



**POLITECNICO DI MILANO**

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**THESIS**

**Almaty in the new state**

**From the old Soviet to the new Global city.**

Supervisor: prof. Carolina Pacchi

Master Graduation thesis by: Bakhtiyar Bekenov

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# ABSTRACT

Urban research and comprehensive urban planning as a science is just coming to Kazakhstan and Almaty is acting as the engine of this process. In 2019, the first bachelor's degree program in urban planning opened in Almaty. Just a couple of years ago, public urban funds and research institutes began to operate in the city. Almaty is the largest city in Kazakhstan and one of the largest in the Central Asian region. The former capital of the country acquired its own individuality, current appearance and urban pattern during the Soviet era. In the last years of the existence of the USSR, many cities, including Almaty, experienced stagnation both economically and socially. After the collapse of the Union, Almaty experienced a deep crisis in many spheres of life and, in addition, lost its status as a capital. Thirty years have passed since the city is located in a newly formed state, experiencing a flourishing and is looking for its identity in a new capitalist world.

This work presents the first attempt to describe the urban age model, the main idea of which is that each city at a certain period of its history goes through one of three main age stages (youth, maturity and old age). This process is endlessly repetitive, but the time periods for each city are different. This work is an attempt to analyze today's Almaty through the prism of this model. In the last years of the USSR and the first years of independent Kazakhstan, Almaty passed its «old age», where the city was a withering organism in stagnation. The Soviet legacy, both physical (city boundaries, street layout, architecture of buildings and public spaces) and social (public administration, civic outlook), plays an important role in modern Almaty. Now the city is again in a transitional age from «youth» to «maturity». The main goal of this work is to find what Almaty lacks to become a modern global city and produce set of recommendation for further development.

In conclusion, after reviewing historical data, analyzing current state reports and statistical data, and comparing the case studies of urban conflicts, the main problems and obstacles that hinder the development of Almaty as a modern city were selected. The five main recommendations such as introduction of direct elections of the mayor, drawing up a city development strategy for future decades, symbiosis of citizens and local authorities, etc. were formulated for the city of Almaty. Furthermore, this work will be useful for future urban studies of Almaty and other cities of Kazakhstan.

Key words: Almaty; Soviet legacy; city governance; urban conflicts; citizens; urban development; city's age model

# INTRODUCTION

## Research motivation

Almaty is one of the main cities considered by foreigners wishing to move to Kazakhstan. The former capital with a population of two million is ahead of other cities in terms of urban infrastructure development, living standards and tourist attractiveness. In the former capital of Kazakhstan, there are enough establishments and places for recreation, because it is the cultural, historical and financial center of Kazakhstan, the city generates about 20% of the country's GDP. Because of its importance, relative development and creativity, the city of Almaty is an engine of progress in terms of urban planning and urban design for all other cities in the country, setting an example and direction for future development. Even critics of the new capital Astana, which was built from scratch, often counterbalance the best ideas or innovations taken from Almaty.

The city is in a certain transitional state, which stretches from the shock and crisis experienced by the collapse of the USSR and the not fully formed young state to a modern and sustainable global city. Not only the architectural, but also the cultural heritage of the USSR left a significant mark on the history of the urban environment, because the formation of the current image of the city began in Soviet times. The first years of independence passed hard for Almaty, the city lost its status as the capital, and the crisis in the country stopped any urban development. In the last decade, Almaty has been gaining momentum in creating a comfortable urban environment, developing infrastructure, striving to follow global trends and attracting creative and educated citizens.

Urban studies, urban research, integrated urban planning are relatively new areas of activity in the post-Soviet space, especially in Kazakhstan. The first and only educational bachelor's program specifically in urban planning and policy design was opened in the city of Almaty only in 2019. Therefore, when trying to competently arrange a comfortable urban environment from different sides, from analyzing public requests to implementing urban projects, either foreign specialists were invited in Kazakhstan, or local

authorities were looking for those who studied at foreign universities. The study of the city of Almaty as a kind of living organism, which is in the stage of maturation, the formation of a new identity and the search for visions of the urban future, arouses not only scientific interest, but also opens up an opportunity for practical application in creating a strategic plan and vision of the city for the near future.

## Aim

To produce special recommendations to improve the socio-economic development, comfortable living environment and living standards of the city of Almaty, which can be used by local authorities and stakeholders interested in the development of the city.

## Objectives

- Collect data on the physical and social heritage of the USSR inherited by the city and select those that affect the political and social life in the present.
- Analyze the current state of the city with a focus on socio-economic, spatial-physical and management aspects and reveal the main problems, which inhibit development.
- Select major urban issues and obstacles in Almaty through a case study of urban conflicts. Determine the importance of the role of society in the formation of urban policy in the current time frame in Almaty.
- By comparing cases of urban conflicts in other cities of the former USSR, identify common problems in urban management that have arisen due to the Soviet legacy.

## Research question

What prevents Almaty from developing faster and being a more comfortable and attractive city for life at the global level?

## Methodology

For this work the method of secondary research was chosen, since the result of the work implies the provision of some necessary measures for a general change in urban life and city management, and not a specific transformation or redesign of a certain part of the city. To achieve these goals, it was necessary to research some historical references, statistics from government agencies and official government reports. The secondary research used both local sources and international publications. When using local publications, usually the information was available only in Kazakh or Russian, which required an original translation from the author of this work. Since urban studies are not very developed in Kazakhstan, the main supporting theories, ideas and concepts regarding urban studies were taken from the scientific works of foreign scholars and writers.

### Structure of thesis

1. Initially, the city of Almaty was chosen as the object of the study, since there was no full-fledged academic urban research regarding the city, but the city is rapidly developing and growing.
2. Formulation of the problem. There are enough specific local problems in Almaty regarding urban planning and urban policy. However, for the initial study, it was decided to take a more general issue of the city's future vision in order to provide a basis for further research.
3. In order to show the necessity for changes in city management, transformation of values and to give a correct and up-to-date assessment of the current state of the city, an universal City's Age Model was formulated. The model used asserts that the city goes through 3 age stages one after the other, repeating cycles throughout its life. Almaty is now in a transitional age from "youth" to "maturity".
4. The Soviet period played an important role in the formation and shaping of the appearance of today's Almaty, since active development was carried out precisely in the 20th century. In this regard, it was necessary to conduct a historical review of those times in order to understand what legacy of the Soviet Union remained in Almaty and how it affects political and social life in the 21st century. In addition, the historical excursion confirms the correctness of the City's Age model, proving that in the last years as part of the USSR and the first years of independent Kazakhstan, the city in stagnation was experiencing its "old age" and was waiting for a new "youth".
5. The study of updated statistical data, government and various international reports regarding Almaty and Kazakhstan helped to compose an objective picture of the current socio-economic and governance conditions of the city. When studying these data, the main problems that impede the more efficient and rapid development of Almaty were identified and selected.
6. To address the issue from a different perspective, six case studies on urban conflicts were examined, four of which were from Almaty. Empirical analysis of the role of society in the development of Almaty under an authoritarian regime, helped to identify new urban problems that had to be solved.
7. When compiling a set of recommendations for Almaty for its further effective development, the most significant problems were selected that stretch from the Soviet past and hinder the full flourishing of Almaty. These recommendations relate to different spheres of the city's life, from changes in the political system of government to the creation of city development strategies. These recommendations are suitable for further practical application and do not require a large amount of financial investment and time.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE WAY OF CITY'S MATURITY: EXAMPLE OF ALMATY







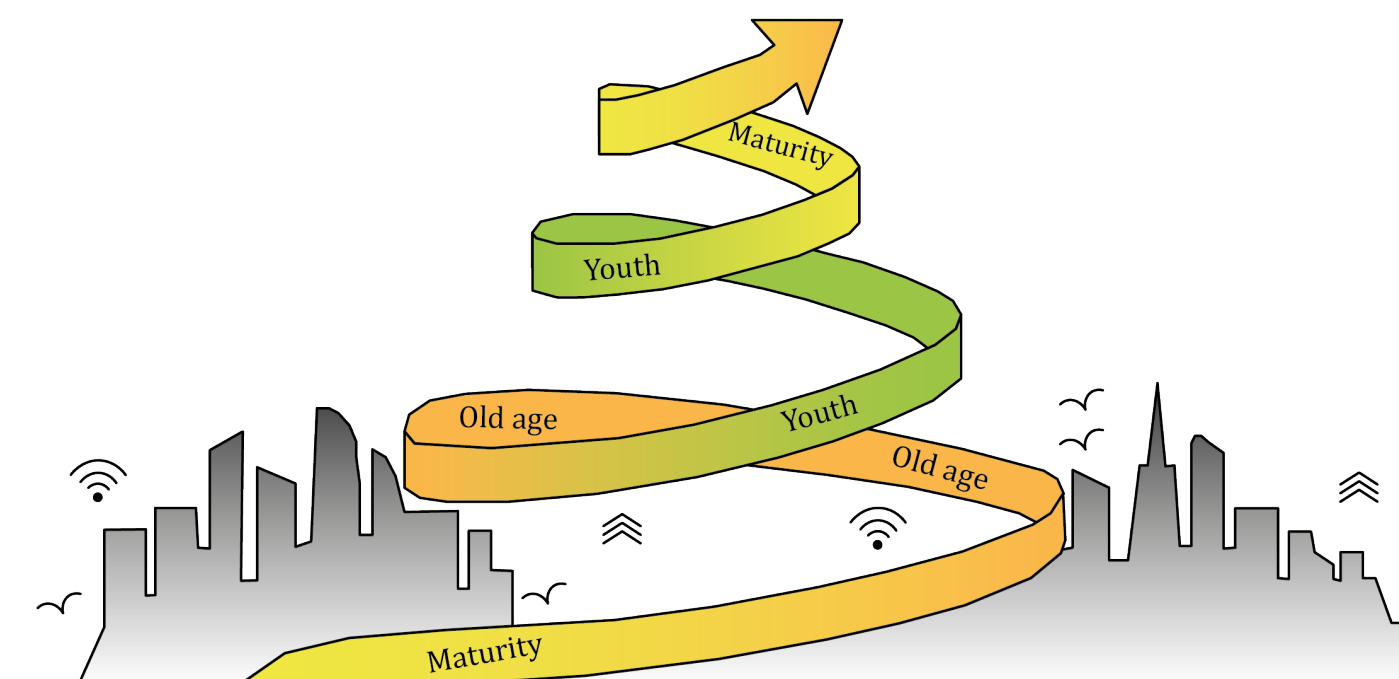
# 1.1 CITY'S AGE SPIRAL MODEL

Each city in a certain period of its history has a certain age, this is not a physical age that determines from the formation of an urban lifestyle of a settlement or from the construction of the first buildings and a grid of streets. Cities have a different dimension of age, different from the human one, but in many ways they are similar. If a person grows up first as a child, then matures, adolescence begins, followed by maturity and old age, respectively. Cities, on the other hand, can repeat the human life cycle, only with long time intervals. The city may already be quite old, historical with a well-coordinated city life that seems to never change, but within a couple of decades it will again turn into a «youth» which has become interested in everything new and wants renewal on its streets. This is how the “urban age” of the city changes over time. It is very difficult to determine the periods of human life. All over the world, there are various theories of research work reports, which describe the period of a person’s life in different ways.

This is also difficult to do because in different countries the living standards of people are different and the periods of growing up or the age of death are very different and it is difficult to unite all of humanity under one classification. International organizations are still trying to unify the classification of ages. For example, in 2015, the

World Health Organization, under the auspices of the UN, updated the age standards of mankind. Now there are 6 main groups: childhood under 25, youth from 25 to 44, maturity is 44-60, elderly age is 60-75, senile age is 75-90 and long-livers are after 90. The given international classification is made without physical and psychological patterns of different social groups. Some scientists fundamentally disagree on these standards and argue that youth begins from 13 to 25 years old, maturity from 25 to 61 years old, and then old age is already going on (Dyussenbayev A., 2017).

Throughout the history of the city, there have been different periods of development. Globally, all cities have passed four eras and are now in fifth. The first era of cities was pre-industrial or agrarian. Cities developed as a gathering place for farmers, where people interacted. The second era of cities was industrial. Industrialisation changed the old patterns of settlements. Manufacturing became the backbone of new cities. In the third era of the mercantile city, where close location to markets has crucial importance, cities became centres of import, export and consumption for the manufactured products. The fourth era was the era of capital or financial city. The cities became the centers of financial power with main occupations in banking and support services such as consulting, accounting and notary. The fifth era



Sketch 1.1 Life-cycle of the city. Abstract age spiral of city.  
Source: Elaboration by the author

is digital city. In the modern world, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic period, where working and social life can be mixed in online, real-world experiences take on an enhanced value. People have begun to value the time they spend in the real world, so the streets of cities and the cultural life that takes place on them will have economic, social and environmental value (Barnes, Y.,2019).

In each era cities can be divided into 3 large age groups, which follow each other like a spiral throughout the entire time. The transition from one abstract urban age to another is accompanied by a crisis, whether political, economic, social or even global. But apart from these five global eras of development, each city can live its own local eras, in which they will relive their “youth”, “maturity” and “old age”. Each age shows the city’s vitality, resilience and ability to withstand challenges. Regardless of status, size, location and global trends, all cities in the world alternate between these three ages, each city in its own period. The rich and more independent cities spend less time in “old age”, because thanks to their opportunities and past experience, they quickly find ways to regain their youth. Global cities, which play an important role in the global economy, are in their “mature age” for most of their lifetime and are trying to maintain this balance. “Youth” enables cities to choose a new path of development, in this period there is a search for a new urban identity. With effective and advanced governance, cities usually do not stay long at this stage. It would be best to start the explanation with “old age”, then follow the erasing of the proposed model and explain “youth” in more detail, and at the end discuss “maturity”. In this way, the urban age-spiral model itself will be more clear.

**Old age period** - Cities live in the old way. Cities are stagnant, not developing or developing very insignificantly and begin to lag behind the global world. Residents and government reject and deny anything new, they do not want to learn new things and adapt new technologies or policies in the city. The city government is responsible only for basic functions: distributing salaries to public sector employees, keeping streets clean, ensuring security, etc. Old cities do not think about the future, they live or survive here and now. Various factors lead to this age, from the ineffectiveness of the work of local authorities here and now to

global problems such as the collapse of the USSR. Below are the indicators that you can focus on in order to understand that the city is in “old age”. In some cases, all four guidance may be present on the agenda, in other cases, one strongly prevailing factor is enough to classify the city as old.

*Lack of adequate funding for the development of the city.*

The city lost its investment interest for the country, the higher authorities (parliament or the finance ministry, depending on the country) began to invest less resources for its development. This is often due to a sharp decline in tax revenues. The city lost its city-forming enterprise or for various reasons (environmental problems, natural disasters) nearby resort places were closed. If you do not go into the roots of the problems, but take a detached first glance at the situation that happened in Detroit in the 1970s, we can say that the closure of car factories led to the loss of a large number of jobs, the movement of residents in search of work to other cities and, accordingly, to the aging of the city.

Whatever human resources the city possesses, the enthusiasm of the local authorities and the passionate desire of residents to help the city will not advance far. The city needs a constant and large flow of capital to plan and implement further development. The cities themselves are not always to blame for their plight. The financial crisis in the country strongly and directly affects this criterion. In such a crisis, the government of the country begins to think about preserving the budget for the needs of basic necessities, i.e. to maintain the viability of the country and cities. With budget savings or obvious lack of financial resources, no government will think about infrastructural or social development of cities. Firstly, because of a lack of funds, and secondly, because it will be concentrated and focused on the effective solution of current problems. According to an annual report by Truth in Accounting 63 cities out of 75 most populous American cities did not have enough money to pay all of their bills. This means that to balance the budget, elected officials did not include the true costs of the government in their budget calculations and pushed costs onto future taxpayers. (Truth in Accounting, 2020) When cities spend more than they have, then they stop thinking about

the future and move from maturity to old age.

### *Brain drain.*

Initially, the idea of human capital flight was focused on the migration of people for political, economic or social reasons from one country to another. But in our globalized time, where global cities have become the engines of the world economy and play a significant role in the world political arena, setting new trends and conducting their own policies, the brain drain does not go from country to country, but from city to city.

The availability and validity of money does not always solve all urban issues. The presence of finance in the city is a solid foundation, which the city should have as a basement for a building. But it is important how, where and by whom this money flow will be distributed. Before Florida's idea of a creative class, one of the criteria for urban old age was the departure of professionals and educated people from cities. The city lost its attractiveness for various reasons, but later the brain drain influenced aging even more. The avant-garde driving force in the modern economy is the creative class of society in cities. People, who can transform their creativity and ideas into economic value, form the backbone of the Creative Class. Therefore, this class of society includes many knowledge workers such as scientists, professors and teachers, narrowly professional and technical workers, but emphasizes their true role that they play in the urban economy. The main creative class values are individuality, meritocracy, diversity and openness (Florida R., 2003). This is exactly what is needed for the modern life of the city. The absence of these qualities in the city's society means further stagnation. The city begins



Fig. 1. Detroit city. The biggest decline of the city in modern history. The stagnation and decline of the urban population are a consequences of de-industrialization.

to age when educated people leave in search of a better life. During their youth or maturity, cities attract talented and intelligent people, they generate new ideas for the development of society and the environment, create something unusual and breakthrough for the city and help to reach new heights. This class of society feeds the whole city with vital energy and is the engine of development, from ideas to implementation.

### *Political crisis. Irremovability of power or unsuccessful reforms.*

It is important here to understand the difference between government and governance. The government can change even in authoritarian countries, because these are elected representatives who run the state, but the governance can remain the same. Governance has reached political significance in the postmodern world as a model of public management - it is the trajectory along which elected representatives follow for the functioning of a country or city (Dufour, D. 2009). If the governance way remains the same for many years and does not adapt to new trends, social changes and new global challenges, then crises occur in which cities get old and do not develop.

With the irremovability of power and guarantees of re-election for the next term, the political elite does not want to change or undertake anything. After all, why should they come up with something if they keep their places and without any extra effort. On the contrary, the authorities want changes, carry out reforms, but fail to take into account the social and economic situation in the country, failing their transformations. There is also a combination of these two reasons, as happened with the USSR. For a long time, the ideology in the country did not change and the party could be led by the same persons for almost an uncountable number of terms. Over the course of time, the country realized that this could not continue and closing off from the whole world would not help, so they initiated strong political reforms. Unfortunately the system could not change and it crashed. Many Soviet cities at that time (1990s) were "old" for a long time and, living out their last years, were waiting for their revival.

### *Stagnation.*

All of the above criteria together lead to stagnation in the economy, production, social life of the city, etc. Stagnation in a more expanded

concept, not just in economic terms, can be equated with the old age city model. The city goes with the flow without thinking about the future and only remembering its past merits and achievements. This happens after a long period of prosperity of the city, several generations of both residents and the government can change. Stagnant cities are often burdened with serious financial obligations that they cannot pay. Uncertainty about these liabilities increases the risk of doing business, which in turn delays investment. In the stagnation of cities, 3 factors are responsible that need to be changed to improve the life of the city: City Finances, Governance and Public Services. Fixing city finances, reforming non-working or failing institutions, and transforming public services will prepare cities for revival (Renn A., 2019). The revival that Renn talks about in his report is the «youth» of the city, the next stage after the stagnation (old age of the city).

**Youth period-** It is important to understand that in this context, the «youth» of cities is not their official and documented age from the day of foundation. A city over a thousand years old can be young again and again. Usually after stagnation, cities begin a new stage in their lives, when they are searching for their own new self-identity or urban identity. Cities are beginning to look at other more developed global cities and try to adopt best practices for themselves, borrowing effective and innovative ideas and adapting them according to their culture and history. There comes a kind of “urban renaissance”, creation of a new comprehensive plan for future development and reorganization of urban life-style. With a minor crisis, a quick period of old age with minimal loss of resources, youth also proceeds much faster and more comfortably. Using the following factors, you can determine the «youth» of a city.

#### *Revival after the crisis*

Always after the decline, the recovery process begins and the first changes occur in the structure and governance of the city. The most famous and most tangible urban crisis occurred in Detroit. In 2013, the city was declared bankrupt, and the population at that time had decreased by more than 60%. But a year later, a state program was launched to restore it. Local authorities and organizations are implementing various programs to rebuild the city, develop the economy and attract labor. For example, the Detroit Future City includes a number of ideas and approaches on how to

make the best use of land, ensure job growth and economic prosperity, build infrastructure, and so on. In 2017, the DFC team proposed converting the city’s 900 vacant industrial sites into recreational areas, clean energy plants, air and wastewater treatment plants and other green infrastructure, and creating attractive jobs on derelict land. (Detroit future city, 2013). When a turning point comes and the city authorities, together with its residents, understand that they will not be able to live the same life or that it will only get worse, the city begins to search for ways to transform. Public organizations offer their ideas or full-fledged programs for the revival of the city, local authorities are looking for alternative approaches to organizing urban life. The city ceases to be old when the search for possible reorganization of some processes of urban life begins.

#### *Searching for a new city identity*

The identity of cities is not constant; it changes over time. The identity of the city can be associated with the identity of the person. A person’s identity changes with age as well as city’s, but for cities it takes much longer. Urban identity can be called a person’s internal intuitive perception of the peculiar appearance of the city, which unites the built environment, history, culture of society, spatial and functional values in the urban space. Of course, the history of the city cannot be changed, but the perception of the city, the values that it promotes, build environment, and most importantly, the culture of society in the city is possible. The young city is in search of a new identity of its own. New people come, generations change and society under general globalization is also changing. With these changes, urban spatial and functional values are being rethought.

This search also takes place thanks to the work of the local administration. Business trips to other cities to adopt the best urban practices and policies, or to invite competent professionals (architects, urban planners, designers, etc.) to transform the spatial conditions of the city. All these actions are done in order to understand what the city represents today, that is, to look at the already familiar city from the other side, and also in order to think about what it might become in the near or distant future.

It is not only large metropolitan areas that are looking for a new urban identity. Haidari is a small Greek city located 6 km from Athens,

which is considered the western gateway to the capital. Haidari Municipality seeks to develop a comprehensive solution regarding the development of new system and the creation of new spaces and new urban dynamics, striving to achieve a new model of the city. The new “Haidari for All” model aims to create a new city that will have a high quality of life and opportunities for a promising future. The new Haidari for All model encompasses four main areas: Environment, Education, Accessibility and Equal Opportunity, and Civilization and Culture. (URBACT: building new urban identities, 2009).

### *The younger generation in power*

A young mayor is always new ideas and a fresh look at the work of the city administration. In 2015, the Akimat (city hall) of Almaty was headed by the 41-year-old mayor - Bauyrzhan Baibek. For the largest metropolis of the country in the post-Soviet environment (where mayors are usually 60-year-old adults), this age can be considered young. During the 4 years of his reign, several hundred streets and roads were reconstructed, kilometers of fences were demolished, the Universiade was held, and the city administration itself underwent a serious transformation. Many bike paths and pedestrian zones have appeared, one of the first innovations under the young mayor was the launch of an electronic ticketing system and differentiated fares for public transport. With the younger generation of officials, the structure of the city administration has changed. In the Akimat of Almaty, 12 departments were renamed, and 6 departments were completely abolished by transferring functions to other structural divisions. So, in the city there were departments for a green



Pic.2. Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao that changed city from old industrial to young and creative one.

economy, social welfare, urban mobility, energy efficiency and infrastructure development, and urban planning. That is, young officials also keep abreast of world trends in cities and want to implement them in their own, which has a very positive effect on the development of the city.

The younger generation may end up in power in the city, but if the city is to some extent dependent on the power of the region or on the power of the country, which continues to be ruled by a sharply conservative older generation representing the majority, who do not recognize modern and liberal ideas, then it not makes a lot of sense and there is no need to expect radical changes in cities. In this case, “youth” and the search for urban identification can continue for a long time, while the local young generation, which is looking for new opportunities and ideas, is struggling with the older adult generation, which strives for constancy and preservation of the former lifestyle. It is impossible to change the entire system of government of the country at once, therefore, cities in authoritarian countries or with hybrid regimes, even with educated and creative human capital, the young generation in the city administration can be in “youth” for a long time.

### *Creative class*

As Florida envisioned, the creative class is driving the economy to grow with its new ideas and intangible values. Creative Class people are mobile and non-native. They are attracted to the cities by unusual projects in which they can participate or various spheres of art, education and culture. An example of attracting people of the creative class to a city that has turned from “old and unattractive” to a “young and open to all” is the city of Bilbao. In modern vocabulary at the beginning of the 21st century, the term “Bilbao Effect” appeared. The Bilbao Effect is characterized by the transformation of an entire city or area with one iconic building. Of course, successful transformations of the urban environment occur not only with the emergence of one building, but also as a result of an integrated system of measures and activities carried out with the support of local authorities.

Since its opening in 1997, the Guggenheim Museum has attracted many millions of visitors to the city and has generated millions of euros in Bilbao as a result of increased economic activity and tax revenues. The museum has transformed Bilbao from a decrepit industrial port city to one of the most popular tourist destinations. The creative

class of people not only participated in the creation and construction of this museum, but also plays a role in its daily life. Museums attract educated and interested people not only in material values, but also in the exchange of knowledge. Of course, other construction projects also played a role here - improving the metro system, a new airport, a shopping center; but the main merit belongs, of course, to the Guggenheim Museum (Rybczynski W., 2010).

**Maturity** - The cities are developing steadily, fulfilling the set city development plan for the next decades. By implementing a comprehensive development plan, the city attracts new experts for the implementation of sustainable technologies. The most preferred age for cities, including its residents and local authorities. The city administration clearly understands what exactly is required of them, what is needed for the city, they know the exact deadlines and what the effect of their work will be. Residents, in turn, take a responsible approach to the consumption of urban services, using public spaces, and effective resolution of emerging urban conflicts.

#### *Comprehensive development plan for next decades.*

The mature city follows a predetermined comprehensive development plan for years to come. Regardless of the head of the city administration, the city has its own identity and its residents clearly know what the city is striving for, what goals it has set for itself and its citizens. Whether it is zero road deaths, reducing carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere to a certain % or building infrastructure for a new mega-event (Olympics, world competitions or exhibitions). It does not matter what plans the city has, each city has its own development path and its own goals, the main thing is that these are not abstract goals, but real indicators that at a certain moment can be assessed and conclusions whether the city has reached them or has failed. For such goals from the city development plan, it is easy for townspeople to assess the effectiveness of the mayor and demand the completion of tasks. In turn, the administration knows what needs to be done and there is no confusion or inconsistency in the city between different departments. Even with a development plan for the next decades, a mature city always renews it and does not complacent. The city plan must always be up to date in order to be able to make recommendations for subsequent planning and thus reflect the political will of the



Pic. 3. Baibek B. is a young mayor of Almaty who worked in office from 2015 to 2019. Under his leadership, Almaty has changed a lot for the better. City bike rental, dedicated bus lanes, increased pedestrian accessibility, etc. was commissioned under his administration.

municipality. For example, Stockholm in 2018 updated the city development plan. The new City Plan draws on the city's "Vision 2040 - a Stockholm for everyone". According to Stockholm City Plan - city development plan takes a long-term perspective and aims to clearly set out how the physical development of the city will help to attain the vision of a Stockholm for everyone. According to the Planning and Building Act, a City Plan is to provide guidance on how the built environment is to be developed and protected (The city of Stockholm, 2018).

#### *Financial independence*

A city can be called mature if it does not depend on subsidies from the state or international unions. Subsidized cities, which depend on state money, cannot fully be independent. And by analogy with people, such a city is still young, under the patronage of «parents». City's financial independence is used to determine the capability of the local government to finance its expenditure without depending on the fund aid from external parties.

What guarantees the financial independence of the city? Firstly, it is the independent reproduction of capital. The city can produce finances due to some large industries or many small ones, due to the tourism sector (attracting financial flows from other cities through guests, tourists, people who go on a business trip), as well as due to the developed banking sector. The vector of generating financial resources is laid down by the historical past, but it can be adjusted in the present. If the city has not historically been famous for industry, trade

or tourism, then financial independence can be obtained by the ability to attract foreign investment. Again, you can draw an analogy with an adult, if there is not enough money for their ambitions or achieving goals, in modern society people take loans from banks, loans or credits are a kind of bank investment in a person. When receiving foreign investment, the city takes responsibility for the implementation of projects and the safety of resources, i.e. the city can independently decide what is interesting and useful and which companies should be invited to his city. The process of the country's economic development is influenced by the form of government and the development of cities. With the transition from a centralized to a decentralized form of government, the financial independence of cities increases. There are some strategies to increase the financial independence of cities: creating conditions that help stimulate local economic growth, achieving efficiency and effectiveness of various urban enterprises, improving the quality of human resources and technologies, and minimizing the elements of debt in local finance (Fafurida F., & Pratiwi E., 2017).

#### *Independence from higher authorities in decision-making*

The more mature the city is, the more political power and will the city administration and local politicians have. Independence from the country's parliament or the ministry of finance in making decisions on a particular issue in the city makes it more independent and "mature". In such a city, the townspeople and local authorities are able to initiate new projects at will, and not under duress from above. There is such a paradox: local authorities get rid of dependence on higher authorities, but at the same time they fall under the influence and depend on the mood of local residents. Here real support and approval of the population is important for the authorities. In turn, the townspeople understand that they are the masters in their city, and not just temporary guests, who must unconditionally obey in everything and give a ride to the city administration. The emergence of active citizenship in the city is part of gaining independence from above.

The concept of citizenship might be considered from two points of view - political and social. Both sides agree on the concept of membership in public life and government. The first point of view, which is understood as political, focuses on the notion of status as a set of rights and obligations. The

second perspective views citizenship dynamically - citizenship as a social process, lifestyle in modern cities with specific sets of practices and urban experiences, which regularly change the rights and obligations of people in urban areas. Citizenship involves distribution of resources including space which is the primary one, since it is unique and scarce. (Mazza L., 2007). Any decision-making processes in a city come from aspirations and motivations for the use of space. The idea of citizenship is a struggle for the right to use and manage urban space. When the townspeople want to take part in managing the space of their city, then the city becomes more independent from the higher authorities, so the authorities have to make concessions.

#### *Integration into the global economy*

A city does not have to be among the global cities to reach maturity, because then there would be only 100 or 200 mature cities. It is enough to be aware of what is happening around the world, try to establish relations with other cities, not only in your own country, but even better with foreign ones. Even if the city does not have direct connections and communication with the cities of other countries, which is practically unrealistic in our time, or they have a limited opportunity to choose, then it is necessary to find intermediaries, which all the more makes them grow overgrown with connections and establish contacts. Connections mean cooperation in trade, transportation of capital and resources, not only economic, but also social and cultural exchange. To do this, the city needs to have at least one of the following three things.

Firstly, the most commonplace is goods, if the city has some kind of production that can be brought to the world market (technology, auto industry, food industry, etc.), then this is a great potential for integration into the world economy. Secondly, a city with a rich history or distinctive culture has a priori tourism potential. Nowadays, tourism is a powerful global industry. The importance of tourism as a source of foreign exchange earnings and the expansion of international contacts is constantly growing. According to the WTO, the contribution of tourism to the world economy is 10.9% of world GDP. Third, human capital, people from the "creative class," whose ideas can be sold at high prices or exchanged as commodities. The headquarters of organizations that employ creative professionals may be located in other cities, but

the people themselves and their laboratories or workshops should be located in mature cities. It is beneficial for cities to remain adults for a long time and to shorten the time spent in other ages and transition periods as quickly as possible.

