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back to the sense of the city

CHALLENGES OF THE NYC URBAN GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

New York is the city that once was called by Rem Koolhaas- the urban laboratory with a distinctive ability of implementing innovative solutions to meet its development challenges.

That was years before the explosion of the Asian megacities, when New York had to face the problems of the rapid growth of its population together with the uncontrolled urbanization. Continuing of having an ambition to be the world's most dynamic urban economy New York is also set to be the city of choice where families, businesses, and neighborhoods thrive. From the New York City`s priorities of being the world`s capital of capitalism and the global city – nowadays there are visible changes in planning for the city growth. The main focus of the urban policies is ensuring quality of life for generations of New Yorkers to come and one of the goals of the New York City`s strategic plan for the future is to be a strong and just city. At the same time, its diverse neighborhoods with their own distinctive character, history, and culture are listed among the city's greatest assets.

Is it an innovative solution for city`s strategic plan? – probably not and the more adequate term would be return to the origins of democracy – but in terms of New York`s development history - it is a slightly different case.

Introduction

The rapid urbanization concentrates population and economic growth in the cities. That process creates more and better opportunities for professional and personal development. At the same time cities have to face many challenges like overcrowding, poverty, air pollution, financial stability. The functioning of all of the above influence not only an economic situation of the cities and their inhabitants but also affect the quality of their life conditions.

Jerzy Regulski notes that experience shows that in urban systems there are no efficient self-regulatory relations that could eliminate internal tensions and restore the optimum balance of the city system components. Conversely, the existence of a center of power and coordination which would prevent the city crises is a necessary component of the proper functioning and

development of the city. That, in Regulski`s opinion, requires the need for the compromises and solutions that would satisfy all concerned stakeholders, but to make such dialogue possible, objectives and rules for the implementation of urban policy must be clearly defined by the authorities both for the entire city as well as for each of the actors individually (Regulski,1984, pp.120).

That gives a conclusion that cities need good governance – city management that would be able to provide a system of regulations that would give a direction for the future development. Good city governance is a crucial factor of the proper development of the cities with the respect of the environment and the equal rights of all their inhabitants. This is especially important in the bigger cities where the level of the accumulation of the problems is much higher than in small towns. The 'proper ' development of the contemporary cities has been identified for the recent years with sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development includes both care about the environment (solutions promoting energy conservation, development of the environment friendly technologies, the preservation of green areas), and the application of economic measures to promote integration, the reduction of social stratification and preventing social exclusion.

Urban governance

Urban governance is a common subject of discussions in the works of the professional of many fields among which there are urbanism, politics, economics. The emergence of large, global cities and extensive metropolitan regions with their complex and multi-layer structure resulted in the need for comprehensive urban policy that would be efficient in a new context of city governance. That proper urban governance becomes often a main problem confronting cities independently from their geographic location.

Governance signifies "a change in the meaning of government referring to a new process of governing or a changed position of ordered rule, or the new method by which society is govern" (Rhodes, 1996, p. 652-3). Gerry Stokes notes that even "the traditional use of *governance* and its dictionary entry define it is as a synonym of government" but "there is a redirection in its use". He also points that "governance is ultimately concerned with creating the conditions for ordered rule and collective actions. The outputs of governance are not therefore different from those of government. It is rather a matter of a difference in processes" (Stoker, 1988, p.17). Jon Pierre notices that in many countries the urban politics, from 1990s was gradually transformed into the urban governance. In his opinion "governance, unlike government, looks at the interplay between state and society and the extent to which collective projects can be achieved through a joint public and private mobilization of resources" (Pierre, 2011, p.5). David Harvey writes that urban governance means much more than urban government. "It is unfortunate that much of the literature (particularly in Britain) concentrates so much on the latter when the real power to reorganize urban life so often lies elsewhere or at least within a broader coalition of forces within which urban government and administration have only a facilitative and coordinating role to play" (Harvey, 1989 pp.6).

