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СОФЬЯ СЕРГЕЕВНА СКОБЕЛИНА

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ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЯ ПЕТЕРБУРЖЦЕВ ОБ ИДЕАЛЬНОМ УСТРОЙСТВЕ ГОРОДСКОЙ СРЕДЫ

Аннотация. Исследование посвящено изучению восприятия жителей муниципального округа Лиговка-Ямская городской среды округа на основе глубинных интервью и ментального картирования. Рассматриваются взгляды на инфраструктуру, общественные пространства, безопасность и представления об идеальном городском ландшафте. Выявлены положительные стороны центрального расположения, транспортной сети и культурных объектов, а также проблемы нехватки зеленых насаждений и устаревающей инфраструктуры. Рекомендации включают расширение парков, обновление инфраструктуры и продвижение немоторизованного транспорта. Предлагается активизировать культурное и общественное участие через возрождение исторических мест и волонтерские инициативы. Подчеркивается важность устойчивого развития, улучшения условий жизни и укрепления общественных связей.

Ключевые слова: восприятие жителей, городская среда, инфраструктура, зеленые насаждения, общественные пространства, устойчивое развитие.

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Introduction

Topic description. This research aims to investigate the perspectives and aspirations of St. Petersburg residents regarding their ideal urban environment, focusing on the Ligovka-Yamskaya Municipal District as a representative case study.

The project will employ approaches to urban sociology to gain a comprehensive understanding of the residents' visions for a perfect urban space. By delving into the cultural, social, and environmental factors that shape these visions, the study seeks to contribute valuable insights for urban development strategies that align with the desires and expectations of the local community. Through in-depth interviews, the research aims to identify common themes, preferences, and potential challenges that can inform future urban planning initiatives in the considered district of St. Petersburg.

Relevance of the topic. Urban environments are dynamic and complex spaces that play a crucial role in shaping the well-being and quality of life of residents. In the context of St. Petersburg, the Ligovka-Yamskaya Municipal District holds the designation of an intra-city municipal entity, situated within the Central district of the city.¹

The district boasts prominent landmarks such as the Alexander Nevsky Lavra and the Moscow railway station, along with St. Petersburg Metro stations like "Plushchad Vosstaniya", "Ligovsky Prospekt," and "Plushchad Alexandra Nevskogo". Consequently, this area is enriched with significant cultural and historical value, serving as a pivotal transportation nexus for the citizens.

Concurrently, the district grapples with derelict structures (31, Telezhnaya Street), a sizable vacant space within the "Tsarskaya Stolitsa" residential complex, and common issues prevalent in St. Petersburg concerning the clearance of icy formations and snow.

In essence, the territory possesses its own distinct characteristics, rendering it a compelling subject for examination. Despite this, there are not many qualitative studies examining residents' views on their urban environment in general.

Thus, the study of how residents perceive the urban environment and how they want to see it in a small-scale example may be of scientific interest and also have practical value for deriving some recommendations for improving the urban environment.

Problem statement. The thesis seeks to address an existing gap in the understanding of how residents perceive their urban environment in Ligovka-Yamskaya. In line with current research trends, this study draws inspiration from the works of authors, who have explored various facets of urban development in St. Petersburg. Bater's analysis of social class shifts in Tsentral'nyy Rayon, St. Petersburg, and Bernt's examination of

¹ The Charter of the Inner-City Municipality of St. Petersburg, Ligovka-Yamskaya Municipal District, as amended by the decision of the Municipal Council dated March 4, 2021, No. 53.

gentrification in post-socialist urban contexts provide valuable insights into the city's evolving dynamics (Bater 2006; Bernt 2016).

Zhitin et al.'s study on the urban transformation of St. Petersburg and other relevant contributions highlight the socio-economic and spatial challenges that may parallel those in Ligovka-Yamskaya (Zhitin 2020).

By embedding my research in this discourse, I aim to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on urban sociology, planning, and cultural-historical perspectives. This study specifically focuses on residents' preferences and aspirations, enriching the collective understanding of how urban environments shape community dynamics. Through this contextualized exploration, the thesis aims to extend and refine the current discourse on residents' perceptions and experiences within the Ligovka-Yamskaya Municipal District.

Research Question and Tasks.

Main Research Question: How do residents of the Ligovka-Yamskaya Municipal District perceive and assess their urban environment in terms of physical, social, and cultural aspects?

This research question aims to explore residents' satisfaction levels with key elements such as infrastructure, public spaces, safety, community amenities, etc., and to identify prevalent challenges or issues within the current urban environment.

