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**THE INTERRELATION BETWEEN SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS
AND THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES IN ALMATY,
KAZAKHSTAN**

**ВЗАИМОСВЯЗЬ СОЦИАЛЬНО-КУЛЬТУРНЫХ АСПЕКТОВ И
УРОВНЯ КАЧЕСТВА ОТКРЫТЫХ ОБЩЕСТВЕННЫХ
ПРОСТРАНСТВ ГОРОДА АЛМАТЫ, КАЗАХСТАН**

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Abstract

This article investigates how socio-cultural factors impact the quality of public open spaces (POS) in Almaty. The study's relevance lies in the significant role public spaces play in local and citywide contexts, as well as in architectural and urban planning policies. Jan Gehl highlighted how urban environments and planning decisions shape city behaviour, emphasizing the global importance of urban space development. Jacobs developed methods to model social interactions with a focus on environmental safety, while Campbell explored social boundaries, and Lynch and Jacobs examined the socio-cultural aspects influencing POS formation. The research employs an interdisciplinary methodology, analysing Almaty's socio-cultural context, POS design, and functioning. Surveys among residents were conducted to gauge their perceptions of these spaces. The study spans urban planning, sociology, cultural studies, and landscape architecture, using both qualitative and quantitative methods, including photo documentation, sociological research, and mathematical modelling of selected POS sites. The findings reveal that the quality of POS in Almaty is influenced by their appeal to social groups, the availability of cultural events, and the levels of safety and comfort. These factors are crucial for creating inviting and functional public spaces. The study's results aim to guide future improvements in open public spaces, not only in Kazakhstan but also in other developing countries.

Keywords: public open spaces, socio-cultural aspects, Almaty, Kazakhstan

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Аннотация (Abstract)

В статье исследуется влияние социокультурных аспектов на качество открытых общественных пространств (ООП) Алматы, описываются социальные и культурные факторы, формирующие их. Актуальность исследования обусловлена ролью общественных пространств как на локальном и общегородском уровнях, так и в архитектурно-градостроительной политике, а также ее выходом на ведущие позиции. Ян Гейл подчеркивал, что городская среда и планировочные решения влияют на поведение и функционирование города, что подчеркивает глобальное значение развития городских пространств. Методики моделирования социальных взаимодействий с учетом безопасности среды разработаны Джейкобсом. Кемпбелл изучал социальные границы и дистанцию, а Линч и Джейкобс исследовали социокультурные аспекты формирования ООП. Методология исследования включала проведение анализа социокультурной ситуации в городе Алматы, изучение проектирования и функционирования открытых общественных пространств, а также опросы среди жителей города для выявления их мнения о качестве данных пространств и их использовании. Область исследования междисциплинарна и охватывает вопросы градостроительства, социологии, культурологии, ландшафтоведения, статистических данных и др. Цель исследования — выявить взаимосвязь между социокультурными аспектами и качеством ООП. Для достижения этой цели был проведен анализ текущей ситуации открытых озелененных пространств города Алматы, включающий фото-фиксацию, социологическое исследование, индикационные и количественные методы, методы математического моделирования. Анализ показал, что качество ООП в Алматы зависит от привлекательности для социальных групп, наличия культурных мероприятий, а также уровня безопасности и комфортности. Учет этих аспектов при проектировании и управлении ООП важен для создания комфортных и привлекательных мест. Результаты исследования будут способствовать будущему улучшению открытых общественных пространств в Казахстане и других развивающихся странах.

Ключевые слова: открытые общественные пространства, социально-культурные аспекты, Алматы, Казахстан

INTRODUCTION

here are different approaches to defining public open space. This article takes as a basis the definition according to the research report on public spaces of HABITAT III - about public space - includes all places of public property or public use that are open and available for use to all free of charge and without profit (Habitat III Research Reports, 2015). Thus, public open space (POS) is a place accessible to all people without restrictions, where they can freely gather, communicate and participate in public life, for example: streets, open spaces of parks, squares, embankments and other public facilities.

The objective of the study is to identify the relationship between sociocultural aspects and the quality of the architectural environment of public open spaces. Possible problems in studying this topic include insufficient knowledge of the issue, and as a result, the lack and unreliability of some data; difficulty in measuring sociocultural aspects and quality of the built environment. The purpose of this study is to empirically examine how public open spaces in the city of Almaty are used, and to compare the characteristics and problematic aspects of different types of public spaces. Specifically, this study points out differences in user behaviour across different types of POS through surveys, questionnaires, and visual analysis. In addition, observation makes it possible to empirically understand which elements of the environment and organizational techniques contribute to the ease of use of POS. The results obtained contribute to the improvement of public education and daily activities in Almaty, other cities of Kazakhstan, as well as other developing countries with similar social contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To date, there are a number of works devoted to the problems of the relationship between socio-cultural aspects and the level of quality of public open spaces.

