

# Urban Regimes and Socially Significant Projects of Transformation of the Urban Environment in the Russian Federation

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**Abstract**—The authors of the article aim to identify the principles and patterns of mutual influence of socially significant projects for transformation of the urban environment and urban regimes in the Russian Federation. Clarence Stone’s concept of urban regimes is used as a theoretical framework. Based on the author’s system of social significance criteria, six projects for transformation of the urban environment in four cities were selected and analyzed: Okhta Center and Tuchkov Buyan in St. Petersburg, Zaryadye Park and development of the fields at the Timiryazev Academy in Moscow, St. Catherine’s Church in Yekaterinburg, and concreting of the embankments of the Vologda River in Vologda. Whereas the initial phase of all projects took place in the realities of local urban growth regimes, with the predominance of the interests of the established coalitions of business and government, the subsequent increase in the role of public activism in all projects and the change of goal-setting under its influence led to a change in the local urban regime during their implementation. It is shown that in five studied cases, during implementation of projects, there was a transition of local urban regimes from growth to progressive, and in one, from growth to a greater extent towards a status quo regime. The general principles and patterns of mutual influence of socially significant transformation projects and urban regimes in the Russian Federation are identified and described: competitive public interaction of all types of actors; change or relocation of the project as a spatial way of conflict resolution; the prevailing shift from the realization of the government and business interests in favor of society; employment of paternalistic tools as a way to achieve consensus. Such conditions of mutual influence of socially significant projects and urban regimes can develop in a certain period in any major Russian city; then we can expect in it spatial transformation similar to the results described. The results of the study clearly demonstrate the onset of the process of local transformation of the dominant urban regimes in the Russian Federation.

**Keywords:** urban regimes, urban political regimes, transformation of the urban environment, socially significant projects, use of urban space

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the importance of large projects in transformation of the urban environment in Russian cities has sharply increased, which for various reasons is becoming indicative for society, image-oriented for business and authorities at various levels and for the cities and regions where they are implemented, and even on the international level for Russia as a whole. It suffices to mention resonant (with a different sign and for different audiences), even at the international level, examples of projects for locating Gazprom Tower in St. Petersburg and projects for transformation of Vladivostok or Sochi.

At the same time, with development of business institutions, civil society, and reformation of the political system, the interests of the main actors of urban

and social development in general are actively changing and not always unidirectionally. Such projects are increasingly becoming an arena of conflict interactions, in which they are not only identified, but the conflicting interests of the involved parties (society, business, and government) are resolved (Fainstein, 1994; Ledyayev, 2008; Stone, 1989).

It is important that such arenas, first, are public and *socially significant* (Fedotova, 2018; Orlova et al., 2019; Trumbull, 2012); second, they are fixed for a long time in material space and, consequently, in the public consciousness (Gelman, 2003); third, they concentrate spatiotemporally on developing and testing new efficient tools for resolving conflict or conflict-free interactions of all participating actors in cities (Koroleva and Chernova, 2017; Tykanova, 2013).

The patterns and effectiveness of this kind of interaction between the main urban actors (bearers of special interests) are analyzed by the so-called theory (or concept) of *urban regimes* (Dowding, 2001; Dowding et al., 1999; Elkin, 1987; Fainstein, 1994; Ledyayev, 2008; Logan and Molotch, 1988; Samatareva, 2017; Stone, 1989; Stoker and Mossberger, 1994). Clarence Stone's classic definition (1989) describes an urban regime as a set of arrangements or relationships (formal and informal) realized in the efforts of actors forming a coalition by which the community is governed. An urban regime is formed when interests intersecting in the urban space begin to emerge during the interaction of actors (Papadopoulos, 1996).

It is noteworthy that in the Russian literature, Stone's term urban regime is translated differently by researchers; the concepts of urban regime (Trubina, 2011) or urban political regime (Ledyayev, 2008) are used, which is not differentiated in Stone's concept. However, in our opinion, the term urban regime has a broader interpretation and more accurately describes relationships and interactions—not only political, but also economic and sociocultural—emerging in a city. The creation of coalitions and regime changes can also be caused by apolitical reasons and may involve more than just political processes. For the purposes of this study, aimed at analyzing a wide range of actions by urban actors from the viewpoint of impact on urban space, we use the term urban regime.

The topic of using the theory of urban regimes to analyze the processes of transformation of urban space in Russia (including in comparison with foreign practice) is not new (Bederson et al., 2021; Karpov, 2013; Pustovoit, 2018; Tykanova, 2013; Tykanova and Khokhlova, 2015). Today, there are many sociological studies on urban social practices, social activism, and participation (Bakharev and Demina, 2019; Ivanova and Zykova, 2017; Kolodii et al., 2017; Zhelnina and Tykanova, 2019). There are also a large number of studies analyzing the effects of megaprojects (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003; Ansberg and Margolis, 2009; Medvedev, 2016; Tykanova, 2013), environmental, urban planning and ecocultural protests in cities (Capri and Mattei, 2021; Galustov, 2016; Medvedev, 2015, 2016), and administrative practices in this area (Akkermans, 2020a; Bell, 2018; Kessler and Wagner, 2020; Koroleva and Chernova, 2017; Lifshitz, 2020; Parchomovsky, 2006; Shevtsova and Bederson, 2017). Among geographical studies, there are a number of papers on the problems of the image of geographical space, metageography, and the integration of these ideas in systems of natural and social geographical sciences (Zamyatin, 1996, 2010; Zamyatina, 2022).

