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# Architectural images and symbols of the regional identity of modern architecture in Kazakhstan

Las imágenes arquitectónicas y los símbolos de la identidad regional de la arquitectura moderna en Kazajistán

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## SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The content of the research is devoted to identifying the architectural images and identity symbols of modern cities of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The relevance is the need to find new ways to create a regional architecture based on a set of principles of traditional art of building, modern innovations, capable of being not only unique in terms of the materials and structures used, but also being a part of the culture of Kazakhstan, part of the national, local self-identification. **Materials and Methods:** Aim of the study is a search for images and symbols of the city's identity in Kazakhstan, as promising areas of the study and subsequent in the development of region. The basis of this research is made up of the theoretical works and a sociological survey and the features of the current city's environment in Kazakhstan, images and architectural symbols of settlements, symbols of the country, were determined. **Results and Discussion:** The idea is substantiated that the search for representative images of buildings and structures play an important role, being a kind of "icons" of self-identification of citizens. Particular emphasis in the study was given to architectural images and identity symbols of the largest cities of Kazakhstan (Almaty and Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana)), identified through a sociological survey. **Conclusions:** The results of the research can be considered a prospect for more research of the architecture of the region. It should be noted that the hypothesis is confirmed, directions for further study have been outlined.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary architects, in a complex, contradictory world, retain the main task - increasing the comfort of staying in the artificial environment they create, while the architect is responsible not only for the aesthetics and functionality of the architectural environment, but also for the social and psychological phenomena that this environment generates. The aspects are the connection of an architectural object regional location, the need to transfer of the color of a particular settlement, the country where it had been placed, an important condition is also the preservation of the "spirit of the place". Significant conditions that encompass "the issues of space, myth, ideology and politics is regionalism" <sup>(1)</sup>.

In the past few decades, the concepts of "regionalism", "regional identity" have increasingly appeared in architectural circles, which are promising areas and features of modern architectural activity on a global scale, becoming a kind of antonyms for the widespread process of globalization <sup>(2)</sup>, which is characterized by the erasure of the boundaries of economic, cultural and even political activity. The interconnected concepts of "regionalism", "regional identity" at the end of the twentieth century began to penetrate from the social sciences into the field of architecture, forming, through symbols, signs, images, self-identification of both an individual and communities, states and regions. It can be noted that the listed concepts include in their definitions both material and non-material aspects, expressed through human perception, associations and images of objective and subjective reality, the purpose of which is to unite people and create an environment comfortable for a person, stable and endowed with sacred meanings, images inherent in a particular region and community. Architects around the globe has long been a vocal advocate for the creation of an environment - proportionate to a person, "native" in the broad sense to everyone and valuable to one and all.

As an example, the manifestos of the UIA congresses Turin (2008), Tokyo (2011), Durban (2014) and Seoul (2017) <sup>(3)</sup>, which called for countering globalism as a modern trend, to regulating the spontaneous growth of megacities and limiting the vertical growth of cities, and most importantly, the need to return architecture to national roots, nature and regional differences. Obviously, the main task of the architects, the creators of the manifestos, was to emphasize the importance of differences in architecture at the regional level, which in the near future should become that feature and value of the region, designed to humanize the artificial environment, that is, to make it "closer" and more understandable to every person, forming in it lost spiritual values inherent in the culture of the region. It should be pointed out that the regionalists are betting on the younger generation as the social base of the future "The huge cultural layer left to us as a legacy should serve as a door for young people that will open the door to the future of their countries" <sup>(4)</sup>.

Currently, the biggest problem facing many developing countries, the globalization, urbanization, transition to a market economy, development and implementation of technological advances in all fields of human life and activities; social transformations of society and the loss of value orientations; deterioration of the ecological situation. The Republic of Kazakhstan is no exception. The thirty years period of independence was associated with the strengthening of the political status of the country and the socio-economic situation, the emergence of the cultural and moral foundations of Kazakh identity and unity.

It is apparent that political decisions have also been embodied in the adopted documents and programs, that determine the path of development of the state for years to come. It is worth mentioning that the program article "Looking to the future: modernization of public consciousness," in which were determined the main directions of "development of public consciousness", where, along with competitiveness, pragmatism and the cult of knowledge, there is national identity, as a feature characterized by the relevance of studying heritage of ancestors and the need to introduce heritage into contemporary spiritual and material life - turning to the roots of culture, preserving "own national code" <sup>(5)</sup>.

In this regard, it is important to highlight that architecture as an art and a material environment that surrounds a person must undoubtedly also correspond to the chosen direction, but at the same time not exclude modern achievements in science and technology, creating a regional identity, forming stable symbols and character of the region and a specific locality - inhabited place - the Homeland, the unique expression of which should become part of patriotism.

Achieving a harmonious combination of the regional traditions and architecture is quite difficult, for this reason, the search for the right path is possible with the right interrelation of modern trends and national ideas <sup>(6)</sup>. The creation of innovative materials, structures, but with traits of regional features of unique architectural objects, which today are defined by residents as symbols of the Republic, was part of political decisions and actions to strengthen national identity and create a stable, purposeful society as a nation of a single future <sup>(7)</sup>. In the architecture of Kazakhstan, this process is already partially embodied, opening up a new opportunity for a variety of architectural creativity. However, as Baytenov E.M. notes, the choice of "regional" or "global" orientation is like a rhetorical question of "to be or not to be", each of them has the right to be. However, when choosing the first one, it is necessary to take into account its

evolution and not “get stuck” on mechanical copying of forms, to be based on the “re-encoding” of the regional fund of images in order to search for a fundamentally new architecture”<sup>(8)</sup>. There is a need for new studies of regional identity, including in terms the non-material aspects.

Taking into consideration mentioned above, the authors of the research sought to study, through a sociological survey, the peculiarities of the perception of the region by its inhabitants. Perceptual associations comprehensively influence the formation of the image of the city and the identity of the community. Based on the combination of the material (in the form of a search for uniqueness and identity in the implemented examples of regional architecture during the period of independence of the republic) and the spiritual, represented by the identified images and symbols, expressed in a sociological survey of citizens of Kazakhstan, by this point, the data structure of this article have been compiled and analyzed.

The main research issues were formulated as follows:

- modern factors of formation of regional identity
- determination of identity symbols of contemporary cities of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The identification of architectural images and identity symbols of the cities of Kazakhstan, as promising direction for the study and subsequent development of the region, was the purpose of this research. It is assumed that the creation of an architectural space based on the introduction of regional architectural features in the design within the cultural and geographical context will provide a comfortable living environment in the future and become a prerequisite for social cohesion and expand the prospects for architectural and urban.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. RESEARCH SUBJECT

Regionalism in the architecture of a particular territory is one of the forms of the nation's self-identification<sup>(9)</sup>, which manifests itself in ideas, architectural objects, moods, actions, intentions aimed at preserving the identity of the region<sup>(10)</sup>. The emergence of this direction in architecture was associated with the aesthetic rejection of the anonymous geometry of modernism with opposition to globalism, with the need to create an environment from which the self-identification of an individual, community and nation as a whole takes place<sup>(11)</sup>. In this regard, the region, as a small homeland, is a kind of guarantee against depersonalization not only at the national, but also at a more local (for example, city) level<sup>(12)</sup>. From the side of architecture, following the opinions of Kamalova G., Asylbekov D., regionalism is “the process of integrating regional traditions into modern architecture”<sup>(11)</sup>.