Tadeusz Markowski defines governance as "an action consisting in the impact on the people in order to induce them to perform set tasks, and such using of the organization's resources to

achieve the established goals" (Markowski 1999, p.15). Urban policy considered as the urban governance is a very complex issue, including among others: economic policy, transport, environmental, social or spatial development policy. It also involves the system solutions to ensure the proper development and functioning of the entire city. Different participants, who have to work together on areas of accumulation of conflicting interest groups, should be involved in the process of the implementation of these solutions.

Cities can be economic engines in their regions but while one group of the cities grow, the other decline. Besides all, one of the key factor which affect their success or failure is their governance.

The real challenge for governments is to adjust the policy to the changing determinants. They need to provide a proper governance framework at the right level. The right level means long perspective of planning that would be based on local assets and resources and provide benefits for all types of the social groups. Sometimes the local governments make the attempt to boost economies through the effort of possessing new investors compromising spatial, environmental and social issues. Willem van Winden and Luís de Carvalho note that according to the European Commission`s 2011 report 'Cities of tomorrow': "In this dynamic environment, a key challenge for cities is to achieve economic growth that benefits all citizens and does not compromise the environment" (van Winden, de Carvalho, 2015, p.9).

Climate change, soaring (and sometimes declining) population, territorial competitiveness and economic changes are among the main challenges of the development of modern cities. The policy of sustainable development has become the basis of strategic development plans of most cities - regardless of their size and geographical location. New York is also included in the group of the cities which development is based on the sustainability. Challenges of the future development described in the New York urban policy include not only as mentioned above economic growth, better living conditions for New Yorkers but also a significant improvement of environmental issues.

New York

New York is a prototype of metropolis which Rem Koolhaas called also the urban laboratory with a distinctive ability of implementing innovative solutions to meet its development challenges. From the times of New Amsterdam, New York is a fast developing city where the changing growth determinants have become real challenges to the local government.

In 2002, the City Planning Commission presented a report with a projected population growth of the city of one million inhabitants by the year 2030. This fact became essential for planning the city's development strategy based on the principles of sustainable development, so as to ensure better living conditions for the 9.1 million New Yorkers. The development program includes the dynamic and adaptive strategies to address the current challenges as well as these that the city will face in the future. The current challenges were defined in the following general areas: climate change as substantial risks to city's communities and infrastructure (sea level, temperature etc.), population growth (infrastructure), competitiveness, affordability and access. According to above issues the Mayor's Office of Sustainability introduced the necessity to conduct work in the following areas: housing and neighborhoods, parks and public space,

transportation, energy and buildings, waste and recycling, clean air, water, and land, access and opportunity. In 2007, New York released PlaNYC 2030, a comprehensive long-term plan to create "a greener, greater New York". Beside of aspects of the urban development, the city`s pathways towards a sustainable development included also issues which are crucial in the process of improving the quality of life of New Yorkers. To reach sustainability development goals, the city`s initiatives have targeted the energy efficiency of the new and existing buildings to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the certification of urban development projects, increasing green areas within the city, improvement of the city streetscape, zoning for growth and neighborhood character and many others. One of the basic premises of New York City's long-term sustainability plan, PlaNYC 2030 follows this logic by assuming that continued growth in the city, with the appropriate infrastructure development, can be sustainable and beneficial to the environment, and produce public health benefits.

Housing and neighborhoods

Growing population requires solving the problem of availability of housing units especially for low and middle income families. The effort to preserve and create affordable housing units for current and future New Yorkers is the real challenge for the city administration. The most important policies and programs that are implemented by the city agencies concern work with communities to identify areas that can support new affordable development or provide opportunities for preservation for existing units in all five boroughs. In order to ensure diverse and inclusive communities, the city programs include requirements of mandatory inclusionary zoning in transitioning neighborhoods and increasing the portions of the new housing developed to be permanently affordable to low- or moderate-income households in developing areas.

Many aspects of the housing need to be supported by city programs conducted in the long term planning. Sustainable urban development is based on a system of spatial planning and urban design and architecture, which determine the shape and the principle of transformation of urban space. The attempt to follow the principles of sustainable development requires strategic and coordinated action considering the dynamics of development. Under these condition the key element is an indication of the priority areas of the most valuable and protected urban structures (where unplanned development investments could result in a loss values and resources). The most important strategic decisions about the most of contemporary cities are connected to provide or keep the existing spatial balance of built and unbuilt areas of different functional program what relates to the idea of the model of polycentric cities, compact cities and smart growth. Other challenges are availability and affordability of housing for inhabitants at all income levels and also the social integrity of city`s neighborhoods.

