

## HUMAN FACTOR

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### WHY DO I LIVE HERE? THE HISTORICAL CENTER OF SAMARA THROUGH THE EYES OF A RESIDENT



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**Abstract.** This paper presents the results of a qualitative sociological study conducted in the Samara urban district. Samara city center possesses historical and cultural value; several years ago it was awarded the status of a historical settlement. The purpose of the study was to identify the value structure in the attitude of residents of the Samara historical center to the territory of their residence. An attempt has been made to comprehend the perception by residents of historical areas of the value of the place through the spatial triad of Henri Lefebvre. When explaining the high potential of the historical city center in relation to other areas, Robert Lucas' clustering theory was applied. The hypothesis about the clustering of people, resources and opportunities in the city core is proven based on the obtained empirical data. With reference to Richard Florida's book, the thesis that different places are suitable for different people is tentatively confirmed.

**Keywords:** urban sociology; historical and cultural environment; historical center of Samara; identity of space; value of space; choice of location.

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## **Introduction**

Everyone who lives in a city long has their own attitude towards it and their own understanding of it. Each person has their own city. Each person individually perceives its space, possibilities, comfort or lack thereof, rhythm, style, pace, beauty, convenience and many other parameters. Many people are currently reflecting on their attitude to the urban environment. This is dictated by the growing popularity of urban studies and theories, the development of urban sociology as a separate area of science, and the modern trend towards using an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing and planning territorial development. One of the main topics discussed today among urbanists, architects, historians, restorers and government officials is the topic of heritage preservation. It seems appropriate to analyze the problem of preserving urban heritage not only in legal or historical and cultural aspects, but also in the traditions of classical spatial theories, one of which is Henri Lefebvre's theory of the Production of Space [Lefebvre, 2015].

In his 1974 work, Lefebvre calls for a comprehensive view of space, moving away from reductionism in its analysis. He proposes a model of the «Spatial Triad», which is designed to focus attention on social relations in the context of the production and reproduction of space [Bedash, 2012, p. 220].

In this triad, Lefebvre identifies three elements.

*Representations of space* (or «Conceived space») are how space is perceived and interpreted by experts or professionals in various fields.

*Representational space* is the «Lived space» of the territory's inhabitants. This refers to everyday practices of using space that is «felt rather than thought». Due to spaces of representations, people develop spatial attachments and associations that make social life in the territory meaningful for the individual: a favorite street, a favorite neighborhood. Such a space combines the real and the imaginary.

*Spatial practices* are the objectification of social actions performed by a person in a given space into a material form, the formation of the so-called «spatial competence», as Lefebvre calls this phenomenon [Bedash, 2012, p. 220]. What is important is that spatial practices connect the understood and inhabited spaces and belong to the realm of the perceived. At the same time, Lefebvre claims that any space is the result of the activity of a number of objects in time or actions performed in the past. He endows space with the properties of social relations. «Being a product that is used and consumed, it is also a means of production; exchange networks, flows of raw materials and energy shape space and are determined by it» [Bedash, 2012, p. 221].

According to Lefebvre's theory, space is volumetric and multidimensional, it should not be simplified, reduced to linear models. He considers everyday life to be the starting point for the study of space.

Only by analyzing everyday life, we can structure, understand the relationships, trace in time the processes that form and reproduce the studied space.

If we go further and discuss the historical center of a city from the standpoint of the theory of place, then we should point out another important reference point: the theory of clustering (cluster effect), which was formulated by the economist Robert Lucas and which Richard Florida uses to explain how territories acquire distinctive social quality in his book «Who is your city? The Creative Economy and the Choice of Residence». As R. Florida writes, R. Lucas formulated the concept of the power of clustering «people and productivity, creativity and talent, which drives economic development» [Florida, 2014, p. 66].

The potential of a historical center is determined by clustering there of the most productive and outstanding forces in comparison with other territories, their saturation and mutual intertwining.

The economist Alfred Marshall explained clustering of economic forces by the mutual benefit of the neighborhood [Florida, 2014, p. 68]. The importance of clustering people and their most diverse competencies for the development of the economy was also emphasized by Jane Jacobs in her book «The Economy of Cities» [Jacobs, 2008]. Combining these ideas, Florida concludes that «when people, especially the gifted and creative, come together, it becomes easier to exchange ideas, and, as a result, their individual and collective abilities increase exponentially, i.e. the final result significantly exceeds the sum of its terms. This clustering makes each of us more productive, which in turn makes the place where we live even more productive, and accordingly, collective creativity and economic wealth grow» [Florida, 2014, p. 71].

