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The development of urbanization processes in the Republic of Kazakhstan and abroad: a comparative analysis

Abstract

Object: The purpose of the study is a comparative analysis of the processes of urbanization development in Kazakhstan and in Russia, covering the chronological framework of almost a century period.

Methods: concretization and abstraction; retrospective analysis and classification; comparative analysis; descriptive method; statistical methods and methods of scientific analysis and synthesis.

Findings: The key findings of the study are summarized in the following conclusions:

- The special demographic structure of the 1980s was reinforced by the economic restructuring of the 1990s and gave rise to probably the most important problem of the 21st century in Russia and the countries of the former USSR: demographic decline and urban population decline.

- At present, the development of former socialist cities is largely determined by market forces and democratically elected governments. However, they are also not fully developed capitalist cities.

- The main similarity between the urbanization of Russia and Kazakhstan is the gap between the most developed major cities of federal and republican significance and lagging medium and small cities.

- In Russia and Kazakhstan, medium and small towns are often characterized by specialized and less diversified economies.

Conclusions: The development of medium-sized and small cities in Russia and Kazakhstan faces the main problems: lack of financing and/or inefficient use; barriers to decentralization; insufficiently effective regulatory framework and lack of standards or their ineffective implementation regarding sustainable and environmentally friendly development.

Keywords: public administration, urbanization, globalization, sustainable development, cities, megacities.

Introduction

Today, the phenomenon of urbanization affects all countries of the world. The evolution of production technologies, technological progress, the difficulties of rural employment, rural poverty and the advantages of modern urban life are examples that encourage migration to urban ensembles. Thus, existing cities continue to grow, and new ones are being created, thereby strengthening the urban system. In such studies of urban economics, we call this phenomenon “urban development” (UNDESA, 2021).

The city was defined as a place of maximum social interaction, as a place of exercising power and managing the territory, as a center of production, consumption and exchange, as a place of origin and a pole for the spread of innovations.

In fact, a city is a living organism that adapts to the conditions of the era and, in particular, to the needs of its inhabitants. In this regard, in this scientific work it is necessary to consider all the elements that can lead to the development of cities. However, this is very difficult due to the complexity of the variables and their constant evolution. On the one hand, the development of urban systems in each country is not a random phenomenon; on the other hand, monitoring the future development of cities requires the implementation of a thorough planning program (Henderson, 1997).

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The purpose of the study is a comparative analysis of the processes of urbanization development in Kazakhstan and in Russia, covering the chronological framework of almost a century.

Based on the purpose of the study, the following tasks were set:

- to study the evolution of urbanization in Russia and Kazakhstan;
- to assess the degree of urbanization of countries;
- to assess the risks and challenges of effective urban development management;
- to form a number of councils for the development of cities and regions of Russia and Kazakhstan.

The relevance of the chosen topic is due to the fact that the changing general context of territorial competition, urban development and territorial governance requires an updated intervention structure and appropriate tools more than ever. It is necessary to simultaneously ask the right questions, find original answers, especially with regard to management, projects and tools, and clearly formulate the scope, time frame and various problems in each territory.

Literature Review

Urbanization is fundamentally changing the planet. We can understand this phenomenon in terms of landscapes, demographics, and civilization:

- from the point of view of landscapes: a city is defined by a special type of landscape (buildings, streets, urban material), which radically distinguishes it from rural areas; this also leads to artificial tillage necessary for production and urban life;
- from a demographic point of view: the habitat is urbanizing, and we increasingly live in cities;
- from the point of view of civilization: the urbanization of lifestyle is also the homogenization of lifestyle around the world. Living conditions can be very different, but dreams, customs, norms are becoming standard (UNDP, 2019).

Urban growth is classically the result of three processes:

- natural growth (the difference between fertility and mortality) of the urban population;
- migration from rural areas to cities (or “exodus from rural areas”);
- Reclassification of municipalities that were previously considered rural, but are now considered urban (this is largely due to the phenomenon of urban sprawl).

However, along with the growth of cities, the problem of uneven development has arisen. Over the past ten years, in a context where the problem of widening the development gap between territories has become central, numerous studies have shown that the gap between megacities and other types of territories has increased significantly, whether in terms of wealth production (Davezies, Pech, 2014), employment or population growth and housing attractiveness. Often, faced with this growing inequality, States advocate for the concentration of public investments in densely populated areas where they will bring the greatest return, and for the implementation of territorial policies that promote “productivity increases associated with spatial concentration” (Askenazi, Martin, 2015).

Thus, the combination of dynamics favorable to megacities and a revision of the territorial planning policy based on the goal of territorial equality raises the question of what will become of non-megacities and, in particular, of medium-sized cities. Although these cities have played a key role in the country's urban structure, their demographic and economic weight remains unchanged, and even today they represent a network of territorial organization, service and access to services. Their position and trajectories have become much more fragile (Demazière, 2014; Santamaria, 2012; Floch, Morel, 2011; De Roo, 2007). Some of them, which are under the combined influence of the processes of metropolization and deindustrialization, currently represent disintegrating cities, defined as “urban spaces in which there are population losses, economic recession, reduced employment and social problems, that is, all the symptoms of a structural crisis” (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012). In fact, the process of urban decay affects small and medium-sized cities more than large cities (Wolff et al., 2013; Cauchi-Duval et al., 2016). At the local level, the processes of urban decline are accompanied, on the one hand, by population instability and an increase in socio-spatial inequality, and on the other hand, by growing inequality between often vulnerable urban centers and more prosperous peripheries, which indicates problems of territorial equality.

