



# Save Khimki Forest

*Mikhail Matveev*

Movement to Defend Khimki Forest (Ecooborona),  
Coalition for the protection of Moscow District's Forests

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jarawa4@gmail.com, ecmoru@gmail.com, www.ecmo.ru

# Timeline

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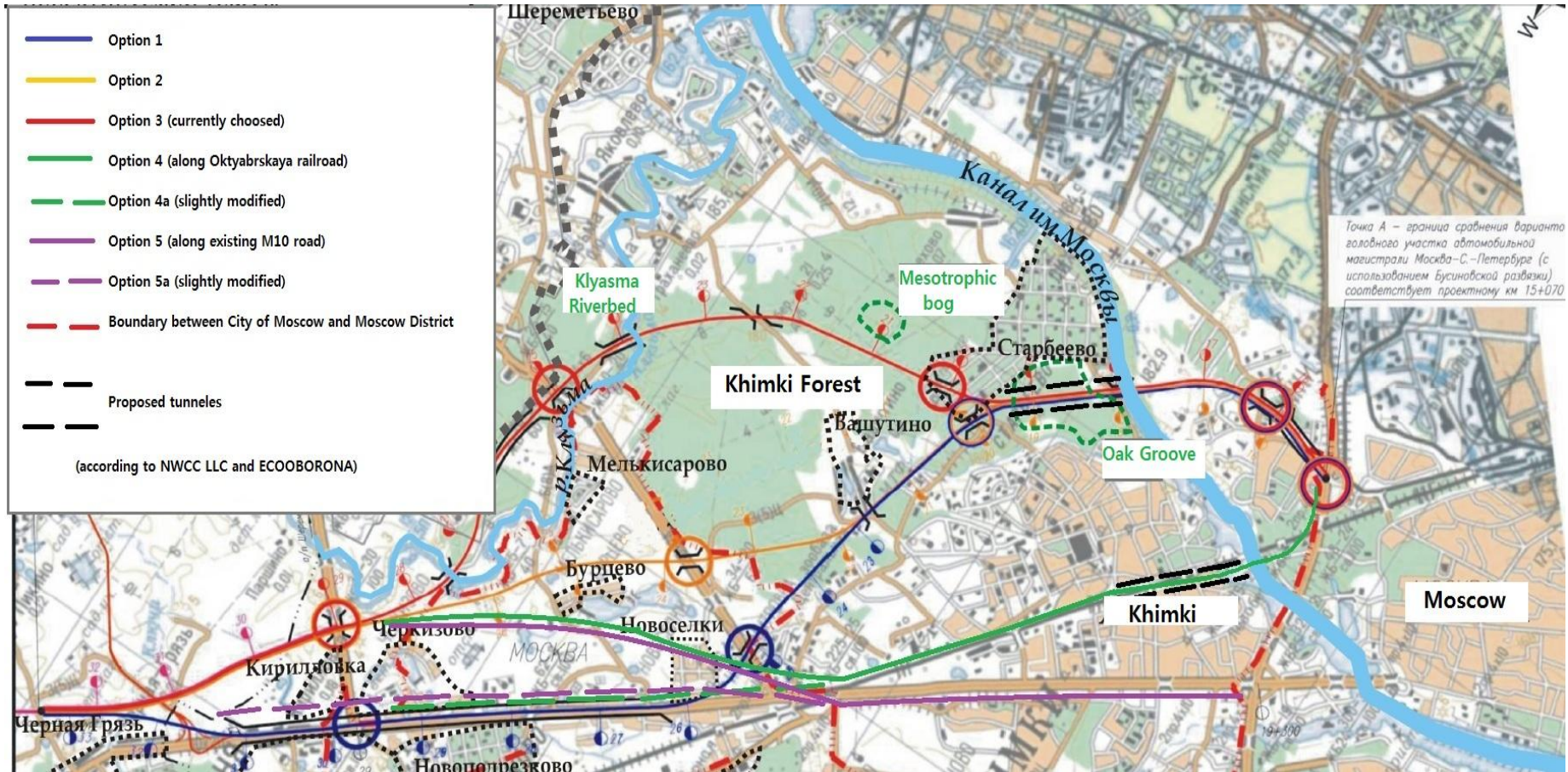
- ▶ 2004 – Decision was taken on Building of Moscow – St.Petersburg toll motorway;
  - ▶ 2005 – Option 3 (passing through Khimki Forest, see map below) was chosen behind the closed doors. Dummy “Public Hearings” were arranged – as it was found out later, on a quite different project. No proper information was made available to the locals;
  - ▶ 2006 – the entire territory of the Khimki Forest park was reserved for the placement of the motorway as well as of “objects of transport infrastructure and capital construction”;
  - ▶ 2007 – Surveying works were carried out in the forest park. Most people got aware of the project. A popular movement to defend Khimki Forest was formed by locals.  
New Forest Code forbade any construction works in forest parks – so any works according to Option 3 became completely illegal .
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- ▶ 2008 – First public rallies and other manifestations of public discontent. A killing attempt against local journalist Mikhail Beketov who wrote a lot about the problem. Preliminary works on the project still went on despite the legal ban.
  - ▶ 2009 – A candidate of Movement to Defend Khmki Forest participated in elections of Mayor of Khimki as an independent candidate taking 16% of voices. Rulings on the placement of the motorway as well as on the reservations of the forest lands for the “infrastructure” were cancelled. New public hearings showed negative public attitude toward the project. Nevertheless, Prime Minister Putin transferred the forest lands for the construction of the motorway. A bill was passed that lifted the constraints on construction works in forest parks – but only if no alternative options available, which was not true in this case.
  - ▶ Activists started to discuss the problem with representatives of EBRD and EIB. A meeting with EBRD’s Board of Directors took place in Moscow. EBRD promised to demand the concessioner a “high level of public involvement” as a mandatory condition of EBRD’s participation in the project.
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# Backgruond – available alternatives



