

Going Green Pays Off

By [Frank Jensen](#)

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Resource depletion and environmental degradation present obvious obstacles to economic growth around the world. These are challenges that are all too familiar in Russia. In particular, with its overburdened public transportation system and high levels of air pollution, Moscow demonstrates that there is no way around a new growth strategy. Moscow, along with the rest of the world, needs a green transition.

Denmark's capital, Copenhagen, is helping to show the way. Copenhagen has now set the ambitious objective of becoming the world's first CO₂ neutral capital by 2025. It is a very ambitious plan that requires continued long-term efforts. But it is certainly possible, and we have made a start. In 2011, Copenhagen had reduced its CO₂ emissions by 21 percent compared to 2005.

On May 22, Copenhagen's City Hall presented the plan for how the city would become CO₂ neutral. In the plan, we propose solutions that will be initiated in close partnership with public and private sector players. Wind turbines will be installed and investments made in solar cells, and power stations will be converted from fossil fuels to biomass. In the future, Copenhagen's residents will cycle even more, and we will invest in hybrid buses for public

transportation. Buildings in Copenhagen will be energy-renovated, and new buildings will be energy-efficient.

In return, city residents will gain a great deal in terms of increased growth and quality of life. Cleaner air, less noise and a greener city will give the population better daily lives and create more jobs. These improvements are also possible in Moscow if it decides to go green.

The good news is that the investments will bring returns. Not just in terms of a better climate, environment and improvement in the health of citizens, but also in terms of cash. It is estimated that more than a half of the investments put into improving the energy efficiency of schools, cultural centers, residential homes and offices will be repaid through operational savings by 2025. Copenhagen residents can look forward to monthly savings on their electricity and heating bills of \$50 to \$75. And in a time of economic crisis, these investments are creating jobs, and new solutions will set the foundation for a strong green sector.

It is undoubtedly true that cities all over the world can and should learn from each other. But we must be even more ambitious than that: We must transfer actual solutions from one city to another. After all, there is no need to reinvent the wheel in every city.

Copenhagen has gained knowledge and ideas from a range of other capitals, including London, Hamburg and Amsterdam. Copenhagen's approach has been to go beyond products and describe the solutions. Rather than focusing on technology such as pipes, pumps and software, the focus has been on the combination of political vision, technology, organization and knowledge.

Just as Copenhagen has benefited from initiatives in other major cities, we now hope that the solutions we develop and test will benefit Moscow and other Russian cities that are seeking solutions to improve the environment and reduce energy consumption and CO₂ emissions. It is a fact that the world's cities account for 80 percent of global CO₂ emissions.

In the final analysis, the transition to a green economy will only succeed if it is commercially sustainable. Going green must pay off. That is the main idea behind Copenhagen's ambitious project. But also, on a global scale, we believe that the industrial transition to a green economy has the potential to create new growth engines and spur global economic development.

As public and private sector partners intersect in their varied interests in green growth, new opportunities and ways of collaborating are emerging. The potential benefits are numerous. If we find the right buttons to press in bringing business and governments together to identify not only the barriers but also the solutions, a renewed impulse in the green transition could result.

We have a shared responsibility to ensure a global green transition. Political leaders, municipalities and corporations share the task of creating a new smart growth strategy that will ensure that jobs and growth go hand in hand with green development.

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The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.

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