One of the key authors who investigated the relationship between socio-cultural aspects and the development of public spaces is Jane Jacobs. Her book "The Death and Life of Big American Cities" became a classic in the field of urban studies and offered a new perspective on urban planning, emphasizing the importance of taking into account socio-cultural characteristics to create high-quality public spaces (Jane Jacobs, "The Death and Life of Big American Cities").

Another well-known author who has researched this issue is Richard Sennett. His book *The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism* examines the relationship between urban space, socio-cultural practices and the quality of life of citizens (Richard Sennett, "The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism").

The work of researcher Kevin Lynch "The Image of the City" raises the question of the importance of visual perception of the urban environment and its

impact on the formation of a comfortable and convenient public space (Kevin Lynch "The Image of the City").

Theoretical works by V.L. Glazychev, K. Lynch, Z.N. Yargina, A.V. Krasheninnikov propose to study the architectural qualities of public spaces according to various indicators, and consider methods for modeling public spaces that are comfortable for people.

Specific techniques for modeling the space of social interaction, based on the criterion of environmental safety, are being developed by Jacobs D.

In the applied works of V.R. Vuchika, J. Jacobs, J. Geila, E. Penialosy, J. Speck and others, open public spaces are considered as the basis of the social life of the city.

Environmental behavior of people is considered in the works of A.A. Zhelnina, V.I. Iovleva, A. Yu. Lozhkina, A.L. Titova, M. Chernoushek, V.T. Shimko et al.

In general, the literature review shows that the development of public open spaces in Almaty depends on taking into account the socio-cultural characteristics, needs and preferences of its residents. Understanding these aspects will help to create a harmonious and comfortable space for the life and recreation of citizens.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study applied document analysis of literary sources, scientific papers, sociological surveys, practical activities and statistical data of selected study locations. To further validate the output, an analysis of the current situation of three green open spaces in the city of Almaty was conducted, the selected POS were, Kok Tobe Recreation Park, Yuzhny Park and Gulder Park. The method includes photographic documentation, sociological research, indicator and quantitative methods, and mathematical modelling methods. The main criteria in the survey were environmental comfort, accessibility, versatility and safety.

ANALYSIS

Kazakhstan is a multinational state with a wide ethno—cultural, linguistic, religious, racial and national diversity. The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan proclaims the country a democratic, secular, unitary state with a presidential form of government.



Figure 1: Age of the respondents

Source: <http://www.uzngos.uzsci.net/Map> of Central Asia

Kazakhstan has a sharply continental climate with warm summers and cold winters. Astana is the second coldest capital in the world after Ulaanbaatar. Precipitation varies between arid and semi-arid conditions, with winters being particularly dry.

Almaty (1867-1921 — Verniy) is a city of republican significance in Kazakhstan, the former capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan (until 1997), the former administrative center of the Almaty region (until 2001).

Almaty is the largest city and region of Kazakhstan in terms of population: 2 211 198 people lived in the city (as of October 2023). The climate of Almaty is continental and is characterized by the influence of mountain-valley circulation, which is especially evident in the northern part of the city, located directly in the transition zone of mountain slopes to the plain. The average long-term air temperature is +10 °C, the coldest month (January) is -4.7 °C, the warmest month (July) is +23.8 °C.

There are 211 park territories with a total area of 631.2 hectares in Almaty (for the period on May 2022). In addition, landscaping, repair and reconstruction of parks and squares are carried out annually (Tengrinews.kz, 2022).

Currently, there is considerable interest in the subject of public spaces all over the world. This interest is quite natural, given the increasing role of cities in the socio-economic life of most developed and developing countries. In Kazakhstan, unlike in other countries, where the processes of urbanization have been studied by specialists of various profiles for a long time and in various aspects, the processes have not yet found a comprehensive analysis, including in the aspect of studying the role of public spaces in urban development.

The construction, design and reconstruction of open public spaces in the cities of Kazakhstan are regulated by state standards in the field of architecture, urban planning and construction (CODE OF RULES OF the REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN 3.01-105-2013. Improvement of territories of settlements.).

The provision of green areas for common use in citywide and residential areas is regulated by the SNiP of the Republic of Kazakhstan 3.01-01-2008(СНиП РК 3.01-01-2008), where the norm for the largest, large and big cities, including Almaty, is 10m² per person (Table 1) (Urban planning, Layout and development of urban and rural communities, SNiP RK 3.01-01-2008).

Table 1: The area of green areas of common use

Source: Urban planning, Layout and development of urban and rural communities, SNiP RK 3.01-01-2008

Green common areas	Square of green areas (m ²) per person			
	The Largest, Large and Big Cities	Medium-Sized Cities	Small Towns	Rural Settlements
Citywide	10	7	8 (10)*	12
Residential areas	6	6	-	-

* The sizes for small towns with a population of up to 20 thousand people are shown in parentheses.

Notes.