Beginning of the 21st century characterizes the period in the research of the environment “as a comprehensive and controversial initial system, the problems of which are perceived as a motivational source of new shaping and the search for architectural typologies that are adequate to “pressing problems”<sup>(13)</sup>. There has been a tendency to replace the regional style with new technologies<sup>(8)</sup>, in particular, related to solving environmental problems within the architecture, for example, compliance with BIM, LEED standards. The process of bringing regional traditions into the country's critical eras is especially relevant, when the search for one's regional identity becomes relevant, which in the modern architecture of Kazakhstan often manifests itself through direct copying of traditional architecture or the embodiment of pseudo-national forms<sup>(8)</sup>. It should be noted that despite the fact that the architecture of Kazakhstan in the 21st century, after gaining independence, is characterized by a departure from the Soviet past, the regional style has not yet developed.

Researchers see one of the options for searching for a regional style in the search for regional identity based on research from the standpoint of socio-cultural aspects, where human potential acts as a source and condition for the formation of an innovative vector of regional development. Thus, the subject of this study is the socio-cultural aspects of the formation of regional identity in Kazakhstan, the symbols and architectural images identified through a sociological survey.

### 2.2. REGIONAL IDENTITY. THE IMAGE AND SYMBOL OF IDENTITY AS PROMISING DIRECTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION

In modern literature, the concept of regionalism is closely connected with the concept of regional identity. This concept is applicable to the research of the regional architecture of Kazakhstan and is associated with the process of self-identification of residents<sup>(14)</sup>. “The problem of identity in architecture can be interpreted as a problem of finding opportunities and mechanisms, a palette of means, that contribute to the preservation or birth of identity”<sup>(15)</sup>.

Danibekova E.T. defines regional identity as a tool that expresses the sacred and artistic meaning of local architecture in the natural and historical-cultural landscape, based “on the identification of traditional and the formation of new regional symbols and images” <sup>(16)</sup>. G.S. Korepanov emphasizes that regional identity “often acts as a process of interpreting regional uniqueness”, which leads to the establishment of social institutions and the unification of society <sup>(17)</sup>, this is a kind of connection between a person and his place of residence, which is capable of form a new personality type <sup>(18)(19)</sup>.

The concept under consideration is characterized by local specifics and self-awareness <sup>(20)</sup> as a set of cultural relations, associated with the concept of “small homeland”, or the attitude of a person to his small homeland, to the land on which he was born or lives and works <sup>(21)</sup>. Regional identity can be understood “as an internal (from the point of view of the local residents themselves) and usually “non-promoted” image of the territory, including an internal set of images, symbols, myths” <sup>(22)</sup>.

Bochko V.S. determines, that the concept of “regional identity” is systemic. It reflects the cultural, social, psychological and economic aspects <sup>(23)</sup>, where the cultural aspect reflects the totality of relations connected by cultural traditions and is characterized by the concept of “small homeland”; self-identification determines the social aspect and is determined by the formation of territorial communities and social institutions; the development of civic responsibility is associated with the psychological aspect, and the economic one depends more on external factors: state policy, the media, and the economic development of a particular region.

It is worth noting that, noting the social orientation of regional identity, researchers include concepts, that are simultaneously related to the cultural, psychological and social aspects, conditioned by the individual consciousness of the inhabitants of the region/city/hometown - image and symbol. The image and symbol are associated with the interpretation of the objective and subjective reality of a particular space and environment. At the same time, if the image is a general mental picture of the outer physical world of the city” <sup>(24)</sup>, then the “symbol” in modern architecture rather occupies a middle position between objective and subjective representations, between material and ideal. In the modern world, it is more directed towards a collective interpretation, which is formed not infrequently through external aspects, for example, the media, turning an architectural symbol into a brand and image of the city.

However, these concepts are deeply interrelated. The image of the city, expressed in symbols, has cultural and educational functions, creates patterns of behavior and, as a result, affects the general social situation in a particular city <sup>(25)</sup>. In this case, regional identity acts as an emotional category, an interpretation of the real space, in which the data of subjective knowledge about a particular place “are perceived by their carrier as objective and stable” <sup>(26)</sup>. People evaluate the city through the prism of their past experience, value orientations, generally accepted norms and moral principles, associations. It is a person who perceives the environment, he evaluates it, experiences it, behaves accordingly.

Finally, it is the person who creates the environment, including the architectural one, therefore any description of the environment is always subjective and always associated with the activity of the subject (man, society). However, the need to study associative links based on the search for allusions inherent in territories as the embodiment of the spirit of the place encourages researchers in search of regional identity to turn not only to objective reality, but also to the deep sources of the subconscious <sup>(15)</sup>. Through such a category as the image of the city, we have the opportunity to identify the systemic interaction of the image of the city, fixed in its architectural and landscape component, with the mental basis, manifested in the system of cultural attitudes of the population.

An important aspect is also the correlation of the emotional component and the formation of comfort in the urban environment. According to the concept of Mumford L., all elements of the community (in this case, urban), including symbolic ones, form the everyday standards of comfort for the resident, where city symbols and images also influence the rhythm of society life, which is characterized by the alternation of material and symbolic images <sup>(27)</sup>. Therefore, the better the urban environment is organized, the more harmoniously the symbolic elements of the urban image are thought out, the more citizens are satisfied with their place of residence and the more likely the formation of local communities. Thus, subjective images formed at the mental level acquire real features, imprinted in material objects, the aesthetic form of which, composition, spatial organization expand the field of meanings and values of culture, forming a regional identity.

### 3.METHODOLOGY

The research involved an analysis of the results of a sociological survey. At the first stage - the concepts of regionalism, regional identity has been considered in respect of relation to the modern architecture of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Using sociological survey, the features of the existing building environment were determined, using the example of

settlements in Kazakhstan, factors that influence and affect the formation of regional architecture, regional identity. The second one - is also based on the sociological survey data and involves consideration of the architectural image and identity symbol of a particular city/village/region and identifying the symbol of the country's identity as a region as a whole.

