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### Introducing the issue

This Issue is composed of translations of articles that were published in two issues of the Russian-language journal “Sotsial’nye novatsii i sotsial’nye nauki” for 2024–2025 under the common theme of urban environment transformation. The selected materials offer an in-depth examination of the dialectics of renewal and homeostasis in urban socio-cultural ensembles.

On the one hand, modern urbanism favors a futuristic approach to the development of cities with ever-increasing intellectual and technical component in life support systems, social interactions and communication platforms. On the other hand, the dynamism of the urban environment – migration and population rotation, growth and sprawl, transformations of the architectural and planning appearance, functional inequality of different city parts and other processes – require careful and thoughtful approach to mechanisms that ensure a city’s self-regulation and reproduction of the identity of its residents. The authors presented in the Journal attempt to see in the present both the echoes of bygone eras and the sprouts of innovative solutions that determine the current trends of urban life, which are focused on two popular models of urban development: the “smart city” and the “creative city”.

The first section of the issue, “**The space of discourse**”, opens with a review by *M.A. Polozhikhina*, which discusses four main tools for shaping the urban intellectual environment: the creation of technology parks and university campuses, the formation of creative spaces, and the introduction of “smart city” technologies. *M.A. Polozhikhina* analyses the existing approaches, identifies constraints and contradictions following practical implementation.

In the article by *P.M. Shulgin* and *O.E. Shtele*, the historical and cultural heritage is considered as a special sphere of urban life and an indicator of its quality, as well as one of the most important sources of a city's development. The authors describe the method of mapping cultural and natural attractions, and provide samples of specific “encyclopedic” cartographic solutions, which serve as an important tool for preserving and using historical and cultural potential, especially in small and medium-sized cities.

The third article, also methodological in its nature, presents the results of testing an innovative method of automated (“cybermetric”) assessment of the social well-being of the population based on digital traces. The co-authors. – *I. Dymova* and *A.Yu. Dombrovskaya* – modify the scale of sufficiency of social benefits, applying it to the text array of documents spontaneously arising as a result of the communicative activity of Internet communities.

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The authors of the “**Point of View**” section focus on the development and use of the urban creative potential. Focusing on the attractiveness of Kazan's creative spaces for students, *F.F. Ishkineeva* and *K.G. Gorskaia* note the fragmentary nature of the existing practices of involving young people in the socio-cultural life of the city and the lack of social elevators. At the same time, the authors praise the high role of the urban creative environment as a factor in retaining young people in the region and improving city's competitiveness in the context of labor shortages.

Utilizing the potential of territories on the material about the Nizhny Novgorod region is discussed in the article by *Yu.L. Kruze* on the capitalization of symbolic resources. Purposeful and planned activities may turn symbolic capital into the prime factor for building business chains. The author shows the process of forming a “heritage economy” based on the historical and cultural potential of a territory. An important conclusion is that the beneficial nature of this process affects not only urban but also rural municipalities. In the latter, creative industries grow out of the traditions of folk crafts. On the one hand, this helps to revive economic activity and reduce unemployment in rural areas. On the other hand, changes occur smoothly and “ecologically”, without excessive modernization load on the way of life and the rhythm of rural life.

Articles in the “**Human Factor**” section, based on the results of empirical sociological research, demonstrate the different roles of city residents in terms of their involvement in the processes of urban environment transformation and reactions to the introduction of innovative practices, depending on current socio-economic factors.

*E.A. Ryzhkova* verifies the hypothesis of clustering of a city territory as a result of the gradual concentration of people with similar properties in some areas, allowing them to carry out the activity they need, and, thus, to assimilate to each other. Based on qualitative interviews with residents of the historical center of Samara, the author identifies in the narratives those signs of self-descriptions that form the basis of their identity and, accordingly, the essence of the perception of the unifying territory.

*A.V. Prokofieva* and *A.A. Lyadova's* qualitative study of a narrow socio-professional expert group (directors of motor transport museums in the Urals) demonstrates the ability to contribute to enhancing the city's intellectual potential not only for those traditionally considered representatives of the meritocracy and creative class, but also for people from other social strata. Success is predicated on their high level of engagement in the process, loyalty to the city/city-forming enterprise (which played a significant role in their life history), and the dominance of professional identity in the structure of their self-image.

How to combine tradition and innovation in urban planning solutions, supporting the positive identity of both young people striving for a high-tech future and older people who require the preservation of historical and cultural traditions and the integrity of important places of memory, as well as ensuring the comfort and security of the indigenous population and satisfying the reasonable need for an influx of migrants—these questions remain unresolved. The Journal's series of thematic issues dedicated to urban

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transformations can be expanded with collective analysis and discussion of successful practices and urban policies aimed at harmonizing contradictions between various groups of citizens with conflicting interests.

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