Housing projects are awarded as investments whose impact is to improve the standard of living, especially those of lower economic means to provide affordable housing (Inclusionary Housing Program), designing public spaces on private land, improving the image of local streets by putting greens, rewarding commercial buildings providing fresh food for the locals to designated areas poorly invested. Inclusionary housing program is a planning tool to level social differences between different areas of New York, and the second providing more housing at a price accessible to the average city dweller. This program promotes, with the bonuses of investment

(based on the principles of zoning resolution) new residential units for people with lower incomes. The bonus increases the maximum rate of usable space in the building.

Another important element of New York`s housing policy is a aim to build strong and diverse neighborhoods. Its unique history and culture are essential and beneficial component to the development of New York City because they allow to build social integrity of communities based not only on common goals but also on their tradition and heritage. Sustainability of New York is simply related to the city`s housing and neighborhoods in the following aspects: energy-efficient buildings, neighborhood walkability and availability of green and open spaces, access to the public transportation and healthy food. The plan favors the concentration of new development around existing transit nodes accompanied by improvements to public transportation and open space, better air and water quality, and reduction of the city's contribution to global warming.

Parks and public space

In accordance with the principles of sustainable development, improving the quality of life of the inhabitants of this metropolis the city`s goal is to increase the access to growing green and public space. The City committed to provide more greenery to the city`s landscape by ensuring that all New Yorkers live within a 10-minute walk of a park, opening waterfronts to recreation by 2030 and providing more greenery in the streetscape (program MillionTreesNYC). This also included opening underutilized spaces as playgrounds, creating new and upgrading existing parks, and also incorporating sustainability throughout the design and maintenance of all public space.

Figure 1. Bonus Plaza. Seagram Building, Park Avenue.
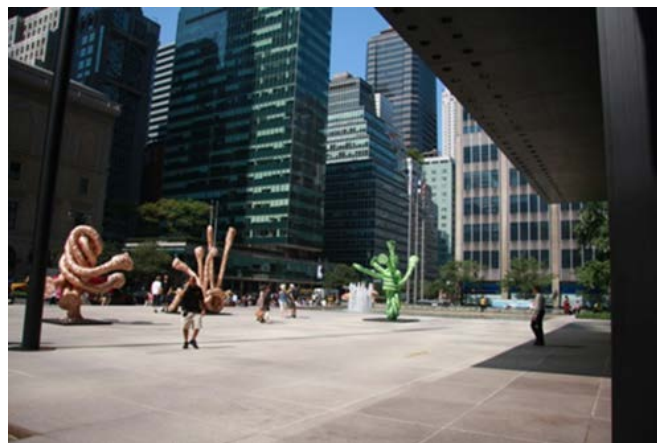
Source: author

The most interesting city initiatives include projects of private public spaces that are created and maintained by private owners. The idea stems from the provision of bonus plaza (see Figure 1), when it introduced the idea of an open, public spaces around the buildings on densely built-up areas. The regulations on private public spaces provided guidelines for their implementation, size, location, guidance on seating, greenery and parameters of buildings such as kiosks or small cafes. The set of specific objectives aims to create attractive, open and inviting spaces for

city inhabitants and visitors that are especially important in a dense urban areas. These spaces have to provide seating areas and greenery to be easily visible and accessible from the street to encourage passers-by to take advantage of them. To meet this requirement the most spaces are located at the street level that also allow a sense of security thanks to the direct relationship with the surroundings.