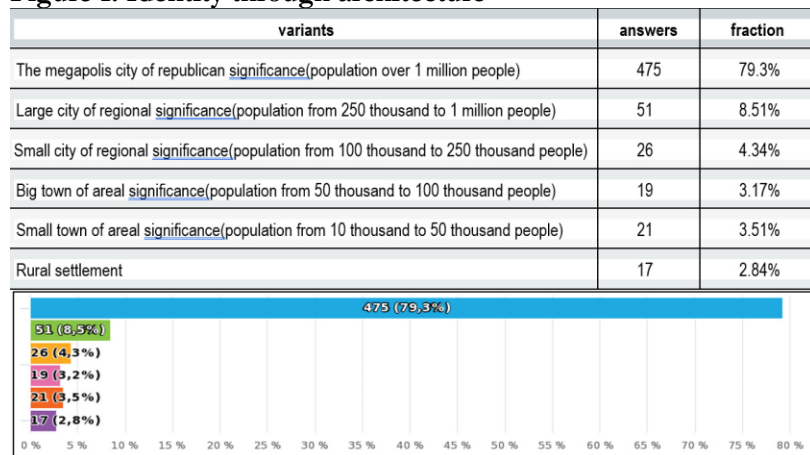
An objective selection of sources was directly related to the purpose and tasks of the research. Case study research methods can be called analysis, synthesis of literary and online sources. Doctoral and master's theses, scientific articles of peer-reviewed databases, covering the topics of “identity” and “regionalism” were subject to consideration (The Richard G. Trefry Library, KazGASA library; “Gylym ordasy” RSE Central Scientific Library, CS MES RK; National Library of the RK; kazneb.kz; lib.enu.kz; vestnik.nauka.kz; totalarch.com; tekhnosfera.com; britannica.com; <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/library>; [www.mdpi.com](http://www.mdpi.com); [www.elsevier.com](http://www.elsevier.com); [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com); [cyberleninka.ru](http://cyberleninka.ru); [elibrary.ru](http://elibrary.ru); [marhi.ru](http://marhi.ru); [scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com); [researchgate.net](http://researchgate.net)). The main criterion for selecting sources were: the concepts of “regionalism”, “regional identity”, factors and current processes of world reality, that affect the development of modern regional architecture. Particular emphasis in the research was given to the architectural images and symbols of identity of the largest cities of Kazakhstan (Almaty and Nur-Sultan), identified through a sociological survey. On the one hand, this is due to the greatest importance of these settlements for the life of the republic, on the other hand, with a large percentage of respondents who were residents of these cities and, accordingly, provided the most complete picture of the positions under consideration.

The main research method was a sociological survey of 598 respondents, conducted and analyzed through the online platform <https://www.surveymonkey.com>. The survey is dedicated to identifying regional identity in the architecture of Kazakhstan and is an intermediate stage of the research project: “Trends in the development of modern regional architecture of Kazakhstan” (IEC, campus of the KazGASA (Kazakh Leading Architecture and Civil Engineering Academy)). In April 2022, a sociological survey questionnaire was developed.

The direction of the research was based mainly on the methods of synthesis and generalization. Also, among the methods of analysis, the analysis of open questions of the questionnaire was used, which makes it possible to highlight the key semantic characteristics that determine the image of the city/village, most often mentioned by the respondents. Using the graphic-analytical method, tables and graphs were compiled showing the survey data. The results of the second stage of the proposed research made it possible to identify the architectural structures of the country's largest cities, which to a greater extent became symbols not only of a particular city, but of the entire Republic, as well as to determine the features of the development of regional architecture of the Republic of Kazakhstan and outline ways for further research.

The research was conducted from May to August 2022, through the send out of links through: e-mail, social and personal networks. The survey involved 598 people aged 17 and older, among them: 334 women (55.9%) and 264 men (44.1%). In terms of occupation, most of the respondents were employed – 69.2%; students – 25.1%; non-working – 9.5%. Based on the disclosed answers received during the survey (Fig. 1), the most active were residents in the megapolis of republican significance, where the population is over 1 million people; fewer active respondents from rural areas 2.84%.

**Figure 1. Identity through architecture**



Source: compiled by authors.

Prior to compiling the questionnaire questions, a review of previous researches was conducted <sup>(28)</sup> <sup>(29)</sup>. According to the results of the pilot testing conducted with the participation of 20 students and graduate students of KazGASA, some of the questions were revised, in particular with regard to the wording of questions that are equally clear to both professionals and laymen. The final questionnaire included three main sections dedicated to:

- features of the existing environment of the settlement;
- identifying the architectural image of a particular settlement and identifying architectural objects that form the identity of the city/village;
- definition of the symbol of Kazakhstan and Homeland.

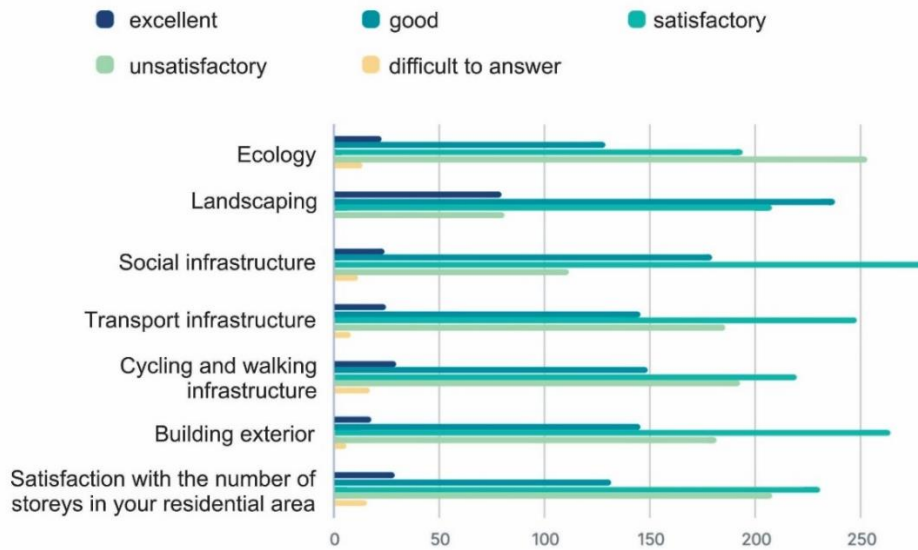
### 3. RESULTS

The features of the existing environment of the settlement were reflected in the answers to questions, that related to the quality of the formed environment, civic responsibility, and factors in the formation of the identity of the settlement.

Identification of opinions of citizens about the quality of the environment of the settlement and architecture (Fig. 2). The table presented seven criteria: 1 - ecology; 2 - landscaping; 3 - social infrastructure; 4 - transport infrastructure; 5 - cycling and walking infrastructure; 6 - external appearance of the building; 7 - number of storeys of residential building.

The results of the survey showed that most of the respondents are not satisfied with the issue of ecology – 41.8%; in second place - number of storeys of building – 34.3% and with a small difference, dissatisfaction was also noted in other criteria, such as: transport, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure of the order – 30.1%.

