

An interview with Tamotsu Aoki (November 2012)
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The Anatomy of New Cities

Attractiveness of a City and the Shape of Cultural Industry in Japan



Tamotsu Aoki,
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Attractiveness of "Walker Friendly City"

- You have been expressing that a city's cultural level is measured by whether it's suitable for walking or not. Please explain what you mean by it. -

Strolling around the cities should be a great pleasure to the residents but in reality it doesn't always work that way. For example, the way from Tokyo to Shinjuku Station doesn't seem to be such a distance, but if anyone faces a chance to walk all that way, they may not feel like walking through Yotsuya area toward Shinjuku, as the area isn't suitably constructed for walking. When I used to serve as a visiting professor in Paris, I walked the equal distance every day, morning and evening. In Paris, the first thing was that the roads were constructed for comfort walk. There are sidewalks and you can easily find a café to drop in when you need a break. The whole city is suitable for walking. This aspect enables us to measure the city's cultural level.

Looking back at my experiences, most of the cities in Western Europe seemed to have been well designed for walking. In major cities in Western Europe, open space where citizens spend their time and streets which people use to move around are basically very carefully designed, for it is regarded that "walking" is the basic activity of people who are living in urban areas. From that point, Tokyo, though it can be given an excuse that it is too large in its size, its basic urban plan is not designed upon the idea of "walking". Each place is developed nicely one by one but there is little consider of their linkage between one another. In particular, the city seems to have been constructed with no vision of making it comfortable for people who are walking nor the idea that the open spaces and roads/streets are the places for people to walk and stroll around.

Every time I fly over to New York, I walk quite a distance along Fifth Avenue from Washington Square to Central Park. It always is an interesting visit. The high-graded area is full of renowned hotels and department stores, and a further walk to 30th then 20th Street will bring me to some different place with differently dressed people and different shops. Going further on to the cultural area, there stands New York University. It is so amusing to find

out the social structure of New York by just taking a single walk, such as the makeup of residents and the cultural position of the city.

Making cities suitable for walking or making them enjoyable for walking is expected also as an opening charm for the first-time visitors. Tourists including people from overseas love walking. They may walk about with curiosity, stroll around to take photos and be amused at people and scenery of the town. What I think as the ideal city is those that has a good coordination of various shops, view, other factors, non-standardized buildings and structure offering changing of the vision while walking, which is not only fun to walk but also which urges your heart dancing. Of course for ones who are tired of walking, a comfortable café should be at hand. A city without intentional provision of such places for break or to stop over cannot be called a global city in the 21st century.

- Will you recommend any of the preferable local cities in Japan? -

A typical case is Kanazawa which was awarded as a "Creative City of Art and Culture" by Agency for Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Japan. Kanazawa is well known of traditional culture such as Kanazawa Castle, old samurai residences and gardens but on the other hand it has 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa. Also an event called Kanazawa Jazz Street is held on the consecutive holiday every September which marked the fourth year in 2012. The local shopping malls greatly welcome this event because it pulls in about a hundred thousand visitors in three days. Performance of amateur, professional and international stars can be seen at around forty places within the city. Also simple stages at the street corners let the city enjoy three hundred small to large concert including performance of the bands from universities all over Japan. Jazz Street events are held in other cities but in Yokohama, for example, stages are wide-spread in the broad area. In case of Kanazawa, spots can be assembled around Korinbo and people can exactly "walk" to enjoy the next performance. It's just the

perfect size. Again Kanazawa is rich with traditional townscape, with the presence of shrines, temples, samurai residences and the castle. Not only the olds but the new sites co-exist including 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa.

I also used to live in Kyoto but neither Kyoto is a comfortable place to walk. Certainly there are many cultural properties but they are not well linked with each other. With such a volume of quality resources and townscape, Kyoto would be the world's greatest city of culture and tourism only if it would be treated with a new type of urban planning that adds the dimension of "walker friendly".

Osaka has now lost university from its urban center. Even

Local Culture and Living

- What do you think about the possibility of losing local traditional culture, rural (agricultural) culture, etc, as the consequence of population decrease and aging society? -

Simply saying, the reason why attractiveness of Japan has decreased is the shrinking of society and culture in the local and regional areas. Actually there used to be Ginza-Dori in every town, same shaped station square at every station, etc, and it did work in Meiji era from the aspect of bringing Japan together. Unfortunately this made local characters disappear. Moreover, in Japan, there is scarcely the idea of living happily and fully in rural areas.

