MOSCOW CITY PROFILE

1. General information

Geographical location Moscow is located in the central part of the East European Plain. Almost from all sides the city is surrounded by the Moscow region, with the exception of a small southern section, where the region borders on the Kaluga region.

M²: 2.561,5 km²

Population. As of 2021, the population of Moscow was 13,010 thousand people. Moscow is the largest city in Russia, with about 9% of the country's population. This figure does not include the migrants without official work permits. The city was constantly growing, despite the restrictive measures introduced as early as 1932. These measures included compulsory registration for every resident, impossible in the absence of an official request from certain employers and quota, attempts to reduce the creation of new enterprises and institutions. In the post-war years, the number of Moscow residents increased by about 1 million every 10 years (table 1). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, due to the high demand for labor and significant salaries, the capital remained one of the most attractive destinations for both internal migrants and, to an increasing extent, immigrants from the countries of the former USSR, primarily Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan).

Table 1. The population of Moscow according to the data of national censuses.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population of Moscow, thousand people</th>
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<tr>
<td>1871</td>
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<td>2012</td>
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<td>2021</td>
<td>13010,1</td>
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Local self-government

Moscow and St. Petersburg are the cities of federal importance, along with 84 (until 2022) other regions, form the subjects of the Russian Federation, separate from the Moscow and Leningrad regions, respectively. Executive power in the city belongs to the Government of Moscow, headed by the Mayor elected for 5 years (since 2010 this post has been occupied by Sergei Sobyanin). Legislative power belongs to the Moscow City Duma. It consists of 45 deputies elected by the majoritarian system in constituencies.

An executive branch and municipal authorities operate on the same territory in each of the 125 districts. The executive power is represented by both the City Government and the prefectures, its divisions.

They operate in 11 of the 12 districts into which the city is divided. Two peripheral districts, only recently incorporated into Moscow, are governed by the same prefecture. These two districts still include two cities and a few other separate urban and rural settlements in the countryside\(^1\). They still retain their status after the expansion of Moscow.

So, Moscow municipalities are divided into three types: municipal districts (coinciding with 125 districts), two urban districts (Troitsk and Shcherbinka), and 19 settlements (19 municipalities). The boundaries of municipalities coincide with the administrative division into districts, although they are not officially tied to it. Municipalities of all levels have the councils of deputies and the administrations (executive authorities) with their heads\(^2\).

Economic data. Moscow has the largest economy among all subjects of the Russian Federation. The GRP of the capital in 2020 amounted to 196,730 billion rubles (about 2,500 billion euros), which represents more than 20% of the country's GDP. After the collapse of the USSR, the economy of the city underwent rapid and radical changes associated with deindustrialization and structural changes in the tertiary sector. Until the early 1990s, industry accounted for a significant part of the GRP and included both high-tech enterprises (for example, aerospace industry), as well as traditional labor-intensive industries, including large automobile plants, textile production, which are not typical for modern large capitals. Enterprises that failed to become competitive in the international and domestic markets closed within a few years. Some of their sites were abandoned but very often they were initially used as markets and warehouses. Then, due to the high value of urban land, they are being replaced by modern residential and office buildings according to a special plan. For example, such a complex arose on the site of ZIL, in the past one of the country's largest automobile plant employing in the 1970s. about 70 thousand people (Fig. 1).


\(^2\) Law No. 8 of April 11, 2012 “On Amendments to the Law of the City of Moscow of November 6, 2002 No. 56 “On the Organization of Local Self-Government in the City of Moscow”.
Fig. 1. The project of the Zilart residential complex, which is being built on the site of the former ZIL industrial zone. Source: https://www.lsr.ru/msk/zhilye-kompleksy/zilart

Now the contribution of industry to the GRP of the capital has decreased to 16%. The capital's manufacturing industry employs about 700,000 people, or about 10% of the working-age population. The sectoral structure of industry has changed dramatically and now relies to a greater extent on the scientific and human potential of the city. The capital concentrates about a third of the country's scientific personnel, and Moscow's share in R&D spending of the state budget is more than half (52%). Accordingly, the share of high-tech industries in the industry is increasing. It produces 19.3% of electronics in Russia. The pharmaceutical industry is growing, providing about 20% of drugs in the country.