To address the main research question, the following tasks will be undertaken:

Evaluate Residents' Satisfaction with Key Urban Elements:

- Evaluate the residents' views on the infrastructure, recreational areas and neighbourhood within the Ligovka-Yamskaya Municipal District.

Identify Challenges and Issues:

- Investigate prevalent challenges and issues that residents encounter within their urban environment, focusing on physical, social, and cultural aspects.

Examine Residents' Ideal Urban Environment:

- Investigate the specific attributes that district residents envision as constituting an ideal urban environment, including preferences and expectations regarding urban design, green spaces, public services, and community engagement.

Conduct Comparative Analysis of Urban Perceptions and Ideals:

- Perform a detailed comparative analysis to identify similarities and differences between the current urban environment and residents' ideal visions, assessing physical, social, and cultural dimensions of the urban landscape as perceived by the community.

Formulate Improvement Recommendations Based on Urban Dissonance:

- Analyse the dissonance between the existing urban environment and residents' ideals to develop targeted recommendations for urban improvement. This involves synthesizing key areas of misalignment, gathering community feedback, and identifying actionable insights that can guide future urban planning and development initiatives in Ligovka-Yamskaya.

By addressing these tasks, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the residents' perspectives and to formulate practical recommendations for enhancing the urban environment in the Ligovka-Yamskaya Municipal District.

Literature review

The way residents represent their neighbourhood and the way they want to see it is inextricably linked to urban sociology, urban design, a discussion about the cultural and historical significance of urban areas and the existing research on St. Petersburg city itself.

Urban Sociology. Notoriously, urban sociology studies the social structures, processes, and dynamics within urban areas. It explores how individuals and groups interact, form communities, and experience social life in the context of urban environments.

A well-known sociologist J. Wirth defines “urbanism,” as a way of life characterized by specific social behaviours and attitudes prevalent in densely populated urban areas (Wirth 1938).

He contends that the sheer density and diversity of urban populations create a set of conditions that shape individuals' experiences and interactions in a fundamentally different manner than in less populated settings.

It is influenced by increased specialization and heightened social differentiation. While common to all members of the urban community, each individual may interpret and live this way of life with some degree of variation from others.

In Ligovka-Yamskaya, with its high population density and sufficiently heterogeneous composition, residents' perceptions of their urban environment and their ideals should be explored.

Moreover, Wirth brings important concepts of social fragmentation and a sense of belonging that are designed to help understand how urban characteristics shape feelings of community or alienation.

J. Jacobs' offers a groundbreaking critique of urban planning practices and advocates for a more people-centred approach to city living (Jacobs 1961).

Jacobs challenges prevailing urban renewal strategies of the time, arguing for the importance of community engagement in shaping urban environments and finding out whether there are mixed-use areas that foster community interaction (“active streets”).

Jacobs also focuses attention on the safety perceptions of residents and whether the design of public spaces allows for effective natural surveillance (concept of “eyes on the street”).

In turn, M. Castells explores the emergence of the “informational city” and its impact on social organization, power structures, and spatial arrangements (Castells 1989).

Another work is Henri Lefebvre’s “The Social Production of Space”, which redefines understanding of urban spaces, emphasizing that they are socially constructed through daily practices, power dynamics, and cultural expressions (Lefebvre 1991).

Applying Lefebvre’s lens to Ligovka-Yamskaya might involve exploring how residents actively shape their urban environment through everyday activities and cultural practices, providing a nuanced understanding of how the social production of space influences residents’ perceptions and experiences in the district.

As for more recent research, McAndrews et al. explored the vital role of community participation in urban transportation planning, specifically in the redesign and revitalisation of San Pablo Avenue in California (McAndrews et al. 2006). It underscored the substantial impact of residents on various activities along the arterial, such as shopping, personal business, pedestrian traffic, transit ridership, and auto use. Additionally, it emphasized the need to consider not only the physical environment but also social and economic conditions, including neighbourhood concerns and aspirations.

Leyden et al. more broadly examined the impact of the built environment, public policies, and social connections on community satisfaction in 10 cities (Leyden et al. 2011).

The main findings indicated that factors such as access to parks, public transportation, cultural amenities, and positive social networks significantly influenced residents’ satisfaction with life in their cities. Additionally, aspects like aesthetics, safety, and economic conditions were found to play a crucial role in shaping community satisfaction.

For St. Petersburg, understanding these trends is crucial as it situates the city within the broader spectrum of global urban development, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities presented by neoliberal urbanism.

Urban Planning and Design. The study likewise relates to research areas in urban planning and design by assessing residents’ preferences for specific attributes in their urban environment.