One ideal way of life in England is to live in the countryside after retirement even if you are successful in the City. Even today, nobilities live in rural areas and they are cultivating local culture. Little towns in rural areas are making up extremely beautiful surrounding to live. Such environment draws a desire to live there. I rarely feel that way, I'm sorry to say, when I visit rural areas in Japan.

Then how can we create such attractive life in the rural areas? Natural condition, construction method of houses, usage of vacant land --- there are lots to consider about. It is needed to find out a method of enjoying life in rural areas and to act it out in campaigns. Japan, blessed with nature environment, should originally have the potential

"Culture" is a Promising Industry

- You have been stressing that the culture of media arts is a growing industry. Would you explain about it more specifically including its condition in Japan? -

In Japan, the word "industry" was mainly used to mean heavy and large manufacturing industry. Though finally the word "service industry" did come out, there is some kind of self-denial to industrialize "culture" based on the perception that culture shouldn't be industrialized or culture won't be anything like an industry. When the sales of gaming machine manufacturers overcame that of the steel manufacturing companies, it was once said that such gaming machine manufacturers are the key, but soon the tide faded. What is necessary now is to regard culture as an industry and to proudly nurture it as a natural basic industry.

Once we turn our eyes on China and Korea, although the standard is not high enough, culture is regarded as an

Osaka University has moved out. Osaka City University as well is not at the center either. Subsidence of Osaka is not only caused by the moving out of large company's central office to Tokyo but also by missing of university in the urban center. In the daytime, corporate employees are working inside the office and the people out in the city are the students, so when the students are gone the city's vibrancy will be lost. In addition, students are from all over the country. City is a place with "promenaders", which are the people strolling around casually. City only made up of workers or people with purposes is unattractive. The city may include inexperienced visitors restlessly looking around.

of creating more appealing and unique cities without emulating other foreign cities.

This doesn't mean just to develop local products but to enrich daily life. Having cultural properties is better than none but it is also a culture to make out joy in daily village lives. Nowadays we live with PC and other equipments so we won't be starved for information. Rather, we can create enriched cultural life full of humanity in rural areas. Such things can be the ideal way of life. I think it is not a bad thing to draw a life plan firstly working in Tokyo and at last developing lives in rural areas to follow one's own preference. Rural/local areas can be regarded as such places --- not only for the retired people to live --- and it is better for the nation and the local society to harmonize its spatial planning with the resident's life plan to make out fruitful lives in those places. That should bring affluence to the rural areas and that must be brought into realization. More funds should be invested to that aspect.

How can individual resident enjoy their lives in rural areas? We should build up the picture of ideal life in countryside and make it out as actual cases throughout the country, that are the places where people can live sufficiently, go for a walk, work in sunny days and read in rainy days (sei-ko-u-doku), etc,. There are still plenty of places, suitable or vacant. We are wasting them.

industry by the nation and the society, and both countries are cultivating human resources to work on animation and comic (manga) as national policy. From that point of view Japan is running at the tail end.

The largest culture in Japan that should be industrialized is, as was expected, animation and comic (manga). What is called "Cool Japan" is absolutely the specialty of Japan which can induce foreigners to Japan. This is the biggest key to vitalize the cities. The great cultural industry in the 20th century was Hollywood, U.S, which was a gravity to attract people from all around the world. They transmitted their product to the whole world. Without such cultural transmission base it is out of saying that American films wouldn't have been able to have that dominant position in the world.

This notion was reflected when I planned Media Arts Center at the end of my career as Commissioner for Cultural Affairs. Constructing a great cultural center integrating art, animation, comic (manga) and

entertainment, the largest and the greatest in the world, is exactly what is needed as a national policy. Thinking of how Japan can pull in visitors from overseas in nowadays, this center should have been a core attraction. A great cultural industry base including TV games and TV dramas should be the culture-creating facility which people around the world may wish to visit in their life. Needless to say, everyone wishes to visit Louvre Museum in Paris or Metropolitan Museum in N.Y. Or else, Palace Museum in Beijing --- each country or a city has main cultural core. However, Japan has nothing comparable to them.