This age model of cities suggests that the most preferable period of development for all is maturity, since at this moment cities are the most powerful and developed. Most city dwellers do not strive to survive by caring about fair employment, an affordable housing and other basic needs, they live and reflect on higher needs such as democracy or personal freedom (Ferro E., 2013). The importance of spawning and preserving as many mature cities as possible on the map can be interpreted using broken windows theory. If a

certain number of depressed and underdeveloped cities remain in the country for a long time, then in the course of time there will be even more of them. Therefore, cities need to strive to be mature and stay that way for a long time. Own development is not selfishness on the part of the city, but on the contrary, universal support for the well-being of the region or country. In order to reach maturity, to pass the crises of old age and the difficulties of youth faster, all cities need to be guided by the previously mentioned criteria. These transitions from one stage of growing up to another are really difficult for cities and require basic support and at the same time non-intervention from the state, knowledge and skills from local authorities, and self-consciousness of citizenship in society.

## 1.2 THE RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC

Why exactly Kazakhstan and its former capital Almaty taken as the basis for this study? In 2021, it will be 30 years since the collapse of the USSR (Britannica, 2021). Almost all cities in the post-Soviet space fell into decay right after collapse, faced with a previously unprecedented crisis in management, restructuring of the country, economy and social sphere. Interest in how cities live now and how they overcame these crises are causing more and more discussions in the post-Soviet, both scientific and everyday society. The communist way of life has shaped its vision of urban governance. This vision is the complete control of the city's power over the planning of urban life and the organization of public spaces. The legacy of the Soviet Union is firmly rooted in the minds of the older generation who are in power now, and in the images of modern cities in various post-Soviet countries. Kazakhstan was heavily influenced by ideology and was the last to leave the Soviet Union, trying to preserve its state. For 4 days Kazakhstan was the sole member of the Soviet Union, becoming the last Soviet republic to declare independence (Patowary, K., 2020). Today, while pursuing a peaceful and multi-vector policy in the world and being the leading country in Central Asia, it still remains an authoritarian country closely connected with Russia and Belarus. The former capital Almaty is the most developed city in the region, where many people aspire not only from Kazakhstan itself, but also from their neighboring countries. It is worth noting that more people live in Almaty than in Brussels and Milan.

Although Kazakhstan and other post Soviet

countries are completely different, independent countries with their own culture, economy and laws, the common history of being in one state has left a mark on urban planning, architecture, and public administration. Urban planning practices have largely remained the same, except that the prices for construction and the quality of materials have changed. In some cities, time seems to have stopped and people live in the past, as in the USSR. It is good that large cities are developing and relatively new urbanistic approaches to urban development are beginning to be applied in these countries. These cities are the engines of progress that motivate settlements frozen in the past to look at the new world. It is undeniable that all urban conflicts transform cities and change the belief system of the citizens. Over these 30 years, a whole generation of new people has grown up in the post-Soviet countries with different views on urban governance. People in large cities are beginning to realize their responsibility for where they live and to take initiative for the places where they want to live, without shifting their hopes and dreams to the government, as was the case during the Soviet Union. No one is going to solve the problems of citizens except themselves.

Any city depends on how the power is organized in it, i.e., who is in charge and who demands the development of the city. Governance of the city and participation in its governance of citizens are two poles of urban policy research. These two poles are indicators of the «age» of the city. Speaking about stagnation, denial of new ideas in the city, we must remember that it is the city



authorities and its inhabitants, those who make decisions, are themselves has «aged» in mindset. In «youth» cities, radical political ideas have been born that changed the course of history, there were demonstrations for human rights and freedoms, in which oppressed people won their modest victories over seemingly unyielding power. The streets of European and American cities have witnessed protests before, for these cities, people's indignation is not new, the authorities have learned how to organize and manage the changes in city's age with emerging protests in their cities. The countries of the Western world are far ahead of other countries in terms of democracy and respect for human rights. In Western countries, the rights and forms of democracies are different, but still a cut above the rest of the world. Therefore, cities in these countries pass the stages of aging and youth faster and more imperceptibly, because the authorities understand how to act and work with residents, and residents understand what they need and how to influence the authorities.

Those who have power are the reasons for the change or preservation of a certain age of the city. Of course, everyone would like their cities to be «mature», ie. steadily developing, without visible or latent crises, with concrete plans of action for the near future. Unfortunately, it is not always possible for everyone to achieve it. So, who has power in the

city? Elite theories of urban politics boldly assert - the elite, the urban elite. In classical political theory, the city was a model of the political system, as Aristotle, Machiavelli and V. Pareto noted in their time, which means that the elected one rule. On the contrary, pluralist theory says that no group could monopolize power, it is distributed among the bearers of different interests. Interest groups are made up of business people and the middle and upper middle class. There is also a relatively new vision of urban politics, the so-called urban policy of the citizens. It is based on the «right to the city» proclaimed by Henri Lefebvre. In the process of discussing the concept of social space proposed by Henri Lefebvre, the idea of two hypostases of the «right to the city» was formed: the right to participate and the right to appropriation. The right to participation includes the requirement of local self-government, support and development of civil society institutions, direct participation of citizens in the discussion and decision-making on all issues related to urban space. The right to appropriation argues that open urban spaces should be equally accessible to everyone, both for leisure activities and for expression of will. (Lefebvre, H., Kofman, E., & Lebas, E., 1996).

Currently, according to the annual report "Democracy Index 2020" by Economist Intelligence Unit\* the 3 researched countries are classified as

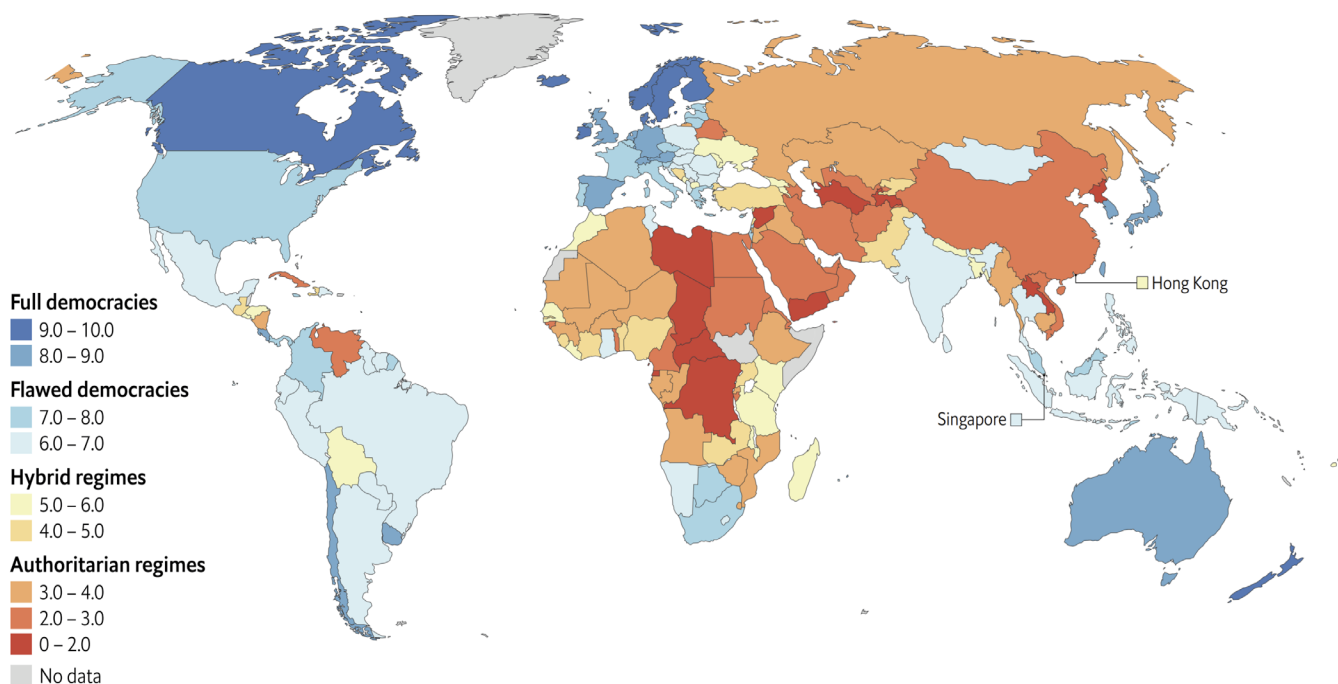


Chart 1.1 Democracy Index 2020, Global map by regime type  
Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

\* The Economist Intelligence Unit - research and analysis division of The Economist Group, the sister company to The Economist newspaper. Created in 1946, they have over 70 years' experience in helping businesses, financial firms and governments to navigate the ever-changing global landscape. <https://www.eiu.com/n/>

countries with autocratic regimes. "In states with authoritarian regimes, state political pluralism is absent or heavily circumscribed. Many countries in this category are outright dictatorships. Some formal institutions of democracy may exist, but these have little substance. Elections, if they do occur, are not free and fair. There is disregard for abuses and infringements of civil liberties. Media are typically state-owned or controlled by groups connected to the ruling regime. There is repression of criticism of the government and pervasive censorship. There is no independent judiciary." - a definition of authoritarian regimes is given in this report (Democracy Index 2020, 2021). Over the past few years, urban protests have increased in these three countries. Basically, the protests are taking place because of the crisis in the political system, the desire of society to come to the democratization of their countries and the rejection of the new rules by authoritarian regimes. All these protests are in one way or another connected with the right to the city, i.e., whoever controls or owns urban space continues to impose their principles and ideas. In this regard, the emerging need for an inalienable right to the city is gaining popularity in society. Upholding human rights and citizens' rights to the city in authoritarian regimes is a very difficult and time-consuming process. This is an inevitable and necessary process, not so much for further development,

but rather to prevent the gradual degradation of society. Authoritarian regimes do not allow cities to fully realize their potential, thereby retarding the development of "maturity" and preserving "youth" for a long time, or not leaving "old age" at all. An imperceptible and even hidden struggle against such regimes begins with cities, with their desire to be more progressive and comfortable. Despite the fact that the concept quickly took root in Western urban studies, the concept of «the right to the city» appeared in the post-Soviet public field at about the same time as the «urban environment» and "urban studies" or other basic concepts of urbanism, without which it is now difficult to imagine at least some high-profile public discussion. In 2015, Ian Gehl (Gehl Architects, 2015) came to Kazakhstan and created the concept "Towards a Liveable and Loved Almaty". This was the impetus for the development of urbanism in Almaty, and then in Kazakhstan. He developed the basic principles of urbanism in Almaty. And to begin with, all these principles had to be adapted to the local mentality and conveyed to the city administration and townspeople. The city has begun a gradual transition from youth to maturity, and the city continues to look for ways of development and steps that are necessary for growing up. But the main question remains on the agenda: what does a city need to become a truly mature city?

## **1.3 FROM GLOBAL TO LOCAL AND WAY BACK**

After a large country split into 15 new republics, many cities in these countries had «aged» rapidly. Great political and economic shock kept the cities in a state of coma. Larger and stronger cities recovered faster from the initial effects of the crisis and entered a new round of their life cycle. All the same, cities depend on the countries in which they are located more than on external partners. After 30 years after collapse the countries of the former USSR are currently in different categories of the democratic index in chart 1.1; countries such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which are full members of the European Union, are characterized as countries with flawed democracies. Countries such as Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, which have experienced major coups d'état with open military conflicts, are considered to be countries with a hybrid regime (Democracy Index 2020, 2021).

Kazakhstan is the most urbanized country in Central Asia. Kazakhstan's former capital - the city of Almaty - is the main object of research,

but it would be wrong to consider it separately, detaching from the context of close international ties with Russia and Belarus. The country's economy and urban system have changed in Kazakhstan, but the system of government still has echoes of Soviet power. The market economy cannot exist and develop without a democratic regime that provides people and businesses with the necessary competition and freedom of choice. An authoritarian regime does not allow to realize the full potential for urban development. The existence of this regime in Kazakhstan is proved by the former president who was in power for 30 years and still has political power. Since these three countries (Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus) are still countries with an authoritarian regime, it will be useful to compare the developing interest in urbanism in different cities of these countries. Russia is the successor of the Soviet Union within the framework of fulfilling obligations under the previously concluded bilateral and multilateral treaties of the USSR. Therefore, Russian cities are

very interesting for comparison, since government and urban life are most closely related to the Soviet past. However in the early 2010s - coincided with the transformation of Moscow and other Russian big cities, which headed for rapid urbanization (Furgé, N., 2019). Belarus, bordering 3 EU countries on the one hand and Russia on the other, is going through a political crisis in a country where society wants changes and fights for human rights, but the political system does not want to change. The 2020 protests in Belarus aroused public interest in the concept of a “right to the city” across the social spectrum (Krawatzek, F., & Sasse, G., 2021).

Kazakhstan is the ninth largest country in the world, but has a population of only 19 million, respectively, the country has a low population density. Thus, the formation of a well-managed system of large and medium-sized cities is of paramount importance for the economic development of Kazakhstan. The «Regional Development Program until 2020» defines the three largest urban agglomerations as critical points for future demographic economic growth. One of such agglomerations is the city of

Almaty, the former capital of the country (Regional Development Program until 2020, 2018).

Although the first mentions and archaeological excavations date the foundation of the first settlements in the Almaty region back to the Bronze Age and the development of these territories during the Great Silk Road, the modern city began on February 4, 1854, when the Russian government decided to build a military fortification on the left bank of the Malaya Almatinka River. Most of the currently existing post-Soviet cities first became true cities in essence, that is, in terms of functions performed, composition and lifestyle of the population, properties of the urban environment, and only then received city status. The gap in time between the formation of cities «de facto» and «de jure» was measured in decades and even centuries. Therefore, the date of foundation of Almaty is conditional (Lappo G.M., 2006). In the spring of 1854, near the ruins of ancient Almaty, the construction of the Zailiysk fortification began, later named Vernyi. From the middle of 1855, Russian settlers began to arrive at the fortification.

Ranking by city	CIMI 2020 (IESE)	Global Cities Index 2020 (A.T. Kearney)	Global Financial Center Index, GFCI 2020 (Z/YEN)	Quality of Living City Ranking 2019 (Mercer)
1	London	New York	New York	Vienna
2	New York	London	London	Zürich
3	Paris	Paris	Shanghai	Vancouver
4	Tokyo	Tokyo	Hong Kong	Munich
5	Reykjavík	Beijing	Singapore	Auckland
6	Copenhagen	Hong Kong	Beijing	Düsseldorf
7	Berlin	Los Angeles	Tokyo	Frankfur
8	Amsterdam	Chicago	Shenzhen	Copenhagen
9	Singapore	Singapore	Frankfurt	Geneva
10	Hong Kong	Washington, D.C.	Zurich	Basel
Almaty	128th	124th	101st	177th
Minsk	111st	-	-	188th
Ekaterinburg	-	-	-	-

Table 1.1 Comparison Global Cities Indexes (Top 10 + Almaty, Minsk & Ekaterinburg)

Source: Elaboration by the author (with references to (Berrone, 2020), (Kearney, 2020), (GFCI 29 Rank, 2020) and (Mercer, 2019))

With their arrival, the city begins to develop rapidly. Almaty from 1936 to 1991 was the capital of the Kazakh SSR, and from 1991 to 1997 - the first capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The end of the Soviet era and the collapse of the USSR, which led to a crisis in many spheres of life not only of the city, but of the whole country, renewed the life cycle of the city, transferring "old age" into a completely new "youth", which had to go through many trials.

Kazakhstan gained its independence in 1991 after being ruled by the Soviet Union for almost 70 years. During the first decades of independence, a destabilizing period of transition from a planned economy to a market economy continued in the country. In the first half of the 90s, Kazakhstan, like all new states, experienced a deep economic crisis (Bendini, R., & Przetacznik, J., 2013). The country's GDP in the first five years decreased by an average of 18.7%. The decline in production covered all sectors of the economy. The reasons for such a catastrophic recession were associated with the collapse of the USSR and the breakdown of most of the economic ties between the republics. In the early 90s, the outflow of the Russian-speaking population to Russia and other republics, which began in the late 80s, intensified. Due to the open borders after the fall of the Iron Curtain, which made it possible to go abroad, as well as due to the crisis in the 90s, a brain drain began. For these reasons, urbanization in Kazakhstan has been relatively slow. The period of the largest urban growth in the history of Kazakhstan falls on an earlier time, namely in the era of the existence of the USSR.

In the first decade of the 21st century, Kazakhstan experienced sustained economic and demographic growth. Economic growth was driven by the activities of the oil and gas sector. In 2000-2005, the country's GDP growth by 50% was a merit of this sector; a new capital, Astana, was built from scratch with oil and gas money. (However, this city will not be considered in this work, since it is not of interest in the research topic, being a generic city described by the Rem Koolhaas). But since 2010, domestic demand and the service sector have become the main driving force. However, even in recent years, the country's urbanization process has been slower than in most middle-income countries. The Soviet central planning system formed the urban system that Kazakhstan inherited after its independence (OECD, 2017). With the transition to a market economy, the government of Kazakhstan also abandoned many elements of the Soviet system after 1991 (including

the distribution of young specialists by region after graduation), which entailed the transformation of the urban system of Kazakhstan, the population was concentrated in large cities, such as Almaty. In Kazakhstan, there is a «Country Development Strategy until 2050», proposed by the first president in 2012, which determined the vectors of the state's growth. The main goal is to enter Kazakhstan into the top 30 leading and developed countries of the world (Strategy "Kazakhstan - 2050", 2012). The concept of urban development is inextricably linked to the implementation of this task. Each country in the top 30 developed countries has its own global cities. Saskia Sassen, scholar who popularized term «global city», argues that the global economy is embedded in a number of places, and its continued operation is vitally dependent on activities that are performed in these places. From this point of view, in order to be one of the leading countries in the world economy, it is necessary to have and develop such places, i.e. global cities.

The UN predicts that by 2050, about 70% of the world's population will live in cities. A daily changing environment, new trends, based on digitalization and technology companies, determine the participants in the global city race. Competition begins at the level of global cities. Today Almaty provides about 20% of the country's GDP and is already among the 600 largest cities in the world, which form 60% of the global economy. In order for Kazakhstan to be in the honorary club of the leading countries, Almaty, as a locomotive of the economy, must reach the level of development of the leading global cities. Large cities around the world are today the terrain where some of the novel conditions marking the twenty-first century hit the ground: Multiple globalization processes assume concrete localized forms, electronic networks intersect with thick environments (whether financial centers or activist meetings), and new subjectivities arise from the encounters of people from all around the world. Thus, today's large cities have emerged as a strategic site for a whole range of new types of operations, some pertaining to the global economy and others to political, cultural, and subjective domains. (Sassen, S., 2006).

If earlier the competition in the world arena for political influence and economic opportunities was between countries, for example, the competition between the USA and the USSR in the 20th century, now the competition is between cities, regardless of countries. Global cities - leaders in commerce,

arts and education - are growing faster than others. They have the capabilities, ambitions and strength to not only change the global economy, but also to influence on a global scale on culture, politics, ideas, and determine the future of the whole world.

The city of Almaty is below the 100th place in various ratings of global cities (see table 1.1). However, the fact that Almaty is already included in this list suggests that this city plays a significant role in the global economy. Even if Almaty cannot be considered a full-fledged global city from a world point of view, at least it strives to become one. In the meantime, the city is a clear leader in the Central Asian region. Even Minsk, the capital of Belarus, does not make it into all the ratings and Ekaterinburg is completely absent. Although according to socio-economic indicators, they are approximately equal. This is due to the fact that the city of Almaty is more open to the world, since many foreign contracts and transactions of the entire region are conducted through it.

The leaders of global cities, that is, mayors, become very important politicians with great influence in their country. So, for example, the former mayor of Almaty, Bauyrjan Baibek, after the decision of his powers as the head of the city, became the first deputy chairman of the Nur Otan party, which dominates in Kazakhstan. In fact, the second person after Nazarbayev in the party. Cities became a site for new types of political operations: in fact, the centrality of 'place' in a context of global processes makes possible a transnational economic and political opening for the formation of new claims and hence for the constitution of entitlements, notably rights to

place. In this perspective, cities have turned into a strategic terrain for a whole series of conflicts. Almaty is now at an intermediate stage of maturation, moving from youth to maturity. The city is undoubtedly making attempts, but for over 30 years Almaty has not been able to fully become "mature". The transition from youth to maturity in cities also takes place thanks to the voices of the inhabitants. That is, their protest, the creation of public organizations that are interested in the development of cities, the struggle for the right to the city. Many nongovernmental organizations and city development agencies consider the "right to the city" as the right to implement the following scenario: "affordable housing for people" (ranging from "good" housing and "good infrastructure" in the neighborhood to "environmentally friendly" transport) plus "participation" already in a more close to the original sense. In the political-philosophical and socio-theoretical sense, the right to a city can mean the following:» as much justice and environmental protection as possible. «In most cases, people believe that the right to a city is a right for a better, more «human» life in a capitalist city and society and representative democracy (Uitermark, J., Nicholls, W., & Loopmans, M., 2012)

Further, using the example of Almaty, we will analyze the life cycle of the city, show how from "old age" the city experiences its "youth" and strives for "maturity." The following chapters will tell about the influence of the heritage from the past on the development of the city today, the role of the government and citizens in growing up of city, what prerequisites does the city of Almaty have to become mature and what is lacking and needs for maturity.



# CHAPTER 2

## OLD AGE: THE LEGACY FROM USSR







# ECHOES OF SOVIET HISTORY: URBAN PLANNING

## Previous youth: Development under the USSR

The Second World War postponed the implementation of the city's master plan for several years. The city grew thanks to the evacuation in Almaty of a number of industrial enterprises, organizations and institutions away from the front line. The problem of an acute shortage of housing was only partially solved, as before, by the construction of frame-reed barracks without any improvement and beautification. In the late 1940s, construction began to resume in the city. For the first time, reusable residential projects were introduced. They have not yet become standard model projects, but, by introducing orderliness in design solutions, they made it possible to create a certain unity of development (Ordabaev A.B., 2018).

In just a decade, the provincial town turned into the capital of the Republic, demonstrating unprecedented in scale a social and cultural program. A network of administrative, government, cultural, educational and scientific institutions, housing complexes was created. The leading architects of Moscow and Leningrad took part in the All-Soviet Union competitions for projects for Alma-Ata (old name of Almaty city). The construction of Almaty has become a kind of testing ground for a creative experiment

in approbation of a new and "young" typology, theoretical and stylistic doctrines, both of avant-garde trends and "traditionalists". All of them were guided by the heritage of the region.

## Maturity: from sustainable development to stagnation 1960-1970s

Large volumes of objects of mass construction in the USSR determined the need for industrialization of construction methods and their typification - the selection of the most optimal, economical solutions for their repetitive practice. This path had serious aesthetic drawbacks, because the replication of typical objects gave the development of Soviet cities a monotonous, inexpressive character, and did not take into account natural and cultural differences. The seismic factor in some cases helped the architects and the Almaty authorities bypass the standard that was spread throughout the country. Most of the standard projects developed in the central design institutes of the USSR did not take into account seismicity, and individual designs were developed for many public and administrative buildings in Almaty. Due to this feature, interesting objects have appeared in the city, which have become not only functional buildings, but also works of art of architecture.

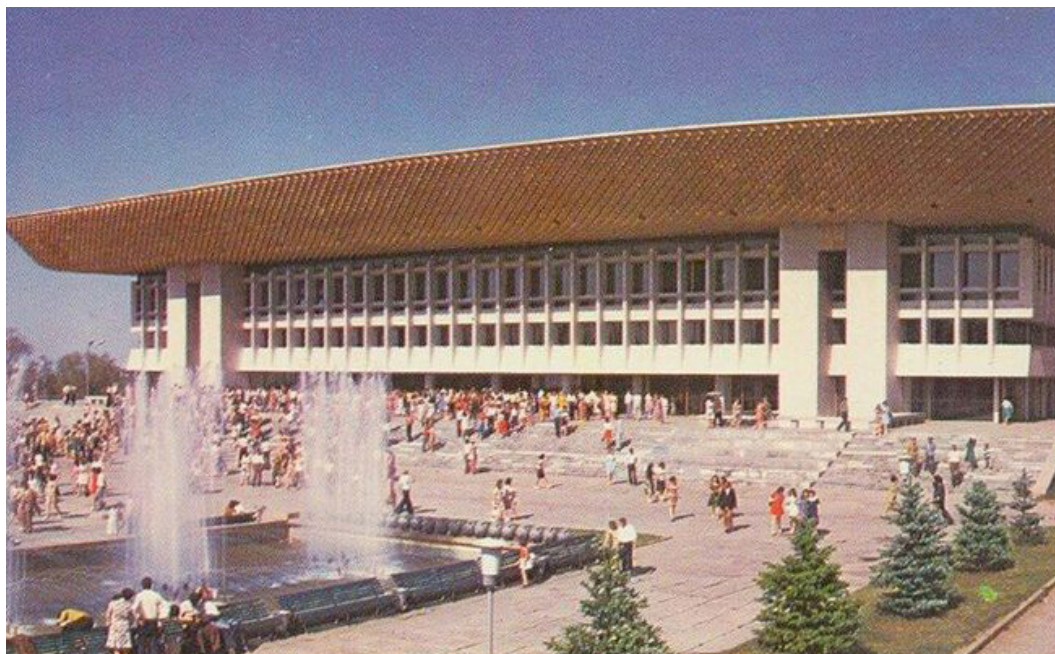


Pic. 4 Hotel «Zhetysu», 1957.

One of the first hotels in the city. The city began to host various government delegations and tourists, and therefore a need arose for this type of building.

Pic.5 Palace of the Republic/ Palace named after Lenin, 1970.

The architects and chief engineers received the USSR State Prize for this project in 1971.



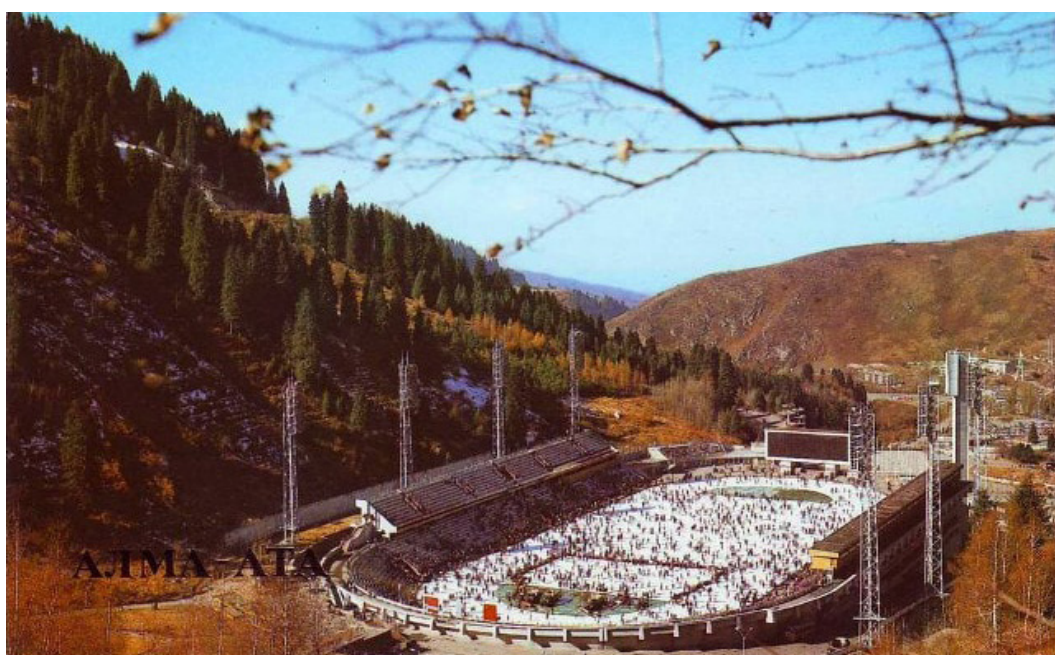
In the 1960s, the architecture of Alma-Ata took leading positions in Soviet architecture - victories in all-Soviet Union competitions became an everyday reality. Significant structures appeared, whose innovative designs determined the figurative-planning solution. An obvious breakthrough of Alma-Ata architecture to the highest level of achievements of Soviet architecture was marked by the architecture of the Lenin Palace (Palace of the Republic), in connection with the successful development of a new building in terms of function - a multipurpose hall. The building of the Palace was held with a quality indicator «innovation» in all parameters: technical and constructive, uniqueness of figurative and expressive characteristics, overcoming typological

standards, functionalist criteria of form formation, synthesis of national and international traditions, demonstrating a creative multi-theme (Malinovskaya E.G., 2020).

One more significant ambitious project of the new high-mountain skating rink «Medeo» will be remembered for this period. The project turned out to be very expensive: it required 8.4 million rubles (\$ 11.2 millions in 1972, but taking into account inflation for 2021, this amount is equivalent to 73.3 million - Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021), it was necessary to approve the budget and receive funding in Moscow. The complexity of the construction was also in the fact that it was necessary to build a road to the construction site

Pic. 6 The high-mountain skating rink «Medeo», 1972.

From the beginning of its opening to the present day, this facility is a cult place in the city.



and carry out communications there: water supply, electricity, sewerage. The skating rink is located at an altitude of 1691 meters above sea level and 14 km from the city center. This skating rink has set many world and Olympic records (Romashkina S., 2018).

### **Old age: perestroika\* and the collapse of the USSR (1980s-1991)**

In the 1980s, Almaty looked subdued, muted, despondent and doomed. The large-scale urban development projects of the past decade have come to the end by themselves. Something else was being completed by inertia, but most of the tower cranes above the city froze, turning into unsightly tombstones of a bygone era. Nobody took care of the city, there were no legislative levers and laws protecting the city's appearance, so the beautiful-looking buildings, just built according to the architects' ideas, were quickly spoiled by the owners. A striking example of inaction and indifference on the part of the authorities to the city is the transformation of the residential buildings "Three Bogatyrs". This residential complex is one of the first high-rise

residential complexes in Almaty, built during the reconstruction of Lenin Avenue in the 70s. Three Bogatyrs are three 12-storey pavilions united by a two-storey stylobate. The building was built in 1970 by architects B. Churlyayev and A. Petrov. The original exterior of the house, as the architects envisioned it, can only be seen on postcards from the Soviet era. Currently, the facade of the building is hopelessly damaged by the lurid and awkward glazing of the balconies.

One of the last significant buildings built in Almaty during the Soviet era is the Schoolchildren's Palace. It is included in a single architectural ensemble with Republic Square, although it is located at a decent distance from it and closer to the Samal neighborhood. This neighborhood was built up in the 1980s and was supposed to be innovative, but perestroika and the collapse of the USSR prevented it. Completing what was conceived in the 1970s, new ideas and development plans stopped. Already in the early 80s, the country was in stagnation and it categorically needed reforms. The government was not up to the development of the city, then the priority was the nationwide administrative and social reformation.



Pic.7 The residential complex «Three Bogatyrs», 1982.

Initially, the building did not have its own name; the popular rumor gave it the name «Three Bogatyrs» by the end of the 1970s. Bogatyr is translated from Russian as a hero.

\* «Perestroika» - general name for reforms and the new ideology of the Soviet party leadership, used to denote changes in the economic and political structure of the USSR initiated by the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985-1991. Perestroika in translation means "reconstruction". The goal of the reforms was the all-round «democratization» of the socio-political and economic system that had developed in the USSR. Plans for economic reforms were developed back in 1983-1984.

Pic.8 The residential complex «Three Bogatyrs», 2010s.

Indifference and lack of control led to the fact that each owner glazed his balconies as «best» he could.

Fortunately, there is now a discussion about renovation and a return to open balconies.



## ECHOES OF SOVIET HISTORY: SOCIETY

Why do interest in cities among ordinary people on the territory of the former USSR appear only now? The simplest answer that comes to mind first, people were not up to comfortable cities. Many cities in Kazakhstan (as well as in Russia and Belarus) underwent urbanization during the Soviet era, so their structure is very similar to each other.