In this context, the authors aim to test this hypothesis, whether in practice there is a problem of medium-sized cities in Russia and Kazakhstan. And also, to find out whether the territorial planning policy considers the problems specific to these cities, and whether it still pursues the goal of territorial equality on a national scale?

Methods

Research methods are formulated based on the task, as a result of which the following methods and approaches are used:

1. Historical analysis, which includes:

– Analysis of statistical data on the growth of urban population, the number of cities, and migration flows over different historical periods.

– Study of archival documents, legislative acts, urban planning plans reflecting the dynamics of urbanization.

Analysis of scientific literature on the history of urbanization in Russia and Kazakhstan.

2. Comparative analysis:

– Comparison of stages and features of urbanization in Russia and Kazakhstan, identification of common features and differences.

– Comparison with the experience of urbanization in other countries, taking into account the specifics of socio-economic development.

3. Statistical analysis:

– Using data from Rosstat and the Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan on the number of urban and rural populations, population density, and standard of living in cities.

– Calculation of indicators of urbanization, such as the proportion of urban population, urban growth rates, the level of population concentration in large cities.

– Analysis of spatial patterns of urbanization, identification of regions with high and low concentrations of urban population.

4. Risk assessment and problems of effective urbanization management:

– SWOT analysis: identification of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to urbanization in Russia and Kazakhstan.

– Analysis of the factors contributing to the effective management of urbanization and ways to solve the problem.

– Case analysis: study of successful and unsuccessful examples of urbanization management in different cities of Russia and Kazakhstan, identification of success factors and causes of failures.

The research information base consists of normative acts of state and local executive authorities; research work of the World Bank, OECD, UNDP reports; scientific publications in journals and online resources; information on the official website of state and local executive authorities; statistical indicators of the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation, the agency for strategic planning and reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Results

Within the framework of this study, the authors conduct a comparative analysis of the processes of urbanization development in Russia and in Kazakhstan. It is important to emphasize that historically the two countries were part of the same state — the USSR, which led to some similar features of the development of urbanization.

In general, the Soviet history of urbanization, firstly, is associated with a huge movement for exodus from rural areas, when the urban population of the Soviet Union increased from 26.3 million inhabitants to 86.3 million between 1926 and 1955, that is, the level of urbanization of the population ranges from 18 to 50 %. In the minds of Soviet intellectuals, the separation of people from rural areas meant the eradication of former religious and social preferences and the formation of a new person, formed in accordance with revolutionary ideals. There are three main periods in the history of urban planning in the USSR: the revolutionary period from 1917 to the 1930s, the Stalinist period from the 1930s to 1956 and, finally, the post-Stalinist period, defined between 1956 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Robic, 1982).

The urbanization of the Soviet Union was enormous. As for the largest settlements, in 1897 there were 17 cities with a population of more than 100,000 people, in 1926–31, in 1939–82, in 1959–148. In general, the urban population increased almost 4 times in the period from 1926 to 1959 throughout the USSR. Compared to this average, urban areas have increased almost 4 times. The West has taken over the lag (coefficient 2.9), while the eastern regions are significantly ahead (coefficient 5.5) (Alonso, 1964).

It is noteworthy that Kazakhstan developed at the fastest pace: from 1926 to 1959, the number of urban residents increased 8.6 times, only during this period 82 % of cities were urbanized, most often on empty

lands until 1930. The indicator, by the way, differs by zones: the coefficient is 3.2 in Western Kazakhstan; 13.8 in the Karaganda region (Akhmedov, 2019).

Thus, from 1926 to 1959, an extraordinary process of urbanization took place in the USSR, marked by both the development of old cities and the creation of new agglomerations. Both of these aspects of the phenomenon happened very quickly, both one and the other. The evolution of such a scale has, of course, completely changed the face of the urban network, causing a significant growth of old agglomerations, the creation and development of very large new cities, and the emergence of urban centers in remote peripheral regions. Closely related to development and industrialization and widely spread throughout the Union, this urbanization, impressive in its scale and speed, organized and planned through planning, seems to be the very symbol of systematic and effective territorial planning.

In the USSR, trade, which had become an element of the general administrative system, no longer played a decisive role in the economic development of the country. Industry took over, the creation or expansion of factories led to the emergence and growth of cities and the arrival of rural residents leaving the land. And since industry has contributed to the growth of the urban population, it also attracts administrative and commercial services to the city. However, industrialization is the most powerful factor of regional development, the real driving force of any effective territorial planning.

Thus, in this regard, it can be said that the Soviet industrialization policy was largely successful, since it not only significantly increased the economic potential of the country, but also expanded all the regions that thus benefited from development. Industry has really established itself everywhere, revitalizing or creating every city, transforming every small region, sometimes based on local needs, sometimes in order to use regional wealth for the benefit of the Union.

Thus, the city appears not only as a symbol, but also as the main basis for the economic and social development of the Soviet Union. It has been and remains the preferred and often very important tool for the “take-off” or progress of various regions of the Union. It can be said that the urbanization of the Soviet Union corresponded in scale to the industrialization efforts supported by this country, since it was both a condition and a consequence of these efforts.

A. Blum (2004) suggests that some discrepancy, discovered since the 1960s in the demographic characteristics of Central Asia in relation to Russia, is precisely due to the “homogeneous orientation” of the health care system applied to different forms of mortality: “setting mainly technical goals, not caring about local needs, limiting medicine to technical with its approach to providing medical care, it limits and even interrupts this progress. In a sense, Soviet health policy did not understand that it was impossible to treat the situation in the field of health and medicine of the old regime and the modern situation equally” (Blum, 2004, 155). According to him, this is an important factor explaining the very low life expectancy that was still observed after independence in most countries of the former Soviet Union.