Something similar happens in the historical centers of cities. Having the longest history in comparison with other parts of a city, combining and retaining a variety of functions on their territory, these historical centers have a great power of clustering. The synergistic effect of clustering determines the development and potential of a center. The American sociologist, a representative of the famous Chicago school, Robert Park, who considered the city as a social laboratory, noted that «the more diverse and eccentric an individual is, the more likely he will be able to realize himself in a large city, in its most developed core – the center, rather than in a small community» [Park, 2002, p. 12].

From the point of view of the theory of place, everyone should find their own territory that suits them. On «their» territory, it will be comfortable to live, work, walk, spend time with other people. And life in a historical center is not suitable for everyone, this choice is individual. Florida argues that different types of territories can attract different types of people, offering benefits for them.

Researchers Rentfrow and Gosling [Florida, 2014, p. 191-193] studied the relationship between residents and places and came to a paradoxical conclusion. Based on the results of their research, they noted that «sooner or later, certain places (and their inhabitants) acquire certain personality traits. The authors call this phenomenon the social «founder effect». This means that people develop personal traits that reflect their experience, lifestyle and beliefs. Places that tolerate or encourage openness to experience

will eventually attract people looking for an environment where they can safely express themselves as they please» [Florida, 2014, p. 201].

## **Materials and methods**

This article will focus on Samara, or more precisely, its historical center.

Samara traces its history back to 1586, when, by order of Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich, the Samara fortress was built by the voivode (military commander) Prince Grigory Osipovich Zasekin. In 2025, Samara will be 439 years old. At the end of the 19th century, Samara became one of the largest centers of trade, the «bread wharf of Russia», and was a prosperous merchant city, of which there is much evidence. During the Great Patriotic War, Samara (at that time Kuibyshev) became the «spare capital» of the country. Now it is a large industrial center, the space capital of Russia. As in any city with a rich history, the concentration of historical memory, identities, and meanings falls on the historical center. The center of Samara is rich in architecture of the Art Nouveau and Constructivism era, samples of unique Samara wood carvings have been preserved, and the special design of Samara courtyards attracts the interest of researchers and tourists.

A few years ago, in order to preserve the historical center of Samara, it was granted the status of a historical settlement, which implies additional restrictions on the implementation of various activities in this territory, primarily, restrictions on development.

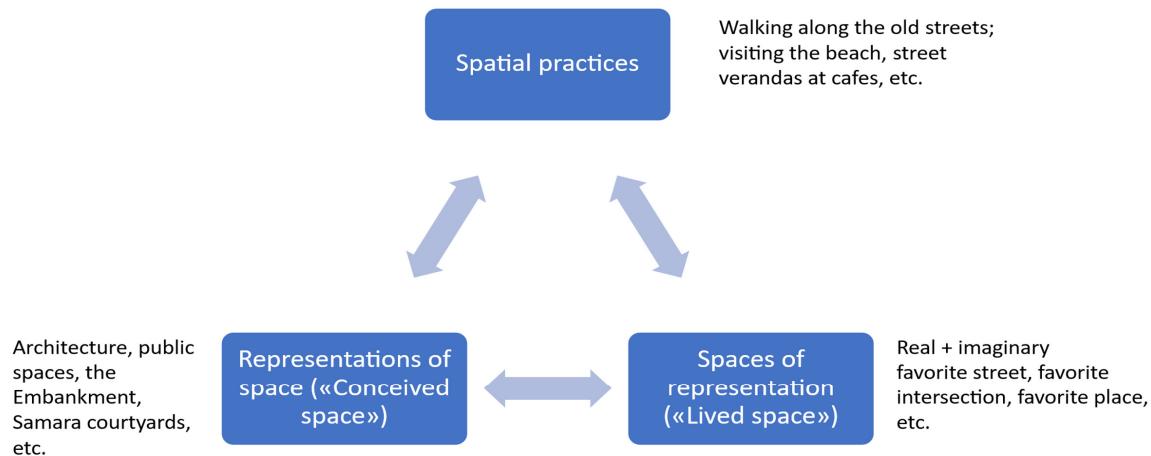
There are ongoing discussions among residents, experts, scientists and the media about the appropriateness of such a decision and the choice of mechanisms for the further implementation of this concept. That is why the purpose of the study was to identify the value framework in the attitude of residents of the Samara historical center to the territory of their residence: how did this happen that they chose to live in the historical center? What value system corresponds to this choice? What problems do residents encounter and what further development paths for the territory they envision? Why is housing and land more expensive in the center? Why do many people want to live and work in this territory? What is the phenomenon of central areas of cities?

