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# Philosophical understanding of urban culture in an interdisciplinary context

The authors set themselves the goal of characterizing the culture and spiritual life of the city within the framework of an interdisciplinary approach. The article substantiates an interdisciplinary approach to the study of urban culture, since the complex ambiguous nature of city culture cannot be fully described and studied from the standpoint of any monodisciplinary approach. However, both cultural, semiotic and environmental factors are important in the study of certain aspects of the material and spiritual urban culture. The authors emphasize that the environmental approach is one of the most sought-after methodological approaches to analysis. Thus, urban architecture as the most important component of the city's material culture, which differs in fundamental features in various historical eras, represented by various architectural styles (antique, architectural modernism, minimalism, etc.) and involves joint actions by designers, philosophers, architects, as well as civil engineers, financiers, representatives of local authorities and, most importantly, members of the public. The article provides an analysis of domestic and foreign studies of urban culture, shows the transformation of assessments of the city, urban spiritual life, urban culture. "Urban culture" is characterized as an artificially created environment for people to exist and realize themselves. The study examines the vectors of development of the culture of a modern city.

*Keywords:* city, urban culture, spiritual life of the city, contemporary urban culture, creativity, modern city, cultural industries, cross-cultural communications, mission of culture, cultural capital, chronotopy of the city.

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## *Introduction*

The relevance of the study of contemporary urban culture is due to its transformation (old traditions and rituals are disappearing, urban space is expanding due to the increase in population and the need to develop infrastructure).

Cities and cultures are inseparable from each other. It is this interconnection and interdependence that give the urban environment that special individuality that requires mutual adaptation and attracts researchers.

The work provides a comprehensive interdisciplinary analysis of the object of study — urban culture in its dynamics, categories and theoretical models created within the framework of various disciplines: philosophy, psychology, sociology, cultural studies.

The use of an interdisciplinary approach in studying the complex synthetic nature of urban culture made it possible to overcome the narrowness of monodisciplinary approaches that consider urban culture in one of the aspects outside the relationship of all cultural phenomena.

## *Research methods*

The authors used the most appropriate approaches, such as interdisciplinary, cultural, comparative and methods of cultural-historical analysis, comparative typological method, etc.

## *Results and discussion*

Cities arise, change, disappear and in all their stages of existence and development remain an object of study for many modern researchers. Special attention to urban culture as a systemic formation can be seen in those studies that take into account the results of studies by M. Weber, J. Baudrillard, F. Braudel, H. Ortega y Gasset, L. Velikhov, O. Genisaretsky and others, in which urban culture and its dynamics were considered in various aspects, which allowed them and their followers to move away from a monodisciplinary consideration of urban culture.

Foreign and domestic studies paid an important role to the issues of the ethnic component of the cultural system of the city.

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Migration processes that have covered the entire planet make their own adjustments to city development plans. The crazy growth of cities is caused by the resettlement of significant masses to cities with higher wages than in regions. This is a very serious social problem and these problems must be solved by states and governments. Programs for the development of small cities must be developed, the living space of which must become more comfortable than megacities. Has anyone thought about why there are no megalopolis development projects in Great Britain or Germany, why megalopolises have suddenly sprung up like mushrooms in the developing countries of Latin America and Southeast Asia? Now they are trying to implement a similar project in some post-Soviet states. Who benefits from this? What socio-cultural problems will arise and are already arising in cities where a huge number of migrants have appeared? Donэt we see constant protests by migrants in European cities? Who cares? The desire to get cheap labor by business nullifies all declared social projects, creates problems in education and healthcare, whose representatives have completely forgotten the essence of healthcare, outlined by N. Semashko. As for interethnic and interfaith problems, in Kazakhstan they are largely prevented thanks to the activities of the public under the patronage of the APK, the main institution of civil society. The authors set themselves the goal of characterizing the culture and spiritual life of cities, based on the concepts and views of renowned researchers, both foreign and domestic, whose experiences Kazakhstan should draw upon. This approach aims to provide not only significant profits to developers but also a happy, comfortable life for citizens, with due attention to spiritual culture, such as art galleries, opera, and ballet theaters. Notable examples include the ballet of Bulat Ayukhanov, the permanent director of the "Young Ballet of Alma-Ata", and the distinguished opera artists Kulyash Baiseitova, Ermek Serkebayev, Alibek Dnishev, among others.