A. Blum adds: “Differences in behavior from republic to republic, from socio-cultural space to socio-cultural space have not been changed by integration into a common political whole called the Soviet Union. The space outlined by geographical boundaries outside the Soviet Union was perfectly hermetically sealed to any movement, and the social behaviors underlying demographic attitudes remained tied to them. Common history has not been able to destroy these foundations or cut off these regional ensembles that make up the Soviet Union from their traditional cultural area. The various gaps that occurred throughout the history of the Soviet Union, although they caused many demographic catastrophes, did not affect long-term trends” (Blum, 2004, 146-147).

This demographic conclusion is supported by the economic profile of the specialization of the states formed on the territory of the USSR. Thus, while in the Soviet Union as a whole in 1985 the share of industrial workers was 52 %, in Central Asia this figure fell to 20.6 % — less than in neighbors Iran or Turkey — or even between 15 and 20 % in Tajikistan or Turkmenistan (Table 1).

Table 1. Sectoral national specializations in the USSR

Geographical area	Share of assets in the industry, in %	Geographical area	Share of assets in the industry, in %
Central Asia	20.6	USSR	52.0
Uzbekistan	20.9	Iran	33.0
Kyrgyzstan	27.1	Turkey	29.0
Tajikistan	18.5	Pakistan	16.0
Turkmenistan	14.7	Afghanistan	14.0

Note — compiled by the author based on (Vichnevski A., 1995)

These regional differences should be compared with the levels of urbanization in 1989 (Table 2), which show a strong gap between mature levels of urbanization rates on the European side, with the exception of Moldova, and territories still predominantly rural in the south of the USSR in 1989 — with rates of less than 40 % in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Table 2. National rates of urbanization in the USSR in 1989

Geographical area	Rates of urbanization, in %	Geographical area	Rates of urbanization, in %
Central Asia	40.7	USSR	58.7
Kazakhstan	50.4	Russia	66.4
Azerbaijan	46.9	Latvia	61.9
Georgia	46.4	Estonia	61.4
Moldova	42.1	Lithuania	60.2
Uzbekistan	38.6	Belarus	59.0
Turkmenistan	39.6	Ukraine	58.2
Kyrgyzstan	32.6	Armenia	58.2
Tajikistan	28.0		

Note — compiled by the author based on (Vichnevski A., 1995)

Thus, it should be noted that regional contrasts in demographic, economic and urban dynamics persisted until the end of the USSR's existence and for some time after independence. “The governments of the newly independent states are returning to each region its traditional cultural zone of belonging” (Blum, 2004, 161), however, this affected mass migration in 1990–2000, as in Kazakhstan, where the north of the country was inhabited mainly by Russian speakers who brought their demographic model with them. This is due to the fact that on a smaller scale, demographic imbalances and gaps are observed in regional ensembles, such as in Central Asia and even in individual countries. Thus, Kazakhstan, the “demographic bridge” between Russia and the rest of Central Asia (Seys, 2009, 244), itself seems to consist of several demographic regions more or less corresponding to the “ethnic” occupation and neighboring areas of cultural influence. Based on an ascending hierarchical classification combining 25 demographic indicators (fertility, mortality, migration, marriage, divorce, abortion), O. Seys has identified 4 main regions with a clear demogeographic identity in Kazakhstan since 2007 (Fig. 1).

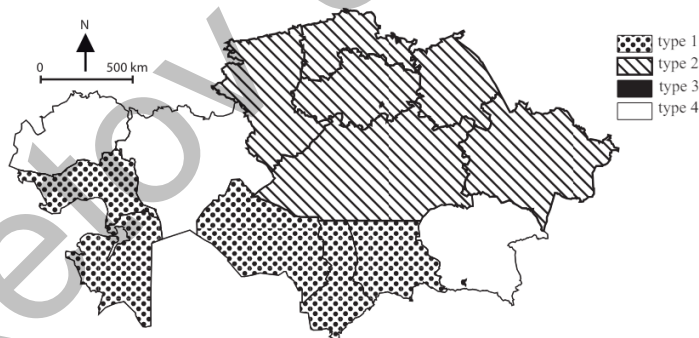


Figure 1. The results of the classification in ascending hierarchy

Note — compiled by the author or compiled by the author based on (Seys F.-O., 2009)

Type 1: South and west of the country. In these regions, there is a very high natural excess due to the high birth rate (ICF greater than or equal to 3) in a more traditional family environment.

Type 2: The north and east of the country seem to be regions with completely opposite dynamics. The natural excess there is close to zero within the framework of more European family models with low fertility and marital status, while the divorce rate and the proportion of illegitimate children are higher there. Two intermediate spaces are emerging between these two regions, one European and the other Central Asian.

Type 3: Despite the fact that they are located in their demographic regions, one in the north, the other in the south, the two cities of Almaty and Astana demonstrate unique dynamics in terms of migration and mortality.

Type 4: The Ural, Aktobe and Almaty regions are in a demonstration-geographical transitional position between the North and south of the country. The level it uses intermediate indicators, be it fertility, mortality, education and family breakdown, as well as migration growth.

Similarly, within Russia, regional economic and demographic differences were strong before the collapse of the USSR. Since then, they have been experiencing both a tendency towards economic and political divergence, as well as a convergence of technical and social infrastructures. At the same time, the authors emphasize the importance of domestic tax transfers to mitigate the overall imbalance of Russian regions. The urban transition model applied to various regions of the former USSR makes it possible to describe differences in the pace and timing of urbanization on this scale (Artemova et al., 2021).

