

ASTANA AND THE PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERNIZATION AND URBANIZATION

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Abstract: This article explores the role of Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, as a center for the preservation and development of cultural heritage in the context of modernization and urbanization. Building upon global scholarship on capital cities and cultural heritage, the study situated Astana within a comparative framework of relocated capitals such as Brasília, Abuja, and Islamabad. It demonstrates how the Kazakhstani experience reflects both continuity with global patterns of symbolic nation-building and unique regional characteristics shaped by post-Soviet transformations. A comprehensive literature review highlights key research on world capitals (Rome, Paris, London, Beijing, Tokyo), emphasizing the integration of heritage into urban development strategies. Specific studies of Astana reveal its dual role as a modern metropolis with futuristic architecture and as a custodian of national traditions and cultural identity. Methodologically, the research combines observation, field expeditions, questionnaires, expert interviews, GIS mapping, and remote sensing techniques, complemented by comparative and content analysis. This integrated approach enabled the development of a cultural and recreational resources map of the Astana agglomeration, highlighting administrative and business districts, cultural and sports facilities, as well as suburban recreational zones within a 20-minute accessibility radius. The findings indicate that cultural heritage and values not only shape urban identity but also significantly contribute to internal and inbound tourism. Heritage-related initiatives expand leisure opportunities for local residents, strengthen social cohesion, and enhance the attractiveness of the capital as a destination. The article concludes that integrating cultural heritage management into urban planning is crucial for sustainable development and for positioning Astana as a vibrant cultural hub in Central Asia.

Keywords: Astana, cultural heritage, urbanization, modernization, tourism, recreation, identity, agglomeration

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INTRODUCTION

The study of cultural heritage within the context of modern capitals is one of the important areas in the field of humanities and social sciences, combining issues such as urban planning, national identity and sustainable development. Capitals typically concentrate political power, economic resources and cultural symbols, serving as hubs for global innovations, while continuously preserving historical memory. It is in capital cities where the contradiction between modernization and the need for preserving cultural traditions is most evident. There is a concept of a global city, a synonym of this term is “alpha city”, or “world city”. The global city is a key element of the global economy. The capitals are in the list of world cities; they might be different in terms of political and economic levels. They are often both regional and capital cities.

The study of the cultural heritage in world capitals is multifaceted and covers various disciplines. Thus, in the European context, the main attention was on the preservation of the historical quarters of Rome and Paris, where cultural heritage is considered a resource for tourism and cultural development (Choay, 2001; Gravari-Barbas, 2019).

London was analysed within the context of the creative economy and cultural industry, where heritage becomes a factor in the global positioning of the city (Evans, 2009). In Asian capitals such as Beijing and Tokyo, cultural heritage is explored through the lens of modernization, urbanization, and national identity (Wu, 2016; Sorensen, 2015; Ilieş et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023; Abdikarimova et al., 2025).

A special area of research focuses on the phenomenon of capital city relocation. Well-known examples include Brasília, relocated from Rio de Janeiro, Abuja, which relocated from Lagos), and Islamabad, which was moved from Karachi. Researchers emphasise that the relocation of the capital city is not only an administrative act, but also a symbolic one that reflects political priorities and shapes a new capital topography of the country (Holston, 1989; Jenkins, 2011; Wolfel, 2002;

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Schatz, 2004). The relocation of the capital cities is accompanied by migration flows, economic changes and the establishment of new cultural centers, which create opportunities to think about national identity. Kazakhstan's experience with creating a new capital city, Astana, is one of the prominent examples of post-Soviet urban planning and cultural policies. The decision to relocate the capital from Almaty to Astana in 1997 held a strategic significance: it reinforced the country's geopolitical priorities and simultaneously enabled the creation of a new symbol of independence (Nazarbaev, 2006). Researchers note that the architectural style of Astana has been shaped as a combination of global urban trends and national cultural symbols (Anacker, 2004; Köppen, 2013). Urban studies of Astana focus on several aspects.

Firstly, the political and geographical dimension shows how relocating the capital city strengthens independence and promotes national consolidation (Schatz, 2004; Wolfel, 2002; Berdenov et al., 2024).

Secondly, the architectural and cultural dimension presents buildings and planning decisions as carriers of national identity and cultural modernization (Köppen, 2013; Fauve, 2015; Ratiu et al., 2025).

Thirdly, the socio-demographic dimension highlights Astana as a space of multiculturalism, migration, and the formation of new cultural institutions (Rees, 2017). Thus, Astana has become both a political and a cultural project. The city performs a dual function, positioning as a modern metropolis with a futuristic appearance and developed infrastructure while simultaneously preserving and transmitting Kazakhstan's cultural heritage. This experience makes Astana a significant case for comparative studies of capital cities, allowing it to be compared with other global examples of capital city relocation and practices of integrating cultural heritage into urbanization.