Another important feature of New York`s public green spaces is waterfront. According to the definition of coastal areas is the area located in the immediate vicinity of the shoreline, and its scope determines the parallel line away from the shoreline about 800 feet (about 244 meters) inland, while the water-side boundary is the line of the breakwater. Due to the huge impact of these areas on the image of the entire city, they are bodied by specific legislation. Regulations are formulated in the framework of special districts or individually set for each location, both in Manhattan and in other neighborhoods. Waterfront zoning is not only to control the process of building the city, forming its skyline (especially important in the case of Manhattan), but also the social benefits of these areas due to their unlimited accessibility for residents of New York City. Assumptions of the basic rules, introduced in 1993, and reformed in 2009, was to provide the largest public green space along the shoreline, which thanks to its special advantages, landscape, bring valuable new value to the urban landscape.

Figure 2. Waterfont public walkways.

Source: author

Waterfront zoning regulations not only regulates the forms, functions, parameters of the new buildings but also the required quantity and quality of land allocated for public purposes. Spaces designated for public purposes are compulsory throughout the city. Exceptions are port, industrial and aviation zones but also residential areas with a low density area (outside Manhattan). Private investors alongside the creation of public spaces in the coastal areas (as in the case of all private public space) are also obliged to maintain them later in an unchanged form. Legal rules require the creation of public open spaces along the shoreline (see Figure 2) and planning transport connections (pedestrian and bicycle) these areas to other parts of the city. Zoning provides standards for the design of public spaces located along the waterfront, and they are: minimum size, shape and proportions, greens, and landscape architecture and equipment. Boundary areas designed for public access have to include: walking areas (shore public walkways), transport connections, with particular emphasis on pedestrian traffic (upland

connection), and scenic corridors between the coast and the hinterland (visual corridors). Walking areas available for public use must be located on the waterfront as a series of walking (often combined with bicycle paths) and equipped with seating.

Transportation

Since transport is one of the largest producers of the city pollution, the subject of sustainable transport is often brought to action to reduce emissions to the atmosphere. But the development of the foundations of the principles and mechanisms of sustainable mobility, relied on the opposition to the destruction of the urban heritage. This attitude was much stronger in Europe than in the USA especially when the development of car oriented cities required transformations of the city landscape. The most significant transport related transformations in New York started in the late 1920 and were experienced due to Robert Moses projects towards the creation of new city transportation system. Many of them were constructed including the TriBorough Bridge and Brooklyn Queens Expressway. But when another project of the Brooklyn Battery Bridge was planned to physically encroach and destroy the large part of the part of Lower Manhattan with financial district and Battery Park, it met very strong opposition from New Yorkers supported of the Regional Plan Association. The main goal of these protests was a protection of the existing urban development of that are. One of opponents during that time was the urban activist Jane Jacobs. In her works she focused on the vitality of the city and its inhabitants who create on the conditions of cities proper functioning. Jane Jacobs also pointed the aspects that currently are considered as essential elements of the sustainable city – good and healthy conditions for people living in the diverse neighborhoods. Over the years the core transportation problems have been transformed from the spatial issues into the environmental ones.

Transport is a key element in the functioning of the city but it also can become the barrier and a source of development problems of the city. Besides ecological issues, transport efficiency not only directly depends on the quality of spatial planning, but also determines the form of the urban space. In New York the tools that are used to stimulate sustainable mobility are cycling, public and car transport. The main premise of the City`s sustainable transport system is to expand the public transport system in order to reduce the pollution caused by road transport and the intensity of traffic on city streets. Initiatives to improve the city transit are focused in the following areas: increasing use of subway and rail transit, expanding and improving bus rapid transit, providing better conditions for electric vehicles, promoting biking and walking.

Subway and commuter rail serves as a very efficient system of transportation of passengers and goods which also helps to reduce road congestion and air pollution. New York City conducts expansion projects with the goal of creating complex and diverse system of connections in order to best serve for a growing city. Improving bus rapid transit is an important goal especially in some neighborhoods, where buses are the only transit options for residents. The City launched the program Drive Electric that aims to make using electric cars easier. In addition, the City of New York is testing electric taxis and requires that new off-street parking is built "charger ready" what will increase availability of them. Biking and walking improve and increase sustainable transportation system while reducing city congestion. A well-designed system allows move freely within the territory of the city but as public bike system also allows

the rotation of users and reduction of the occupied space. WalkNYC is standard for pedestrian wayfinding that provides a clear visual system of graphic signs that can encourage walking in the city by providing consistent and helpful information about the environments in the city. The New York City Department of Transportation conducts various programs to increase safety in the City's streets and public spaces, improve their quality and provide more activities around them. Some of the initiatives are NYC Plaza Program, Street Seats, DOT Art, Weekend Walks, Neighborhood Slow Zones and Safe Streets for Seniors.