Moscow hosts the highest stages of the production chain of the manufacturing industry – management and the creation of new products. For example, most plants of the aerospace have been transferred to other cities, but the new National Space Center being built in Moscow will employ about 10 thousand people in the field of R&D. The share of industries producing goods mainly for the large market of the Moscow region is also growing: the food industry, the energy production, electric buses, etc. The Moscow authorities contribute to the development of innovative industries through special economic zones, which are granted tax and customs benefits.

The decline in the share of industry in the GRP (14%) was offset by a sharp increase of retail and wholesale trade (up to 24%). Real estate transactions account for another 12%. Together with industry, these three types of economic activity account for 50% of the capital's GRP (Fig. 2). Since Moscow is home to most of the federal authorities - the Presidential Administration, the Government, the State Duma (parliament), ministries, state committees and agencies and has its own large administrative apparatus, its maintenance also constitutes a significant part of the GRP.

The construction complex remain an important part of the Moscow economy remains and employs about 1 million people.
Moscow is Russia's main financial center, reflecting its traditionally high political and economic centralization. Moscow banking companies account for more than 80% of assets. Other major Russian companies also have headquarters in Moscow. Their main production assets may be located thousands of kilometers from the capital, but these companies pay taxes in Moscow, which creates the base of its financial well-being. The city benefits from one of the highest per capita budget expenditures in the country. However, this situation is changing: since 2011, the contribution of the oil and gas industry to the budget of the capital has decreased by 4 times.

Tourism has become one of the important branches of the city's economy. Due to domestic tourism, the number of tourists who visited Moscow during the year is partially recovering after the coronavirus pandemic. More than 10 thousand historical monuments are officially registered in the city. Moscow museums such as the State Tretyakov Gallery (Russian art), the A.S. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts (foreign art), Garage Museum of Contemporary Art were among the top 100 most visited art museums in the world until 2022. According to the Moscow Government, last years every third historical building has been restored. A unique program for business has been launched: a private investor can rent a valuable historical building for 1 ruble per 1 m² per year, subject to its scientific restoration.

2. Urban history

Grand Duchy of Moscow and Russian kingdom

Moscow, founded in 1147 by Yuri Dolgoruky on the left bank of the Moskva River, one of the tributaries of the Oka, quickly became the center of one of the largest principalities in Northwestern Rus'. Having won the struggle against Tver’ and Novgorod for the role of the focus of integration of Russian lands into a single state, the Grand Duchy of Moscow was transformed into the Russian (Moscow) kingdom, and Moscow became the main political and economic center of Rus'. The annexation of new lands required the expansion of the state apparatus and the creation of new "prikaz" (prototypes of ministries). Under Ivan IV the
Terrible, for the first time since the Hanseatic period of Veliky Novgorod, foreign courts (embassies) were opened in Rus', and Moscow was included in international trade.

The Time of Troubles, as a period of political and social turbulence, had a negative impact on all territories of the Russian state, including Moscow. The capital remained the main arena of the struggle for power between political and dynastic groups. The capture of Moscow occupied by the militia and the accession to the throne of the new Romanov dynasty marked the end of this period. The 17th century was characterized by a relative political lull, during which the new dynasty consolidated its power, and Moscow gradually increased its influence.

**Imperial period**

With the coming to power of Peter I, the reorganization of the entire state began according to the European principles. Expansion to the North-West, South and South-West required consolidation of new territories. Moscow, mired in competition for power between boyar families, was the symbol of the vices of the past. In 1712 the capital was moved to Petersburg. Moscow, despite the short-term return of its capital status in 1728–1732, was relegated to a secondary role politically, but remained the economic and cultural center of the empire for a long time. For instance, the coronation of emperors and empresses was still held in Moscow.

In the late 19th – the early 20th centuries, Moscow was going through a period of industrialization and became one of the largest centers of the textile industry. The rapid transition to an industrial economy caused an increase in the size of the working class, which on its turn contributed to the development of revolutionary activity.

