

That this is just one act of the drama about the destruction of social and public goods, we can see by the examples of the well-known scenario of privatization and conversion of space for the sake of gaining profits of individuals throughout Serbia.

While chainsaws are preparing to cut another part of Kosutnjak forest in order to build an elite residential complex and private commercial content, a public inspection is underway regarding the development of a Detailed Regulation Plan (PDR) for the “Avala Film” complex to be held so that the illusion of civic participation in planning processes is maintained and with the aim to legalize ecocide.

Privatization

Despite the opposition of part of the cultural scene, left-wing activists and the call of the Cinematic institution to at least exclude the film fund from that privatization, the new owner received over 200 feature films, 600 documentaries, over 20,000 square meters of various facilities, as well as the space used by “Avala Film”, which was assessed as worthless due to the purpose of the land at the time.

The space used by “Avala Film” seems to have been the most valuable and most desirable resource during its privatization in 2015.

Conversion

Although part of the previous purpose will be preserved, while other contents should only complete and support the development of the primary function, it is obvious that the focus of the new detailed regulation plan is on the construction of a residential-commercial complex.

If the new PDR is adopted, new residential buildings will be built, mostly multi-storey residential buildings for about 7980 inhabitants (compared to 854 current inhabitants). Commercial contents are planned for the middle storey zone and could be: shops, businesses, catering, as well as contents intended for entertainment, tourism, culture, etc. All this should be accompanied by the construction of kindergartens, primary schools, high schools and accompanying service content.

Iva Čukić, architect and member of the organization “Ministry of Space”, reminds that for months Belgrade was one of the most polluted cities in the world, and that unlike other cities that introduce environmental protection measures to ensure quality living conditions in Belgrade, the opposite is done.

At the same time, according to the PDR, only 3 ha of forest remains, while the type of forest, its function and specific rules of arrangement will be subsequently defined for 7 ha, the

interlocutor explains.

Apart from the redevelopment of the area, the plan does not solve traffic problems, which will only increase with the immigration of new residents in that part of the city. According to the Beobuild website, the load on the local infrastructure already exceeds the existing capacities, and the settlement of thousands of new inhabitants will lead to frequent traffic collapses and delays in public transport. Transport of sufficient capacity is not likely in the foreseeable future, and by moving the subway from the southern Belgrade settlements to Makiško polje, all planned support for further raising the density of settlements in this part of the city has been lost.

The organization “Ministry of Space”, is already working on objections to this plan and invites citizens to join them in this fight.

Destruction and profit extraction

If the plan is adopted and the objections of initiatives, organizations and citizens are rejected, which has been the most common practice so far, we will approach the last act of this tragedy. It is an act that starts with the sound of chainsaws, and ends with the redistributed inherited natural and social wealth, but upwards into the hands of the elite, while the citizens remain at a loss.

Citizens are left without greenery, with traffic jams, with a lack of public areas, with polluted air in the concrete overheated city, which is afraid of any rain because it brings a potential flood.

After the initial reaction of the citizens, Deputy Mayor Goran Vesić told Pink that “no one is crazy to cut down so many hectares of forest” and that the City will not allow the destruction of the forest on Kosutnjak.

It remains to be seen how it is physically possible to build 570,000 m² of new residential and commercial space in the same zone, with additional accompanying content that will require a lot of parking spaces, without cutting down forests and destroying green areas on Kosutnjak.

Instead of conclusion a struggle and fight!

The struggle of citizens, activists, initiatives, organizations and individual political parties against the seizure and destruction of the public good has been going on for years. The outcome of the drama around this part of Kosutnjak will also depend on this fight. It is obvious that the current city and republic authorities react only to the pressure, when the citizens unite to defend the public good.

The planned conversion of areas and subsequent deforestation in Kosutnjak would be the biggest destruction of green areas in Belgrade in the past few decades, almost incomparable with everything else that happens every day. And all the other local fights that have happened and are happening – from the fight for the Fifth Park, through the fights of the inhabitants of Zvezdara, Petlovo Brdo, Miljakovac, Banovo Brdo – mobilized the citizens and convinced them that it is possible to achieve at least some small victories.

Learned from previous experiences, the inhabitants of Belgrade, despite the threat of coronavirus, quickly organized themselves and currently the fight is being waged on various fronts by informing as many people as possible, sending complaints to on the plan of detailed regulation, until the preparation for the physical defence of Kosutnjak if necessary. The battle for Kosutnjak has begun. Having in mind the current policy of caring for public goods, we should expect many more fights before the final victory, which would remove the price from public and natural goods and make them, instead of a source of profit for individuals, a gathering place for the community.

Source: masina.rs