It is impossible not to emphasize the influence on the domestic theory of the city and urban culture of the Soviet period, which was exerted by the works of M.S. Kagan, who considered "the city as an integral self-organizing socio-cultural system, who identified urban culture with European civilization": "The city throughout its history has turned out to be the creator and bearer of a special type of culture and continues to be so to this day. It was in the city that culture entered that phase of its history which is commonly called civilization" [1; 15].

There is no objection to the assertion that "urban culture was not born suddenly and instantly, but evolved along with the development of human society and such a form of its unification as cities. However, researchers do not have a consensus on what period of time the history of cities can be counted from and what historical type of settlement can be called urban in the full sense of the word. In particular, M.S. Kagan, examining the evolution of types of culture, notes «that three types of culture were initially formed from prehistoric existence: the culture of cattle-breeding tribes, the culture of agricultural peoples, and the culture of the ancient Greeks and Romans. A feature of the latter was the developed handicraft production that developed within the framework of special city-states (polises), different from the urban settlements of the East"… [2; 151]. It was "the Greek polis that directed the development of culture in a different direction, opening up to humanity unlimited possibilities for progress" [3; 426].

The developing city of the late European Middle Ages required the development of rational scientific knowledge, the spread of writing, the transformation of education, the elimination the church's dominance over science, which had not yet been overcome even in the conditions of the Renaissance. People sacrificed their lives for the sake of these transformations. The birth and formation of new value ideals was accompanied by terrible personal tragedies. Urban culture was born in the harshest conditions of overcoming religious prohibitions. All these transformations should have met the needs of the new emerging industrial civilization, the development of secular culture, which, following the representatives of the Renaissance, did not agree to recognize God as the highest value, but recognized Man as the creator. The emerging industrial civilization gave rise to the development of not only elite, but also mass culture, new design solutions for the urban landscape, the development of a culture of interethnic and interfaith interaction, and cultural dialogue. The new conditions for the formation of an industrial society required democratic transformations of public life, including the development of new channels of interaction between the authorities and civil society, and fair relations between employers and employees.

As is known, "the era of feudalism brought new changes: the transformation of culture into a system of subcultures. In this system, a special role fell to the culture of the medieval city, or burgher culture, since it was in it that the future (Renaissance) type of culture was born, because the needs and interests of the new social stratum that was forming in the city — the "class of townspeople", as F. Engels called it, gave rise to a special psychology and ideology" [2; 151]. In this case, M.S. Kagan expresses a widespread point of view, which "sees the origins of urban culture in the European Middle Ages" [2; 162].

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The contribution of Yu.M. Lotman to the development of the theory of urban culture is determined by his creation of the semiotics of the city. [4] In his works devoted to the semiotics of St. Petersburg [4], Yu.M. Lotman identifies several criteria necessary to consider a city as a semiotic system. He suggests considering a city from different perspectives: “a city as a name, a city as a space, a city as time” [4; 173].

Semiotics, perceived by modern researchers as a meta-science, allows us to assert that the semiotic approach is universal, and allows us to reveal the essence of urban architecture, since signs and symbols as information carriers allow us to analyze the semiotics of architectural texts. An article by Berestovskaya D.S., Petrenko A.P. is devoted to a semiotic approach to the analysis of urban culture and the architectural appearance of the city. The architectural space of the city: a semiotic approach, according to which «the departure from stylistic design has created many inconsistencies between the psychological needs of a person in an artificially created environment and the desire of the architect (and the customer) to demonstrate originality» [5; 25]. In other words, a lot depends on the so-called “aggressive” advertising.

Yuri Lotman, analyzing the semiotic space of the city, considered architectural structures as a semiotic background of the urban environment. From his point of view, mentality, value preferences, behavior, and system of views tie everything together.

Today, the destruction of monuments around the world, the demolition of old architectural structures in residential areas and industrial zones, the renaming of cities, streets, and squares in individual countries does not take into account semiotic model of urban culture and urban space. What is the innovativeness of modern architecture? To what extent does it meet the current requirements? Does it meet the spirit of the times, is it associated with scientific and creative space, with cross-cultural communications?