Culture and Art in Relation to the Recovery from the Earthquake Disaster

- Tohoku region is currently in the recovery process from the earthquake disaster. How do you feel about the power of culture under that situation? -

Every December, Agency for Cultural Affairs, MEXT, Japan holds East Asia “Kyousei” Forum (forum to seek the harmonious co-existence of East Asian countries) and this year it was held in Sendai. One of the themes was “Regeneration through Culture and Arts”. The other was “Archives” and a discussion was held about constructing archives of the experience and memories of the Great East Japan Earthquake. Deputy Managing Director of Louvre Museum was invited to the forum as one of the guests.

This year, from April, The Louvre Museum brought twenty-three art works and held traveling exhibition called “Encounter” in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima. Louvre Museum, from France, had embodied “recovery through arts”. The opening of the exhibition was attended by the members including French Ambassador to Japan and Managing Director of Louvre Museum, who gave speeches on how important arts are for recovery and how valuable is the peace of heart for the disaster victims. Louvre Museum flew all the way from France to give special exhibitions at disaster areas. That was indeed the cultural power, France, and I was so much impressed. What a precious mindset of setting culture and arts as the supportive item for human recovery.

On the other side, talking about the temporary housings after one and a half year from the earthquake, many people living there don't know each other and many of them are those who have lost their families. Following our conclusion of the discussion that some place for them to chat and relax should be prepared, students of Aoyama Gakuin University donated about a hundred benches in August of which they built up with people in disaster area.

When considering cultural industry or cultural city, constructing such “Media Arts Center” will pull out vitality throughout Japan. It will be the world's power spot of culture at a bound. Everybody will cheer up and anybody can enjoy because it's the world of comics and animation. The center should be positioned as the cultural transmitting base from Japan to foreign countries. This may invite many people from all around the world. Tours from China and Korea, and from Europe too. To tell the truth, if the situation allows I am imagining personally to hold an exhibition here, at National Art Center, Tokyo, the exhibition that compiles Japanese animation, comics (manga) and media arts.

It is important to have such place continuously, where an old lady sits on the bench in the early-evening and starts chatting with someone who happens to settle down next to her. It was the students who made those places. Needless to say, a tragic natural disaster needs consolation by human transaction.

Soma Nomaoui (a traditional horse festival in Fukushima) managed to gather horses and was fully revived. Such events seem to have no physical meaning to serve the purpose of disaster restoration. However, for the local residents, those symbolic events are what they cannot live without. In fact, culture and art and traditional events can be a home of human's living. You cannot measure people's feelings and value by materialistic value only. I remember an Indonesian who had experiences of huge earthquake and a big tsunami saying “Culture is our life.”

It is a great deal to consider how to include and make use of culture in disaster recovery plans. It will create a new hope within people living there. Isn't it a good idea to develop cultural industry center in Tohoku? At the same time, it will be wonderful if major ports of Tohoku could be linked by cruise with Daiba, Tokyo. Nice going over from this side, also nice coming over from that side. We need something to link us together.

So-called “smart city” scheme pursues convenience but it rarely cares about culture. More consideration should be given to the cultural device that enables people to enjoy by just taking a rest in a normal manner. What is important of Tohoku today is the attractiveness of things that doesn't exist in Tokyo and other cities. The area originally is blessed with enriched culture and its richness should be informed more widely and deeply inside and outside the country. That would be the creation of a “walker friendly” and “comfort giving” city filled with culture, based on the pursuit of people's inner sense of contentment.

Embassy Visit & Interview

The Capital Relocation in the Republic of Kazakhstan



Akylbek Absatuly Kamaldinov,
Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan
Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Outline of the form of government of Kazakhstan

Q. We would like to know briefly about the form of government and legislative, executive and judicial systems of Kazakhstan.

A. Kazakhstan gained its Independence on December 16, 1991.

The Republic of Kazakhstan is a unitary state with a presidential form of government. According to the Constitution, the state proclaims itself as democratic, secular, law-governed and social state, with its highest values placed on individual life, rights and freedoms.

The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the head of state, the highest official, who determines the main directions of the domestic and foreign policies of the state that represents Kazakhstan at the relations inside and outside the country. The President is the symbol and guarantor of people's unity, state power, inviolability of Constitution and rights and freedom of individual citizens.