Green text in the map designates planned specially protected natural areas within the Khimki Forest park

# Khimki Forest

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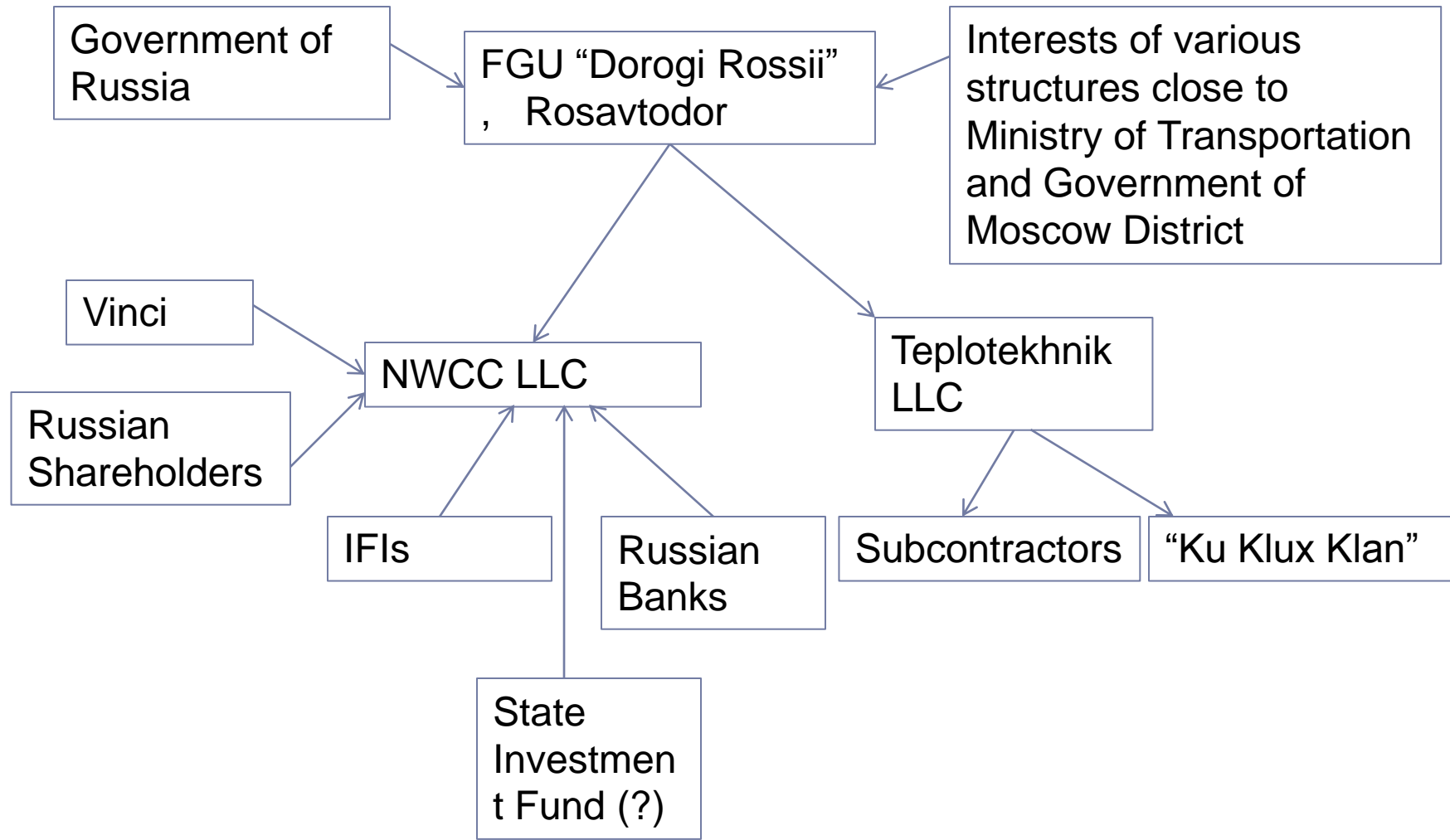
View from the left bank of Moscow-Volga Canal