**Soviet period**

Although Petrograd remained the center of political events, Moscow still played an important role in the life of the state. During the revolution of 1917, bloody battles broke out here again. As a result, the city came under the rule of the Bolsheviks. Meanwhile, in Petrograd, due to the lack of food and basic goods, the discontent was growing, and the likelihood of a counter-revolutionary rebellion increased. In February 1918, Germany launched an offensive on the Eastern Front, threatening Petrograd. Under the influence of these factors, the Bolshevik government decided to return the capital to Moscow.

After the victory of the Bolsheviks in the Civil War of 1917-1921, Moscow became again the capital of a large state. The city was being built up at a rapid pace, its territory expanded at the expense of suburbs. In the same period, the Soviet government actively was getting rid of the pre-revolutionary symbols of the city, primarily religious ones: temples and monasteries were destroyed. At the same time, the transport infrastructure developed: in 1935, the first metro line was opened. The scientific potential of the capital increased: in the 1930s, a network of research and design institutes was established, including the system of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Between 1917 to 1939, the population of the capital increased by 2,361 thousand people, reaching 4,216 thousand (Fig. 3).

During this period, the General Master Plan (“General Plan for the Reconstruction of Moscow”) was worked out and began to be implemented, which implied a radical change in the entire city, its structure and economy. Large engineering and technical projects were developed: the creation of a subway, watering the city, the reconstruction of land transport, the construction of bridges. The radial-ring structure traditional for Moscow was combined with the creation of new districts (Fig. 3).
The life of the capital was strongly influenced by the Great Patriotic War. Moscow hosted the State Defense Committee, as well as the General Staff of the Red (Soviet) Army. In the winter of 1941-1942, the front came close to Moscow. The city was subjected to constant shelling and bombing, the people's militia was formed from Muscovites. Many industrial enterprises were evacuated, some government offices were evacuated to Kuibyshev (now Samara). In December 1941, the offensive of the German Army Group “Center” was stopped, and German troops were driven back from the capital.

After the end of the war, Moscow entered a new round of development. In 1960, the area of the city was dramatically expanded; a new border of the city was formed along the Moscow Ring Road (MKAD). In the 1960s-1970s, the periphery of the capital was actively built up by the so-called micro-districts. They are parts of the city limited by several streets with a population of several thousand, and sometimes tens of thousands of people, including prefabricated residential buildings located freely in the green space, and the necessary infrastructure meeting specially developed norms and standards in separate buildings (kindergartens, schools, canteens, shops, etc.). In 1980, Moscow hosted the XXII Summer Olympic Games, for which a number of large sports facilities were built.

Contemporary period

In the post-Soviet period, the unprecedented concentration of political life, financial and human capital in Moscow further strengthened its role as a symbol of Russia's claims to maintain the status of a great or at least an influential regional power, its comprehensive modernization and integration into the global economic system. Back in the 1990s., the construction of the business center Moscow-City, consisting of several skyscrapers, was started on the site of the old industrial zone (Fig. 4). It included office buildings, international-class hotels and expensive housing, and malls. At that time, such business center providing access for the new middle class towards cosmopolitan consumption patterns was unusual for Russian citizens. Futuristic and experimental architectural forms, high-rise dominants, and extensive glazed surfaces symbolized modernization aspirations of the city authorities. At the same time,
active construction in the historical part of the city often led to the destruction or gross violations of the norms of scientific restoration of architectural monuments. In the 1990s - 2000s, the urban environment suffered from a chaotic heap of kiosks and small commercial buildings, loud advertising. Rapid motorization with a lack of transport infrastructure has caused regular traffic jams on many streets and highways, slowing down traffic and overloading public transport.

![Fig. 4 “Moscow City”, a CBD district. Source: https://ria.ru/](image-url)

Over the past two decades, these problems have been largely resolved. In 2018, Moscow, along with 11 other cities, hosted the FIFA World Cup. Several important sports and infrastructure facilities have been built in the city for this event. However, even the construction of numerous costly interchanges, the arrangement of chord highways and backups of congested avenues has not yet made it possible to eliminate congestion during peak hours. A special role in the development of Moscow belongs to the vast territory to the southwest annexed in 2012 and called New Moscow (its area is almost 1.5 times larger than the "old" Moscow). In the zone closest to Moscow, active residential construction is underway in it, many new jobs have been created in shopping centers, services, and industry. However, it is too early to talk about the full integration of the more remote territories of New Moscow.

