

Evolution of the Political Landscape of Moscow as Capital¹

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Abstract—Political landscape includes a wide range of tangible and intangible phenomena. The appearance of a capital is not only the political history of the state imprinted in buildings and monuments, but also a reflection of the ideas of the national elite about its social support, development prospects, the outside world, and diverse social ideas about space. Material objects, which shape urban environment, representative buildings of federal and regional authorities, monuments, and memorials play a special symbolic role as the dominant categories of the matrix of new representations. The objective of the present study is to trace the stages of evolution of the most important material elements of political landscape with a case study of monuments and buildings of government institutions in Moscow. The features of the modern distribution of government buildings and monuments in the city have been considered. The historical hyperconcentration of government buildings in or near the center of the capital has been confirmed. Two large areas of their high concentration have been identified: in the area of Lubyanka, Kitai-gorod, Staraya and Novaya squares and within the Moscow City business complex. Despite the transfer of a number of federal institutions outside the center, no noticeable spatial decentralization of the administrative functions of the capital has yet occurred. The geography of the monuments follows the general patterns of the capital's layout. Their location reveals the radial-ring and sectoral structures of the city, as well as the specialization of individual districts. The undisputed dominant features of the landscape are monuments dedicated to the heroes and events of WWII (more than 40% of the total number of monuments), which constitute one of the pillars of modern Russian identity. The significance of many of the capital's monuments is based on a powerful long-standing discourse. Despite the erection of monuments to rehabilitated public and political figures, victims of new wars and terrorist attacks, as well as monuments with Orthodox themes, the monument landscape of the capital has not changed radically during the post-Soviet period.

Keywords: political landscape, Moscow, monuments, government buildings, federal and regional authorities, capital, urban environment, appearance of the capital

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INTRODUCTION

The close relationship of social and political space with physical space is expressed, among other things, in the growth of research the territorial distribution of objects, processes and phenomena that have symbolic meaning. In social sciences, the physical-geographical term “landscape” is frequently used metaphorically, capturing the structural diversity, contrast, and heterogeneity of a certain sociopolitical phenomenon across the territory (Gritsenko, 2017), e.g., differentiation of voting results for different parties and candidates. Several terms are used, namely political, symbolic, and cultural landscape. Their relationship is not always clearly defined: in many works, they are examined both together and separately, and are considered

as close or overlapping concepts, or components of each other.

Cultural landscape remains the most developed and widespread concept. It is understood as a landscape formed by people and embodied in a system of artifacts and symbolic objects and primarily reflecting traditions, historical development of the territory, and ethnocultural and political processes (see, e.g., Kaganskii, 2001; Kalutskov, 2008; Vedenin and Kuleshova, 2001). The symbolic landscape, as a rule, is viewed more narrowly – rather as a set of symbolic objects that form a certain semantic series including a material manifestation of political culture. In our opinion, the political landscape is a broader concept than the symbolic one. These concepts are independent, but largely overlapping.

There are relatively few works where the term “political landscape” is used as a conceptual basis for research. It was introduced by Derwent Whittlesey and

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Richard Hartshorne in the 1940s and 1950s, then developed by Denis Cosgrove. D. Whittlesey interpreted political landscape relatively narrowly—as a result of the authorities’ influence on the cultural landscape in the form of the construction of defensive structures, border barriers and other infrastructure necessary for the state. These activities were seen as contributing to the homogenization of the political landscape within state borders (Whittlesey, 1944). R. Hartshorne, in accordance with his well-known functional approach, interpreted political landscape as a reflection of the confrontation between centripetal forces promoting the unity and territorial integrity of the state, and centrifugal forces leading to its disintegration (Hartshorne, 1950). D. Cosgrove understood political landscape as a way of expressing the supremacy, control, and dominance of a ruling class or classes over a territory (Cosgrove, 1998; Kliot and Mansfeld, 1997). Summarizing the views of these authors, we can define political landscape as a territorially localized set of objects and processes that reflect the ideology, political values and norms, demonstrating the ideological control of the ruling regime and/or certain social groups over the territory.

Since the mid-1990s, Russian authors have defined political landscape as a set of parameters of the political process and political culture characteristic of a certain territory (Kolosov, 1997; Turovskii, 1995). A.A. Gritsenko (2017) understands the political landscape as a background, arena, and way of existence of historical memory and territorial identity of population, a reflection of the culture of territorial communities while simultaneously guiding their self-identification. In these works, political landscape appeals to the real world of objects and phenomena, their social component, reflecting the close relationship between the long-term process of development and arrangement of living space by individuals or communities and the situational process of filling it with semantic and symbolic content (*Identichnost’ ...*, 2017). Since the 2000s, many studies devoted to transformation of political landscape have considered its transformations as material changes in the form of the transfer or demolition of old monuments and installation of new ones (see, e.g., Gaidai and Lyubarets, 2016) and the emergence of new memorials, museums, memorial boards, and temples dedicated to events or persons, toponyms, etc. At the same time, intangible carriers of symbols were analyzed, usually closely associated with material ones: parades, holidays, and official ceremonies. The focus was on shifts in the invisible properties and interpretation of the symbolic meaning of material objects, resulting from the political interests, orientations, and strategies of interacting actors (*Identichnost’ ...*, 2017).

The semiotic approach to the concept and structure of political landscape focuses on the unity of the processes of integrating semiosis into the ideological and symbolic elements of landscape (Lotman, 2020).

Using this approach, P. Adams and O. Lavrenova (2023) consider the political landscape as a layer of the semiosphere, the matrix in which cultural codes, expressed in symbolic form, are manifested materially and fixed on the territory. They find a particularly deeply accumulated meaning in monuments, memorials, and statues, anchoring collective memory to specific coordinates and reinforcing a social group’s collective memories of a place. F. Bellentani’s (2021) typology of cultural reinterpretation of monuments and memorials is based on the idea that in semiotic terms, they can be considered “fluid,” acquiring new meanings in different historical/cultural contexts.

Thus, a wide range of material and intangible phenomena can be considered elements of the political landscape: from the settlement system to the features of architecture, political symbols, monuments, street advertising, and typical forms of political behavior. Many elements of political landscape are also parts of the symbolic capital of a country, region or locality.

The urban political landscape, especially in capital cities, is much more diverse than the rural. The urban environment of capitals contains rich and multilayered material for researchers of various specialties who study the formation and evolution of territorial identities at different levels: national, regional, urban, and ethnic, in different historical periods. J. Agnew (2011) wrote that people’s association with a particular territory as part of their collective identity includes attachment to a typical cultural and political landscape.

Foreign scholars pointed out the great symbolic role of monuments in Russia. J. Pallot (1999) noted that the monument to Peter the Great in St. Petersburg (“the Bronze Horseman”) or the monument to Pushkin in Moscow served in different historical eras as venues for participants of protest movements. Moreover, monuments are seen as central to the nation-building project in post-Soviet Russia, a result of a struggle between elites to create a “legitimate” history (Forest and Johnston, 2002). Monuments testify to changes in semiotic trajectories and “explosions,” when one or several layers of the semiotic space undergo dramatic transformations and give rise to multidirectional readings of the landscape (Lotman, 2020). The appearance of the capital is not only the political history of the country imprinted in buildings and monuments, but also a reflection of the ideas of the national elite about its social support, prospects, and the outside world (Berlin–Washington ..., 2007). As the French geographer B. Debarbieux (2021) emphasizes, multiple collective social ideas about space are not only an attribute of social life, but moreover, a condition of its existence, background and motivation for action (Debarbieux, 2021).