The proposed study aims to analyze the role of Astana as a hub for the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in the context of modernization and urbanization, taking into account both local specificities and global trends.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Astana, positioned at the geographic center of the Eurasian continent, is located in the southeastern part of the Akmola Region, within northern Central Kazakhstan. Serving as the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan since December 10, 1997 (Alpyspaeva, 2008), Astana plays a pivotal role in the nation's socio-economic and political landscape.

The geographical coordinates of the city are 51° 08' 00 North latitude and 71° 26' 00" East longitude. The study area spans 797.33 km² (Figure 1), with the majority consisting of low mountain slopes and gently rolling plains at elevations ranging from 300 to 500 meters (Romanov, 2019). Administratively, Astana is divided into five districts. The city is an enclave, surrounded by the territory of the Akmola Region, but it is not part of the region administratively. Astana is situated on a steppe plain, with its terrain characterized by low flood-plain terraces. The lowest elevation, at 337 meters above sea level, is found in the flood-plain of the Yesil River.

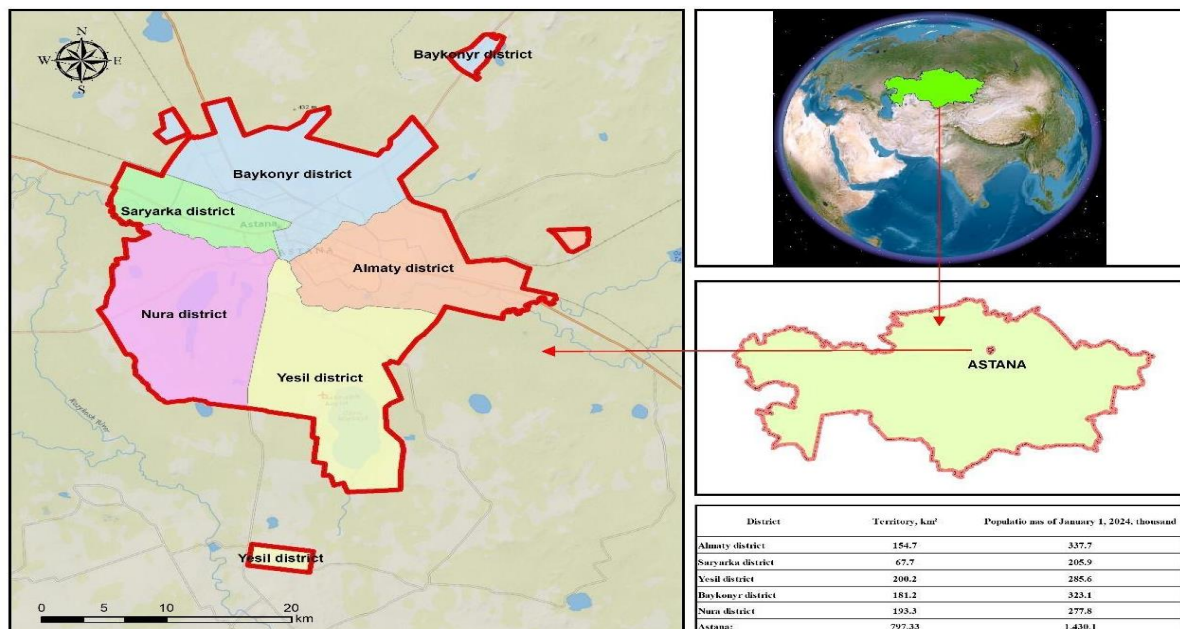


Figure 1. Study area (Source: Own development in the ArcGIS10.8 program)

The methodological basis of research on cultural heritage and urban development in the world's capital cities is interdisciplinary, combining the approaches of geography, urban studies, sociology, cultural studies and information technology. According to the authors of works on urban cultural heritage (Ashworth & Turbridge, 2000; Guzman et al., 2017; Ginting et al., 2024), complex methodologies combining field studies, sociological and remote data collection methods are the most effective. Modern research is based on the idea of multilevel analysis: from spatial characteristics of urban areas to socio-cultural perception of sites and heritage practices.

Observation and qualitative methods. In studies of cultural heritage in cities, observation is traditionally used to document the condition of the sites and the spatial organisation of cultural landscapes. For instance, Holston, 1989

applied anthropological observations to analyse the symbolic space of Brasilia. Fauve (Fauve, 2015) used qualitative observations of architectural practices in Astana, documenting the transformation of urban identity. Questionnaires and interviews. The collection of opinions of residents and experts is widely used in research on urbanisation and heritage.