3. **Stages and politics of urbanization**

Having taken shape in the most important political center back in the 14th century, the modern capital of Russia has retained significant traces of past eras and stages of development (Fig. 5).
The first stage can be defined as the period from the formation of the city as one of the centers of Russian lands until the appearance of the first regular building plans. Its main features were a constant modernization of city fortifications, the expansion of the built-up areas gradually merging into the single massif and the first attempts to transform the natural landscape. The evolution of city fortifications is best known - the core of Moscow, the Kremlin was expanding, and the areas of the city closest to the Kremlin were surrounded by additional walls, the first of which was Kitay-gorod, the main trading suburb. By the 17th century, a system of fortifications consisted of several rings, which predetermined the further development of the radial-ring structure of the city. There was a functional division of different territories: the Kremlin lost its residential function and became an "administrative" area. The radial-ring structure of the city continued beyond its borders - defensive arcs of fortified monasteries were formed, surrounding the capital at a slight distance from it. This stage ended with the reformist activities of Peter the Great and the emergence of regular urban plans.

The second stage was marked by attempts to rebuild the medieval structure of the city in accordance with the modern European ideas. Their implementation was stimulated by the loss of defensive and capital functions by Moscow. The fortified lines, were transformed in the second half of the 18th century into rings of boulevards. But funding was insufficient for the reconstruction since another city, St. Petersburg, became the capital of Russian Empire. This stage was interrupted by one of the most important events in Moscow history - a fire during the Patriotic War of 1812 when the ancient capital was captured by the Napoleon army.

The third stage is connected with the restoration of the city and its pre-industrial development. The fire of 1812 destroyed most of the urban development inside Zemlyanoy Gorod. Instead, neighborhoods of tenement houses arose. At the same time, a new ring structure was laid - the Kamer-Kollezhsky Val, which served as the border of the city.

At the fourth stage, which began in the 1850s, the first industrial zones appeared. They were located along the Moscow River and later, with the development of railways, along them. The first workers' neighborhoods emerged nearby. As a result, Moscow acquired an even more heterogeneous structure, especially in social terms. During the revolutionary events of the early 20th century it led to the appearance of stable uprisings’ strongholds (the most striking example
of them is the district of Presnya). This stage ended with the change of the state regime and the return of the capital status to Moscow.

**The fifth stage (1918 - late 1950s)**, which began with the restoration of Moscow, which lost half of its population during the civil war, is characterized by the emergence of many plans for a radical restructuring of the city and active actions to implement some of them. Already in the first decades of Soviet power, parade highways were laid in Moscow, framed by monumental public and residential buildings. The best domestic and world architects (Le Corbusier and others) became the authors of their projects. These buildings were designed to meet the latest global trends in architecture and urban planning technologies and be based on the creative processing of the best Western approaches. The participation of famous architects in the transformation of the capital was also supposed to contribute to the diversity of the city's appearance and the formation of its new image abroad. Wide avenues and front squares lay on the site of hundreds of churches, monasteries, valuable historical and cultural monuments that did not fit in with communist ideology and simply interfered with construction. In the era of “mature” Stalinism, the bright architectural experiments of the first years of Soviet power were replaced by a commitment to the majestic and pompous neoclassical eclecticism, called the Stalinist Empire style, which combined elements of the Renaissance, late classicism, art deco and neo-Gothic and relied almost exclusively on domestic architects and urban planners.

As part of this phase, in 1935, the first master plan for the city was adopted. Moscow became the largest industrial center and housed many industrial plants. Large residential neighborhoods were built for their workers, while many central neighborhoods were modernized in accordance with the new ideology. As part of the master plan, new standards have been introduced – constructing multistorey buildings in large blocks. A special place in the master plan belonged to the projects for watering and planting trees and shrubs. Canals and reservoirs were built on the Moscow River. The authorities tried to implement the concept of a protective green belt around the city and the radial green axes. In connection with the spread of motor transport during this period, existing highways were expanded and new roads were built, including in the historical center. The growing population began to use the newly constructed first lines of the subway. Seven buildings reminiscent of American skyscrapers of the 1930s were erected in the early 1950s and make part of high-rise dominants of the city till nowadays (Fig. 6).
The sixth stage began in the early 1960s. It is associated with the transition to industrial housing construction and the expansion of the city to the Moscow Ring Road completed in 1962. Significant territories included to the city have not yet been built up and served as a resource for new housing construction. The first vast residential areas were appearing at the periphery of the city populated both by Muscovites resettling from the center and migrants from other regions who were allowed to move to the capital under special quotas from Moscow factories. This resource for territorial development was exhausted only in the 1990s.

