main reasons were that this first venture of the Bronx co-op city in was built from scratch, according to a pre-developed project, and a unique situation: empty landfills, marshland, the need for inexpensive (though not the cheapest) housing, the support from the state authorities and the energy of two talented enthusiasts, both from Russia.

The British experience of the same time period and of the same nature was less radical: they created a cooperative, which was more consistent in overcoming the social isolation of residents. The new borough with city status named Milton Keynes (or Keynes) is located at an equal distance from London, Cambridge and Oxford. by The British government determined the choice of location to distribute population more evenly across the country [1]. It should be the largest one among new cities in the UK with a foreplanned population of 250.000 people [2]. Currently, 207.000 residents live in Milton Keynes.

A specific feature of urban planning in Keynes is a network of citywide expressways with intersections at intervals of 1 km. Each grid cell of the structure makes an urban territory “for its own needs”. There are no traffic lights at roundabouts of highway intersections, which is convenient to pass through. Pedestrian and bicycle paths run throughout the entire city with underground crossings or overpasses.

The idea of such a layout design belongs to American urban theorist Melvin Webber (1921–2006). Back in the 1960s, he was confident that in the time of digital economy, the tendency of high concentration of people in one place would become obsolete, as well as transport-free zones would be necessary for people to move freely and contact each other informally.

Neither the American, nor the British experience of co-operative constructions could be applied elsewhere universally. However, currently the idea of a cooperative city is still relevant all over the world, and, as a rule, could be used without exotic experience of the Bronx (at least, regarding its founding trail-blazers and in terms of discussing and thinking later about their original implemented ideas).

#### EUROPE MOVES TOWARDS CO-OP CITIES

On July 18, 2020, several public organizations from six European countries adopted the document entitled “Cooperative City Manifesto”. It stated, that in the context of the Coronavirus pan-



demic, the controlling role of the state increased in many countries, but only in a few cases, the grass-root initiative regarding protective measures was launched. The anti-Coronavirus campaign revealed only one side of the problem, which covers far beyond the pandemic situation.

First, this applies to the growth of property stratification related to the epidemic. In such circumstances, communication between neighbors allows to find out quickly those who suffered more than others not only due to health problems, but also financially. As a result, the COVID-19 epidemic led 1 billion people in the world on the brink of poverty, including 45 million people in Europe. Official social services are not able to operate efficiently to cope with this even in the territory of the European Union. Public and local communities should have taken care of such mission.

“Cooperative City Manifesto” assigned the task to develop systems and procedures for organizing cooperation between neighbors to administer a more correct and fair distribution of efforts and provision of financial support. The document suggested promoting the experience of the city of Milan in distribution of food supply to those in need through a centralized network of municipally owned farms, commercial retail entities, delivery vehicles and free-of-charge soup-houses. At the same time, permanent surveys of the population needed to single out who among the neighbors should be included in list of food aid program, and who can do without it.

Besides “Cooperative City Manifesto” raised the problem of ensuring free access to reach some areas of urban territory for the needs of common people. For example, many poor families could not have a summer house outside the cities, but were ready to grow vegetables under their windows on in the backyards. Should municipalities interfere over such trifle issue? — No, this is a problem for local communities that must be structured for it.

This is not a new initiative for the European Union: the EU Urban Agenda, a kind of Agency

for cities has been operating there for a long time. The only thing was to improve the system for its operation. Anyway, in addition to this, organizations of the grass-root level started to become actively involved in the process of transforming urban life.

In particular, there operates Eutropian, a non-profit organization, founded by enthusiastic communities from three European countries: Austria, Hungary and Italy. Its mission is to support interaction between people involved in the process of urban development, help in research and promotion of interaction, as well develop new means of communication. The organization has already gained an extensive experience in transforming urban space, creating attractive public areas and cultural heritage zones, reviving ecologically hopeless urban areas and involving local communities to improve their urban life.

Another, quite important initiative of Eutropian was the launch of an internet-driven version of Cooperative City magazine. It has already published many examples among cases of cooperation arranged at the level of local communities and aimed to develop European cities.

For example, in 2020, one of the public organizations in Budapest received a grant to arrange the location of Bartok Quarter cultural center.<sup>1</sup> The aim was to overcome the feeling of self-isolation among inhabitants of the surrounding houses by getting them involved personally in social network activity and in cultural events. Although cultural events in the Bartok Quarter attracted many people, the local inhabitants of this area did not join its essential cultural part in their daily lives. Besides, most students of two nearby universities were not significantly involved in the cultural life-style of this location as well.