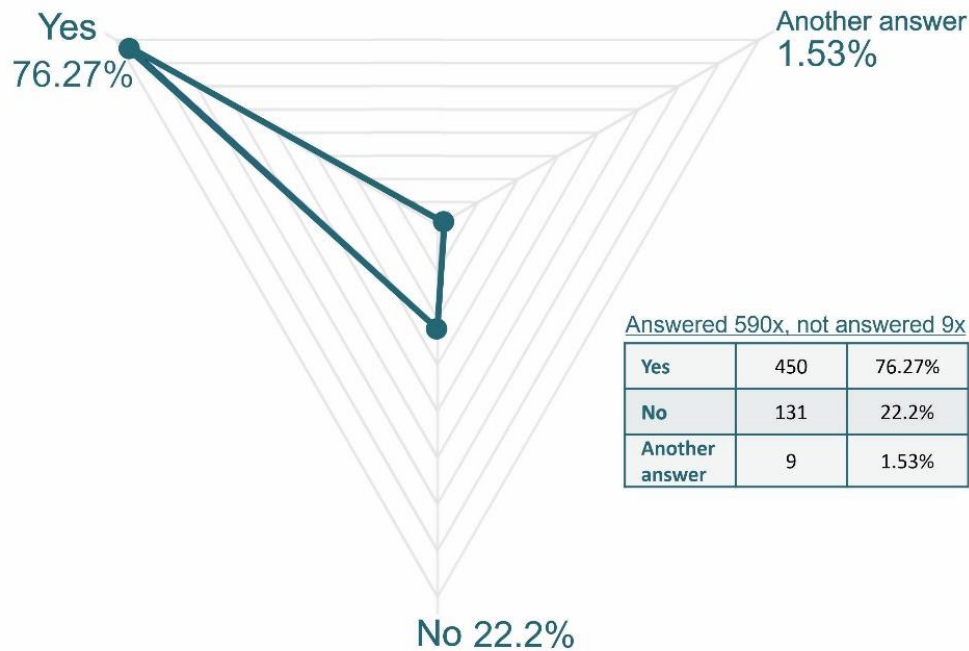
**Figure 2. The goal of this survey is to assess the quality of the environment in residential area**



Source: compiled by authors.

The level of civic responsibility (Fig. 3). According to the conducted research, the level of civic activism, in particular, taking part in the discussion of building projects among Kazakhstanis is quite high – 75.9%, the rest, 22.6% of respondents are not ready to participate.

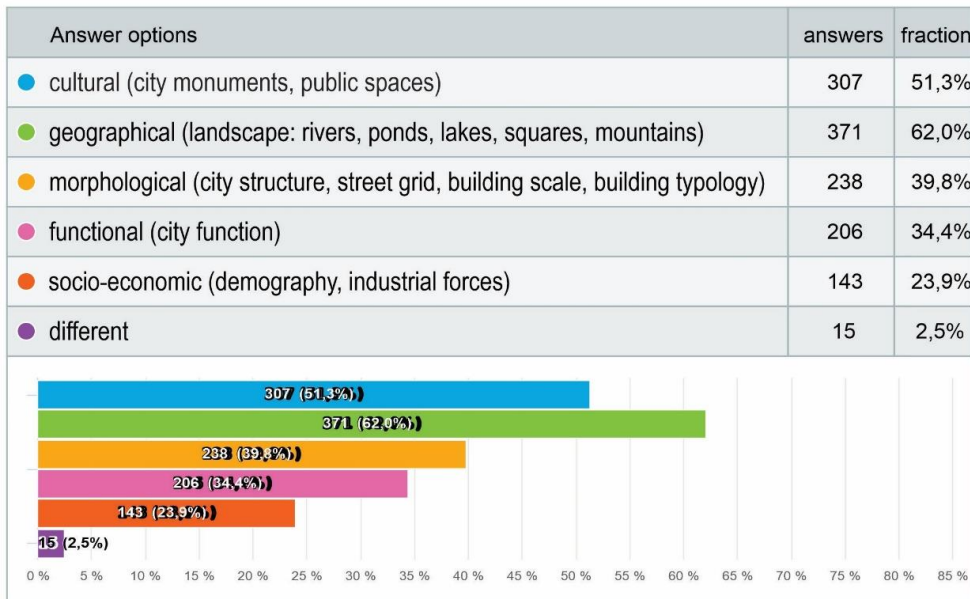
**Figure 3. The level of civic responsibility**



Source: compiled by authors.

Factors in the formation of the identity of the settlement (Fig. 4). According to the results of the survey, important factors in the formation of an urban identity are located in the following order: geographical (62%), cultural (51.3%), morphological (39.8%), functional (34.4%), socio-economic (23.9%).

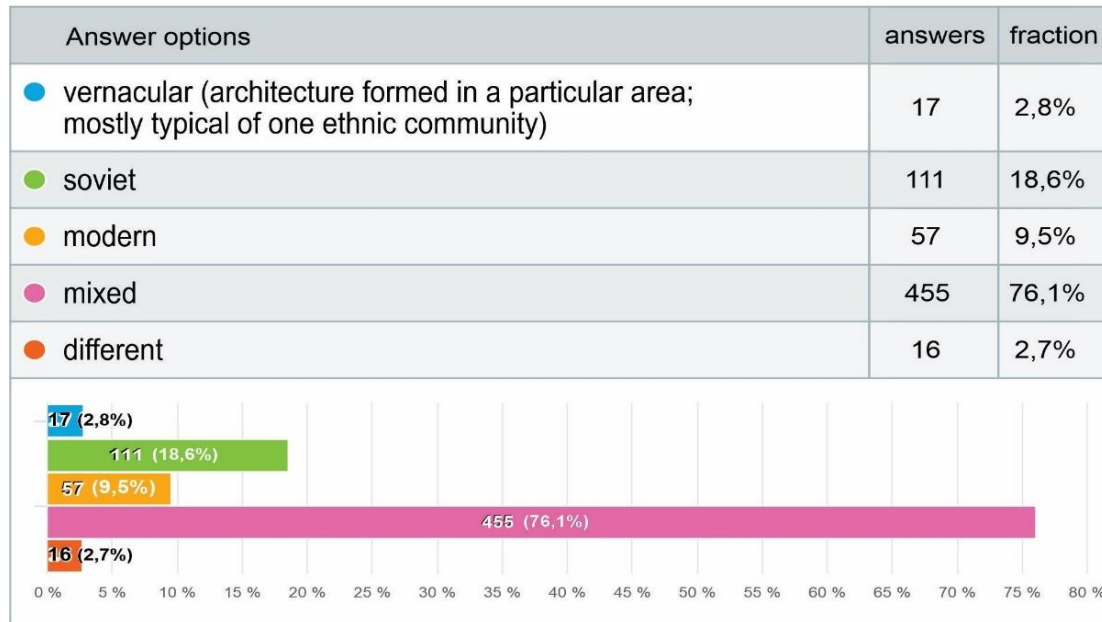
**Figure 4. The results of the social survey. Factors in the formation of an urban identity**



Source: compiled by authors.