Over the years of independence, public administration of infrastructure and urbanization have stabilized, which indicates an improvement in the situation. However, most medium-sized cities still face high costs for maintaining and upgrading this infrastructure, which leads to significant reductions in services in many cities. It is estimated that 40 % of the former public housing stock, privatized in the 90s, has deteriorated significantly, which has affected the quality of life of citizens, the rising cost of electricity and the impact of cities on the environment.

Obviously, if we compare the two states at the present stage of development, the main difference lies in the size of the country and, based on this, in the types of government — federal and unitary.

In accordance with the federal structure, the state management of the urbanization process is regulated by Federal Law No. 172-FZ dated June 28, 2014 “On Strategic Planning in the Russian Federation” (Garant, 2024). At the same time, the “Spatial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation” is being implemented. Within the framework of the Spatial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation, proposals are being made to improve the settlement system and priority areas for the use of productive forces in the Russian Federation. In accordance with the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation dated August 20, 2015 No. 870 “On the content, composition, procedure for developing and approving a Spatial Development Strategy, as well as on the procedure for monitoring and monitoring its implementation” (Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, 2024), the Strategy has been developed for the entire territory of the Russian Federation with a detailed description of its provisions in the context of the subjects of the Russian Federation.

State management of the urbanization process in Kazakhstan is regulated by Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 1434 dated December 30, 2013, approving the main provisions of the general scheme of organization of the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Adilet, 2024a), as well as by Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan from Kazakhstan No. 634 dated December 13, 2013. At the same time, the Strategy “Kazakhstan 2050: a new political course of an established state” (international, 2024) is being implemented, which sets goals for the successful modernization of the main areas of state activity, including urbanization and international integration.

Statistically, both countries are currently characterized by a high degree of urbanization. Thus, in Russia, the level of urbanization is (74.9 %), and most of the population lives in large cities, of which more than 21 % live in settlements with a population of more than one million people and 31 % in cities with a population of half a million people, one million people (Fig. 2).

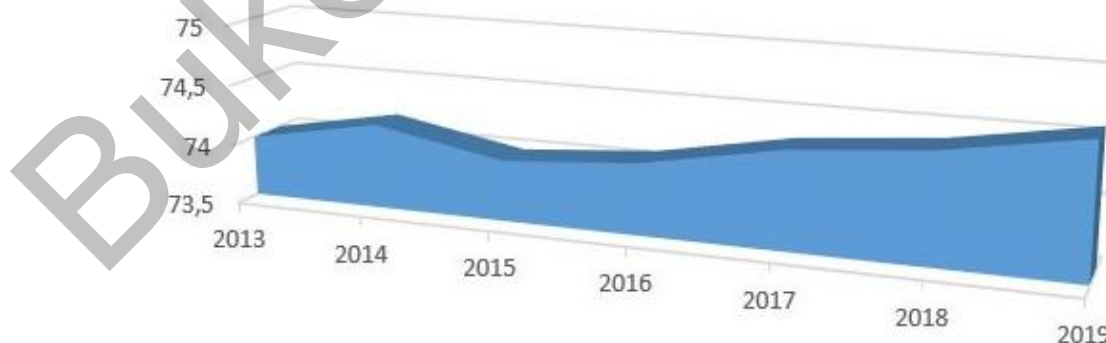


Figure 2. The level of urbanization in Russian Federation, %

Note — compiled by the author or compiled by the author based on (Russian Statistical Yearbook, 2023)

If we compare with the level of urbanization in Kazakhstan, then with a population of 20 million people, the urban population is about 12.5 million people, while the rural population is about 7.5 million people, that is, the level of urbanization is 62.15 % (Fig. 3).

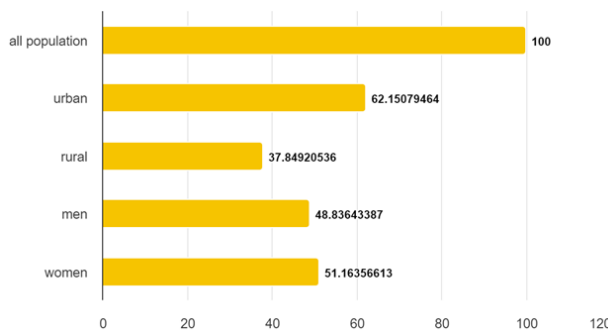


Figure 3. The population by gender and type of settlement at the beginning of 2024, people, as a percentage
 Note — compiled by the author or compiled by the author based on (Bureau of national statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024)

According to two legislative bases, three cities have a special legal status. In Russia, Moscow, St. Petersburg and Sevastopol have a special status of federal significance, and in Kazakhstan, Almaty, Astana and Shymkent have the status of republican significance. Based on this, in both cases, high urbanization and agglomeration are observed in cities with a special legal status. Thus, in Russia, the trend remains unchanged: the cities of the Moscow agglomeration are developing at the fastest pace, while cities that are not regional capitals are generally lagging further behind (Fig. 4).