Among the highlights of this project was activity of a knowledge center network Adapter, which provided online and offline sessions in combination to attract interest groups for training courses,

<sup>1</sup> Bela Bartok (1888–1945), a famous Hungarian composer, author of the opera *Bluebeard's Castle*, ballet *Miraculous Mandarin*, *Wooden Prince* and many symphony concerts.

exhibitions and cultural events. This venture keeps on going to gain momentum.

Another international public organization, the European Urban Initiative, stimulated similar projects in many European cities: Košice (Slovakia), Ghent (Belgium), Tilburg (Netherlands), Almeria (Spain), and Athens (Greece) [3].

Pigneto, an urban district in the eastern part of Rome is the area, where few tourists visit, but many artists and musicians live. In 2017, cooperative Nonna Roma (Roman grandmother) was founded to provide firstly food delivery for 2.000 families with sick people and for another 300 families on the brink of poverty survival. Traditional number of volunteers for such districts increased from 50 enthusiasts to 200. Such charitable activity went along with the process of improving housing conditions for needy families. Thus, banks approved individualised mortgages, taking into account financial capabilities and living conditions of specific families.

Traditionally, state support for poor families is limited financially and is accompanied by so many lengthy procedures. Those most needy often have to find themselves deprived of state financing. For this reason, Nonna Roma set up a system of mutual aid within the neighbourhood communities, which was considered a more reliable method of supporting those who find themselves in difficult financial situation. Besides, if a person spends subsidies carelessly, for example, wasting money for drinks, neighbours inevitably and openly disapprove him or her to stop this. Keeping in mind such neighbourhood control, his or her family will behave in a more civilised way to spend the subsidies. Such social involvement of participation within local (neighborhood) communities provides some room for hope to pay off the funds for back up of the needy [4].

The Italian city of Prato 20 km North-West from Florence generated the project Prato Urban Jungle with involvement of local citizens. Activists ran meetings with residents in three areas of the town to select enthusiastic volunteers for the project. They teamed up enthusiasts in working

groups to plant greenery in their micro districts. For some time, a city laboratory operated there with some of these volunteers and reinforcement group of professional architects, specialists in urban management and landscape. At the third stage, residents discussed the revision of landscape projects at general meetings. Such approach gives a firm feeling of confidence, that people will preserve lawns, flowerbeds and every tree in good condition [5]. Besides, as a result, Citizens' Council, a new non-profit organization was founded to take on new urban projects.

Such project to maintain urban spaces stands out as unique of all similar initiatives in the European Union, where the main task is the so-called revitalization of streets. Meanwhile streets became simply transport arteries in the overwhelming majority of cities in the world, and local people usually have to spend time inside buildings and very rarely in the streets there.

Debrecen is the second largest city in Hungary. The residents initiated "car-free day" there, when the main street of the city is closed for traffic, meanwhile the roadway offered space for recreation, outdoor games, meetings, training sessions and other cultural events. No doubt, this worsened the transport situation at least for this day there, but the city residents made a choice, which citizens of other cities cannot make. This is exactly why local communities must have ways to represent and accomplish people's interests.

### THE RUSSIAN WAYS: FIRSTS FROM HIGHER LEVEL

In my opinion, no changes in Russian legislation are necessary to transform any city into a cooperative one, neither at the federal, nor at the local level.

In 1957, the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union took measures to intensify residential construction: it authorized housing construction of cooperatives (HCC) and granting loans for the construction of residential buildings. What should happen to the HCC after the construction was completed was not clear from regulatory acts.





Eighteen years later, all public organizations received the status of “entity of public initiative” if they still operated after completion of such houses. These were street committees, quarter’s committees, house committees, parent committees, women’s councils, as well as voluntary civilian squads for the protection of public order in the Soviet Union. Another ten years passed and in 1985, the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation approved the Regulation on public rural, street, quarter’s committees in rural settlements.

Article 161 of the Housing Code of the Russian Federation<sup>2</sup> defines a few types of management (except management companies) for apartment buildings: homeowners’ association, housing cooperative, specialized consumer cooperative, or cooperative of direct owners of the premises, if a building has no more than 30 apartments.