For that reason, it is important to note Kevin Lynch's "The Image of the City", which explores how people perceive and navigate urban environments (Lynch 1960). By understanding the concepts of imageability, legibility, and the elements contributing to mental maps Lynch focused on cities' distinct identities and design.

Jan Gehl in his book "Cities for People" also advocates for human-centric urban design, emphasizing vibrant public life, pedestrian-friendly environments, and human-scale planning (Gehl 2010).

In the context of Ligovka-Yamskaya, Gehl's principles' importance to residents could be taken into consideration. Such as public spaces, pedestrian-centric design, the environment tailored to human scale, and community engagement in the design process.

Similarly, Lund et al. focused on the sense of community affected by pedestrian environments (Lund et al. 2002). The methodology involved surveys in two distinct Portland neighbourhoods to examine this impact. Their findings indicated a more pronounced sense of community in traditional neighbourhoods compared to automobile-oriented ones, with significant influence from pedestrian environment factors.

As for the mental maps mentioned by Lynch, Mirza et al. used an Active Perception Technique (APT) to capture key perceptual features of the area (Mirza et al. 2020). APT is a method for measuring urban scene preferences by having individuals draw landscapes from memory. As a result, participants expressed a preference for natural elements in urban "windowscapes" over built features. Furthermore, among natural features, large bodies of water and the sky were the most favoured. Among built features, landmarks stood out as the most preferred, receiving strong positive ratings from participants.

Another research concerned with the phenomena of "windowscapes" was the one conducted by Batool et al. in 2020. The study was concerned with the impact of window views in urban settings on various aspects of human well-being. Favoured urban views typically included people, vibrant colours, well-maintained buildings, and naturalistic elements, leading to gaze behaviours with fewer and shorter fixations (Batool et al. 2020).

Cultural and Historical Significance of Urban Areas. To some extent, by acknowledging the cultural and historical value of the Ligovka-Yamskaya Municipal District, the thesis might intersect with research that emphasizes the significance of preserving and understanding the cultural heritage of urban areas. This aligns with existing literature on the role of history and culture in shaping urban areas.

That way, in David Lowenthal's work "The Past is a Foreign Country", the complex relationship between memory, history, and place is being explored (Lowenthal 1985).

It could be interesting to know how the Ligovka-Yamskaya residents perceive and engage with the past in their urban setting, and how it affects their views in modern times.

Tim Cresswell adheres to a similar idea of the focus on cultural, historical, and social dimensions within urban areas (Cresswell 2004). In his book "Place: A Short Introduction" he provides a theoretical framework for understanding how places acquire meaning through human interactions, memories, and narratives. It might be of value to discuss the heritage, identity, and dynamic nature of the Ligovka-Yamskaya district with locals as well.

The meanings of places to residents become a central topic for Liu et al. too, as they argue for prioritizing public perceptions of authenticity of the place (Liu et al. 2019).

Their study concludes that former methods overlooked the public's understanding of heritage values crucial for identity, sense of place, and sustainable urban heritage use.

Research on St. Petersburg City. Moving to the research on the St. Petersburg city, some studies help unfold the city's current urban narrative. These contemporary explorations shed light on how St. Petersburg has evolved economically, spatially, and socially. These studies might offer valuable insights, helping understand the challenges and opportunities shaping the present identity of St. Petersburg in the urban landscape.

J. Bater's study in Tsentral'nyy Rayon, St. Petersburg analysing social class shifts during the city's market economy transition aligns with my research. Bater's findings on changing demographics and residents' attitudes towards quality-of-life indicators, housing, and district attachment provide valuable historical context (Bater 2006). The study's insights into traffic congestion's impact on residents' attachment resonate with the focus on urban challenges as well.

Matthias Bernt's examination of gentrification in post-socialist urban contexts is connected to exploration of St. Petersburg's urban transformation too. She focuses on gentrification and defines it as a complex urban process marked by neighbourhood upgrading, wealthier resident influx, rising property values, and lower-income resident displacement (Bernt 2016). The study emphasizes the importance of understanding local complexities and historical legacies in shaping urban changes.

More recent example of studying urban context change in St. Petersburg is the one by Zhitin et al. Their insights about growing social segregation, spatial contrasts and the need for restructuring align with the broader urban challenges that may impact the district (Zhitin et al. 2020). The study offers valuable perspectives on demographic change, suburbanization, and gentrification additionally.

Anokhin et al.'s study on post-Soviet urban development in St. Petersburg corresponds with the topic as well. The findings highlighted the city's entry into the post-industrial stage, retention of industrial elements, and impact of the Soviet past (Anokhin et al. 2017).