These questions formulate the objectives of the study, while the answers to them appear during the analysis of the collected empirical data.

The spatial triad of Henri Lefebvre was chosen as the methodological basis for the study. If we project the proposed model of studying space onto the selected context, all three components of the triad are clearly visible.

In the context of our study, architecture, landscaped spaces, embankments, street layouts, etc. correspond to «representations of space» according to Lefebvre. «Representational space» refers to those streets and places that respondents indicated as favorite, memorable, associate with them some stories and tales, emotionally color them. «Spatial practices» are walks, visits to the beach, instances of business and

government work on the territory within the historical center and other types of activities that informants tell us about.



**Fig. 1. Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad.**

The study relied on qualitative methodology by conducting a series of in-depth interviews. The author conducted ten in-depth interviews with residents of the historical part of Samara. Informants were selected using the snowball method from different microdistricts of the historical center of the city to ensure the greatest spatial representation of the obtained empirical data in the studied area. The second selection criterion was the condition that the informants were of different gender, age and occupation.

In addition, as part of testing the toolkit, a series of interviews were also conducted with non-residents of the historical center of Samara, which showed the difference in views of residents of the central districts of the city in relation to residents of other districts.

All interviews were conducted in person or online and recorded on a dictaphone. Coding and analytical processing of interview transcripts was carried out using MAXQDA software.

### Research results

After conducting the first interviews, it became clear that the attitude towards the importance of the historical center differs greatly between those who live or work there and residents of other areas of the city. The first conversations with non-residents showed that residents of outlying areas do not see much sense in preserving wooden houses in the center, visit it quite rarely, can go for years without visiting museums and theaters, know much less about the history of the city and do not appreciate architecture. Among them, there are suggestions that it would be better to demolish all this «junk» and build anew with modern objects.

Historical center residents	Residents of outlying areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A conscious, well-established attitude towards the historical and cultural heritage of Samara.</li> <li>• Understanding the value of a territory in relation to other areas.</li> <li>• Willingly reflect and formulate their thoughts on the topic of identifying themselves as a resident of the historical center.</li> <li>• Show greater knowledge of local historical information and a desire to learn more about their city.</li> <li>• A sense of love and pride in residing in Samara.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't see much sense in preserving wooden houses in the center.</li> <li>• Rarely visit the center, can go for years without museums and theaters.</li> <li>• Don't understand the beauty of architecture.</li> <li>• Suggest that it would be better to demolish this «junk» and build anew with modern buildings.</li> <li>• Feel disgusted by old crumbling houses, consider them untidy.</li> <li>• Often complain about poor landscaping and the urban environment.</li> </ul>

**Fig. 2. Differences in views of residents and non-residents on the historic center.**

Residents of the historical center have a completely conscious, well-formed attitude to the historical and cultural heritage of Samara, understand the value of the territory where they live in relation to other areas of the city, with great warmth and willingness discuss the topics of identifying themselves as residents of the historical center, show greater knowledge of local history information and a desire to learn even more about their city. All my interlocutors from among the residents show a feeling of love and pride in belonging to Samara, perceiving it as «home», a sense of intergenerational connection and a special «way of life» of Samara's historical quarters. This is clearly seen in Figure 2, which shows how much the attitude to the historical center differs among residents and non-residents.

*Values and identities.* Almost all resident informants begin their narratives with the fact that Samara, its center, represents a unique image. They explain this by describing natural landscapes, location at the confluence of two rivers, a unique history, a combination of accessibility to nature and modern entertainment infrastructure.