The semantics of the urban environment and the political landscape of the city results from the superposition of many historical layers and represents a kind of palimpsest, defining the uniqueness of both

the capital as a whole and its neighborhoods. A special role in this process is played by material environment-forming objects: palaces of the nobility, religious buildings, fortresses, various monuments, business centers—the focus of political, administrative, and other important functions of the capital. As a rule, the material elements of political landscape exist throughout the lives of several generations, or centuries, and sometimes even millennia. In contrast to, e.g., literary narratives, they are addressed to all residents and become an integral part of their image of the city and territorial identity, associated with certain events, ideas, and personalities.

Buildings of leading government institutions, frequently remarkable architectural constructions, historical symbols, and memorial sites, also occupy an important place in the political landscape of capitals. They are carefully protected but at the same time serve as tourist sites. Along with toponymy, these objects become the dominant categories for describing a place and set the further evolution of its symbolism as a kind of matrix of new representations (Lavrenova, 2009).

The objective of this study is to trace the stages of evolution of the most important material elements of political landscape with a case study of monuments and buildings of government institutions in Moscow.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main information source for the study was the database created by the authors, which includes, first, processed information about the location of federal government institutions—the Presidential Administration, the Federal Assembly, federal ministries and departments, including addresses, city district, year of construction, architectural style, previous function and other information posted on their official websites. The list of objects under consideration also includes buildings of the executive and legislative authorities of Moscow and Moscow oblast, the largest federal subjects in terms of population. However, we did not consider it possible to take into account the location of the 125 municipalities² into which Moscow is divided, since they are not comparable in importance to federal and city (regional) institutions, are more or less evenly distributed throughout the city, and many of them are located in adapted premises, frequently on the first floors of residential buildings.

The source of information about the construction date of buildings housing federal and regional authorities was the interactive map of the “age of buildings” of Russian cities on the website *How old is this build-*

ing,³ as well as the data on the previous purpose of buildings and their architectural style from the site *Wikimapia.org*, and visual observations. Using automated geocoding, the locations of objects were linked to a virtual map in a GIS project created in the QGIS mapping service. Qualitative analysis was carried out by cross-analysis of information about the location of buildings and other auxiliary information to identify spatial patterns of their location.

The quantitative analysis consisted of calculating the distance between a conditional point, which is the center of Moscow (the geometric center of Red Square), and government buildings (the geometric center of the building) by constructing a distance matrix in the QGIS package. Then, from a discrete image of the phenomenon (individual points), a representation of the continuum (density field) was compiled using kernel density estimation in the QGIS package. The result of kernel density estimation was a raster image (regular grid), where the number of objects under study is calculated for each cell (size 10 m × 10 m) within a radius of 1000 m.

The database also included systematic information about the location, date of installation, theme, and background of the erection of monuments with political connotations, selected from a complete list of more than 900 monuments in Moscow (Pamyatniki ..., 2016). This information made it possible to distinguish 11 categories of monuments. Although the distribution of monuments by category was uneven, it was important to preserve a number of semantic categories (e.g., Orthodox monuments and monuments dedicated to the “friendship of peoples”). In addition, the installation of monuments was considered in a historical retrospective, within which conditional historical stages were identified: prerevolutionary (before 1917), early Soviet (from 1917 to 1954), late Soviet⁴ (from 1955 to 1991), and post-Soviet (since 1992).

The monuments under consideration include those dedicated to past events and personalities—politicians, military leaders, artists, and cultural figures. The choice of these events and figures is political in nature. The interpretation of historical events and figures of the past is associated with people’s self-association with their great ancestors, the founders of the state, who defended it from enemies, developed the economy and culture, committed acts that allow descendants to be proud of their country or city, and put forward ideas that have retained high value and relevance for citizens until current days (Lavrenova, 2022). Assessing the significance of famous personalities is an important factor and at the same time an element of territorial identity, associating oneself with

² Moscow is divided into 12 administrative districts, 125 rayons within them and 21 separate settlements in two districts, including the territories incorporated to the city in 2012 (the so-called New Moscow). Rayons and separate settlements are municipal entities, that is, they have elected bodies of self-government.

³ <https://kontikimaps.ru/how-old/moscow?p=h-msk> (accessed July 16, 2022).

⁴ The death of Stalin was considered the conditional date for dividing the Soviet period into early and late.

one's country, region, city, or locality (Kolosov and O'Loughlin, 2017).

Before the collapse of the USSR, monuments to revolutionaries and leaders of the CPSU played an important ideological role. An ideological role was also played by sculptural compositions dedicated to professional working communities, designed to symbolize official respect for the most important professions and emphasize that the Soviet Union is "a state of workers and peasants." The choice of foreign figures was also political in nature, especially in Soviet times. The construction of a monument to them reflected the official attitude towards their activities (e.g., A. Lincoln, who abolished slavery in the United States, or H. Heine, the ideologist of the secret revolutionary society "Young Germany") and/or was a sign of friendly relations with a certain country (monuments to M. Gandhi or A. Navoi).

According to numerous polls, one of the main historical events that evokes the greatest pride in Russia and has become the cornerstone of national identity is victory in WWII (the Great Patriotic War). Monuments dedicated to its heroes and milestones in all corners of the country are the most important part of Russia's political landscape. Its integral element is also monuments to the defenders of the Fatherland and law and order in peacetime: soldiers who served in Afghanistan, policemen, firefighters, etc. who died in the line of duty, etc.

City sculpture (*Water, Land and Bathing Horses, Paris and Helen*, etc.) and memorial signs dedicated to events not of a political nature (e.g., victims of disasters) were not considered. The location of the monument in most cases was indicated in two forms: the address of the building closest to the monument or a set of landmarks. In the first case, automated geocoding was used, linking an object on the map to an address. The result was a set of points, each of which corresponded to one monument. In the second case, the source material indicated a street intersection or a significant object located nearby (e.g., a square or a park); the QuickMapServices plugin was loaded into the GIS project, making it possible to view available maps from different services (Google, OpenStreetMap, Yandex, etc.), then the monument was drawn onto the scheme on top of this image manually. To optimally display the distribution of monuments, kernel density estimation with the QGIS map service was applied.

SPECIFIC FEATURES AND COMPOSITION OF THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF CAPITALS

One of the most characteristic features in the appearance of capitals is the symbolism of modernization, renewal of the country, and its achievements in science, technology and art, embodied in the planning structure, unique public buildings, major projects,

and infrastructure. The development of the capitals is also determined by the need of large international businesses for a similar host urban environment that meets certain standards. Such an environment is relatively easy to reproduce, monitor, and update in accordance with known models—in any case, much easier than modernizing a historical city for new political needs (Scott, 1999).

However, a standard environment poorly fulfills the other main function of the capital's symbols. According to the American political scientist L. Vale, capitals are places in which power, historical memory and culture are embodied in stone to create the image of a cohesive and strong nation, and where the social, ethnic, religious and political diversity of the country is symbolically integrated (Stephens, 2013; Vale, 2008). Therefore, the capital very frequently promotes or directly serves as a brand of the country, just as, e.g., Paris is closely associated abroad with France as a whole.