Thus, residents themselves were supposed to determine one of the forms of management of their building, when it is already accomplished. Interestingly, there is no legislatively established automatic transition: while the house is under construction, the housing cooperative operates to manage it, but when the house is ready to accommodate inhabitants the housing cooperative is being transformed into association of homeowners.

What is the difference between Russian housing cooperatives and homeowners’ associations at present? Firstly, their definitions are determined in different legislative acts. Article 110 of the Housing Code of the Russian Federation classifies housing cooperative<sup>3</sup> as consumer cooperative, and Article 50 of the Civil Code of the Russian Federation<sup>4</sup> defines homeowners’ association as peoples’ owners-of-property association. Nevertheless, the Housing Code gives classifications for

both entities — housing cooperatives and homeowners’ associations.

Due to blurred boundaries between them, functions of both of them retain the style of work of the housing cooperative. Homeowners’ associations mainly focus on the category of property in their activities and not on organizing common life of their association neighbours. Access to those functions, which currently carry out local public organizations in Russia, was not officially blocked, people simply were not aware of them.

A new question arises: what is the difference between a cooperative and an association? The difference is in details. Homeowners’ associations have more comprehensive regulations about responsibilities of the governing bodies. Besides, its Association Board cannot neglect the decisions of the general meeting of homeowners.

When someone signs an agreement to join a housing cooperative, he/she does not receive ownership of the apartment, but acquires a share and cannot demand transfer of the shared construction object from the developer. Ownership of the apartment is officially registered as soon as the share has been fully paid. On July 1, 2018, it was prohibited to raise citizens’ funds for the construction of houses by means of creating housing cooperative societies.

The competencies of the General meeting for members of a housing cooperative society and its Board are still not legislatively established in the Housing Code of the Russian Federation. The residents themselves are authorised to determine these competencies.

This is why many housing cooperatives made up a decision at their General meetings to become homeowners’ associations, since this is permitted by article 122 of the Housing Code of the Russian Federation. As a result, this transformation has changed nothing, only powers and competencies of some elements of the management system have become more clearly expressed in regards to the terms of the General meeting, the Board, or the Chairman.

Due to the fact, that the scope of powers does not adequately specify the statute in the charter

<sup>2</sup> URL: [https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_51057/](https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_51057/)

<sup>3</sup> URL: [https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_51057/a23123b6d315e8ada8c8e969f66e8e6a0e709258/?ysclid=m2k7fv2by3309103743](https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_51057/a23123b6d315e8ada8c8e969f66e8e6a0e709258/?ysclid=m2k7fv2by3309103743)

<sup>4</sup> URL: [https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_5142/3a585d0351c74adc4c9878b6019d704cdd9d3699/?ysclid=m2k7gr04x7819201663](https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_5142/3a585d0351c74adc4c9878b6019d704cdd9d3699/?ysclid=m2k7gr04x7819201663)

of the housing cooperative, sometimes abuse of power and infringement of interests of some members of the cooperative are possible. According to Article 147 of the Housing Code of the Russian Federation, a member of the Board of the housing owners' cooperative cannot combine his/her activities with work in the same cooperative under the employment agreement. It is also impossible to transfer to someone else the performance of his/her duties as a member of the Board in the housing owners' cooperative.

There are no such restrictions for housing cooperatives. Besides, according to Article 111 of the Housing Code of the Russian Federation, membership in a housing cooperative is not directly related to existence of ownership in the apartment building. Therefore, any outsider can be elected to the Board and even become the Chairman of the housing cooperative. On the contrary, only owners of the apartment can become members of the housing owners' cooperative, as well as only they exclusively can become members of the Board or Chairman of the housing owners' cooperative.

Residents have the right to decide in each specific case, whether it is necessary to transform a housing cooperative into a homeowners' association. If member of the housing cooperative adopted a working charter (with all clear powers and competencies) for all management bodies of their cooperative, including detailed interaction algorithms (which are not in the Housing Code of the Russian Federation), then, it is rather no need to transform the housing cooperative into a homeowners' association.

Article 110 of the Housing Code of the Russian Federation provides some clarification: both housing cooperatives and homeowners associations are consumer cooperatives, which means, that provisions of Article 123 of the Civil Code of the Russian Federation apply to both of them. In particular, their members bear subsidiary liability for the debts of housing cooperatives and homeowners associations. Sometime before, this was coined "collective responsibility" and it drastically

reduced the level of risks for the vertical power.