1. For resort towns, the above standards for citywide green areas of common use should be increased, but not by more than 50%.
2. The area of green areas of common use in settlements may be reduced for semi-desert and desert areas by 20-30%, increased for steppe and forest-steppe by 10-20%.
3. In medium-sized, small towns and rural settlements surrounded by forests, in coastal zones of large rivers and reservoirs, the area of green areas of common use may be reduced, but not by more than 20%.

There have also been improvements in the interaction between citizens and local governments. An example of improvements is the Almaty Parks 2017 project. From January 28 to February 9, 2017, the Urban Studies Center held the first open urban workshop for the development of 22 draft designs of urban parks and squares. Architects, urbanists, landscape designers, sociologists, environmentalists, representatives of the creative community and simply caring citizens who wanted to contribute to the development of a comfortable life in the city took part in the discussion on the improvement of parks.

The Almaty City Hall also published the Almaty City Development Program until 2025 and Medium-term Prospects until 2030, which is aimed at creating a safe, comfortable city environment, sustainable economic growth, social sustainability and stability. The city must be prepared for emergencies such as accidents, catastrophes, diseases and natural disasters (avalanches, mudslides, landslides, heavy rains, spring and summer floods, hail, dangerous geophysical processes). Almaty, as a city located in a seismic zone, has a high risk of

earthquakes. In the event of a strong earthquake with an intensity of 9 points, the city may suffer significant damage and losses. To reduce damage, earthquake-resistant building codes, an early warning system, emergency measures to turn off gas and electricity supplies, stop railway transport and metro, and block dangerous processes are necessary.

Since July 2022, Almatygenplan has launched a survey survey "Citizen's Questionnaire" among Almaty residents to find out how Almaty residents live, how much time they spend on the road, what they want to change and how they are ready to participate in the development of the city. The intermediate results of the Citizen's Questionnaire were successfully used in the work on the project for the transformation of Rayymbek Avenue. At the start, the opinions and needs of residents of several districts at once, through which the highway runs, were studied.

CASE STUDIES

Kok Tobe Recreation Park

Kok-Tobe Hill (or Kok-Tube) is a popular attraction in Almaty, and one of the favorite vacation spots of the citizens. A small mountain, whose name translates as "Green Hill", is located on the southeastern outskirts of Almaty, and on its territory, there is a small amusement park, monuments, observation decks and the Almaty TV tower. There is a cable car on Kok-Tobe, and there is also a long winding highway. The height of the Kok-Tobe is 1130 meters above sea level, and 200 meters relative to the city of Almaty.

Initially, this place was called Verigina Gora, in honor of a rich merchant who built a house at its foot. In the 1960s, the leadership of the city of Almaty decided to turn the green hill into a place of rest, and work began on creating all the necessary infrastructure. In 1965, the lower station of the cable car was laid, and all work was completed in 1967, and on November 4 of the same year, the grand opening of the park took place.

The cable car was designed and built jointly with Georgian engineers who already had extensive experience in this industry. According to some reports, it was the first in the Central Asian region. The length of the cable car on Kok-Tobe is 1620 meters, and the cabins cover this distance in 6 minutes, gaining 250 meters of height at the same time. The cost of a round-trip ticket is 5000 tenge (11.25 USD), one-way ticket is 3000 tenge (6.7 USD).

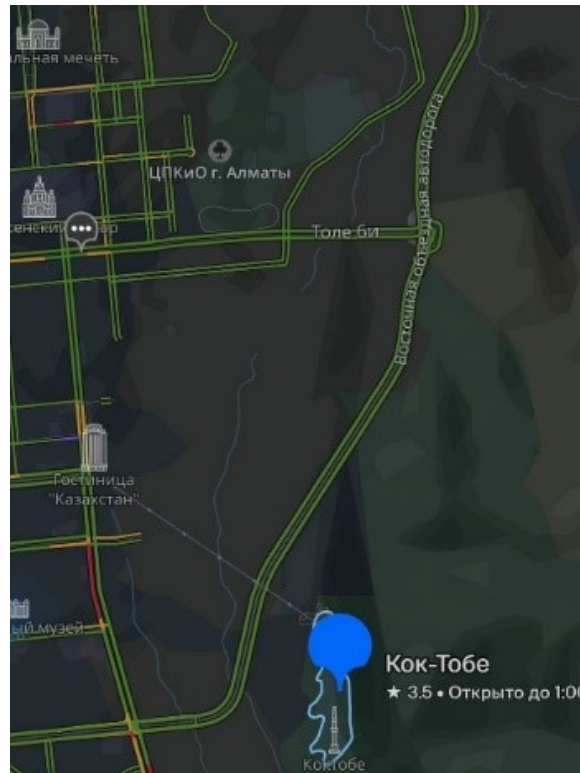


Figure 2: Situational scheme of the Kok-Tobe Recreation Park
Source: 2gis.kz

In 1978-1983, a 371.5-meter-high TV tower was built on Kok-Tobe, which at the time of commissioning was ranked 9th in the world in height (today 41st place). One of its main features is earthquake resistance – it can withstand an earthquake of 10 points. Unfortunately, the TV tower is closed to tourists due to safety concerns, although it has observation decks and a restaurant.