### **The birth of new society: 1920s-1950s**

Since the early 1920s, an Iron Curtain has arisen between the Soviet Union and Western countries: isolation is necessary to ensure complete indoctrination of the population in order to make people «real builders of communism.» People who have not traveled abroad have not seen other cities, how life is arranged in them, how people use public spaces and streets. For such people, the monotony of the streets and the same residential neighborhoods in different cities were commonplace. Therefore, they did not require changes or improvements to cities.

In war and post-war times, people survived and they did not know what to do and they did not care what happened to their cities. Society in cities, together with architecture and urban planning, lived its «youth». After the war, people rebuilt social ties, improved relationships with each other. It was necessary to rebuild not only cities after the

bombing, but also to rebuild society, where they are striving, goals for the future. Almaty was no exception, the city began to gather a lot of different people and build new relationships.

The Iron Curtain and the war influenced the development of society. Travel abroad sometimes led to the running away of Soviet tourists from the USSR. As a result, traveling abroad has become a kind of privilege for certain social categories of the population - diplomats, writers, artists, scientists, artists, musicians, and the military. But even these people could never be sure that next time they would have the opportunity to go abroad - the Iron Curtain could become a reality for them at any time. People were socially embarrassed and politically passive because there was fear. Passivity of citizens was a monopoly on city management for officials. Cities were planned by people who did not live there, or not specialists at all (politicians, economists, but not city planners). After all, ideology was above the quality of cities. The authorities had to show their people that communism is better than the capitalist world. Unfortunately, they showed it in quantity but not in quality; how many products were produced, how many houses were built for workers, how many kilometers of roads were laid. Fortunately, Almaty was lucky, due to the peculiarity of its location, the city combined both the Soviet communist monotony, which extended to all cities of the USSR,

and unique large projects. Therefore, the residents of Almaty have always been a little more advanced, as they saw and learned more.

### The flourishing of society: 1960s-1970s.

After 40 years from the accession of countries to the Soviet Union, cities have come to their maturity. Passed a state program to teach everyone the Russian language, and almost all Soviet cities spoke it. People from different countries began to understand each other better. Therefore, domestic tourism was very popular. Then there was a kind of Schengen area on the territory of the Soviet Union. During the Soviet era, when the Iron Curtain existed, there were no strangers in the cities, everything was simple and clear. The same people meet on the way from home to work and back. Everyone speaks the same language, the environment of upbringing and worldview was identical, even despite the large geographical distances. People who lived geographically in the eastern European part of the country were similar in spirit to the Central Asian inhabitants or to the northern inhabitants of Siberia. Therefore, even if people traveled within the Soviet Union, they remained “their own people” in foreign

cities. In these years, people were born who are now in power. This generation was brought up and brought up by the Soviet ideology, which undoubtedly left its mark. People started to work and get management experience in the socialist system. In the political sphere, the authoritarian traditions of the Soviet era founded during these years have so far prevented Central Asian states from adopting more representative forms of government. Another long-term consequence of the Soviet period is cultural and linguistic Russification in all large cities including Almaty.

It was not only in Soviet cities that society began to rethink its position and attitude towards cities and people within it. The most significant and turning point in the history of relations between cities and its inhabitants was the period of the middle of the 20th century. After the Second World War, when the value of human life took on a new form and became more significant for all mankind, people (masses of people, not just philosophers, scientists and the upper strata of the population) began to think about their rights and comfort, and not just about survival.

In 1968, student protests in Paris spread around



Pic. 9 The May 1968 events in Paris, also known as the «Red May», was a social crisis in France that began with radical leftist student demonstrations and resulted in demonstrations, riots and a general strike.

the world. Student unrest swept across Belgium and Yugoslavia, engulfed the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin, powerful demonstrations took place in Chicago, and student performances in Mexico were brutally suppressed. The 1968 protests included various youth protests around the world. It is almost impossible to determine all the political beliefs of students who actively participated in the protests, even in Paris alone. The reasons for the protests were not economic, but ideological. The protesters mainly fought for human rights, but also against racism, advocated for feminism and environmental protection. In the United States, these protests were largely directed against participation in the Vietnam War. The truth was clearly confirmed that «democracy requires public visibility, and public visibility requires a material public place» (Mitchell D., 2003).

In the same 1968, Henri Lefebvre, a French sociologist and philosopher, linked the problem of public urban space with the problem of human rights. For the first time the concept of «the right to the city» as one of the inalienable human rights was declared by him in the work of the same name «Le Droit à la ville» published in the same year. Of course, he wrote this book before the protests, but the timeliness of the statements that every resident has a «right to the city» has caused an approving reaction and support among the protesters. This issue is raised in at least four of Lefebvre's works: *The right to the city* (1996), *Space and politics* (1973), *The production of space* (1991), and *Writings on cities* (1996).

The most important role for the rethinking of power in cities was played by those who took up the Lefebvre imperative, they were Don Mitchell, R. Moses, M. Davis, but above all David Harvey. David Harvey, the winner of the most prestigious international prize in the field of geography, theorist and popularizer of Marxism, Professor of Anthropology and Geography at the City University of New York, in his work «*The Right to the City*» defends the thesis of its natural rootedness in the daily practice of everyday urban life. Like Lefebvre, he puts into this demand, first of all, a political message. He ties the concept of the right to the city to Marxist theory and postulates that the protesters should attempt for the collective right to shape everything about the city – not just improvements in their individual status. Harvey further explains Right to the City as follows:

*“The right to the city is, therefore, far more than a right of individual access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart's desire. It is, moreover, a collective rather than an individual right since changing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanization”* (Harvey D., 2008).

### **Stagnation and breakdown: 1980s-1991**

The inhabitants of the USSR were not accustomed to changes. Stability on the verge of stagnation was at the heart of Soviet constancy. And any shift, for example, the transition from a working six-day period to a five-day period, a change in fares or a switch from «summer time» to «winter», was perceived in society with intense attention. And others, generally brought to nervous breakdowns. But at the same time, the inhabitants of the USSR wanted changes. In the 1980s, everyone in the Soviet Union understood that it would be impossible to live as before. The monotonous flickering of everyday life has bothered many. The overly slow course of life was especially depressing for the most active. But the paradox was that changes were expected even by those who did not need them at all. The enterprises were still working. But also somehow by inertia - apathetic and tired. People pretended to be doing something. The state pretended to be interested in these matters. What was unthinkable a few years ago began: massive salary delays and massive layoffs. At the same time, peace and confusion reigned on the streets. Deserted urban spaces were a picture of the future epidemic of 2020, which wiped out the people from the streets of the city to zero. There was simply no particular need to go out into the streets: shops stood with empty shelves, stalls and «lumps» had not yet appeared, and then life did not provide any public entertainment. It was an unusually conflicting time. Society sparkled here and there. People's nerves were on edge all the time. Slaughter and abuse arose everywhere and on any soil: everyday, ideological, national, religious.

As soon as the situation in the USSR in connection with Perestroika became freer, the pre-existing interethnic conflicts began to manifest themselves in public life, primarily in the form of mass demonstrations. An increasing proportion of the inhabitants of the republics believed that the

best way to get rid of exploitation by the central bureaucracy was to secede from the USSR. Sensing that the reforms of M. Gorbachev threaten the interests of the bureaucracy, its national groups began to support nationalist protests in order to protect themselves from the actions of the union center with their help. The first massive national demonstration was the Alma-Ata riots on December 16-19, 1986. Later, similar events occurred in other national republics of the Soviet Union. It began with a demonstration on December 16, when the first groups of Kazakh youth came out with a demand to cancel the appointment of G.V. Kolbin (a leader appointed from Moscow, not associated with the republic and did not know the Kazakh language) to the post of head of the country. Perestroika was just beginning at that time, the power in the country was still strong, so the reaction of the government in Moscow (in contrast to similar events that took place several years later in Tbilisi, Baku, etc.) was lightning fast: it immediately instructed the Ministry of Internal Affairs to disperse the rally. In the city, the telephone connection was immediately cut off, these groups were harshly dispersed by the police and military units.

The main reason for the conflict was the growing economic difficulties of the Soviet system in the context of different ethno-demographic trends in the development of the two main ethnic groups of the Kazakh SSR - Russians and Kazakhs - which led to an increase in social and interethnic tensions. At the same time, the implementation of the Russification policy continued in large cities where there was a Russian majority, including Almaty. Both Kazakhs and Russians were appointed to the highest leadership positions, but in addition to personal qualities, knowledge of the Russian language was a mandatory requirement. At the same time, knowledge of the Kazakh language was not required for the appointment of an ethnic Russian to leadership positions in Kazakhstan, even if it was appointed in a region dominated by the Kazakh population. Discontent grew among the population. Kazakhstan declared independence on December 16, 1991, exactly five years after Zheltoksan (Kozina V.V., 2007). Many documents concerning the December events are kept in the archives of Moscow and Almaty and have not been made public until now.



Pic. 10 Almaty 1980s. The city was very quiet - the shortage of gasoline strongly sequestered the already poor car fleet of the capital of Soviet Kazakhstan. In the photographs of those years, the number of cars on the roads argues for their scantiness with the number of people on the sidewalks.



Pic. 11 The December events in Almaty, also known as «Zheltoksan», were demonstrations of Kazakh youth on December 16-19, 1986, which took the form of mass protests and popular uprisings against the then communist government.

With the rise of nationalist independence movements and the subsequent collapse of the USSR, those people (of other nationalities) who were previously considered one nation, now turned into strangers. Private property appeared, people began to fear their former compatriots, not to mention the newly arrived foreign tourists. More barriers, more fences and locks appeared in cities. Cities have become less friendly to people. Restrictions on movement or accessibility to the urban environment are one of the main reasons that the new concept of “right to the city” is struggling with.

In the 21st century, with the advent of the opportunity to travel more and with the development of the Internet, and, accordingly, the globalization of the whole world, including previously closed countries such as the USSR, people began to look and compare the conditions in which they live with other cities on the planet. Seeing the diversity of the world and realizing that the city

can be improved, people began to demand from the authorities greater attention to urban spaces. But not everyone has such an opportunity. Some people, mostly educated and young, want to regain their right to the city, but the authoritarian power gives them only the appearance of concessions. The state “hears” the townspeople and does what the people want only in small and insignificant cases that in no way affect the current system of government. But it is impossible to redesign and change everything at one moment; this requires repeated attempts on the part of citizens. In order for changes to take place in the country and in the cities, a public inquiry is needed. First of all, people must understand what they want and how they will live better. The problem is that most people in the post-Soviet countries travel little and therefore have visited few places and seen little. Accordingly, people take for granted the current state of affairs in these countries. And those who want changes for the better are very few.



# CHAPTER 3

## YOUTH: THE ROLE OF GOVERNANCE IN CITY'S LIFE-CYCLE





### 3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECT

Almaty is the former capital of Kazakhstan, the largest city in the country, it is also called the cultural capital of the country. The city of Almaty is located in the southeast of the Republic at the foot of the Trans-Ili Alatau mountains - the northernmost ridge of the Tien Shan at an altitude of 600 to 1650 meters above sea level. The location of the city is a generator of environmental and seismic problems. The mountains that surround the city on both sides impede air circulation. Beginning in 1991, the central areas of the city began to change dramatically, the density of traffic increased sharply, which in turn negatively affected the level of pollution in the city. On the roads, traffic jams have become commonplace in the evening and morning hours.

A little less than 2 million people live in the city, and in the Almaty agglomeration there are about 2.5 million. There are 19 universities in the city,

which certainly attracts a lot of students. Almaty forms 20% of the country's GDP, a lot of people specially move to this city to work or stay after graduation. After independence, the city's public infrastructure began to be renewed, and new hotels, casinos, restaurants and shopping centers were built. Accordingly, the standard of living in Almaty exceeds the average for all Kazakhstan. But this city cannot be called only a business city that generates money. Almaty is the city of the most creative, bright and unconventional people. Here, every corner of the city is saturated with inspiration, muse and creative flight. The city is a point of attraction for people from different regions, which certainly has a beneficial effect on the diversity of people in society. But with this it is also fertile ground for the emergence of various urban conflicts, in addition to ecology. This chapter will help to better understand the structure of city, governance system and role of citizens in the life of the city.

● **Economic center**

**20% of the country's GDP.**  
Service sector - more than 50%, trade - 35%, industry - 5% of the city's economy

● **Regional center of attraction**

The population reached **1.97 million** inhabitants due to migration and natural population growth

● **Tourist center**

**50% of all foreign tourists** in Kazakhstan visit Almaty and its environs

● **Logistics hub**

The city is linked by **major intercity and international road, rail and air connections**

● **Sports center**

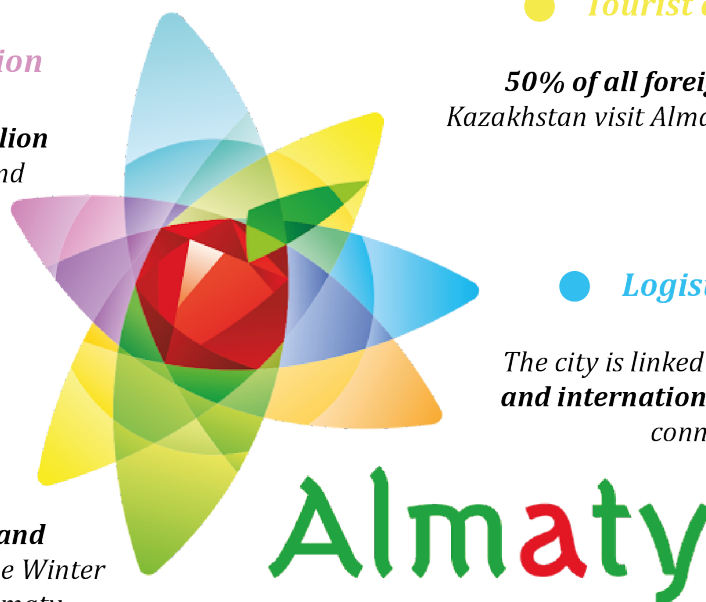
The city hosts many **regional and international sporting events**. The Winter Universiade 2017 was held in Almaty

● **Cultural center**

The city has more than a **hundred cultural institutions** (museums, theaters, galleries), about 150 monuments of architecture, history and culture

● **Education center**

More than a **third of all universities** and a third of the total number of students in the country are concentrated in Almaty



Sketch 3.1 Characteristics of Almaty.

Source: Elaboration by the author. In center official logo of Almaty city.

## Population

Analysis of the demographic situation in the city of Almaty in recent years shows a stable increase in the population due to natural and migration growth. So, over 10 years, the weighted average rate of annual population growth was 2.6% (excluding the jump due to the annexation of the region's territories in 2014). In the gender structure of the population, there is an excess of the number of women over the number of men, that is, 54.3% are women, 45.7% are men. Life expectancy of the city's population increased from 70.91 years in 2011 to 75.18 years in 2020,

including for women from 75.62 to 78.53 years and for men - from 66.2 to 71.84 years old. The city is inhabited by representatives of about 100 nationalities, among which Kazakhs make up 62.4%, Russians - 23.5%, Uighurs - 5.4%, Koreans - 1.8%, Tatars - 1.3%, Azerbaijanis - 0.7%, Ukrainians - 0.6%, Turks - 0.5%, Germans - 0.4%. The demographic situation in the city is characterized by an increase in the birth rate and a decrease in mortality. Positive changes in fertility and mortality ensured an increase in natural population growth.

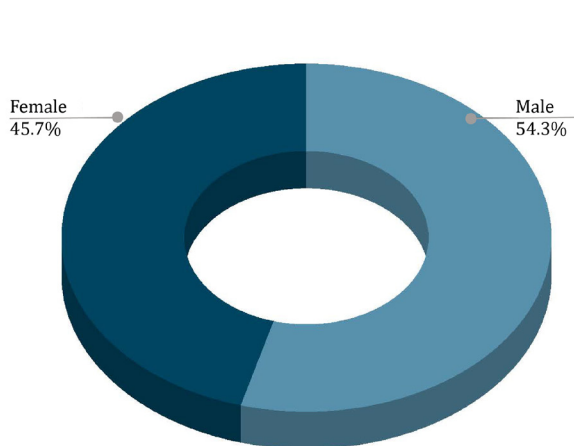


Chart 3.1 Percentage of Almaty residents by sex

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan<sup>1</sup>  
Elaboration by the author.

In the structure of the population by age contingents, the proportion of the population younger than the working age and older than the working age has grown, the percentage of the population of working age is decreasing, but the number of people is increasing (Chart 3.4). In Almaty, during 2009-2017, the Billeter index was negative, that is, the number of children under 15 years old was lower in terms of the number of adults 50 years old and older in relation to the population 15-49 years old (2009 Billeter's index = -1, 3). In 2018, for the first time, the Billeter index was a positive value of 0.6 per 100 people, or the number of children 0-14 was 419 376, the number of people from 50 and older - 413 138 and at the age of 15-49 - 1 022 142.

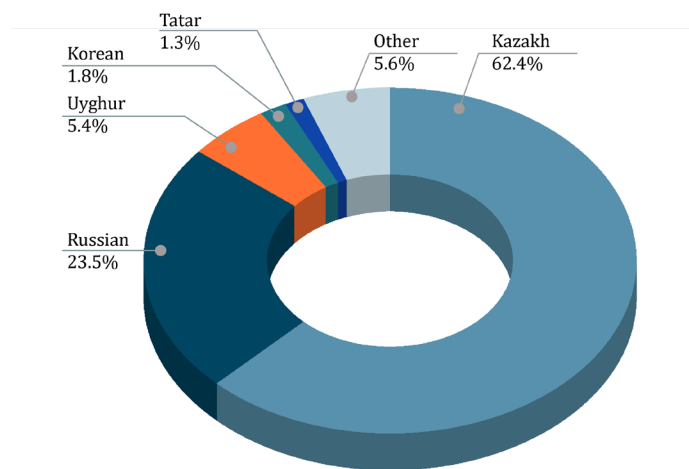


Chart 3.2 Percentage of Almaty residents by nationality

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
Elaboration by the author.

The decline in the population of typical university age in the country and, accordingly, in the city over the past 10 years is associated with the demographic echo of the decline in the birth rate and emigration in 1990-2000. These were the consequences of a difficult period after the collapse of the USSR. In contrast to the typical contingent of previous levels of education, the population aged 18-24 during the first decade of Independence remained relatively stable. Then, from the beginning of the 2000s, it steadily increased, reaching a maximum at the end of 2009. Starting from 2009 to 2020, the population of this age began to decline.

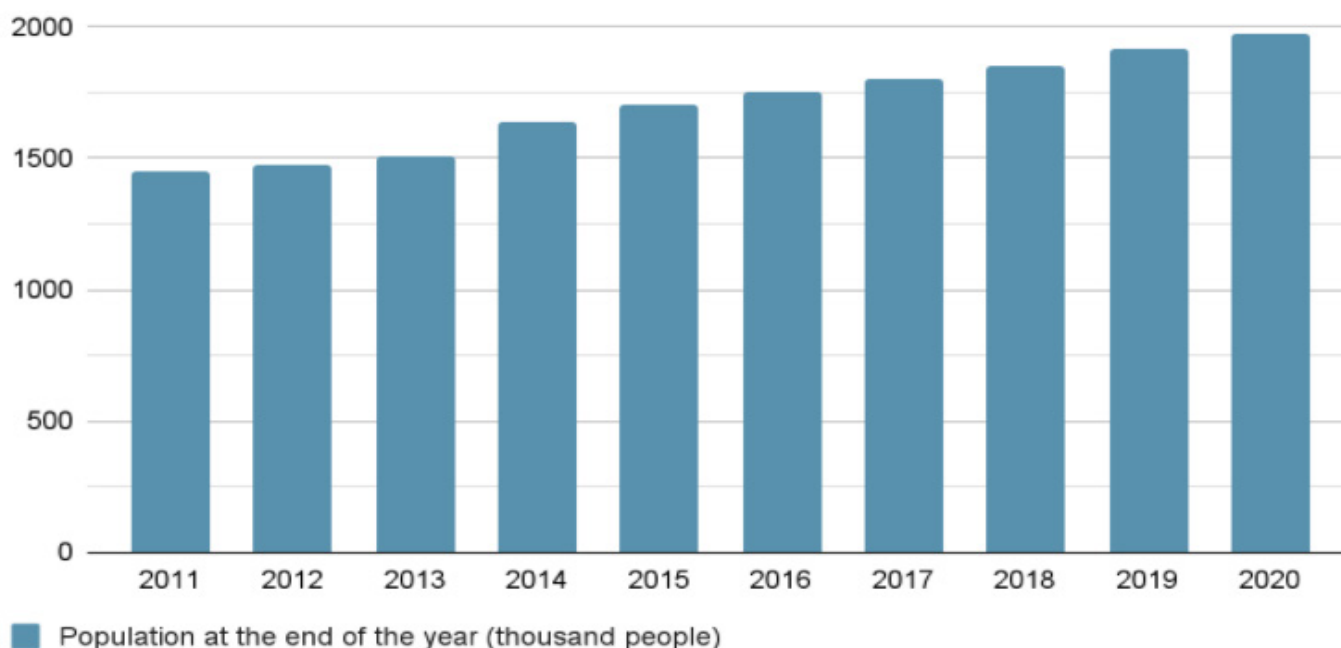


Chart 3.3 Population growth in Almaty city. 2011-2020

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
Elaboration by the author.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Population at the end of the year (thousand people)	1 449,4	1 474,8	1 506,9	1 641,4	1 702,7	1 751,3	1 802,0	1 854,7	1 916,8	1 977,2
Natural population growth (people)	13 749	15 608	16 492	18 623	20 580	20 910	20 488	21 581	32 655	27 689
Migration balance (people)	22 465	9 875	15 558	21 992	40 742	27 632	30 197	31 082	29 597	32 720
Total population growth (people)	36 214	25 483	32 050	40 615	61 322	48 542	50 685	52 663	62 252	60 409

Table 3.1 Population growth in Almaty city including natural growth and migration. 2011-2020

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
Elaboration by the author.

All of the above data are taken from official sources. Official demographic data for large cities are unreliable and underestimates the real population in large cities as many internal and external migrants live there without official registration. Therefore, the discrepancy between official demographic statistics and socio-

demographic trends can negatively affect the efficiency of public services and the use of urban infrastructure. According to unofficial statistics (medical statistics), more than half a million people live in the city than official statistics show.

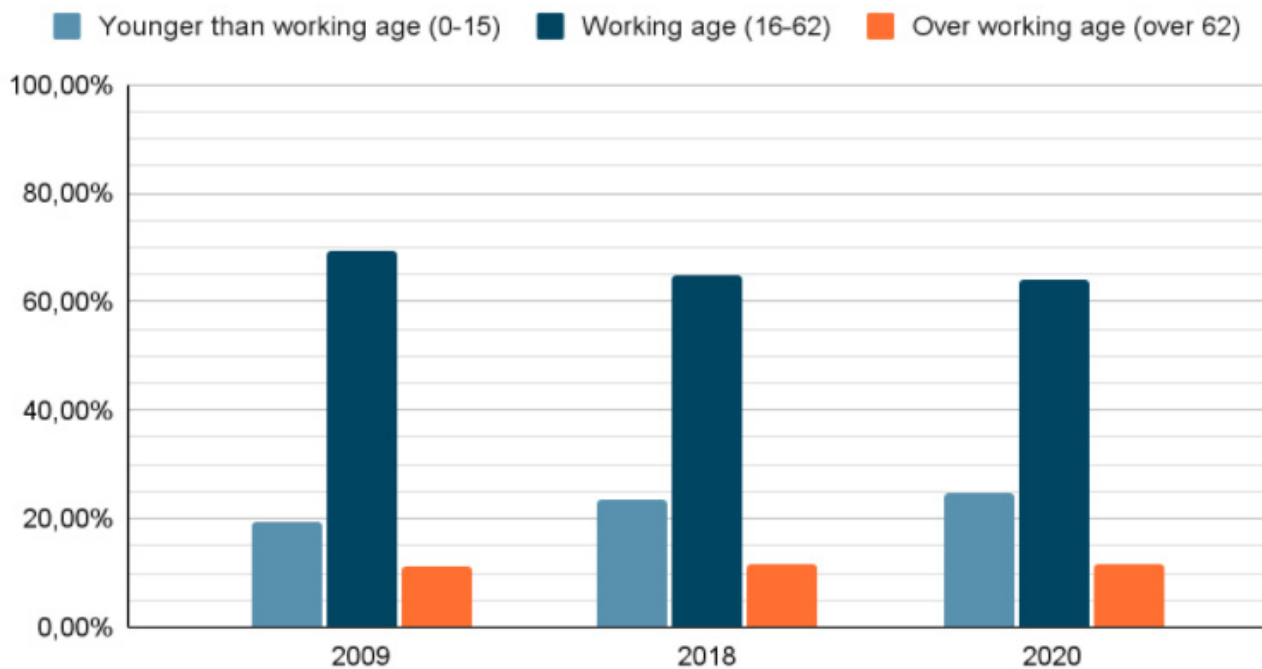


Chart 3.4 Distribution of Almaty residents by age contingent. 2009 - 2020

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
Elaboration by the author.

## Salary

Official statistics report that in the city of Almaty the unemployment rate is 5.1%. This percentage is very close to the average world statistics on unemployment. However, despite the moderate number of unemployed, one should not forget about those segments of the population who receive the minimum wage. The median salary in Almaty is significantly lower than the average monthly nominal salary of one employee (236.2 thousand tenge). In 2020, the difference reached 32.2%, which indicates a high level of social inequality in the country. The wider this gap, the stronger the inequality in wages is felt in the country and the greater the proportion

of people with low wages. It is important to note that the calculation of the median wages did not include small businesses engaged in entrepreneurial activities. It can be assumed that accounting for small entrepreneurs would have a negative impact on the value of the median salary. The median salary is an indicator that reflects the amount in the center of the salary row and divides it into 2 equal parts, that is, 50% of employees receive a salary below, and 50% above this amount. There is also a significant gender inequality in the wages of the country's population. So, the median salary of men in Almaty in 2020 was 171.6 thousand tenge, women - only 148.5 thousand tenge.

	Kazakhstan	Almaty city
Income used for consumption, on average per capita per month, tenge (euro)*	61 358 (144.3)	85 894 (202.1)
The minimum subsistence level, on average per capita per month, tenge (euro)	33 015 (77.7)	36 115 (84.9)
Share of the population with incomes below the subsistence level, %	5,3	4,9

Table 3.2 The main indicator of income differentiation of the Almaty residents for 2020

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan

\* 1 USD = 425 tenge exchange rate on 01.08.2021

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Average monthly nominal wages of employees in tenge	121 674	134 378	142 310	155 242	161 845	178 678	190 875	200 919	224 158	236 216
in US dollars (at the current exchange rate for the year)	830	901	935	850	730	522	586	583	586	563
Median wages of employees in tenge	76 595	88 238	96 485	102 253	106 321	109 730	112 811	126 778	141 442	160 154
in US dollars (at the current exchange rate for the year)	522	591	634	560	479	320	346	368	370	382

Table 3.3 Salary in Almaty city. 2011-2020

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
Elaboration by the author.

The decline in wages in the table 3.3 was due to the devaluation of the tenge. Over the past 12 years, there have been 4 large devaluations, which led to a 3.5-fold depreciation of the tenge against the dollar. The fall in the tenge exchange rate occurs against the background of low oil prices, because the country's main export is energy resources, including oil and gas.<sup>2</sup> Another indicator of a possible devaluation of the tenge is the exchange rate of the dollar against the Russian ruble, since it is Kazakhstan's main trade and geopolitical partner.

People received the same salaries in tenge, but the actual purchasing power was falling. People increasingly lost confidence in the government. This especially affected people working in SMEs, since many deliveries of products or equipment are imported and therefore associated with dollars or euros. After losing their savings, small and medium-sized entrepreneurs began to understand that they cannot fully trust the government and must themselves take the initiative into their own hands, take responsibility for the business and

the people who work for them, and, accordingly, for the city in which they all live. SMEs are highly developed in Almaty and form the basis of the middle class. After devaluations, people independently got out of difficult situations and continued to do business. A sense of self-reliance has made people demand more comfort and convenience in the city for themselves. Not even for themselves, but for their clients. Competition has played its own role. After all, the development of their business and the city are interconnected and interdependent. If it is more convenient to drive up to your store or salon by public transport or there is a place where you can leave your car, there are public spaces nearby where people can stay, as well as other services, that is, if your area is lively and comfortable, then your business will flourish. This idea has been understood by that type of middle class and they began to show its civic position on improving the city. The understanding of the concept of the right to a city has come, that this right is just as necessary as the right to vote, the right to education and, in general, human rights.

Years	Tenge exchange rate* at the beginning of the year	Tenge exchange rate at the end of the year	Reasons
2009	120.7	149.3	The 2008 global economic crisis and the fall in oil prices.
2014	154.4	182.3	The artificially restrained dollar rate was depreciated. This was due to the imposition of economic sanctions against Russia and the rapid fall in oil prices.
2015	182.3	277.1	The government of Kazakhstan has decided to let the national currency float freely. This means that the market will now determine the dollar rate.
2020	382.6	420.9	A factor of pressure on the course is the introduction of a state of emergency in the republic associated with the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic. The coronavirus pandemic has led to a decline in industrial production in China and several other countries, which has led to a drop in oil consumption.

Table 3.4 Devaluation of tenge. 2009-2020. The main reasons of devaluation.

Source: Elaboration by the author (with reference to Trading Economics)

\* (1) USD = (...) KZT

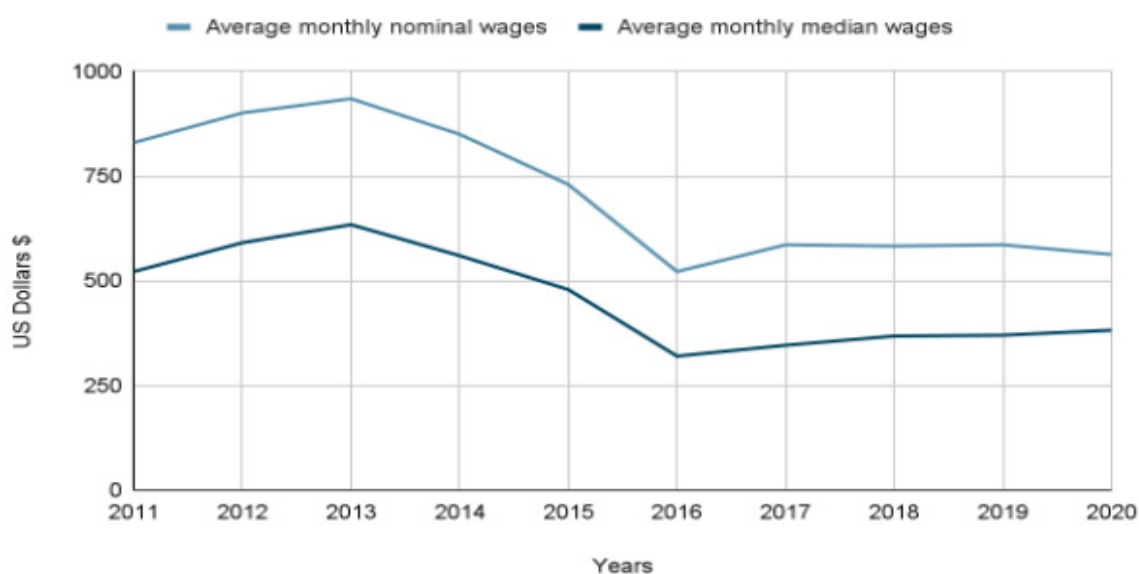


Chart 3.5 Average monthly nominal and median wages in Almaty

Source: Bureau of National Statistics, the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Elaboration by the author.



