

# MOSCOW INHABITANTS SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN CITY MANAGEMENT

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Social networks are capable of uniting people and mobilising them to assert their rights in a number of differing situations. That is why, in the nearest future, this issue will most likely belong to social networks, and to bloggers.

We are often blamed that our activity does not change anything, and we respond to that by saying: 'Time will tell'. For example, take the situation with the 'human shield' on the Moscow belt highway, formed with the cars of ordinary citizens by the road patrol service employees in order to catch some criminals. We demanded Kazantsev's resignation. But it is not only about Kazantsev – the most important task is to avoid such 'human shields' in the future. For this reason, the result will not be felt at once. We have raised the axe, which will always weigh above Kazantsev (who is the head of the Moscow GAI) and now any lapse, any big scandal, and he will have to go. Of course, he will be fired peacefully, and probably the official reason for his resignation will be different.

Our power today is in unity. People can fight for their rights, but they either don't want to waste their time on this, or they don't believe in the effectiveness of

their actions. This is the real reason for the passivity of Muscovites, though some other reasons can also be pointed to, of course. People are ready to sit beside their computers, voice their discontent, vote, even sign petitions via the Internet, but that's about all. One of the most significant problems of those who live in a megalopolis is their lack of time. Time is a very precious commodity in big cities. So, it happens that some organisations take on an initiative, protesting against something that is going on in the housing and public utilities sector, on the roads, or around the demolition of garages in Moscow, but all the others just act as observers. Some people even believe that our activity is a way to generate PR coverage for ourselves.

However, **in a short period of time the population in general will be ready to participate in different forms of active social protest.** Even today we can say that about 70% of people are in favour of this. Everything depends on how professionally the preparation work is done. Professional PR technologies exist in this area, and there are some rather good specialists.

There are many people in Russia who fall within the framework of different subcultures. **There is no difference between a group that protects the rights of car owners, or those who help pensioners, young people or hippies,** provided that they really want to do exactly that, and not simply to get PR attention for their activities, as do the Movement Against Illegal Immigration do for example, who try to advocate and promote the ideas of 'great Russia' at our events. Yes, they have come to us, but it does not mean that we fully support them. The role of the different subcultures will increase if they are utilized correctly.

Only two years ago it seemed that, on the whole, people didn't care about our activities and about the operation of FAR. But today we keep finding we have totally unknown scooter riders and bikers who are ready to help us and to participate in our activities. The most important thing here is the trust between



The Federation of Car Owners of Russia (FAR) is an all-Russian public organisation that unites car owners and fights for their rights. It was established on May 19, 2006 in the course of an assembly of regional organisations of car owners that took place in Novosibirsk. One of the most recent actions of the FAR has been to demand the resignation of the head of the Moscow State Automobile Inspectorate, Sergey Kazantsev, for the organisation of a 'human shield' made up of the cars of his employees on March 5, 2010 in order to catch some criminals.

people, which keeps getting undermined by those forces that are pursuing their own ends.

The Public Chamber has reacted strongly against the General Plan for the development of Moscow. They are more worried about historical real estate development. But how can they call for the demolition of 18,000 garages in the North-Western district alone? The activities of the Moscow City Duma openly contradict the interests of the city's inhabitants. I would like to hope that in future the people will unite, as happens in the US or in Canada, and they will decide for themselves what needs to be done with this territory – whether garages need to stay, whether a filling station should be built, or whether multi-layer garages can be constructed using the obtained revenues.

As for the Public Chamber, there are people within it who are not just public figures, but who are partially politicians. Many of them earn their own dividends by criticising various projects. There are people in the Public Chamber with whom one can cooperate, and there are some who it would better not to approach, even distantly. But, in any case, the Public Chamber is a bureaucratic structure, even though it includes many rather well-respected people. Given this, I find it difficult to believe that the role of the Public Chamber will increase. ■

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