The seventh stage is associated with the active growth of the population of Moscow in the 1990s through migration. Available housing was not enough, which gave a new impetus to housing construction despite of the transition crisis. The largest project of that era was the development of the Mar'ino district in the southeast, at the moment the largest in terms of population from the districts of the city. But “spot” development has also become widespread, which has become the “scourge” of modern Moscow: new high-rise buildings fit into the long-established urban environment caused sharp discontent among residents. The growing demand for housing had to be satisfied by the "protuberances” of the city that appeared during this period beyond the Moscow Ring Road (then the boundary of the city) - Butovo, Solntsevo and others. The growth of the city continues to this day, but the modern stage is characterized by somewhat different processes.

Since the 2010s, the concept of renovation has become widespread. In connection with the end of the service life of many buildings of the era of industrial housing construction (the second half of the 20th century), a major renovation program of many neighborhoods is being carried out. It involves the construction of new housing in their place with a larger living area, which allows to accommodate old residents of the area and at the same time to sell part of apartments on the market. Former industrial facilities are being acquire new functions, including residential. However, this does not fully meet the demand, which leads to outpacing the growth of the suburbs, where housing is relatively cheaper. To improve connectivity with
them, major infrastructure projects are being implemented, in particular, the construction of new outbound highways and the expansion of the metro (subway): the number of stations doubled from 2012 to 2022.

**Actors of urbanization and their interactions**

In such a large city as Moscow, there are many different actors that influence urban processes and urban planning decisions. The most influential are the federal and city authorities, large companies and entrepreneurs, to a lesser extent - civil society. In Moscow, as the capital, the urban planning role of the federal center as the most important land user and "ideologist" of the city's image is important. Thus, the main actors of urbanization in Moscow are as follows.

1. **Federal authorities.** The federal center takes an active part in the formation and implementation of megaprojects in the capital - large objects of international level, such as, for example, an international business center, creating a positive image of the capital and attracting foreign investment. No major decision can be taken without the approval of the highest national leaders. Various parts of the federal authorities, from the Presidential Administration to individual ministries, are in charge of unique objects and large territories, for instance, the Kremlin or the territories of large universities.

2. **City authorities** - the mayor and the Government of Moscow. Over the past 30 years, two administrations have changed in the city – of the mayors Yuri Luzhkov (1992-2010) and Sergei Sobyanin, who replaced him since 2010. Different political and economic conditions and other factors had a significant impact on the priorities and ways of managing of their administrations.

3. **Entrepreneurs.** Owners and management of large public and private companies headquartered in Moscow. Many of them have significant influence at the federal level and successfully lobby for the urban development projects they need - the construction of new buildings and the allocation of sites for them, sometimes at the expense of the cultural heritage of the city. The influence of medium and especially small businesses is limited to the local level. During the years of Yu. Luzhkov's rule, in key points of the capital, especially near metro stations, markets, many small buildings intended for retail trade and entire towns of kiosks arose. Some of these buildings were erected without the necessary legal grounds. Passenger transportation, along with the largest municipal organization Mosgortrans, was carried out by private companies that used the labor of migrant drivers ready to work 12 hours a day, and cheap minibuses in poor technical condition. Under Mayor S. Sobyanin, the problems associated with small commercial buildings were solved radically - they were demolished almost overnight and replaced in particular by large malls and other modern forms of retail trade. Unreliable private carriers were replaced by new forms of transportation.