Evans (Evans, 2009) showed the role of surveys of London residents in shaping the city's cultural strategies. Ress (Ress, 2017) analyzed the perception of multinational identity in Kazakhstan through sociological methods.

Expedition-based research. In the fieldwork across Central Asian cities, expedition-based research methods enable the study of both tangible heritage sites and intangible forms of heritage (traditions, practices). Scientists (Anacker, 2004; Köppen, 2013) combined expedition surveys of architectural sites with cartographic analysis.

Comprehensive methodologies. Geographic information technology (GIS) and remote sensing (RS). Modern studies on the management of cultural heritage in cities actively utilise cartographic methods. Scientists (Guzmán et al., 2017) proposed a GIS data integration model to assess the impact of urbanization on heritage sites. In studies of Chinese megacities, Wu (2016) demonstrated how remote sensing captures changes in the urban fabric and the condition of cultural zones.

The latest research emphasises the integration of methods: a combination of GIS analysis, field surveys and questionnaires provides a more complete picture of the dynamics of heritage in the context of urbanization (Crowley et al., 2022).

The following methods are used in the study:

- Observation and photographic documentation. Systematic field observations of the condition of cultural heritage sites, architectural ensembles and cultural spaces of Astana. Photographic documentation is used to record visual changes.
- Questionnaires and interviews. Conducting surveys among residents and experts (architects, historians, employees of cultural institutions) to identify the perception of cultural heritage and assess its role in shaping the identity of the capital.
- Expedition-based methods. A survey of cultural heritage sites in the capital, with visits to areas where both new and traditional cultural forms are concentrated.
- Geoinformation Analysis and Remote Methods. The use of satellite imagery (Sentinel, Landsat) and GIS mapping enables it to monitor the dynamics of urban development, identify protected areas and analyse the transformation of the landscape (Safarov, 2021).

The Comparative Historical Method. The analysis of the experience of relocating capitals in the world, such as Brasilia, Abuja, Islamabad compared to the case of Kazakhstan.

The research methodology is based on the principles of interdisciplinary and complexity (Figure 2). The combined use of the field, sociological and remote methods allow to evaluate both spatial-physical and sociocultural aspects of heritage. This approach includes a comparative analysis of Astana and other world capitals in the context of migration and modernization. It also covers monitoring the condition of the cultural heritage sites using modern technologies. In addition, the perception of heritage by the population and the expert community is being assessed. The final element is the development of proposals for the preservation of heritage and its integration into the sustainable development strategy of the capital cities.

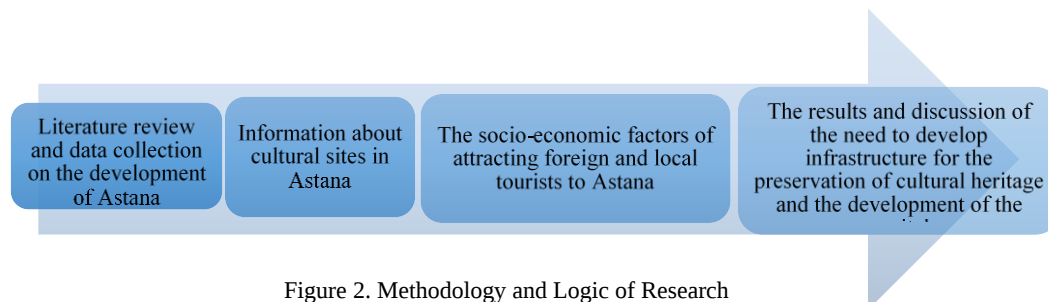


Figure 2. Methodology and Logic of Research

Thus, the research methodology combines traditional (observation, surveys, expeditions) and modern (GIS, remote sensing, integrative analysis) methods, which ensure the reliability and complexity of the results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The image of the new capital of Kazakhstan carries a deep political, spiritual and even philosophical meaning. This is not just a vibrant modern metropolis. It is a symbol of the rebirth of our country, renewal and the acquisition of deep and authentic spirituality by the people of Kazakhstan. Astana has become the city with which the dreams, hopes, and prospects of all generations of Kazakhstani people are connected. The historical and cultural heritage of each nation is its valuable treasure, reflecting its past. This heritage plays an important role as the spiritual wealth of the nation, a foundation of a national identity, and a force that sustains generational continuity.

Historical and cultural heritage includes architectural monuments, archaeological artifacts, works of art, national traditions and customs. It preserves the identity of the nation and plays a special role in shaping national consciousness and cultural identity. Architectural monuments, handicrafts, folklore, and folk art shape the historical identity of a particular nation and consolidate national values in the consciousness of generations.