In the Russian literature some studies interpret the coalitions of business and government in regions that existed in the 2000s as *growth machines* (Tev, 2006; Tykanova and Khokhlova, 2015). E. Tykanova and A. Khokhlova note that they are formed from a tacti-

cal compromise between the interests of the authorities and large construction business. Such growth machines (coalitions of government and business) suppress other actors, depriving them of their voice, and society is forced to look for ways to consolidate with various political groups, parties, and urban protection organizations in order to influence the situation. O. Bychkova and V. Gelman (2010) demonstrate the diversity of urban regimes and their periodic dynamics, which may vary depending on the amount of political and economic resources. A change in these proportions, combined with a change in the role of actors, can affect the implementation of certain socially significant projects. However, researchers note that Russian urban regimes are quite complex for obvious identification (Bederson et al., 2021). According to Papadopoulos (1996), the urban regime can be also be local, since certain urban areas often have their own system of interactions between actors, which may differ from the citywide management system. Therefore, the authors employ the theory of urban regimes using local cases as examples.

This study focuses only on urban transformation projects that have *social significance*. The concept of social significance has many interpretations. For example, from an economic viewpoint, a project that mitigates or solves problems of a social nature is socially significant (Petrov et al., 2018). At the same time, A. Ageeva (2019) believes that socially significant projects primarily involve those whose implementation results have a significant impact on the socioeconomic conditions of development, as well as priority projects that cannot be implemented without government support. According to Koroleva and Chernova (2018), projects become significant when the authorities begin listening to the public. One way or another, public significance arises in cases of active participation of actors in the project of transformation of the urban environment, especially the authorities and society.

From the viewpoint of influence on the urban environment, socially significant projects can exist in various forms. The most common today is *redevelopment*, which involves a change in functional purpose, as a result of which the object acquires qualitatively new properties that are more flexible to the current economic situation (Gotham, 2001; Weber, 2002). Concepts also closely related to social significance comprise renovation, the renewal of territories through the redevelopment of abandoned areas with the possibility of reassessing the role and function of an important part of the city (Jensen and Maslesa, 2015; Martinaitis et al., 2004); revitalization of an area or facility that is no longer operational (Barney et al., 2011; Hughes, 1999); and megaproject, which in the literature most often refers to any projects with increased value (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003). We do not use the term urban conflict (a conflict of opposing interests, goals, views, ideologies between individuals, social groups,

classes) (Cherepanov, 2013; Dement'eva, 2013), although in most cases many socially significant projects will intersect with many urban conflicts. Any of these cases (most often redevelopment accompanied by a conflict of actors) can come to the focus of our attention if it influences the formation of a new image of a city and significantly shapes its image in the public space.

With respect to the declared subject, the next key element of the theoretical basis of the study combined with the theory of urban regimes is *theories of urban transformation* (Rudolph, 2001; Sýkora and Bouzarovski, 2012; Treivish et al., 1999). More specific aspects of such research are based on analysis of the transformation of urban practices, redevelopment studies in the field of geourban theories (Aksenov, 2012, 2015, 2021; Galustov, 2016; Savoskul et al., 2014), in urban conflict research and political conflictology (Shmeleva, 2008; Tykanova and Khokhlova, 2014), in the formation of coalitions—and the sociology of social movements (Byron, 2000; Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Goldstone, 2004; Goodwin and Jasper, 2004; McAdam, 2004; Tarrow, 2011; Zald and McCarthy, 1980; Zdravomyslova, 1993); in the study of their interaction and sociology (Park, 2002) and urban law (Akkermans, 2020b; Capri and Mattei, 2021; Klyukanova, 2019; Medvedev, 2016; Parchomovsky, 2006). As applied to the current case of post-socialist transformation, L. Sýkora and S. Bouzarovski (2012) argue that three different types of transformation in a postsocialist city have different natures and should be considered separately. This is institutional transformation, transformation of social practices, and transformation in the morphology of urban space. They argue that while the first type of transformation (which includes economic and political institutions) has largely ended, the other two are still ongoing in Post-Soviet cities.

According to this interpretation, large, socially significant projects for transforming the urban environment in Russian cities precisely reflect the interaction of generally altered socialist institutional actors and actively changing social practices regarding transformation of the morphology of urban space (Aksenov, 2015; Axenov et al., 2020). For example, the unrealized construction of the Okhta Center led the city administration to the idea of limiting the height of buildings under construction in the center and semi-periphery of St. Petersburg,<sup>1</sup> and the unrealized concept for construction of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation complex on Tuchkov Buyan exac-

erbated the issue of the fundamental need to transfer federal authorities to St. Petersburg.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, speaking about the special place of a socially significant project for transformation of the urban environment, it is important to note that it can form an image, identity, and a new image of the city in the public consciousness (Belobragin and Grosheva, 2015). The reputation and prestige of city authorities and the idea of city politics in the public consciousness may depend on it. In our study, social significance is assessed based on the interest of actors, the participation of senior state officials and corporations, the reaction of the media, and the multiplicity of concepts for development of the urban environment.