## Education

The city is the educational center of the republic, has a developed network of educational institutions, which provides a real opportunity to get an education of the appropriate level. The number of public schools in the city is 205, private - 61, more than 260 thousand students study in them. The city's schools are 100% equipped with classrooms of the new modification. At present, practice shows the interest of investors in the construction of private schools, favorable conditions have been created and administrative barriers for the return of funds have been reduced. Private schools are fee-paying, and the growing number of them shows that Almaty residents have the finances to pay for the education of their children. Even in spite of the relatively low average income level, there is a segment of the population in the city capable of such spending.

The main indicator of the quality of work of educational institutions of vocational education is the demand for their graduates, the level of their qualifications, compliance with the needs of the labor market and specific requests of employers. Every year colleges (technical or vocational institutions) graduate about 19 thousand young specialists who need to be employed. According to

UNESCO, in Kazakhstan, the share of youth enrolled in TVE (technical and vocational education) programs at the age of 15-24 is 14.66% (UNESCO UIS, 2021). There are 82 colleges in the city, in which 74 thousand people study, private institutions make up over 60% of the total. According to their specialties, students are distributed as follows: production, installation, operation and repair, operation of transport - 19.4%; service, economics and management - 21.8%; communications, telecommunications and information technology, electronic equipment - 13.3%; medicine - 18%, construction - 4.2%, energy - 3.4%, education - 7%, etc.

The development of Kazakhstan as an educational hub in Central Asia stimulates access to higher education for foreign citizens. The entry of Kazakhstani higher education into foreign markets is the task of the Strategic Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025 and will contribute to increasing the competitiveness and relevance of the national higher education system. There are 41 higher educational institutions in the city (39 of them have doctoral programs) with a total number of students of 175 thousand people, which is 33% of the total number of universities

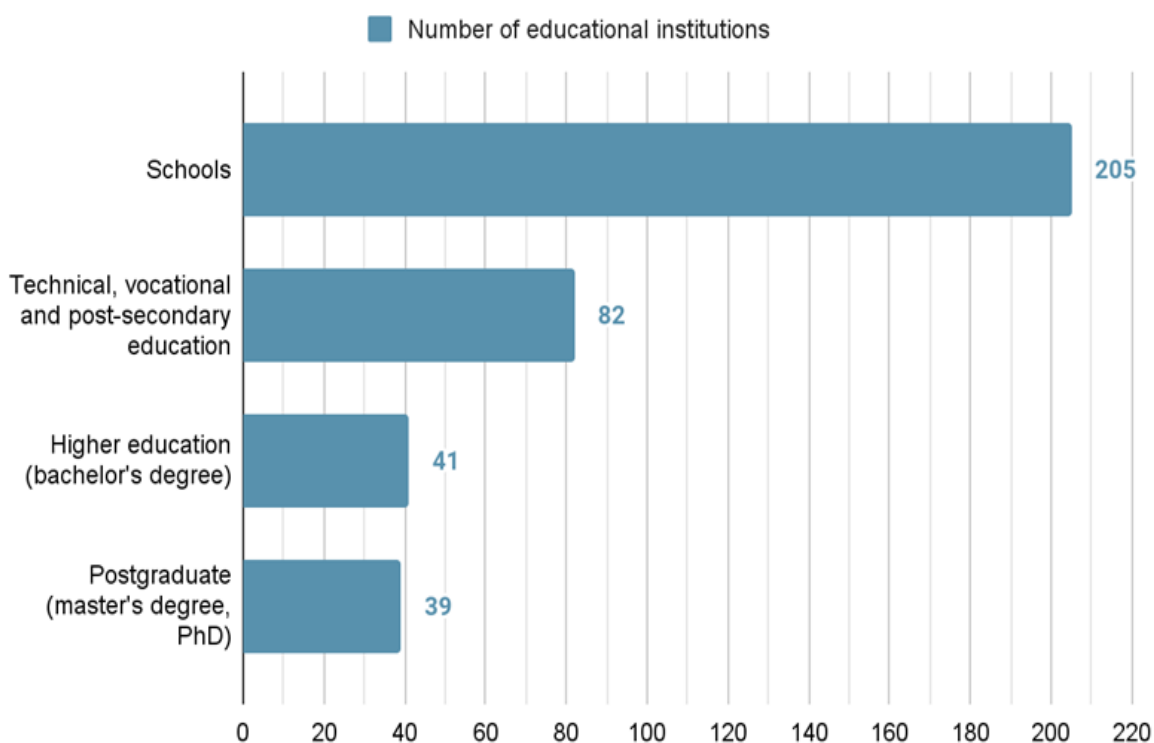


Chart 3.6 Number of educational institutions

Source: Bureau of National Statistics, the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Elaboration by the author.

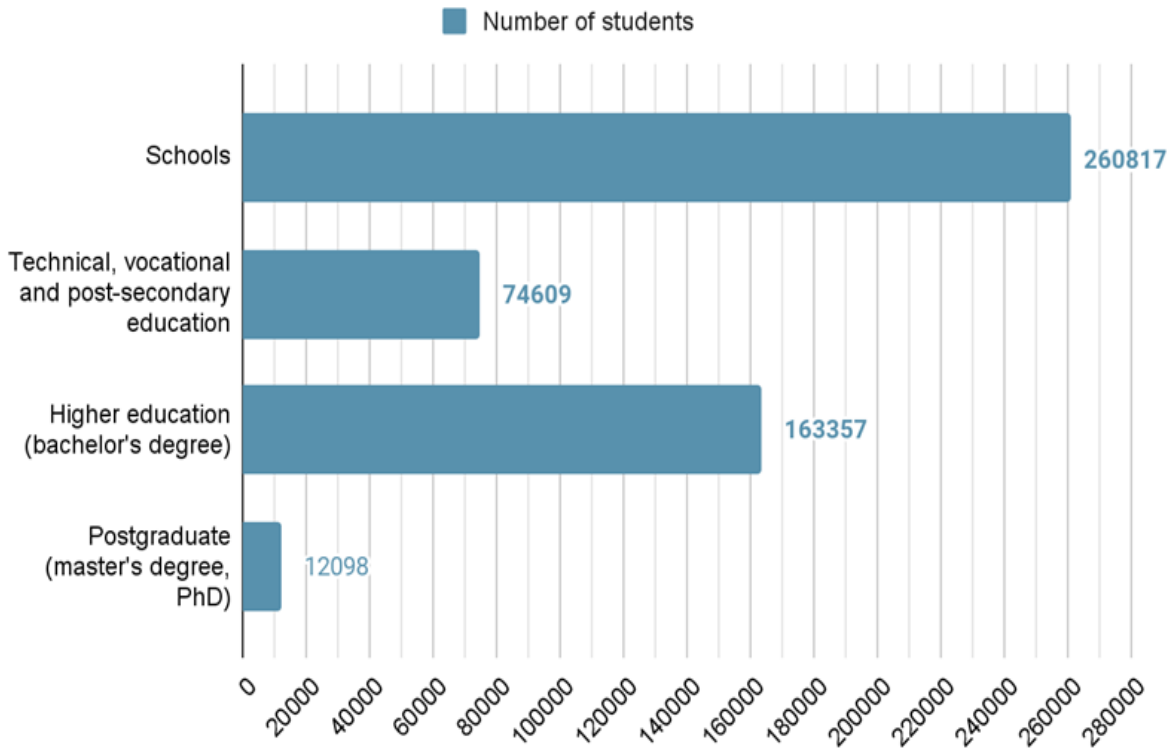


Chart 3.6 Number of students in different levels of educational institutions

Source: Bureau of National Statistics, the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Elaboration by the author.

in the country and 26.5% of all students in the republic. The distribution of students by specialties was as follows: technical sciences and technologies - 27.2%, social sciences, economics and business - 17%, education - 13.1%, healthcare - 9.2%, law - 7.8%, humanitarian science - 5.6%, art - 4.5%, etc.

The fact that urbanism is only gaining popularity in the country and in the city of Almaty in particular, proves that only in 2019, for the first time in the country, the «Urban Studies and City Management» faculty was opened at the University of AlmaU. The main advantages of this educational program are its relevance in the current labor market in Kazakhstan and its applied nature. (Almaty Management University, 2019)

On this page, top. Pic.12 Kazakh-British Technical University - top university in the technical field.

Bottom left. Pic.13 Kazakh National University - leader of the General ranking of universities in Kazakhstan.

Bottom right. Pic.14 Almaty Management University - first university that have program about urban studies.



## ***Economy***

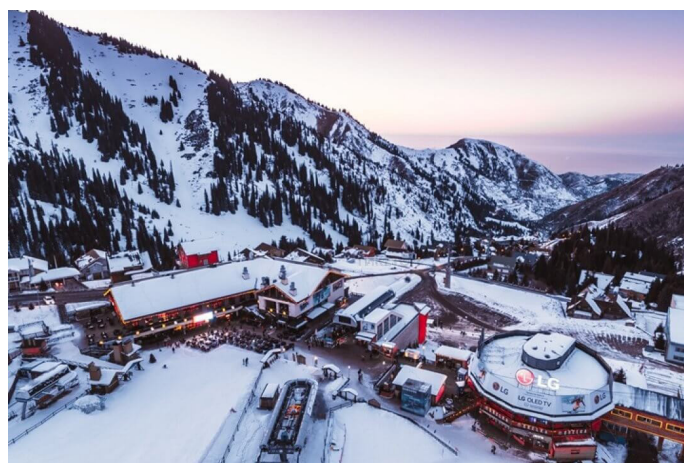
The city of Almaty is the largest city in the country, a donor of the republican budget, occupying a leading position among other regions of the country in terms of GRP for a long time. So, in 2020, the share of the city in the republic's GDP was 19.7% (in 2019 - 20.6%). As the largest and most developed metropolis of the Central Asian region, Almaty has emerged as a center for the location of representative offices of international organizations, financial institutions and major companies. Significant potential for international cooperation is opening up within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union and the World Trade Organization. The economy of Almaty is mainly developing at the expense of banking institutions functioning in the city (33 banks of the country of the second tier operate here), as well as small and medium-sized businesses. Despite the fact that the city of Almaty does not have a resource base, this region is a major center for industrial development, but the main sectors of the Almaty economy are trade and tourism (Municipality of Almaty city, 2019).

### **Among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Almaty ranks first in terms of the largest number of employees.**

Around 42.7% of the gross regional product is contribution of small and medium-sized businesses (2018 data). In 2018, the local budget allocated 5.5 billion tenge (15.7 million dollars) for the realization of the Governmental Program for Business Development and Support «Business Road Map 2020». This program has resulted in the saving of over 4,000 jobs. The total amount of the registered small and medium-sized businesses in Almaty (as of 01.01.2019) is 274,689, with approximately 600,000 residents having opportunity to work. Simultaneously, in terms of the number of people employed in this field the city confidently ranks first. At the end of 2018, the share of budget revenues from small and medium-sized enterprises was 62.2 percent (1.2 trillion tenge) in total profit. Active growth among small and medium-sized businesses demonstrates that the city is well-maintained and has a favorable business environment. The more literate entrepreneurs the city has, the better the business climate. Excluding the western cities of the country (as there is oil production and fields there) Almaty is the most appealing city for investment in Kazakhstan.

### **Ecotourism and ski resorts: What engage tourists to Almaty**

In 2018, more than million foreign tourists visited Almaty, with 365 thousand coming from Europe, the USA, Russia, and Central Asia. Almaty is widely advertised on international travel websites. European tourists are showing a huge interest. The object of their attraction is also ski resorts. If all the ski resorts will be considered, the calculation of ski slopes will be 46 km. The routes are planned to be increased to 456 km. In addition, there are 2.5 thousand restaurants, 128 shopping centers, 50 markets, 19 museums and 20 theaters in the city. But the main interest of foreign tourists is ecotourism - hiking in the mountains and river rafting in summer; skiing and snowboarding in winter. In the rating of the most popular resorts of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States - an organization which includes almost all countries of the former USSR) the first place is occupied by the Shymbulak ski resort for the active recreation in the mountains.



Pic. 15-16. Shymbulak ski resorts in Almaty

Picturesque and photogenic natural places, mountain lakes and trails, all this together with a developed infrastructure creates great opportunities for the development of tourism. With the expansion of the city's boundaries, popular places that were in the mountains and were registered by the region are now under the control and funding of the city. In this regard, even local tourism to these places began to grow, the city dwellers themselves try to go out into the mountains in their free time. It has become more accessible and comfortable with the joining of these territories to the city boundaries. Investors invest a lot of money in infrastructure in the mountains and attract foreign companies to develop the mountain cluster. In just an hour from the city center you can take a city bus to the high-mountain skating rink "Medeo", and from there there are already either shuttle buses or walking routes to the Big Almaty Lake or the Kok-Zhailau plateau. There is a cable car or minibuses to the Shymbulak ski resort. The opportunity to go snowboarding within two hours, and then return to the big city with cozy cafes and restaurants, large shopping areas attract not only local tourists.

Almaty is currently undergoing rapid development in all areas related to tourism. The impact of this development can be felt in many tourism-related industries. This emphasizes the importance of tourism to Kazakhstan's economy. This also applies to the improvement of the mountain cluster, accommodation facilities, public transportation, catering services, and promotion of the tourist potential of the metropolis at the international level. Almaty has been visited by half of all foreign tourists who have visited Kazakhstan. Such high rates have become a reality as a result of a number of tourism development initiatives. The potential of mountain cluster is great. A master plan for mountain locations in the Almaty agglomeration has been developed in collaboration with Austrian and French experts. Tourism generates foreign exchange earnings and provides employment for low-skilled workers. Tourism generates one out of every ten jobs worldwide, accounts for more than 10% of global GDP, and accounts for 6.5 percent of export earnings. Tourism and related services are expected to account for 6% of Almaty's GDP by 2025 (Official Information Source of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2019).

On this page, bottom. Pic. 17 Big Almaty Lake, Medeu district.



## 3.2 SPATIAL-PHYSICAL ASPECT

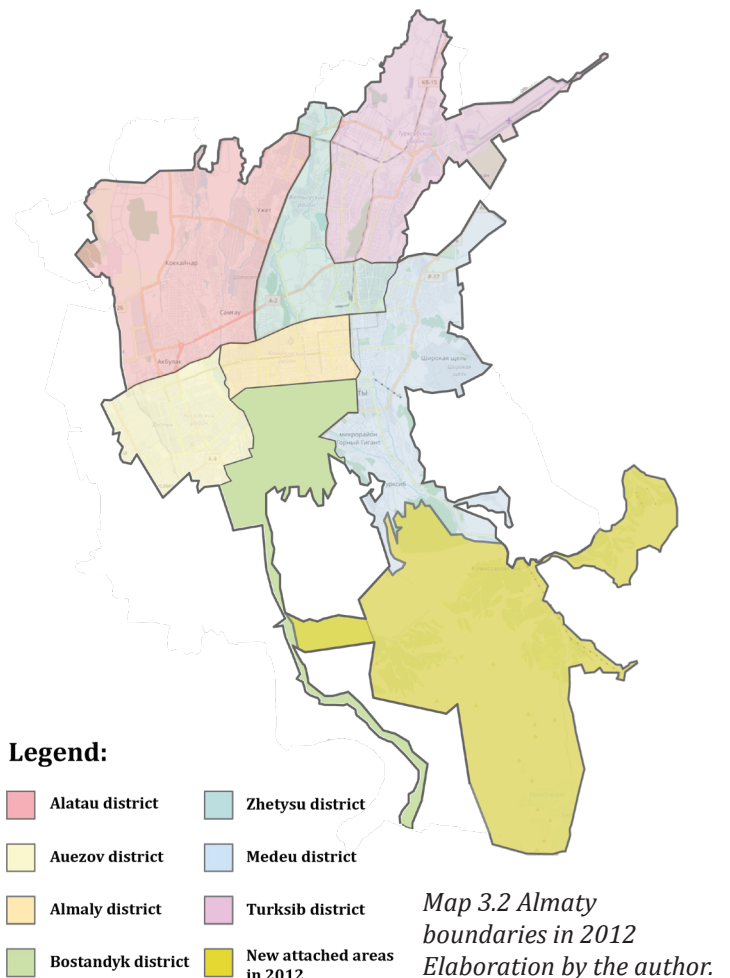
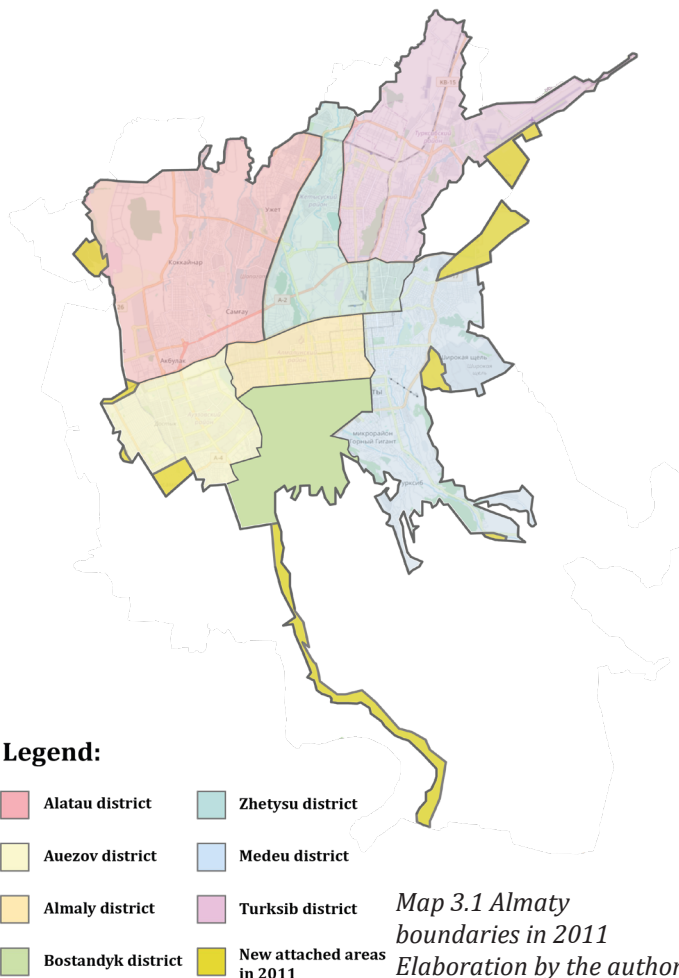
### City boundaries

Historically, the city has grown in proportion to its population. However, in the Master Plan, the rate of population growth was incorrectly estimated - in the edition of the Master Plan of 2001 and 2004, the number of population by 2020 was predicted to be around 1.3 million (Master Plan of the city of Almaty, 2002), which is clearly not true. Since 2011, Almaty has been expanding its territory, expanding the boundaries of the city. Before the changes in 2011, the area of the city was 317.5 km<sup>2</sup>; in 2011, 13.3 km<sup>2</sup> were added. The expansion of the city's borders was absolutely necessary, but not sufficient. The city physically did not accommodate so many people and could not satisfy all the necessary needs. By a government decree<sup>2</sup> in 2012, part of the lands of the Karasai and Talgar regions with an area of 119.2 km<sup>2</sup> was included in Almaty. And in 2014 it increased by another 232 km<sup>2</sup>. As a result, for 2021, the area of Almaty is 682 km<sup>2</sup>.

### Prerequisites for increasing the boundaries of the city:

Mass automobilization of city dwellers (since 1990 it has grown at least 5 times - up to 490 thousand cars, 248 cars per 1000 people). In Almaty until now\* there were no commuter trains that allow transporting a huge number of people from satellite cities. Also, the absence of an expanded metro system, which not only covers almost the entire territory of the city, but is also associated with the main types of urban and suburban transport. In Almaty, the metro is just beginning to develop, in which at the moment there is only 1 line with 9 stations. By 2025, it is planned to build 4 more stations. Therefore, people are forced to use a private car to get to work, which is mainly based in the city. The situation with a large number of cars

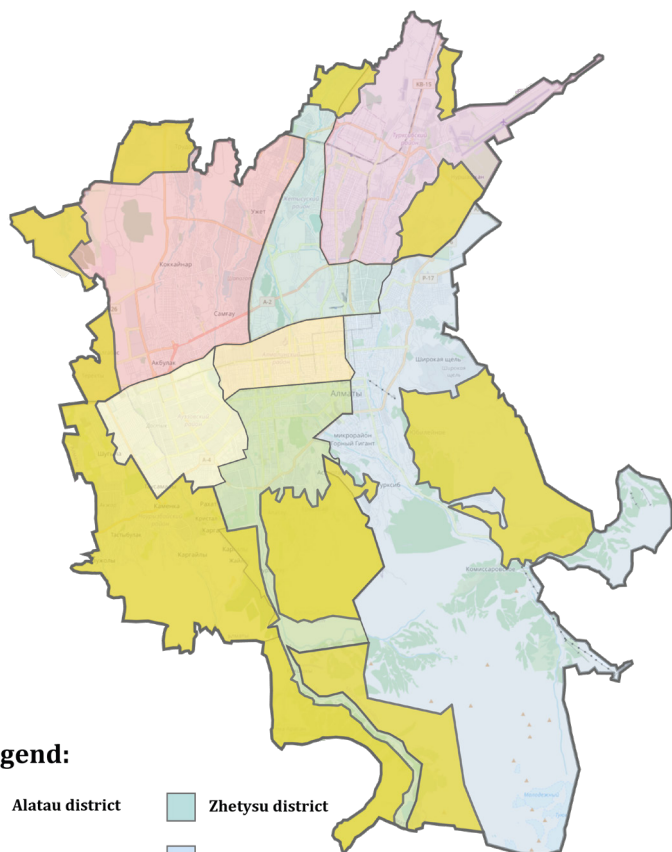
*\* (Within the framework of the public transport development program, only in 2021 will the implementation of projects for the development of suburban communications - BRT, LRT, electric trains begin.)*



was worsened by a decrease in the share of public transport due to the elimination of tram routes. With automobilization, the load on the engineering, communication and transport infrastructure increases. The daily migration of people from the suburbs significantly affects the availability of social infrastructure, public spaces, negatively affects the ecology of the city and exacerbates the crime situation. This means that Almaty needs to take into account its close functional relationship with the adjacent territories. The increase in the number of unregistered residents is at least 500 thousand people, which increases the number of residents in the city to 2.5 million people. This directly affects the decrease in social infrastructure facilities (kindergartens and schools) per capita and the general unevenness of their distribution, which increases the number of trips of citizens.

### What difficulties have arisen?

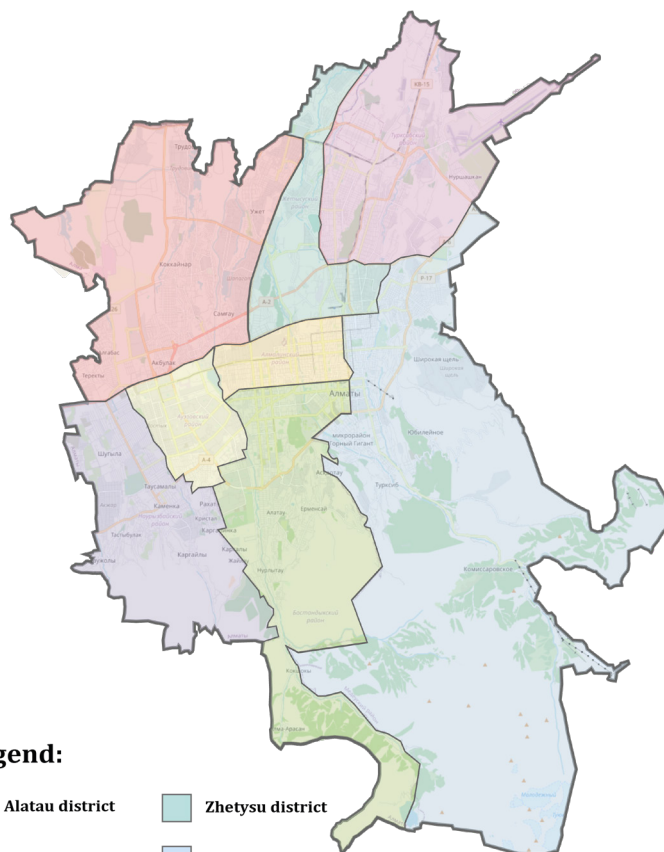
1. It will be necessary to pull up these territories to the already existing areas of the city in many respects - roads, utilities, social facilities.
2. It is necessary to re-register all state departments in these territories, to employ employees of these institutions.
3. All new territories and their inhabitants will have to be entered into city cadastres and databases, which will entail certain difficulties with documents and bureaucracy.
4. All these events need money, and here comes the lack of funds. It is necessary to reallocate the budget, to suspend some non-essential projects.
5. It will be necessary to establish communication from the annexed villages to the city - the current project of a light rail tram, which will be launched in 2022, will need to be adjusted and new transport hubs and routes should be introduced.



**Legend:**

- Alatau district
- Auezov district
- Almaly district
- Bostandyk district
- Zhetyysu district
- Medeu district
- Turksib district
- New attached areas in 2014

*Map 3.3 Almaty boundaries in 2014  
Elaboration by the author.*



**Legend:**

- Alatau district
- Auezov district
- Almaly district
- Bostandyk district
- Zhetyysu district
- Medeu district
- Nauryzbay district
- Turksib district

*Map 3.4 Almaty boundaries in 2021  
Elaboration by the author.*

## What did the expansion give to the city?

\* The ability to move development areas to vacant sites, which will reduce the need for infill development within existing urban areas. Land, being a scarce resource, plays an important role in the development of the city. Expansion provides new opportunities to use surplus financial resources.

\* Development of the city's transport infrastructure to reduce time and relieve stress from the main highways. It will be necessary to connect the city center with the new outskirts

## City pattern

Even with all the problems in mind, Almaty does not look overpopulated in the city center for a next reasons:

1. The city's layout is in the form of a rectangular grid, rather than a radial-circular one, which dramatically improves the transport connectivity of the districts. The city is more permeable and residents do not spend much time on detours. Any huge city develops non-stop, in megacities there are never final decisions, but the basic layout remains as the basis and base of the city.

2. Presence of formed neighborhoods in a part of the city. Even without a detailed plan, the presence of such neighborhoods already makes it possible to introduce the concept of a 20-minute city. In terms of the development strategy of Almaty until 2050, there are references to the international experience of cities such as Melbourne and Stockholm, which speak of the introduction of the principle of «20-minute quarters». Until 2015, the city did not have a system of urban planning for neighborhoods with a developed social infrastructure, which leads to the absence of the need to leave their area, except for work. Fortunately, the city is changing its attitude towards urban planning, increasing interest in urbanism (Development strategy of the city of Almaty until 2050, 2019).

3. The efforts of the city authorities to improve the transport situation - interchanges, punctured streets, the Eastern bypass road, a cycle path system, a metro line, and so on. These are all complex actions to implement the concept of a 20-minute city. By providing citizens with the

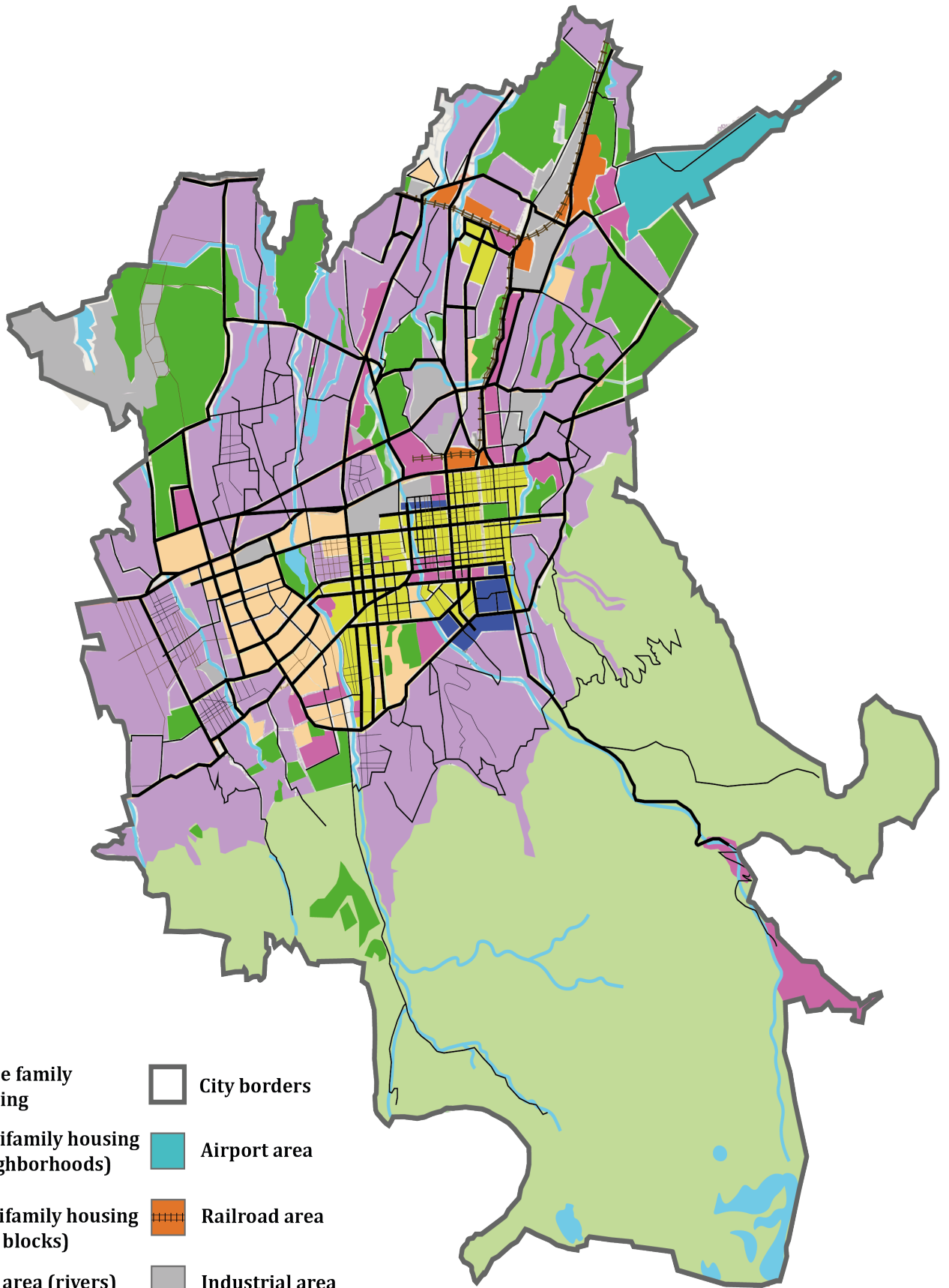
\* Development of tourism infrastructure and facilities that are currently lacking. The city expanding towards the airport and railway stations will contribute to the development of the connection, which will help tourists to get to the center faster and more comfortably.

\* Residents of suburban settlements will receive their own social facilities, and they will not need to semi-legally use city facilities (kindergartens, schools, clinics).













\* Opportunity for the development of new industrial production and logistics centers.

opportunity to «live locally», that is, satisfying most of their daily needs within a distance that can be covered in 20 minutes on foot, either by bike or by public transport, the city, thereby, solves a whole range of issues related to infrastructure, ecology and formation of an attractive urban environment.

The gentrification process in Almaty is not massive; rather, it is an indirect consequence of the urban policy of regenerating the city's territory. This process is catalyzed by various city programs related to the reconstruction of dilapidated housing stock and the construction of new housing in its place. Local authorities work together with representatives of big business. Harvey Molotch spoke about such synergy of mutual work between the authorities and developers in his 1976's classic paper «The City as a Growth Machine». According to the Growth Machine Theory, city leaders and investors continuously form coalitions to promote development that will increase land values and profits (Molotch, 1976). For example, in February 2012, the city program for the demolition of dilapidated residential buildings in the city of Almaty for 2012-2015 was approved. In accordance with the program, in 8 districts of the city, vacant land plots were selected on which, first of all, multi-apartment residential buildings will be built for the relocation of citizens living in dilapidated residential buildings, the service life of which exceeds 50 years or more.