In addition, historical heritage is the main source of education and science development. Archaeological excavations, ancient records, and historical data provide the foundation to study the past, the worldview, and the social structure of the population. Cultural heritage also plays a significant role in the development of tourism. Historical and cultural sites

are one of the most important factors attracting tourists. Ancient cities, historical monuments and national museums revitalise tourism and contribute to the economic growth of the region. Patriotic education of the younger generation draws upon historical figures and events to promote core values such as resilience, courage, and wisdom.

The main milestones in the history of Astana, which has changed several names and become the capital city of Kazakhstan at the turn of the century, indicate that it has never lost its strategic importance in the life of the country.

The military headquarters of the Kipchak Sultan, which appeared over a thousand years ago in the left-bank valley of the Ishim River, has taken its place in the history of Kazakhstan's new capital city, Astana. The discovery and study of the ruins of the Bozok settlement have made it possible to establish that the history of the city goes back more than a thousand years.

The search for medieval cities that once existed in the basins of the Nura and Ishim Rivers has attracted the attention of both prominent scientists and local historians since the beginning of the 20th century.

However, it was only after the relocation of the capital city from Almaty to Akmola that a systematic archaeological study began in the upper Ishim region. The Bozok settlement was discovered in 1998 by K.A.Akishev, the head and founder of the Ishim Archaeological Expedition (Smayyl, 2006). Centuries have passed; the site was abandoned by its first settlers. The second stage in the history of the settlement dates to the period of the Kipchak Khanate's rise in the steppe (10th-11th centuries). The Kipchaks who settled in the area cleared the moats and built houses made from clay bricks and wood. There were yurts in the center of the courtyard, and their foundations were discovered during excavations (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Excavations of the 19th-century settlement of Bozok (Source: Smayyl, 2006)
(The valley on the left bank of the Yesil River, five kilometres southwest of Astana, the eastern shore of Lake Buzukty)

The third stage of the development of this place began in the Golden Horde Era (13th-14th centuries) and continued until modern times. The ruins of the Bozok settlement acquire the status of a sacred center. One of the first Muslim missionaries was buried here, and his grave became a shrine. At the Bozok settlement, it was discovered the remains of five mausoleums built from mud and fired bricks. A silver coin was found in one of the graves, minted in 1321, and it now is housed in the National Museum, Astana. The appearance of a military headquarters more than a thousand years ago on the site of modern Astana is due to a geostrategic factor - the ability to control the caravan routes of the Steppe Silk Road.

Based on the concentration of mausoleums on its territory, the Bozok settlement was regarded as the spiritual Mecca of the medieval population of the Nur-Ishim region. The history of the steppe military fortress, which was later to become a trading crossroads in the Saryarka steppes, the center of the virgin land and the capital of sovereign Kazakhstan, it began with the administrative reform under the Russian Empire in 1822, Alexander I enacted the Regulation of the Siberian Kirghiz.

In 1830, a detachment led by F.K. Shubin was dispatched to construct the Akmola fortification. On June 18, 1830, the Tsarist administration issued a document, naming the settlement of Akmolinks, and this date can be considered the birth of Kazakhstan's future capital city. The sprawling fortification in 1845 became the Akmolinsk train station.

Akmolinsk, as a transit point connecting Russia with Central Asia, has always been very convenient for the development of commerce, industry and culture. This was the reason for choosing a place for a steppe outpost. Merchants from Siberia, the Ural and Central Asia relocated here. Over time, a small military fortification turned into a small town.

As a result, Akmolinsk became an attractive destination for investment. Gradually the city began to build stone houses, many of which are still preserved in the old center of the capital. On the old Dumskoy Street (later Komsomolskaya Street, even later Zheltoksan Street) was the building of the City Administration, which had an important political, social and economic role in the life of the city. It was the place where all the affairs of Akmolinsk were administered. At this moment, this building has been preserved in its original form, and it is the administrative building of the Russian Dramatic Theatre named after M. Gorky (Figure 4). It can be considered a cultural heritage site of the 19th century.