Socially significant projects change the essential content of the urban environment. During the transformation, the essence of urban phenomena is not simply modified, but replaced with fundamentally new ones (Axenov, 2014). Therefore, in generalizing and supplementing the above approaches and definitions, by *socially significant* we mean those projects for transformation of the urban environment that have *maximum impact on changing and consolidating a new image of the city in the public consciousness* (Gelman, 2003), *change the essential content of the urban environment* (Axenov, 2014; Gotham, 2001; Weber, 2002), and *significantly steer current public discourse* (Belobragin and Grosheva, 2015; Koroleva and Chernova, 2018) and *urban development in general* (Ageeva, 2019).

The main aim of the study is to define the principles and patterns of mutual influence of socially significant projects for transforming the urban environment and urban regimes in the Russian Federation. A specific feature of the study, in contrast to existing ones, is the focus on the social importance of urban spatial transformation practices for urban development. The authors' task was to offer a new look at the mechanisms underlying transformation of urban space, without claiming in any way to cover the problem in its entirety, but to identify the maximum possible range of interactions under study.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The key socially significant transformation projects in Russian cities were selected by the authors' methodology using the approaches of E.V. Tykanova, A.M. Khokhlova (Tykanova, 2013; Tykanova and Khokhlova, 2015), K.A. Galustov (Galustov, 2016; Galustov and Khodachek, 2021), B. Li, K.E. Aksenov, and O. Golubchikov (Bin Li et al., 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Putin supported the idea of setting up a park instead of a judicial quarter in St. Petersburg, 2019. <https://www.rbc.ru/society/23/04/2019/5cbf1ba29a7947cde3bed5f9> (accessed December 23, 2021); S. Satanovsky, Why not everyone in St. Petersburg is happy about the move of the Supreme Court of Russia to the city, 2020. <https://www.dw.com/ru/why-in-St.-Petersburg-is-not-everyone-happy-to-move-to-the-city-of-the-supreme-court-of-Russia/a-52178204> (accessed December 23, 2021).

<sup>1</sup> In Smolny they want to regulate the height of new buildings in St. Petersburg, 2015. [https://www.novostroy-spb.ru/novosti/v\\_smolnom\\_hotyat\\_kontrolirovat](https://www.novostroy-spb.ru/novosti/v_smolnom_hotyat_kontrolirovat) (accessed December 22, 2021); Lower and lower, 2015. <https://asninfo.ru/magazines/html-version/672-spb/15114-vse-nizhe-i-nizhe> (accessed December 22, 2021).

As the hypothesis, formulated from the cited developments and tested in the study, the authors identified the three most significant *groups of criteria for the social significance of projects for transforming the urban environment* to assess their mutual influence with urban regimes: (1) *spatial (environmental)*, which defines projects with respect to the urban environment; (2) *resonance and participation of actors*, which describes the parameters of social significance, distinguishing the projects under study from the entire set of projects; (3) *transformational*, which classifies projects as transforming the urban environment.

The proposed groups of criteria describe all three aspects of the complex phenomenon under study. In each aggregated group, one or more criteria are additionally identified that determine the social significance of the project for transforming the urban environment.

**(1) Spatial (environmental) criteria.** This group consists of two criteria.

*Criterion 1.1. A large territorial redevelopment project localized in a city.* Only redevelopment projects of certain urban areas are subject to consideration, i.e., those associated with the emergence of new urban functions in the territories. Projects affecting only individual urban sites or newly developed territories (receiving a certain urban function for the first time) were not considered.

*Criterion 1.2. Location at a socially significant site for the city.* Deepening criterion 1.1, the authors focus on the fact that a city itself can be divided into locations that consolidate the status of the city and secondary ones. Socially significant locations, as a rule, include central, historical, publicly accessible and visited, and aesthetically or symbolically significant places. To evaluate the criterion, the authors use the center–periphery model already described and adapted for urban space (Galustov, 2016).

**(2) Criteria for resonance and participation of actors.** This group includes three criteria.

*Criterion 2.1. The spatial conflict of interests of the three main actors and reflection in all three public discourses on the part of the authorities, business, and society.* If at least one of the actors has no interest in the project, it will not be perceived as socially significant. This criterion excludes from our consideration federal urban transformation megaprojects, such as preparation of Sochi for the 2014 Olympic Games or Vladivostok for the APEC Summit. As a rule, projects that cause direct conflicts of interests have a complex public response from all three actors—*conflicts* regarding the use of urban space.

In this case, socially significant transformation projects attract more spontaneous attention to the project from without, prevent it from being resolved by the realization of the interests of one specific actor, and locally influence changes in the urban regime. In the study, we focused on projects that were altered by

social activism, since in these cases, the interaction of actors most clearly makes it possible to determine the existing urban regime.

*Criterion 2.2. Participation of all levels of state and municipal authorities in public discourse.* The most conflict-related transformation projects for actors prevent the conflict from being resolved within the “urban government—urban business—urban communities” interaction system. As a rule, in such cases, public significance becomes so great that it requires the involvement of external echelons of power in the discourse—in special cases, even the highest state officials. This type of decision making refers to the concept of so-called *paternalistic urbanism*,<sup>3</sup> which is very typical of Russia. In the present study, the authors use cases that fit the parameters of this concept.