Architectural image of the place of residence. When asked about the architectural image that the respondents had in relation to a particular settlement of Kazakhstan (place of residence or Homeland), 5 variants were offered for selection: vernacular (architecture, formed in a particular area; mostly typical for one ethnic community), Soviet, modern, mixed, your own version Fig. 5.

**Figure 5. Describing an architectural image of a place**



Source: compiled by authors.

Taking into account the fact that the territory of Kazakhstan was part of the USSR, the appearance of the living environment of the settlements of which was largely similar, which undoubtedly left a mark on the homogeneous development and perception of the inhabitants (the Soviet answer of 18.6% of the respondents took second place), everything the majority of respondents 76.1% define the image of their locality as mixed, where in most cases the buildings of the Soviet period are interspersed with the buildings of the period of independence of the republic - more diverse in terms of external appearance. The last place “vernacular architecture” – 2.9%.

Respondents included not only buildings (Fig. 6), but also embankments, a railway, a square complex as architectural objects that form the identity of their native city/village. In general, the main architectural structures with which the participants identify their region are public structures built in Kazakhstan in different periods.



**Figure 6. An architectural object that forms the identity of their native city/village**

CITY/VILLAGE NAME	YEAR	ARCHITECTURAL BUILDINGS IN KAZAKHSTAN	FRACTION
Nur-Sultan	2002	"Bayterek" Tower	6.7%
	2017	Expo 2017 Astana	1.4%
	2010	"Khan Shatyr" Entertainment Center	0.6%
	2004	Presidential residence "Ak-Orda"	0.6%
	2010-2022	Abu Dhabi Plaza	0.4%
	2004	Palace of Peace and Reconciliation	0.2%
Almaty	2013	Library of the First President	0.2%
	1977	"Kazakhstan" Hotel	20.4%
	1972-1983	"Medeu" Alpine Sports Complex	16.1%
	1975-1983	"Koktobe" TV Tower	14.9%
	1980	Ski resort "Shymbulak" (Chimbulak)	4%
	1936-1941	Kazakh National Opera and Ballet Theatre named after Abay	3%
	1930-1970	Downtown	1.6%
	1970	Kazakh state circus	1.6%
	1921	"Astana" Square or Old Square	1.2%
	1975	"Republic" Square or The New Square	0.4%
	1979-1982	"Arasan" Wellness & SPA	0.8%
	2006-2008	"Esentai" Tower	0.8%
	1926 - 1929	Kazakh Academic Drama Theater named M.Auezov	0.6%
	1930-1970	Tulebayev street	0.6%
	1970	Palace of the Republic	0.6%
	1983	Student palace	0.6%
	1951-1957	National Academy of Science Republic of Kazakhstan	0.6%
	1978	The Park of 28 Panfilov Guardsmen	0.4%
	2005-2010	"Nurly-Tau"	0.4%
	1937	"Alma-Ata" Hotel	0.4%
	1992-1994	Raiymbek Batyr Mausoleum	0.4%
	1971	Wedding palace	0.4%
	1985	Museum of the History of Kazakhstan	0.2%
	1953-1955	Old building of former Kazpotrebsoyuz	0.2%
	1983	Entrance arch to Atakent	0.2%
	1996	"Altyn Adam"-Golden man Monument	0.2%
	1938, 1957	Kazakh-British Technical University (KBTU)	0.2%
2012	Financial District - Kazkommertsbank Headquarters	0.2%	
1971	Al-Farabi Kazakh National University	0.2%	
1975	Green Bazaar	0.2%	
Shymkent	2009	Ordabasy Square	0.4%
	2013	Central Mosque Akmeshit	0.2%
	2012	Monument to Baidibek Bi	0.4%
	1957	Cinema "Kazakhstan"	0.2%
Aktobe	2009	Water-green boulevard of Unity and Consent	0.2%
	2006-2008	St. Nicholas Cathedral	0.2%
Karaganda	1952	Palace of Culture of Miners	0.6%
	1974	"Miner's Glory" Monument	0.4%
	2011	Independence Stele	0.2%
Taraz	2003-2007	Hibatullah Tarazi Mosque	0.2%
	1961	Hotel "Taraz"	0.2%
	2014-2015	"Köne Taraz"	0.2%
	2019	Arbat Pedestrian Alley	0.2%
Atyrau	2007	"Kazakhstan" Hotel	0.2%
	2007	Marriott Executive Apartments	0.2%
Pavlodar	1957, 2000, 2005	Embankment	0.2%

CITY/VILLAGE NAME	YEAR	ARCHITECTURAL BUILDINGS IN KAZAKHSTAN	FRACTION
Semey	1895, 1997	Abalatsko-Znamensky Petropavlovsk Monastery	0,2%
	1972	Kazakh Music and Drama Theatre named after Abay	0,2%
	1966	Memorial complex of "Abay-Shakarim"	0,2%
	1998-2001	Suspension bridge	0,2%
Oskemen	2021	Abay Mosque	0,2%
	2009-2012	Khalifa Altai Mosque	0,2%
	1957	Palace of Metallurgists' Culture	0,2%
Petropavlovsk	1902	People's House.	0,2%
	2007	Residence of Abylai Khan	0,2%
Oral	1879—1884	Uralsk regional historical museum	0,4%
	1995	Victory Park Memorial Complex	0,4%
Kyzylorda	1959	City Palace of Culture A. Tokmagambetov	0,4%
	1985	Kyzylorda regional Music and Drama Theatre named after N. Bekezhhanov	0,4%
	1998	Kyzylorda State University named after Korkyt Ata	0,4%
	1890-1896	Temple of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God	0,2%
	1992-1998	Regional Medical Center	0,2%
	XI-XII в.н.э., 2008	Mausoleum of Tolegetai-Kylyshy Ata	0,2%
Kostanay	2012	"Syr-Ana" monuments	0,2%
	1980	Kostanay clock tower	0,2%
	1977	Stele at the entrance - "Verin's hands"	0,2%
	2013	Tobol River Embankment	0,2%
Pavlodar	1902	Yaushev Passage Building	0,2%
	2000-2001	Mashkhor Jusup Mosque	0,7%
Turkestan	1385	Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi	0,4%
	XI-XII век	Mausoleums "Aisha Bibi", "Babaja Khatun", "Karakhan",	0,6%
	XIII век	Dautibek Mausoleum	0,2%
	2019-2021	Complex "Keruen-Saray"	0,4%
	1973, 1982, 2019	Archaeological Park "Kultobe Hillfort"	0,2%
Temirtau	2002	"Metallurg" monument	0,2%
	2011	Historical and cultural center of the First President	0,2%
Kokshetau	2010	Central Mosque	0,2%
Taldykorgan	1956	Theatre for Children and Young People	0,2%
	2018	Taldykorgan Drama Theater named after B.Rimova	0,2%
Saryagash	1954	Sanatoriums	2,2%
Baikonur	1955	"Baikonur" Cosmodrome	0,2%
Satpaev	2915	Memorial Complex "Tagzym"	0,2%
Balkhash	1951	Palace of Metallurgists	0,2%
Otegen Batyr	1957-1962	Thermal Power Plant An administrative building	0,2%
Kulsary	2000	Zhylyoygaz	0,2%
Dobyn	2005	The Dobyn Mosque	0,2%
Esik	1969-1970	"Altyn Adam"-Golden man	0,2%
		College Building	0,2%
Janakorgan	1904	College Agricultural and Industrial Technologies	0,2%
	2014	Monument to Koken batyr	0,2%
Zhezkazgan	1972.	Baikonurov Zhezkazgan University	0,2%
Жетісай	1968	Zhetysay Drama Theater named after K.Zhandarbekov	0,2%
	2016	"Nugman" mosque	0,2%
Shu	1931	Railway	0,2%
Ekibastuz	1974, 1980	"GRES"	0,2%
Kaskelen	1966	The university is named after Suleyman Demirel (SDU)	0,2%