The government implements the executive power of the Republic of Kazakhstan, heads the system of executive bodies and exercises supervision of their activities.

Legislative functions are performed by the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan that consists of two

Chambers acting on a permanent basis: the Senate and the Majilis.

The Senate is composed of members elected in accordance with an order established by the constitutional law; two persons from each oblast (region), major city and the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Taking into account the necessity of maintaining the representation of national-cultural and other significant interests of the society, 15 deputies of the Senate are appointed by the President.

The Majilis consists of 107 deputies elected in an order established by the constitutional law. Nine deputies of the Majilis are elected by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. Term of office of deputies of Senate is six years and that of the Majilis deputies is five years. Currently three parties are represented in the Majilis – “NurOtan” People's Democratic Party, “Akzhol” Democratic Party of Kazakhstan and Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan.

By its administrative-territorial structure the country is divided into 14 oblasts (regions) and two cities of republican significance.

Background of the relocation

Q. What were the background and intention of the capital relocation from Almaty to Astana?

A. The idea of creating a new and modern capital belongs to the Head of State - Nursultan Nazarbayev.

The decision to relocate the capital was hard to make. The president had to meet the members of parliament in order to convince them that the capital city should be equidistant from different regions of the country.

In addition, as the Head of State pointed out, Almaty did not meet the requirements of the capital of an independent state either economically or geopolitically. With the population approaching to around 1.5 million, it was not a very promising place in terms of territorial

proportions and spatial distribution.

There was a necessity to enlarge the territory of Almaty. However, there was no possibility for the further broadening of the city, because of the high density of buildings and a large constraint of available areas.

In addition, due to the high seismicity, new construction in Almaty would cost much more in comparison with that in other cities of Kazakhstan.

And, as a new nation, we had to build new office buildings that previously were not so necessary, for example; a complex of Parliament buildings, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, banks, and other organizations including foreign embassies.

Advantages of the new location

Q. Why was Astana selected as the location of the new capital city?

What are the advantages of Astana, compared to Almaty or other cities?

A. At the new stage of development, the new capital was urged to become not only a main city that unites our nation, but also the economic center that provides a brisk economic activity in the future which to become one of the economic leaders of Eurasia.

By the order of the President of Kazakhstan, a detailed study of the whole national territory was conducted in order to determine the optimal location of the new capital. The capital had to meet 32 main criteria. Among these, the most important were; socio-economic indicators, climate conditions, landscape, seismicity, environment condition, availability and prospects for the development of engineering and transport infrastructure, communications, building complexes, labor force, and so on.

The analysis showed that the most preferred city was Akmola. The previous condition of the city and its territory allowed the usage of any architectural approach. Akmola is located in the geographical center of Kazakhstan, near important economic regions, as well as at the intersection of major highways. On that time, the population of the city was around 200,000. And in accordance with the main development plan, there was a possibility of population

Relocation process

Q. Which capital functions were relocated in Akmola?

What were the procedures and processes needed for the relocation?

A. The decision to relocate the capital from Almaty to Akmola was adopted by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan on July 6, 1994.

On September 15, 1995, the decree of the President of Kazakhstan "On the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan" was issued. The decree with a power of law gave orders to form Special State Commission which would be working on the relocation of the highest and central authorities. The government also established an off-budget fund "The New Capital" in order to accumulate extra funds for the provision of all necessary facilities in Akmola. The government also had to prepare and submit

The capital functions relocated in Astana

Q. The capital functions relocated in Astana

A. Today Astana is a large politico-administrative, business and cultural center of the country. All central authorities of the country, foreign diplomatic missions, headquarters of national and foreign companies, leading universities, up-to-date medical clinics and cultural institutions are located in Astana.

Our capital is connected with more than twenty cities in

Urban design of the new city

Q. We would like to know about the concept of the urban design of the new capital city.

A. President Nursultan Nazarbayev's idea of creating a special Eurasian style in the capital lies at the basis for Astana's new architectural concept.

The general development plan of Astana was designed by well-known Japanese architect –Kisho Kurokawa.

Astana is now a national leader in terms of construction volume. Since Astana has become the capital, around 10 million square meters of housing has been constructed in the city. Hundreds of local and international construction companies from France, Italy, Switzerland and Turkey participated in Astana's development.