4. **Developers.** Moscow is the largest Russian city with the largest absolute population growth in the country and a huge demand for housing of various classes, which determines the economic power of developers and broad lobbying capabilities of the construction business. Some authors believe that many urban planning decisions, including the expansion of the territory of Moscow and the construction of new metro lines in their direction, are largely due to the interests of developers building up large areas in the former countryside.

5. **Local communities.** At the municipal and local levels, there are many activists and social movements involved in urban planning - fighting against "spot" development, ambitious projects of the city government or private developers, destroying the existing urban environment, trying to solve local environmental problems, etc. Their agenda has become
especially relevant and significant in the last decade due to the accumulated burden of urban planning problems.

6. **Ordinary residents**. Ordinary Muscovites and tourists are the most important users of the city's infrastructure, widely expressing their opinion about the city-planning decisions of the authorities on various Internet sites.

7. **Migrants**. Moscow is the city with the largest migrant communities, many of which number in the hundreds of thousands. They significantly affect the functioning of the service sector, construction, urban services.

4. **Problems of urbanization: urban sprawl, environmental pollution, etc.**

The economic and socio-cultural problems faced by the Russian capital can be conditionally divided into general, inherent in the whole city, and local, manifested in individual districts or, most often, neighborhoods or buildings.

The common problems, as in other global cities, are primarily related to high social stratification (Fig. 7). Moscow belongs to the “richest” regions of Russia in terms of per capita income and purchasing power, and in the Russian capital there are many people with the highest incomes in the country. But there are also many poor people: the difference between the two extreme deciles is about 40 times. At the same time, there are no poor areas in the city with a neglected, degraded urban environment (this is a positive legacy of the socialist period). There are no areas with a high concentration of migrants. Relatively expensive housing can be found in virtually every neighborhood, sometimes with fenced and heavily guarded areas around it. But there are prestigious districts (in the center, the west and southwest of the city), and non-prestigious ones, mainly around the former and active industrial zones, mainly in the south and southeast.

![Fig 7. Social differentiation of Moscow neighborhoods. Source: Vendina, Panin, Tikunov, 2019](image)

Sharp social contrasts are clearly manifested in another general problem - the provision of housing. The housing problem is traditionally one of the main problems in Moscow. Despite
the active construction of new housing, buying an apartment is available only to a small stratum of residents (about 5%). Renovation and “spot” development have their costs, as they increase population density in the green neighborhoods of the 1960s, as well as deepening inter-district disparities in living conditions. The solution of the housing problem with the help of mass mortgage loans is also not possible, since this method of obtaining capital for the purchase of real estate, for various reasons, is available only to a few citizens. The aging of the population and its narrowed reproduction leave some families with hope for apartment exchanges and their inheritance. Some pensioners use or reconstruct their second homes in the countryside (“dachas”: more than 50% of Moscow families have a second home), providing the opportunity to live outside the city in winter, leaving their Moscow apartments to children and grandchildren.

The third most important general problem in Moscow is transport. In early 2022, there were more than 3.7 million cars in the city. They have a negative impact on environment, and also daily creates a transport collapse on the main city highways. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that a significant part of federal government institutions, cultural potential and the service sector is concentrated in the city center, which occupies only 6.5% of the total area of Moscow. The “daytime” population of the central part of the city is almost 7 times higher than the “nighttime” population, which is why public transport is overloaded during peak hours. According to experts, it is overcrowding and huge intracity distances that are one of the most significant factors that pose a danger to Moscow in the future.

However, in the last two decades there has been a significant decentralization of jobs, and alternative sub-centers are emerging. The city authorities are trying to distribute traffic flows more evenly. Relatively cheap public transport, in which large investments are directed, and environmentally friendly individual vehicles have received a clear priority. The metro is rapidly developing, which is in the top 3 in the world in terms of passenger satisfaction. For intracity and suburban communication, a “surface metro” is organized - a “clock” movement of railway trains along the so-called central diameters the nearest suburbs via the center. The dedicated lanes for public ground transportation on many streets are created. Each passenger has the opportunity to track the movement of the buses, electric buses and trams using applications on mobile phones or electronic scoreboards. High-speed urban roads are being built. Car sharing and rental systems for bicycles and electric scooters have been created. Nevertheless, in the conditions of huge distances, the transport problem cannot be called solved.