Cycling infrastructure in New York offers ways to get around the city, connect to transit, and get to work. New York City's public transportation system of bike sharing, Citi Bike was launched in May 2013. The City administration encourages cycling by expanding the bike network, installing outdoor bike parking and managing the Bikes in Buildings program. In order to increase safety in the streets the DOT provides safety tips and resources for private and commercial cyclists including free helmets for the first ones.

Energy and buildings

Buildings are the biggest energy consumers responsible for the majority of greenhouse gas emissions in New York. Energy efficiency is the most important goal of the city agencies but that means not only work to reduce energy consumption but to make the energy systems cleaner, dependable and more affordable.

For the construction industry, the promotion of sustainable development refers to processes, climb buildings and manage the entire life cycle. Sustainable architecture, embracing a broader spatial context, should direct the development of construction, based on the ideals of sustainability, utility and beauty. The tasks of sustainable architecture and construction should renew and creating objects available, safe, healthy, comfortable and productive, with the environmentally-friendly concept at all stages of design.

The Greener, Greater Buildings Plan is an extensive municipal policy, passed in 2009, that focus on the energy efficiency in large existing buildings. To achieve this goal there are four provisions which ensure pursuing the most cost-effective energy efficiency:

• Local Law 84 – Requires large buildings (greater than 50,000 square feet) to perform energy and water use benchmarking annually

• Local Law 85 – Created the NYC Energy Conservation Code (NYCECC) to close a loophole in the energy code to require all buildings to meet the current energy code for any major renovation or alteration project

• Local Law 87 – Requires large buildings (greater than 50,000 square feet) to conduct energy audits & retro-commissioning once every 10 years

• Local Law 88 – Requires lighting in large, non-residential buildings to be upgraded to meet code and large commercial tenants be provided with sub-meters by 2025.

Certification is a kind of eco-labeling. Its aim is to concluded to provide information about the size the impact of building on the environment: the degree of energy consumption, resource consumption, emissions, the type and amount of waste generation, integration with the environment. Certificates awarded objects, that meet certain criteria. Typically, at the design stage determines a standard that the building has to meet and it selects appropriate solutions

utility and technology. Starting with the transformation of the public buildings, the city administration provides the examples of possibility of greenhouse gas emissions. Among the leading initiatives are LEED Law (Local Law 86) which requires most new City government building projects and renovations to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification and Municipal GHG Emissions Reduction requiring that the GHG emissions from City operations be reduced by 30 percent in just 10 years to meet PlaNYC goals. In addition, the City has implemented a number of programs and initiatives to green City buildings, such as Environmentally Preferable Purchasing, Sustainable Civic Buildings, Sustainable Housing and Sustainable Schools. Additionally, Mayor Bill de Blasio launched the city program The New York City Carbon Challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent below the 2005 levels by 2050. The program set up the plan of energy efficiency improvement in the city buildings. The program is conducted in a partnership with private organizations and institutions like universities, residential management firms, hospitals, global companies.

Waste and recycling

Waste management is an important issue in the city in the aspects of environment and financial problem. New York City works on efficient and effective solutions of the waste management through the areas regarding waste reduction, recycling and composting and organic waste diversion. In order to increase the scale of the waste reduction city (Department of Sanitation) started a program of voluntary residential organics recycling and a program The Food Waste Challenge encouraging city restaurants to increase organic waste diversion. Part of the diverted material was donated to City food banks. In 2013, the City Council passed Local Law 146 which classifies commercial establishments covered under the law and mandates those establishments to divert food waste.

In addition the city expanded the recycling program to include all rigid plastics and provided safe and convenient opportunities for electronics, automotive, flammable recycling. New York City launched an education program dedicated to engage New Yorkers to turn into more sustainable lifestyles through the energy use reduction and less waste production. The City`s goal is called zero waste sending to landfills by 2030 and 80% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 [GreeNYC].