# Alternatives – in brief

- ▶ ~~Options 1, 2, 3 – were initially considered in 2004. All the three options inflict serious damage to the oak grove of Khimki Forest park, as well as to a protective forest strip on the left bank of the Moscow-Volga canal. Only option 3 implies heavy fragmentation of the forest. Unfortunately, Option 3 was chosen without any public discussion.~~
- ▶ Option 4 – passes in a common transport corridor with Oktyabrskaya railroad. It was proposed by activists in 2009 on the basis of the plans for transport development in Moscow. If the planned prolongation of the motorway within Moscow is ever to be built it will be done along Oktyabrskaya railroad. Option 4 is just the use of the same approach in case of Khimki.
- ▶ Option 5 – enlargement of existing M10 motorway within Khimki. There is a line of shopping malls with large parking areas to the south of the existing motorway. Those parking areas can be easily used in transportation purpose. This option can be very effective in a combination with environment-friendly modern electric public transport. The latter is capable to reduce drastically the local traffic between Khimki and Moscow –reducing , respectively,
- ▶ requirements to the new motorway.

# Structure behind the project



# Why we are against the project?

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- ▶ **Environmental issues:** the forest will be severely fragmented and cease to exist as an eco-system.

Today, the eco-system of Khimki Forest park is unique for the area so close to Moscow. There are some species enlisted into the local Red Book. The high environmental value of the forest park is acknowledged by expert assessments, including those of Greenpeace, and even of the concessionary of the project – NWCC LLC.

All the three planned specially protected natural areas within the Khimki Forest park will be destroyed directly by the motorway if Option 3 will not be discarded.

The existing layout of the motorway allows further seizure of forest lands for the placement of adjoining infrastructure.

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Oak grove is to be destroyed according to options 1, 2,3 if no tunnel built





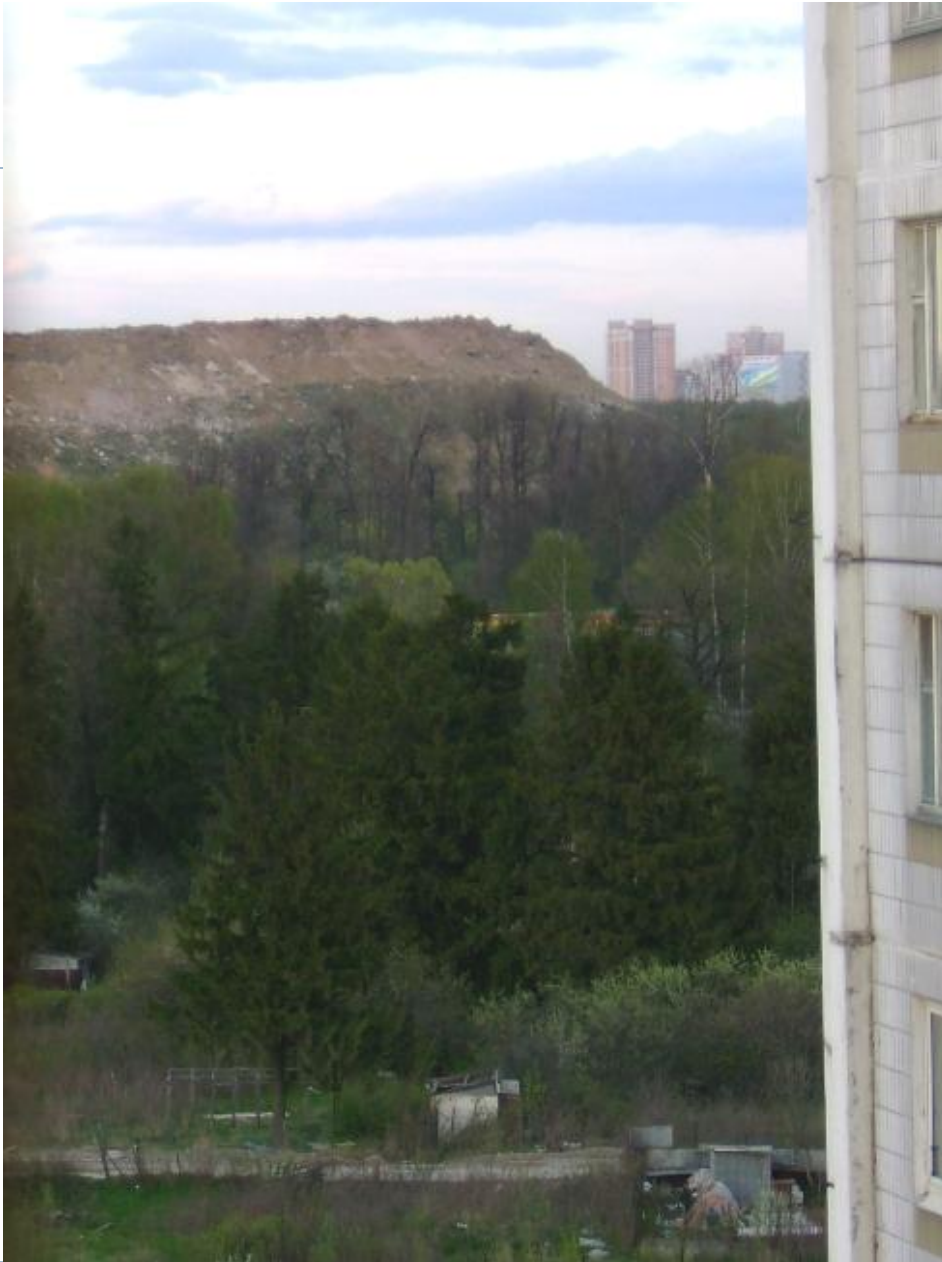
Red marks for the motorway near the trees which were eaten by elk. One can see new and old bites on the trees – i.e., here is an elk's permanent habitat. Picture taken near the mesotrophic bog (to be destroyed only if Option 3 is chosen)