Authors' identification of non-linear transformation processes resonates with my study's focus on urban improvement challenges and residents' ideals.

Linov's study, which delves into the redevelopment of Saint Petersburg's historical centre, sheds light on the challenges and opportunities associated with enhancing unique urban fabrics. Linov emphasizes the importance of socially friendly spaces, accessibility, and vibrant public areas (Linov 2015). His proposed approach, including the creation of new squares, pedestrian streets, and passageways, aligns with the goals of my study in understanding residents' preferences for an ideal urban environment.

And there is also an example of the study which explores the emotional perception of urban environments in St. Petersburg. Nenko et al.'s innovative use of the "Imprecity" platform to collect and analyse data on urban emotions provides valuable insights applicable to understanding residents' sentiments in my study area (Nenko et al. 2018). Authors' emphasis on improving subjective well-being and enhancing urban life through placemaking recommendations links emotional experiences to the urban environment in a meaningful way.

In conclusion, the thesis intersects with urban sociology, planning, and cultural-historical perspectives. From urban sociology, Wirth's framework explains the impact of density on community (Wirth 1938). Lynch and Gehl's urban planning concepts emphasize human-centric design and community engagement (Lynch 1960; Gehl 2010). Cultural and historical dimensions, explored by Lowenthal and Cresswell, offer insight into residents' engagement with their urban past (Lowenthal 1985; Cresswell 2004).

In connection with St. Petersburg's narrative, studies by Bater, Bernt, Zhitin et al., etc. provide context for Ligovka-Yamskaya's challenges and opportunities (Bater 2006; Bernt 2016; Zhitin et al. 2020). These contemporary insights enrich the understanding of the city's economic, spatial, and social evolution, aligning with the thesis's exploration of residents' sentiments.

Description and motivation behind the methodology

The methodology will include the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews as the primary means of data collection. These interviews will offer an in-depth exploration of residents' perceptions, experiences, and aspirations related to the urban environment. The motivation behind this

methodology is the following — semi-structured format allows for flexibility, enabling respondents to articulate their thoughts freely while ensuring key themes are systematically addressed.

The interviewing was successfully used in C. Bieling et al.'s paper on the linkages between human well-being and the natural environment (Bieling et al. 2014). Semi-structured interviews were chosen by the authors to capture residents' diverse perspectives on the urban environment. With the interviews, they found out that public awareness, environmental education, and opportunities for engagement with natural surroundings are most essential for addressing experiential factors in preserving human well-being.

Marshall et al. emphasize that the depth and reliability of qualitative data are paramount, suggesting that the focus should be on extracting rich, detailed insights rather than meeting a numeric target (Marshall et al. 2013). This approach to selecting the number of interviews aligns with the methodology's goals to comprehensively explore resident perceptions while ensuring the study remains feasible and rigorous.

Incorporating mental maps into this study, inspired by Kevin Lynch's approach aims to complement interview data with visual representations of residents' cognitive images of their urban environment (Lynch 1960). This approach not only enriches the qualitative data gathered through interviews but also provides a tangible manifestation of the residents' perceptions, priorities, and connections to their city.

Glazkov notes that mental maps can effectively reveal the “imaginary city” shaped by residents' experiences, memories, and social interactions (Glazkov 2015). This aspect is crucial in analysing how the residents of Ligovka-Yamskaya district perceive their environment, particularly in terms of areas they value or see as problematic. Furthermore, Glazkov's analysis provides a critical look at how external perceptions, such as those shaped by city branding or narratives imposed by outsiders, can diverge significantly from the internal views held by the city's inhabitants.

Similarly, Whitehand explores urban morphology through mental maps, offering insights into how the physical structure of cities influences resident perceptions (Whitehand 2022).

The inclusion of mental maps, therefore, allows for a multidimensional analysis of urban environments, blending physical spatial data with the intangible qualities that define the lived experience of a city. By employing mental maps, this study follows a proven path to uncovering the layered, complex relationships residents have with their urban surroundings, thus offering a comprehensive view that bridges urban planning with subjective human experience.

In conclusion, the chosen methodology of combining in-depth semi-structured interviews with the innovative use of mental maps presents a robust framework for capturing the complex dynamics of urban environments. This approach ensures a holistic understanding of residents' perceptions, grounded in both their articulated experiences and cognitive representations of space.