GreeNYC is New York City's public education program dedicated to educating, engaging, and mobilizing New Yorkers to take simple, but meaningful, steps to reduce their energy use, generate less waste, and live more sustainable lifestyles. These steps are critical to achieving the city's goal of sending zero waste to landfills by 2030, reducing NYC's greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050 and improving the quality of the city's environment.

Access and opportunity

Access and opportunity for all New Yorkers means more public transit options, providing more housing choices and employment opportunities at all income levels and for all communities. It means development of mixed use neighborhoods that offer commercial and community services within walking distances.

Health and well-being programs are supported by city to improve the distribution and disposal of healthy, sustainable food within New York City and promotion of healthy lifestyle. That includes the City's action Take Care New York to improve the quality of air, water, and the inhabitants life within healthier environment and buildings. In a consequence it will not only benefit the environment but it will provide positive public health and economic impacts.

Communities are working together to decide what they can do to make their neighborhoods more sustainable and this is an ongoing dialogue that people get involved in, locally and through our programs in the areas regarding healthy food access, health and well-being, workforce development, support for small businesses and neighborhood development. Health challenges of growing population require creative and modern shifts in how the city operates.

Workforce Development New York City is focused on providing new jobs and training opportunities that can be found working in areas of sustainability and resiliency. This includes work in rebuilding and resiliency projects which were taken after Hurricane Sandy when city started to invest in new infrastructure. It creates possibility of the collaboration with local companies and local residents for particular projects. There are also some business recovery and resiliency programs intended to support impacted businesses by hurricane. They focus mainly on financial support, development of effective technologies to protected the impacted areas and encouragement development projects.

New York is like twenty different cities since its neighborhoods are extremely diverse in terms of spatial, social and economic, that is why they need to protect the unique character in a parallel collaboration according to the city`s common goals like improving of public transit, increasing the number of affordable housing units and straightening the employment situation.

Instruments and monitoring

Implementation of all of above the New York City's sustainable policies requires financial and incentive tools for the City's building industry that are available at the national, state and local level. Besides federal funding for green building and energy efficiency related projects, State Incentives for energy efficiency for a variety of programs, New York City has developed financial incentives to supplement state incentives where gaps have been identified, or where certain strategies have been targeted to reduce barriers for adoption. Examples include tax abatement programs for green roofs and solar panels.

The other important element of the process of implementing the New York growth policies is a system of monitoring the achieved progress by the analysis of the obtained results.

Conclusion

Globalization, growing diversity, migration, multicultural society, climate changes and environmental problems are among the most important challenges of the contemporary cities. Some of them like globalization can create both positive and negative impact on the development because it can give an economic shift to the city but also it can negatively affected the local tradition and values.

The nature of the problems of the particular example of the city depends on many factors and local conditions that is why there isn`t one good model of urban governance. Cities, on account

of their complicated and dynamic nature, will never constitute an ideal system of regulations. The most important factor of the good urban governance is its flexibility and ability to adjust to the new challenges that may appear due to the changing conditions. Also, the defined urban policy with its principles, instruments of implementing will not eliminate all mistakes or negative effects on the urban structure.

The efficient system of urban governance requires the involvement of all city stakeholders both in taking responsibilities though common decisions and providing sources of financing. Participations of private sector and city inhabitants guarantees not only the understanding the process of development but also common work on its continuality. Equally important is the process of monitoring the effects of the urban governance in all of the aspects.

The one of the most important step in constructing the model of future development is defining the problems and establishing the goals. But sometimes the conditions and challenges can change or develop and the system of governance need to respond to the new reality.

New York is an unique city but each of the other cities also is. As it was mentioned before there aren`t two identical cities so there is not one ideal and universal system of urban governance that could be applied in cities. New York with its own challenges provides its way of solving the development problems and implementing policies that are supposed to create good city environment in the future. The main focus is put on the environmental and social issues because there are provide the good and perspective base for the economic growth. The most important conclusion is that consistently pursued urban governance with clearly defined objectives can guarantee the optimum development of the city in economic, spatial and social aspects.

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