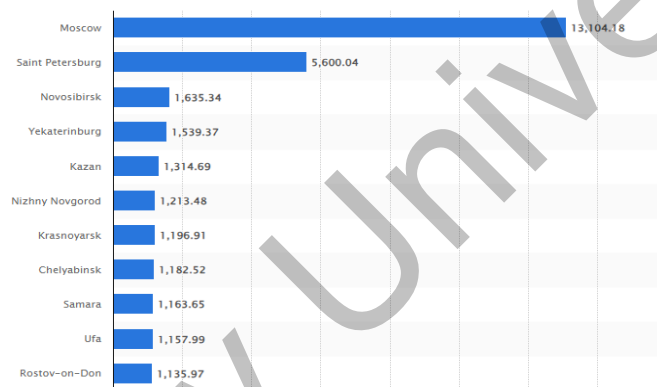


Figure 4. Largest cities in Russia as of January 1, 2023, by population
 Note — compiled by the author or compiled by the author based on (Federal State Statistics Service, 2024b)

The same situation is developing in Kazakhstan: in the former capital of Almaty, and in the current one — Astana. Thus, positive net migration of the population has developed in 4 regions of the country: the cities of Almaty (35,302 people), Astana (33,798 people) and Shymkent (2,756 people), as well as the Almaty region (898 people) (Fig. 5). In his Message, the President of Kazakhstan noted that the previously adopted laws “On the status of the capital” and “On the special status of the city of Almaty” played a positive role, but today they need to be improved. A large number of the population of cities of national importance is no longer a matter of pride, but a reason for concern from the point of view of fully ensuring the socio-economic needs of residents (Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2019).

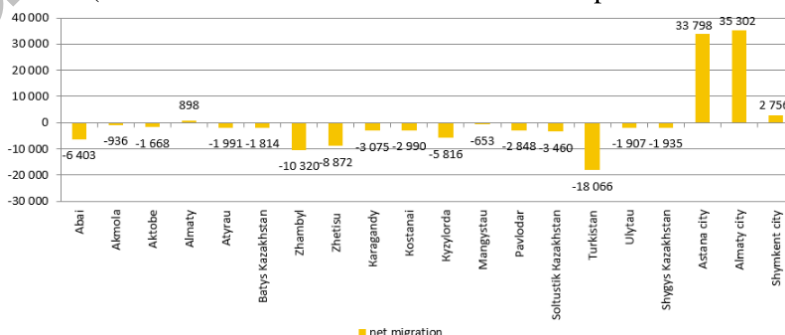


Figure 5. Interregional population migration in Kazakhstan, 2022
 Note — compiled by the author or compiled by the author based on (Bureau of national statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022)

As mentioned above, the indisputable difference between the two countries is the size of the territory and the number of cities. As of March 9, 2024, there are 1,122 cities in Russia, while there are 89 cities in Kazakhstan.

Moreover, the administrative and territorial structure of the countries is fundamentally different. If there are 89 state entities in Russia, that is, subjects that have their own legislative and executive authorities. They include 22 republics, 9 territories, 46 regions, 3 federal cities, 1 autonomous region and 4 autonomous districts. Such a territorial division complicates the state process of managing the urbanization process, but at the same time allows local authorities to consider the specifics when developing and implementing their own development strategies (Federal State Statistics Service, 2024a).

In turn, Kazakhstan has a unitary type of government, which allows for the implementation of a unified policy of the urbanization process throughout the territory. In the Republic of Kazakhstan, as of January 1, 2024, the number of regions is 17, districts — 188, cities — 89, including 3 of republican significance, settlements — 29, rural districts — 2,169, villages — 6,256 (Citypopulation.de, 2022).

Due to the fundamentally different types of administrative and territorial structures, it is extremely difficult to compare the development of the level of urbanization in the two countries. However, in both cases, we are seeing a disproportionate increase in urbanization across the country.

Thus, the most developed cities in Russia are federal and industrial cities that are export-oriented and, as a result, investment-oriented. The wage gap remains unchanged: northern and federal-level cities specializing in the extraction of natural resources are in the lead. Inequality between large cities is also stable and based on objective factors: size, condition, economic specialization and geographical location.

In order to bridge this gap, a Strategy for the Territorial Development of Russia was developed and adopted in 2018. One of its main goals is the formation of large urban agglomerations and a polycentric national space. The strategy provides for the preservation of forty agglomerations with a population of more than half a million people, which qualify as “very large cities, potential growth centers”. It is assumed that the federal budget will allocate additional funds to them for the development of their infrastructure. The first version of the Strategy included from fifteen to twenty settlements. Their number has doubled due to a typical phenomenon in Russia: lobbying local authorities in the hope of obtaining additional funding. The final list now includes all cities with a population of half a million people, regardless of their socio-economic situation and development prospects. It follows from this that if support is indeed provided, it will be carried out in the form of a general selection or will include selection according to more or less opaque criteria.

Another feature of Russia is that agglomerations develop in different ways, which is confirmed by the per capita figures of the forty largest cities in Russia, which are home to more than five hundred thousand people, to which Kaliningrad (475,000 inhabitants) is added. Cities specializing in metallurgy, oil production and petrochemistry, which receive large revenues from the export of their products, remain the main industrial centers (Federal State Statistics Service, 2024a). Federal cities are the most attractive for investment, and the high performance of other regional centers is explained by short-term factors or the fact that they are “tied” to them. In terms of housing construction per capita, southern, more comfortable cities, regional centers of the Black Earth region, as well as Tyumen and Kaliningrad are in the lead.