*Criterion 2.3. Significant resonance for the image of a city in public discourse, media, and online media.* The increased attention to the transformation project is largely due to the increase in the number of publications in the media, the level of media in which discussions take place, and the number of public events that generate informational events related to possible implementation of the project.

**(3) Transformation criteria.** The last group consists of three criteria.

*Criterion 3.1. Alteration of the functional purpose of a spatial object in the process of redevelopment.* If a new business center appears at the site of a business center, and a more landscaped green area appears on the site of an old park, then such a project cannot radically transform the image of the urban space. It is important that the transformation project changes the essential content of the urban environment, significantly modifies the characteristics and image of the city, and gives actors the opportunity to obtain new spatial functionality.

*Criterion 3.2. Change of the project concept during implementation.* The authors believe that the most significant examples of environmental transformation projects are those that, due to circumstances, have no final result for a long time, even in the event of intervention by higher authorities. Such projects are capable of generating an assessment of the quality of administration of the urban environment both in the country and abroad; they have very complex positive and negative connotations among different actors. As a rule, change/adaptation of a project (as well as its transfer described below) in such cases occurs in

<sup>3</sup> Paternalistic urbanism is a type of decision-making in city government, when it is expected that some important controversial issues related to the jurisdiction of the city will be resolved (or resolved de facto) not by the city itself, but by central (external higher) authorities. The important thing is that after intervention by the central (external, higher) authorities in a controversial issue of urban development, all conflicting urban subjects cease their conflict, even if the solution does not fully satisfy them and such a compromise would not have been acceptable to them before (Bin Li et al., 2021).

**Table 1.** Socially significant projects for transforming urban environment and public discourse

Project	City	Public Discourse
Okhta Center	St. Petersburg	Economy—Preservation of cultural heritage
Zaryadye Park	Moscow	Infrastructure of power—Green areas in center
Church of St. Catherine	Yekaterinburg	Churches—Parks
Tuchkov Buyan	St. Petersburg	Expensive development with authority functions—Green areas in the city center
Concreting of river embankments Vologda	Vologda	Landscaping—Conservation of green areas
Construction on fields of Timiryazev Academy in Moscow	Moscow	Redevelopment—Science

In the article, public discourse is the authors' evaluative category based on the study of the above-mentioned cases.  
*Compiled by the authors.*

during conflict communication between actors, which is perhaps the most significant indicator for assessing changes in urban regimes. In the present study, each change in concept marks the beginning of a new phase of the project.

*Criterion 3.3. Transferral of implementation of a transformation project to a new location during revision of the project.* Of particular social significance are projects whose functions are implemented in a new place as a result of a conflict of interests of actors in the same space. The spatial relocation of a project can reduce the negative background associated with the previous location, and there may also be a drop in social significance due to the loss of the previous conflict-generating location and a general decrease in tension in the relationships between the actors.

## RESULTS

As a result of selecting possible cases for consideration based on the described criteria, there are many regional projects that fall under criteria 2.1 and 2.3 in Russia. Suffice it to recall the conflicts surrounding the construction of alluvial territories in St. Petersburg, the development of the Nagatinskaya floodplain in Moscow, and the reconstruction project for the 1000th anniversary of Kazan. However, there were not as many projects in which there would have been any intervention by the federal government (criterion 2.2), which influenced a change in the concept of transformation or the transfer of project implementation to another site (criteria 3.2 and 3.3).<sup>4</sup> The criterion of intervention by federal authorities, together with the criterion of a radical change in concept, was the decisive cutoff criterion. Based on the methodology described above, we identified only six such large cases (Table 1).

(1) The first selected project is the unrealized project for the construction of the Okhta Center complex

(also famous as Gazprom City) in the center of St. Petersburg, which led to the collapse of the previous model of urban planning policy. This conflict resulted from a significant gap in the understanding of urban development between government, business, and society (Vorobyev and Stiglitz, 2014). The state company Gazprom, as the initiator of construction, obviously pursued the goal of consolidating its special economic role through architectural and spatial methods of symbolic politics, while public organizations were guided by cultural and aesthetic ideas about the preservation of the historical and cultural landscape. Their interests did not coincide at all. Even if we assume that the goals of the actors were convincingly argued on both sides, the lack of normal public debate was the decisive critical factor leading to the largest ecocultural conflict in recent years (Dixon, 2010). The situation began to be resolved after the World Heritage Committee at UNESCO, influenced by urban protection protests, asked Russia to develop and consider alternative projects for the Okhta Center. Construction was canceled, influenced by President Dmitry Medvedev, who stated that the decision on construction of the Okhta Center should be made after completion of legal proceedings and consultations with UNESCO. The subsequent transfer of Gazprom's administrative building to Lakhta on the city periphery became an important stage in slowing the growth

<sup>4</sup> In 2020, under the leadership of K.E. Aksenov, master's students of the Geourban Studies Program at St. Petersburg State University collected and summarized primary material on nine cases of socially significant transformation projects of the last decade in five cities, among them: the project for construction of the Okhta-Lakhta Center (Gazprom Tower); protest against the development of Fedorov Park in Moscow; conflicting projects for the construction of the Church of St. Catherine in the park on Oktyabrskaya Square in Yekaterinburg; landscape and architectural planning on Tuchkovy Buyan in the center of St. Petersburg, etc. This material has not been compiled and published before. The authors assess the relevance of using these materials and supplement them with new data and new cases.

machine regime that had developed by the 2000s in St. Petersburg (Tykanova and Khokhlova, 2015). The story of construction of the Okhta Center became the subject of public discussion and an echo of how innovation was perceived not only in St. Petersburg, but also in other regions.