Sampling strategy and method

Purposive sampling method is used in the research. The condition for the participants is to live in the Ligovka-Yamskaya district on a permanent basis for 5 years or more. The number of 5 years can be justified by the fact that according to Russian law, for a foreigner to obtain Russian citizenship in the usual manner, it is required to live continuously in Russia for 5 years on a residence permit.² That way the status of a “local citizen” of the district can be compared with achieving the status of a citizen of the country to a certain extent.

Purposive sampling is chosen for its effectiveness in identifying participants who can provide relevant perspectives, crucial for exploring the complex dynamics of urban environments. As highlighted by S. Denieffe in her commentary on purposive sampling, this method allows researchers to strategically select individuals who meet specific criteria, enhancing the depth and relevance of the data collected (Denieffe 2020).

Recruitment through social networks such as Telegram and VK is identified as an efficient strategy to reach and engage potential participants within the Ligovka-Yamskaya community. This approach not only facilitates access to a wider pool of eligible residents but also supports the unobtrusive solicitation of participation.

The developed interview guide is divided into thematic blocks, each designed to elicit contextualized data that reflects the complexities of urban life and environment as perceived by the residents of the Ligovka-Yamskaya district. The blocks within the interview guide are as follows (Appendix 2):

Biographical and Demographic Data: Establishes the context for each respondent's experiences within the district, informed by sociodemographic factors that may shape their perceptions and interactions within urban spaces.

Current Urban Environment Perception: Seeks to understand the resident's comfort and satisfaction with their living conditions, a key component in evaluating urban quality of life.

² Decree of the President of the Russian Federation. 2002. “On Approval of the Regulations on the Procedure for Considering Issues of Citizenship of the Russian Federation.” No. 1325. Dated 11/14/2002. Edited on 07/03/2023.

Social and Cultural Aspects: Investigates the importance of cultural and social landmarks and activities in the community, recognizing the integral role they play in shaping urban identity and social cohesion.

Community and Space: Explores the social dynamics of the district, including feelings of belonging and community involvement, following the sociological tradition of community studies.

Changes and Challenges: Addresses the transformations and issues faced by the district over time, mirroring the research trend in urban studies that focuses on gentrification, urban renewal, and sustainability.

Ideal Urban Environment Vision & Future: Encourages respondents to articulate their aspirations for the future development of the district, a process grounded in participatory urban planning research.

Method of Mental Maps: Incorporates a creative and introspective technique that asks respondents to visually represent their current perception and ideal vision of the urban environment. This innovative method adds a layer of depth to the qualitative data and is rooted in the seminal work of Kevin Lynch on urban form and cognitive mapping (Lynch 1960).

By integrating theoretical frameworks with methodological rigor, the interview guide is designed to capture subjective experiences of urban residents, providing valuable insights into their daily lives and aspirations for urban living.

Results

As a result of the fieldwork, 15 in-depth interviews were conducted, and mental maps from 4 respondents were collected.

In the course of the work, it turned out that the method of mental maps often causes difficulties for respondents. Some of the respondents refused to draw maps, arguing that they had low artistic skills, although they were informed that the latter were not necessary when reproducing their vision of the area. Other respondents seemed frustrated by this method, and some of the respondents openly said that they were not comfortable with this method.

The difficulty some respondents faced with mental maps, including discomfort due to perceived inadequate artistic skills etc., underscores a broader issue of accessibility in participatory research methodologies. However, these challenges also provide insights into the varied levels of engagement and the psychological barriers that can influence participatory activities. By adapting the methodology to only include voluntary participation in the mapping exercise, the study respects ethical considerations while still gathering qualitative data from those willing to express their spatial awareness creatively

The demographic data of the respondents varies, this is due to the fact that the respondents were recruited through Vkontakte groups (“Наш Дом — Лиговка-Ямская”, “Муниципальное образование Лиговка-Ямская”) respectively, the audience of subscribers of the groups is quite different. (Appendix 1)

However, it is possible to note the prevalence of older respondents who are concerned about the problems of the district. It can also be noted that 11 out of 15 of them have completed higher education, which could correlate with higher levels of civic engagement and awareness of urban issues. This educational background might also influence the community’s expectations and demands regarding urban planning, public services, and community activities. The respondents’ level of education and area of professional activity might also indicate a relatively high social class of the respondents.

Current Urban Environment Perception. First, when considering the concept of a “comfortable residential area”, residents highlight the presence of convenient transportation infrastructure, shops, clinics, parks, and a large number of green spaces.

“A comfortable area is close to the metro, has well-functioning ground transport, proximity to supermarkets, equipped playgrounds, the presence of greenery, and parks and squares within walking distance.” (R2)

Respondents also focus on their personal well-being regarding a comfortable living area, feeling it as an extension of their home.