In 2007, a monument to The Beatles was unveiled on Kok-Tobe. The monument, made of bronze, is a popular local landmark. There are several speakers around the monument, from which the band's hits are constantly playing.

There are souvenir shops on Kok-Tobe, a Ferris wheel works, and there are several observation decks that overlook Almaty and the snowy peaks of the Zailiysky Alatau ridge. Also popular among tourists is the monument fountain "Alma" (Kazakh: "apple") in the form of an apple, the symbol of the city.

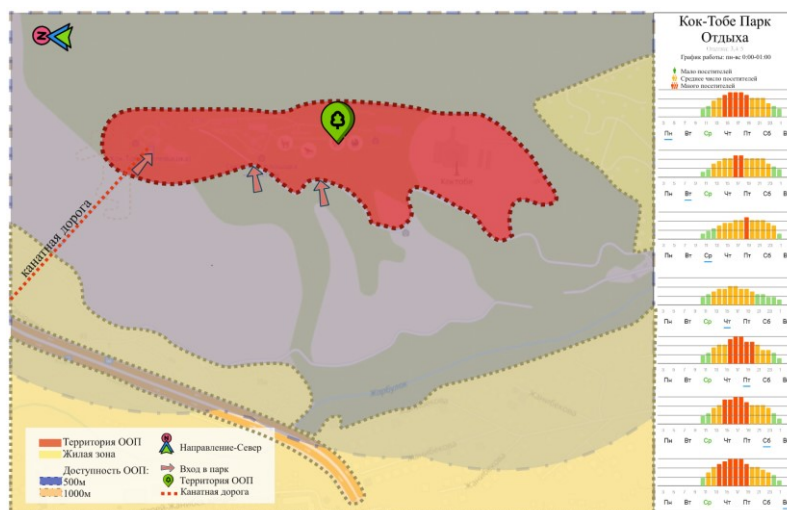


Figure 3: Situational scheme of the Kok-Tobe Recreation Park
 Source: Author's Survey

In addition to the rich nature surrounding the park, the positive and socially favourable moments noted during the tour were:

- i) Availability of bins in sufficient quantity along the entire road to the park;
- ii) Tourist information center near the nearest public transport stop to the park;
- iii) Security booth on the observation deck when climbing into the park;
- iv) Availability of a public toilet;
- v) Free entrance to the zoo with pets and wild animals;

The name of the park "Kok-Tobe" (Green Mountain) fully justifies itself, since the territory is quite landscaped, you can hear the singing of birds. Also, during the crawl, such disadvantages were noted as:

- i) There is no pedestrian road on the way to the park, when walking up to the park you need to walk along the roadway;
- ii) Lack of benches (only 2 places had benches, there were also none on the observation deck on the way to the park);
- iii) A large amount of commerce (despite the fact that entrance to the territory of the POS is free, most of the park is occupied by paid attractions, for which there is very low demand. Amusement park workers obsessively offer services);

- iv) Loud advertising and music (A negative feeling is created, the feeling of being not in a quiet park area, but at a busy fair due to the fact that there are many points around with different noise effects (music));
- v) Unpleasant odors near attractions bordering public toilets;
- vi) Not clear navigation in the park;
- vii) Poorly developed transport infrastructure (Expensive ascent by cable car, minibus, traffic jam at the entrance, and at the exit even more, which makes it difficult to leave);

These factors affect the attendance of the park. Currently, the place is popular mainly among tourists, residents of the city choose to visit the park mainly on weekends and holidays.

Yuzhny Park

Yuzhny Park (former name “Alumni Alley”) was founded in the 90s on the site of apple orchards next to Atakent on Zharokova St. between Khodzhanova St. and Baykadamova St. The park area is more than 14 hectares. More than 5000 trees grow on its territory.

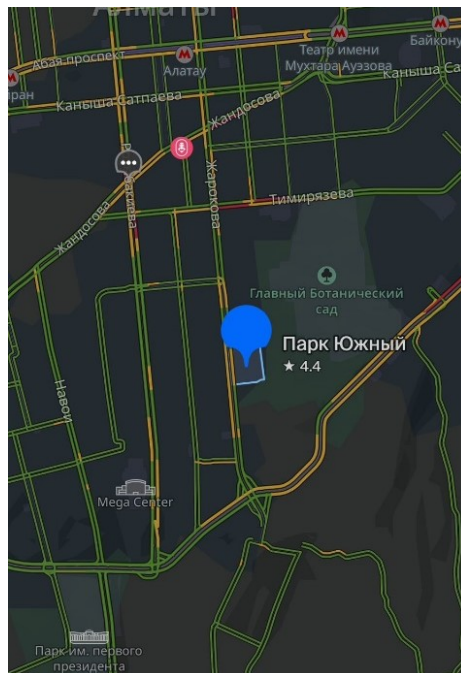


Figure 4: Situational scheme of the Yuzhny Park

Source: 2gis.kz



Figure 5: Situational scheme of the Yuzhny Park
 Source: Author's Survey

For many years, the city authorities did not really deal with the park. The irrigation system collapsed, the asphalt on the paths fell into disrepair, there were not enough benches and bins, and they were also not in the best shape.