(2) Zaryadye Park is a vast area in the heart of Moscow, east of Red Square. The idea of building a park in this space greatly influenced Moscow's urban image, both in Russia and abroad (Tkachenko, 2019). Until 2007, this territory was occupied by the Rossiya Hotel, designed in the style of Soviet Modernism. After long discussions about possibilities for its reconstruction, a decision was made to demolish the hotel and build a Parliamentary Center (for relocation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation), a hotel and business complex, and a residential block. However, in 2012, based on the results of a survey among residents about a possible location for Hyde Park,<sup>5</sup> it was decided to create an area for a new park, and construction of the Parliamentary Center was relocated to the Mnevniki district. It is characteristic that both decisions did not provoke opposition from socially active groups among the population (Tkachenko, 2019). The authorities recognized that the greatest value for this place was as a recreational and tourist site (Ter-Voskanyan, 2018; Tkachenko, 2019). Despite the regional competence of the project, its federal significance was emphasized by a joint statement by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyanin. According to Putin, construction of a parliamentary center and a business zone with a hotel complex, as previously proposed, was inefficient, since it would create an additional burden on the center of Moscow.<sup>6</sup> As a result, direct intervention by the federal center resolved the dispute about the functional future of the territory (Tkachenko, 2019).

(3) The construction of the Church of St. Catherine in Yekaterinburg has become the most resonant transformation project outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg. The urgency of the issue stemmed from the fact that construction of the church was planned in the very center of the city. This case is also interesting because, under the influence of the public, the potential location for construction of the church was changed four times.<sup>7</sup> Seven years of sluggish public resistance to development gave way to significant pressure from regional and municipal authorities on

construction of the cathedral and mass unauthorized rallies of the local population in 2019.<sup>8</sup> The conflict quickly gained notoriety throughout the country, and Yekaterinburg became almost a symbol of an antireligious agenda and the people's struggle for the right to the city (Harvey, 2003; Tykanova and Khokhlova, 2015). The situation was resolved after intervention by President Putin, who proposed finding a compromise and conducting a survey of the population,<sup>9</sup> based on the results of which, a certain consensus was reached among city actors.

(4) The territory of Tuchkov Buyan in St. Petersburg is distinguished by a significant variety of projects that have arisen for possible use of this space. Whereas initially after the demolition of the State Institute of Applied Chemistry here, it was planned to build the residential and business quarter Embankment of Europe,<sup>10</sup> in 2012, President Putin adopted the decision to build a complex of Supreme Court buildings.<sup>11</sup> As part of the campaign for election of the governor of St. Petersburg in 2019, the acting Governor Alexander Beglov initiated the decision to build a park in this territory, taking into account numerous requests and demands by citizens. This decision was personally supported by Putin, who changed his position on the issue of building the Supreme Court in this territory. However, in 2022, the issue of building a judicial quarter on this site again appeared on the media agenda.<sup>12</sup> The only constant element that remained during all the changes in redevelopment plans was the construction of the Dance Academy, publicly promised by President Putin to the artistic director of the theater Boris Eifman.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Residents of Yekaterinburg came out to protest against construction of the temple for the third evening in a row, 2019. <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/661291> (accessed January 19, 2022); Activists proposed putting to a referendum the issue of land for a temple in Yekaterinburg, 2019. <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/664818> (accessed January 19, 2022); Putin intervened in the conflict over construction of a temple in Yekaterinburg, 2019. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2019/05/16/801646-konflikt-vokrug-stroitelstva> (accessed January 19, 2022).

<sup>9</sup> Putin proposed a way to resolve the conflict over the temple in Yekaterinburg, 2019. <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/16/05/2019/5cdd66b29a79470bfa116d24#ws> (accessed February 4, 2022).

<sup>10</sup> The governor liked the projects of the Embankment of Europe, 2009. [https://www.bsn.ru/news/market/spb/16141\\_gubernatoru\\_ponravilis\\_proekty\\_naberezhnoy\\_evropy/](https://www.bsn.ru/news/market/spb/16141_gubernatoru_ponravilis_proekty_naberezhnoy_evropy/) (accessed February 1, 2022).

<sup>11</sup> In St. Petersburg, land is being cleared for federal judges, 2012. [https://www.rbc.ru/spb\\_sz/04/12/2012/5592a5af9a794719538cd961?utm\\_source=amp\\_full-link](https://www.rbc.ru/spb_sz/04/12/2012/5592a5af9a794719538cd961?utm_source=amp_full-link) (accessed February 1, 2022).

<sup>12</sup> BBC: instead of a park, Putin wants to complete construction of a judicial quarter in St. Petersburg, 2022. <https://www.kommer-sant.ru/doc/5157179> (accessed February 1, 2022).