Another aspect, which clearly presents the current legal situation of self-government at the lower level is related to gardening non-profit partnerships (GNPP), or, more precisely, to the transfer of such non-profit partnerships in relation to a populated area or only to a part of it. Today, entire cottage villages are founded on non-profit partnerships territories, which are *de facto* cooperatives. Paragraph 12 of Article 54 of the Federal Law of July 29, 2017 No. 217-FZ "On the conduct of gardening and vegetable gardening by citizens for their own needs and on amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation" defines the status of GNPP land in the following way: it can be changed to "lands of populated areas" with permitted use for individual housing construction.

There are several conditions for this: the General Meeting of the partnerships approved of such decision; the partnership is located within the boundaries of the settlement; all buildings on the plots of land are considered residential houses. If the decision is positive, they close their gardening non-profit partnership and set up a housing owners' cooperative instead of it, or select a management company.

This situation is very much like a parable about a mathematician who needed to explain the algorithm for making tea. He started in the following way: "Take a kettle, pour water into it, turn it on and wait till it boils." Then someone interrupted him: "What if the kettle is already filled with water?" Without hesitation, the mathematician replied, "Take the kettle, pour out the water, and then use my algorithm." So, here we are: instead of simply equalizing the rights of their gardening non-profit partnership with the housing owners' cooperative, it should be closed and a new housing owners' cooperative should be founded from independent owners of houses and plots — according to the old principle: "destroy it up to the foundation, then rebuild it all anew."

Summarising the first way, we can note, that here we deal with what could be called "an eco-



conomic materialism". Building housing, providing it with heat and other amenities is some material and tangible process. However, it is impossible to plan and make schemes, how comfortable the rooms will be for people to live there.

The management company is an external structure, which provides services to the residents of the residential complex. Nevertheless, it was obvious, that if the management company operates harmoniously with the residents, its activity is more successful with less probable debts and higher turnover of funds [6]. Thus, the boundary between the management company and the homeowners' association, which exists in the legal field, is not fundamental for residents.

### **ANOTHER WAY: FROM GRASS-ROUTE LEVEL**

In 1988, the first territorial self-government body (TSGB) started to function in the district of Brateevo of Moscow. In the same year, such local communities were established in other districts of Moscow: Golyanovo and Arbat. Two years later, this initiative from grass-root level was employed by the city administration to impose district community councils aiming to break up the old system. The so-to-say De-Sovietisation imposed by the authorities as part of the process to replace Soviet-style hard-liners among officials with modern-minded personnel.

Likewise, the first legislative act that consolidated and removed local self-government entities from the structure of local councils was the USSR Law No. 1417-1 of 09.04.1990 "On the General Principles of Local Self-Government and Local Economy in the USSR".

At the same time, Article 145 of the USSR Constitution "On Amendments and Additions to the Constitution (Basic Law) of the USSR regarding improvement of the system of state administration" gained the following statement: "In the system of local self-government, in addition to local Soviets of People's Deputies, territorial public self-government bodies, meetings of citizens, other forms of direct democracy may

operate in accordance with the legislation of the republics". Thus, local self-government was envisaged as part of the unified system of socialist self-government, and the necessity of participation in the management of the previously established "bodies of public amateur activity" was acknowledged. The term "amateur activity" was quite closely associated with people's song and dance activity. Gradually, this terminology disappeared from the context of self-government.

In the second half of 1993, the powers and credentials of the Soviets of People's Deputies of all levels were terminated. In 2003, due to adoption of the Federal Law of 06.10.2003 No. 131-FZ "On General Principles of Organisation of Local Self-Government in the Russian Federation", the legal framework for the regulation of territorial public self-government appeared. Bodies of territorial public self-government were removed from the sphere of legal regulation of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

For 15 years, they existed separately as independent, unrelated hotspots of civil initiatives. Then their integration in separate cities began, and this process continues. In December 2010, Association of Management Companies was founded on the basis of a construction self-regulatory organisation (CSRO) The Union of Builders in St. Petersburg. The association included 124 companies in St. Petersburg.

Initially, Association of Management Companies performed the main functions of the self-regulatory organisation, namely: control over the activities of management companies, improving the quality of its services and providing its members with relevant and useful information. However, since 2020, The Association started to deal with issues of interaction between management companies and non-profit company Fund — Regional Operator for Major Repairs of Common Property in Apartment Buildings. This was a major step towards creating a cooperative city.