After the news of the upcoming reconstruction of the Yuzhny Park in 2018, which many people know as the "Alumni Alley", an initiative group, mainly consisting of residents of the Almagul microdistrict, wrote a letter addressed to the Mayor of Almaty, asking to review the reconstruction plan of the park (reconstruction project 2015). The citizens were invited to a meeting with developers, designers and employees of the City Hall.

The wishes of the residents were taken into account and adjustments were made. POS users expressed the opinion that the most important thing for the residents of this city and district is the living plantings.

As of 2015, there is no lighting or irrigation system in the territory. There are paths that residents and vacationers have trampled, according to the project, a sandy road was laid in such places, without compromising the ecology of the park. The main goal of the project was to create a comfortable urban environment. However, the reconstruction was delayed for two years. The initiative group continued monitoring the project, they demanded not to install a fence around the park and checked the work of the builders daily, made sure that the equipment did not harm the trees, so that the work took place strictly in accordance with the new project.

The positive and socially favourable moments noted during the tour of Yuzhny Park were:

- i) The presence of a police station on the territory of the park with patrolling officers;
- ii) The territory of the park is clean and well maintained;
- iii) There are a large number of playgrounds;
- iv) Urns, benches in sufficient quantity;
- v) There is a free-walking area for dogs;
- vi) There is a bike path and hiking trails;
- vii) Convenient access to the park from all adjacent streets;
- viii) Lack of fences;
- ix) Division by zones;

On the other hand, the disadvantage noted during the study of the park is the coverage of the bike path. Gravel used as a coating can damage the tires of the wheels.

It is worth noting the great work done by the initiative group “Let's Save Yuzhny Park” – this is an amazing and wonderful example that confirms the statement: “We are responsible for our beloved city!”.

Gulder Park

Gulder Park (translated from Kazakh as “Flowers”) is located near the PSC of the Zhetysu district of Almaty. The total area is 13.3 hectares. Basically, the park is a recreation place for residents of the Kulager neighborhood. In 2017, local initiatives of the city within the framework of the “Almaty Parks 2017” program revealed that the park can be accessed from four points, 71 benches, 72 urns are installed in the park, there are two children's and three sports grounds. It also turned out that visitors do not know the name, moreover, it does not correspond to reality – there were no flower beds in the park. The main problems noted in 2017 were:

- i) There is no entrance group;
- ii) The small architectural forms do not correspond to the concept of the park;
- iii) Spontaneous parking on the territory of the basketball field;
- iv) Lack of toilets, bike and treadmills, as well as poor navigation system in the park;
- v) Four benches and five urns are missing in the designated places.
- vi) Playgrounds do not have a special coating;
- vii) There is no inclusive infrastructure.

Restoration work was carried out in 2021-2022. From the reviews in the open access, it is noted that the park as a whole is a popular place for residents

to relax. There is a variety of entertainment for children and adults, well-groomed green spaces, benches and lighting. However, visitors pay attention to some problems, such as the presence of garbage, including syringes near benches and gazebos; lack of toilets; lack of hot drinks outlets and food boutiques; poor lighting, especially in the central part of the park.

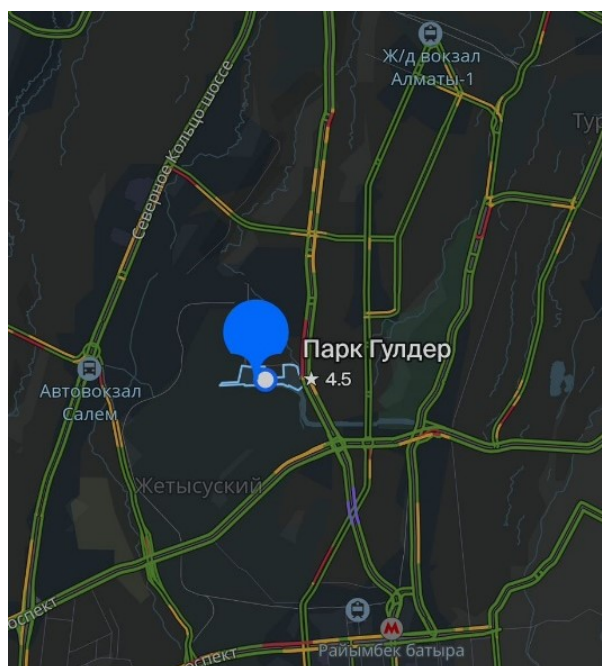


Figure 6: Situational scheme of the Gulder Park
Source: 2gis.kz

Thus, in order to further improve the condition of the park, attention should be paid to solving these problems and continuing to develop infrastructure and service for visitors. It is necessary to improve the control of order and safety in the park; provide public toilets, places with drinks and food for the convenience of visitors; improve lighting to increase the safety and comfort of evening rest.