Public opinion and part of the elite, as a rule, oppose the replacement of historical urban environment buildings and individual buildings, even those that do not have cultural value, with modernist uniform projects. A typical example is Ankara, whose residents highly value the low-rise streets of the historical center, which are gradually disappearing from the city map during new construction (Sargin, 2004). Similar trends have been summarized in the concept of the hybrid city, implying a combination of modernist (techno) styles with a flexible approach to existing urban environment, which is in the process of continuous but not radical evolution (Scott, 2021), contributing to strengthen national identity and appealing to national architecture, symbolism, narratives and heroes.

One of the most developed topics in political geography related to the semantics of the urban environment of capital cities is the transfer of capital functions: the choice of a new capital, which in itself is symbolic, its planning structure, the architecture of government buildings, etc. In many countries, especially federal states, the choice of the capital represents a compromise between the most powerful regional and urban elites or the largest ethnic communities. The capital is frequently located on a specially designated territory that is not part of any federal subject (e.g., Ottawa or Canberra), and in a specially built new city (e.g., Brasilia), where it is easier for the central authorities to embody their ideas about the political nation and its origin, place in the world and historical mission (Rossman, 2013), and thereby achieve their political goals.

The main one is usually strengthening the identity of the new state. Such is the case of moving the capital of independent Kazakhstan closer to the geographical center of the country, Astana, which is actually a new city built next to the old, but modernized regional cen-

ter. Its urban space expresses the depth of traditions, history, and culture of the Kazakh people as a state-forming people who has regained a numerical majority in the population. This idea is most clearly embodied in such buildings as the Baiterek Tower, which has become a place of pilgrimage for tourists, mosques, the National Museum, and the Khan Shatyr shopping and entertainment center, designed by the star of modern world architecture Norman Foster. At the same time, the appearance of Astana does not reject allusions to the Soviet past and close ties with Russia and includes international motives as a symbol of modernity. The architecture of the presidential palace, along with national symbols, reproduces certain features of Washington's White House, and other governmental buildings—European architectural styles (Thorez, 2019).

In the approach to analyzing the urban political landscape, we can highlight, first, the study of *material signs* (symbols). They can be the plan and entire development of the city, if they are typical of historical cities of the country, and infrastructure (e.g., the Ostankino TV tower in Moscow, which for a long time remained the tallest in the world), temples, universities, and representative buildings, primarily government ones. Their very names become political symbols (*The White House stated..., the Kremlin made a decision...*). An important element of the political landscape of the capital are monuments to events of the distant and recent past, outstanding political and military figures, writers, composers, actors, and scientists.

Second, an obligatory part of an analysis of the urban political landscape is *interpretation* of historical events and legacies of outstanding personalities which can change over time. A well-known example is the attitude towards one of the largest administrative buildings in the world, the House of the People, now the Palace of Parliament in Bucharest, erected in the 1980s at the initiative of N. Ceausescu and destined to personify the greatness of his figure and the regime he built. Almost completed by the time of his overthrow and execution in 1989, this palace has now become a symbol of totalitarianism and arbitrariness in urban planning

Changes in political course or shifts in popular perceptions sometimes lead to the demolition of monuments, as illustrated by the recent destruction of monuments to Civil War figures in the United States and the destruction of monuments to Soviet soldiers in a number of countries in Central and Eastern Europe. But some destroyed monuments are such significant symbols that they are restored in their original form or in a different form, e.g., the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow and the nearby monument to Alexander II.

The official, government-supported interpretation of material symbols or narratives associated with them

is not always shared by all social groups. The diversity of interpretations is facilitated by a complex and increasingly differentiated social structure, including diversity of the ethnic composition of the population of large cities, the polyphony of their political views, and attitudes towards the past. Moreover, different material symbols are inherently addressed to different audiences. For example, the cosmopolitan landscape of business centers is the habitat of domestic and foreign companies, highly paid managers and other office employees, and some parts of the historical center in the vicinity of well-known monuments are turning into tourist neighborhoods endowed with strong national symbols.

Third, analysis of discourse plays a significant role in studying the urban political landscape—*creating and disseminating narratives* by including information about edifices and monuments in tourist guides, depicting them in movies and works of art, conducting or publicly encouraging rituals associated with monuments: laying flowers, visits by foreign delegations during official visits or wedding processions (e.g., the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow), organizing festivals, parades, and demonstrations. This analysis reveals the ways in which authorities and other actors reinforce or alter the perception and interpretation of material symbols.

MODERNIZATION AND NATIONALIZATION IN THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF MOSCOW: BUILDINGS OF FEDERAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

The well-known French geographer Paul Claval (2010) distinguished between “*heavy*” and “*light*” *capital cities*. He classified as heavy large centers with a highly diversified economy, including all or the predominant part of capital functions, exceeding by far other cities in the country in population and lead the states with a historically established centralized system. Light capitals are located in cities that primarily perform capital functions, including those specially created for this, comparable in number of inhabitants to other cities in the country or inferior to them, frequently located in relatively recently formed federal states (Washington, Brasilia, Pretoria, etc.).

Moscow, along with Paris or London, is a typical example of a heavy historical capital of a highly centralized state. It has always concentrated a large part of national symbols. Even having lost capital functions for more than two centuries, it remained the undisputed second political and cultural center of the country. The return of capital functions in 1918, economic devastation during the Civil War and collectivization of agriculture in the early 1930s, which pushed millions of people out of the countryside, sharply accelerated Moscow's population growth. Its appearance has undergone fundamental changes, largely related to the ideological basis of the Soviet state. The main center of

the country was supposed to become, first of all, a “political manifesto” of the regime, as well as a city of a new type, without social segregation. The Soviet capital was a platform for the implementation of ambitious projects demonstrating the advantages and achievements of socialism, radical modernization of all aspects of public life, the greatness and power of a vast multinational power. The top leaders of the Soviet Union paid close attention to urban planning in Moscow, its master plans and the creation of a “host environment” worthy of a capital in terms of J. Gottmann (1973)—office buildings, hotels, public spaces and other infrastructure. Not a single important decision was made without the direct participation of the Soviet leadership.

Already in the first decades of Soviet power, grand avenues were laid in Moscow, framed by monumental public and residential buildings. The creators of their projects were the best domestic and foreign architects (Le Corbusier and others), whose participation in the transformation of the capital was also supposed to contribute to the diversity of the city’s appearance and formation of its new image abroad. Wide avenues and parade squares replaced hundreds of churches, monasteries, valuable historical and architectural monuments that were not compatible with communist ideology or simply interfered with construction. In the era of “mature” Stalinism, the vibrant architectural experiments of the first years of Soviet power ceded place to pompous neoclassical eclecticism, called the Stalinist Empire style, which combined elements of the Renaissance, Late Classicism, Art Deco and Neo-Gothic, and relied almost exclusively on domestic architects and urban planners.

At the same time, the capital had to preserve some elements of traditional culture as a pillar of national and ethnic identity. The residence of the czars—the Kremlin became the center of Communist power. People’s Commissariats, later renamed ministries, were located not far from it. The massive State Planning Committee (Gosplan) “crushed” the now seemingly quite modest building of the former Noble Assembly (renamed the House of Unions in 1917), built in the classicist style at the late 18th century, where farewell ceremonies for Soviet leaders traditionally took place.

Megaprojects were given particular importance. The most famous of them is the never-built Palace of Soviets, 415 m high, on the site of the largest Orthodox temple in the country, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, which was blown up in 1931. Fortunately, the monstrous project for the People’s Commissariat of Heavy Industry on Red Square, which would have deprived Moscow of its historical appearance, was not implemented.