*In this sense, Samara has its own image, its own face, its own feeling. It is unique in that, for example, in the summer you are inside the city, you can swim in the Volga and even swim to another wild part of it and look at this metropolis from there... Here you can climb up many slopes and walk, see the sights, get into restaurants, cozy coffee shops and in the evening generally partake culture in some museum or theater. This interconnection of nature and culture of opportunities with pleasure and enjoyment, which is important for a post-industrial person, that it is not just walking among high-rise buildings or birch trees, it is important for him to enjoy what he sees around. All this is very tightly placed here in Samara in some*

kind of feeling, what the locals call «Volga hedonism», well, what A.K. said, this is «life on a big rive». Indeed, it is life<sup>1</sup>.

Residents often associate the image of the historical center with home, comfort, and a special way of life. They remember their childhood very warmly if it was spent in the «old city». From the point of view of Lefebvre's triad, a strong dominant is «Lived spaces», favorite streets, corners, squares, areas within the historical center. They are associated with warm memories, traditions, family stories, feelings that live in the soul and are pleasant to return to.

*... as psychologists say, there are apartments, and there are houses ... That is, the same space, the same room in which we live, it can be perceived as an apartment, i.e. as something temporary, in which you are not immersed. Or it can be perceived as a house. And it does not matter at all what it is – 100 square meters, 200 square meters ... So on Buyanova it was a house in every sense of the word. It was a very warm, soulful and absolutely symbolic space for me, because my grandmother and great-grandfather also lived in this house. And there was such a dramatic story of their love.*

*Well, the thing is that I was born in the area of Samarskaya Square and have lived there all my life. And for me, the city center is not just a geographical point on the map of our city, it is literally my home. That is, I consider the concept of home more broadly than an apartment.*

Thus, informants express commitment to the territory of the historical center as a home in its expanded sense.

Another image that residents associate with historical Samara is the image of a mother. The expression «Mother Volga» is often found in the narratives of Samara residents. This association is actively cultivated among residents.

*Maybe, somewhere, sometime in my youth, I had thoughts and even opportunities to go to Moscow and not only to Moscow, but also abroad. But now I think how great it is that I did not actually do this. Because no matter how imperfect Samara is, right? But for me it is like a mother. You don't choose, you love and don't betray. That's the most important thing!.*

The way of life is not only buildings. The way of life is people, family traditions, the yard, the community. One of the informants very clearly emphasizes this identity of the Samara historical center:

*... this is a way of life, this is a unique way of life, of which little is left now. And this way of life – what is it? This is the way of life of the yard. This is its own community, these are its own rules, this is its own world. ... A few years ago I was walking along Buyanova, returning from work in the evening after my teaching classes, and i.e. here are the yards, and people are sitting in front of the yards. Women, as a rule, grandmothers, men. They communicate, talk, children run around in the yards ... That is, this is a kind of common world for people of different ages.*

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<sup>1</sup> Here and below we provide verbatim quotes from informants that convey their live speech.

*On Leningradskaya street for a long time, it was interesting to look at this. ... on the right, these grandmothers in their home clothes, and this is a house, and this yard is a house, and the street in front of the house feels like home, i.e. they are in robes, slippers, so cozy... That is, this is such a way of life.*

Another important feature of the Samara center is its eclecticism along with harmony. Informants note eclecticism in architecture, in the urban environment, explaining it by the connection between times and generations. At the same time, the negative statements reflect on the contrast with modern buildings. In the negative connotation, as a rule, they mention modern architecture, emphasize the regret that old houses are being lost, and new ones do not attract with their appearance and do not contribute to the architectural heritage. If we speak in the terminology of Lefebvre's spatial triad, informants have different attitudes to the representation of space in different time periods. The «perceived space» of previous periods seems harmonious to them, while modern representations take root with greater difficulty.

*...every city you visit is unique in its architecture, which is the result of people building here from the very beginning, and their city layout represents their thoughts on how life should be arranged... Times change, people's ideas on how to live, how to conduct their daily life, where to go for entertainment change, and cities change. And at the same time, the old is preserved, the new is added. And Samara definitely fits into my vision of how a city should be arranged. And the fact that it is now quite eclectic, especially the city center, and the ruins, one might say, wooden houses of the tsarist regime, and beautiful mansions from the same time, and attempts of the Soviet era to sprinkle new buildings there, and quite successful ones, in my opinion, in most cases, and, probably, not very successful modern glass high-rises. This, it seems to me, makes our city so unique that it definitely needs to be preserved.*

Informants highlight the commercialization of urban relations as a factor that negatively influences the architectural appearance of the city and hinders its harmonious development.