High technologies and innovative methods of the 21st century's urban development have been widely used in building the city. The architectural style of Kazakhstan's modern capital embraces a harmonious combination of cultural traditions of the West and the East. The highly-respected architects from all over the world implemented their best projects.

The "Bayterek" Tower turned into the main symbol of the

growth amounting to 400,000 people. However, the current growth of population, as it is known, has surpassed all our expectations.

Astana's favorable location at the center of the Eurasian continent makes it an economically advantageous center of transport, communication and logistics, as well as a unique transit bridge between Europe and Asia.

to the President, proposals on tax and preferential duties as well as other privileges for investors who will be participating in construction and development of the new capital's infrastructure.

The official relocation of the capital was held on December 10, 1997. In accordance with the Presidential Decree dated May 6, 1998, Akmola was renamed Astana. The new capital was presented internationally on June 10, 1998.

As capital relocation is not a type of project to be finished in a short term, it was essentially completed, as planned, by 2000.

At present Astana's territory makes up for more than 700 square kilometres, and its population, as of June 1, 2012, is more than 750,000. The city consists of three districts – Almaty, Saryarka and Yessil.

the world through friendly sister cities' relations. In July 1999, by the UNESCO's decision Astana was awarded with the "World City" title. Since 2000, the Kazakhstan's main city is the member of International Assembly of Capitals and Cities.

Astana's mission is to become a cultural and intellectual center of the Eurasian space and to play a role of key generator for Kazakhstan's sustainable development.

new capital and became the city's famous "landmark." There are other unique architectural constructions, including; "The Palace of Peace and Accord" designed by well-known British architect Norman Foster and built in the form of a pyramid, "Khan Shatyr" shopping center - the highest tent construction in the world, "Duman" Aquarium – the most remote aquarium from the sea, "Kazakhstan" Central Concert Hall, "Triumph of Astana" and "Polar Lights" residential communities, office buildings of national companies "KazMunayGas" and "Kazakhstan Railways", and so on.

The city's modern sports facilities include "Astana-Arena" stadium with capacity of 30,000 and the unique "Sary-Arka" cycle track with capacity of 10,000 which was recognized in 2011 as the best one in the world. Another important sports complex is "Alau" Ice Palace that meets the highest international standards.

Astana recently is also turning into a garden city. The city's "green belt" is getting wider, and Astana is becoming like a green oasis in the center of huge steppes, being a model of non-polluting megacity.

Astana, Today ; Evaluation after the relocation

Q. More than ten years have passed after the relocation to Astana. We learned that construction of Astana will be finished in 2012. We would like to know the present status of the new capital Astana and Almaty. How is the relocation evaluated?

Is the role of Almaty as a financial center growing?

A. Nowadays Astana is the center of the Eurasian space, where various forums, congresses and other activities of international importance are conducted. During recent years, the capital of Kazakhstan has repeatedly been in the focus of international community's attention.

Congresses of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, Astana Economic Forum and other internationally important events are held in the capital on a regular basis. Astana also hosted the historical Summit of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), as well as Summits of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). In 2011, the city welcomed participants and guests of the VII Winter Asian Games.

The relocation of the capital has given a powerful impulse to Astana's economic development. The city's high economic growth rate attracts numerous investors. For example, volume of attracted investments has increased by 30 times and the total regional product, by 90 times. The share of Astana in the country's gross domestic product makes up about 8.5 percent.

The city's economy is based on trade, industrial production, transport, communication and construction. The city's industrial production is mainly focused on that of construction materials, foodstuff and mechanical

engineering. Since the relocation, capital's industrial output has increased by 11 times.

The city has become one of the largest business centers in Kazakhstan. Astana's entrepreneurial culture is dynamically developing – there are more than 50,000 small and medium businesses that involve about 200,000 workers.

In November 2012, Astana won the right to host an international recognized exhibition "EXPO-2017," which will serve as a basis for the further development of the city. All facilities, to be built under "EXPO 2017" will allow Astana to become a major platform of international exhibitions and presentations.

Speaking about Almaty, it is obvious that the city will remain as the country's largest city. Today, when Almaty claims to be a regional financial center in Central Asia and the CIS, we can use the enormous potential of the southern city to bring this city to the international level. And, the presence of two powerful centers will increase the economic potential of the country. There are a lot of examples of co-existence of two big centers within one country; Ankara and Istanbul, Moscow and St. Petersburg, Karachi and Islamabad, Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia, Melbourne and Canberra, Ottawa and Toronto, Washington D.C. and New York. Among this series, we are not the first and not the last.