In the postwar years, during the period of the bipolar world, Moscow became not only “the world’s first country of victorious socialism,” but also one of main

political centers, the capital of the entire “Eastern Bloc.” Moscow’s new status as the capital of the “socialist camp” was also expressed in its political landscape. In a spectacular location on the banks of the Moscow River, a complex of buildings of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance was built.

The next megaproject and symbol of modernization consisted of seven high-rise buildings topped with spires, reminiscent of American skyscrapers erected in the early 1950s. Two of them were designed for government agencies—the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Ways of Communication (railways). For a long time, all seven became the architectural dominants of the city and elements of its brand. In the mid-1960s, a new highway was built in the center of Moscow, as in some European cities. Kalinin Avenue, now New Arbat, built up with high-rise frame-panel buildings in the minimalist style of Soviet architectural modernism characteristic of that time. Some of them housed all-Union ministries.

The rapid growth of the city’s periphery did not interfere with the construction of representative buildings for party and government bodies, as a rule, in the center. Buildings for them on the site of demolished blocks were constructed up until the end of Soviet power, including the Ministry of Defense on Arbat Square, the RSFSR Government building on an embankment of the Moscow River, etc.

In modern Russia, the vast majority of federal ministries and agencies are still located in Moscow. Although in the early 2000s, the Constitutional Court, governing bodies of Moscow oblast, and a number of head offices of large state companies (Gazprom, VTB, etc.) were moved from the capital, there was no noticeable deconcentration of administrative functions.

The location of the buildings of federal ministries and agencies is largely inherited from the late Soviet period. All major capital buildings have retained administrative functions: the Administration of the President is located in the buildings of the CPSU Central Committee. The FSB (Federal Security Service) inherited the KGB complex, greatly expanded in the last decades of Soviet power. The Government of Russia is located in the former building of the RSFSR Government, the premises of the State Planning Committee were occupied by the State Duma, etc. A lot of ministries and federal agencies are located in close proximity to the Kremlin (Staraya, Novaya, and Lubyanka squares). This area is characterized by a high density of government bodies of various categories and predominance of buildings of the prerevolutionary era, which were not initially designed to perform administrative functions (Fig. 1). Only the State Duma is housed in one that was erected in the early Soviet period and was used for administrative purposes since the very beginning (from 1935 to 1937, it housed the Council of Labor and Defense; until 1946,

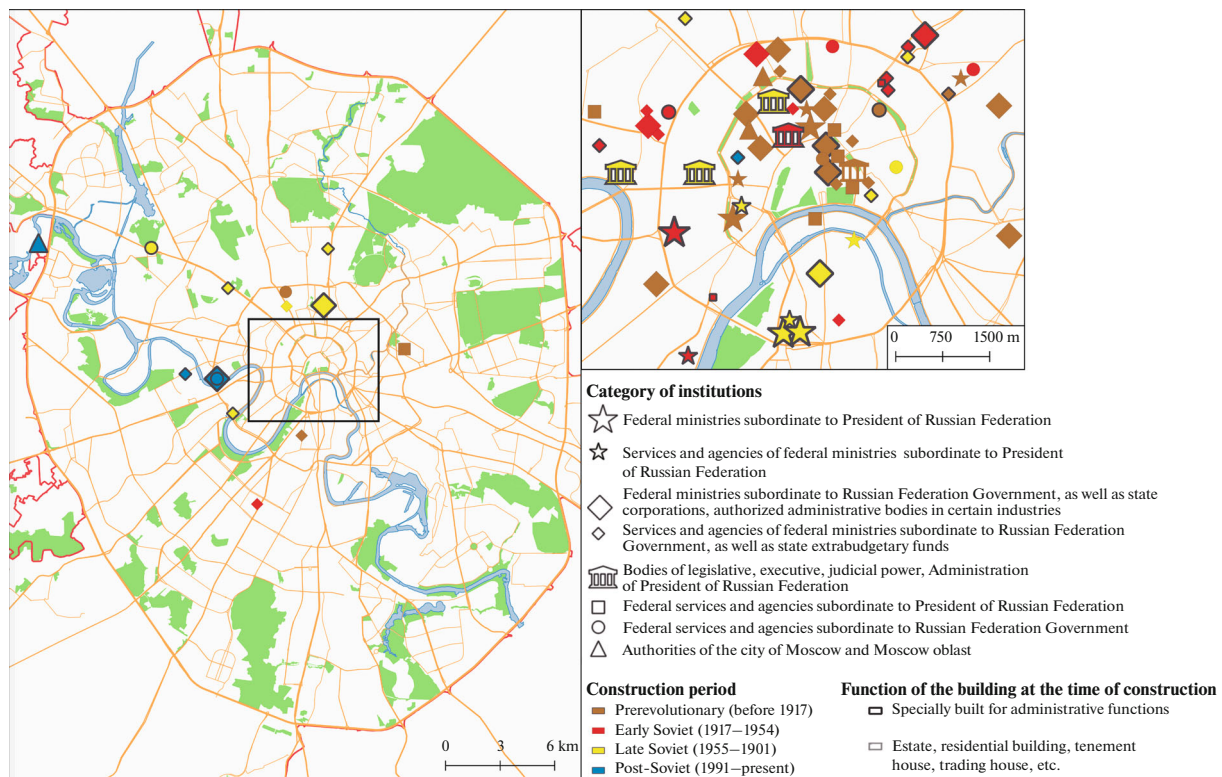


Fig. 1. Location of federal and regional institutions in Moscow.
Compiled by A.S. Karasev using data from the site *How Old Is This Building*.

the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR; until 1991, the Council of Ministers; and then the State Planning Committee of the USSR).

The zone of concentration of federal and regional institutions gravitates towards the Kremlin, a section of the capital's center between the Boulevard Ring, Mokhovaya Street, Teatralny and Kitaigorodsky lanes, and Staraya and Novaya squares (Fig. 2). In the east, in the Basmanny district and Nikolaevskaya Gorka, their concentration is much lower, since in the prerevolutionary period mainly residential buildings were located here. In addition, historically, the western part of the city was more privileged, and the noble and merchant estates here were more attractive for the location of authorities in terms of functionality and aesthetics. The accumulation of federal institutions in the northern sector is also due to the historical factors and the development expansion in the prerevolutionary period in the direction of the then capital—St. Petersburg. In this part of Moscow it was difficult to carry out intensive construction of large-area facilities necessary to house federal bodies, due to the high density of buildings of the prerevolutionary era, a considerable share of which are cultural heritage sites. Therefore, out of 16 objects on this site, 11 are adapted buildings.

The density of government buildings between the Boulevard and Garden Rings is much lower. Almost all of them were built during the Soviet period and from the very beginning were intended to perform administrative functions (e.g., the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Federal Atomic Energy Agency, the successor to the USSR Ministry of “Medium Engineering”).

Outside the Garden Ring, there are mainly agencies and services placed lower in the unofficial hierarchy of federal institutions (see Fig. 1), but their localization is not random. For example, the Federal Medical and Biological Agency is in a cluster of medical and biological buildings in Shchukino that developed in the mid-20th century; the Federal Air Transport Agency and the Federal Service for Supervision of Transport which are part of the Ministry of Transport, are near the Ilyushin Aviation Complex and the former Central airport on Khodynskoe Field.