*... when I see what is being built and what ghastly architecture... I read somewhere the expression "architectural bastards". It sounds rude, but true. That's exactly how the city center is being built today. These are architectural bastards that have no aesthetic value, that do not improve the appearance of the city at all, but, on the contrary, destroy it. This is such, you know, architectural aggression – I would even call it that. Architectural aggression, the desire to squeeze out the maximum profit, and then nobody cares.*

Residents are convinced that the special flavor of old Samara is connected with wooden houses. Other features of the architecture and overall construction of the historical center space are manor development, unique Samara street layout, Samara courtyards, Art Nouveau mansions. Residents advocate for the preservation of these identities, their reproduction and allow only contextual, environmental development that will not disturb the existing landscape.

*... it is important to preserve the historical grid of streets, the system of courtyards... The second value is the preserved estate development in many places. Courtyards that represent simply an endless*

*Universe. No matter how much you walk through them, you will always find some new ones. Because they number in thousands.*

The attitude towards new construction varies – from «ban it altogether» to «build according to scale». But the overwhelming majority of informants understand that preserving houses in the center without new construction is a utopia. Therefore, they are ready to support the construction of new buildings that fit into the context of the environment, provided that there are clear regulations.

At the same time, residents are convinced that developers of new buildings in the center are focused on super profit, and not on preserving the identity of the urban environment. In this regard, negative assessments of modern buildings are expressed, high-rise buildings are condemned, which leads to the loss of the atmosphere of the streets, their lighting and the general feeling of space.

*Of course, I understand the inevitability of progress, development, and so on, but I always remember my childhood, when you go outside and see these little houses, and you see the sky above you. You see space, some kind of space.*

*In my opinion, it should not be pseudo-historical development, although many people think that it is acceptable to build in the style of the late 19th, early 20th century. No, it is bad. Because any period, any time is characterized by its own style. Building a modern building does not mean building badly. Modern architecture is generally good. On the contrary, it can serve as a very good background for historical development. Another thing is scale. Here I am a supporter of strict measures, because the scale and humanity of the historical environment itself should be a priority. If it is observed, then the architecture of new buildings can be of any style.*

*... in these city blocks it would be possible to integrate some small construction projects. And this would probably have a positive effect on the entire economy of these same blocks... I am not against new construction, but it is important to maintain the rhythm, the height, so that this diversity of the environment is supported in this way.*

All respondents emphasize that the historical center should be residential. It should not turn into a museum or a territory covered by gentrification. The center should be accessible to people of different incomes, residents and non-residents, out-of-town tourists and foreigners. Only through the diversity of its functions and its users will the center remain a center and continue to develop.

Business is one of the main sources of energy for further life and renewal. In the center there are company offices, administrative buildings, a large number of catering establishments, services, shops. Transfer of houses for rent or ownership to business is one of the main methods used now in cities to support and renew old buildings. Residents of the Samara historical center have a positive attitude to such practice, they understand that it is impossible to restore historical buildings at the expense of the budget.

*...the fashion for historical real estate has started, and now there are many people, private individuals, who have started buying historical houses and want to buy historical houses and open a business in them. And in fact, one can give more than one example, ... but quite a few. And that's good.*

*It is essential to attract businesses and new residents of the old city. And there are enough of them, in general. There are enough people willing to live in the city center now, but in a comfortable environment. Therefore, we need programs that could give new blood, new life to these neighborhoods through project teams that could work with entire neighborhoods, or attract investments, residents here, but all this should still be linked to general municipal programs. This concerns networks, this concerns the entire infrastructure. All this should be linked into a single system.*

Thus, residents of the historical center in their narratives emotionally emphasize the importance of preserving the integrity of the historical environment, but at the same time they realize that it is unlikely that this will be fully realized, they regret this and place their hopes on investors and the authorities, while expressing a significant amount of skepticism.

*A city for people.* Often, informants emphasize the value of living in a historical environment by comparing it with other areas of the city or specific streets. They also note the feeling of security they experience when they are at home.