However, the development of large cities and their agglomerations is hampered by a number of institutional obstacles. All regional centers are municipalities with the status of urban districts, they have little tax revenue and quite little room for maneuver. Most of the taxes go to the regional or federal budget, urban districts are entitled to receive only 15 % of the income tax collected on their territory (in 2012 it was 30 %), as well as taxes on property and real estate (a very low level in Russia). for individuals and taxes for small businesses. On this basis, it is impossible to form a deficit-free budget for a large city. The level of funding for urban districts increased from 47 % in 2010 to 59 % in 2018. In regions with a population of more than a million people, the largest subsidy in 2018 was received by the urban districts of the Chelyabinsk Region (69 %), and in the Sverdlovsk, Rostov regions and the Krasnoyarsk Territory — more than the average (63–64 %). Tatarstan (42 %), Samara and Novosibirsk regions (47 %) were the least prosperous; Nevertheless, even there, regional authorities control almost half of the budget revenues of large cities (Federal State Statistics Service, 2024a).

The lion's share of transfers (34 % out of 59 %) comes from subsidies provided by the regional government, which directs funds to cities. 16 % are subsidies allocated for specific projects, on which the region also makes decisions, while the city must co-finance them. Subsidies (funds that the city can freely use) amount to only 5 %. In short, there is little money in cities that could be spent on their development, man-

agement is determined from above, and almost all the social policy of the municipality (health, education, social security) is transferred to the municipality. the level of the region.

Three decades of independence of Kazakhstan show fairly representative statistics of a gradual slowdown in the growth of the urban population as it leaves the nearest cities. Thus, at the time of independence, an average of 44.2 % of the population lived in cities located within 50 km from the nearest major city. In cities located within a radius of 50–150 km from large cities, the average population growth rate is 17.8 %, and in cities located within a radius of 150–250 km, the average population growth rate is 7.5 %. Suburban settlements, located on average at a distance of more than 250 kilometers from major cities, have not yet restored the population of the Soviet era.

The difference in urban growth rates can be considered a good indicator of the formation of urban nodal systems in which large cities with a population of more than 200 people serve as nodal points, and neighboring cities function in this context, depending, among other things, on the distance from large cities. It is clear why the fastest growing cities near large megacities are those that are known to be mostly residential, such as Zachagansk near Uralsk, Tasboget near Kyzylorda and Kaskelen, located near Almaty.

While in small urban centers, commonly known as industrial cities, there is generally no significant population growth, despite their proximity to large cities. Typical examples of such cities in decline are Saran, Temirtau and Shakhtinsk in the Karaganda region (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

In cities located near large cities, several processes are taking place that determine trends in demographic change. First, many cities located around large cities are beginning to function as suburbs, attracting urban populations from central cities as residential areas. Heavy industry has traditionally been seen as a serious negative impact, so cities with heavy industry may not be well suited to attract people from nearby large cities. The whole process of turning a city into a suburb can be considered as part of a larger suburban landscape, where large cities begin to develop and not only absorb neighboring cities, but also partially abandon residential activities in residential areas.

The transition from a planned economy to a market economy has had a significant impact on the system as a whole and on the organization of urban settlements. The shift in the distribution of cities by size in favor of large cities has become one of the main trends indicating a significant concentration of population in large cities, mainly due to small urban settlements. At the same time, the redistribution of the population from small towns to large ones has also slowed down urbanization.

Thus, in both countries there is an uneven increase in urbanization due to the special status of cities of federal and republican significance and other internal factors. Based on this, the largest cities have the most developed economies and a greater amount of financing and investment. As a result, medium and small towns suffer from loss of human resources, budget shortages and, as a result, lack of economic growth.

Discussions

In the light of all the previously presented data on the Soviet and post-Soviet cities of Russia and Kazakhstan, we see that four types of specificity are distinguished, which can be attributed to the geohistorical conditions characteristic of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the fifteen states of the former Union.

1. Firstly, the teleological aspect of Soviet urbanization is a property that can be clearly traced in the works of Soviet geographers, and, in particular, in the work of B.S. Khorev (1975), for which even the study of urban settlement should be carried out in accordance with the goal attributed to urbanization: the goal of urbanization is the optimal development of productive forces. It is this goal that also motivates B.S. Khorev's work on marginal production and marginal costs per inhabitant in cities of different size categories in order to get a city with an optimal number of inhabitants. As summarized by R. French and F. Hamilton (1979, 19): "Socialist urban models are what is intended, the so-called blueprints for a planned future".

2. The second type of uniqueness is associated with the intra-urban organization of cities with a systemic component and a historical component, that is, the legacy of the conditions of Soviet urbanization: This is the rural character of the population and urban landscapes, their monotony. These inherited characteristics are changing today, but they retain a special identity, urban landscapes formed under socialism are adapting and being reconstructed to new conditions formed by the political, economic and cultural transition to capitalism. Cities in former communist countries can no longer be considered socialist cities. Currently, their development is largely driven by market forces and democratically elected Governments. However, they are also not fully developed capitalist cities.

3. The predominance of new cities in Soviet times, created in large numbers, about a thousand over several decades, was noted as an important feature that contributed to the internal mobility of the country, as well as the monotony of landscapes (with the same urban forms and up to redundant toponyms).

4. The importance of shocks or “catastrophes”: revolution, civil war and “dispossession”, world wars, famine, deportations, shock therapy, etc. gave urbanization in the post-Soviet space very peculiar demographic and social features. Probably the most traumatic shock, the Second World War, turned the age and gender pyramid upside down and shook society, the distribution of men and activities. Thus, peoples were deported far from their homelands, industry was moved to the East, creating new urban research and industrial centers, etc. The Cold War emphasized the nuclear and military industries, contributing to the creation of new isolated and closed cities dedicated to advanced research and the creation of new social conditions (Bochko & Zakharchuk, 2020).