New symbols and signs are mostly not only alien to socio-psychological perception, but also to historical models of thinking, and breaking them over the course of one generation is unlikely to give positive results, the history of the city is preserved not only in memory, but also in architecture and building. Will future generations have to restore monuments and return historically significant names to cities and streets?

Architectural structures are also considered as a system of signs by U. Eco: “Significant forms, codes, formed under the influence of usage (from the Latin usus — use, custom, rule, generally accepted by the speakers of this language of the use of linguistic units), and which are put forward as a structural model of communication, denotative and connotative meaning — this is precisely the semiological universe in which the interpretation of architecture as communication is legally possible”. “The only objects that can be meaningfully engaged with are architectural elements that serve as significant forms” [6; 212]. For U. Eco, who viewed the sign in architecture as an architectural object itself, “in an architectural sign, the signifier is inherently tied to its actual functional purpose” [6; 210].

What necessary tools allow us to systematize and synthesize data on the processes of the cultural life of the city, in order to understand their significance for world cultural development? What is their innovative potential and what are the most problematic issues in the process of urban development that need to be addressed first?

In his work Culture as the Ideological Battleground of the Modern World-System, I. Wallerstein “proposes to speak not about culture in general, but to see and analyze its two “tonalities”, which, in his opinion, best illustrate the processes occurring in the modern world-system. On the one hand, culture should be understood as a unique set of value characteristics and behavioral features inherent in one group and not inherent in another, such that each group has an authentic culture. In this axiological sense or tonality, culture is a way of accumulating cultural and social experience and values that help to distinguish “ours” from “others”. Another tonality of culture is used to denote differences within one culture, hence the distinction between elite and mass culture, spiritual and material” [7; 31].

I. Wallerstein uses both the term “global culture” and “world culture” [7]. “However, both concepts have similar semantics for the American researcher — with a claim to universality and relevance of universalistic values” [8; 147].

In the works “Civilizations and Modes of Production: Contradictions and Points of Conjugation”, “Culture as an Ideological Battlefield in the Modern World-System”, “Culture and the Modern World-System: A Response to Roy Boyne”, “National and Universal: Is a World Culture Possible?”, “Clash of Cultures? Who Are We? Who Are the Others?”, “Global Culture: Salvation, Threat, or Myth?” and others examine the process of globalization and its consequences. So, relying on the ideas of I. Wallerstein, despite the odious assessment of his reasoning by some researchers, following his logic, we can agree that urban culture cannot be understood outside the mechanisms of formation of national culture and the consequences of migration, the

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relationship between universalism and particularism, intercultural interaction in the context of acceleration of globalization processes.

Over the past decades, studies examining the influence of the urban environment on representatives of various population groups have become an independent scientific direction that actively uses foreign experience, including the experience of the Chicago sociological school. One cannot agree that at the present stage of social development, human life is increasingly associated with cities, and cities have occupied an important place in history, especially in the history of culture, and their role is growing so much that some researchers take the liberty of asserting that in the future the main population of the planet will be concentrated in megacities.

Understanding culture as an environment for existence and self-realization, one that is deliberately created by people, remains an undeniable truth in contemporary discourse. Why is the vector of development of both city and urban culture so ambiguous? The city is not only an architectural phenomenon, a work of construction art, but also a socio-cultural formation, where various forms of human life, material and spiritual, are presented. The foundations of material urban culture are formed during the design and construction phases of the city, with its development unfolding as cultural potential accumulates, closely tied to production. Culture is not only one of the spheres of the urban organism, including the cultural institutions of the city, but also the culture of the urban spatial environment: streets, courtyards, public institutions, etc., which is primarily a material component of urban culture, but is also the level of the city's population, its needs, interests, orientations, and spiritual life in general.