- ▶ **Social issues:** the forest has great recreational potential, especially the oak grove with its St. George's spring. It is the only wide green space in this polluted and over-populated region, available for the citizens of Khimki, especially for persons with limited mobility like elders, families with small children, etc. **76% of the locals are against the project**

Khimki Forest belongs to the “protective forest belt” around Moscow which protects the city against various pollutions like the deadly smog in the summer 2010.

- ▶ The planned motorway destroys a protective forest strip between a giant open dumping ground and a densely populated area on the left bank of the canal. The environmental situation there is disastrous even now. It will be even more worse after the road is built. Taking into account technical problems (see below) there will be a permanent traffic jam with very high level of pollution due to car exhausts.



A forest strip between an open dumping ground (in the upper left corner of the picture), and a residential area. It is to be destroyed according to Options 1,2,3, if no alteration is made.

- ▶ **Human Right issues:** The project is very unpopular (according to public opinion polls, 76% of residents in Khimki, 67% in Moscow, 66% in all Russia are against the project. Instead of public involvement - violence, arrests, bans of public rallies were used to implement the project. The realization of the project according to Option 3 would be a severe blow to civic society in Russia



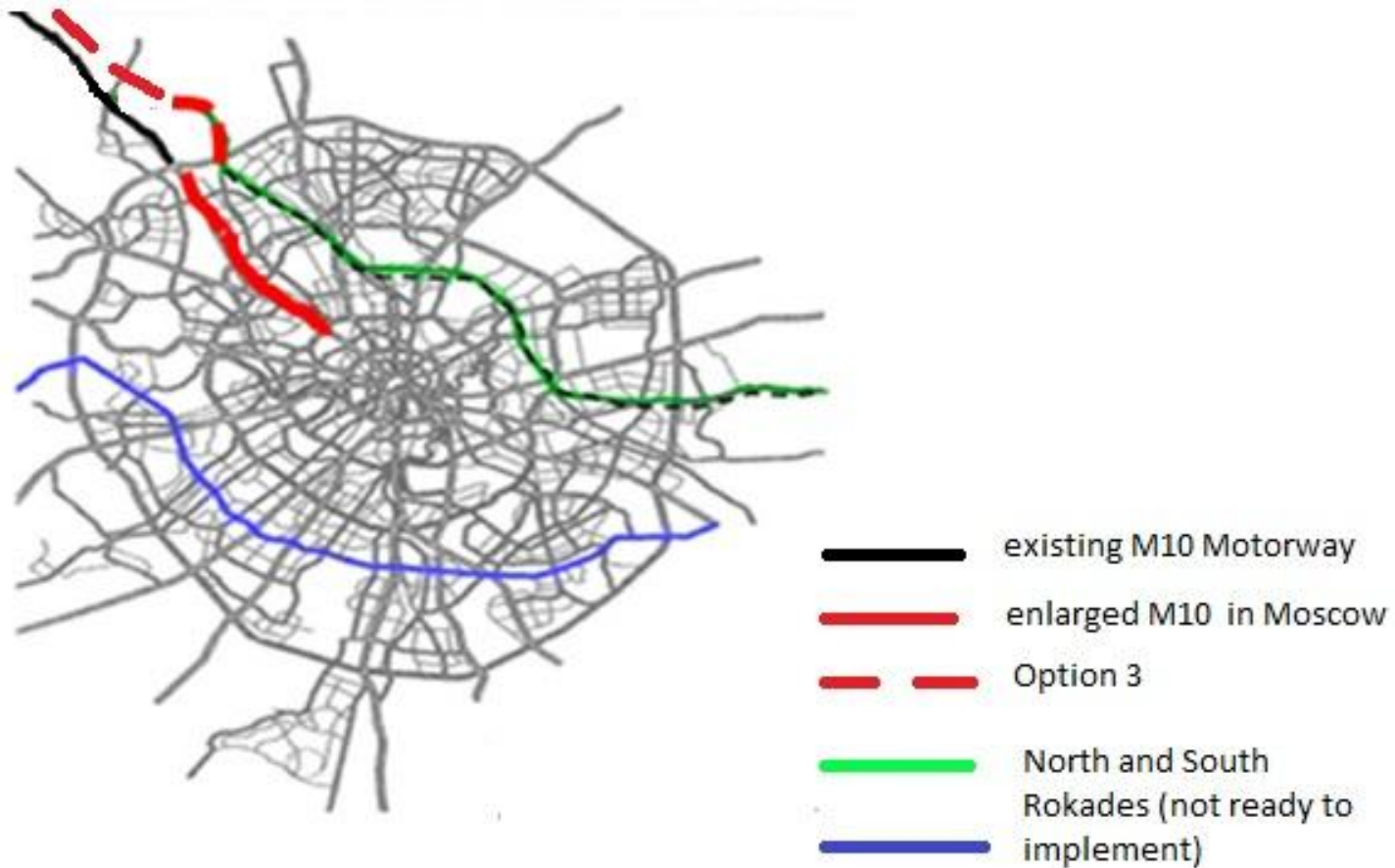
- ▶ **Technical issues:** No prolongation of the motorway within Moscow is ready to implement. Without the prolongation, the new 10-row motorway will merge with Moscow Ring Road which is already overloaded. A traffic jam is guaranteed on both the new motorway and the Moscow Ring Road. Only Option 5 is free from this problem.