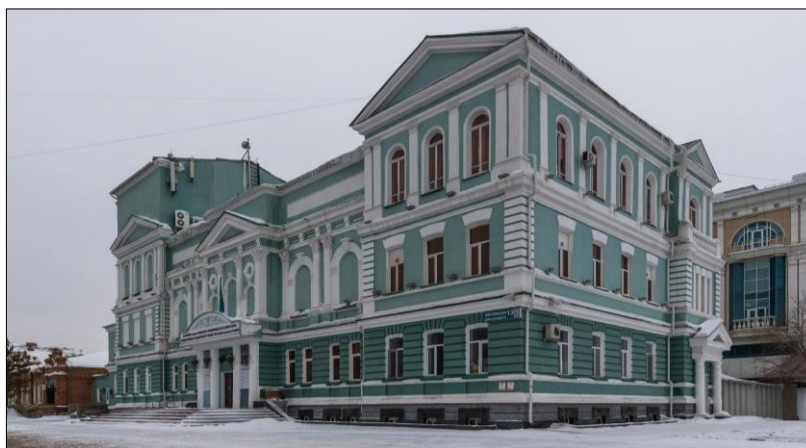


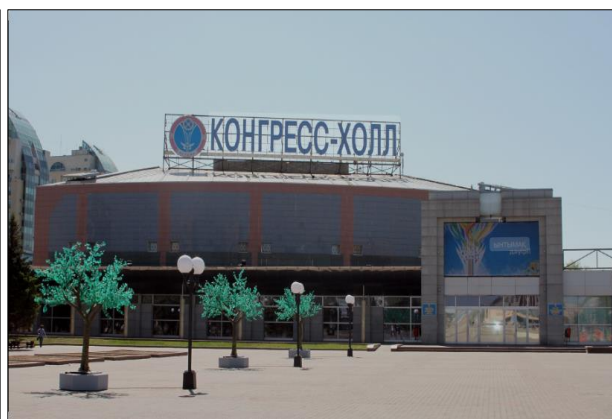
Figure 4. Building of the Russian Dramatic Theatre named after M. Gorky (Source: Author, 12.02.2025)

In October 1939, Akmolinsk was designated as the regional center. This did not occur accidentally: by the beginning of World War II, the city was already fairly large with a widely represented industry. There were six enterprises operating in Akmolinsk, three of them of national significance, and three more of local and cooperative industries.

One of the most significant stages in the history of Akmolinsk began with the decision to develop virgin and fallow lands in the Akmolinsk region in the middle of the 20th century. Due to the development of virgin lands, the Akmolinsk region has become one of the main breadbaskets of the country and a major center of agricultural machinery production. Since 1961, Akmolinsk has been called Tselinograd. In 1963, the Palace of Virgin Lands Workers was opened in Tselinograd, designed by Latvian architects P. Yu. Fogels, O. N. Krauklis, and D. K. Danneberg. In terms of scale and technical equipment, it was considered the second hall in the USSR at that time, after the Kremlin Palace of Congress. The building was renovated in the 21st century; at this time, it is a Congress Hall (Concert Hall) (Figure 5).



a)



b)

Figure 5. The 20th Century Cultural Heritage Building a) Source: <https://pastvu.com/p/1694549>; b) Source: Author

In 1992, Tselinograd was renamed Akmola. On July 6, 1994, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted a decision to relocate the capital from Almaty to Akmola (Regulatory document, 2024).

The city was called Akmolinsk for 130 years, then became Tselinograd, then Akmola, and now it is Astana. Today, Astana is the center of Eurasian space, hosting various meetings on political, economic, and social-cultural issues. It attracts increasing foreign investment and serves as a site for architectural masterpieces, bringing bold projects to life.

The periods of development of Astana city followed a certain sequence and succession. We divide them into 6 stages.

Stage I - 1997-1999. In this period of time, the development of the city was regulated by the project of the General Plan for the development of the capital city, designed by Kazakhstani architects (creative group “Ak Orda”) until 2005. A year later, in 1998, the construction of the Presidential Cultural Center (now the First President’s Museum) on the city’s main avenue, along with the reconstruction of the Yesil River embankment and the bridge.

Stage II - 2000-2001. During this period, the construction of the city and its development were carried out in accordance with the General Plan designed by the project group “Dar-al-Khandasan”, consisting of American, Arab, and European architects, and officially approved by the Government of Kazakhstan. Construction companies from Switzerland, England, the Czech Republic, Türkiye and other foreign countries actively participated in the development of the city’s construction sites. Modern facilities of expressive architectural style (12-25 floor buildings) have been put into operation.

Stage III - 2002-2005. In February 2002, to create a favourable investment climate and attract funds of domestic and foreign companies, the President of Kazakhstan signed a decree “On the establishment of the Free Economic Zone “Astana - New City”. During these years, the “Duman” Aquarium was opened to the public (2003) (Figure 6).

By 2006, the construction of a new administrative center - the Water-green Boulevard and the Baiterek Monument Square (Figure 7), a Circular Square and the buildings of the new residence of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan “Akorda” (Figure 8), the Government Building (Figure 9), the National Library, the residential complexes “Emerald Quarter”, “Northern Lights”, “Triumph of Astana” was completed (Berdenov et al., 2024). This period is marked by the development of cultural heritage at the beginning of the 21st century.