Post-Soviet changes in the location of federal and regional government buildings are also associated with the creation of the Moscow City business center, which began to be built in the Presnenskaya embankment area in the late 1990s on the site of an old industrial zone. The modernization impulse of the city authorities was manifested in bold futuristic and

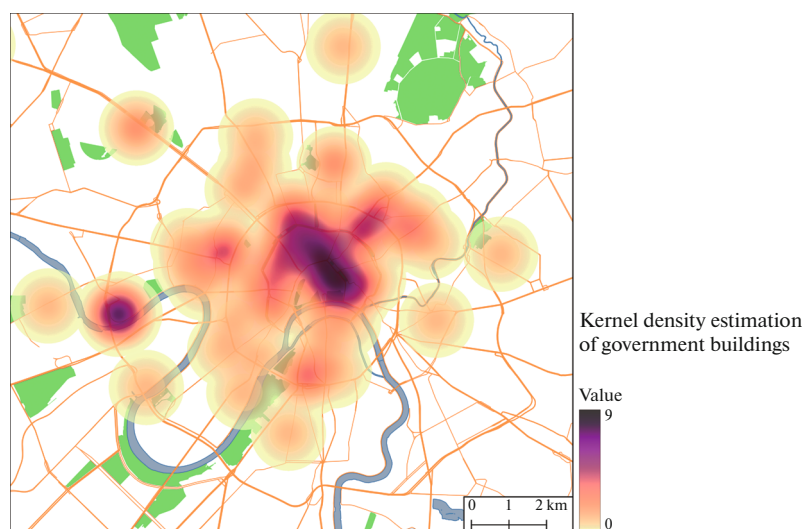


Fig. 2. Kernel density estimation of federal and regional institutions.

Note: The maximum density value corresponds to the maximum number of objects within a 1 km radius for a 10×10 m cell.

Compiled by A.S. Karasev.

experimental architectural forms, high-rise dominants, and extensive glazed surfaces⁵ (Semyonov, 2022). On its territory in 2017, the large cluster “IQ-Quarter” was formed, which now houses the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Federal Agency for Technical Regulation and Metrology, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry of Digital Development, the Federal Accreditation Service, the Federal Agency for Tourism, and the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs.

Thus, in the post-Soviet period, the unprecedented concentration of political life and financial capital in Moscow (Kolosov, 1997) strengthened its role as a symbol of Russia’s claims to maintain the status of a great or at least globally influential regional power, renewal and comprehensive modernization of the country and its integration into world economic system. Moscow quite quickly became one of the global cities of category A (Druzhinin, 2018; Kolosov et al., 2002; Sluka, 2007; Taylor et al., 2002). This was facilitated by both the human capital inherited from Soviet times, unique in Russia in terms of wealth and diversity, the extensive cultural heritage, as well as the rapidly multiplied traditions and infrastructure of interaction with foreign partners (the capital remained the USSR’s main “window” to the outside world). Moscow appears in the discourse by the authorities⁶ as a unique city, an arena for the implementation of the most daring projects. New megaprojects are designed

to demonstrate the modernization, scale, and greatness of the country (a landscape park near the Kremlin walls in Zaryadye, the One Tower skyscraper in Moscow City, etc.). Among the most recent and relatively few projects implemented far beyond the historical center is the complex of Moscow oblast’s government in the Myakininskaya floodplain (2004–2007), which resembles a giant unidentified object or an exotic citadel. Formally, it is located in the city of Krasnogorsk, which has actually long ago merged with Moscow.

MONUMENTS IN MOSCOW’S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Among the 800 monuments with political connotations, an important place belongs to monuments dedicated to heroes and events of WWII. They account for 45% of the total number of objects in the database. Monuments of this theme are one of the undisputed dominant features of the political landscape of Moscow, not only of the city as a whole, but also of most of its administrative districts. Although a significant part of them (58%) were built in late Soviet times (Fig. 3), a new boom in the construction of such monuments began around the 2000s. During this period, the souvenirs about the Great Victory, as thoroughly rooted in the mass consciousness, became an important symbolic resource and supporting structure of modern Russian identity (Malinova, 2015). Since the mid-2000s, it has become widely used in various political contexts, including materializing in monuments. A third of all monuments dedicated to the events of the war are dated 2000–2015. (see Fig. 3). At the same time, such an abundance of monuments does not mean their absolute dominance in the political land-

⁵ <https://vestnikstroy.ru/articles/ratings/20-krupneyshikh-stroek-moskvy-za-poslednie-10-let/> (accessed January 26, 2022).

⁶ <https://www.sobyanin.ru/achievements/bestcity2022> (accessed February 26, 2023).

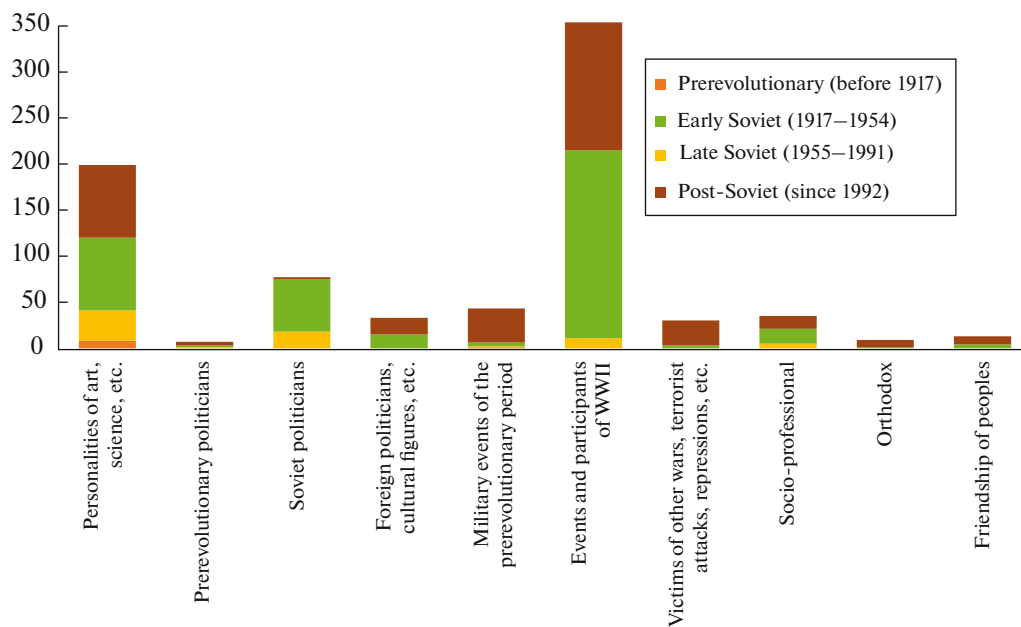


Fig. 3. Number of monuments of different categories by construction period, units.
Compiled by the authors from (Pamyatniki ..., 2016).

scape of the capital. For example, in the Central Administrative District almost half of monuments are dedicated to cultural and artistic figures of different periods, and the share of monuments to WWII does not exceed one-tenth. Only in the districts of New Moscow—Troitsky and Novomoskovsky—do military-themed monuments absolutely predominate (70 and 90% of all monuments, respectively) due to the large number of memorial signs and obelisks erected along highways or in urban municipalities of these districts against a rather sparse background the political landscape as a whole. The concentration of monuments generally decreases with distance from the Moscow Ring Road, the old border of the city. Most of the monuments to marshals and generals who earned fame during the war (G.K. Zhukov, K.K. Rokossovsky, I.S. Konev, A.P. Beloborodov, P.S. Rybalko, D.M. Karbyshev, etc.) were put up from the late 1960s to the 2010s on new streets of the same name in the outlying microdistricts then being built in northwest Moscow, the area where historically there were military units, warehouses, shooting ranges, etc.