<sup>13</sup> Putin assured Boris Eifman that his theater project would not disappear from the development plans of St. Petersburg, 2013. <https://tass.ru/spb-news/618351> (accessed February 15, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Muscovites vote for Bolotnaya and Zaryadye as a counterpart to Hyde Park, 2012. <https://ria.ru/20120525/657359450.html> (accessed February 1, 2022).

<sup>6</sup> On the site of the Rossiya Hotel, a counterpart to San Marco Square will be built, 2013. [https://www.vedomosti.ru/realty/articles/2013/04/19/na\\_meste\\_gostinicy\\_rossiya\\_postroyat\\_analog\\_ploschadi](https://www.vedomosti.ru/realty/articles/2013/04/19/na_meste_gostinicy_rossiya_postroyat_analog_ploschadi) (accessed February 1, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> In Yekaterinburg, the results of a survey on a new site for the temple were tallied, 2022. <https://www.rbc.ru/society/14/10/2019/5da443249a794740315d8995> (accessed February 4, 2022).

(5) The project for concreting the embankments of the Vologda River was widely discussed on the regional and federal agendas. The plan involved improving the embankments but met fierce resistance from the local population. The principled position of the regional authorities, who called for not listening to anyone,<sup>14</sup> led to repeated direct complaints from the local population to the President of the Russian Federation.<sup>15</sup> However, in this case, even intervention by the president did not immediately slow the process, which had already begun.<sup>16</sup> Currently, work has been partially suspended and the possibility of more rational landscaping, with maximum preservation of green areas, is being discussed.<sup>17</sup>

(6) Development of the territory belonging to the Russian State Agrarian University—Moscow Agricultural Academy (the Timiryazev Academy) in northern Moscow also became a large and significant project that required intervention at the federal level. In this case, we are talking about a large residential construction project on the territory of the scientific testing grounds of the Timiryazev Academy. The situation roused discontent among the public and academy employees and they appealed to the president, who suggested leaving this territory alone.<sup>18</sup> Initially, it was decided to keep to the existing construction plans,<sup>19</sup> but under public and federal pressure, the area intended for construction was reduced from 100 to 24 ha.<sup>20</sup>

In the final scale (Appendix 1.1<sup>21</sup>), we assessed the criteria for the social significance of projects for trans-

forming the urban environment. For criteria 1.1 and 1.2, the authors introduced geographical parameters of location and scale, information about the functional status of the territory before the implementation of the project. Criterion 2.1 was designated Predominance of the interests of actors at the beginning and end of the project and differentiated depending on which of the actors was the largest beneficiary at the beginning of the project and at the end of the project. Criterion 2.2, which assesses the significance of the project for different levels of government, is constructed on a hierarchical principle: from the highest level of intervention (international, federal) to the lowest (regional, municipal). The significance of the transformation project is classified on a scale of high to low. Criterion 2.3 focuses on the breadth of publications about the project and reflects the extent to which discourse has gone beyond the regional (city) agenda. For assessment, a scale similar to criterion 2.2 was used. Criterion 3.1 analyzes the change in the functional purpose of the territory during the project and allows us to see how the essential direction of the transformation project is changing. Criterion 3.2, using the phase identification method, evaluates the number of changes in the concept of the transformation project and its functional content in the process of coordination by all actors. Finally, criterion 3.3 demonstrates whether a decision was made to move the project (or its function) to another location, which indicates the type of resolution of the conflict around the case and reflects the special social significance of the transformation project. A more detailed analysis of the substantive effectiveness of the cases, the role and participation of actors in socially significant projects is also presented additionally (Appendix 1.2).

## DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis of socially significant projects for transformation of the urban environment demonstrate the similarity of implementation scenarios in different Russian cities. As a rule, cases become publicly significant due to their location and the gradual increase in public attention to the project. It is worth noting that all transformation projects that required the intervention of federal authorities were resolved in various forms of consensus among actors. All selected projects required the personal participation of the President of the Russian Federation, and in the case of the implementation of the Okhta Center project, even the intervention of a global actor, UNESCO. As a result, none of the projects presented here were implemented in the original form. Moreover,

<sup>14</sup>So what if the banks will be concreted: the Vologda governor spoke about the work on the embankment, 2019. <https://newsvo.ru/news/121398> (accessed February 9, 2022).

<sup>15</sup>Vladimir Putin hears complaints about concreting the historical embankment in Vologda, 2019. <https://vologda-poisk.ru/news/na-zlobu-dnya/vladimiru-putinu-pozhalovalis-na-betonirovanie-istoricheskoy-naberezhnoy-v-vologde-video/> (accessed January 19, 2022); Vladimir Putin was again reminded of the scandalous concreting of the embankment in Vologda, 2020. [https://www.xn--b1a9xu.xn--p1ai/articles/society/vladimiru-putinu-vnov-napomnili-o-skandalnom-betonirovanii-n-aberezhnoy-v-vologde/?sphrase\\_id=2623533](https://www.xn--b1a9xu.xn--p1ai/articles/society/vladimiru-putinu-vnov-napomnili-o-skandalnom-betonirovanii-n-aberezhnoy-v-vologde/?sphrase_id=2623533) (accessed January 19, 2022); Architect Nadezhda Snigireva told Putin that the city embankment in Vologda is being poured with concrete, 2019. <https://newsvo.ru/news/118678> (accessed February 9, 2022); Putin was again reminded of the concreting of the embankment in Vologda, 2020. <https://newsvo.ru/blogovo/127926> (accessed February 9, 2022).