**Legend:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  Single family housing               |  City borders                                  |
|  Multifamily housing (neighborhoods) |  Airport area                                  |
|  Multifamily housing (city blocks)   |  Railroad area                                 |
|  Blue area (rivers)                  |  Industrial area                               |
|  Green area (parks)                  |  Business and administrative area              |
|  Mountains                           |  Mix area (infrastructure, retail, education ) |

*Map 3.5 Land use map of Almaty  
Elaboration by the author.*



Pic.18 Single-housing neighborhood in Turksib district in Almaty.

The most common type of housing in terms of area occupied in the city. In these areas, public transport is poorly developed, so residents often use a private car to get to work or other city services. Basically, there are only residential buildings, very few services and facilities, such as shops, educational institutions, pharmacies, etc. They are located in the «bottom» part of the city.



Among the many factors affecting the cost of housing, location is always in the top three. In Almaty, in this regard, the best place is considered to be the place where it is easiest to breathe. Unwritten division of the city on the «top» and «bottom», indicating the proximity or remoteness from the mountains. The high price of a square in the houses that were built in the foothills, and, therefore, profits from the sale resulted in a massive building zone in which to develop, and even high-rise buildings, is destructive. In addition, this is partly the reason for the sprawl of the suburbs.

In general, the urban structure of Almaty can be divided into 6 large blocks. Single-family households (light purple color on the map) constitute the largest block in terms of occupied territory, which is similar with their structure to typical American suburbs, where personal vehicles are the main means of transportation, since public transport in these areas is very underdeveloped. In fact, these areas were the outskirts of the city; however, this territory is now surrounded the city center; some of them were annexed in the period from 2011 to 2014 during the expansion of the city's boundaries. As it was mentioned earlier,



Pic.19 Single-housing neighborhood in Medeu district in Almaty.

More elite neighborhoods with single-family houses are located in the «top» part of the city, in the foothills of the mountains. Cleaner air, views of the city and mountains attract developers to build luxury homes for wealthier segments of the population. However, the level of services and transport accessibility is at the same low level as in the «bottom» part of the city.

Pic.20 Multi-family households in the central part of the city in Almaly district.

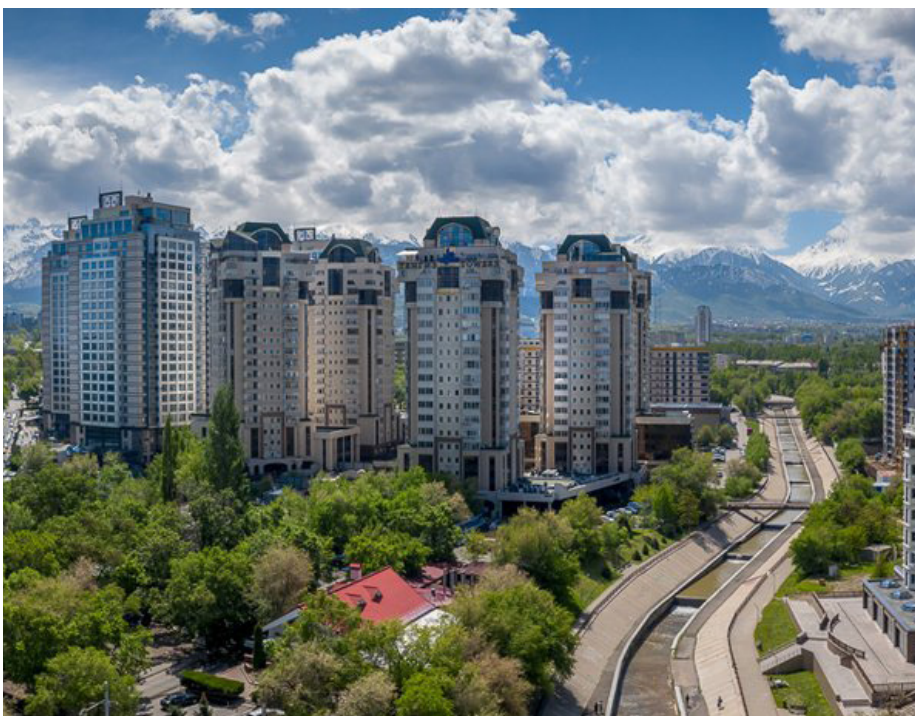
A more familiar grid of streets with multi-storey buildings, developed infrastructure, within walking distance of various services. Dominated by residential buildings, but also there are schools, supermarkets or small offices, which are embedded in the urban fabric and are not allocated.



more elite houses are located closer to the foothills, in the southern part of Almaty, known as the upper city. From the beginning of the construction in this area, developers pay attention to the improvement of the city, construct high-quality roads with safety islands, moreover, in many houses they envisage large backyards. People with higher incomes approach to architects and designers during the construction of their houses. Lower-income single-family housing is concentrated in the city's northern and northeastern parts. The majority of these buildings were constructed during the Soviet era. Houses are close to each

other and people frequently build up this territory on their own, without the assistance of the state, so there is often an unpaved road on the streets.

The multi-family households with a rectangular grid of streets (yellow on the map) in the city's oldest district are the second most significant in terms of territory. This is a kind of city center in which new multi-story residential complexes rise alongside preserved historical buildings of «low-rise construction», creating the dense population that is inherent in large cities. Because the residents of these areas are the most vulnerable



Pic.21 Multi-family households in Bostandyk district.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the city began to develop with high-rise buildings. Developers have found particular value and attractiveness in residential complexes, separate houses with their own courtyards, shops or commercial premises on the ground floors and underground parking.

Pic.22 Typical neighborhoods of Almaty in Auezov district.

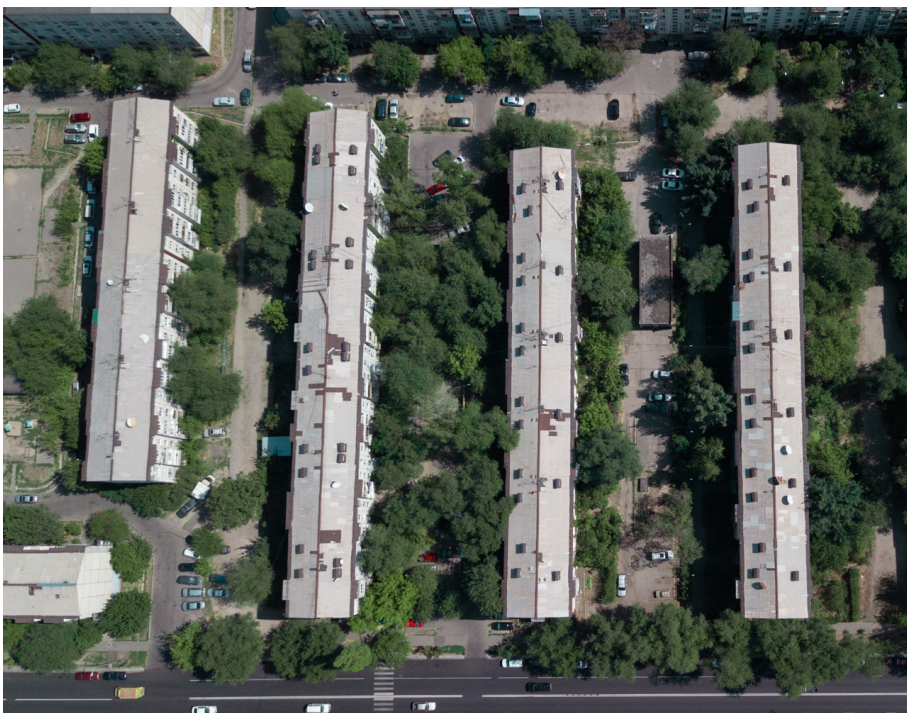
The neighborhood houses were built in the 60s' with prefabricated panels for quick construction due to the problems with the rapid expansion of the urban population. During the construction, the courtyards were planted and now these neighborhoods are the greenest in the city.

Now houses whose facades face the street are being rebuilt or new houses are being built slightly higher than the previous ones. Initially, 4 and 5 storey buildings were built.



to urban change, the themes of urban planning and urban politics are more than just buzzwords to them; it is reality they face. Since these areas are already more developed, any decision made by city authorities, from compacting buildings to rebuilding a street into a pedestrian one, takes place primarily in these areas. The newly annexed territories are developing gradually, without the use of new ideas so far. The first neighborhoods of multifamily housing (sand-colored on map) in the capital of Soviet Kazakhstan looked unappealing in their original form; they were built in the post-war period in

the early 1960s. These unassuming four-story panel buildings, dubbed by Khrushchev project, did their job by resolving a seemingly intractable housing issue for many town residents. Finding new settlers was difficult for the townspeople who had been raised on the center's quarterly logic, furthermore, one micro district did not differ from another in any way and was not fenced off. But it's only been a few decades, and everything has changed dramatically. The trees planted immediately after construction grew during this time, reliably shielding the inhabitants from the sun, and even more reliably shielding them from

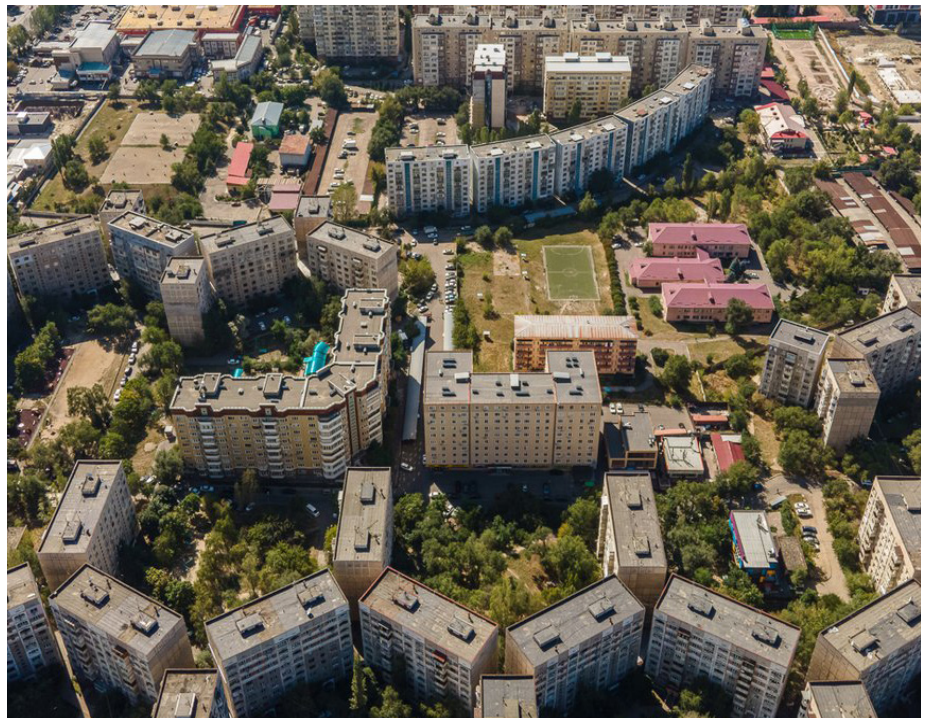


Pic.23 Top view of one of the neighborhoods in Almaty.

The roads between the houses are usually without a name and it is difficult for people who find themselves in these places for the first time to navigate. The houses are located perpendicularly sideways to the main street with access via secondary footpath, so the windows of the apartments overlook the inner courtyard. It was made to achieve "hygienic" advantages such as best possible exposure to light and ventilation. Almost complete independence from surrounding urban space.

Pic.24 Neighborhood «Zhetysu» built in the early '90s in Auezov district.

The neighborhood built as a cluster - highly dense and organizationally complex groups. Arrangement of buildings whose character is based more on inner compositional logic than external urban organization. This neighborhood is surrounded on 3 sides by wide avenues, therefore it is very similar to a kind of «island», which is separated from the city.



indiscreet glances - their gray dwellings. In the 2010s, the courtyards underwent renovations.

The next block of the city (colored blue on the map) is made up of business and administration area, which are mixed in with hotels and partially residential complexes, but the buildings where people go to work predominate. Usually, these are districts with modern skyscrapers surrounded by large areas of asphalt for parking, bustling with life during the day and empty territories at the evenings.

The dark purple zone on the map is a mixed territory that includes large sports facilities (stadiums, ski slopes), large educational hubs (scientific institutes with laboratories, universities with student dormitories, as well as secondary schools near which kindergartens are located), and, of course, shopping and entertainment areas. This is almost the same city structure as the previous block, with office buildings and large empty spaces nearby, but unlike the previous block, these areas are not empty in the evenings and on weekends due to retail space and sports events that take place after work.



Pic.25 Neighborhood «Zhetysu» in Auezov district.

Overall, public transport coverage is poor. Somewhere there is a lot of it, but somewhere there is none at all. It is completely absent inside the neighborhood. There are obvious problems with defining the boundaries of the courtyards. Because of this, there is a lot of «no one's» land. Passages between houses do not instill a sense of security.



Pic. 26 Business and administration area. In the 2010s, a new large business center «Nurly-tau» was built in Bostandyk district.

This solitaire is clearly distinguishable from its urban surroundings. The area surrounded it is full of parking space. Inside this building are offices of various companies and residential floors. The building is a landmark in the city because of its controversial but unique architecture.

Also, industrial district of the city should be considered (shown in gray on the map), because 20 percent of the country's GDP cannot be achieved solely through trade and tourism; it is necessary to produce something in addition to services. This area of the city contains factories for the food industry, food products, and beverages, as well as heavier production of building materials (steel, wood, and bricks) and machine-building factories. Light manufacturing is closer to the city center, whereas heavy industry is further away from residential areas but still within the city limits.

The city is developing chaotically, without clear standards. When developing a territory in one area, developers and local authorities that issue building permits do not think that they can create barriers or inconveniences for neighboring territories, overload transport and engineering networks. The city develops in different ways, some developers are guided by the purchasing power of the middle class and build residential buildings based on the price per square meter, others are trying to find a vacant place in a city with already developed infrastructure, and still others "taking care of the environment" build houses away from the noisy and dirty city, thereby forcing people to change to



Pic. 27 Mixed area. Shopping and entertainment center «MEGA» is one of the most popular places of attraction in the city.

There are 19 shopping malls in the city. Due to climatic conditions, when it is too hot in summer, and in winter because of the cold it is impossible to walk for a long time on the street, Almaty residents really liked the large shopping and entertainment centers. The large area of the building itself and the parking spaces in front of it occupy a huge urban space.

Pic. 28 Mixed area. Ice Palace «Almaty Arena» - the palace of sports and culture in Alma-Ata. Built in 2016 for the 2017 Winter Universiade.

After the victory of Alma-Ata's bid to host the 2017 Winter Universiade and the submitted bid to host the 2022 Winter Olympics, the city authorities faced the need to build a large ice rink with a capacity of at least 12,000 spectators.



cars, because in remote areas there is no public transport system. There is no unified development concept in Almaty, there is no clear vision of what city should be. Glass buildings, aimed at giving the metropolis a modern look, are wedged between the buildings of Soviet postmodernism. High-rise buildings are being built in the center of the city, violating the long-established look and color. In addition, skyscrapers block the city's main attraction, the mountains. Almaty needs stricter control over construction and urban planning, and for this, the authorities and citizens must have tools or clear guidelines on which they can rely.

Pic. 29 Industrial area.

All major factories in Almaty are located on the outskirts. They are usually found in the «bottom» part of the city, from the northwest to the northeast.

The MODEX enterprise will introduce innovative technologies of industrial-modular construction, thanks to which the housing industry of Kazakhstan will radically change.



### 3.3 GOVERNANCE ASPECT

#### *State governance*

The success of government measures for urban development largely depends on the organization and well-coordination of the different levels of authorities that are responsible for implementation of urban policies. The issue is not how correct the existing structure of governance in Kazakhstan is, but how well its various levels work cohesively and whether the decision-making powers, responsibilities and resources for urban development are effectively and equity distributed.

Kazakhstan has a complex urban and territorial structure. Each country interprets the definition of a city or urban area in its own way from the administrative-territorial point of view. In Kazakhstan, the definition of urban areas is based on the 1993 Law “On Administrative and Territorial Structure of the Republic of Kazakhstan”. This Law defines them as “major economic centers with a developed industrial and social infrastructure and with a population higher than 50 000 inhabitants”. Of course, the country has changed since that time and therefore there have been changes in the division of cities and the definition of their statuses.

According to the latest government data, in 2021 there are 88 cities in the country, as well as 30 urban-type settlements (which may become cities in the future). There are 3 levels of territorial-administrative division - Regional, District and Municipal. One of the most characteristic features

of the system is how cities fit into this scheme. Based on human capital and political influence, cities are categorized into 3 tiers. In the first Regional level there are 14 regions and 3 cities of republican significance (Almaty, Astana and Shymkent).

These three cities enjoy a unique administrative position, since they have the prerogatives of the Regional, District and Municipal levels. The entire state budget is distributed over them, and these regions (and 3 cities) already distribute finances among their subordinate cities and districts.

Next comes the division into districts, which depend on the regional centers. In total, there are 163 rural and 20 urban districts in Kazakhstan (including 8 districts of Almaty), in which there are 37 cities of regional significance. Next comes the municipal level, which has 48 district-level cities and more than a thousand small villages and rural settlements.

Previously, cities of republican significance differed from cities of regional significance only by their financial capabilities, i.e. they received more funds from the country’s budget. The vertical of power at the state level was preserved, cities could not introduce something innovative or start transformations on their streets without the permission of a higher authority (regional administration, or if these were multimillion-dollar projects without the presidential administration

Territorial organization of Kazakhstan			
Unitary country	Regional level	District level	Municipal level
	14 Regions and 3 cities of Republican significance	37 large cities of regional significance (14 of them are administrative centers of regions. map 1.2) 183 districts (163 rural and 20 urban)	48 small cities of district significance. 6316 villages, rural communities and settlements and 30 urban-type settlements.
	17	220	6394

Table 3.5 Territorial organization of Kazakhstan

Source: Bureau of National Statistics, the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Elaboration by the author.





Map 3.6 Map of Kazakhstan by regions with major administrative city (capital of region)  
Elaboration by the author.

or the country's Senate). In December 2019, the government signed amendments to the Law «On the Special Status of the City of Almaty». These amendments will allow the city authorities to approve the design code of Almaty, the tariff policy for rail transport without confirmation in the Senate, schemes for urban development of the city's territory and urban planning regulations. Thanks to this law, the city's powers were expanded to coordinate and implement urban planning in urban areas and suburban areas. (Government of Kazakhstan, 2019).

#### Regions (oblys)

	Akmola		Kyzylorda
	Aktobe		Mangystau
	Almaty		North-Kazakhstan
	Atyrau		Pavlodar
	East-Kazakhstan		Turkistan
	Karagandy		West-Kazakhstan
	Kostanai		Zhambyl

#### Cities

-  Republican significance
-  Administrative center of the region

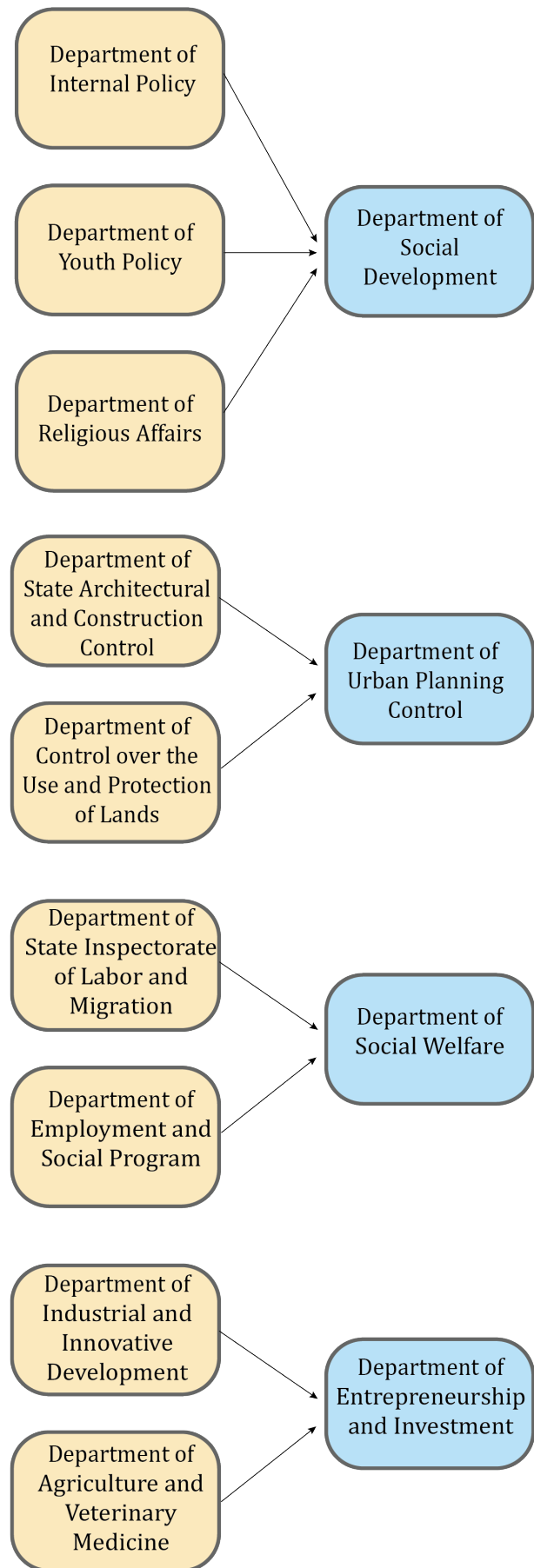


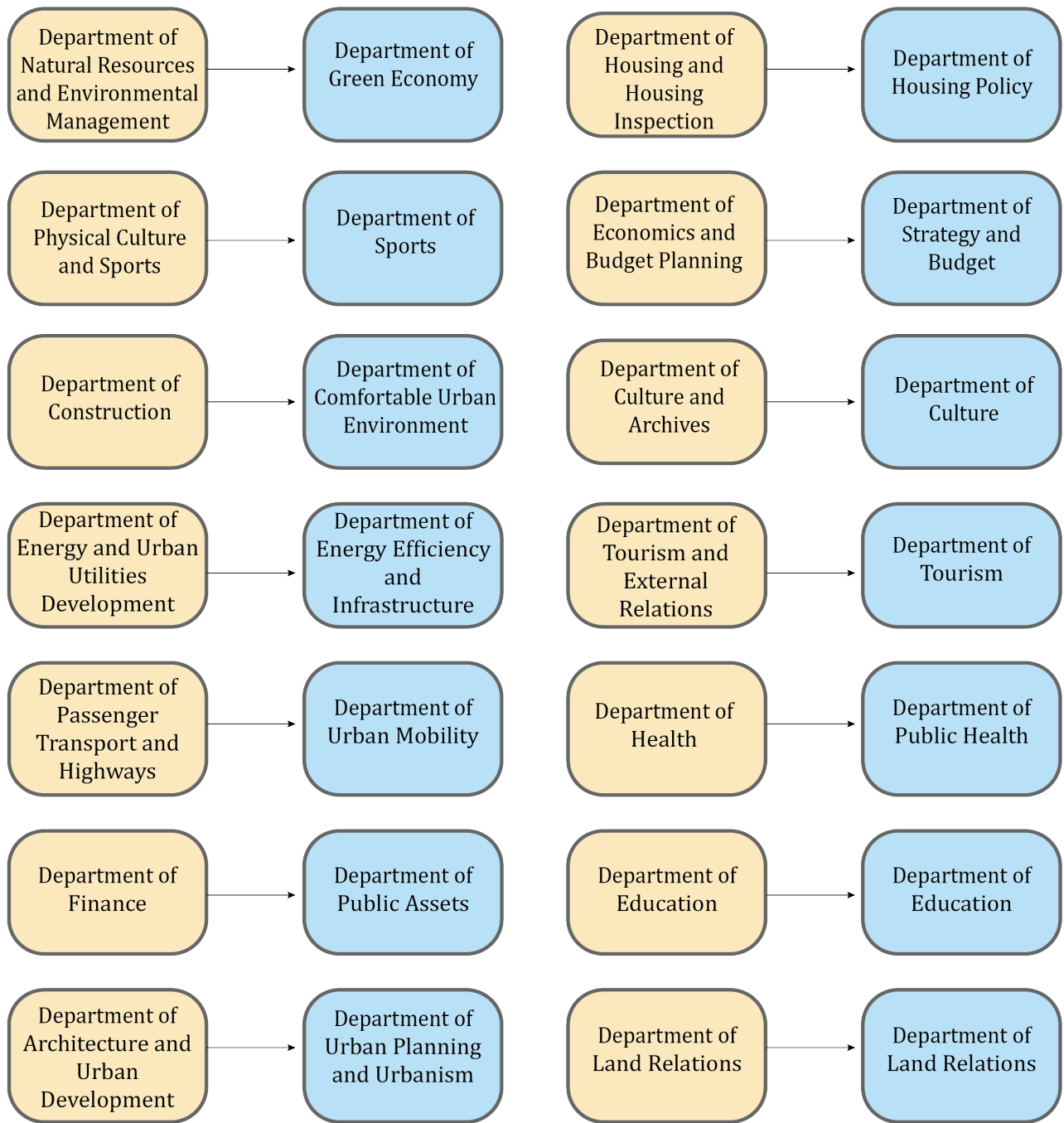
## City governance

The Akimat in Kazakhstan represents the executive branch in the region. It is headed by akim (mayor) - government and presidential representative. His responsibilities include the development and implementation of plans for the development of the ward region in the economic and social spheres. Under the direction of the akim there are also communal property of the headed region, personnel decisions, coordination with legislative bodies.

In 2019, various city administrations and departments were reorganized in Almaty (see sketch 5.1). 5 of them were completely abolished by merging with other departments, and 12 were renamed. This was done in order to reduce the management staff of departments and make interagency coordination more effective. While in the country, on the contrary, more ministries are being created (in 2018, a new Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development was created, in 2019 - the Ministry of Digital Development, Defense and Aerospace Industry), thereby increasing the number of civil servants, Almaty, on the contrary, is trying to do its work more efficiently and does not inflate the staff. The transformation of the akimat will make it possible to abolish managerial and auxiliary positions, redirect the vacated units to strengthen the administrations closely working with the population. But the work is not over yet, and during 2019, work was carried out to optimize business processes, introduce digital technologies in public administration, introduce corporate governance and improve the quality of public services.

Jane Jacobs, in her famous book «The Death and Life of Great American Cities» argued that administratively large cities should be divided into districts in order to make power more horizontal. Such administrative districts in large cities will begin to act as political subjects, because they will have real departments that allow them to collect information from their relatively small districts, develop recommendations, make decisions and implement them. This will be one of the main advantages of the new city management system. In many cases, big cities act as a «crazy quilt» of governments and administrations, which makes it difficult for residents to understand the labyrinths





Sketch 3.2 Departments of Almaty city hall  
Elaboration by the author.

of the bureaucratic machine. Therefore, cities need to learn how to manage more compactly and efficiently (Jacobs J., 1993). Almaty is administratively divided into 8 districts. Each of them is governed by their own local mayors, but they are all accountable to the chief city mayor.

## ***Local governance***

Currently, the formats of interaction between society and government are being actively improved. Non-state institutions that create organizational opportunities for the influence of society on the affairs of the state are consultative, advisory, supervisory bodies designed to increase the transparency of government decision-making. In this regard, various formats of communication between society and government are being actively introduced in Almaty. In 2017, the Akimat of Almaty was the first in Kazakhstan to implement the Open Almaty project, a public reception office to improve the quality of interaction between government bodies and the population. The main task of «Open Almaty» is to create a barrier-free environment, accountability of state bodies to the population, and solve everyday problems of citizens. Applications are accepted through 4 communication channels: portal, front office, contact center 1308 and social media accounts (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter).

In the second half of 2019, a pilot project «Participatory Budgeting» was launched in Almaty. In each of the 8 districts of the city, residents will determine a pool of projects for 500 million tenge (1.17 million dollars), which were financed in 2020 from the local budget. Members of the public council, experts, local deputies, representatives of NGOs are actively involved in the pilot project. This project is an important stage in the development of local self-government. The townspeople had the opportunity to speak about how to use part of the city budget for the development and solution of the problems of their districts.

In general, the townspeople liked the idea itself and the pilot project was continued for 2020-2021. But there are some shortcomings that will need to be corrected in the coming years.

1. It is necessary to define the objectives and principles of the participatory budgeting, since the townspeople and the city authorities faced this for the first time, there were misunderstandings.

2. To work out the tactics of the information campaign. An effective information campaign implies not only clarification of the purpose of the project, but also advisory support to citizens at every stage of the project. It will also help expand the circle of participants, because in the first year about 30,000 residents of the city took part in this

project, which is very little for a 2 million city.

3. Improve coordination. Establishing internal processes and training civil servants is an important part of the success of participatory budgeting. Often, it is the inconsistency of work processes that leads to a decrease in overall trust in the participatory budgeting, both among residents and among the administration staff themselves.

This year, funding for the participation budget was increased to 800 million tenge (1.87 million dollars) in each district of the city. In order to develop the annexed territories to the city, Nauryzbay and Alatau districts within the framework of the «Participation Budget», an additional allocation of 500 million tenge is provided. Thus, the total amount of funds allocated for each of these two regions amounted to 1.3 billion tenge (3 million dollars). (Open Almaty. Participatory Budgeting. 2021)

Almaty, as the most advanced and developed city not only of the country but of the entire region, tries to follow global trends, not only dictates its own conditions, but is interested in the opinion of residents and tries to involve them in joint work. Despite the general authoritarian regime in the country, the city still pursues its policy of democratization, giving residents the opportunity for their rights to participate and appropriate in the city. The above factors support the idea that global cities have an increasing influence on the economy and development policy, regardless of the countries in which they are located.