The problem of parking is closely related to it. In Moscow yards, even in new neighborhoods, there is little space for car parking, intra-block passages are narrow and inconvenient, and underground parking is available only in expensive apartment buildings. Parking in the center, near crowded places is very expensive in accordance with high demand - up to 10-11 euros per hour.

Although Moscow avoided the formation of ethnic ghettos populated by migrants, the problem of their integration is especially acute in the capital, given its leadership in the number of immigrants from the former Soviet republics among the regions of Russia. The degree of integration depends on the country of origin, legal status, length of stay and work in Moscow, residence of the family at home or in the Russian capital, skills and knowledge of the Russian language. Many migrants arrive in Moscow without actually having any qualifications, are used as cheap labor, primarily in construction, which naturally complicates their situation: their rights are often violated. Though there are no significant conflicts between migrants and “native” Muscovites, relations between them are still far from being harmonious.

Like all major cities in the world, Moscow is experiencing serious environmental problems. Cars are since a long time the main source of air pollution. In Soviet times, it was
assumed that residents would mainly use public transport, and the projects of many districts do not meet the required noise insulation indicators. The share of areas under streets and driveways is insufficient in the total city territory is insufficient, and the carrying capacity of some of them is low. In Soviet times, there were several air polluting industrial plants within the city limits, but now almost all of them have either closed or been taken out of the city, with the exception of the Moscow Oil Refinery located on the outskirts, but the large sums of money were invested there in treatment facilities. A big problem for Moscow is the reduction in the area of green spaces, parks and forests. The construction of new housing, retail space and social infrastructure is often done to the detriment of green spaces.

Among the most pressing local problems that concern the residents of the city, in addition to "spot" development, one should include difficulties in housing and communal services, that is, the maintenance, condition and overhaul of multi-apartment residential buildings. The maintenance of most of them, especially the relatively old ones built in Soviet times and earlier, is most often carried out by local divisions of a special organization belonging to the city government, although there are also many buildings maintained by the housing cooperatives or associations of residents. The inhabitants of some houses complain about the lack of timely response to their problems, poor cleaning of stairwells, etc. There are still houses in the city that need urgent overhaul, sometimes associated with the temporary resettlement of residents. A planned overhaul means not only painting works, but also the replacement of the entire infrastructure in the building - heating pipes, plumbing and sewerage, electrical facilities, elevators. Such repairs are associated with significant inconvenience to residents. In some cases, the construction companies hired by the city organization are doing this work slowly or badly, which causes dissatisfaction among residents.

5. Place of residents in the city: participation and mobilization

In accordance with the concentration of power in the capital, political, protest and social activity is most pronounced in Moscow. Examples of street political activity include rallies on Bolotnaya Square in 2011, caused by the disagreement of some voters with the results of the elections to the State Duma, or demonstrations in 2020, which were caused by opposition-minded citizens disagreeing with the results of the elections to the Moscow City Duma. The main actors of political activity are young and middle-aged people belonging to the middle class. In such cases, the authorities do not issue official permissions for public demonstrations and in case they are after all organized use special police forces against their participants.

A certain protest activity is generated by the environmental agenda. Persistent attempts by the city authorities to allocate part of the forests and parks for development are sometimes met with no less active resistance from local residents. The largest conflicts of this nature occurred in 2007-2012 due to the cutting of part of the forest during the construction of a high-speed highway in a Moscow suburb - the city of Khimki, and the cutting of the Troitsk Forest in 2022. In cases concerning small green areas, such conflicts are local in nature (Fig. 8).

Conflicts over "spot development" or some projects proposed by the authorities are usually developing according a similar scenario. Public hearings provided for by law andf needed for the approval of construction, are often of a formal nature, and in some cases are falsified by interested authorities (for example, they are attended mainly by persons affiliated with them).

The city government has set up a number of websites that allow citizens to express their opinions about projects or their concerns, but the representativeness of discussions on major issues is far from being clear, and they are accordingly not always effective.
Fig. 8. Protest action during the cutting of a section of the Khimki forest for the construction of the Moscow-Petersburg highway. Source: https://bestmaps.ru/goroda/himki?k=cosmo/hybrid

6. References