<sup>16</sup>The period of work on bank protection of the embankment in Vologda was extended until September 2020, 2020. <https://newsvo.ru/news/124744> (accessed February 9, 2022).

<sup>17</sup>Embankment. Abstracts of a large interview with the mayor, 2020. <https://newsvo.ru/blogovo/124235> (accessed February 9, 2022).

<sup>18</sup>Putin proposed leaving the Timiryazev Academy alone, 2016. <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/570f8f059a794765734b5ea8> (accessed February 8, 2022).

<sup>19</sup>The closer to the elections, the larger the bloating, 2016. [https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2016/04/14\\_a\\_8176571.shtml](https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2016/04/14_a_8176571.shtml) (accessed January 19, 2022).

<sup>20</sup>They want to build up the Timiryazev Academy again, 2021. <https://www.vesti.ru/article/2626889> (accessed February 8, 2022).

<sup>21</sup>Appendices 1.1 and 1.2 can be found at <https://escjournal.spbu.ru/article/view/13187/10272>. The appendices are given in the original form.

four of the six projects were moved and implemented in a completely new and less conflict-inducing location (e.g., construction of a church in Yekaterinburg was moved to the territory of a former instrument-making plant; the Okhta Center was built on the city periphery, in Lakhta district). Such transfers largely correspond to public outcry in the media and are accompanied by a change in the concepts of projects in the original territory.

Clearly, the cases we have chosen demonstrate a more complex system of relationships between actors. According to Tykanova and Khokhlova (2015), St. Petersburg in the 2000s was characterized by a *growth regime* due to an obvious tactical compromise between the interests of the authorities and large construction firms (according to (Gelman, 2010) it is “predatory state regime”). Stone points out that such a situation can, in principle, only arise if governments and businesses have the capacity to mobilize capital (Bederson et al., 2021; Stone, 1989). As soon as these opportunities become limited, grounds arise for a new regime. In the case of active pressure from society, a progressive middle class regime begins to form. In the case of passive influence on the part of all actors, a status quo regime occurs. According to (Stone, 1989), for a change to a progressive regime, the existence of an active middle class (an active civil society) with a significant amount of free time is necessary. The general cooperative agenda for society, as a rule, becomes ecological and antimilitarist issues and protection of cultural heritage (Papadopoulos, 1996).

In our opinion, in most cases, the closest to the current situation is a *progressive middle class regime*, which forms when a society begins to seriously oppose projects in the field of growth strategies. The existence of such a regime largely explains the ultimate abandonment of such symbolic projects for the city’s image as the Okhta Center, the Church of St. Catherine, or the European embankment on Tuchkov Buyan. However, in the initial phases of implementation of these socially significant projects, the situation was closer to a growth regime due to obvious coalitions between government and business (see Appendix 1.1). It should also be mentioned that the most important structural factor in the formation of growth coalitions is recovery economic growth; in Russia, it was widespread in the first half and middle of the 2000s (Borisova et al., 2011). In turn, growth machines (coalitions of government and business) suppress other actors and deprive them of their voice, and society is forced to look for ways to consolidate with various political groups, parties, and urban protection organizations in order to influence the situation. This state of affairs is extremely typical of the cases of the church in Yekaterinburg, the Okhta Center, and Tuchkov Buyan in the initial stages of their implementation.

The chosen methodology allows us to take into account the different levels of involvement of business,

the public, and administration in different socially significant projects. As indicated above, our study uses the theory of urban regimes as an analytical tool to see the ability of various actors to work together to produce a socially significant result in the space (Ledyayev, 2008; Stone, 1989). The methodological approaches we have chosen are relevant, since they differentiate in maximum detail the state of projects for transforming the urban environment, and also allow us to visualize different local options for transitions from one urban regime to another. The local transformation of the interaction of actors triggers the transformation of the urban regime as a whole. As we have already noted, certain territories can definitely have their own system of interactions between actors (Papadopoulos, 1996), which may differ from the citywide system of government (using the example of Brussels, it was proven that local regimes can exist within the same city depending on political circumstances).

As follows from the materials of Appendix 1.1, all of the considered significant projects for transforming the urban environment were initiated either by business or government (criterion 2.1). Almost all of them initially had a business/commercial aim (religion and business), which was abandoned in the process of interaction between actors in favor of a new socially significant one (criterion 3.1). An exception may be the case of the Timiryazev Academy development project, where the scale of the project was reduced in favor of preserving part of the territory for existing functions. According to the theory of urban regimes, the initial phase of all projects obviously took place in the realities of local urban growth regimes with the predominance of the interests of established coalitions of business and government. The subsequent increase in the role in social activism projects (criterion 2.3) and the change in goal setting in all projects under its influence (criteria 2.1 and 3.1–3.3) allows us to state that during the implementation of the above criteria, a change in the local urban regime occurred. Since the composition of the coalitions influencing the projects expanded to include a social actor and it was his interests that became the governing bodies in the final stage of all projects, we can claim that in five cases we observed a change in local urban regimes from growth to progressive. The realized interests of society there were associated not with conservation, but with development in the interests of the urban middle class, and in the case of the Timiryazev Academy, the regime transformed more towards a status quo regime. For the urban environment in aggregate, the transition to a progressive regime leads to what was seen in the 2010s (Zakharova, 2017): growth in the number of public spaces in the city with respect to commercial and administrative spaces, which, in our opinion, is an important indicator of transformation of the urban regime as a whole.

