



CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF MODERN CITIES

The beginning of the 21st century was marked by changes in the approaches and assessment of not only the natural environment but also the cultural landscape. The concept of a cultural landscape refers to a territory that has been transformed by man as a result of the development of human civilization.

Landscape originally meant an artifact associated with the cultural process and cultural values, that's why it is considered as a kind of "document" of human history. In a sense, the cultural landscape of a modern city not only reflects the ordinary daily life of its population but also reveals the history and even the identity of the local community. For example, the Ascension Cathedral, the second tallest wooden building in the world located in the center of Almaty, which withstood the strongest earthquake of January 1911, reminds the history of the city during the spread of Tsarist Russia's military settlements in Kazakhstan in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The building of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Kazakhstan with an adjacent area and fountains and the monument to scholar and explorer Shoqan Walikhanov are an excellent example of the architecture of the Soviet period, with its monumentality, stability, and confidence in the future of communism builders.

Apple orchards on the slopes of the mountains around Almaty are a special history of the harmony of man and nature, love and beauty, which created the unique aura of the city and is preserved in the memory of many generations, giving rise to a keen sense of nostalgia for places and times that are no longer there.

Thus, the formation of the landscape concept is influenced by many factors – geography, sociology, urbanism, architecture, ecology, but at the same time historical and political changes, territoriality, ethnic and religious diversity. The modern urban landscape contributes to economic activity and job creation in cities, and also plays a prominent role in promoting public interests in culture, ecology and social problems.

However, in many countries of the world, and Kazakhstan is no exception, nowadays political and economic factors are the main elements of influence on the landscape transformation. Consumption and globalization processes transform the urban landscape so that it becomes more technological, economical, and profit-oriented. This is expected to benefit citizens,

the environment, government budgeting, and urban design implementation plans. For example, the Smart City concept involves the use of big data for urban design and planning. The rapidly expanding model of shopping and entertainment centers rewrites the urban landscape, dominating it as a symbol of modernity. Moreover, when interviewing young people, in particular, who had recently arrived from the countryside to the city, about 80% mentioned not the theaters or museums, but the MEGA malls as the main symbol of urban culture and modernity.

Experts believe that cultural landscapes in many countries of the world are subject to a number of negative impacts, including:

- urban sprawl and the demolition of historical sites;
- the increase in mass commercial tourism and the so-called tourist colonization in areas that until recently were free from tourism;
- the reduced importance of the legal protection of territories of environmental value, and turning such areas into zones available for commercial use;
- the construction of large shopping complexes;
- the creation of large industrial facilities in or near cities;
- the expansion of damaged areas (after mining or post-industrial zones) and the so-called "excluded space" (especially in poorer countries);
- the change of traditional forms of land management.

The European Landscape Convention, which was adopted on October 20, 2000, in Florence, demonstrates the special role of landscape in the social sphere and aims at the protection, management, landscape planning, and cooperation in Europe in this field. The convention defines the landscape as a major component of the European natural and cultural heritage, which contributes to human well-being and the strengthening of the European identity, and also claims that it is an important part of the quality of life of people throughout the world. In Kazakhstan, the protection of cultural and historical sites is governed by the Law on Culture, adopted in the new edition of 2006, and the Law on the Protection and Use of Objects of Historical and Cultural Heritage of 1992, which currently operates with certain changes.

Some other legal acts aimed at the preservation, use, and restoration of the cultural

heritage of Kazakhstan are developed and adopted, which include the laws "On Architectural, Urban Planning and Construction Activities in the Republic of Kazakhstan" (2001) and "On Specially Protected Natural Areas" (2006). In April 1994, Kazakhstan acceded to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and the law of December 21, 2011, ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

However, the process of "consuming" a cultural landscape is becoming so widespread that it is not controlled and not regulated, so it is difficult to predict exactly its consequences. It is obvious that, like the environment, the landscape must be considered as a strategic resource. Cities should take care of its preservation just as they are concerned about saving water or energy. This requires a reassessment of thinking about the landscape, just as we did about nature. The key to success can be the right proportions between "growth" and "development".

And we must begin again with education. Apparently, it is necessary to introduce into the school curriculum content that will teach aesthetics and care for the beauty of landscapes, combined with the principles of rational use. The cultural landscape combines the state of the urban environment and the state of society. It is a common good and belongs to all citizens.

It also imposes special responsibility on local politicians and administrators. The work on the landscape (especially in cities and small towns) is a manifestation of identity and an emphasized specificity of places. The contribution of local communities and the public sector in improving the quality of space is necessary to increase the comfort and quality of life of residents, as well as increase the tourist attractiveness. The process of learning and social participation in the landscape, although gradually progressing, is still far from sufficient.

Success in spatial planning and landscape management as a way of a thoughtful, organized and effective system of actions aimed at protecting and enhancing landscape values is of strategic importance. This is evidenced by the Law "On the National Security of the Republic of Kazakhstan", adopted in 2012, which among the main threats to national security mentions the loss of the cultural and spiritual heritage of the people of Kazakhstan.