Modern urban culture is a unique formation, whose distinctive qualities can be contrasted not only with nature but also with the culture of the classical urban type, where everything was crafted from natural materials and closely connected to nature. In contrast, the culture of modern urbanism is primarily characterized by the practical and transformative activities of people, as well as the advancement of science and technology. However, today, the reproduction of natural laws through industrial analogues, as proposed by bionics, demonstrates the 'bionic' optimization of architectural structures. This has become one of the key principles in modern design, subtly guiding us back toward nature and the natural environment. This is made possible by applying the strong, stable formations found in nature — structures that, despite their high specific rigidity and distinct mechanical properties create a harmony now being utilized in bionic architecture. The core principles of architectural bionics rest on the idea that nature already holds solutions to many of the challenges encountered in construction.

The term "bionic architecture" was first used by the American architect L.G. Sullivan, the "father of skyscrapers", in the 1890s. What inspired architects in bionic architecture? Architecture gradually became part of the philosophy of using new opportunities for a prosperous human life, relying on natural processes.

Bionic architecture is based principle that takes into account natural laws, which then and today remain fundamentally important for humans. The space of such a building, which is not just an analogue of natural formations: the curvature of the outlines of forms, which is either a semblance of mollusk shells, honeycombs, climbing vines, etc., has a positive effect on humans due to the similarity with the natural habitat. Bionics in architecture is, first of all, more comfortable, more harmonious, more reliable spaces for both human life and survival. Suddenly, it became clear that the demand for a natural, harmonious environment filled with air, greenery, and natural elements is growing. And environmental issues are becoming increasingly relevant in both landscape design and the appearance of buildings.

In a modern technocratic society, bionic architecture creates buildings that seamlessly integrate with nature, rather than conflicting with it, offering spaces where people can fully relax, unwind, and escape the hustle and bustle of the city. The greatest bionic-based structures in the world: the Eiffel Tower in Paris (repeats the shape of the tibia), the Swallow's Nest stadium in Beijing, the Aqua skyscraper in Chicago, the Nautilus or Shell residential building in Naucalpan, the Sydney Opera House, the swimming complex in Beijing, Casa Caracol in Mexico, etc.

Modern studies of the architectural space of the city very often rely on the environmental approach.

This is primarily due to the multifaceted nature of the concept of "environment" itself. At the same time, we must not forget that a city is not only an architectural phenomenon, a work of construction art, but also a socio-cultural formation where various forms of human activity, both material and spiritual, are represented.

Vectors of development of the city and urban culture depend on various factors, but ultimately on the level of economic development, the type of society, and management models. Each of the models of managing the development of the city and urban culture is substantively related to the theories of economic growth,

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new urbanism, and includes all or individual elements of the concepts of healthy, inclusive, entrepreneurial, smart, creative cities. All these concepts are united by the task of determining additional resources, conditions, and grounds for the development of cities. Richard Sennett in his work "Capitalism in the Big City: Globalization, Flexibility, and Indifference" reminds us of Simmel's position and shows how alienation arises at all social levels in a globalized metropolis. What is the justification for the increase in violence in interactions in modern cities, educational institutions, and in interpersonal relations in general, and not only in the West? Will hostility and violence be a characteristic feature of the coming era? If we follow the ideas of, for example, G. Simmel, then we have to admit that "city dwellers are essentially "strangers" to each other"? [9] emphasizes that "the power of strangeness made sense in Simmel's time" [9; 96].

Why has the culture of tolerance, the prospects of which were spoken of with such rapture at the turn of the millennium, been replaced in spiritual life by the rejection of the "Other" as "Alien", as alien and hostile?