In second place in number by a wide margin (25%) are monuments to figures of art, culture, science, medicine, and sports of all periods, erected mainly in the late Soviet and post-Soviet period. In third place (about 10%) are monuments to V.I. Lenin, other revolutionaries and Communist Party leaders, and other figures in the pantheon of Soviet heroes (S.M. Kirov, F.E. Dzerzhinsky, N.K. Krupskaya, etc.). Such monuments were no longer erected after 1991, with the exception of those to A.N. Kosygin and M.A. Lapir (2008–2009).

Unlike WWII, monuments dedicated to the Patriotic War of 1812 do not stand out so much in the monumental political landscape of the capital. Obelisks of its participants account for only 3% of the capital's monuments. They appeared mainly in the post-Soviet period in preparation for the 200th anniversary of this war and are concentrated along Kutuzovskiy Prospekt near the Panorama Museum of the Battle of Borodino, as well as in battlefields on the territory of New Moscow.

There are even fewer monuments to the heroes of the First World War, and almost all of them were erected in the late 1990s and early 2000s on the territory of the Memorial Park Complex on the site of the Fraternal Cemetery in the Sokol rayon.

A similar example of a cluster almost simultaneously and purposefully created in 1967 is the pedestrian Alley of Hero Cosmonauts near VDNKh (the Exhibition of National Achievements) and the Monument to Space Conquerors, 107 m high, in the stylobate of which the Memorial Museum of Cosmonautics is located.

There are very few monuments to prerevolutionary politicians and reigning persons in the Russian capital, and almost all of them were erected in the post-Soviet period (Fig. 3). The collapse of the Soviet Union provoked in the first post-Soviet years a reassessment of the past, a revision of the symbolic heritage and pantheon of heroes. Radical decommunization, however, did not occur, although a number of city streets had their historical names returned. Some political, cultural, and artistic figures of the prerevolutionary period were rehabilitated: monuments to them were

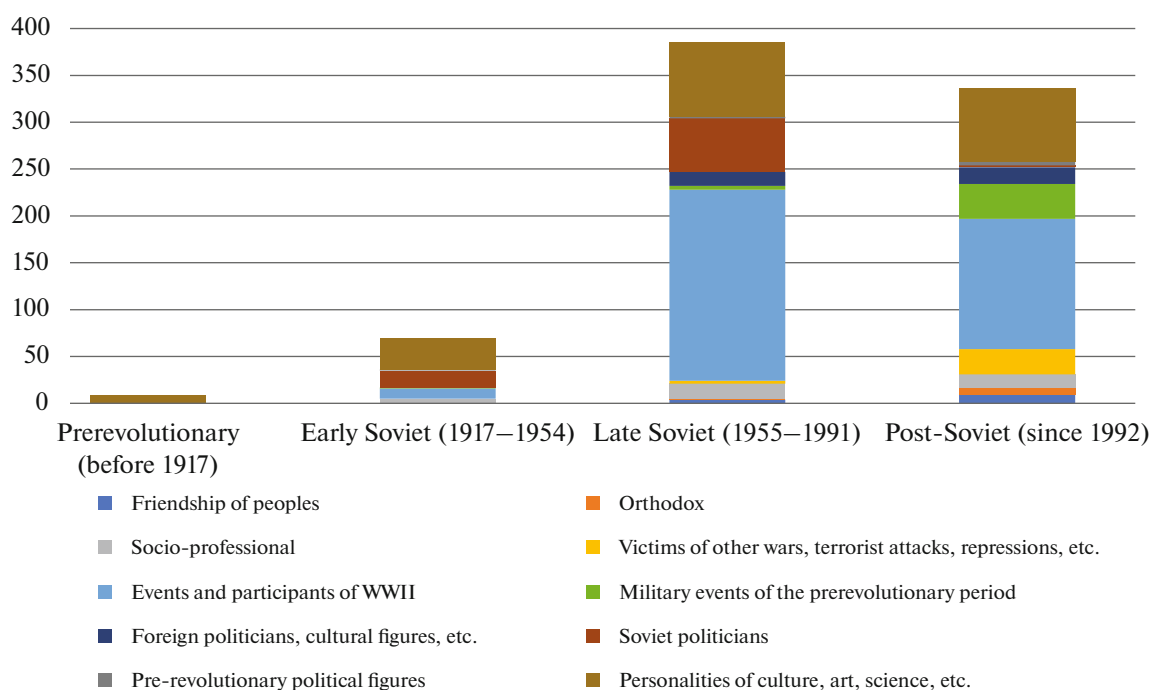


Fig. 4. Dynamics of construction of metropolitan monuments with political connotations by category, units.
Compiled by the authors from (Pamyatniki ..., 2016).

erected or restored (e.g., Alexander I, Alexander II, P.A. Stolypin, etc.). Thus, for first quarter-century after the collapse of the USSR, the political landscape of Moscow changed little.

Monuments to foreign figures of culture, art, science, and politics account for only 5% of monuments. Whereas the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods practically do not differ in the proportion of monuments in this category (Fig. 4), noticeable changes occurred in their composition. Until 1991, monuments were devoted mainly to foreign revolutionaries, leaders of national liberation movements, or communist parties (K.F. Amador, S. Adil, G.M. Dimitrov, E. Telman, etc.). In the post-Soviet period, monuments were erected to foreign politicians of other political orientations, as well as writers and poets (Ch. de Gaulle, A. Lincoln, V. Hugo, D. Alighieri, Ch. Dickens, etc.). A significant number of these monuments were put up in 1994–2006 in the courtyard of the Rudomino Library of Foreign Literature as a gift from foreign scientific and cultural centers or individual regions of foreign countries. After the opening in 2009 of a monument to the American poet W. Whitman on the territory of Moscow State University as a gesture of gratitude from the American people for the monument to A.S. Pushkin in Washington, very few new monuments to foreign personalities have appeared. Among them is a monument to Ch. Aitmatov and I. Karimov. The monument to F. Castro was erected in 2022 for of his “selfless struggle for the triumph of ideas of goodness, peace, and justice, for the freedom of oppressed

peoples, for a decent life for ordinary people and social equality.”⁷ The monument to W. Shakespeare on Varvarka street, which was going to be commissioned in 2019 at the initiative of the British Council was never put up.

Religious monuments to Orthodox saints and figures have become an important element of the material political landscape. Conventionally, they can also include monuments to canonized Russian rulers known either as spreaders of Christianity (Princes Vladimir, Olga, Yaroslav the Wise, Alexander Nevsky, etc.) or Christian ascetics, or as martyrs and sinners (Boris and Gleb, Andrey Bogolyubsky, etc.). Most of them were canonized in 1549. The installation of monuments to Orthodox saints began in 1992 with the inauguration of the monument to Cyril and Methodius as educators, creators of the Cyrillic alphabet, preaching Christianity and performing services in the Slavic language. Then in the mid-2000s the monuments to St. Panteleimon was erected near the main building of the Institute of Oncology, P.A. Herzen and to the Greek monks-brothers Likhud in front of the Epiphany Monastery, where they opened in the 17th century a school of Greek language and rhetoric and subsequently laid the foundations of the system of secondary and higher education in Russia.