Politics, Foreign Affairs, and Security

- During his official visit to Turkey, Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan met with President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss the entire spectrum of bilateral relations and issues of regional and international importance. Among other things, the parties agreed to support a sustainable peace process in Afghanistan with participation of all segments of the Afghan society.
- India and Pakistan exchanged simultaneously through diplomatic channels the lists of their nuclear installations and facilities covered under the agreement on the prohibition of attacks against such objects signed between the two countries in December 1988. Since January 1992, this is the 28th consecutive exchange of such lists between New Delhi and Islamabad.
- Representative of Uzbekistan Vladimir Norov took office as the Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for 2019-2021 in accordance with the decision of the SCO heads of state at the Qingdao summit in June 2018. Norov previously worked as the director of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of Uzbekistan and served as the country's foreign minister in 2006-2010.
- Turkmenistan will chair the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 2019, despite its status of an associate member. The priority objectives of Ashgabat which already chaired the CIS in 2012 are to strengthen trust among the member states, support stability and security, strengthen political and diplomatic interaction, increase cooperation with international organizations, and create conditions for enhancing trade and economic cooperation.
- The 2019 presidential election campaign that will last for 90 days started in Ukraine. The registration of nominated candidates by the Central Election Commission will end on February 3, and the voting is scheduled for March 31. If none of the candidates secures more than 50% of the ballot, the second round of the election will be held on April 21.
- At a two-day ceremony in Istanbul, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople signed a tomos of autocephaly for the newly-established Orthodox Church of Ukraine and presented it to Metropolitan of Kiev and all Ukraine Epifaniy. The historic document granting independence to the Ukrainian Orthodox community ends more than 330 years of Russia's religious control in Ukraine.
- According to Iranian Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi, Iran and Russia plan to hold a joint naval exercise in the Caspian Sea in the near future. The scenario will include relief and rescue, tactical, and anti-piracy activities. The two countries that oppose the military presence of any non-littoral state in the sea conducted several joint drills before, including in 2015 and 2017.

Economy, Finance, and Energy

- In 2018, inflation in Kazakhstan reached 5.3%, with prices of food, non-food items and services increasing by 5.1%, 6.4% and 4.5%, respectively. With prices of most products going up, the decrease in prices was only registered for buckwheat, potatoes, onions, and carrots. It is also noteworthy that the price of diesel fuel increased by 29.6%, while gasoline became cheaper by 2.8%.
- The value-added tax (VAT) in Russia increased from 18% to 20% in accordance with a law signed by President Putin in August 2018, the first such raise since 2004. The measure is expected to increase government revenues by about \$10 billion, but experts believe that it will limit the country's economic growth and drive up inflation.
- Uzbekistan's Ministry of Finance published a list of domestically produced food products, the sales turnover of which is exempt from VAT. The exemption applies to wholesale and retail sales of meat (beef, lamb and chicken), live animals (cattle and poultry), fish, rice, sugar, potatoes, onions, eggs, and bakery products.
- According to Uzbek Ambassador to Ukraine Alisher Abdualiyeu, in 2019, Uzbekistan plans to increase exports to Ukraine to \$220 million. Main items of Uzbek exports include textiles, leather, footwear, home appliances, and cars. The parties also intend to resume direct flights between Tashkent and Kiev, thus promoting the mutual tourist exchange.
- According to the Belarusian Ministry of Agriculture and Food, in January-November 2018, agricultural and food products produced in Belarus were exported to 96 countries across the globe, 11 more than in 2017. Russia remains the largest market for Belarusian food exports, accounting for \$3.757 billion worth of exports, or 78.9%. In addition to CIS countries and Ukraine, China becomes a promising market for various Belarusian products.
- According to Kazakhstan's Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev, the country's three largest oil and gas fields (Karachaganak, Kashagan, Tengiz) will be temporarily closed for major repairs in 2019. The shutdown at these fields, which together account for about 75% of the country's oil and gas production, will last from a month to a month and a half. In 2018, Kazakhstan produced 90.3 million tons of oil, including 28.6 million at Tengiz, 13.2 million at Kashagan, and 12.1 million at Karachaganak.
- In 2019, Russia and Turkmenistan plan to launch a ferry service for cargo transportation in the Caspian Sea between the Russian city of Makhachkala and the Turkmen port of Turkmenbashi. At the initial stage, one or two ferries will be used, while in the future, depending on demand, three or four more vessels could be built and added to the service.

Society and Culture

- Healthcare facilities in Georgia started working in an emergency regime as the H1N1 flu strain, commonly known as swine flu, is spreading throughout the country. According to the Georgian Ministry of Health, 640 people are currently being treated with the virus, 39 of whom are in intensive care units, while 10 people are known to have died from the sickness so far.
- Uzbekistan became the last former Soviet state to abolish the so-called exit visa system that required its citizens to obtain a permit for travels to countries that maintain a visa regime with Uzbekistan. In August 2017, President Mirziyoyev signed a relevant decree ordering the abolition of the system and the introduction of new biometric passports as of January 1, 2019.
- Kazakhstan's Ministry of Education and Science abolished extramural academic programs at the country's higher education institutions since this mode of study did not guarantee a high quality of education. It will be replaced by alternatives forms such as part-time education and distance learning, while existing extramural students will be allowed to complete their studies.
- According to the study conducted by Konda Research and Consultancy, some changes have occurred in religious views of the Turkish society in the past 10 years. The share of people defining themselves as "religious" has fallen from 55% to 51%, while the share of those who refer to themselves as "believer" has increased from 31% to 34%.
- China builds the world's largest earthquake observation and alert system to be completed in 2022. Chinese engineers are setting up more than 15,000 sensors all over the country and wiring them into a web. When an earthquake happens, sensors will send electrical pulses to a control center and then to ordinary people's smartphones, giving them time to prepare for an impact.
- President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon signed a decree declaring 2019-2021 the years of development of rural areas, tourism and folk crafts in the country. 2018 was also proclaimed the year of tourism and folk crafts, which resulted in a 2.5-fold increase in the number of tourists, but Rahmon considered one year insufficient for improving Tajikistan's tourism infrastructure.
- In its guide on places to visit in 2019, the Financial Times recommended Tajikistan as one of the eight most attractive destinations, along with Belize, Cambodia, Eritrea, Faroe Islands, Italy, Oman, and Rwanda. According to the description, the country has become more accessible due to the opening of the north-western border with neighboring Uzbekistan.