Following these conclusions, we must ask ourselves the question: how should we behave towards others: by cooperating with like-minded people and distancing ourselves from all others, the so-called strangers, who are hostile to ourselves, or should this contradiction be overcome? To what extent can this principle of tolerance be universal? The mayor of Brussels, the capital of the European Union, being a Muslim, calmly answered the puzzled questions of Brussels residents about the construction of a mosque: atheist Europeans do not need churches, but Muslims need mosques. It would seem that one should not go to someone else's monastery with one's own charter, but as practice shows, various kinds of refugees behave quite aggressively in the countries where they were accepted, whipping up fear among local residents. At the same time, Sennett emphasizes, "A fairly impartial attitude towards everyone is assumed, driven by a simple caution toward the unknown or a reluctance to become involved in another's personal world". [10; 105]. Sennett explains this attitude by the influence of many factors on the dynamics of urban culture, including industrial activity, social structure, lifestyle, socio-psychological characteristics of citizens, their value preferences, economic interests, political sympathies and antipathies, in other words, internal and external socio-cultural and other reasons. The era when tolerance played a significant role in European cities — when the ability to see the 'other' not as an enemy, but as someone to be understood and accepted, and when the legitimacy of multiple truths, diverse cultures, values, and perspectives was recognized — is now a thing of the past. Uncontrolled forced migration has led to the recognition of a crisis of tolerance. Contrary to the principles of the socio-cultural approach that determine the cultural development of the city, based on the analysis of internal and external factors, on the basis of which a conclusion was made about the mutual enrichment of cultures entering into dialogue, today the marginal behavior of an individual in a modern city with a large number of migrants, especially illegal ones, not only does not disappear, but becomes more flexible and diverse, which aggravates the situation of social and cultural asymmetry in the modern city, provokes a crisis of personal identity, hinders the process of social integration — both of individuals and social groups, contributes to the destabilization of public order and tension in society, aggravates the growing contradictions associated with the deterioration of material well-being and the crisis of the spiritual foundations of society.

R. Sennett gives a very harsh description of what is happening: "Short-term employment also affects relationships within companies. Working on problem solving is associated with serious stress; in teams that do not win, mutual accusations usually appear in the last stages of joint work. Building informal trust takes time, and to achieve something remarkable together, you need to truly know the people you're working with. Short-term employment in the organization encourages people not to strain themselves, not to delve into the work, as they know it will soon come to an end. In fact, this lack of mutual obligations is one of the reasons why trade unions find it so difficult to organize workers in flexible industries or in enterprises, say, in Silicon Valley; the understanding of brotherhood as a common destiny, a stable set of common interests is lost" [10; 104]

The tolerant society of the West, as recognized by European political leaders in the recent past, has undergone a spiritual rebirth: a crisis of tolerance has set in. Spiritual life, as a complex subsystem of social life, which includes interfaith and interethnic relations, demonstrates incompatibility and rejection of each other. And obviously, this trend will intensify. Will this thicket of confrontations pass Kazakhstani society? It is too early to predict positive or negative consequences? The main elements of spiritual life are priority spiritual values and people's needs. The lessons of the Soviet past enable us to view spiritual life as an evolving, active, and creative process in which the individual engages in spiritual production, encompassing the creation, distribution, and consumption of various spiritual values. While during the years of Soviet power, people of different ethnicities and religions, by the will of fate, who found themselves on the territory of Kazakhstan, began to feel like an organic part of it, it is now impossible to claim that this sense of unity remains

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a defining characteristic of the population of modern Kazakhstan, which is explained by both spiritual and economic factors.

*Conclusion*

So, the diversity of urban life, where culture exists in many dimensions, is represented by specific components. Considering the interdependence of material and spiritual urban culture, we have to recognize the decisive role of the economy, politics, ecology as the most important aspects of human life, because socio-economic relations in the urban environment and the degree of participation of the population in socio-cultural processes are the main ones.

A serious analysis of the ethnic and religious components of urban culture is necessary, new ways of their interaction are needed, as ethnocultural associations alone are insufficient. Serious programs on cultural interaction are needed here. Forums, festivals dedicated to the culture and art of ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan and represented not only by amateurs, but also by professional groups from their historical homeland are needed. It is essential for the state to allocate sufficient resources to this area, particularly given the underdevelopment of patronage in the country. Additionally, the interaction between education and science requires significant improvement. This can be illustrated by the ongoing initiatives in European countries aimed at identifying the nation with the most favorable living conditions.

Ignoring the cultural approach to determining the degree of readiness of the individual and various social groups for targeted changes in interaction, we risk encountering the old and familiar truth: a common misfortune unites. We must feel united not only in the face of a catastrophe, but also in the process of peaceful creation. We must not only criticize the past, but also develop in ourselves the ability to constructively resolve emerging issues.

Culture influences many things, it plays an important role in social life, in the life of each individual, forming and determining many social and economic processes. Therefore, such elements of culture as education, upbringing, artistic life and cultural and leisure activities are so important.

