Participativeness, indigenous peoples and landscape planning: theoretical questions

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Abstract. Landscape planning provides for the preservation and development of natural and sociocultural potentials of the territory. Its integrative feature is most important. Landscape planning organizes and coordinates the spatial development of society. Cultural landscape, being a scientific category, combines material and symbolic spaces, life strategies, and resources of the territory. In Russia, the cultural landscape approach, which most fully reflects the participativeness principle, was first applied in landscape planning of the Irkutsk Region territories where the Evenk community lives. Land management led by the Committee of the North in the 1920-1930s became its precursor. Indigenous peoples and Russian old residents in Siberia have a close material and spiritual connection with the territory, which contributes to the preservation of ethnic identity and historical memory. Modern studies of these issues in anthropology and landscape planning have poor contact with each other. The participatory landscape planning based on the cultural landscape approach has some overlapping with the studies in fields of cultural anthropology, ethnoecology and ethnic expertise. It ensures recognition of formal and informal self-governance structures of the indigenous peoples in Siberia and expands tools and practices of landscape planning through integration of cultural and anthropological as well as humanitarian and geographical research.

1. Introduction

Landscape planning based on the determination of potentials and purposes for the development of the territory as well as the communities living there helps to achieve a balance between social, economic and humanitarian fields. Participatory landscape planning is a process of dialogue between subjects of planning. Most researchers believe that this procedure is insufficiently studied in terms of theory, and there are many methodological difficulties behind it. The theory of post-positivist planning appeared to be unable to solve practical problems [1]. Difficulties are different interests of the authorities, local communities and businesses, which entails marginalisation of the population and increase in the external interference in the issues of indigenous peoples [2]. Subtle cultural differences also cause tension between planners and local communities [3]. In Russia, joint decision-making has a form of a partnership between businesses and authorities, in which indigenous peoples participate formally, with their advisory vote at best [4]. The main difficulty is an equal communication, due to which a change in the paradigm of landscape planning at the turn of the centuries is called “deliberative turn in planning” [5].
2. Models and methods
In recent years, approaches of critical discourse, institutional ethnography and humanistic geography have been proposed to theorize participatory landscape planning. To solve the problem of the overall consideration of natural and socio-cultural importance of landscapes in land use, we propose a cultural landscape approach. It is based on an understanding of the cultural landscape as material and symbolic space, and it is prospective for application to indigenous peoples and communities of old residents in Siberia. These communities maintain a close and vital connection with an area that cannot have quantitative terms. It has an exclusive role in the historical generational continuity and the preservation of ethnicity. Therefore, the achievement of participatory landscape planning is not limited to the formation of data array, suggestions and recommendations that local communities address to planners. Cultural landscape studies combined with discourse approaches and ethnological expertise practices introduce the importance of traditional land use as well as traditional knowledge and culture into the methodology and ideology of landscape planning.

The development of landscape planning has parallels with land management methods of indigenous peoples in Siberia. At the First Siberian Regional Research Congress in 1926, land management and delimitation of lands between indigenous peoples and Russian old-residents were called a priority. Large-scale land-management studies in the 1920-1930s had internal contradictions: they were aimed to find opportunities for the free development of the territories and housekeeping of the Siberian peoples, but, at the same time, they had to create a scientific background for the upcoming industrialization, whose interests were opposed to traditional land use. This is the approach of the external observer, which is related to the “state ethnography” and the achievement of political goals. Participativeness was limited to the gatherings of locals as well as considering their opinion in choosing the areas for the construction of the stationary settlements and delimitation of lands. Allocation of lands and determination of their purpose was based on the actual development and proceeded from the social class principle. The inferior, declarative participativeness was characteristic of the land use planning for the Siberian peoples throughout the Soviet times.

A.N. Antipov headed the attempt to change the situation and integrate aims and values of the local communities into the planning process [6, 7]. The approaches of cultural geography and cultural ecology used in landscape planning studies of the Vershino-Khandinsk Evenk community stimulated the search for a theoretical basis to implement the participativeness principle. A.N. Antipov repeatedly emphasised the importance of this principle, which suggests active participation of communities as “co-authors” [8]. It does not turns communities into objects of external decisions and manipulations but ensures communication between all participants of the process and reduces the risk of conflicts. At the same time, in the 1990s and the early 2000s, this principle was not sufficiently studied in foreign, let alone the Russian science when the main landscape planning works were initiated in V.B. Sochava Institute of Geography SB RAS.