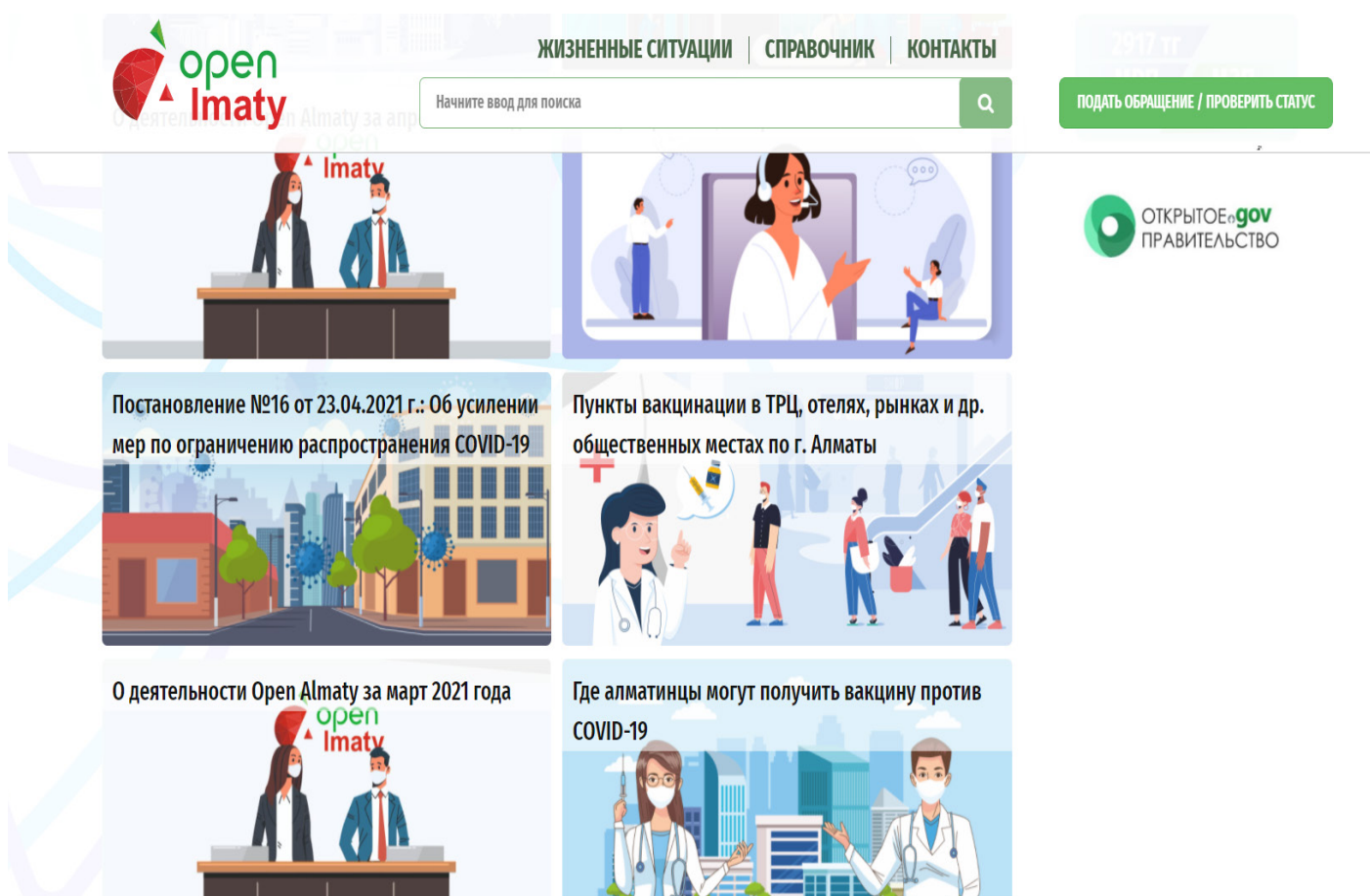
In this chapter, the answer to the question of the growing interest in urbanism in Kazakhstan is following global trends. City governments, looking at how other economies and global cities develop, strive to do governance and direction in the same vein. Of course, this only applies to large global cities (well, or those that strive to be global), because the authorities have political will and opportunities. From reforming the management system of city government to creating comfortable and accessible conditions for citizens' participation in the life of the city, everything is done to follow the global trends in urban development to solve the socio-economic problems of its citizens and active participation in the world economy.

In the following chapters, it will be described how, due to urban conflicts, society itself is changing and now it becomes interested in urbanism, the rights to the city.



On this page, top. Pic. 30 Front-office of Open Almaty - public reception under the city hall.

On this page, bottom. Pic. 31 Website Open Almaty, where citizens can submit a request to the authorities.



# CHAPTER 4

## WAY TO MATURITY: THE TRANSITIONAL AGE





## 4.1 URBAN PROTESTS AS A WAY TO REGAIN THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

Conflicts surround us everywhere, even within the boundaries of one city and within one day there can be many disputes and disagreements of different importance and size, from a conflict in a queue to a store to peaceful demonstrations and rallies in defense of the environment or human rights. The modern city is the center of various conflicts and confrontations. And the city is bigger, the higher the level of its conflict potential. As civilization develops, the number and objectivity of conflicts will only increase and take new forms. By themselves, conflicts are natural for human existence, moreover, they serve as the most important catalyst for development, movement forward. The emergence of a conflict is the first step towards its solution, the only question is how competently and painlessly this conflict will be resolved.

Urban conflicts refer primarily to social conflicts, but they can combine intergroup, environmental, economic, and other components. An urban conflict is a clash of interests of city residents that has received an external manifestation in connection with their use of urban space. The more resonant this conflict, the more people learn about it, respectively, they discuss this situation more and begin to analyze the social problems that lie behind these conflicts. Some strata of the population may not notice this or that problem until it personally affects them, or until the society begins to loudly and violently discuss this topic. Despite the fact that the term «right to the city» appeared in the late 60s of the XX century, its active use began relatively recently. A number of civic initiatives have intensified the use of this term, a wave of which swept around the world, first in the United States, Eastern Europe and Latin America, and then erupting in the Middle East cities such as Beirut and Istanbul. However, most often some urban activist groups have seized upon the term “right to the city” as a slogan and a claim of protests, though what they understand and mean is often unclear and the term is not always interpreted in accordance with the works of Lefebvre or Harvey.

Ivanov O.B., head of the center for the settlement of social conflicts, honored lawyer of the Moscow region, in his article “City conflict: typology and

mediation” published in 2020 in Russian national scientific and political journal «Vlast», argues that urban conflicts are divided into four main groups: urban planning, infrastructural, environmental, symbolic.

\* **Urban planning conflicts** are directly related to architectural changes in the city. Here, citizens may be dissatisfied with both the construction object itself and the construction process, incl. inconveniences arising from this.

\* **Infrastructure conflicts** arise when changes in the urban economy that are inconvenient for residents take place - whether it is the transfer of parking lots and road signs, an increase in public transport fares, the closure of facilities important for residents (clinics, kindergartens, schools), or, conversely, the opening of undesirable for city dwellers, objects such as a hostel for migrants or a bath and laundry facility for the homeless.

\* **Environmental conflicts** are associated with the residents’ perception of unfavorable changes in the environment due to certain architectural or infrastructural changes, such as hazardous emissions, construction of dangerous facilities that harm the ecology of the city, etc.

\* **Symbolic conflicts** concern the so-called comfort zone of residents - cult cafes on a local or city scale, public gardens, special places for meetings and walks, real or revered monuments of history and culture. (Ivanov O., 2020)

It is important to understand that often urban conflict combines the characteristics of all four groups. For example, the construction of a new traffic intersection can annoy residents with both inconveniences during construction work, and a change in the usual infrastructure, and an increase in noise and gas pollution, and a change in a comfortable environment - the destruction of familiar shops, cafes, squares, etc. Urban conflicts arise from the infringement or lack of the right to the city. The right to the city is not just a conditional right of access to what already exists, it is an active right to transform the city, to bring it in accordance with our common needs and desires (Harvey D., 2008).

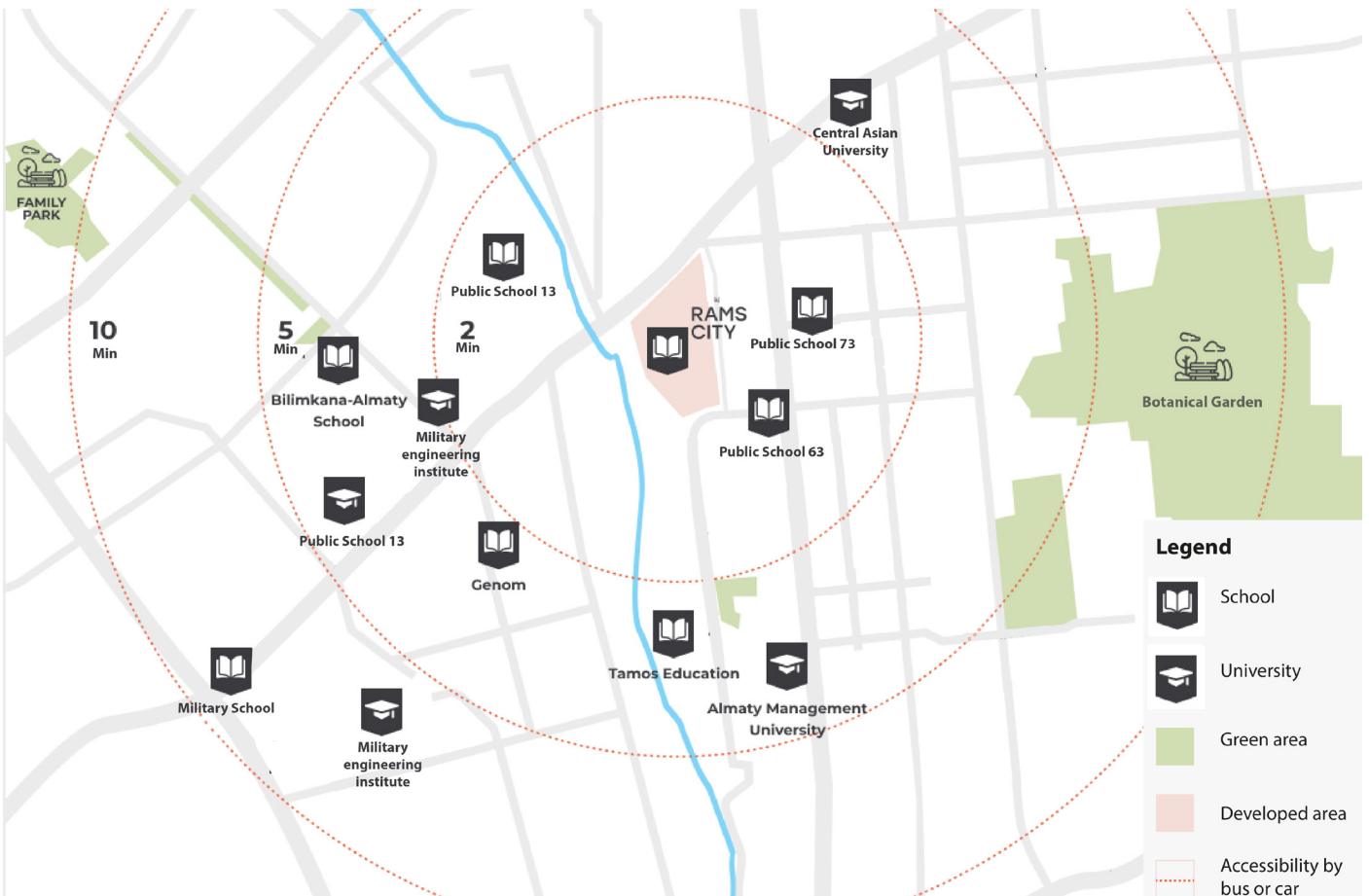
## Urban planning conflict

Almaty is a big city, which is gradually being built up with new buildings. In recent years, high-rise buildings have begun to grow on the site of wastelands or former courtyards. At first, the residents did not pay much attention to this, and no one asked them. The land was sold or leased to private construction companies, who built houses at their own discretion. Basically, construction companies were only concerned with earnings, they did not pay attention to either the architectural component or the landscaping of the territories around their construction site.

In the fall of 2020, Almaty residents began to complain about the massive development of high-rise buildings in the area near Al-Farabi. The townspeople were worried about the construction of five large residential complexes opposite the shopping center on Rozybakieva in Bostandyk district. There were small local discontent, as instead of a football field or a playground, another house was built, but this was of concern only to a small group of people with children.

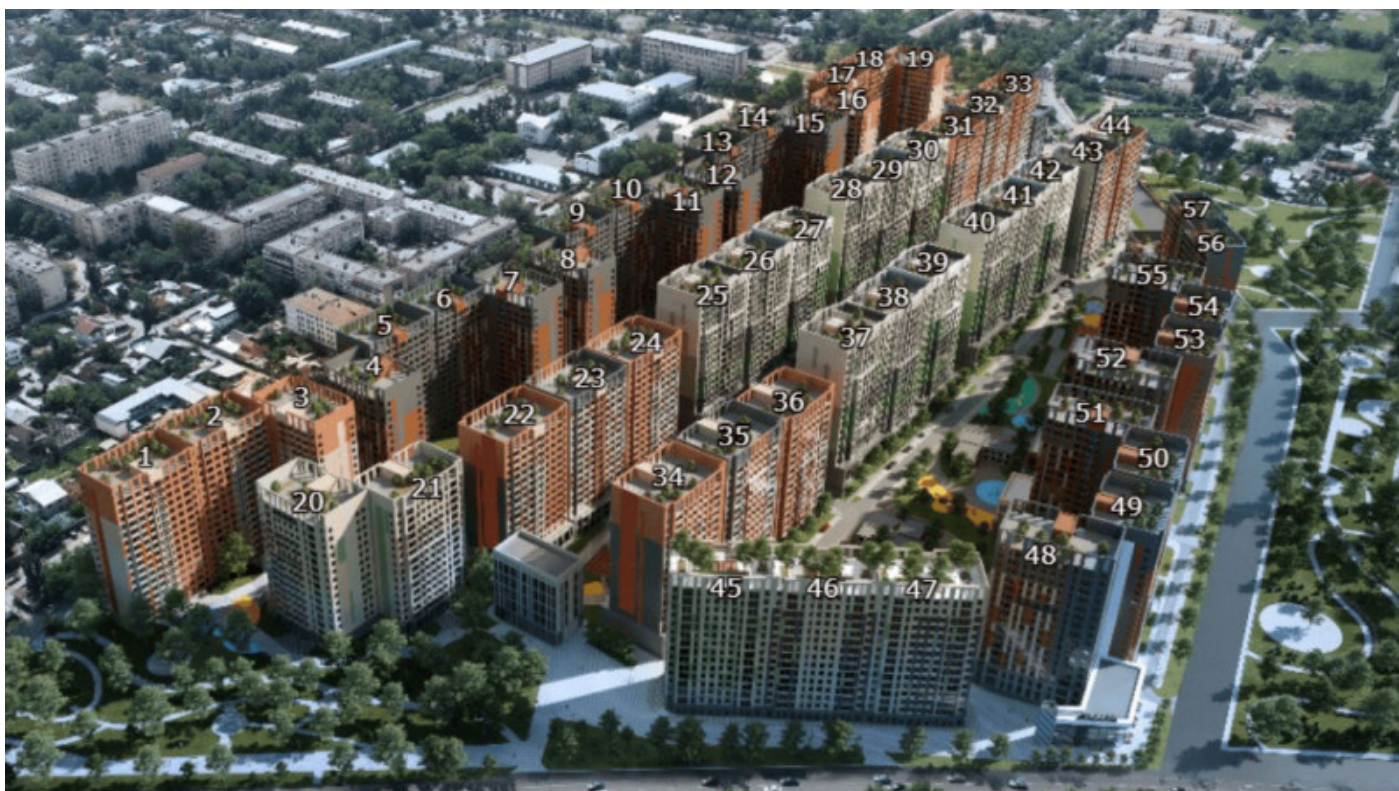
However, in March 2021, residents of Almaty again announced the compacting development in the area of the former fruit canning plant. On a small plot of land of 13 hectares, they wanted to build 57 high-rise buildings with 17 floors at once. Because of this, residents began to call the residential complex «humanhill». The city administration confirmed that construction is indeed planned, but said nothing about the number of new buildings and the height. In the detailed draft of the Master Plan of 2008, it was planned to build only 17 houses with wide green areas on the site of the former fruit-canning plant. In 2016-2017, changes were made to the RAP of the city districts in favor of compact infill development.

The main discontent of residents was that when giving permission for such buildings, officials, unfortunately, did not think that in the future this would negatively affect the ecological and transport infrastructure of the district / city. Densely built high-rise buildings will become an obstacle in the path of air currents coming from the mountains. There will also be difficulties in an emergency, there will be no opportunity to rescue residents in the event of a devastating earthquake.



Map # 4.1. Location of debatable developed area  
 Source: RAMS CITY developer. <https://ramscity.kz/>





Sketch # 4.1. The initial sketch #1 of the development of the area. RAMS City.

Source: RAMS CITY developer. <https://ramscity.kz/>

According to the activists, many norms are violated during the construction of the residential complex. For example, the norms of the maximum population density are three times exceeded. The developer himself, the RAMS company, said that the territory of the residential complex will be as green and convenient as possible for the townspeople.

However, the public was not satisfied with this explanation, since the residential complexes would heavily load the infrastructure. As a result, the construction of the «humanhill» was suspended, and the developer promised to change the original version of the residential complex.



Sketch # 4.2. The renewed sketch #1 of the development of the area. RAMS City.

Source: RAMS CITY developer. <https://ramscity.kz/>

## Initial sketch



Total area - 14 ha

- Residentail complex area
- Residentail houses (57 blocks + Business centre)
- Pre-school institution

Sketch # 4.3. The initial sketch #2 of the development of the area. RAMS City.  
Source: RAMS CITY developer. <https://ramscity.kz/>

Residents, thanks to multiple appeals to the city administration and defending their right to the city, were able to achieve a more humane development and the project was completely revised. In the new project, the number of residential blocks has been reduced from 57 to 37, the number of storeys of some buildings has been reduced from 17 to 13.

In general, the building density has decreased by 45 percent. In addition, the area of greenery has increased from 3 to 8 hectares. Now the project also has social facilities: a school, a kindergarten and a development center, which will be able to be attended by children not only of the future residential complex, but also of nearby houses.

## Renewed sketch



Total area - 14 ha

- Residentail complex area
- Residentail houses (37 blocks + Business centre + hotel )
- Pre-school institution, school, children's entertainment center
- Boulevard

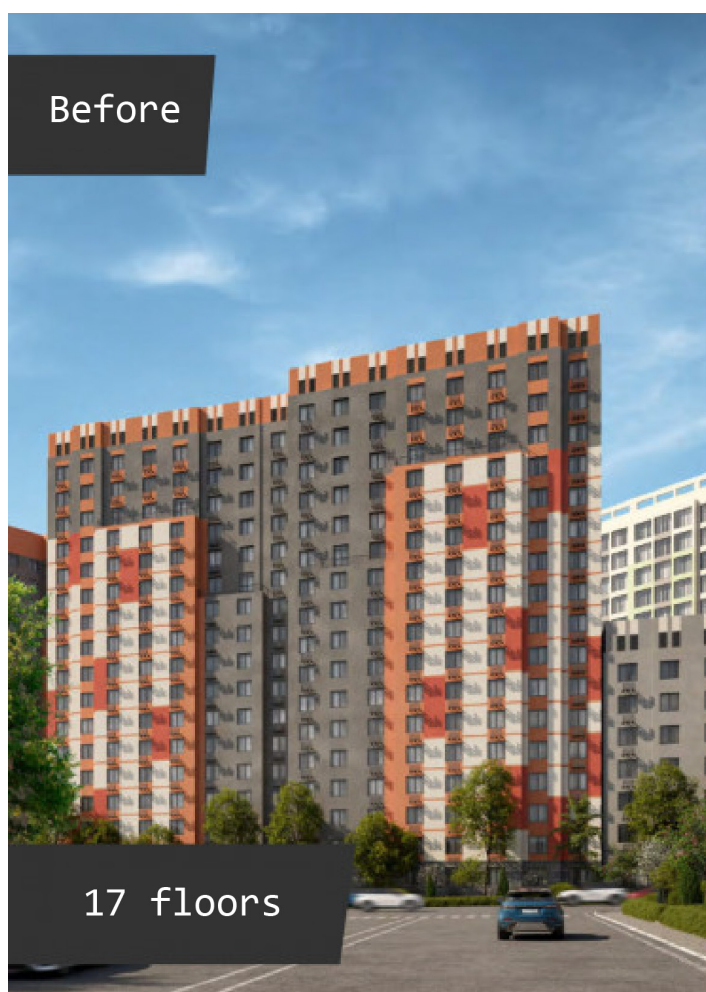
Sketch # 4.4. The renewed sketch #2 of the development of the area. RAMS City.  
Source: RAMS CITY developer. <https://ramscity.kz/>

Educational institutions will be located on an area of 3 hectares. Children’s and sports grounds will appear. The developer also promises to build a one-kilometer-long covered boulevard. This architectural solution will combine pedestrian zones, cycle paths and commercial spaces. According to the calculations of the company, more than 1.5 thousand jobs will be created in the retail outlets of the complex. In the project, the external facade of the residential complex was also changed - they plan to use only modern environmentally friendly materials during construction.

“We deeply regret that the initial version of the project caused concern to Almaty residents, causing a resonance in society. We would like to declare that there will be no “humanhill” in Almaty. Our initial project has been radically changed and finalized taking into account the requirements of Almaty residents, independent experts and city authorities. For this, the city akimat created a special commission, which included the authors of the project, authoritative independent architects. In addition, experts from well-known design companies took part in the work of the commission

for revising the project,» the developer company said. (RAMS City, 2021)

By expressing dissatisfaction, residents of the city defend their right to the city. When residents spoke about the reluctance to build such a dense and high building, they cited the examples of American Los Angeles and German Berlin, referring to the experience of other countries. The most interesting and important thing is that these were ordinary citizens far from architecture and planning. People using their right to the city influence the transformation of the city itself, as Harvey argued. Residents themselves studied examples of urban development around the world, listened to the opinion of experts. That is, the use of the right to the city indirectly affects the expansion of horizons and education in other spheres of life such as architecture, ecology, urban planning, etc. Residents, changing their cities for the better, change not only the appearance of streets or districts, not only improve the surrounding spaces, they also change themselves, their views and replenish their knowledge base.



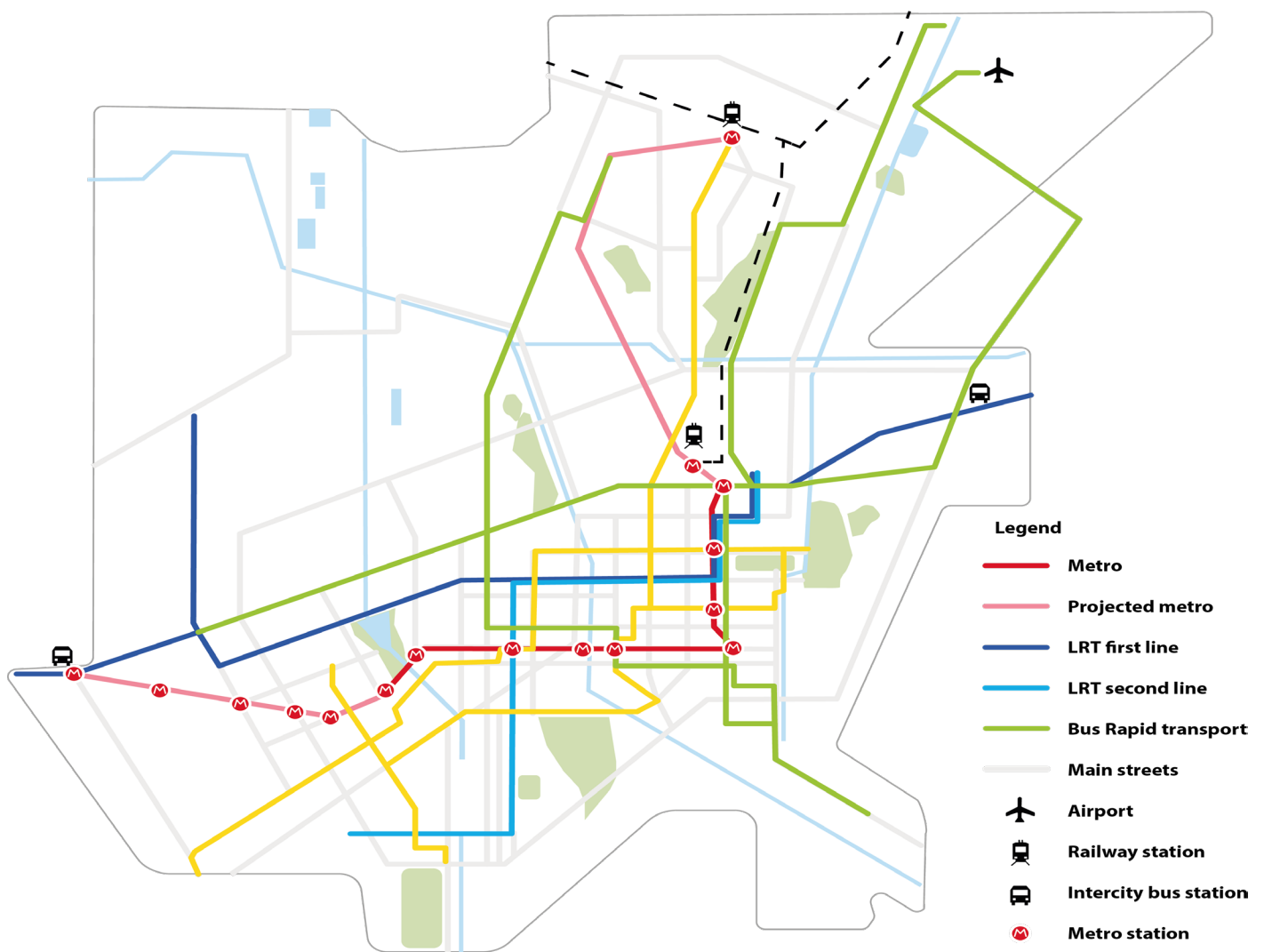
Sketch # 4.5. The comparison sketch of the planned buildings. RAMS City.  
Source: RAMS CITY developer. <https://ramscity.kz/>

## Infrastructural conflict

A potential urban infrastructure protest could take place in Almaty regarding trams, but the lack of education and literacy of residents in the field of urban planning and transport in this matter left the transport diversity of the city without discussion. In addition to the city's reluctance to fund and care about improving public transport, in particular tram lines, the human emotions manipulated by the city's authorities played an important role.

The tram in Almaty appeared before the first traffic light in December 1937 and was actively developing until the mid-1980s. By 1993, the Almaty tram reached, perhaps, its peak - 93 km of track, 200 units of rolling stock. Back in 1990, a new tram depot was built. But unfortunately, the authorities have changed their priority towards a more prestigious metro and decided to remove trams from the streets of the city.

The epic with the liquidation of the tram in Almaty began in 2015 - after two high-profile and massive accidents involving this transport. The first loud accident took place on September 21 at the corner of Shevchenko and Masanchi streets. Then the brakes of a multi-ton car failed, and she crushed 17 cars. 5 people were injured that day. The examination revealed that the tram had faulty brakes. Less than a month later, a similar accident occurs. On October 13, another tram rammed 14 cars at the intersection of Seifullin-Makatayev streets. 4 people were injured. After these massive accidents, residents of the city began to fear trams. According to a study by the insurance company Kompetenz, 78% of drivers began to feel fear at the sight of yellow tram wagons. After a comprehensive analysis of the condition of tramways and rolling stock, the city authorities decided to eliminate this type of transport.



Map # 4.2. Almaty Integrated Rapid Transit System  
Elaboration by the author

In addition to the malfunction, and another important argument was the planned light rail transport (LRT) project. It is, of course, much more expensive, but more comfortable, safer and more modern. It is clear that some Almaty residents fell in love with the yellow tram wagons, they reminded of the Soviet Alma-Ata. The city authorities are hindering the launch of the project, citing a lack of funds, although they have the documentation and the project on hand. They also manipulate old memories of horrific tram accidents to continue their projects of building expensive new metro stations.

Urban Forum Kazakhstan\* has launched a campaign and calls for the signing of a petition to reopen the high-speed tram construction project in Almaty. In various ways, from video clips on the YouTube platform and other social networks to public meetings and forums, they try to convey to the city residents why Almaty needs this modern form of urban transport. The problem is that people who are not versed in transport consider,

in fact, the tram and the LRT to be the same mode of transport. Residents still fearfully recall those terrible accidents and are not particularly eager for the revival of rails on the streets of the city.

This kind of tacit protest against progress and change. Experts want to make the city better, more comfortable and safer. But the lack of sufficient knowledge among the townspeople stops all good initiatives. That is, in order to have the right to the city, one must not only demand that the city authorities do what the residents want, but also require themselves to improve their knowledge. Fighting for the right to the city is not just an opportunity to come out with a poster at a rally, it is taking responsibility towards society. In this case, residents do not quite understand what and how will be best for themselves and the city as a whole, and therefore stepped aside, gave the initiative to the authorities and just waited. Only a small group of specialists represented by the public fund Urban Forum Kazakhstan promotes this idea and generates an infrastructure protest.



This page left:  
Pic. 32 The old trams that functioned until 2015 in Almaty.

This page down:  
Pic. 33 The new project of light rail transport, which began planning for a return in 2020, but has not yet been commissioned.

\* Urban Forum Kazakhstan is an independent dialogue platform, whose activities are aimed at organizing and moderating a sustainable dialogue of city stakeholders with each other. Urban Forum Almaty was founded in 2015. In 2015 and 2016, two large-scale forums were organized; since 2017, the platform has changed the format of discussions, holding a series of thematic round tables throughout the year, united by the declared topic of the year. In 2018, the Urban Forum Kazakhstan Public Fund was formed, and the geography of the project began to include not only Almaty, but also other regions of Kazakhstan.



## ***Environmental conflict***

The ecological situation in the city is an exciting topic for every resident of Almaty, and therefore ecological conflicts have always been a good starting platform for discussion and involvement of citizens in participation in the life of the city. Environmental problems of Almaty are the most acute, the city is among the most polluted in Kazakhstan. Sources of pollution are emissions from vehicles and stationary facilities. Therefore, the main environmental problem of the city of Almaty is air pollution.

Pollution is dangerous because, regardless of gender and age, everyone breathes the same air. If someone gets poisoned with contaminated water, they will stop drinking it. This will not work with air, it is one of the most difficult objects for control and analysis. According to the Almaty Akimat, vehicle exhaust is the main source of emissions in the city. Another reason for smog is the heating of

the private sector (single-family houses), which in winter almost all lives off the burning of coal, and sometimes rubbish with rubber. Therefore, it is impractical to simply purify the air after the fact when the source of pollution works as before.

The geographical location of the city influences the level of pollution, but this is not an excuse for inaction. The mountain range that surrounds the city from the southeast and south sides makes it difficult for air to circulate. Uncontrolled development and changing urban landscapes, in turn, also complicate the flow of air and the wind rose. Somehow a completely utopian idea was proposed - to drill a hole in the mountains to blow out all the pollutants.

Architecture is also one of the key elements of urban ecology. It is necessary that buildings are designed and built taking into account the wind rose, location in relation to the existing building. In

Pic. 34 Smog in the south side of the city towards the mountains. Most of all, air pollution is manifested in the winter heating season, when single-family houses are heated with coal and when it is too cold outside to move on foot or by bicycle, many Almaty residents change to private vehicles or use taxis.

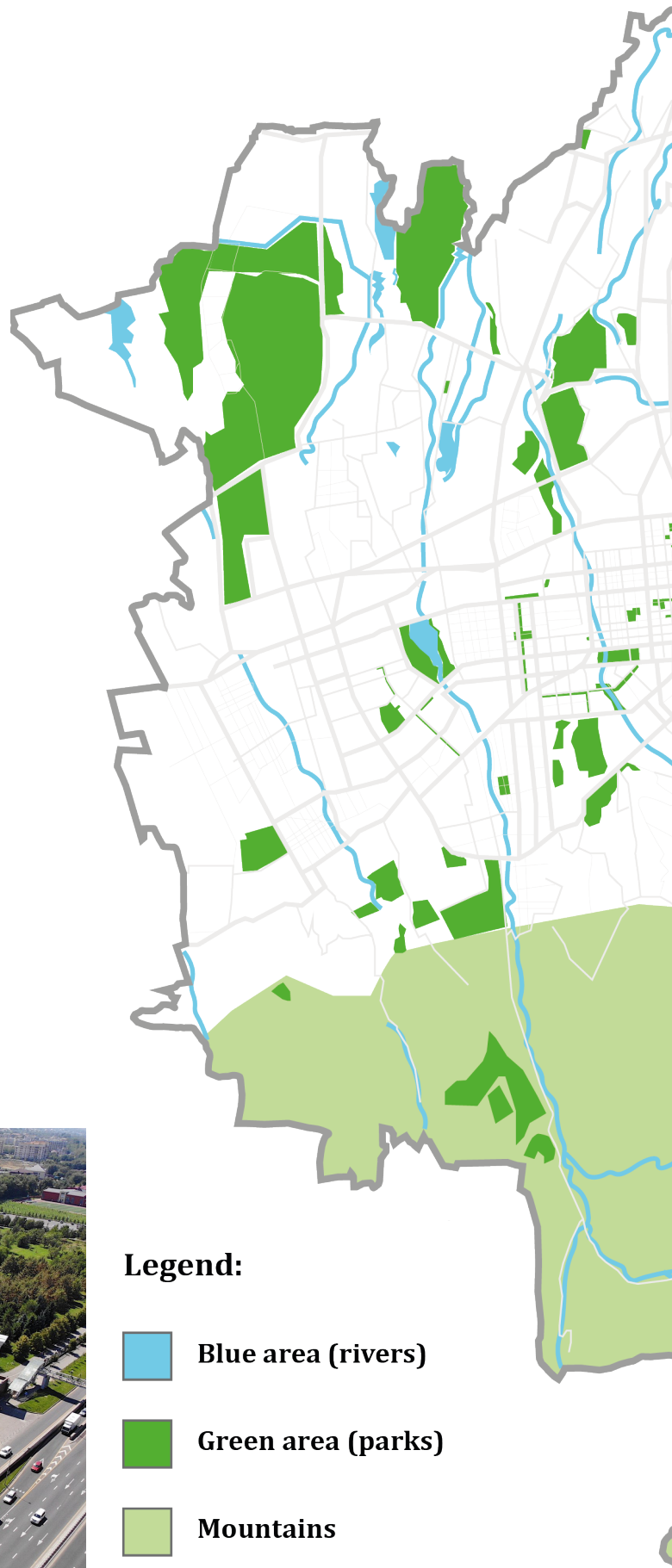


Pic. 35 Smog on the north side of the city. More dense smog is in the lowlands, as most of the single-family housing areas are located there and polluted air is trapped there.