At the same time, another process was underway in Russia: councils of territorial public self-government were set up, and their activi-

ties were defined in Article 27 of Federal Law No. 131-FZ “On General Principles of Organization of Local Self-Government in the Russian Federation”<sup>5</sup> (quote):

“Territorial public self-government are considered as self-organization entities of citizens at their place of residence on a part of the territory of a settlement, intra-urban territory of a city of federal significance, a municipal district, urban district, intra-urban district, as well as in populated areas located on inter-settlement territory (or in a part of their territory) for independent and under their own responsibility implementation of their own initiatives on issues of local importance.”<sup>6</sup>

This form of territorial self-governance was introduced for development of social infrastructure in cities: construction of children’s playgrounds, sports grounds, car parks, clubs, etc. Before the foundation of territorial self-governance councils, such projects were discussed between neighbours, but this did lead to any feasible results. Now the needs or requirements of residents can get materialised.

At present, territorial self-governance councils are engaged in activities that go beyond the functions stipulated by law:

- , repair and maintenance of children’s and sports grounds, recreation areas; landscaping of the territory, road repair; water supply;
- of activities of sports sections in yards and neighbourhood;
- of museums and reconstruction of historical and cultural monuments;
- of territory development projects with their subsequent inclusion in funding programmes;
- cultural events, event and recreational activities (health trails, running competitions, etc.);
- assistance to large families, war veterans, low-income families, disabled and sick people;
- provision of socially useful services (open-

ing paramedic stations, social bakeries; organizing free lunch centers).

The main difficulty in establishing and operating territorial self-governance councils is lack of certainty to find financial support and pay salary to employees, or expenses for the rental of premises, etc. If the council is registered as a legal entity, then it also needs to pay taxes and fees, the minimum wages and control over possible violations of applicable laws. This is why, by the end of 2022, over 2.500 such entities out of 28.000, which operated in Russia, had official registration of legal entities.

Let us compare these figures with the related international statistics. In the European Union, 2 million organizations operate in the social sphere, which is about 10 per cent of all legal entities. They employ more than 11 million people, which is about 6 per cent of all employed people in Europe. At the same time, 160 million people are involved in voluntary work in the social sphere there and as a rule, they work for free doing it pro-bono.

Territorial self-governance councils, being legal entities, have a number of advantages: they can use grants to implement projects, enter into joint activity agreements, etc. At the same time, they have additional responsibilities, such as financial and statistical reporting. Regardless of whether a territorial self-governance council is a legal entity or not, they are authorised to represent the interests of citizens who live on its territory; to promote the implementation of decisions taken at meetings and conferences; to propose drafts of local legal acts to municipal authorities. In addition, they have the right to implement measures of landscaping territories with financial participation of citizens or with support from the municipal budget.

The system of Russian territorial self-governance councils reached the federal level in 2016, with the foundation of The National Association of Territorial Public Self-Government aimed to support socially oriented projects, legal assistance, educational activities, supervision of volunteer-

<sup>5</sup> URL: [https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_44571/](https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_44571/)

<sup>6</sup> URL: [https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_44571/8dca12e4c57dcd9672a34eadf15e13b4455e1519/](https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_44571/8dca12e4c57dcd9672a34eadf15e13b4455e1519/)





ing, etc. With support of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, the Association annually monitors the activities of territorial self-governance councils in the country.

### A NEW STAGE

The Bronx, being one of the world's largest co-op housing complex, established the city's role quite limited — maintaining order, ensuring the safety of citizens and providing emergency assistance. Everything else is the responsibility of the co-operative.

When a city transforms into a co-operative, decisions about power of authority look very different. Currently, there is a gap between management companies and city authorities: they are independent of each other and therefore function separately. Positive experience of co-operation between these two structures exists in many Russian cities and, particularly, in Novosibirsk — due to personal initiatives of the Vladimir Filippovich Gorodetsky.