“A comfortable living area is where I feel good. Primarily, I suppose, it includes shops, parks for walks. That’s important to me.” (R4)

“A comfortable living area for me is an extension of my home. Everyone wants to be comfortable in their house, near the entrance of their house, nearby. And I want my neighbourhood to be an extension of my home, to be cozy and comfortable for walking around.” (R8)

In turn, 12 out of 15 interviewees noted that the Ligovka-Yamskaya area is comfortable for living, although words like “partially” and “almost” appeared in their descriptions of satisfaction with the area. Notably, some respondents considered relocating, but none plan to actually move in the foreseeable future.

Further examining key aspects of the current urban environment, respondents expressed several aspects that, in their view, require improvement.

Greenery and Parks. Overall, residents feel a significant lack of green spaces in the area, noting the low number of trees and greenery. The need for more parks and squares is frequently mentioned.

"The only thing I can highlight is the Metropolitan Garden, which is somewhat green, but it is not urban territory, it is part of the church, not municipal land. As for actual municipal parks, squares, everything is very bad here." (R3)

"Well, it's obvious that there is a lack of greenery. And it feels like there's a lot of asphalt and few trees. There is a deficiency, it is felt. At the same time, this is probably specific to the area, which is located in the city centre." (R4)

"Where are they? Parks, squares? The only one is in the Lavra (Metropolitan Garden) and even there it's either a psychiatric hospital or a cemetery (necropolis) around. We hardly have any squares or parks." (R8)

"There are absolutely no green plantings in our complex (Tsarskaya Stolitsa). There are some plantings that the management company planted around its house on Kremenchugskaya, 13. The rest of the complex is just like a steppe. There isn't a single tree, not a single green planting, no parks, no dog playgrounds." (R10)

Cleanliness of the area. Opinions on this point vary, with some respondents expressing satisfaction with the current state of cleanliness, while others point to serious issues. Generally, the popular opinion is *"it could be better." (R2)*

"Nevsky is still more or less okay. If you turn anywhere else — everything, they don't clean there and there's dirt. And lots of cigarette butts. I really don't like it. I quit smoking. I don't like that there are a lot of cigarette butts." (R8)

"I consider the cleaning of snow and trash unsatisfactory because it is impossible to drive cars in winter." (R10)

Condition of buildings and courtyards. In this aspect, perceptions vary. Some respondents are satisfied with the state of renovated old buildings, while others note the presence of abandoned buildings covered in graffiti.

"Now a mass reconstruction has started, absolutely everything for some reason on our Staronevsky street is in the process of renovation." (R1)

"Everything is fine, except for only the nearby Botkinskaya hospital, old and strange..." (R5)

"There are many buildings, I see, designated for demolition. So, of course, the scene can be unsightly. As you walk — they are all in graffiti. But still, in Ligovka-Yamskaya, I see, they eliminate most vandalism cases." (R7)

Street lighting and safety. Street lighting in the area has not dissatisfied any of the respondents. Regarding safety issues, residents mention some problematic aspects, while noting that these issues are currently being addressed.

"I'm comfortable, I have no problems. Yes, we used to have a migrant dormitory on Telegnaya, there were dubious places there before, but that

was just a couple of years ago, even at that time I had no sense of insecurity, and now it's even somewhat better.” (R3)

“In 2019 there were a lot of homeless people because of the Moscow Railway Station, it was not very safe, but now everything is fine.” (R13)

“You know, there are some drug dealers here. This is in the area. But the police are working.” (R14)

Social infrastructure. From the respondents' quotes, there is a significant number of schools in the Ligovka-Yamskaya municipal district, ensuring accessibility to educational institutions for residents. However, the situation with kindergartens is problematic, with an insufficient number of facilities and unfulfilled promises of new ones.

“From what I feel, we have a lot of schools here, from talking to people, in this part of Ligovka-Yamskaya that's beyond the railway station, we have three schools right here: on Goncharnaya, on Kharkovskaya, and on Nevsky. They fully cover all details about schools. But kindergartens are very bad.” (R3)

“In Tsarskaya Stolitsa (residential complex), they were supposed to build preschool institutions on the municipal wasteland. They were supposed to build a kindergarten and a school by 2023. But so far, nothing. The authorities promise.” (R7)

Transport infrastructure. The overall picture of transport infrastructure in the Ligovka-Yamskaya municipal district appears somewhat varied. Mainly, the metro receives positive reviews for its accessibility and convenience. Opinions about buses, however, are mixed: while some respondents are satisfied with the existing routes, others express disappointment in their effectiveness or convenience.