Existing motorway M10 is enlarged in Moscow up to 12-14 rows, but it passes into a 6-row “shopping street” in Khimki. Therefore, there will be two sections of a modern motorway in the same direction in the nearest future – but they will not meet each other!

The curve of the planned road through Khimki Forest park has such a complicated shape that speed requirements for an A1 class road are not met (speed decreases by 30 km/h). It will decrease even more due to multiple exits to objects of infrastructure which would inevitably appear instead of the forest if the existing project (Option 3) is implemented.



## Plans for transportation development in the Moscow Region



- ▶ The new motorway is to be connected with North Rokada (planned along Oktyabrskaya railroad in Moscow) – but no ready project still available.

- ▶ **Corruption issues:** Placement of the motorway with maximum use of forest lands violates the Federal law which allows to use forest lands only in case where no alternatives available (Article 11 of Federal Law #172-FZ).

There are at least 4 other routings inflicting less damage to the forest than the chosen one – or no damage at all, in case of Options 4, 5. It is easy to understand the eagerness of the lobbyists behind Option 3 if remember that one hectare of forest lands costs RUR 4300 for the customer of the project (little more than EUR 100!). The real market value of lands in this region is about EUR 500,000 – 900,000 per a hectare.

An analysis by Transparency International (R) shows that there are possible corruption motives behind the choice of Option 3 linked to commercial interests of acting Minister of Transportation Mr. Levitin. He is the Head of Board of Directors of Sheremetyevo International Airport, which is interested in approaching the motorway to airport's lands.