As the Mayor of Novosibirsk, and later as the Governor of the Novosibirsk Region, Vladimir Gorodetsky subsequently shared with authorities of neighbouring cities the valuable experience of collaboration between territorial self-government entities and the local authorities. He supervised the foundation and activity of the Coordinating Council for the Development of Territorial Public Self-Governance in the Novosibirsk region. Recently Vladimir Gorodetsky was promoted as the First Deputy Chairman of The Federation Council Committee on Federal Structure, Federal Policy, Local Government and Northern Affairs of the Russian Federation in Moscow. However, territorial self-government entities in Novosibirsk region actively operate, except that the coordinating functions of the Mayor's office became more modest. Nowadays, Novosibirsk, in my opinion, is one of the leading cities in Russia in development of the grass-root level of public self-government.

Why do municipality services have to accept, that a significant part of management functions

is made by informal territorial self-government bodies? As mentioned before, door-to-door neighbours know better than the authorities, who needs financial support, and how beneficial is such support.

In Russia, as in many other countries, people prefer to help those who they know personally. In 2023, according to the survey of The All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center, over the past 12–18 months, more than half of Russian citizens have donated things or money to their relatives, friends, or acquaintances. For comparison, only 10 per cent make their contribution to charity events. The reason is that the majority of our fellow citizens perceive charitable activity as a private type of business [7]. Therefore such contributions are considered as a gesture of help to a businessman, not to those in need.

Currently, some important events occurred to pose a new problem of interaction between city authorities and grass-root initiatives from local societies. This concerns the principles of urban development planning, which started abroad somewhat earlier than in Russia.

For a long time, the essential element of strategy of urban planning was A General Plan of Urban Development. Discussions and debates often occur during public hearings to determine the most significant aspects and elements of the planning structure in the draft of General Plan.

Now architects have a hard time facing the process of transition from The General Plan to The Master Plan. The latter has not been included yet into the Urban Planning Code of the Russian Federation, but Master Plans are already in use for urban planning. What is the difference between these two documents and what changes this may bring?

General Plans include the planning schemes of the territory. Master plans involve the socio-economic territorial strategy and determine significant elements of the structure of the urban territory and their content, as well as methods of implementing what will be located on this territory. The opinion of local communities is taken

into account when General Plans are in development and when the finished project are assessed. Meanwhile local communities are involved in assessment of drafts of Master Plans.

The difference is clear in a relatively simple example. According to The General Plan of the city of Perm, a while ago a tram rail line across the river was laid to develop the urban transport network. This worked well also for additional argument to justify the construction of a new bridge. Indeed, both the bridge and the tram rails were built. However, later, they removed the tram rails to improve the traffic of motor vehicles across the bridge. This was not a violation of rules for the adopted General Plan, since it dealt with the use of the territory, and with not transport services for passengers. Such cases would not occur regarding Master plans: they take into account the interests of citizens, who use public transportation instead of cars. When the Master Plan for the city of Perm was developed, the system of city transport improved and the number of traffic jams decreased [8].

Transport Infrastructure Development Plan is another strategic urban document. General Plans are worked out in accordance with the Order of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation of 09.01.2018 No. 10 "On approval of the Requirements for the description and display in territorial planning documents of objects of federal significance, objects of regional significance, objects of local significance and in view of recognizing as invalid the Order of the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia dated 07.12.2016 No. 793". It does not specify which objects should be displayed on the maps. Many General Plans for Russian cities do not match up with transport infrastructure schemes, as well as

with detailed plans of urban districts. Besides, they do not provide development for pedestrian streets or zones: there is no such category in the requirements for drawing up General Plans [9].

Russian President Vladimir V. Putin noted in his Address to the Federal Assembly on February 29, 2024, that Master Plans had already been drawn up for 22 Russian cities. The Russian President instructed the Government to determine a list of another 200 Russian cities, where Master Plans need to be put in effect in the near future.

In the same Presidential Address, the main essence of the transition from General to Master Plans was stated: "Residents of cities and towns should become co-authors for development of Plans. We must actively use mechanisms where citizens themselves determine, which problems are of top priority for allocations. I propose increasing co-financing of such people's projects."

Thus, the Russian President highlighted the most important direction of supporting the grass-root level of public self-government: city residents should determine their future life, and not wait for someone to build it for them. This is the essence of the idea behind the concept of a cooperative city. Currently, this is only in development, both in Russia and in many other countries of the globe.

It is a complicated task to involve public opinion at the grass-root level in the context of economic research. The involvement of territorial public administration and other similar bodies in agent-oriented models, as new elements, could become far-reaching possibilities for socially useful functions [10]. It is quite possible to evaluate financial savings in such models that do not require municipal funding, thanks to activists' support at their level.

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