Stage IV-2006-2010. Serious consideration has been paid to improvement, small elements that give a modern architectural appearance to the city. Due to the sharp increase in the city’s population and internal migration, there is an acute lack of social facilities such as schools, kindergartens, and hospitals. In this regard, in 2006-2010, 110 kindergartens, 15 schools, 10 hospitals and outpatient medical institutions and primary healthcare centers were constructed (Berdenov et al., 2024). By the anniversary of the capital (July 6, 2008), 33 large facilities began functioning. Among them the “Kazakh Eli” monument (Figure 10), the Palace of Independence (Figure 11), which have also become symbols of heritage and cultural entertainment for residents and guests of the capital.



Figure 6. Duman



Figure 7. Baiterek



Figure 8. Akorda



Figure 9. The Government Building



Figure 10. The “Kazakh Eli” Monument *



Figure 11. The Palace of Independence **

Stage V- 2011-2017. It pays great attention to the urban development of the capital, seamless cities with suburban areas, and development of transport infrastructure. During these years, there was a demographic boom in Astana. This, in turn, pointed to issues of housing, social facilities, roads and communal infrastructure. Over the years, construction of such

important objects in Astana was completed, such as the mosque “Khazret Sultan” (2012), “Astana Opera” (2013), and National Museum (2014). This period was also marked by preparations for the international exhibition EXPO-2017.

Stage VI - 2017 - present time. Currently, the main points in the search for the ideal city have been determined. First, an ideal city must be suitable for a larger number of people living in it. In addition to this, in the face of growing population density, the city must increase the number and quality of well-planned and designed public areas that are convenient for people, sustainable, safe and full of life.

Nowadays, the city maintains and develops trends in the preservation, restoration and recreation of immovable historical and cultural heritage sites as a major urban-forming factor, actively influencing all aspects of its development.

The development of cultural values and heritage enhances the “uniqueness of the destination”, strengthening the competitiveness of the city or region in the tourism market. For incoming tourism, cultural heritage is the anchor of motivation - monuments, museums, ensembles, festivals and gastronomic practices form the basis of tourist flows. For domestic tourism, heritage becomes a source of regular weekend trips and cultural leisure (McKercher & du Cros, 2005; Loulanski & Loulanski, 2011; Grama, 2022). Modern reviews emphasize that the greatest effect is achieved with integrated management of heritage and tourism: from inventory and protection of sites to interpretation and involvement of local communities (Li et al., 2020). Meanwhile, intangible heritage - rituals, practices, crafts - enhances the sense of authenticity and emotional engagement of visitors (Qiu et al., 2020; Ge et al., 2025). For domestic tourism and leisure activities of local residents, heritage development works through the expansion of cultural infrastructure (museums, cultural centers, creative spaces) and the cultural calendar (festivals, fairs, concerts, etc.). Empirical studies show that a community-oriented destination policy improves the quality of life of residents and their support for tourism (Su et al., 2024).

Residents’ perception of intangible heritage is closely linked to their willingness to participate in contribution and cultural consumption (He et al., 2025). Systematic reviews document the contribution of heritage to the well-being of communities, from feelings of pride and identity to social cohesion and increased opportunities for cultural leisure (Brooks et al., 2023; Liang & Hui, 2016; Muštra et al., 2023). Research in Europe shows that the presence of cultural heritage strengthens the sustainability of regional economies and attracts long-term tourist demand.

However, the rapid growth in attendance carries the risks of “overtourism”- a strain on infrastructure, degradation of facilities and a deterioration in the quality of life of local residents (Associated Press, 2023; TIME, 2023). Therefore, modern research highlights the need to manage tourist flows (restrictions, allocation of visits, paid entry) and reallocating benefits in favor of local communities (McKercher & du Cros, 2005). The key to a sustainable balance is community participation in heritage management and joint planning of tourism infrastructure. Surveys of the local population by city districts, as well as reviews, highlight that involving residents in decision-making strengthens the authenticity of the tourist experience, builds trust, and shapes responsible behavior of guests (Li et al., 2020; Shen et al., 2022). This is especially noticeable in projects related to intangible heritage, where emotional engagement and “experiencing the place” create a steady demand for external tourists and add new leisure formats for the residents themselves (Qiu et al., 2022).

Thus, cultural development works as a double multiplier: it stimulates inbound travel to sites and events and simultaneously increases the density and quality of cultural leisure for residents. Eventually, cultural values and heritage not only enhance tourist attractiveness, but also contribute to the formation of social cohesion, the growth of cultural capital and improvement of the quality of life of the local population. Based on the above-mentioned methods - field observations, questionnaires, expedition-based surveys, as well as the use of geoinformation technologies and remote sensing - we have created a comprehensive map of the business districts of Astana (Figure 12).