The Russian experience in land use planning concerning indigenous peoples and local communities of old residents had a paternalistic nature. The decisions resulted from the priorities, functions and procedures of territorial development determined by researchers, providing the managers with an “end product” as the best option.

In foreign science, by the end of the 20th century, weaknesses of central planning, despite the clarity and technical uniqueness of its strategies, outweighed the positive effects. Deficiencies were an underestimation of the diversity of local contexts and political and economic conditions, identities, values of local communities, traditional knowledge, expectations, and social risks, as well as inconsistent approaches to landscape management and contradictions in land use at national, regional and local levels [9].

3. Results and discussion
Involving local communities in the planning process (upward planning) requires grounds for joint decision-making, mutual communication and education, coordination of the aims of all land users as well as the integration of traditional culture and science.
Participatory landscape planning, along with interests of the state and businesses, includes the aims and values of local communities as well as their understanding of the vital and symbolic importance of the landscape. Planning decisions that ignore needs and expectations of locals can damage not only the ecological balance of the natural landscape, as well as its importance and values, but also contribute to the split between communities and their historical memory as well as territorial identity.

Since the 1960s, humanistic geography has been considering the cultural landscape as a unity of material and conceptual spaces, which identities and values of people create. By the 1990-2000s, the cultural landscape has been interpreted as a palimpsest where spatial and temporal strata, rival social narratives, discourses, and practices superimpose each other [10].

The creation, strengthening or abandonment of any form of land use is centred on communication between users, their mutual proportions of values, aims, economic and symbolic benefits as well as cultural stereotypes. In this regard, landscape planning takes on the features of social control, which is based on the notion of “due” and “appropriate”. These discourses are not obvious, disguising as neutral, but they can be traced in historical perspective [3]. Therefore, there was a deliberative turn in land use planning at the turn of the 1990-2000s [5]. The attempts were made to form new directions focused on the inclusion of the subject: communicative, argumentative, collaborative, and inclusive planning. However, the specific processes and characteristics of local communities often did not meet theoretical expectations. The main problem is the combination of communicative and instrumental rationality of landscape planning [1]. Thus, the tendency to regard knowledge, socioeconomic practices and culture of indigenous peoples as another data subset, which will be used in planning, is rather perilous since in this case there is no real participation and lively understanding of each other, and participativeness is only a formal “consideration of the opinion” but not a dialogue [5]. In Russia, ethnological expertise is used to regulate the interests of indigenous peoples, authorities and businesses in the field of land use. However, in practice, it deals with the consequences of the decisions made and identifies damage to the cultural and natural environment of ethnic communities but not establish communications. Moreover, the main problem is communicative and ethnic, which is rather an inability and unwillingness of the authorities and businesses to have a dialogue with people who have a different worldview and lifestyle than the lack of information. For example, during the public hearings of the oil pipeline project, this had a communication style with such a tone of meeting that its outcome seemed predetermined to the locals. The following text was posted on the official website of the company Transneft: “The population (meaning Evenk gatherings in the villages of Kholodnoye and Uoyan) is looking forward to construction of oil pipeline, which will revive economy of this socially disadvantaged area”, whereas, during the gatherings, the local community had a negative opinion [11, p. 67]. For all the importance, the procedure of ethnological expertise has poorly developed mechanisms for coordinating research practices of experts with authorities and business entities, although it should consider not only the law but also customary right, cultural values and ethical standards [12].

4. Conclusion
Integration of participatory landscape planning, cultural landscape approach and ethnological expertise are in their infancy. There is a metaphoric comparison of landscape studies with two branches of medical science: academic medicine, which studies diseases, is similar to scientific and theoretical landscape science, whereas the activities of a general practitioner who directly treats the patient are similar to applied landscape management and landscape planning [13]. At the same time, the practical aspects of management and planning are much weaker than the scientific and theoretical side. The problem of mutual influence of landscape development and culture of indigenous peoples in Siberia remains the least elaborated. The situation becomes more complicated when worldviews, attitudes toward territory and identities of communities differ ethnoculturally. Efficient participativeness results from the fact that communities and people living in a particular territory and researchers planning their development, as well as institutions, which interests they represent, will be able to have a common ground for interactions, a system of shared meanings and values. Participatory planning, proceeding
from the cultural and landscape paradigm, ensures the sustainability and viability of the results of joint work and allows the use of landscape planning tools for the harmonious territorial development of Siberian ethnic communities.

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