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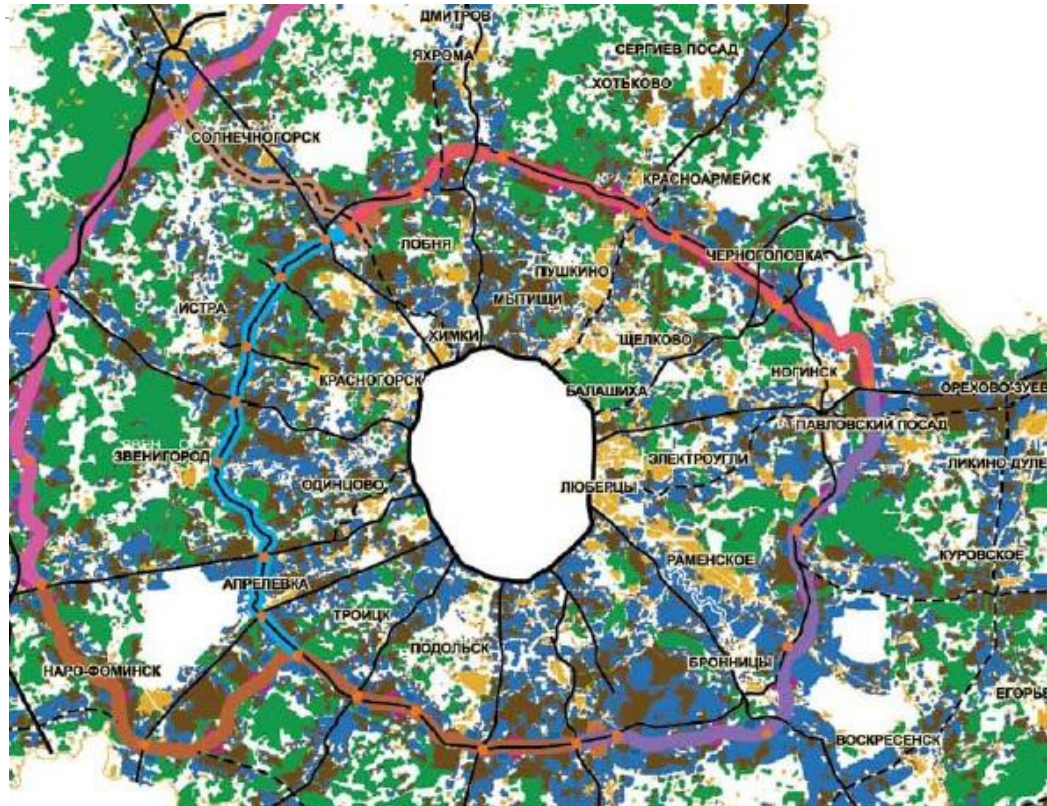
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- ▶ **Strategy issues:** The project implies in an implicit way that automobiles will be the only modern mean of transportation in this direction (at least, for local traffic). That's why the new motorway has 10 rows near Khmki, and only 6 rows in its main section between Moscow and St. Petersburg. Such a solution is obviously environmentally damaging regardless the routing of the motorway.

It is a step back even in comparison with the transportation strategy of the Soviet Union where trains, subways and other more environment-friendly means of transportation were widespread for both local and interregional traffic.

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► This case creates a very dangerous precedent:



Future “Khimki Forests” of Moscow Region (according to official plans of urbanization by the Government of Moscow District ). Brown color designates forests planned for clearing for projects of “development”– mainly along both existing and planned roads

## New events (January – October 2010)

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- ▶ 2010, January – April. Environmentalists tried to challenge Putin's ruling in the Supreme Court. Not surprisingly, it was not successful. The lawsuit was passed to European Court on Human Rights.

A “Public Discussion” on the project was initiated by NWCC LLC as required by IFIs. The procedure was cancelled after some public opinion polls were carried out by NWCC LLC. The results of the polls were not made public.

Transparency International (Russia) found possible corruption motives behind the choice of the motorway routing through the Khimki Forest park

- ▶ May 2010. A representative of the activists Mrs. Evgenia Chirikova met Board of Directors of EBRD. Decision on participation of EBRD was delayed due to the need of “additional study”
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- ▶ May – July 2010. Information appeared that Russian financial groups are ready to be involved in the project.
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Dorogi Rossii and Rosavtodor (the state-owned Russian companies that are the main customers of the project) hired another Russian company (Teplotekhnik LLC) to clear Khimki Forest. The works started in July in extremely hot and dry weather, neglecting fire safety rules, without proper authorization.

- ▶ July 2010, 14. First clashes between activists, security guards, and construction workers happened. Construction workers failed to provide all necessary permissions for cutting down of trees.
  - ▶ July 2010 14 – 23. Construction works halted. An environmentalists' camp established to protect Khimki Forest. Police force took neutral position first. The construction company evaded any discussions with the activists. An old tractor was burnt in the forest, perhaps as a provocation which nearly yielded in a major forest fire.
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First clashes in Khimki Forest. Security guards (in blue T-shirts) attacked without warning.





A symbolic barricade at the entrance to the first activists' camp. Construction machines (behind, in the clearing) were abandoned by the workers

- ▶ July 22-23. Teplotekhnik LLC hired a new subcontractor as well as new security guards. Nevertheless, the activists still resisted their attempts to cut down trees.
  - ▶ July 23. In the morning, the camp was invaded by unknown masked men looking like ultra-right football fans or Neo-Nazis. They confronted activists; the cutting down of trees was immediately resumed under their protection. The activists called police, which arrived but refused to interfere or check who the “Ku Klux Klan” were. Some activists blocked a police car to prevent it from leaving the scene. Activists managed to stop works again despite the resistance of the masked men. Then police reinforcement arrived and arrested activists, as well as some journalists, in a very brutal way. A journalist from “Novaya Gazeta” who was covering the event got a damage of her cervical vertebrae during the arrest.
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July morning, 23 (6-00 A.M.). *“We came to kill and clear!”*





A clash between activists and “Ku Klux Klan” near a fresh clearing



Some activists tried to prevent a bloodbath by keeping police force at place. Police were still not keen to interfere.