Finally, the special demographic structure of the 1980s inherited from the lower classes formed by the war, they were emphasized and reinforced by the economic restructuring of the 1990s and give rise to probably the most important problem of the 21st century in Russia and the countries of the former USSR: demographic decline and urban population decline.

As a result, incorrect or irregular administrative reforms and biased decentralization processes, and of course, the collapse of the Soviet Union, left many intermediate cities with limited resources and opportunities to solve existing problems. Small and medium-sized cities have found that urban planning processes, long-term spatial planning and control over natural resources are gradually declining. The distribution and redistribution of functions and powers between the central and regional levels affected the effectiveness of management in many cities, and the lack of funding for the implementation of programs necessary for development aggravated the situation.

Thus, in Russia and Kazakhstan, medium and small towns are often characterized by specialized and less diversified economies. Many intermediate cities are struggling to adjust to the slowdown in heavy production and modernize the local economy, which leads to problems attracting investment (Gunnar, 2023). There was also a significant decrease in the population due to a decrease in the birth rate, which seems to be an inevitable problem for many cities in Kazakhstan and Russia, as well as for the migration of young people and entrepreneurs.

In Russia, federal, regional and local political systems have a high hierarchy, and intermediate cities are often on the verge of decisive development, characteristic of small towns and rural areas and whose existence depends on regular interaction with other cities. The fragmentation of their systems, the lack of investments to strengthen their economic ties, and their ability to identify and solve specific problems have affected the prospects for regional integration and the development of intermediate cities (Rastvortseva & Manaeva, 2020).

To overcome these problems, it is necessary to strengthen the administrative and financial capabilities of local governments, as well as decentralize power in accordance with the Law. At the same time, the Law should contribute to the development of a more balanced national policy and the creation of mechanisms that promote the development and modernization of intermediate cities.

Both in Russia and Kazakhstan, more powerful internal development is needed to reduce the dependence of material and social capital, as well as goods from intermediate cities, on knowledge-based activities, creativity and technology, in order to reduce their dependence on imports.

Within the framework of this study, the authors propose to implement a three-part approach to the conceptualization of “medium-sized cities” in the reality of urban and demographic systems:

- A morphological approach in which a small town must meet certain criteria in terms of urban structure and habitat;
- An administrative approach in which priority is given to determining that a small town is a recognized “unit of local government territory” within the broader administrative system of the country;
- Finally, a functional approach in which a small city is a concentration in which economic and social activities are concentrated, services are provided and specific administrative functions of the surrounding regional space are performed, which usually coincides with its concentration of urban and (mostly rural) background. The functional method is especially useful in determining the interaction of a small town with its territory. These functions are largely determined by larger local and regional urban systems, including small towns, and not just by their number of inhabitants or size.

Conclusions

Within the framework of this study, the authors concluded that it is necessary to make some changes to the legislative framework in order for the state management of the urbanization process in Russia and Kazakhstan to become more effective, especially for small and medium-sized cities, according to the concept of “medium-sized cities, cities of equilibrium” based on the following principles:

1. Differentiation of support strategies depending on medium-sized cities

Territorial analysis makes it possible to identify needs and problems that differ depending on the territory, in connection with the identification of their vulnerability. Therefore, it is necessary that the support strategies adopted by public authorities take them into account. To this end, we recommend using thematic approaches supported by the Territories by:

- modulating existing social mechanisms in accordance with the variety of problems faced by the Territories;
- orientation, in particular, in areas with a high degree of vulnerability or areas with limited opportunities to solve the tasks facing them;
- giving preference to actions developed at the local level that can contribute to the reduction of national goals in the Territories, for example, in the field of environmental transition, combined with support and assessment tools.

2. Mobilization and adaptation of existing public policy mechanisms

The multitude of existing mechanisms, the intersections of their perimeters and the multidimensional nature of the problems of medium-sized cities put forward in this work emphasize the importance of strengthening their mobilization. To do this, we recommend giving preference to mobilizing and adapting existing mechanisms, rather than creating new programs or calls for projects, by:

- systematizing, strengthening and sharing at the initial stage assessments of each device in a logic of continuous improvement based on feedback on practical experience;
- exploring on this basis and in collaboration with interested communities the possibilities of improving the formulation of national public policy (whether at the legislative and regulatory level);
- encouragement and support of inter-territorial cooperation through incentive mechanisms (programs and financing aimed at creating an image), allowing to support both design and possible follow-up actions.

3. Consolidating and ensuring sustainable access to a minimum base of amenities and services in medium-sized cities

The study highlights the balancing role of medium-sized cities at the local level, especially in terms of offering amenities and services. We recommend creating conditions to maintain this balancing role, paying special attention to the access of all citizens to a minimum base of amenities and services, by:

- accurately characterizing the level and quality of the amenities and services they offer in order to identify possible shortcomings;
- identification within the framework of partnerships between large cities and regions of medium-sized cities that play this balancing role;
- defining principles to ensure, with the necessary modularity, a minimum base of amenities and services in these cities, especially with regard to medical care, secondary education, higher education, etc.;
- initiating a joint investment plan between the State and local territorial authorities to ensure this minimum base and ensure its effective management in the long term.