In addition, since the mid-1990s, five monuments to St. George the Victorious, one of the major Chris-

⁷ <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69914/> (accessed August 26, 2023).

tian saints, have been erected in the capital. Since the reign of Prince Dmitry Donskoy, Saint George is the patron Saint of Moscow, his image appears on the coat of arms of the Moscow sovereigns, and later becomes part of the Russian state coat of arms.

Since the beginning of the 2010s the monuments on the Orthodox theme were dedicated not to Saints, but to real Orthodox figures: St. Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow, Venerable Euphrosyne (Grand Duchess Edochie, wife of Dmitry Donskoy), Patriarch Hermogenes. The sculptural complex near the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, dedicated to the 400th anniversary of the patriarchate in Russia, is another important Orthodox marker. It was planned to create 16 sculptures of the Moscow Patriarchs. But only the monuments to Patriarchs Job, Hermogenes and Tikhon were installed, as well as the sculptural composition “Reunification,” dedicated to the signing in 2007 of the acts of canonical communion between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. The location of Orthodox monuments follows the usual logic and is related to the main Orthodox cathedrals and churches. The erection of Orthodox monuments corresponds to the general political trends in the country and the identity policy of the authorities.

Another category connected with international relations, includes monuments dedicated to the “friendship of peoples.” In Soviet times, monuments to Hungarian–Soviet friendship and the 200th anniversary of Georgia’s incorporation to Russia were erected. At the beginning of the post-Soviet period, in the 1990s–2000s, the number of monuments in this category increased significantly.

At the same time, the appeal to Russia’s historical past gradually gained momentum. During Mayor Yu.M. Luzhkov’s leadership of the city, the response to the heaviness of Soviet modernism was the so-called Luzhkov eclectic style, which included abundant decor in the form of turrets, cornices, columns, and various elements of “Russian style.” The monument to Peter the Great by the sculptor Z. Tsereteli, one of the tallest in Russia, is one of the best examples of this style. It caused outrage and protests not only from experts and city residents, but also from deputies of the Moscow City Duma, and was included in the list of the ugliest structures in the world, coming it at tenth place (Bocharov, 2005).

As the kernel density estimation of the distribution of monuments shows (Fig. 5), 28% of them are concentrated in the Central Administrative District (its share in the capital’s population is only 6%). As one would expect, the political landscape of the center is incomparably richer than in the periphery, which, as a rule, was built only 40–50 years ago. Most of the pre-revolutionary and Soviet cultural and artistic figures, military leaders, and scientists to whom the monuments are dedicated lived and worked in the historical

center. The composition of monuments by category is the most diverse here. The largest share (42%) comprises monuments to cultural and artistic figures. Most of the monuments to military figures are in the Meshchansky rayon, and in Presnensky, the main arena of the 1905 revolution, more than half the monuments perpetuate the memory of revolutionaries and events of this period. Some streets bear the names of those to whom the monuments are dedicated.

The vast majority of monuments have been erected along major streets: Tverskaya, Mokhovaya, the Boulevard and Garden Rings, etc. Thus, these important elements of the political landscape are visible from cars and public transport and therefore significantly contribute to the formation of Moscow’s image.

The oldest monuments of the capital are in the center. The interpretations of a number of them have changed more than once. The first monument in the city to K. Minin and D. Pozharsky, was erected in 1818 to these leaders of the resistance against foreign invaders and the struggle for the restoration of Russian statehood. This monument had a powerful patriotic motive, but also symbolized popular unity (*sobornost*), since the figures to whom the monument is dedicated belonged to different strata of society—merchants and nobility. This symbolism was also enhanced by the fact that the monument was built with money collected by subscription. There was also a motive associated with K. Minin’s participation in the election of the first czar of the Romanov dynasty. After the 1917 revolution, radical voices were heard demanding the dismantling of the monument, since both heroes allegedly contributed to strangulation of the peasant war against the oppressors. However, the main and original patriotic interpretation of the monument prevailed (Alpatov, 1958). It has become an integral part of textbook images of Red Square, reproduced in millions of various publications—from school textbooks to tourist guides, but most importantly, television reports about demonstrations, parades, celebrations, festivals and concerts on the country’s “main square.” The Minin and Pozharsky monument thus became an element not only of the image of Moscow, but of the national narrative and Russian ethnic and Russian national identity (Krinko and Goryushina, 2019).

Another example of a monument with a vivid narrative that has become an element of national identity is that to the poet Alexander Pushkin on the square named after him (Balyberdina, 2012; Chubukov, 1999), erected in 1880, like the monument to Minin and Pozharsky, with public money. On the one hand, every Soviet and then Russian schoolchild is acquainted with Pushkin’s poetry throughout their entire education in secondary school, and on the other hand, this monument’s fame is supported by the circulation of photographs of the successful sculpture by A.M. Opekushin. Moreover, Pushkin’s image has inextricably merged with the place where the monu-

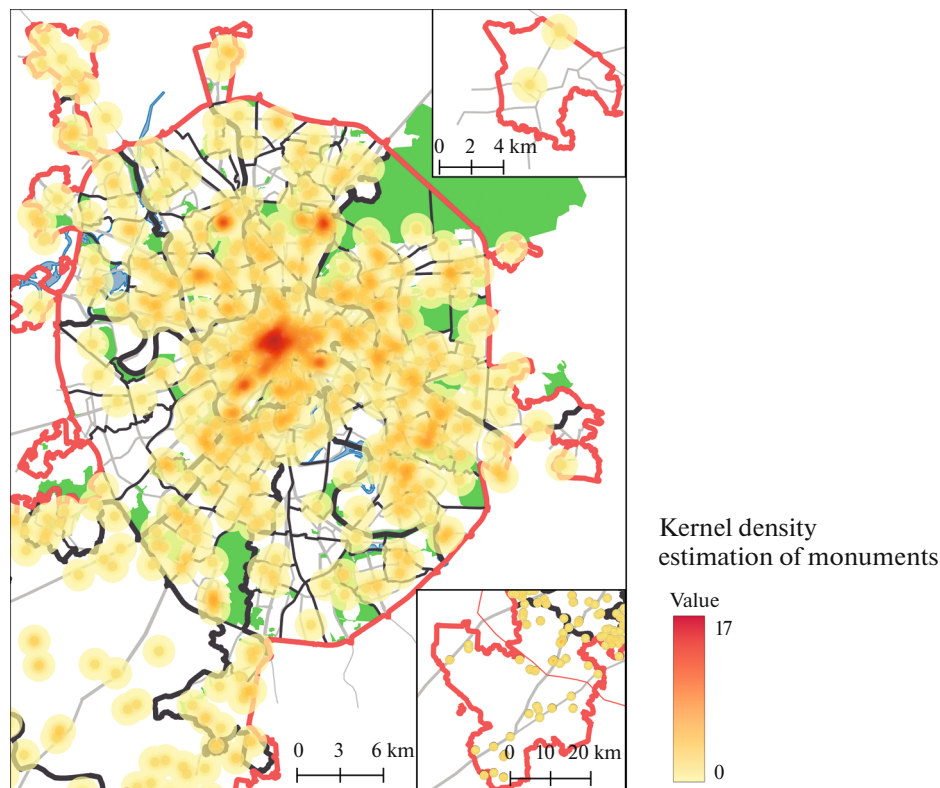


Fig. 5. Kernel density estimation of distribution of monuments.