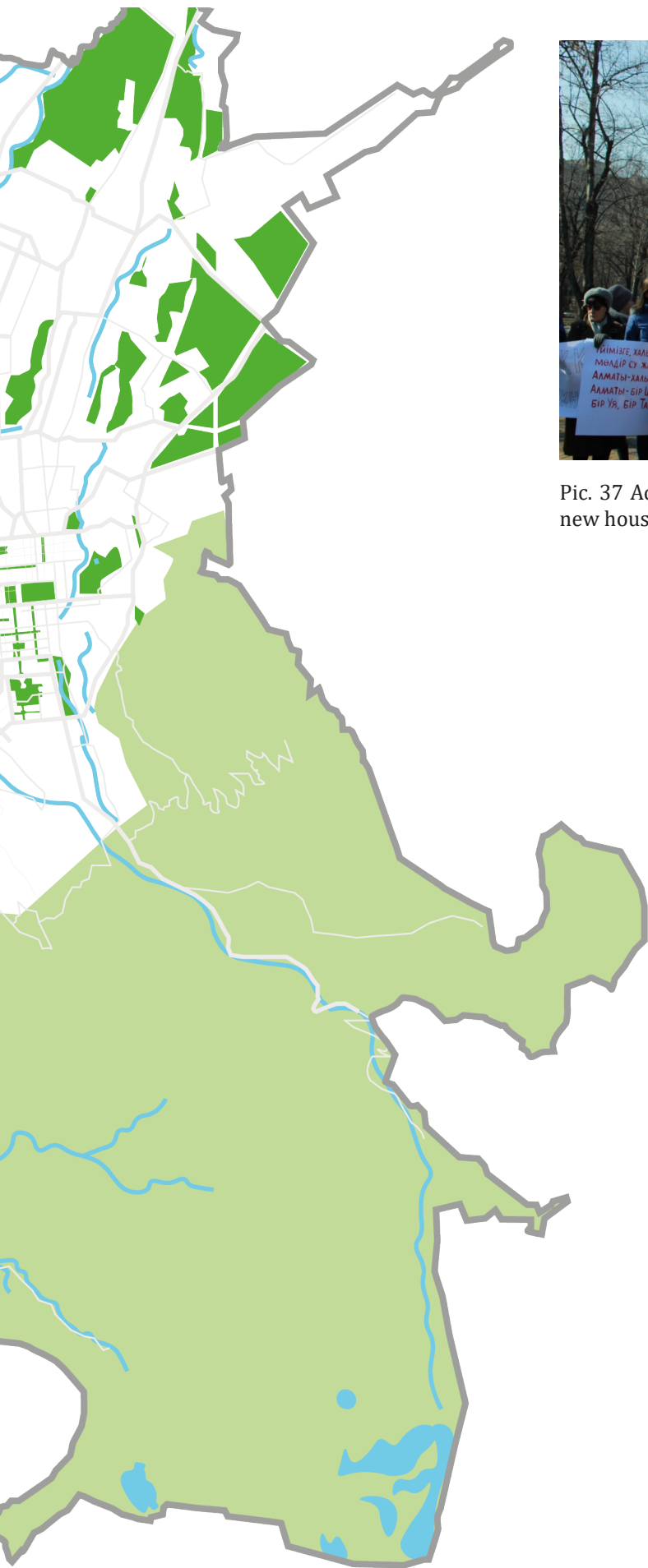
the past, these conditions were strictly enforced. Until 2018, there was a City Planning Council in Almaty, which included not so much architects as businessmen and developers. The abolished City Council did not fully fulfill its function - ensuring public hearings and open approval of projects. Under the current Department of Urban Planning and Urbanism of the city of Almaty, projects are approved behind closed doors. It is not known whether the projects are subject to requirements in terms of the direction of prevailing winds, thermal emissions of buildings into the environment, construction in the foothill areas. Therefore, it is necessary to return an expert council with transparent decision-making, the presence in it not only of architects and urban planners, but also of experts from various fields - from ecology to the transport system. The public and citizens should also be represented on the board.

The most elementary actions, which are clearly seen by residents to help their city, it's greening city streets, not only to preserve, but also the development of green areas. In Almaty, at present, the issues of preserving and improving green areas have become very important. The city has 13 parks, 96 squares and in general about 303 small green areas, 25 boulevards, 2 alleys, 5 embankments, 2 groves, 1 botanical garden. However, the developers mean savings disregard the desire of residents and begin to build on the site of gardens, which clearly did not like the inhabitants of the surrounding areas and in general the eco-activists



Pic. 36 Park named after the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. One of the greenest and largest parks in Almaty.

*Map # 4.3. Green map of Almaty  
Elaboration by the author*



Pic. 37 Activists at the first permitted eco-rally against the building of new houses in the place of green squares and parks in Almaty.

As mentioned earlier, many conflicts combine several, and sometimes all 4 types of conflicts. In continuation of the previous part «urban planning conflicts», on February 29, 2020, the first sanctioned rally was held in Almaty, and it was held by eco-activists who opposed the compacting infill development. More than 50 people gathered in Mahatma Gandhi's park with posters and banners. They demanded to establish a moratorium on such construction. "The compacting infill development is nothing more than the postponed killing of citizens of Kazakhstan," protesters said. Literally in October 2019, there were 36 such objects, and today there are more than 70. Parks and squares of the city of Almaty are being seized for construction, and this complicates the already unfavorable environmental situation. (Toguzbaev K., 2020) Unfortunately, there is no law in Kazakhstan stating that for each new construction, certain square meters of green areas next to residential buildings (squares or parks) must be taken into account. Therefore, developers are guided by those places where people are most concentrated. But they do not take into account the fact that people gather in such green areas. Buying these territories and starting the construction of new residential complexes, people will still leave this area if there are no parks or squares. Unfortunately, architects are now often forced to follow the lead of the investor, who is primarily motivated by the market and obtaining the maximum area for sale. Therefore, the norms for greening construction are just an addition.



If we talk about the post-Soviet context, here the architectural institutions were closely linked and strictly controlled. These have always been government agencies. With the advent of market conditions, institutions were partially abolished or transferred to new statuses. Architecture has become primarily a service. In more developed countries, despite the fact that the market stimulates development, strict systems of regulation and control of the built environment remain, including taking into account environmental parameters. Certification systems exist that evaluate projects according to a number of criteria. Unfortunately, these standards have not yet been introduced in our country. Although attempts are being made. There are many options and ways to improve the situation, but most of the population cannot afford to focus on environmental standards or comfort when buying. The main criterion is the price. Therefore, until the country becomes more economically developed and politically active, the city will be in a very dependent and difficult situation.

Activists believe that construction is being carried out without taking into account public opinion and consider it a violation of the law. Massive violations of the civil rights of city residents were announced. At the rally, questions were raised about the illegal construction of the city, which shocked the residents of Almaty. Those who spoke at the rally put forward demands to the authorities to stop the infill and compact development of Almaty, justifying them with the possible further deterioration of the environmental situation, as well as the probable risks of an earthquake in the city, which is located in an earthquake-prone zone. Among other requirements - the return to state ownership of all parks and squares that have passed into private hands. More than 60% of these construction companies did not have permits. Developers, when designing new development

areas, are moving from building codes and building rules of Kazakhstan, which are actually the laws, to Eurocodes, which position themselves as a recommendation, shifting responsibility to the designers. Developers are legally allowed to build according to Eurocodes, without taking into account the building codes and regulations of Kazakhstan. Due to the inconsistencies of the laws at the highest level, construction firms can use various loopholes and generally ignore the landscaping or greening.

It should be noted that residents began to fight for their rights earlier. For example, residents of house number 11 on Gagarin Street filed a lawsuit against the developer, they won, but the akimats and the developer came up with new tactics. For a month or even more, residents of the house have not been given a court decision. There is an assumption that those in power use their classical scheme, namely, they give time to the developer through their corrupt schemes to draw up all documents for housing development. Apparently, the activists began to be used only in order to impose additional devices on the unscrupulous developer, as well as to offer the provision of services for the illegal execution of documents for the right to build. Many participants in the rally noted such a classic element of capitalist society as class deportation of residents of dilapidated housing being evicted to less habitable areas, while more comfortable ones are being built up in elite housing. Accordingly, those who could not afford to buy luxury housing were sent to less attractive areas. It is clear that the classical demarcation of the territory around the city already exists, but so far not on such a scale and not with such a level of inequality as compared with the ghetto in Harlem and the elite areas of California.

## Symbolic conflict

Nowadays, part of life has migrated to the Internet, and even many discussions about the city are conducted online, without going out on the streets. One notable example is how the city was forced to leave the decoration of the city as graffiti by the online grievances. Previously, public utilities tried to paint any graffiti in some unremarkable and depressed gray color as soon as possible, since in the opinion of the administration (which nevertheless grew up in the USSR) it “spoiled the city’s appearance” and no one gave permission.

Since the birth of graffiti in the 1960s in Philadelphia, city officials in virtually every city have tended to condemn graffiti as thoughtless vandalism. Later, the police began to lean towards the «broken windows» theory, which argued that if a petty crime like graffiti was ignored, such neglect could lead to more serious crimes. But as cities seek to “clean up order,” the ephemeral phenomena such as graffiti can also be beneficial to cities.

- \* Aesthetic function. Fencing of urban space and attracting tourists to new art objects.
- \* Effectively drawing attention to social and political issues.
- \* Occupation for youth. Improving professional skills as an artist and socialization.
- \* Associative memory of local residents, easier orientation in the city. Great and memorable graffiti can become a landmark in urban space.

Everything changed in the early 2000s, when the first works of the then unknown artist Banksy appeared on the streets of Bristol, England. The highly social themes and protest in his work raised a wave of interest in street art in general. Nearly twenty years later, Banksy’s work is being auctioned, street art festivals are constantly held in major cities, and street art is an integral part of the urban space.

It is important to distinguish street art from ordinary vandalism. Modern objects, first of all, should induce a person to think. Make you look at familiar things from a different angle. That is

why now street artists are trying to create murals - large drawings on the facades of buildings. Those murals that they want to draw undergo a certain procedure. First of all, they go through the approval of the department of architecture, which choose the murals, choose the facades of the building, where they will be painted. The second stage is coordination with the residents themselves. This kind of street art is not limited to wall painting; it can include author’s installations, sculptures, performances, or a combination of these genres.

In Kazakhstan, the culture of street art came much later, but thanks to the people and their assertion of their rights to the city, the situation is changing for the better. Street art came to Almaty relatively recently. At first, there were tags on walls and



Pic. 38 This work is one of the gifts to Almaty residents for the City Day. Authors - Neon and Shaman - prefer realism, this work is no exception. It depicts the symbols of our city - a snow leopard and mountains.

fences, inept graffiti, curses and inscriptions. As the years passed, the work of street artists became more and more professional, and they began to be invited to city festivals. Today, murals are part of Almaty, artists paint by order of the akimat, and the townspeople are sincerely proud that every year there are more interesting works. Street art took its toll.



Pic. 39 An example of associative memory. Graffiti adorns the entrance to a sports store where you can buy winter sports items. Almaty 2021.

Pic. 40 Mural with a swallow, dilutes the gray areas of old houses. It is noteworthy that the work is located not far from the airport and immediately became a landmark of the Turksib district. Almaty 2017.



In 2019, a new dark, violent, dramatic and incredibly exciting movie about the Joker, played by Joaquin Phoenix, was released. Anticipating success, the film distributors created a mural dedicated to the Joker on the facade of one of the shopping centers in Almaty. For this, street art artists from the REPAS workshop were invited. Not only the residents of this city really liked this work, but also the Almaty work was noticed by the film director Todd Phillips, on his official Instagram page he posted a time-lapse video showing the process of creating a mural. Unfortunately, this work was not agreed or coordinated with the city authorities.

A few weeks after the completion of the work, it became known that the city administration wanted to paint over the drawing, since the creation of the art object had not been agreed with them. The decision of the akimat was announced at a meeting of the public council. The authors of the mural were among the first to react to the decision of the city authorities, which they wrote about in a post on Instagram. The author's indignation was supported by a huge number of Almaty residents who openly spoke out against the destruction of street art works.

«Mural is not graffiti from the 90s! Why does the akimat want to paint over? Why is it bad? As for



Pic. 41 Work that has not been approved by the authorities still can be good. «Illegal» mural of the Joker, drawn on the eve of the release of the film. Almaty 2019.

me, this is art. And if I were officials, I would start painting over drug ads,» writes a user on Facebook in Kazakhstan. After such online protests of the townspeople, the head of the department of culture of the akimat of Almaty, Ernar Kurmashev, said in that the mural with the image of the Joker would not be painted over in Almaty. «We met with the authors of the» Joker «mural and completely came to an understanding. Nobody is going to paint over any murals. On the contrary, there are wonderful plans and ideas to develop this kind of contemporary art», - Kurmashev. (Sakurova A., 2019)

Residents' protests not only managed to leave one graffiti in the city, but also contributed to the future development of this trend in the city. Since Almaty is a cultural capital and many creative youth live in it, next time young artists will not worry that they

may be punished or their work will be painted over. Of course, street art festivals were held a couple of years before, but then everything was under the direction of the city authorities. This joker precedent will untie the hands of many artists and creative people, which in turn will transform the city, as society will become freer mentally and cohesively, and neighborhoods will be more adorned with various works of street art, turning gray places and more symbolic. Keeping the city in the «purity» of trying to deal with vandals who painted obscenities on the walls, will cost the city a lot of time and money. It is pointless to fight against this, it will disappear when the cultural level rises. To do this, the city needs to pay more attention to education, social support, etc. For an attractive and cozy city, you need to fight not with the consequences, but with the original reasons.

## *Ekaterinburg case study*

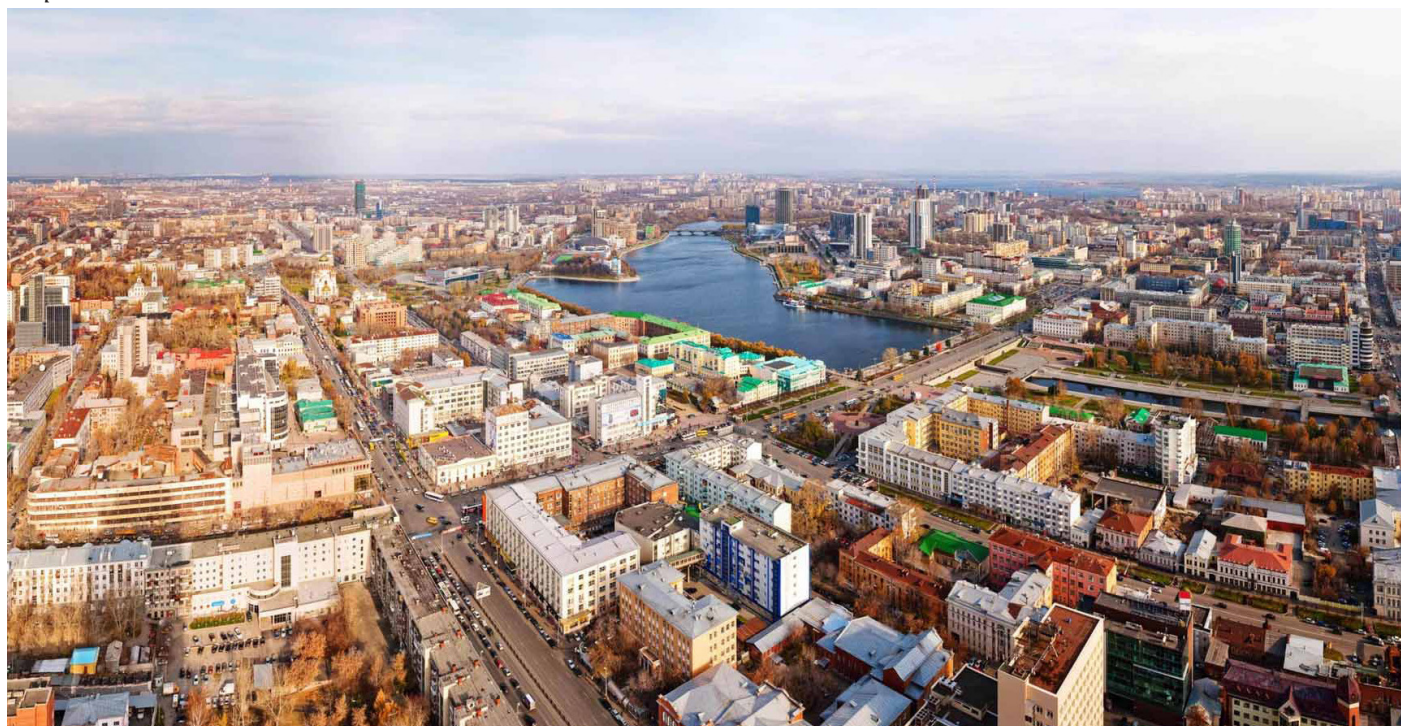
Ekaterinburg is the fourth most populous city (after Moscow, St. Petersburg and Novosibirsk) in Russia with almost 1.5 million inhabitants. It is the largest administrative, cultural, scientific and educational center of the Urals\*. Located on the eastern slope of the Middle Urals, along the banks of the Iset River. In the late 19th - early 20th centuries, the city was one of the centers of the revolutionary movement in the Urals. One of the main attractions is the golden-domed Church on the Blood in Honour of All Saints, built at the beginning of the 19th century on the site where the royal Romanov family was shot in 1918. These events were a prerequisite for the creation of the Soviet Union.

During the Soviet years it turned into a powerful industrial and administrative center of the country. Ekaterinburg is the most compact city with a population of over one million in the country. In Russia, among the cities with a population of over one million inhabitants, there is no other such neat and well-organized metropolis. The length of the built-up area of Ekaterinburg is 20 kilometers from north to south and 15 kilometers from west to east. One of the leading holdings is the Russian Copper Company, whose headquarters was designed by

the Foster + Partners architectural bureau. The city is rich and therefore can afford such projects. The standard of living in Ekaterinburg exceeds the national average. Ekaterinburg's GDP is 5.4% of the country. Compared to Kazakhstan's Almaty city with its 20%, this seems like a small figure, but do not forget that Russia is a huge country with many other cities. Ekaterinburg remains the third largest economy in the country, for comparison, the metropolis of Moscow generates 17.2% of GDP (Strelka KB's Center for Urban Economy, 2017). Ekaterinburg is famous for its unique constructivist architecture and is also considered the «Russian capital of street art».

Today Ekaterinburg also lives in such a transitional age from youth to maturity largely due to its residents who actively participate in the city life. Despite the historically revolutionary sentiments, the authoritarian regime inherited from the USSR played an important role in the current system of government and decision-making policy. Therefore, many urban conflicts, in which citizens are actively involved, are still resolved in the highest vertical of power. The government hears people only when there are massive or resonant protests. The following case study of urban conflict will clearly illustrate this trend.

*Ural\* - is a geographic region in Russia, stretching between the East European and West Siberian plains. The main part of this region is the Ural mountain system. In the east of the region, there is also a part of the Ural River basin, which flows into the Caspian Sea.*



Pic. 42 Top view of the city of Ekaterinburg.

## City and Church: protests against new construction

According to the city information service 2GIS, 65 churches are already functioning in Ekaterinburg. In March - June 2019, mass protests took place in the park on Oktyabrskaya Square in Ekaterinburg. The protests were directed against the construction of the new Church of St. Catherine in the park on this square. In March - April 2019, the protest was expressed in the form of flash mobs («roll calls»). In connection with the installation of the construction fence from May 13 to May 15, 2019, in the evening and at night, clashes with urban activists and law enforcement officers took place in the park. The 2 thousand people came to the construction site, more than 20 people were detained for disorderly conduct and traffic violations, because some protesters partially blocked one street (RBC, 2019). Residents were clearly against the construction of a new church in the city center, as the townspeople would have lost the green park near the city pond. There are not many recreational places in that urban district and Yekaterinburg residents clearly did not want to be deprived of public space near the city pond.

On the official website of Ekaterinburg, in the period from December 21, 2018 to January 18, 2019, discussions were held on the project for the construction of a new church. On February 12, 2019, the Ekaterinburg city council transferred this plot of land from public land to a religious territory. On February 15, 2019, the city authorities announced that 3107 out of 3309 participants voted for the construction of the church at public hearings. At the end of May 2019, opponents of the construction of the church in the park were unable to mobilize their supporters for public hearings. People were encouraged to participate in public hearings, explained how to do it. But it was difficult: citizens needed to come to the administration during working hours, perform a number of actions. On top of that, it was on New Year's holidays. Few people will volunteer to spend their personal time, which can be spent with their family, going through all the bureaucratic instances. As a result, only 200 people were able to undergo the procedure. And a month later, many participants received an answer that they had no right to participate in the hearings, because they did not live near the park.

In May 2019, negotiations were held between the authorities of Yekaterinburg and the authorities of the region, as well as the developer with representatives of the protesters. During the negotiations, the governor refused to stop the construction. The head of the region and representatives of the city administration suggested that the opponents of the construction of the temple choose any public space in order to improve it. On May 16, 2019, the journalist of "Vecherniye Vedomosti", Ivan Morozov, at the media forum of the All-Russia People's Front, asked Vladimir Putin a question about the park. After hearing about the residents' dissatisfaction with this construction, Putin said: "We need not to pull the rope and not swear with each other, but to sit down and come to an agreement. And the city authorities, regional authorities should do just that: find the optimal solution for the people living there» (Interfax, 2019).

Immediately after Putin's speech, the construction site was stopped and the mass protests supposedly disappeared. On the morning of May 17, 2019, construction was suspended until the end of the survey. Then a poll was conducted by VCIOM (Russian Public Opinion Research Center), according to which 74% of Ekaterinburg residents oppose the construction of a temple in the park (Russian Public Opinion Research Center, 2019), and on May 22, 2019, the media published a statement by Governor Mr. Kuyvashev: There is no need to build a church in the park, but they will find another site. On May 24, 2019 it became known that Metropolitan Kirill of Ekaterinburg appealed to the St. Catherine Foundation with a request to remove the construction fence from the square. The building fence was removed,



Pic. 43 Protests against the construction of a church on the site of a public garden in Ekaterinburg. City activists demolish a construction fence.

and on May 26, 2019, representatives of the St. Catherine's Foundation held a cleanup on the site of the planned construction site: they leveled the ground and planted grass.

According to this case study, it can be concluded that the city is no longer old, but not yet mature, the same as Almaty. Initially, the city authorities did everything according to the "old" method. Without taking into account the opinions of local residents, trying to do according to the Soviet authoritarian approach. Local authorities admitted that mistakes were made in the selection of the site and the opinions of residents were not taken into account. The illustration below shows the location of religious temples in the vicinity of the park. There are 3 temples within walking distance of 20 minutes, and the construction on the site of

the park was really not an entirely appropriate idea. There are not so many access to water in the city center; this park was one of the main ones. Therefore, many residents who did not even live nearby were worried and came out to protest. The authorities of Ekaterinburg agreed to conduct a survey of the townspeople and suspended construction work. However, this was done after a "direct" instruction from above from the head of the country. There is some dependence on higher authorities; independence in decision-making is limited. But ordinary residents of the city were able to take the initiative and loudly express their discontent. The society begins to «mature», taking part in the decision-making processes about the urban structure and development, taking initiative and responsibility into their own hands. And together with the society, the city grows up too.



Map # 4.4 Map of Ekaterinburg. Place of urban conflict (light green) and location of temples (blue) nearby  
Source: Elaboration by the author

## *Minsk case study*

Minsk is the capital of Belarus, the largest transport hub, political, economic, cultural and scientific center of the country. The city is home to just over 2 million people. The share of the gross regional product (GRP) of the city in the republican gross domestic product (GDP) is 23.7%. Minsk is the largest industrial city in the country, divided into 9 urban districts. The city is located near the geographical center of the country. Large industrial enterprises continue to operate within the city, and the number of cars is constantly growing. However, large areas of Minsk are reserved for green spaces and parks. Independence Avenue, which crosses Minsk from south-west to north-east, is not only one of the main transport routes of the capital, but also a monument of urban planning of the Soviet era, which is of architectural value both for the city and for the republic. In architectural terms, the most valuable is the central part of the avenue, which was built in the 1940s-1960s. The city not only preserves and takes care of the old historic buildings and streets, but also preserves the old approaches to city governance.

The city has a developed IT industry. The Hi-Tech Park, established in 2005, is rightfully

considered the leading IT cluster in Central and Eastern Europe. In 2019, Belarus took 55th place out of 100 countries in the StartupBlink startup ecosystems rating. Brands such as Maps.me, Viber, MSQRD, Flo, PandaDoc, Kino-mo were born here. The Belarusian market is too small, so most of the young projects are initially aimed at competing in the international arena. Thus, Belarusian startups from Minsk attract foreign investments. During the heyday of the IT industry, the Belarusian authorities adhered to the principle of non-interference (Moroz, L., Skibitskaya, Y., & Belovolchenko, A., 2020).

The city of Minsk, because of the president and the entire system of power, which does not even want to try to change since the times of the USSR, is experiencing old age. Kazakhstan and Belarus are authoritarian countries, but unlike Kazakhstan, where the situation is going for the better, since the former President Nazarbayev, who was in power for many years, himself decided to formally resign, Belarus continues to remain under the rule of the same person. The authoritarianism of Alexander Lukashenko rests on the deep Sovietness of public consciousness, the weakness of the institutions



Pic. 44 Top view of the city of Minsk. The Independence Avenue.



of young democracy, a state-controlled economy and a successfully found format of relations with Russia. The basis of Lukashenko's ideology is the preservation and development of the best aspects of the Soviet past in his understanding. To reduce threats to the political system, Lukashenko carefully checks the loyalty of bureaucrats, prevents the emergence of alternative centers of power, and severely restricts organized mass protests. Many people called Belarus the most Soviet republic of the USSR itself, it was a kind of industrial hub of the Soviet Union. (Shraibman, 2018).

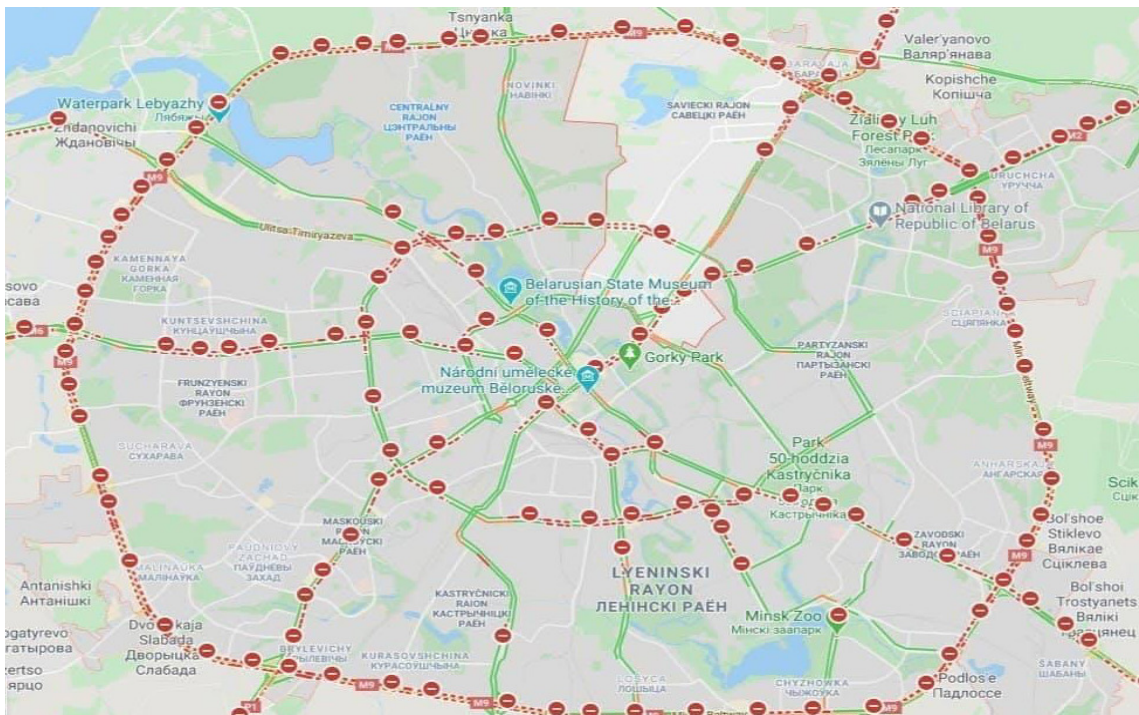
In 2020, Minsk became the center of events related to the presidential elections held in the country on August 9. For many months, numerous marches and protests were held in the capital, caused by the next re-election of Alexander Lukashenko to the post of President of the Republic of Belarus. A whole generation has already grown up in society that never lived in Soviet times; they want to rejuvenate their cities, following world urban trends. The voices of the citizens are pushing Minsk to move to a new stage of the city's life-cycle and look at the world and society from a "young" point of view.

## Minsk protests 2020

In August 2020, in connection with the announcement of the results of the presidential elections and the announcement of the victory of Alexander Lukashenko, mass protests began in Belarus. From that day on, the actions acquired a nationwide scale, and the situation in the country began to be characterized as a political crisis. The protesters accused the authorities of falsifying the election results. The street demonstrations of the first days were brutally dispersed by the police. The largest protests, respectively, took place in the capital of the country. In addition to street demonstrations, large factories in the city of Minsk went on strike. To a greater extent, the protests are connected with the political situation, but nevertheless they directly affect the urban life of citizens. Such a crisis and the accompanying urban protests could probably have occurred both in Russian and Kazakhstani cities, but this is already a geopolitical issue, concerning not only foreign but also domestic policies of countries. During the protests in 2020, martial law and a curfew were imposed in Minsk. People literally fought for their city and for the right to calmly



Pic. 45 Mass protests in Minsk in 2020.



Map # 4.5 Map of closed accesses in Minsk during protests in 2020.

Source: Image archive from Google Maps on ukanews.com

take to the streets. The political crisis has not been eliminated, the country is in a very difficult and incomprehensible situation for the whole world, and in fact there was a “hybrid martial law” in Minsk for six months, when the authorities continue to terrorize people in order to prevent mass actions.