The girl was trying to stop cutting down of trees by climbing the harvester.



Reinforcement arrived. The brave policemen arresting Mrs. Margarita Popova - a mother of a 1,5 year child.



No “Ku Klux Klan” were arrested or interrogated

- ▶ August 23-28. A court ruled that the leader of the activists Evgenia Chirikova who was arrested on July, 23 was not guilty. The construction works were temporarily stopped due to the interference of some MPs, as well as of representatives of Public Chamber, and Prosecutor Office.

Some activists and journalists were attacked again by unknown thugs guarding the clearing. The thugs had Nazi insignia on their clothes.

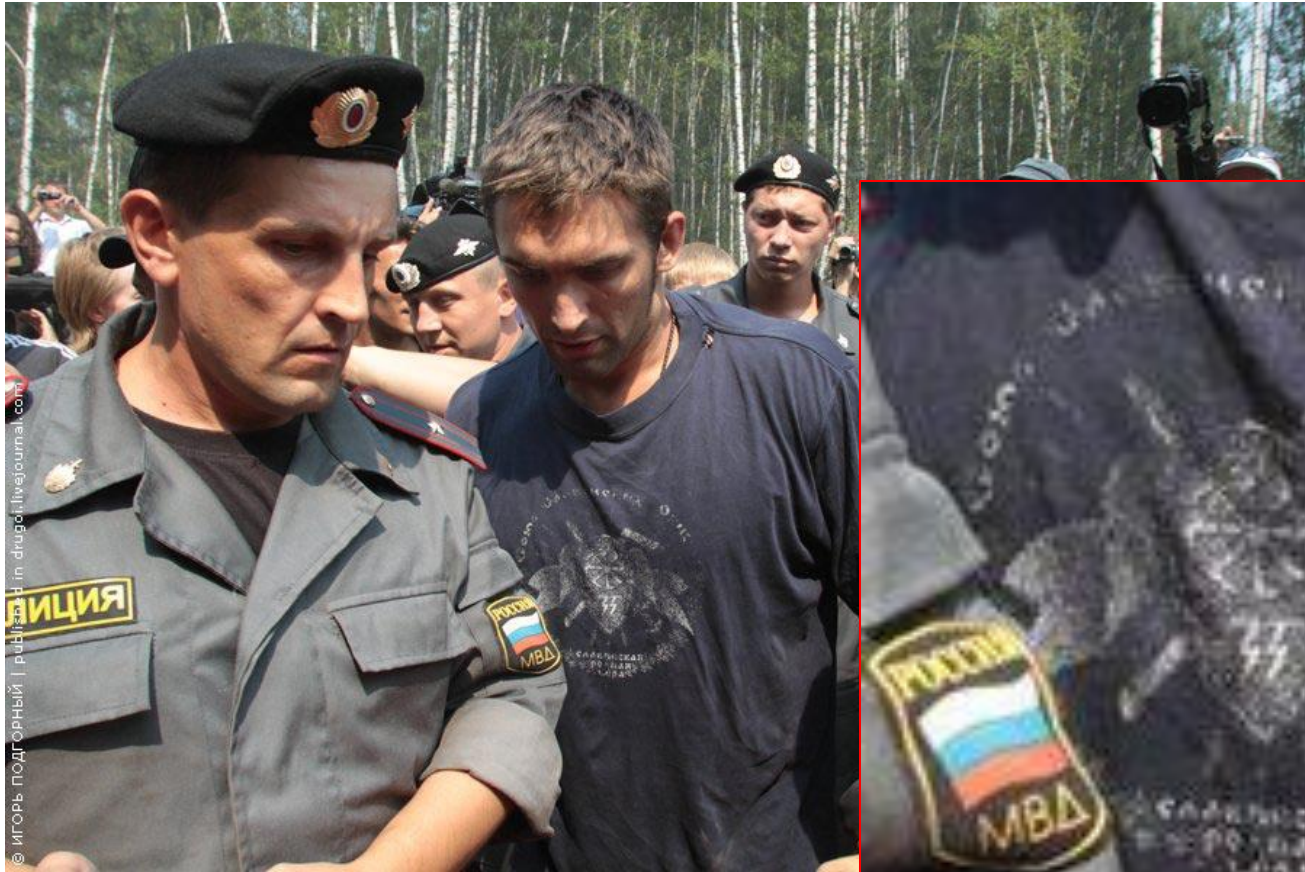
Lawyers of Greenpeace together with representatives of our movement visited the office of Teplotekhnik. There were no necessary permissions found. Nevertheless, cutting down of trees was resumed soon.