Note: The maximum density value corresponds to the maximum number of objects within a 1 km radius for a 10×10 m cell.

Compiled by A.I. Alexandrova from (Pamyatniki ..., 2016).

ment was erected, although in 1950, the monument was moved to the other side of the street, where the bell tower of the demolished Strastnoy Monastery previously stood. Pushkin Square is one of the busiest and most popular in Moscow, glorified in many literary writings. It is known as a traditional meeting place.

In the rest of Moscow, the distribution of monuments across the territory is extremely uneven. Thus, in the Western Administrative District, where there are 79 monuments, about three-fourths of them are in just two out of 13 rayons (Dorogomilovo and Ramenki). The first general pattern is the location of monuments in clusters, frequently dedicated to a period of history or a socio-professional group. Typically, such clusters comprise small squares on main streets or the vicinity of a museum, or the “main” monument. Many monuments are installed at crossroads, at the entrance to parks and on the territory of higher educational institutions, industrial plants, and schools.

The second pattern is a relationship between the density and theme of monuments and specialization of a rayon. The industrial zones of the city were concentrated in the Eastern, Southeastern and Southern districts, and it was there, near the factories, many of which are now closed, many monuments to represen-

tatives of working professions stand—metallurgists, oil refinery workers, foremost workers, etc. However, the Southern district, the largest in Moscow in terms of population and the most industrial, ranks second to last in the number of monuments (32). In some of its rayons—Nagorny, Nagatino-Sadovniki, and Tsaritsyno—there are no monuments at all.

CONCLUSIONS

The concept of political landscape, which has not yet been sufficiently developed, synthesizes the diversity of its visible elements—both natural, transformed in the course of social activity, and man-made. Analysis of combinations of its elements and their origin as a social construct allows us to identify its intangible elements, e.g., the narratives on which its stability and ideological and symbolic functions are based. Since the political landscape is formed over a long period of time, its analysis also makes it possible to consider the superposition and use of its various layers shaped in different periods.

As many scholars have found, government buildings and monuments play a prominent role in the political landscape of capital cities. Thanks to well-known narratives in textbooks, media, and tourist

guides, they become significant symbols not only for regional or local, but also for national identity. Moscow is the main center of political life in Russia. It was mainly in Moscow that key events at the end of the last century took place that changed Russia: the August 1991 putsch, the attempted coup in October 1993, etc.

We can highlight the following features of the Russian capital that influence the specifics of the material elements of its political landscape in comparison with other cities in the country: (1) a strong concentration of administrative and financial functions by the standards of large states, contributing to high budgetary security and, in combination with representative functions, determining the uniqueness, ambition, and innovation of many buildings, edifices, memorials, etc.; (2) the national character of symbolic constructions and their focus on the formation or strengthening of national identity (for instance, the “main” memorial to victory in WWII in Russia), the dedication of most monuments to well-known figures in the pantheon of national, rather than “regional” heroes; (3) certain internationalization—a significant number of monuments to foreign politicians, cultural figures, etc.; (4) dynamism and vivid embodiment in the composition of monuments of national ideology reflected in political discourse—e.g., the erection in post-Soviet times of monuments to characters canonized by the Orthodox Church, or to Russian emperors. The peculiarities of Moscow also include nonmetropolitan features also characteristic of other large centers of the country. First, a focus on “glorifying working people,” inherited from the socialist period, when the city was a major industrial center and the working class made up a significant part of its population. Second, the hyperconcentration of material elements of the political landscape in or near the historical center resulted from the rapid growth of the territory and the number of inhabitants during Soviet times.

Two large areas of concentration of federal government buildings can be distinguished: in the area of Lubyanka, Kitai-gorod, Staraya and Novaya squares (mainly buildings of the prerevolutionary era, adapted for administrative functions) and within the Moscow City business complex (a prestigious quarter of modern skyscrapers with elite level offices). A quantitative assessment of the location of buildings shows that the more important the federal institutions are, the closer they are located to the main decision-making center—the Presidential Administration and the Kremlin. Only 10% of buildings performing administrative functions today are located outside the Central Administrative District. The importance of interaction between the highest institutions of the executive and legislative authorities is evident even at the level of physical distance. Despite the transfer of a number of federal institutions to the Moscow City complex and the withdrawal of Moscow oblast government outside Moscow in 2007, no noticeable spatial decentralization of management functions has yet occurred.

The geography of the monuments follows the general patterns of the capital’s planning structure: the combination of radial-ring and sectoral structures in their location determines very distinct patterns in their diversity and themes, including dependence on the specialization of the territory. Within the Boulevard Ring, monuments to political figures, and figures of culture and art, science, medicine, and sports of both the pre-revolutionary, Soviet and post-Soviet periods are mainly concentrated. They are located primarily along the central and historically significant streets: Tverskaya and Bolshaya Lubyanka and the boulevards (Gogolevsky, Tverskoy, Strastnoy, Petrovsky, Rozhdestvensky). Between the Boulevard Ring and Sadovoye Ring, a sectoral structure of the location of monuments can be observed: in the sector between Tverskaya and Novy Arbat the monuments to cultural figures, artists, etc. are concentrated, which can be explained by the historical features and functions of this area. The sector between Neglinnaya and Myasnitskaya streets. is very diverse and includes, in addition to the monuments to political, cultural, and artistic figures, also socio-professional and military ones, as well as the monuments to foreign figures. The concentration of monuments in Zamoskvorechye, keeping a historical network of narrow streets and the structure of the old city, is significantly lower than in most other sectors of the Central District.

The main category of Moscow monuments (more than 40%) is dedicated to WWII and its heroes: the memory of the 1945 Victory is one of the foundations of modern Russian identity. The significance of many monuments as elements of the political landscape rests on powerful long-standing discourse. Some monuments have become an integral part of textbook images known to every Russian citizen. There is a relationship between the density and theme of monuments and specialization of rayons. Monuments are often concentrated in thematic clusters (Victory Park, VDNKh, the Panorama Museum of the Borodino Battle, etc.) or around key monuments and edifices.

The monumental political landscape of the capital has not changed much during the post-Soviet period, since it is still dominated by monuments dedicated either to the events and participants of WWII, or to cultural and artistic figures of all periods. The changes are associated mainly with the erection of monuments to rehabilitated political figures of prerevolutionary and Soviet history, foreign political and cultural personalities, as well as Orthodox monuments, atypical for the Soviet period.

Regardless of the success of megaprojects, Moscow remains one of the most attractive cities in the post-Soviet space—of course, thanks to its leadership in income and wages, ample opportunities for personal self-realization, richness and diversity of the cultural environment, but also, last but not least, symbolic capital. In the post-Soviet period, politicians and pub-

licists have raised more than once the issue of moving the capital to a city closer to the geographical center of Russia, or to a new city built ex nihilo. However, in addition to objective factors—the exceptionally high cost of such projects—they have not yet been seriously discussed, because the image of Moscow, the Kremlin, Red Square, and a number of government buildings and monuments is part of Russian identity, no matter how widespread the Moscow phobia, caused by the privileged status of the capital, is (Podvintsev, 2013). An attempt to move the capital would mean the possible risk of a crisis to Russian statehood.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of this work declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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