“It's convenient that several metro stations are nearby. Regarding buses, generally, everything is fine.” (R1)

“In Ligovka-Yamskaya itself, we only have bus number 58 running on Kremenchugskaya, but honestly, it's so pointless, I don't even consider it. But generally, for me, as probably a non-old, healthy person, it's fine. How elderly people reach the stops, I don't know. Maybe it seems too far for someone.” (R3)

“From the perspective of how transport operates, I think it's excellent: the metro is nearby, buses run, and you can even walk to the tram. But from the perspective of the vehicle fleet itself, they are very old, sometimes it seems like the trams have seen The Siege and The Revolution...” (R9)

Children's and sports playgrounds. From the statements of the respondents, it's clear that the situation with children's and sports playgrounds in the Ligovka-Yamskaya municipal district is far from ideal. While children's

playgrounds exist and can be used, some of them need repair and updating. Meanwhile, public sports playgrounds are absent in the area.

"It would be nice if they (children's playgrounds) were repaired as needed and had lighting installed." (R2)

"I wouldn't say I'm thrilled, but there are children's playgrounds, they can be used. Maybe they're not always fenced as they should be. There are some old playgrounds. But overall, they exist, which is good." (R12)

"There are no public sports playgrounds in our area. There are two sports playgrounds at schools on Telezhnaya and Goncharnaya, but they don't let everyone in. There are no public sports playgrounds in this half (on the right side of the railway tracks) at all. In that one, on Ligovsky 104, I think, there's one sports playground, and it's terrible. Yes, the situation with sports playgrounds is very bad." (R3)

Roads. Residents express dissatisfaction with the condition of the road surface, noting the presence of potholes and holes on some streets, especially on Voennaya Street. The lack of attention from the authorities to road repair and maintenance in the area is noted.

"If you take Nevsky, I rate it positively. If you take the road on Voennaya Street, between the railway and the Tsarskaya Stolitsa residential complex, I consider it an insult to the military and the citizens of our city because there are potholes and holes." (R6)

"Intra-block driveways are a problem. There are potholes, there are issues." (R7)

"Very bad, that is here Voennaya Street, which, well, Beglov promised to fix when he was first elected. And now, as I understand it, with his re-election, the promises to fix Voennaya Street, as we understand, are still in the same place." (R11)

Pedestrian zones, sidewalks. Overall, respondents expressed satisfaction with the state of pedestrian zones and sidewalks in the municipal district. However, some residents made comments and suggestions for improving the infrastructure. There are requests to add dedicated bicycle lanes to enhance safety for cyclists and reduce conflicts with pedestrians. Accordingly, there was also a desire to ban the movement of scooters in pedestrian areas to ensure safety and comfort for pedestrians.

"What I most want is to ban scooters and other non-pedestrians from pedestrian zones!" (R2)

"Pedestrian zones, signs are up, traffic lights work, sometimes there's a lack of bicycle lanes, for example, if you compare with Moscow, there's a lack of dedicated bicycle lanes, but as it is." (R4)

The analysis of the current state of the urban environment in the Ligovka-Yamskaya district shows varied resident opinions based on individual expectations and preferences, illustrating the challenge of meeting diverse urban needs within a single municipal district, as discussed previously (Carmona et al. 2003).

Concerns about insufficient green spaces align with sustainable urban development theories (Beatley 2000), emphasizing the necessity of natural spaces for enhancing urban life quality.

The state of buildings varies significantly, highlighting the need for a balance between preservation and modern development. Positive ratings for street lighting and safety underscore the importance of effective urban planning and management for ensuring public safety and comfort (Jacobs 1961).

Transport infrastructure, while accessible, receives mixed feedback regarding the convenience and condition of transport vehicles, reflecting the emphasis on the quality of transport services.

Reviews of children's and sports facilities, roads, and pedestrian areas suggest the need for a comprehensive approach in urban infrastructure development, accommodating the diverse needs of the community.

Social and Cultural Aspects. Respondents identified landmarks such as the Alexander Nevsky Lavra, Moscow Railway Station, and nearby metro stations as the most significant for them in the area.

"First and foremost, the metro. Regardless of everything, we rely on the metro. I believe that having a metro entrance is important for us." (R4)

"It's important that the Moscow Railway Station is nearby. It offers the ability to move quickly, to travel to Moscow as soon as possible, and actually, this was one of the main factors why this particular apartment was chosen in this area because I often have to travel to Moscow. It's important, it's convenient, it's great." (R14)

"The Lavra is significant, not just because it has pleasant green spaces with water and all, but because I'm someone who goes there to enjoy it like a park, not a cemetery." (R11)

Among the cultural spots in the area, besides Alexander Nevsky Lavra, the Cathedral of the Feodorovskaya Icon of the Mother of God and the cultural-historical centre — the House of the Romanovs (now private) — were mentioned. The State Museum of Urban Sculpture in the district was rarely noted by the respondents and not in the best light.