However, changes in the interests of actors do not always occur in one direction. As we noted above, in



the case of the Timiryazev Academy, public opinion was taken into account: in most of the territory the existing function was preserved; however, on a smaller part, business interests still prevailed. At the same time, the implementation of the park on Tuchkov Buyan was de facto officially permitted in the public interest, but taking into account the interests of the federal government. Therefore, it is important to note that the transition to a middle class regime does not necessarily mean a complete transition of all actors to the position of public opinion. Consensus can be found taking into account the interests of society, but also taking into account the interests of government and business. However, the fundamental difference between the progressive regime and the growth regime will be the fact that the situation can no longer be unambiguously resolved in anyone's favor without taking into account and the influence of public position.

## CONCLUSIONS

The materials obtained make it possible to draw informed conclusions about the progress of the process and the results of the change in local urban regimes. It is shown that in five studied cases, a transition of local urban regimes from growth to progressive was observed, and in one, from growth to a greater extent towards the status quo regime (the case of the Timiryazev Academy). The results of the applied research (see appendices 1.1 and 1.2) confirm the correctness of the hypothesis put forward: all the identified criteria for the social significance of transformation projects urban environments were in a significant differentiating mutual influence with changes in the parameters of urban regimes. The main cutoff criterion for intervention by federal authorities used in the selection of the studied cases, together with the criterion of the subsequent radical change in the concept of the project in the conditions of the peculiarities of the Russian political system, allow the suggestion that the studied cases, although they describe only local changes in urban regimes, nevertheless become potentially precedent-setting, at least for the studied cities. A more reasonable extrapolation of conclusions about local regime change to cities as a whole, however, requires additional research. Here we have described to a greater extent the mechanisms of such a change and the participation in it of socially significant projects for transforming the urban environment.

Based on the results of the study of such mechanisms, the authors have identified the following principles of mutual influence of socially significant transformation projects and urban regimes in the Russian Federation:

(1) *The principle of competitive public interaction of all types of actors.* The comprehensive, effective interest in the project on the part of all types of actors, which predetermines the social significance of proj-

ects, is common to all studied cases of change in the local urban regime, regardless of the type of such change. Transformation becomes socially significant as a result of interaction, accompanied by the presence of conflicting conflicts between actors.

(2) *The principle of changing or moving of project as a spatial method of resolving conflict.* Such a change under the influence of public activism is the most important reaction, demonstrating high social significance, and indicates a local transformation of the urban regime. The idea of relocating the project with the transfer of its original function to another territory increases the significance even more (relocation of the Okhta Center, the church in Yekaterinburg, the buildings of the Supreme Court complex and the Parliamentary Center).

The patterns of such mutual influence identified in the research materials and verified on a larger sample include the following:

(1) *The prevailing shift from realizing the interests of government and business to the benefit of society.* It has been recorded that during the implementation of transformation projects there is a change in the influence of actors. In most cases, social significance was closely related not simply to the conflict of interests of actors, but to the predominance of the interests of society over the interests of other actors. Whereas at the early stages, the influence of government and business is high, during implementation of the project the role of society grows significantly. According to the authors, this makes it possible to speak about the gradual formation of a progressive middle class regime.

(2) *Involvement of paternalistic de facto tools allow a consensus to be reached.* Federal intervention is typical of Russian practice by resolving situations around socially significant transformation projects. The participation of the President or other federal institutions in resolving issues around transformation projects speaks of crisis regimes in the relationships of actors in cities, and also indicates insurmountable public pressure. Ultimately, federal intervention leads to a decision based on public opinion.

It should be noted that the identified principles and patterns significantly influence changes in the urban environment. Therefore, owing to changes and transfers of projects, territories appear where the initial redevelopment plan could not have been implemented, the number of free spaces and green areas increases instead of the original development projects (Zaryadye Park, Labor Square in Yekaterinburg, the park on Tuchkov Buyan). Relocation of projects opens up the potential for development of new urban peripheral territories and previously untapped urban environments (Lakhta, Mnevniki, the territory of the former instrument-making plant in Yekaterinburg).

The selected socially significant projects for transforming the urban environment are fully indicators of changes in local urban regimes, because they allow

one to see the conflict of interests of actors and its results at the local level, using the game of scale (Haggett, 2001; Kaganskii, 1997; Treivish, 2006). In the cases we have chosen, the growth regime is gradually being replaced by elements of a progressive middle class regime. It should be emphasized that with respect to the described cases, we should not talk about different regimes in different cities, but about local regimes formed by specific projects in the local environment during a certain period. These conditions are studied in detail and briefly described in the study for each case. Such conditions can arise at a certain period in any large Russian city, then one can expect the results of transformation of space similar to the ones described. Currently, a significant local transformation of the dominant urban regimes in Russian cities is occurring; certain parameters of their mutual influence with transformation of urban space are described by the authors in this article.

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#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of this work declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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