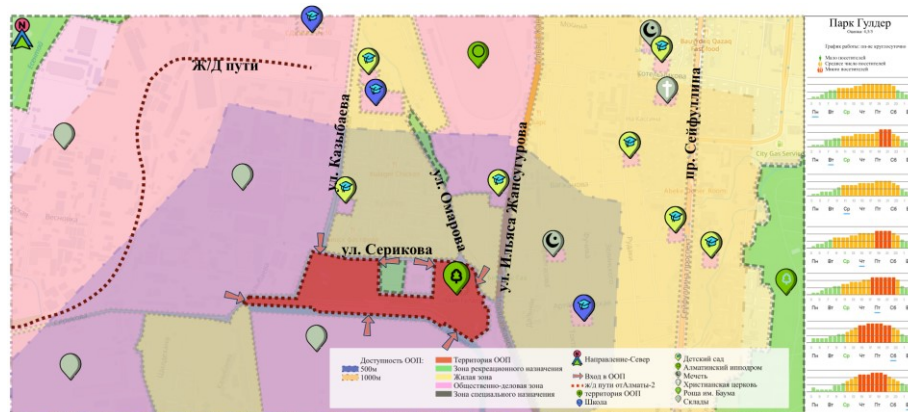


Figure 7: Situational scheme of the Gulder Park
Source: Author's Survey

The positive and socially favourable moments noted during the tour of Gulder Park were:

- i) Availability of a sufficient number of benches, there is a gazebo;
- ii) Availability of a stage for small events;
- iii) The territory of the park is quite landscaped;
- iv) At the time of the bypass, work was underway to restore the path to the park (during the work, the park continued to function without inconveniencing visitors);
- v) There is a public toilet;
- vi) Well-equipped playgrounds, skate court, sports ground, 3 football fields;
- vii) There is a potential for small business development (but it is poorly developed)

Result from the site visit had also identified disadvantages, such as:

- i) At the time of the study, there were a small number of people, which may indicate the unattractiveness of this POS;
- ii) Some tactile coverings on the paths for the visually impaired are being destroyed, despite the fact that the park was under reconstruction 2 years ago;
- iii) There are no signs and navigation markings in the park;
- iv) Broken equipment and sculptures that can be dangerous;
- v) The territory of the embankment adjacent to the park and part of it is in poor condition;

- vi) In most of the park, access to the embankment is blocked by a high fence;
- vii) In some places there is a low fence that does not carry any function;
- viii) The reconstruction of the park was carried out only in the adjacent territory to the akimat, therefore the benches are further in poor condition (broken, peeling paint)
- ix) There are no birdhouses and feeders, as in the POS, close to the central part of the city (despite the fact that there are squirrels and birds in the park);
- x) The boundaries of the park on maps in open sources differ, which creates inconveniences for visitors who are not familiar with the area, as well as the inability to determine the entrance to the park on the map.

It can be seen from the presented data that each of the parks has its own characteristics and unique features. Kok-Tobe Park is rich in nature, but suffers from a lot of commerce and loud advertising, which can scare away visitors. Yuzhny Park, on the other hand, is well equipped for family and children recreation, but has a subjective disadvantage in the form of a bike path cover. Gulder Park has great potential for small business development, but suffers from a lack of visitors, outdated equipment and problems with the waterfront area.

SURVEY ANALYSIS

A survey of citizens to assess the social aspects of the effectiveness of the functioning of public open spaces in Almaty, Kazakhstan

As part of the study, a survey of residents and visitors of the city was conducted, where the main evaluation criteria were self-determination and the feelings of the respondent. A total of 75 questionnaires were collected, which is a sufficient number with a margin of error of 10% (the minimum number of respondents per 2,000,000 inhabitants is 70 people). The survey was conditionally divided into 2 parts: demographic data, questions directly related to the public open spaces of the Almaty city. The questions regarding demographic data were to determine the age of the respondents, their gender identity, level of education, specialty, employment, marital status, area and duration of residence in Almaty. As part of the survey, questions were asked about the frequency of visits to the POS in the city, clarifying the most attractive spaces, assessing accessibility and convenience, identifying problems in functioning, timely response of local government and citizens to problems, determining the role of the POS in shaping the modern image of the city and the cultural life of citizens, the need to adapt the POS to the needs of specific social groups, determining factors for attracting more people to the POS and popularizing them.