In the early days of mass protests, the city authorities blocked entry and exit from the city. In order to make the scale of the restrictions more clear, they blocked not only the main streets and squares of the city, but also Minsk itself as a whole. People simply found themselves in a «medieval castle» with closed fortress walls, which defends itself from enemies. But a modern city in the context of worldwide globalization is not a medieval city that can be closed without any special consequences. Yes, these were numerous protest actions, but not all people participated in the actions, however, these measures had a negative impact on people who did not participate. In a city with a population of two million, people will always have their own personal plans related to movement, at least within the city, not to mention travel outside the city. These measures to restrict movement further forced people to protest, even those who were neutral about elections and politics in the country. These protests can be classified as political, symbolic and later infrastructural.

The conflict was not resolved, the residents were simply tired of going out and fighting

for their rights and for their city. Power is still retained by the authoritarian ruler and the city is completely under control. IT companies mostly supported the protest against Lukashenko, and their employees took an active part in the demonstrations. Immediately after the elections, the usually apolitical leaders of Belarusian IT companies wrote an open letter condemning the violence and stating that «startups are not born in an atmosphere of fear and hatred.» In such conditions, many leave the country - especially IT people, and this is a big problem for the city when young educated people leave it (Moroz, L., Skibitskaya, Y., & Belovolchenko, A., 2020) 3. The outflow of the young and progressive population will slow down the renewal of the city’s life cycle and, unfortunately, Minsk remains an “old city” due to conservative governance.

If in Kazakhstan the maturation of Almaty is due to the symbiosis of the authorities and residents (the city authorities are more independent from the higher echelons of power, and the city residents are more progressive), in Russian Ekaterinburg, the transition to “maturity” mostly comes from the townspeople, but the local authorities are completely dependent on decisions higher government bodies, then in Minsk a potential transition to «youth» will be possible only thanks to social movements, the struggle for the rights to the city. The authorities still cling to the Soviet past and do not want to follow modern world trends.

## *Emerging symbiosis of citizens and authorities*

In countries where Soviet power has left the greatest mark, even 30 years later, the influence of the past lifestyle is felt. Despite the fact that the cities have gone through a period of old age and entered new stages of urban life, a legacy from the USSR remained in the genetic memory. First of all, this concerns public administration, in the examples of Minsk and Ekaterinburg, and in some cases for Almaty, the local authorities are not so much legislatively dependent on the higher officials who sit in the capital, as they withdraw themselves in case of slightly more complex or non-standard urban issues. Local authorities are more of a mediator than a real power that can take responsibility and resolve complex conflict issues. In Kazakhstan, specifically for Almaty, a law was issued that frees the hands of officials and allows local authorities to resolve some issues on their own, without the participation of the state government. In many post-Soviet countries, including the three above-mentioned, city authorities are still not elected by local residents, but appointed from above. All this is happening behind closed doors and residents do not know until the last who will be their mayor. Usually, officials loyal to the ruling party, regardless of their qualifications and aspirations, become the head of the city. This is a significant limitation of democratic freedoms and the right to choose, which undoubtedly hinders the development of cities. Of course, there are coincidences when the new head of the city is loyal to the authorities in the country and really wants and knows how to change the city for the better. But even in this case, there are restrictions, because not all ideas correspond to the policy of the ruling party. Such cities as Ekaterinburg, Minsk and Almaty have no real independence, and only 30 years later, the first real attempts are made to obtain it.

On the one hand, the city can change through social movements or protests even under authoritarian regimes. All the conflicts described above that arise in the city ultimately lead, if not to an explicit and direct improvement of the city here and now, then at least stop the harmful actions of developers, who are only geared to making a profit, and prevent further deterioration. Residents of the city who stand up for their rights to the city, perhaps even with selfish goals to make something better for themselves, still unconsciously do more

for the city and not only. In big cities, people are more demanding of their surroundings, urban infrastructure, and, accordingly, power. The more improvements residents see, the less they are willing to put up with shortcomings in the city in the future. All other cities of Kazakhstan take Almaty as an example and try to follow in their development. Almaty is the driving force behind the development of all cities in the country. Now the independence of the cities of Kazakhstan in resolving issues of their economic and social development is faced with such a barrier as a high degree of dependence of budgets on transfers from the national budget. Taking into account its status, Almaty does not face such an explicit barrier and therefore can promote some ideas for the development of the city, and not wait for orders or help from above in minor issues and conflicts. Even with the general authoritarian regime in the country, Almaty is more open to residents and their needs. Urbanization requires effective management by national and local authorities, which means that the larger the city, the more advanced, open to dialogue and new ideas the city's government should be. Any city can develop successfully only together with its residents, with their support, taking into account their opinions, their requests, when the institutions of direct democracy and local self-government operate, relations with business and public organizations are well established. Developing and urbanizing of the city itself implicitly pushed people to change their consciousness and attitude towards their environment. As can be seen from the presented conflicts, not only young people were involved and interested in urban conflicts, but also the older generation. Interest in urbanism, responsibility for their city and the struggle for their rights to the city is inherent not only in the young generation, which was born in the 30 years of independence of the country, but also in those who were born under the USSR and were further ready to put up with authoritarian rule.

On the other hand, these are relatively minor changes concerning one specific object or a specific territory, but not affecting the city as a whole, its structure, rhythm and lifestyle. The Soviet legacy left a significant mark, not so much in architecture and city pattern, but in the system of management and decision-making, as well as in public opinion

about urban life and its structure. Significant decisions, such as holding the Universiade or submitting an application to host the Olympic Games, are not made in Almaty itself. All global decisions again take place behind closed doors or on the lobbies of the presidential administration or a particular ministry. In fact, the city is devoid of independence and this is what stops it from entering the tops of global cities in the world.

In fact, in the communist period, all horizontal ties between people were absolutely deliberately destroyed in order to strengthen the vertical of power. At that time, trust in the authorities was greater than that between society. Now, on the contrary, when horizontal ties between the population increase and become stronger, confidence in the vertical system of power decreases. Abrupt transitions from one extreme to another are very dangerous for the city, since under such conditions it is impossible to provide adequate communication and effective work between the authorities and citizens. Both parties understand that they are dependent on each other, but still want to get more benefits for themselves. In urban conflicts, when the authorities need to

directly delve into the problems and desires of local residents, and citizens, on the contrary, understand the entire bureaucratic structure in which officials work, an understanding of the importance of mutually beneficial symbiosis comes. Thanks to conflicts, the interaction between the government and the people improves, precedents are created on which you can rely in the future.

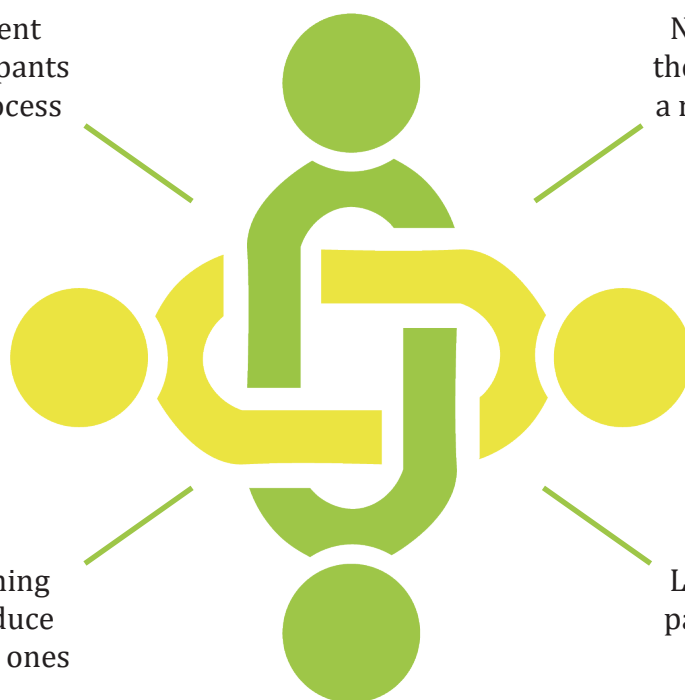
When analyzing urban conflicts in the case study, it became clear that many problems in Almaty are ignored either by the authorities or by the society itself. The authorities ignore or delay the process of solving some problematic issues raised by small groups of activists that do not create a public outcry. And society ignores some of the city's problems, such as the reduction of public transport modes and the constant delay in implementing the promised LRT, due to the lack of highly specialized knowledge and understanding in this topic, or because of the small number of active public organizations advocating the solution of any urban problems. In Almaty, many aspects of city life require public attention, but there are not enough activists who will point the authorities on these issues.

Society and government should be equal participants in decision-making process

Necessity in transition from the Soviet top-down system to a more democratic bottom-up system

Demand to strengthening horizontal ties and reduce dependence on vertical ones

Local authorities are a close part of society, as they live in the same city



Sketch # 4.6. Symbiosis of citizens and authorities  
Source: Elaboration by the author

# CONCLUSION

## WHAT NEED TO ALMATY TO REACH “MATURE”



URITY”



## 5. CONCLUSION

Almaty is a large city with great potential to enter the top 100 global cities in the world according to various ratings. The Soviet past, especially the system of public administration and the crisis that followed after the collapse of the Union in all spheres of activity, hindered the development of the city and its transition to the status of a mature one due to a not entirely correct understanding of the modern city. For 30 years now, the post-Soviet countries gained independence and open access to the world community, but many cities in different republics, including Almaty, have not yet been able to find their own path of development and discern their new urban identity. All cities are unique, but the Soviet period tried to tune and adapt all its cities to one universal Soviet ideology, therefore, in the post-Soviet space, regardless of the country, urban development problems are typical. Right now, at the stage of globalization, it is vital for any post-Soviet city to return to the basics - to its local identity, rethink the Soviet period, adjust basic meanings, remember its values and build new goals through urban dialogue. These are not only concerns of the government and local authorities, but also of the residents of the city. The post-Soviet period is characterized by the fact that collective attention is very dispersed: someone looks to the future, someone looks to the past, but very few people see the present, so it is difficult for townspeople to find like-minded people and get together as a whole society. Yes, now urban conflicts can be settled in favor of the townspeople thanks to their performance and the manifestation of an active civic position, but this turns out only locally and cannot be applied to the entire city. The scale of the problems that people raise and that the authorities fix is very small. In the post-Soviet space, not all European or American approaches to city management work, because they imply a different cultural background and innate responsibility for common urban property. The current generation of residents in Almaty are just beginning to take responsibility for their house, neighbourhood, city, for their taxes (their payment and supervision of their distribution by the authorities).

During this work, it was discovered that the local city authorities had a strong influence from the Soviet way of life and work style, because modern officials began their careers under the USSR, or

lived their youth and studied under that system. The management system, the style of communication with citizens and the priorities for implementing the plan on paper rather than in practice, all these are echoes of the Soviet legacy of the last decade. Then, almost all cities were in stagnation, this mood and approach to work was entrenched among the bulk of officials. To get rid of the negative consequences of the outdated system, it is necessary to radically change the approach to the selection of city leaders, to give the right to choose the mayor to local citizens, since they know better who will be more useful to them. Kazakhstan has been living without socialism for 30 years already, and during these years there have been talks from the authorities that the country is looking for its own way to democracy. So why, in 30 years, not dare to at least partially give power in the city to its inhabitants, giving them the opportunity to choose and further control those whom they have chosen?

The city administration of any city in the world needs to have a clear understanding of the current condition of their city. It is not only about the physical condition, that is, infrastructure development and integrity, but also about the mental condition of the city. The better the administration and residents understand at what stage of development the city is, the more effectively decisions will be made on certain issues. The age model of the city, described at the beginning of this work, can give an average understanding at what "age" the city is and what it needs for further development or maintaining the existing growth rates and preventing stagnation. An incorrect and biased assessment of the state of affairs in the city can aggravate the problems and conflicts that have arisen or create new ones. The youth period at first is good and even brings its positive moments, but its prolonged delay can lead to a further postponement in the stage of maturity, which in turn can slow down development in the rapidly changing worldwide competition between cities.

Unconsciously, mature and large cities are in one way or another responsible not only for themselves and the well-being of their residents, but also responsible for the surrounding areas, and in some cases for more distant cities that are not directly related to them. Almaty is the largest metropolis in

the country, many other cities of Kazakhstan strive to be equal to it. If Almaty does not have clearly set goals or visions of the city for the coming decades, then what can we say about smaller and less developed cities. Today Almaty has only a working version of a strategic development plan with a vision of the future of the city for decades to come, which has been submitted for discussion with the public and experts. Therefore, Almaty is not yet a fully mature and independent city, since it does not have a vision of where to strive, what the city needs and what ways this can be achieved. After the global shock from the collapse of the Soviet Union, many cities are developing by inertia, but they continue the old course, simply increasing the quantity of goods, but not their quality. For a more comfortable life in post-Soviet cities, especially in Kazakhstan, it is necessary to change old beliefs and outlook on urban planning, relying on many years of international experience in this area. For Almaty, the period of stagnation and old age has long passed along with the collapse of the USSR, and today there are no excuses for rocking and staying in urban youth for a long time. Of course, there are internal problems in the country that hinder the development of cities, but despite this, the time has come for Almaty to become a mature city and for this the country has all the prerequisites and resources. There are educated young professionals who studied abroad, adopting the experience of other countries in such important areas of life for the city as architecture, construction, urban planning, public administration, sociology, IT, etc., and these people want to live and work in the former capital, as well as in the current one. There is a large layer of active citizens in Almaty who care about their house, yard, neighbourhood or city as a whole with all their hearts. The city is quite comfortable for doing business, so entrepreneurship, small and medium-sized businesses compete in providing high-level jobs with budgetary or state organizations. This segment of the population of young, educated, entrepreneurial and active citizens will be the basis for transformations and future changes in the city.

The economy for the most part has moved from a planned to a market one, the standard of living and the level of wages in Almaty are noticeably higher than in other cities of Kazakhstan, but still not high enough. The country's economy is based on the export of hydrocarbons. The service sector

does not make up such a large percentage of the country's GDP, so the wage ceiling is low and dependent on the export of raw materials. One city on the domestic market cannot change the economic policy of the entire country, even with such a great tourism potential and a base for a service economy like Almaty. Therefore, for greater self-development, the city needs to enter the world market, providing finished products of intellectual work, and not exporting mineral raw materials. Almaty with its universities has great potential for the development of human capital. With the transition of the world to online, cities need to care more about comfort and convenience, because people can live remotely from the workplace. The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that people can work for foreign companies or provide their services online without having to be physically in a specific location. In the current environment, cities need more for socialization and recreation, therefore, in order for the educated and creative stratum of the population to choose Almaty as their place of residence, working all over the world online, but bringing taxes to this city, it is necessary to create conditions for life. Further, we can draw conclusions about what Almaty needs to become a mature city, what steps to take, what to strive for, and what, on the contrary, to avoid.

### **Direct elections - the way to independence**

No matter how attractive the idea that global cities are conducting their own independent policies and influencing world culture, without direct elections of the mayor, this is almost impossible to achieve. It is always worth keeping in mind in what country and in what political situation the city exists. You cannot just introduce direct local elections if there is no (or at least there is a lot of doubt about their reliability and openness) fair elections at the federal or state level. Although Almaty is the most advanced city in Kazakhstan, with ambitions to become more competitive outside of its country, Kazakhstan is still an autocratic state with explicit references to the Soviet top-down system of government.

For Almaty, in order to become a truly mature city, it is vitally important to introduce direct elections of the mayor. In post-Soviet countries, such practices are still present not everywhere. In Ekaterinburg, until 2018, there were direct elections for the head of the city, but already in 2019 they were replaced



by the procedure for election as deputies of the city council on the basis of candidates who passed a competitive selection. In this regard, there has been a regression. In Minsk, the situation with the elections is much worse. Lukashenka single-handedly swapped the positions of the mayor of Minsk and the deputy prime minister during the protests in 2020. Even indirect elections were out of the question. In Kazakhstan, too, the heads of cities of republican significance, including Almaty, are still appointed by the president on the proposal of the prime minister of Kazakhstan. With the formal departure of Nazarbayev from governing the country, the new president introduced direct elections for akims in rural districts and small villages. This is the first step in approbation of this system for electing city governors. This is a fundamental moment of political reform. In 2024, citizens will have the opportunity, at least in a pilot mode, to elect district akims. If this reform receives a positive response and brings benefits to the development of the regions, then it is possible that direct elections of large cities can take place in Kazakhstan in the future. Direct, and most importantly, fair and free, elections are needed to gain independence from higher authorities. In addition, for the city to be truly independent from state policy, elections should be with as few limits as possible, such as work experience in government agencies, party membership or age. If independent candidates who know the city's problems and have the means and opportunities to find solutions to these problems can run for elections, the city will receive much more than if people who have already worked in the state system came. For Kazakhstan, such independent elections also mean a change in the approach to governance, a transition from the Soviet top-down system to a more democratic bottom-up system. For Kazakhstan, such independent elections also mean a change in the approach to governance, a transition from the Soviet top-down system to a more democratic bottom-up system.

The mayoral election loses its interest over time, but it does not cease to be an important part of city life. Despite the drop in the turnout at the polling stations of local elections in American cities, for example, more than 90% of voters came to the mayoral elections of New York in 1953, and in 2017 only 21.7%, this practice remains and many political scientists and researchers write about the importance of local elections, urging people to vote

as well as for federal elections. The status quo in local elections points to an area for improvement because democracy works best when people's voices are heard. Residents of cities should devote more time and attention to local elections, as this directly affects their daily life more than elections to the federal council (Gross M., 2020).

### **City development strategy**

Any large city needs a long-term development strategy. A strategy that provides a vision of the future for citizens and serves as the foundation for priority development directions for society, business, science, culture, ecology, architecture, urban management, etc. Almaty needs to develop and approve its comprehensive city development plan for several decades ahead. At the moment there is only a working draft «Development Strategy of Almaty until 2050», but it is very incomplete, chaotic and without clear and understandable steps to achieve the set goals. Half of the current draft Strategy is an analysis of the current situation of development of Almaty, the data that needs to be updated every year. The fact of open discussion by the city administration of the draft Strategy with citizens, experts, and city communities is positive. After the presentation of the draft strategy, public meetings were held to clarify ideas, i.e. the city administration is open to suggestions and changes. However, for more productive work, it is necessary to improve communication between the city community and the administration in the process of preparing the Strategy and similar documents by adopting a schedule for public discussions, consultations with stakeholders, groups and authors.

Today, the common task is for experts, representatives of urban communities, administrations of the city akimat, to jointly fill the draft Strategy and subsequent documents within its framework with specific proposals and solutions. Both in terms of priorities and implementation mechanisms, and in terms of specifying measures and indicators of attainability. It is necessary to prescribe in more detail both the strategic goals and the measures for their implementation, and it is also necessary to supplement the draft Strategy with indicators that will be monitored, as well as introduce the stages of their achievement and the assessment of the resources required for this. In the prospective analysis, in addition to those that

exist, one should take into account those risks that are not considered - prospective risks: external crises, resource scarcity, climate change, regional competition, conflicts and others.

A modern mature city is a mobile, accessible, compact and, most importantly, a diverse city. In the subsequent revised version of the city's strategy, Almaty needs to support global trends in urban development and focus on the above criteria. Diversity, as the main criterion for progress, should be present in everything. In mobility, this is expressed by the availability of variability of different modes of movement in the city, i.e. development of various types of public transport. From simple buses to BRT or subway and light rail lines. Bicycles are a new form of public transport, bike rental is almost like car sharing and should not be viewed in isolation as an alternative to car or public transport. Bicycle rental serves its purpose well as an addition to mobility and is an undeniable physical change in the city's appearance (Sadik-Khan J., & Solomonow S. 2017). With the introduction of bicycles into the system of urban traffic, the expansion of the network of bike paths, the installation of bike rental stations and their parking, not only mobility in the city improves, but also accessibility. Problems of accessibility of urban infrastructure, information, services, education and employment for people are becoming a factor in the reproduction of social inequality and an obstacle on the way to an independent life. To prevent stagnation, cities need to focus on accessibility. Even when expanding the boundaries of the city of Almaty, with good intentions, such as providing people living in the outskirts with access to city services (schools, hospitals, etc.), it is necessary to remember about compactness. Without compactness, there will be no efficiency and urban productivity in the outskirts.

In addition, it is extremely important to select analogous cities for comparison and competition of ideas with them. At the moment, the project presents the strategies of Melbourne and Stockholm, but more for informational purposes, to explain what the City Strategy in general is, and not to draw specific analogies and comparative analysis. In addition to individual city plans or development strategies, there are national plans for the development of all cities in the world. For example, in 2016 the Australian government

developed the "Smart Cities Plan", which outlines development strategies for all Australian cities. An attempt to create a universal plan and implement public policy across cities. It is possible for Kazakhstan to create something similar, since all cities are similar in their structure. However, Almaty and Astana (Nur-Sultan) have gone far ahead in development and for them such a plan will be outdated. If something is created at the level of Almaty standards, then other cities of Kazakhstan will not pull it either from the financial side or from implementation, since there are not enough competent specialists in the field of urban planning in the country. It is possible to take the experience with creating strategic plans from the twin cities as an analogy. After all, such cities have an agreement for mutual promotion of culture, life and commercial ties. Why not use these connections to learn from the experience of creating development strategies. For example, Tel Aviv has a strategic plan with a vision of the city, drawn up in 2017. This is an advanced plan with 4 directions of development with specific policy guidelines and courses of Action. Istanbul, also being a twin city of Almaty, can share the experience of regional and urban planning such as "2014-2023 Istanbul Regional plan".

### **Participation in the global economy**

In today's world, the discussion about trade is usually on a national scale. The World Trade Organization concluded agreements with countries, International Banks Issue loans to countries, various ratings and assessments of stocks or trade balances occur at the country level. Central governments make key decisions regarding trade in the international arena, as they have the main levers of trade policy. The global marketplace and trade links have contributed to the formation of modern nation states. However, historically, there is the fact that cities, not countries, were initially important trading hubs. The necessity and interest of people in trade played a huge role in the creation of cities. The very first and largest network of cities was the caravan road called the Silk Road, which connected the cities of East Asia with the Mediterranean in antiquity and the Middle Ages. Every trade hub on the Silk Road had a specific economic specification: in Chinese cities, silk was primarily sold, hence the name of this path, Indian cities traded spices and textiles, Roman cities exchanged precious metals and products

and wine. To overcome such long distances, nomads were a means of transporting goods between cities, gaining their own benefits. With the increase in the flow of trade routes, important transit cities such as Baghdad, Samarkand and Istanbul acquired economic strength and cultural significance. The same trade was the engine of the flourishing of the Italian city-states such as Genoa, Venice and Pisa. Cities in the global economy have always played a special role, and this does not depend on the transition of a primitive economy such as farming and mining to manufacturing and then to a service-based economy.

An economy, regardless of its level: national, regional and local, such as a city, can be improved in one of two main ways. The first way is rather commonplace, the economy can grow due to the amount of resources used. It can be one of three main categories of resources: land, labor, and capital. The first way is rather commonplace, the economy can grow due to the amount of resources used. It can be one of three main categories of resources: land, labor, and capital. Initially, it can consider the available unused resources within the city's jurisdiction. City (or nation) could also attract a new labor force or financial capital from outside its borders. The migration or foreign direct investment usually serves to boost its total economic output. The second way to grow the economy is, with the same inputs and the amount of resources, to increase the volume of output, in other words, to increase productivity. This can be obtained through innovation, that is, the development of new ideas, products, services, technologies, work organization, and so on. But for the introduction and implementation of innovations, the city needs high-quality educated human capital. (Berube A., & Pa J. 2012)

Almaty is quite a wealthy city at the national level. However, unfortunately, the city cannot keep all generated financial resources, because it pays taxes to the republican budget and helps other cities of the country with subsidies. But the city can improve this indicator by transferring experience or ideas to other cities, because if other cities of Kazakhstan are able to support themselves, then Almaty will be able to keep all its money for itself. Since the city has relative financial independence, generating 20% of the country's GDP is a large indicator, it is necessary to aim at deeper integration into the world economy.

## **Active citizenship**

Citizens still need to change their consciousness and worldview to the city in which they live. To better understand the concept of citizenship, that is, to show more initiative on any urban issues, and not wait for orders or decisions from above. Even in conflict situations, residents of Almaty generally oppose one solution or another, but do not offer constructive ideas in response. In order for the townspeople to learn to be not indifferent and proactive to the city, to feel themselves an important part of the city, to become imbued with the idea of active citizenship, first of all, it is necessary to increase public participation in decision-making in the city. This process is vital and beneficial not only for solving one specific case (building a vacant lot, redesigning a street, creating a park, etc.), but also for the democratization of society. This approach has two valuable functions: it is the accumulation of knowledge and skills of citizens to make the right and most satisfying decision, as well as to emphasize the importance of the role of society in the life of the city. Solutions that help to effectively achieve economic and social improvement can be found if as many people as possible are involved in them and if the discussion is open. This will provide an opportunity to consider new ideas and approaches.

In theory, engaging residents in a dialogue sounds very attractive; in fact, it is not so easy to organize this interaction. A number of very difficult questions arise: at what stage of the project should the public be called, how to conduct a dialogue and reach mutual understanding, to be able to isolate from a multitude of really worthwhile and feasible. Not so long ago, the Ministry of Construction of Russia and the Agency for Strategic Initiatives, together with developers from Russian regions, developed «Standards for Citizens Involvement in Addressing Issues of Urban Environment Development». The document explains at what stages of design it is worth contacting the public and how to collect objective data on the needs of citizens. The experience of involving residents in the development of territories in the post-Soviet space is still very modest, so such documents will be an excellent guide in this area. Almaty is also able to undertake the development of such a practical guide, at least one can learn from the experience of Russian colleagues, since the society



### **Direct elections - the way to independence**

Citizens must decide for themselves who will run their city. Thus, citizens take responsibility for their choices, through fair and open elections.



### **City development strategy**

Every large and mature city must have a vision for the future of the city. It is important to create a city strategy with guidelines and goals.



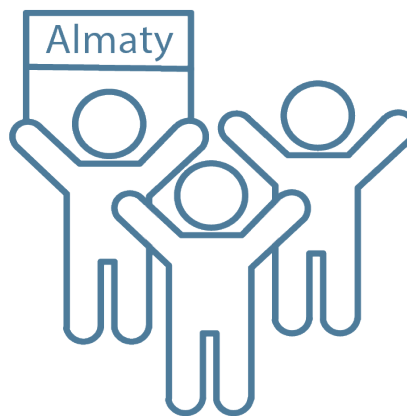
### **Participation in the global economy**

Active involvement in international trade at the city level can enhance financial independence from the state and attractiveness in the world.



### **Mutualistic symbiosis of government and society**

To become a mature city, Almaty needs to turn the symbiosis of residents and local authorities into long-term mutually beneficial interaction.



### **Active citizenship**

This process is vital and beneficial not only for solving one specific case, but also for the democratization of society.

is very similar due to the common Soviet past.

Today, a number of methods are used in the world to involve residents in work on changing the urban environment: questionnaires, online and offline polls, presentations, folk design, when residents, together with architects, test to «try on» different landscaping options for the territory. This trend will definitely develop in the coming years. In Moscow, for example, there is already an application «Active Citizen», with the help of which any resident of the city can express their wishes for changing the urban environment, take part in discussions. Moscow, as one of the global and mature cities, has understood that society is important in decision-making. Almaty is just at the beginning of the path to maturity and the integration of society into decision-making is the right way for growth. When a resident is involved in the planning process, he, firstly, feels heard, secondly, he can get a truly comfortable urban environment, and thirdly, he begins to take care of the space around him.

Earlier in chapter 4, the question was raised about the need to increase civic activists to address emerging problems. There are 2 solutions in Almaty on how citizens need to cooperate so that their issue is resolved. First, public outcry always motivates the authorities to respond more quickly to a problematic situation or urban conflicts, so it is necessary to attract more supporters and expand any organization (eco-activists, cyclists or active citizens of the neighborhood). The more people there will be in this movement, the more they write about it in the social media, the more likely it is to get the desired result from the local authorities. Secondly, it is necessary to expand the horizons of the problems covered, because now people care and raise questions when it comes to them personally, and the citywide problems remain in limbo. We need more communities of active citizens who will raise the discussion about various problems, and not just the main ones.

### **Mutualistic symbiosis of government and society**

Throughout this entire work, it became obvious that under any regime, be it democratic, flawed democratic, hybrid or authoritarian, and with any level of understanding and acceptance of citizens of the idea of the right to a city or citizenship, there

are always at least two main forces in a city. There is government and society: these two forces always create a symbiosis. Not just a collaboration where two different parties work together to achieve common goals by sharing knowledge, learning and building consensus. As a rule, collaboration or cooperation requires a governing body, someone in charge who will ultimately decide whether the result is achieved or not. The city should have exactly symbiosis, because the decisions of one side or the other affect their daily lives every day. People working in government do not live in a vacuum, and all the decisions they make concern them too. Leaving the building of the local mayor's office or non-working days, officials are in very close contact with citizens, entering the community. In symbiosis, the sides have equal value, even if one side works or gives more, the existence of both sides without each other is impossible. When making decisions or arising urban disputes, these two parties can conflict with each other, counteract, collaborate or use the other party for their own profit. It directly depends on the age of the city, the more mature the city is, the more productive and beneficial the symbiosis of government and society will be for both sides. This kind of mutualism, where each side has a net benefit, is the most common type of interaction in nature, which is comparable to the most common age of cities in the world - maturity.

With the youth of the city, even during the search for its identity, this symbiosis will be commensalistic, when one party gains benefits while other neither benefit nor are harmed. Who benefits from such a symbiosis, the government or society is already an individual question of each city. That being the case, it can be assumed that in old cities the local government is a parasite, which lives off citizens, the host of the city, causing it some harm and giving nothing in return.

To become a truly mature city, Almaty needs to turn the symbiosis of residents and local authorities into long-term mutually beneficial interaction. Steps are being taken in the city for joint work and easy access between residents and representatives of government agencies, but the interests of all residents are not always taken into account and the problems that have arisen are solved in their favor. This happens due to the inconsistency of local authorities, even with the reorganization of the city administration, there are many issues that may be in the competence of

different departments. In some cases, for political reasons and dependence in an authoritarian regime on higher authorities, it is very difficult to find a compromise on certain issues. Therefore, until now, the mayor of the city is appointed from above, and not chosen by residents, because most likely people would choose a local and more loyal person to the people than an official from a foreign region or from the capital. To obtain the correct mutualistic symbiosis, Almaty needs not only to organize elections for the head of the city, but also to involve as many residents as possible in decision-making in the life of the city, to increase interest in what is happening, and not just make any decisions from above as the only correct and uncontested. Today, such a symbiosis has not yet been achieved due to the lack of confidence in local authorities. In most cases, the statements of the authorities are perceived as knowingly false, even if in fact it is not, especially when it comes to finance. Due to the fact that immediately after the collapse of corruption took a dominant role in the upper echelons of power, over the 30 years of independence, the country was unable to defeat it or at least significantly reduce its level. According to Transparency International - the global coalition against corruption - in corruption perceptions index 2020 Kazakhstan takes 94th position out of 180 countries and 17% of public service users paid a bribe in the previous 12 months (Transparency International, 2021). These figures indicate that corruption still plays a role in the life of Kazakhstanis and creates mutual distrust between the state and the population. As mentioned earlier, it is necessary to take into account in what context (political and social) the city is located, and for the effective and sustainable functioning of the city, it is necessary to improve the situation in the country. Improvement in the country in terms of the perception of corruption and increasing trust between the authorities and the population will begin in large cities like Astana (Nur-Sultan) and Almaty. Almaty, with its advancement and desire to develop the city as a place of attraction and formation of a democratic society, can become the locomotive of these changes throughout the country.

If all the above points are fulfilled, Almaty will be able to become more mature, full-blooded, stable, and most importantly attractive for the life of all types of people with different worldviews, confessions, cultures and interests. This is why it

is necessary to be a mature city, not for financial development and attracting capital, not for expansion for the sake of expansion, but for a comfortable and safe life for people in cities. After reaching all these points, the main thing in Almaty is not to lose vigilance and try to stay in maturity for as long a period as possible.

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