Source: compiled by authors.

The results of the survey show, that mainly architectural structures with which respondents identify their region are public, built in Kazakhstan both before acceptance of independence and after. Residents of Nur-Sultan identified their city with modern architectural objects - all the answers provided related to the objects of built in 2002-2017. Identity symbols of the identity of the native city and the republic, the respondents were named (Fig. 7).

Figure 7. Identity symbols

CITY/VILLAGE NAME	SYMBOL OF IDENTITY	FRACTION
Nur-Sultan	Baiterek	6,2%
	Light Rail	0,4%
	Samruk	0,3%
Almaty	Apple	25,6%
	The mountains	27%
	Snow Leopard	4%
	Garden city	3,1%
	Air pollution	0,7%
	Apricot blossom	0,6%
	777	0,5%
Shymkent	Tulip	1,4%
	Hospitable and good people	0,2%
	Shym (peat)	0,2%
Aktobe	White hill	0,8%
Karaganda	Coal	0,4%
Taraz	Mausoleum: "Khoja Akhmed Yassawi", "Karakhan Baba", "Aisha Bibi, "Babaji Khatun"	0,4%
Atyrau	Oil	0,6%
Pavlodar	Irtys river	0,4%
Semey	Suspension Bridge	0,4%
	Polygon	0,2%
Oskemen	Irtys and Ulba rivers	0,2%
Oral	Tree	0,4%
	Shield	0,2%
	Shanyrak	0,2%
Zhalpaktal	The mountains	0,2%
Kyzylorda	Rice	0,6%
	The Korkyt Ata	0,4%
Zhanakorgan	Mound	0,2%
Kostanay	Wheat, ears	0,4%
Lisakovsk	Fox	0,2%
Kyzylzhar	Museums	0,2%
Aktau	Caspian lake	0,4%
Turkestan	Mausoleums	0,2%
Zhetisai	Cotton	0,2%
Saryagash	Wood	1,5%
	Spring water	0,9%
Temirtau	Metallurgist	0,4%
Kokshetau	Borovoye lakes	0,2%
Taldykorgan	Tree	0,4%
Ekibastuz	Rotary wheel	0,2%
Zhanaozen	Oil derrick	0,2%
Zhezkazgan	Factory	0,2%
Satpaev	K.Satpaev	0,4%
Balkhash	Lake	0,2%
Kaskelen	The mountains	0,2%
Merke	The mountains	0,2%
Kemertogan	Simple village	0,2%

IDENTITY SYMBOL OF KAZAKHSTAN	FRACTION
Steppe	21,2%
Baiterek	7,5%
State symbols: flag, coat of arms, anthem.	6,6%
Eagle	5,5%
Multinationality	4,1%
People	3,8%
Yurt- kiiz uy	3,1%
Golden man	2,5%
Shanyrak	2,3%
Almaty	2,0%
The mountains	1,7%
Unity	1,6%
Dombra	1,4%
Independence	1,3%
Hospitality	1,2%
Nur-Sultan	1,1%
Saryagash	1,1%
Nomad	1,1%
Corruption	1,0%
Leopard	0,7%
Turks	0,4%
Difficult to answer	6,7%

Source: compiled by authors.

It is noteworthy, that the respondents associated the image of their native city mainly with geographical and natural objects, animals or products of production, rather than with architectural structures. Regarding the symbol of Kazakhstan's identity, it can be noted that the majority of respondents (21,2%) identify their country with the steppe, in second place is the architectural object "Astana-Baiterek" - a monument and an observation tower (2002). It is also worth noting, that a large percentage (6,7%) of the participants could not single out any symbol of the republic at all.

## 4. DISCUSSION

An analysis of publications on the research topic has led to the conclusion that - scientists are unanimous in their opinion, that the regional identity is - a process, through which the population itself (self-identity) and government bodies are interested in developing people's attachment to their territory and forming a positive perception of <sup>(30)</sup>. The concept of "regional identity" of a territory is closely related to such concepts as "brand", "image", which make up the external side of regional identity <sup>(30)</sup>, through the interpretation and "promotion" of a symbol (formed mainly by representations of information from outside, The media play a big part here). While the inner side - characterizes the subjective side associated with perception - the ideas of the inhabitants of the territory / city / village about the well-being of their place of residence and is characterized by the concept of "symbol of the city", "architectural image".

Strengthening the spiritual, ethnic and national identity, accelerating the socio-cultural activity of the population are the main directions for the development of Kazakhstan society (2014). In the XXI century the process of searching for their regional identity has begun, which is based on an interest in preserving national values and revising the values of original culture. Significant factors in this process are the objective characteristics of the region <sup>(31)</sup>, such as symbols and architectural images, geography and natural features, historical aspects, values, national traditions that are associated with the specifics of a particular place.

The first group of issues, affecting the features of the existing environment of a settlement (city/village), revealed a number of factors in the current environment that negatively affect the formation of regional identity, and also informs about the most pressing problems of settlements in the opinion of residents.

1. According to the answers received, a larger number of respondents are dissatisfied with the quality of the living environment on the part of ecology. Respondents are least of all concerned about the state of the city's green fund, the external appearance of buildings and social infrastructure, because these indicators, from the point of view of the respondents, are at a satisfactory level. It is also worth noting that the criteria varied significantly, given the location of the settlement and the number of residents living in it. Residents of large and largest cities are more concerned about the environmental situation, while for the other categories (constituting a smaller percentage of respondents), building infrastructure issues come first.