4. Strengthening territorial analysis

The work carried out highlighted the importance and complexity of objectifying the dynamics and phenomena occurring in the territories in real time. From this point of view, it seems necessary to facilitate the development of an analysis of current phenomena and their potential changes in the territories. To do this, we recommend improving territorial knowledge in support of decision-making by:

- generalizing the continuous provision of spatial data and indicators (indicators of intra-territorial and inter-territorial flows, distribution indicators that consider population mobility, etc.),
- in the context of data openness, it would be useful to analyze the area of operational data useful for territorial analysis (telecommunications, mobility, real estate, territorial projects, etc.). In the case of projects supported by public authorities, the possibility of conditionality of financing by data openness could be considered; collecting this data at the national level and providing access to it in an open data format to facilitate the development of common diagnostic data;

– creating opportunities for dialogue between various public and private actors at the regional and national levels to enhance knowledge about the Territory and a common vision. In this regard, it is proposed to expand the competence of the regional level in the field of coordination and exchange of territorial knowledge in accordance with the powers granted by law in relation to territorial planning and management of location-based data platforms;

– to facilitate the assessment of academic research activities and initiatives in the field of practical research in the territorial sphere, as well as their rapprochement with public entities and private individuals.

5. Developing forward-looking vision and engineering capabilities in medium-sized cities

In order to anticipate the upcoming transition processes, it seems advisable to generalize the construction of common perspective visions in the Territories, providing them with opportunities for action. To do this, we recommend developing long-term analysis capabilities and consolidating engineering developments in medium-sized cities by:

– facilitating local exercises to analyze territorial dynamics and prospects, with the participation of all stakeholders, at the stage of preparing regulatory documents (urban planning documents, territorial climate-air-energy plans, regional planning schemes, sustainable development and territorial equality, regional economic development schemes, etc.) so that they can stimulate these approaches;

– initiating national reflections on this topic from the point of view of promoting the “professional development” of communities and their operators;

– stimulating and supporting the exchange of experience and even the sharing of engineering developments, especially based on local initiatives.

In this context, an updated approach to public management of the urbanization process could be considered with the help of the recommendations presented, as well as become the subject of further scientific research.

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Қазақстан Республикасында және шетелде урбанизация процестерін дамыту: салыстырмалы талдау

Аңдатпа:

Мақсаты: Зерттеудің мақсаты — жүз жылға жуық кезеңнің хронологиялық шеңберін қамтитын Қазақстан мен Ресейдегі урбанизацияның даму процестерін салыстырмалы талдау.

Әдісі: Нақтылау және абстракция; ретроспективті талдау және жіктеу; салыстырмалы талдау; сипаттамалық әдіс; ғылыми талдау мен синтездің статистикалық әдістері мен тәсілдері пайдаланылды.

Қорытынды: Зерттеудің негізгі нәтижелері келесі тұжырымдарда жинақталған:

- 1980-ші жылдардағы ерекше демографиялық құрылым 1990-шы жылдардағы экономикалық қайта құрумен нығайтылды және ХХІ ғасырдағы Ресей мен бұрынғы КСРО елдеріндегі ең маңызды проблеманы тудырды: демографиялық құлдырау және қала халқының азаюы.

- Қазіргі уақытта бұрынғы социалистік қалалардың дамуы негізінен нарықтық күштермен және демократиялық жолмен сайланған үкіметтермен анықталады. Дегенмен, олар толық дамыған капиталистік қалалар емес.

- Ресей мен Қазақстанның урбанизациясының негізгі ұқсастығы федералды және республикалық маңызы бар ең дамыған ірі қалалар (Мәскеу және Санкт-Петербург, Алматы және Астана) мен артта қалған орта және шағын қалалар арасындағы алшақтық.

- Ресей мен Қазақстанда орта және шағын қалалар көбінесе мамандандырылған және әртараптандырылмаған экономикамен сипатталады.

Тұжырымдама: Ресей мен Қазақстан орта және шағын қалаларын дамытуда негізгі проблемаларға тап болады. Атап айтсақ: қаржыландырудың болмауы және/немесе тиімсіз пайдалану; орталықсыздандыру үшін кедергілер; жеткіліксіз тиімді нормативтік-құқықтық база және стандарттардың болмауы немесе оларды орнықты және экологиялық дамуға қатысты тиімсіз енгізу.

Кілт сөздер: мемлекеттік басқару, урбанизация, жаһандану, тұрақты даму, қалалар, мегаполистер.

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Развитие процессов урбанизации в Республике Казахстан и за рубежом: сравнительный анализ

Аннотация:

Цель: Целью исследования является сравнительный анализ процессов развития урбанизации в Казахстане и в России, охватывающий хронологические рамки почти столетнего периода.

Методы: Конкретизация и абстракция; ретроспективный анализ и классификация; сравнительный анализ; описательный метод; статистические методы и методы научного анализа и синтеза.

Результаты: Ключевые результаты исследования обобщены в следующих выводах:

- Особая демографическая структура 1980-х годов была усилена экономической перестройкой 1990-х годов и породила, вероятно, самую важную проблему XXI века в России и странах бывшего СССР: демографический спад и сокращение городского населения.

- В настоящее время развитие бывших социалистических городов в значительной степени определяется рыночными силами и демократически избранными правительствами. Однако они также не являются полностью развитыми капиталистическими городами.

- Основным сходством урбанизации России и Казахстана является разрыв между наиболее развитыми крупнейшими городами федерального и республиканского значения и отстающими средними и малыми городами.

- В России и Казахстане средние и малые города часто характеризуются специализированной и менее диверсифицированной экономикой.

Выводы: Развитие средних и малых городов России и Казахстана сталкивается с основными проблемами: недостаток финансирования и/или неэффективное использование; барьеры для децентрализации; недостаточно эффективная нормативно-правовая база и отсутствие стандартов или их малоэффективное внедрение касательно устойчивого и экологичного развития.

Ключевые слова: государственное управление, урбанизация, глобализация, устойчивое развитие, города, мегаполисы.

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