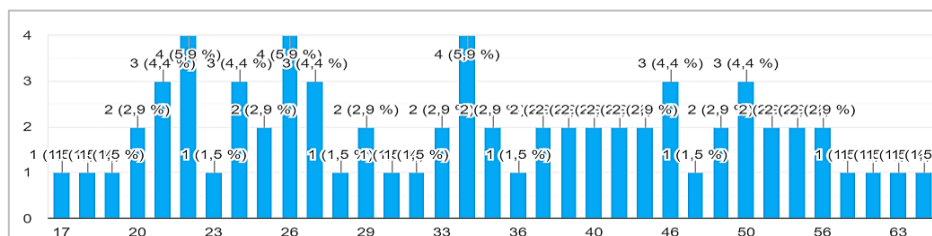


Figure 8: Age of the respondents

Source: Author's Survey

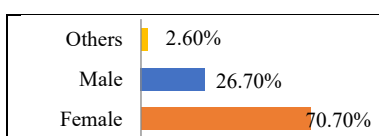


Figure 9: Gender identity

Source: Author's Survey

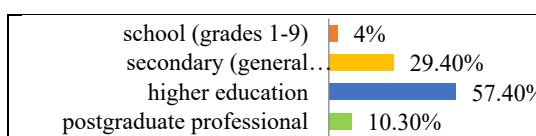


Figure 10: Level of education

Source: Author's Survey

15% of respondents have an education in architecture and urban planning, 7% in design, 5% engineers and builders, 5% in teaching.

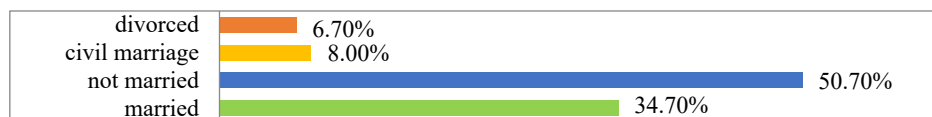


Figure 11: Marital status

Source: Author's Survey

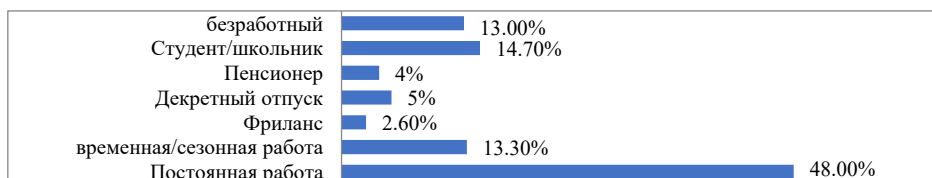


Figure 12: working hours

Source: Author's Survey

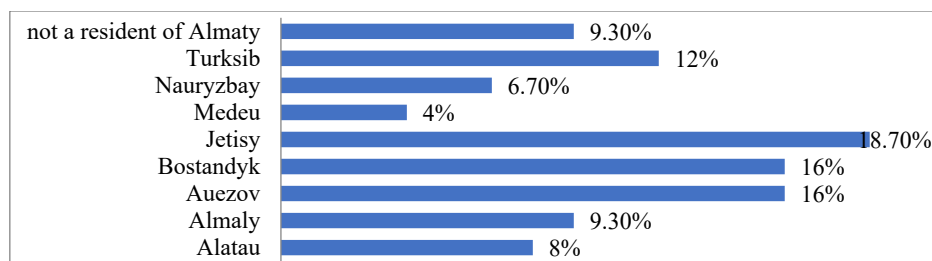


Figure 13: The area of residence in Almaty (district)

Source: Author's Survey

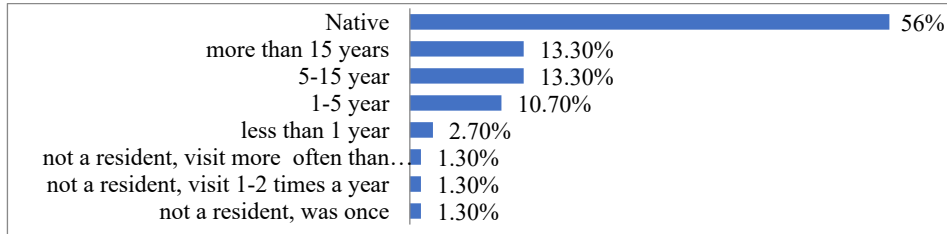


Figure 14: Period of residence in Almaty

Source: Author's Survey

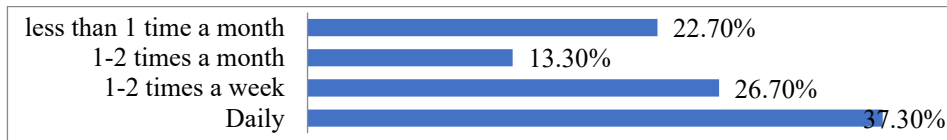


Figure 15: Frequency of visits to open public spaces in Almaty

Source: Author's Survey

Milton Keynes classified open space according to the type of affiliation or structure in which parks and gardens include linear, district and local parks (Dennis Wakaba). This classification was adapted and formed the basis for the question of the attractiveness of the POS in the city of Almaty.