*... I grew up in the Youth-city, on Zheleznaya Divizii Street, you can google it and see Soviet brutalism, it's a scary and uncomfortable place. ... I understand that when I walk along a dark street in the historical center in the evening, I'm not scared, ... I don't think about it, of course, I don't constantly reflect, but it works at the level of some pre-reflective experience. I understand that I'm more protected there, even by the fact that these little houses «hug» you when you walk. And not when you walk along Zheleznaya Divizii, you have these high-rises, from which you can expect anything.*

*It is really safe here. I flew to visit a friend in South Africa. This is South Africa, a developed country, once one of the most successful developing economies, and it has such a strong contrast: it is beautiful and dangerous. Because after sunset it is literally dangerous to be in public places – you can get robbed. And I want to say that this is something we can appreciate. Because we can go out at any time of the day or night and go for a walk along the Embankment.*

*...I don't like crowded events, but we attend all kinds of concerts and movies; we don't feel a shortage.*

*...I attend many events, always and a lot, so to speak. Premieres, visiting performers, and our theaters. ... As for the cultural life of the city center, it's vibrant, sometimes even excessive.*

Many residents go to theaters, noting that they are within walking distance, and performances by both local and touring companies are featured. Residents of the historic center go to the Khudozhestvenny Cinema—the city's oldest cinema is still popular.

One of the main problems of the historic center is the age of the utility network. Residents understand the scale of the problem, recognize the high cost of network upgrades, and are counting on government programs to address this issue. Renewing the network would also help businesses develop in historic buildings. Residents of historic districts incur costs associated with major events in the city center, which involve street closures, and request that these processes be optimized. Residents also note a lack of small retail shops.

*Why do I live here?* When asked the final question, «Why do you live in the historic center?» at the end of the conversation, respondents typically give very emotional answers, indicating that residents of this area have already reflected on the topic, have a formed position, and are not eager to relocate, actively taking advantage of the amenities available to them.

Among the main advantages of living in the center, they note pedestrian accessibility and connectivity to all vital areas, combined with the aesthetic pleasure of moving around the center, its multifunctionality, good opportunities for both business and leisure, and the absence of commuting throughout the day, which can lead to wasted time. A clear advantage of living in the historic center is the proximity of the Volga, which adds to its functionality – there is a beach, walks, access to river transport, and the ability to quickly get to the recreational area on the other bank of the Volga.

Many respondents noted the pedestrian connectivity and dense environment, which provides ample space for a variety of walks.

*... it's a place where you can go for a walk in any direction. One day, I went out to buy bread, and my feet carried me to the Embankment, to Strukovsky Park.*

*... we walk along the Embankment; we practically live there. Of course, we go to the beach, we go to Strukovsky Park; sometimes there are interesting events there, and we attend them. We walk along all the streets of the center, along Samara Street and up to the beginning of all the streets. Because these are truly atmospheric, as you put it, areas, little neighborhoods, and we like it.*

Informants often identify themselves as Benjamin's flâneurs [Benjamin, 2015], who leisurely stroll the streets of the city center, observing lives of tourists, and reflecting on what they see. Such spatial practices are characteristic of the city center. They differ from practices in other areas, especially industrial ones, where people perceive a walk to the store or to a public transportation stop as an action that must be completed as quickly as possible, without any particular pleasure.

*...people from different cities, places, and countries come here. There's a hotel right next to me where visitors from different countries constantly change; it's interesting to observe them and what they do in our cities. They sometimes ask questions, and from these questions I understand that they're interested in why they come here. It creates a certain impression: why does our city matter to others?.*

Residents of the historic center believe it's important to preserve not only tangible but also intangible memory—the memory of their actions, their lives, and events that change the city. Material representa-

tions of space—monuments, steles, museums—partly help with this, but another part is preserved in texts, toponymy, and other symbols. And all of them are important.

Tourism is also well received by residents of the historic center. They all interact with visitors with interest when the opportunity arises and feel a sense of pride for their city. Many note that tourism in Samara hasn't yet reached its full potential, but they have noticed positive trends in recent years. They fondly recall the 2018 FIFA World Cup. This is also a spatial practice characteristic of residents of the city center.

*At one point, I caught myself thinking that I was just a decoration for them. I was a decoration for a resort town, because they arrived, unloaded their suitcases, and here I was, walking around in a flowing dress, and it was all so wonderful. This is generally a pleasant experience.*

*I have a positive attitude toward tourism because it's a driver, a source of income, interest, and life. There are entire cities that thrive solely on tourism. But here, we are just at the beginning of the process. I'm pleased to see the recent diversity of excursion programs and domestic tourism, even just intracity tourism that is developing.*

*I think it (tourism) is growing naturally. That is, something has probably already begun, and we just need to let it go.*

Informants note the municipality's work in recent years in terms of landscaping, positively assess the renovation of public gardens, saying that much is being done, and it's noticeable. At the same time, there are some concerns about the quality of the work, lawn maintenance, and paving, and there are comments about the lack of small public gardens and small architectural features where people can sit and rest during walks in the city center. They note the importance of place drivers and considering the territory's history and identity when developing improvement projects, as well as the use of an integrated approach.