2. According to the results of the survey, the majority of residents are ready to take part in solving issues related to the organization of the environment of their settlement. 76,3% of respondents are ready to participate in decision-making. The dominance of the general civil component in the structure of self-identities allows us to talk about increasing the social responsibility of the population, by implementing the possibility of making joint decisions at the project stage and landscaping, called participatory design <sup>(32)</sup>. Mostly, this kind of approach is used not only to create and adopt a conceptual solution for the project - it has social goals to a greater extent. People gradually, in making decisions on the organization of the living environment, act as a community for which the created territory, in accordance with the preferences, requirements and demands, acquires a certain value. It is precisely such a territory that residents identify with themselves, with their way of life and can rightfully call "ours", "theirs", in which "the spirit of property affects morality" <sup>(33)</sup>, which is reflected in the careful attitude to the created place, according to the principle "my home, I care" <sup>(34)</sup>, where a sense of belonging forms a culture and spreads to the next generations. "It is necessary to involve citizens in order to jointly create places, instead of landscaping, that people will love, that they will care about, that can change life in a particular area" <sup>(35)</sup>.

3. The process of identity search proceeds simultaneously at many levels, including territorial - regional, local - identities. At the same time, more and more researchers recognize the process of regionalization as one of the main trends in the modern world, along with globalization. The formation and features of regional identity depend on many factors that vary depending on the region and the location of the settlement on its territory <sup>(36)</sup>. One of such factors influencing the formation of regional identity (in this case, in relation to the city) is the geography of the region, natural features and places of interest (among those surveyed, this factor ranked first in terms of importance for the participants, 62%). 51% find the cultural factor to be the main factor in the formation of urban identity. That is, according to the analysis, the characteristics of the city: infrastructure, systems, services, facilities, environment and cultural heritage are considered important components and precursors of the perception of the city by people, the formation of the image and symbol of a particular area. It can be noted that architecture ensures the identity of a region, city, rural settlement, that is, "recognition, belonging, identity of the artificial environment to the conditions of the region, the constancy of images, their identification and continuity" <sup>(15)</sup>.

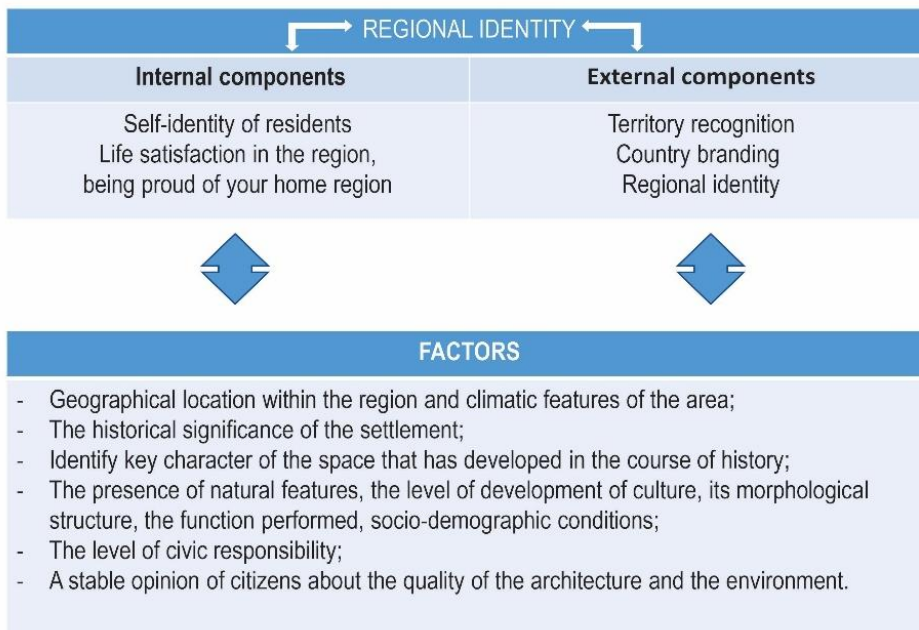
The next important issue, which gives a representation of the already formed environment, is the opinion of residents about the architectural image of their place of residence. Against the backdrop of globalization and mass construction, including standard development, there is a gradual loss of regional identity. Cities are losing their image, there is a

mixture of styles <sup>(37)</sup>. The results showed that the majority of participants find the architectural image of their settlement as “mixed” – 76,7%, in second place – “Soviet” - 18%, in the third – “modern” – 9,6%, and in last place “vernacular architecture” – 2,9%. Such a large percentage of the “mixed” option is associated with the ubiquitous heritage of buildings and structures of the Soviet period and the stylistic diversity of the architecture of the period of independence of the republic. Thus, the development characteristic of a particular city, its appearance, provides the regional identity of the settlement, often in a negative aspect, which is subject to more detailed consideration. On the other hand, the “mixing” of architecture from different periods of development gives the settlement its uniqueness.

So, it is worth noting that the following main factors influence the regional identity of the architecture of an existing city/village are:

- geographical location within the region and climatic features of the area;
- the historical significance of the settlement;
- the availability of natural features, the degree of development of culture, the morphological structure, the function performed, socio-demographic conditions;
- the image of the built-up environment that has developed in the course of history;
- the level of civil responsibility of residents;
- a stable opinion of citizens about the qualities of the architectural and environment. (Fig. 8).

**Figure 8. Regional identity**



Source: compiled by authors.

An important condition, aimed at the formation of a regional identity is the search for an architectural image. Territorial communities of people invariably create a system of representations, images and symbols, that are linked to the place of residence. This is an integral part of the process of self-identification, where the socio-cultural, emotional, geographical, and natural features of the region interact with each other. Over time, images, precise knowledge, geographic space become a single whole <sup>(38)</sup> - a set of external information and human culture, a set of the most striking associative elements that reflect the regional identity of a person/community/country, where “Subjective ideas about the territory, mastering the masses, they acquire real value, creating an effective mechanism for managing regional development <sup>(39)</sup>. A perspective image of a city/village/region can become an integral attribute, a central link in the system of strategic planning for years to come. Territories and states pursuing an active regional policy widely use this image as a tool for regulating relations with themselves, for example, creating an attractive investment climate.














This research involved the identification of the architectural image of a particular settlement. It was assumed, that the identification of architectural objects, which, in the opinion of residents, are the most successful examples of regional architecture, will reveal the best examples that subsequently require the most careful research from a scientific point of view <sup>(40)</sup>. The results of the sociological survey demonstrated a wide range of objects of various functional purposes, with which residents identify their settlement. It is possible to single out historical buildings of cultural value within

the whole region, buildings of a religious nature, industrial facilities, embankments and parks, monuments and memorials. The largest percentage of public buildings, built mainly from the middle of the last century to the present. Among the architectural images, that gained the most votes in the largest cities of Kazakhstan - Almaty and Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana) are: the hotel “Kazakhstan” and the “Medeu” complex - in the southern capital, as well as the monument and observation tower “Astana Baiterek” - in the northern one. Thus, despite the fact that these buildings belong to different periods of construction, they rightfully act as significant and recognizable architectural images of their cities. At the same time, it can be noted that a low percentage of Almaty residents (1,4%) associate their city with modern buildings (BC “Esentai”, BC “Nurly Tau”), which are stylistically more in line with global architecture, than regional.