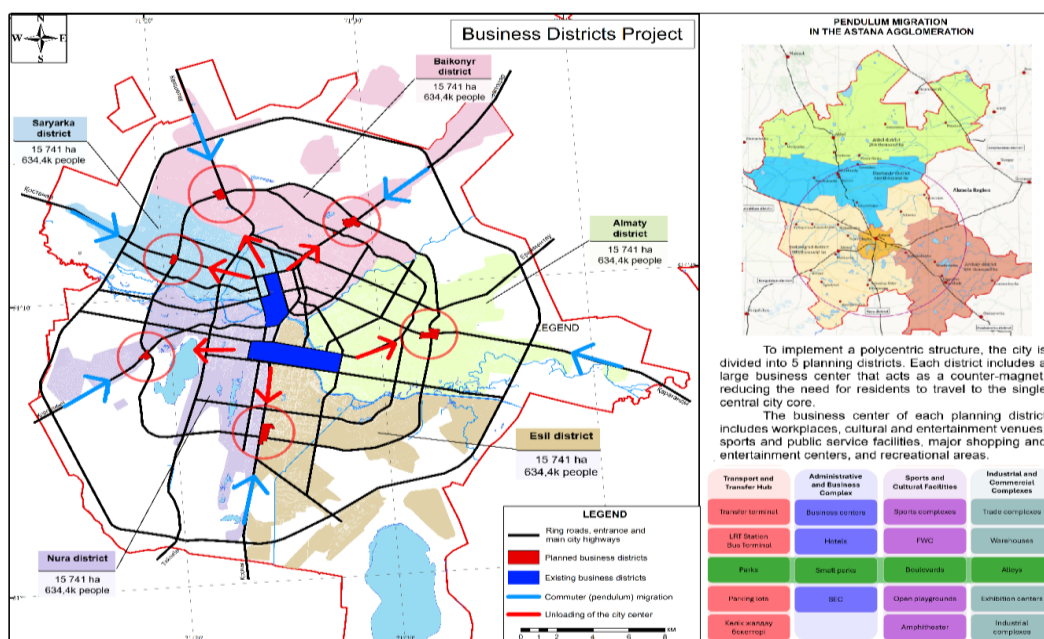


Figure 12. Map of the Business Districts of Astana (Source: Own development in the ArcGIS10.8 program)

During the work, it was possible not only to fix the spatial distribution of key objects, but also to identify the functional features of the urban environment. The map clearly demonstrates administrative and business zones, where government agencies, international representative offices, financial and business centers are concentrated.

These districts play a central role in shaping the image of the capital as the political and economic center of Kazakhstan. A separate block is dedicated to sports and cultural facilities, including modern arenas, theaters, museums, exhibition complexes and cultural centers. Their spatial distribution shows the city's aspiration for balanced development, in which business activity is combined with opportunities for cultural leisure, the shaping of urban identity and the attraction of both domestic and international tourism. Visualisation of data in the format of cartographic materials made it possible to demonstrate the interaction between the administrative, business, cultural and leisure functions of the capital, as well as identify promising areas for further development.

This approach highlights the importance of integrating socio-cultural and economic analysis into a comprehensive study of Astana's urban dynamics. As a result of the study of the suburban area of Astana agglomeration, key sections of tourist and recreational territories have been identified, which are currently actively used for recreation by the predominantly local population. The analysis demonstrated that these zones perform an important function of providing cultural leisure for residents, creating conditions for health, family recreation and maintaining a connection with natural landscapes. The main emphasis is given to the design of a map of the recreational resources of the agglomeration (Figure 13), which allows systematisation and visualization of the existing potential.

The map includes both natural resources (forested areas, rivers and reservoirs, steppe landscapes) and man-made objects (parks, cultural complexes, ethnographic zones). This tool is aimed at solving two key tasks: 1) expansion of cultural recreation for residents of the capital through the creation of various forms of leisure; 2) attracting tourists by increasing information accessibility and popularization of suburban areas. The analysis also revealed the need for more active promotion and information support of such territories. Despite their high attractiveness, a significant part of the facilities remains little known not only to the guests of the capital, but also to the city's own residents. This especially applies to areas within 20 minutes of transport accessibility from Astana, which could become part of regular cultural activities, including weekend excursions, ethnographic tourism and ecological routes.