Unknown militants (in dark T-shirts) attacking an activist.





A militant from the previous picture near a policemen.  
Pay attention to the insignia.





- ▶ July, 28. Head of “Teplotekhnik” Mr. Semchenko had promised a meeting with locals but then suddenly refused to arrive. Later this day, a group of Antifascist and Anarchist youngsters apparently outraged by Neo-Nazi support of the project, attacked administrative buildings in Khimki. No one attacker was arrested there, but police arrested all the activists in the forest camp, instead.
- ▶ Two public speakers of the antifascists (Gaskarov and Solopov) were detained later despite lack of evidence against them. They are still (October, 10) in jail. Ecooborona condemned the antifascists’ tactics, but blamed authorities’ refusal to take public opinion into account as initial source of all the violence.
- ▶ July, 28 – August, 21. Cutting down of trees was proceeding slowly under protection of OMON (police special force) as well as of unknown thugs. Clashes between them and activists took place, more people were beaten or arrested. Public outrage about such a way of the “implementation of the project” was growing up both in Russia and abroad.



## Antifascists' attack in Khimki



Police failed to protect the administrative buildings, probably because their force was concentrated in the forest, near environmentalists' camp



It was much easier to arrest activists in the forest

- ▶ August, 21 Meeting between the French Greens (incl. MEPs) and our activists. International pressure is mounting against Vinci (who is one of the foreign participants of the project) as well as against EIB and EBRD since they still not refused to take part in the project. About 30 thousand letters were sent to EIB and EBRD from different countries around the globe asking them to abandon the project.



- ▶ August, 22. A large rally in Moscow in support of the Khimki Forest activists, from 3 to 5 thousand people gathered in Pushkin Square in Moscow. Some celebrities including an iconic rock-star Yuri Shevchuk came to support the Khimki Forest. Moscow police as well as pro-Kremlin movement “Nashi” tried to interfere with the rally. Vans with sound equipment were attacked by unknown motorbikers, the tires were punctured. Some people including celebrities were banned from entering the square. Despite all this, the rally became “the largest opposition rally in the last ten years”, according to some media.
- ▶ EIB and EBRD answered to the activists that they are deeply concerned by the situation, and a thorough analysis on the project would be done.





- ▶ August, 26 Surprisingly, President Medvedev as well as the ruling party (United Russia) announced that they want to halt the works on the project to allow more “public&expert discussions”. Local authorities of Khimki and Moscow District attempted to arrange quickly dummy “hearings” in support of the existing project – by summoning public workers and distributed false information about mass demolition of houses in Khimki in case if an alternative option is chosen. These “hearings” were boycotted by activists and were mocked in media.

Latter, Presidential Administration appointed the Public Chamber of Russia as the main ground for further discussions on the project. EBRD supported this development but underlined that they don't take responsibility for both transparency and outcome of the process.

Mayor of Moscow Luzhkov tried to interfere with the President's decision – and was fired soon.



- ▶ September, 16. Hearings in Public Chamber on the project. No solution was found due to inflexibility of Russian authorities in transportation as well as local authorities of Khimki and Moscow District. They refused unconditionally to consider any other option for the motorway placement except Option 3.
- ▶ Meanwhile, public support of the environmentalists grew up. According to public opinion polls, 76% of residents in Khimki, 67% in Moscow, and 66% throughout Russia supported protesters. Only 9% in Khimki and 11% in Moscow supported the existing placement of the motorway.



- ▶ A coalition of environmental organizations and movements was formed to protect the Khimki Forest as well as other forests of Moscow District. It included Greenpeace, WWF as well as 4 Russian members including Ecooborona.
- ▶ September 16 – nowday. No further public discussion was under way. According to some unofficial information, there were talking on the problem in the Presidential Administration, but no final decision was taken yet. The coalition issued a statement to the Public Chamber demanding honest and clear discussion on the project. Street rallies against the project in its present state resumed in Khimki in spite of further illegal works on the project. It led to further conflicts between activists and local authorities. A few people were arrested on October, 10





Illegal works were carried out despite the President's decision. They were stopped again by activists



Rally in Khimki,  
October, 10



## We kindly ask EC:

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- ▶ Not to grant Community Guarantee to EIB for the Moscow – St. Petersburg motorway project (at least, until the motorway routing is changed so that the bulk of the Khimki Forest Park is intact as well as the oak grove and the forest strip which protects residential buildings from the dumping ground).
- ▶ To raise publicly its environmental concerns as well as to recommend to choose a more environment-friendly option in order to obtain European support for the project – because today “interests of investors” are used by Russian supporters of Option 3 to advocate its future implementation.
- ▶ Ask Russian Government to stop repression against those activists who oppose the project – including the antifascists who have been imprisoned now for more than 2 months – without even enough proof of their involvement in the Khimki attack.



Thank you for the attention!

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