The process of creating a regional identity is impossible without determining the symbols of the region. The symbols of the territory are an integral part of its image. They are able to emphasize and complement a holistic image, introducing into it the features of illustrativeness, brightness, recognizability and uniqueness. To the question concerning the determination of the symbols of the identity of their native settlement, residents cited both architectural objects and structures, traditions, natural objects, persons, objects, natural resources. Detailed results are presented in Fig.6. It is applicable that, determining the symbols of the northern and southern capitals, residents in Nur-Sultan brought associations with architectural objects and infrastructure projects, while Almaty residents associated their hometown with natural objects (mountains 27%, apple 25,6%, snow leopard 4%, blossoming apricot, orchard, smog). A wide variety of symbols, with which Kazakhstan is associated is presented in Fig.6 – 21.2% of respondents associate Kazakhstan with the steppe, 7.5% - with the architectural object “Astana-Baiterek”, 6.6% - with state symbols, 5.5% - with the eagle, 4.1% of respondents spoke in favor of multinationality.

It can be assumed, that the fundamentally difference between the identified architectural images (in terms of the time of construction) and symbols (natural architectural objects) of Almaty and Nur-Sultan is due to the specific features of the development of the architecture of these cities, which flourished in the southern capital in 1970-80 and was formed by outstanding buildings (Kazakhstan hotel, Medeu ski complex), and the same approach (construction of representative structures for the modern formation of the image of the modern capital, but at the present time) with which the northern capital, Nur-Sultan, is associated, saturated examples of “the best world architecture”. It can be noted that stable symbols are also important, which, unfortunately, have already lost their paramount importance, but are preserved in the minds of residents, for example, the association of Almaty-city-garden. More clearly, the architectural images and symbols of Almaty and Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana) identified during the sociological survey are presented in Fig. 9.

**Figure 9. Architectural images and symbols of identity of Almaty and Nur-Sultan**

City	Architectural image	%	Symbols	%
Nur-Sultan	 "Astana-Baiterek", 2002 arch. Akmurza Rustembekov	6,7	 Astana-Baiterek	6,2
			 Light Rail	0,4
			 Samruk	0,3
Almaty	 "Kazakhstan" Hotel, 1971 arch. G. Ratushny, L. Udobotov, K. Deyev	20,4	 Mountains	27
			 Apple	25,6
			 Snow leopard	4
	 "Medeu" Sports Complex, 1972 arch. V. Katsev, A. Kainarbaev, I. Kosogova	16,1	 Garden city	3,1
	 TV tower "Koktobe", 1983 arch. N. Terziev, A. Savchenko, N. Akimov	14,9	 Air pollution	0,7
			 Apricot blossom	0,6

Source: compiled by authors.

Thus, each city creates its own identity, trying to form a "business card" through various symbols, which at first glance would distinguish it from others. Most of the regions are based on traditional images, time-tested and determined by the historical, economic, geographical and other features of the territory <sup>(41)</sup>. It can be noted that stable symbols are also important, which, unfortunately, have already lost their paramount importance, but are preserved in the minds of residents, for example, the association of Almaty-city-garden, as well as negative ones - formed under the influence of existing problems – air pollution. So, based on the results of the study, we can summarize:

1. The formation of the regional identity of architecture is a complex multi-level process, which includes not only the embodiment of material architectural forms, but also the semantic and value assessment of the architectural structure, the definition of the historical context, stylistic features, understanding of its symbolic meanings that cause certain emotional states in the subject;

2. The formation of a figurative reflection of the environment is influenced by the already formed development of the territory (at the present stage, the architectural environment is determined by the respondents mainly as “mixed”).

3. National traditions in architecture and design should not be understood as the introduction of traditional decorative elements into details. The main principles should be regionalization and the expression of the nationalization of architecture and design by “abstract” methods, reflected not by direct copying, but with the help of traditions adapted to the modern needs of residents, technical achievements, as well as rethought subjective elements of perception, allowing to form that “base of images”, which can become an impetus for the creation of unique projects of regional architecture;

4. The formation of images and symbols of the identity of a city/village is influenced by factors: the presence of natural features, the degree of development of culture, the morphological structure, the main function of the settlement, socio-demographic conditions. At the same time, the majority of residents of the Republic of Kazakhstan most often associate the image of the identity of a particular settlement with the natural and geographical conditions of the area and its cultural features.

5. Application of an individual approach to identify the spirit of the place, through the semantics of each individual settlement, affects the preservation of its identity and can become the starting point for successful economic development, for example, through the creation of a locality brand;

In addition, consideration of the issues of the regional architecture of Kazakhstan should have an interdisciplinary discourse and be explored both from the side of traditions and from the side of innovations. A comprehensive solution to the issues of creating an environment with which residents identify themselves should take the form of participatory design.

The results of the research makes contribution to the development of scientific representations about the concept of “regionalism” and “regional architecture of Kazakhstan”. Identified in the course of the research symbols and architectural images can become material for further research of a specific territory - a city/ village of the republic and lay the foundation for research on the image and brand of the area, which will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the economic development of the region and the cohesion of its inhabitants.

The obtained research data may be of interest to architects, urban planners, designers who focus their activities on the study and study of regional architecture in order to create a comfortable environment, both in terms of material objects and in terms of intangible: value and symbolic component. It is hoped that this study will be the beginning of an interdisciplinary dialogue on the need for more careful design, taking into account the traditions of shaping, customs and specifics of everyday life, continuing the search for regional imagery and originality.

## CONCLUSIONS

With every passing day the concept of identity becomes more and more relevant for architecture in all its areas: from urban planning and urbanism to elements of urban design. It appears not only in the lexicon of designers, but also in the texts of state laws, as one of the main parameters of the quality of the modern urban environment, aimed at the self-determination of the nation and the preservation of its identity. There are many objects in which historical images are realized. These objects “imitate” traditional architecture, but often do not meet the needs of the country in regional architecture. Despite the rich history of traditional architecture of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the modern regional style of architecture on its territory has not yet taken shape, which requires new searches and solutions in this direction. Regional identity in architecture, on the one hand, can be considered as an artistic correspondence to something that has arisen earlier (architectural traditions, images of traditional architecture), on the other hand, it is - a “disclosure” of the properties of the territory, aesthetic and other qualities of nature and landscape, the revival of cultural traditions, that is, a combination of expressive and pictorial ways, with the third, the direction and instrument of adaptation and synthesis of innovation and tradition, the creation of an object with regional features, but with all the properties of sustainable architecture.

It is hoped, that this research will be the beginning of an interdisciplinary dialogue, aimed at a more thorough study of regional architecture, taking into account the traditions of shape formation, the customs of the inhabitants of this region, continuing the search for architectural imagery and successfully adapting it to modern reality, embodying the image that over time will turn into a state symbol that can express with its appearance not only the “spirit of the locality”, but also contribute to the rallying of the nation.

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