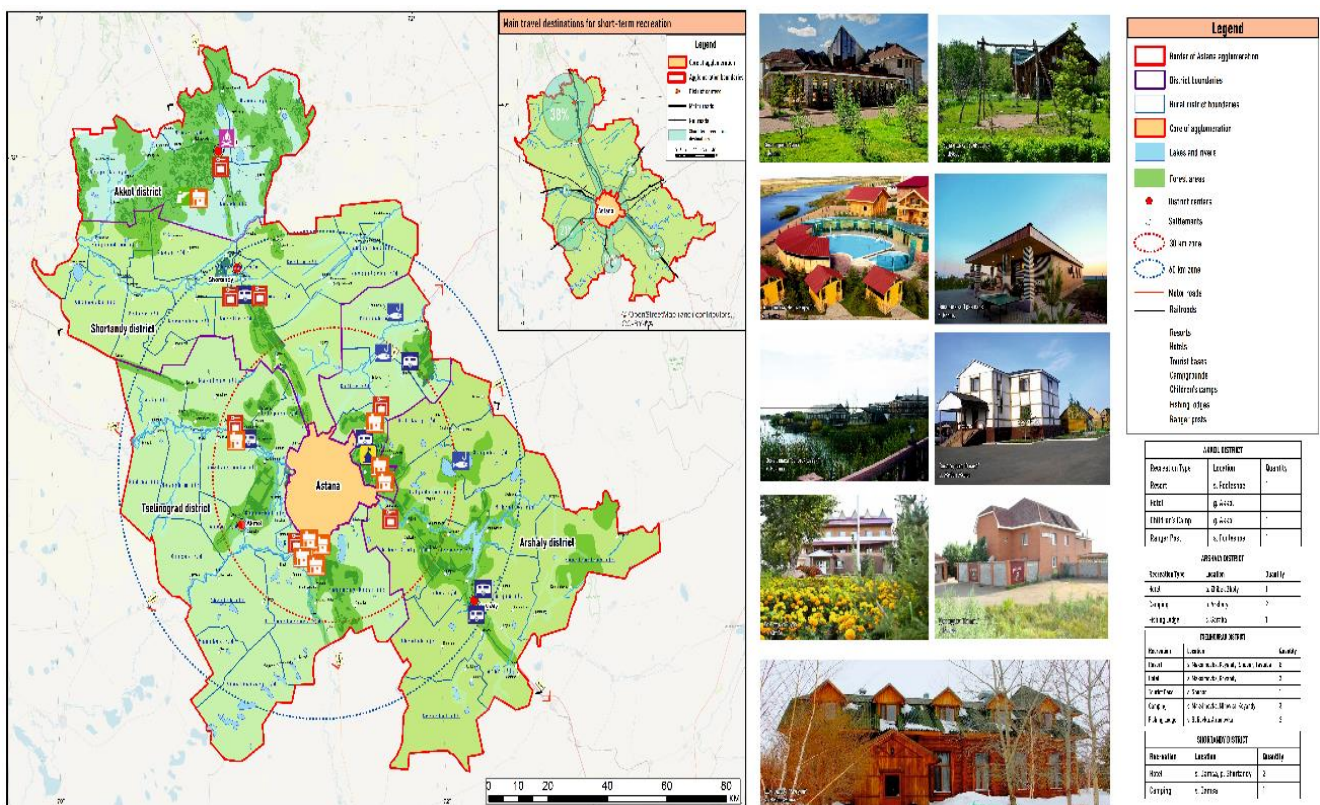


Figure 13. Map of Recreational and Cultural Zones of the Astana Agglomeration (Source: Authors, the ArcGIS10.8 program)

The inclusion of these facilities in the city-wide strategy of cultural and tourism development can increase the level of public engagement in cultural practices, as well as form an attractive image of the capital as a city that harmoniously combines business activity, cultural heritage and diverse recreational opportunities.

Thus, the developed map of recreational resources of Astana agglomeration is an important step towards the systematic development of cultural recreation and tourism in the region.

It serves as a basis for planning new routes, organizing cultural and educational programs, and integrating capital's tourism into the broader context of regional development.

CONCLUSION

The study has demonstrated the pivotal role of Astana as a unique center for the preservation and development of cultural heritage under conditions of rapid modernization and urbanisation. A comparative analysis of global capital relocations revealed that the Kazakhstani experience embodies both universal patterns of symbolic nation-building and distinctive regional features shaped by post-Soviet transformations and the aspiration to consolidate national identity.

The methodological framework, which combined observation, surveys, field expeditions, GIS mapping, and remote sensing, enabled the systematisation of the city's cultural assets and the development of a comprehensive map of the recreational resources of the Astana agglomeration. This map identifies administrative and business districts, cultural and sports facilities, as well as suburban recreational zones within a 20-minute accessibility radius.

Such an approach not only illustrates the functional structure of the capital but also highlights new opportunities for cultural leisure for residents and visitors alike. The findings confirm that the development of cultural values and heritage significantly enhances the city's attractiveness for both domestic and inbound tourism. Moreover, it strengthens social cohesion, broadens leisure opportunities, and contributes to the overall quality of urban life.

Therefore, the integration of cultural heritage into urban planning and sustainable development strategies is a key prerequisite for positioning Astana as a vibrant cultural and tourism hub in Central Asia.

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