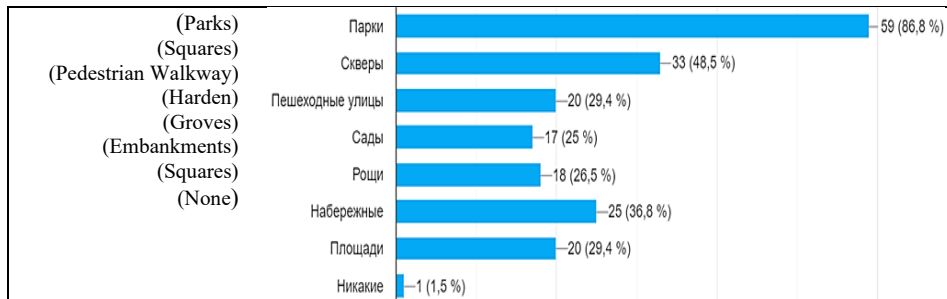


Figure 16: The most attractive POS in Almaty for recreation, leisure activities, meetings with friends, according to the typology

Source: Author's Survey

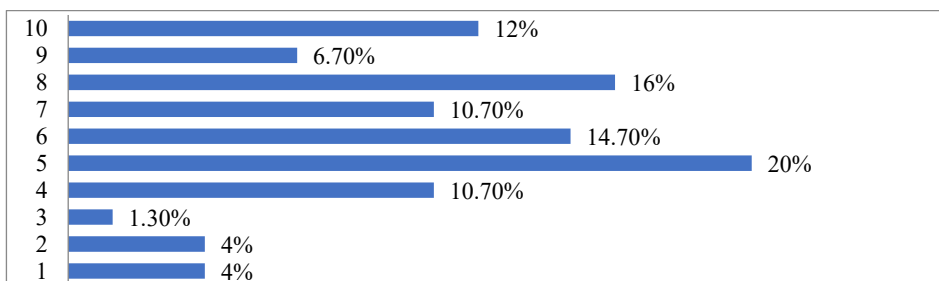


Figure 17: Accessibility and ease of use of POS in Almaty (on a scale of 1-10, where 1- does not correspond at all to accessibility and convenience, 10-fully correspond)
Source: Author's Survey

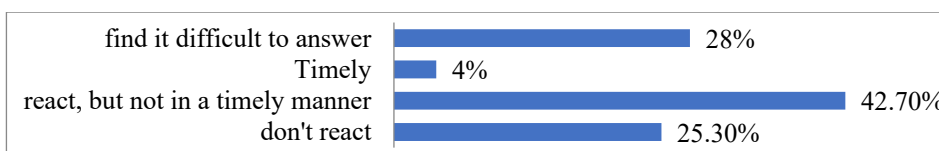


Figure 18: The opinion of the respondents on the issue of timely response to problems in the use of open public spaces by local governments and citizens
Source: Author's Survey

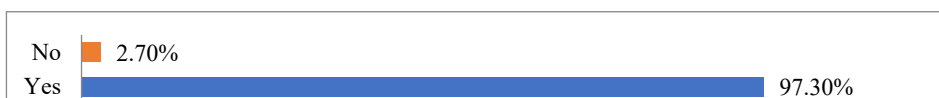


Figure 19: The opinion of the respondents regarding the need to adapt the POS to the needs of specific social groups, for example, children, youth, the elderly
Source: Author's Survey

DISCUSSION

In accordance to the presented data, majority of respondents are women (more than 70%), people with higher education (more than 70%), their age varies from 17 to 64 years (average age 35 years). Most of the respondents work full-time. Based on the typology presented, residents more often visit parks, squares and embankments.

Survey results were also able to conclude an estimated accessibility and usability of public spaces range from 4 to 10 points, which also pointed out that one of the causes for public open spaces dysfunction was due to the lack of connectivity between them and the untimely reaction of local governments. The majority of respondents believe that open public spaces play a significant role in shaping the modern image of the city and the cultural life of citizens. Respondents also express their opinion on the need to adapt public spaces to the needs of various social groups, such as children, youth and the elderly. This perceptive suggestion aims to attract more people to public spaces considering open space accessibility is proven to increase a space's popularity. Additionally, respondents

suggest providing more amenities, comfort, diverse content and additional social events. This survey outcome among respondents in Almaty open spaces is aligned with several literature and studies that promotes multi-level social indicators to be taken into the planning and design consideration.

These data show that socio-cultural aspects, such as the availability of safety, cleanliness, comfortable conditions for recreation and accessibility of cultural events, play an important role in creating high-quality open public spaces. It is important to take into account the opinions and needs of local residents when designing and updating parks to make them more attractive to visitors.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study, it follows that in order to attract more people to public spaces and increase their popularity, more amenities, comfort, diverse content and additional social events should be provided. The analysis of data collected in these three parks further identify that the main problems and advantages of each of them, which in turn will help to identify areas for improving the quality of public spaces in Almaty. The key factors of the recommendations may be improving infrastructure, ensuring safety and comfort of visits, supporting small businesses and holding cultural events to attract visitors. These social aspects affect the quality level of public open spaces, emphasizing cultural characteristics, meeting social needs, and providing psychological comfort.

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