*... Aksakov Square is somehow connected to the White Cup<sup>1</sup> courtyard, the courtyard of the Art Nouveau Museum, because it's already forming a kind of cluster, a kind of cultural cluster. It's simply starting to behave differently socially.*

*... in the center, for example, if you're walking along Sadovaya Street, you simply have nowhere to sit.*

The lack of organized parking spaces is causing a negative reaction. Residents are positive about the introduction of paid parking, emphasizing that this measure will help regulate the use of personal vehicles, and they express a willingness to pay reasonable parking fees in lieu of towing fines, which are several times higher.

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<sup>1</sup> A coffee shop in Samara on the grounds of the Museum of Modern Art, not far from Aksakov Square.

*My car is towed four times a year. It's frustrating. And, of course, the overall problem is a lack of parking and regulation. I'm in favor of paid parking, so that it functions not as a punishment, but as an opportunity. It's generally unreasonable to drink coffee and worry about where your car is.*

Speaking about the cultural life of the historic center, respondents note its richness and the accessibility of cultural and artistic institutions, emphasizing that they don't experience a shortage of events when choosing where to attend. However, they note that there are plenty of large-scale events, but they would like to see more smaller festivals specifically associated with Samara, which would be associated with our city and attract visitors from other regions.

One of the key aspects highlighted by respondents is the rhythm or pace of life in the historic center. It is generally characterized by a less hectic pace, a sense of time-saving, and leisurely transitions between work and play. This is achieved through the compactness of the streets, their functional richness, and the harmonious environment.

All interviewees express a love for Samara's center; their narratives reveal a sense of «specialness» or «otherness» relative to residents of other parts of the city, a sense of pride in possessing the valuable assets of the urban environment that they possess.

### **Conclusion**

The main conclusion reached at this stage of the study is that anyone who has once experienced the beauty, uniqueness, indescribable sensations, and special opportunities offered by Samara's historic center is generally not prepared to give them up. Unless, of course, they are moving to another city for one reason or another, including the capital, and are committed to continuing to live in the Samara region.

From the perspective of Lefebvre's spatial triad, it is clear that spatial practices are the connecting element between the representations of space («conceived space») and the representational space («lived spaces»). Through lived experiences and vivid events, the real is combined with the imaginary in people's thoughts, creating sensations and associations that arise again and again in connection with a particular territory. Thus, space acquires certain intangible characteristics. As one informant noted in an interview, «because home is, above all, the soul».

The hypothesis of clustering people, resources, and opportunities in the city core is also confirmed by the study's findings. Most respondents point to the multifunctionality, richness, and density of the historic center across a variety of indicators. The desire to live and work here is a desire to achieve more, to be successful, to test one's abilities, and to realize one's initiatives. Not everyone is capable of this, but those who are have contributed to the creation of the space of the historic center, in this case, Samara, and it will «repay» them in the form of resources and opportunities that they will receive in the future.

The cool attitude of residents of other districts toward the city's places of interest and their lack of understanding of the value of the historic environment confirms Florida's assertion that different types of

places suit different types of people. Not everyone wants or enjoys living in the historic center. Many feel perfectly comfortable in Bezymyanka or Metallurga (the historically established colloquial names for certain areas of the city) and have no desire to move anywhere else.

Lefebvre believed that by changing space, one can change life. He argued that the contradictions of the social order are visible through the contradictions of space. This is evident in the research results. Samara's historic center, which residents understand, value, and want to preserve, considering it their «lived-in space», is, on the one hand, challenged by the interests of the business community, which seeks to profit from constructing ever-higher buildings on the valuable land of the historic center. On the other hand, another group of residents argues that these old buildings shouldn't be held on to, but rather demolished and redeveloped—all these points of view coexist. This is just one of the most glaring contradictions that can be identified by analyzing the empirical data obtained during interviews with respondents.

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