In a short term, the new capital, emerged by the will of the First President of Kazakhstan, turned into the national idea and became a symbol of independence and global success of the young state.

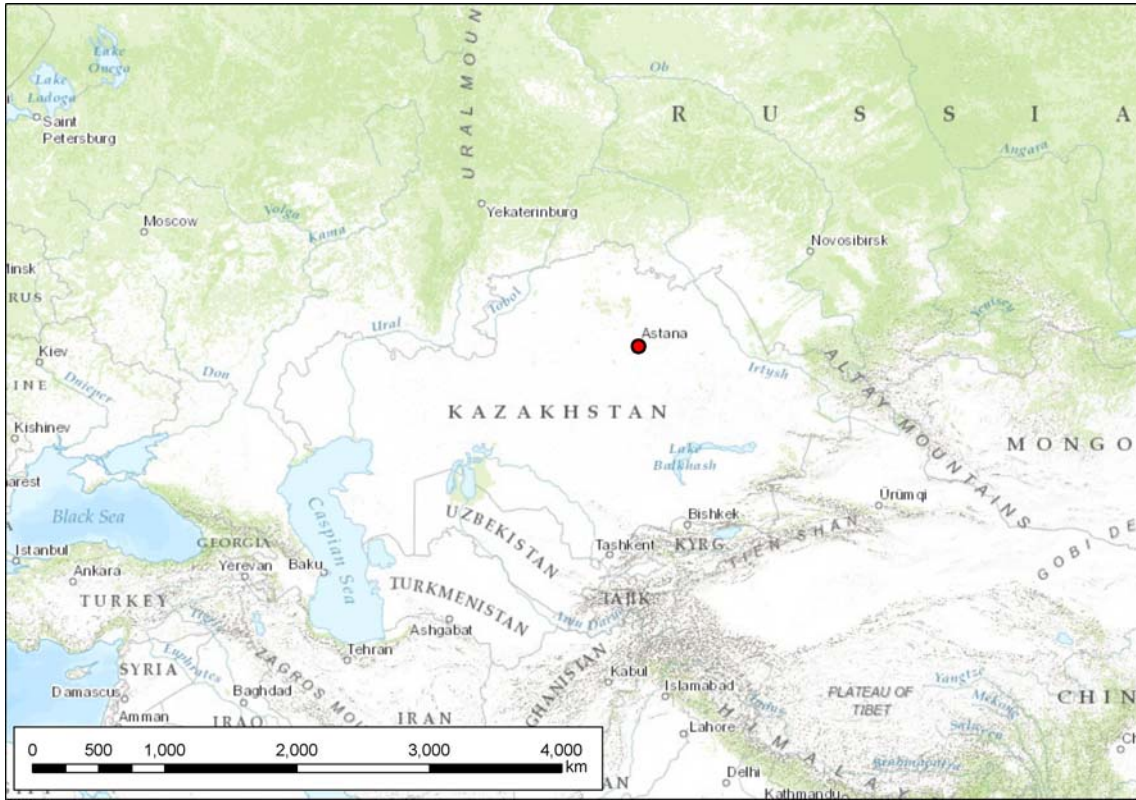
Territorial vision toward the future

Q. We would like to know the future vision of the new capital city.

A. In his keynote speech dedicated to the 10th Anniversary of Astana, President Nursultan Nazarbayev has very vividly and figuratively defined the philosophy of the development of the new capital;

" Here, on the ancient land of Sary-Arka, the new cradle of the country's future was born. The history of Astana and Kazakhstani people's destiny are inseparable from

each other. The capital embodies power, dynamic development and stability of our country. Astana has become a bright, strong, prosperous city that unites all Kazakhstanis and aspires to the future. Our capital is the heart of our motherland, the symbol of people's belief in its power and the great mission. Nowadays representatives of more than one hundred ethnics live in Astana, as it is in the whole country. People's friendship, mutual understanding and solidarity are the basis of the development of Astana and new Kazakhstan."



Source: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, TomTom, Intermap, increment P Corp, GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community