This determines the upbringing of appropriate life guidelines, value preferences and understanding of one's vital interests, which the state should protect. The implementation of this protection is possible, as it is commonly known, on the basis of the principle of tripartism. It can be recognized that the semiotic approach developed by Yu. Lotman and his followers can be applied not only in the analysis of the architectural space of the city, but also in the formation of various schemes of architectural communication. It is obvious that the satisfaction of the population with education, health care, science, and leisure depend on a satisfactory or unsatisfactory solution to the issue of organizing and developing the urban cultural environment.

The cultural environment influences consumer culture and the interests of the community and contributes to the development of urban space and the harmonization of public life.

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## Қалалық мәдениетті пәнаралық кеңмәтінінде философиялық тұрғыдан түсіну

Авторлар пәнаралық көзқарас аясында қаланың мәдениеті мен рухани өмірін сипаттауды мақсат еткен. Мақалада қалалық мәдениетті зерттеуге пәнаралық көзқарас негізделген, өйткені қала мәдениетінің күрделі екі-ұшты сипаты кез келген монодисциплинарлық көзқарас тұрғысынан толық сипаттауға және зерттеуге мүмкіндік бермейді. Алайда, мәдени, семиотикалық және қоршаған орта факторлары материалдық және рухани жағынан қалалық мәдениеттің кейбір аспектілерін зерттеуде маңызды. Қоршаған ортаға негізделген тәсіл талдаудың ең сұранысқа ие әдістемелік тәсілдерінің бірі екені туралы айтылған. Сонымен қатар, қалалық сәулет қаланың материалдық мәдениетінің маңызды құрамдас бөлігі, ол тарихи дәуірлердегі әртүрлі архитектуралық стильдермен (ежелгі, архитектуралық модернизм, минимализм және т.б.) ұсынылған және дизайнерлердің, философтардың және сәулетшілердің, сондай-ақ құрылыс инженерлерінің, қаржыгерлердің, жергілікті билік өкілдерінің, ең бастысы, қоғам өкілдері секілді әртүрлі принциптік ерекшеліктерімен айрықшаланады. Мақалада қалалық мәдениеттің отандық және шетелдік зерттеулеріне талдау жасалып, қала, қалалық рухани өмір, қалалық мәдениетті бағалауларының өзгеруі көрсетілген. «Қалалық мәдениет» тіршілік ету үшін адамдар жасанды түрде жасаған және өзін-өзі жүзеге асыру ортасы ретінде сипатталады. Зерттеу қазіргі қала мәдениетінің даму векторларын қарастырған.

*Кілт сөздер:* қала, қала мәдениеті, қаланың рухани өмірі, заманауи қала мәдениеті, шығармашылық, заманауи қала, мәдени индустриялар, мәдениетаралық коммуникациялар, мәдениет миссиясы, мәдени капитал, қаланың хронотопиясы.

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## Философское осмысление городской культуры в междисциплинарном контексте

Авторы поставили перед собой цель охарактеризовать культуру и духовную жизнь города в рамках междисциплинарного подхода. В статье обосновывается выбор данного подхода в изучении городской культуры, поскольку сложный неоднозначный характер культуры города не поддается полному описанию и исследованию с позиций какого-либо монодисциплинарного подхода. Однако и культурологический, и семиотический, и средовый факторы важны при исследовании тех или иных аспектов материальной и духовной городской культуры. Подчеркивается, что средовой подход является одним из наиболее востребованных методологических подходов к анализу. Городская архитектура, как важнейшая составляющая материальной культуры города, отличается принципиальными особенностями в различные исторические эпохи. Она представлена различными архитектурными стилями, такими как античный, модернизм, минимализм и другие, и требует совместных действий дизайнеров, философов, архитекторов, а также инженеров-строителей, финансистов, представителей местной власти и, что немаловажно, представителей общественности. В статье проводится анализ отечественных и зарубежных исследований городской культуры, раскрывается трансформация оценок города, городской духовной жизни и городской культуры. «Городская культура» характеризуется как искусственно созданная людьми среда для существования и самореализации. В исследовании рассматриваются векторы развития культуры современного города.

*Ключевые слова:* город, городская культура, духовная жизнь города, современная городская культура, креативность, современный город, культурные индустрии, кросс-культурные коммуникации, миссия культуры, культурный капитал, хронотопия города.

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