"Referring to the Ligovka Yamskaya area? The Museum of Urban Sculpture. I think it could be more active, run interesting programs, lectures, and attract locals. As it is, I think it's a very passive museum."

I don't remember any other museums here. The architecture on Staronevsky street isn't what it is at the beginning of Nevsky." (R6)

"From a cultural standpoint, the Alexander Nevsky Lavra is significant as it is a monument of architecture. The Feodorovskaya Cathedral is also very interesting as it's where the children of Nicholas II were baptized, and it served as a sort of family church where all Christian holidays were celebrated. The House of the Romanovs, where the royal family stayed, is also in our district." (R10)

It is quite important that respondents did not consider the Ligovka-Yamskaya area typical for St. Petersburg, possibly only typical for the city centre.

"This is more like St. Petersburg for tourists. After all, there are more leisure institutions here. As in any city centre, everything is better arranged, while in other districts, it's more about high-rise residential buildings and so forth. Objectively, perhaps, one shouldn't judge the whole of St. Petersburg based on our district." (R1)

"Well, I would say it's a typical central district of St. Petersburg. You see, our city is very much divided into two: the central districts like 'Vaska', 'Petrogradka', the central district itself, the centre. And the rest of St. Petersburg, places like Kupchino, Akademicheskaya, and others, can't even be compared with each other, but Ligovka-Yamskaya is a typical central district of St. Petersburg." (R3)

Meanwhile, there were opinions that Ligovka-Yamskaya is a unique miniature example of the city of St. Petersburg, or else a standard district for the city.

"I would say that our district in microcosm reflects the essence of St. Petersburg: its historical heritage, culture, and even the contemporary problems of urban life." (R9)

"Clearly, it's not the best district in St. Petersburg, but not the worst either, just a standard one. I would rather judge by districts in St. Petersburg, maybe somewhere like Chernyshevskaya or Tekhnologicheskyy Institut, or more so, Gostiny Dvor." (R11)

Therefore, the analysis of the Ligovka-Yamskaya cultural aspects reveals a complex urban identity shaped by its historical landmarks and modern cultural life. Residents appreciate key sites like Alexander Nevsky Lavra and the Moscow Railway Station for their cultural and practical importance. This highlights the need for urban planning that integrates historical heritage with the demands of contemporary urban living, as discussed in urban studies (Castells 1989; Lefebvre 1991).

The district's characterization by its residents as both typical and unique reflects its dynamic role within the broader context of St. Petersburg, aligning with discussions on urban identity and space (Lynch 1960; Gehl 2010).

Community and Space. Speaking of the characteristics of the people living in the Ligovka-Yamskaya area, respondents noted a predominance of elderly people and native St. Petersburg residents. At the same time, the presence of a different type of people in newer buildings (constructed in 2016 and later, for example, the Tsarskaya Stolitsa residential complex) was also mentioned.

"There's a big separation into two categories of citizens: residents of the older housing stock and residents of new buildings. And there's a fundamental difference between them in almost everything. Residents of the older housing stock have their own specifics; they are less interested in changes, more accustomed, predominantly older generation, among other things. Well, there are probably more marginalized people on average, but I don't want to say they are all marginalized, of course not." (R3)

"You know, most of the people here in the complex (Tsarskaya Stolitsa) are newcomers, only a few are native St. Petersburg or Leningrad residents. Mostly newcomers. Accordingly, their views are somewhat different." (R7)

"I often meet various pensioners here who are real native St. Petersburg residents and have lived here for a very long time. It seems to me that there are quite a lot of such people here." (R13)

Overall, the atmosphere of the area is described by respondents as "peaceful," "quiet," "cultural."

"Specifically, the part of Ligovka Yamskaya where I live (older housing stock) is quiet and peaceful; nothing particularly noisy ever happens here, and it's very calm." (R15)

"The atmosphere here is warm and friendly. Although there are shortcomings that I described, the historical atmosphere makes it special. I would describe it as 'lively,' 'cultural,' and 'somewhat mysterious.'" (R9)

Yet, there were opinions expressed about the need for transformations in the area, its "polishing."

"Such an uncleaned diamond, such an unpolished diamond. That's how I would put it, because to see the beauty and charm of this area, you need to understand a bit about what's happening inside. On one hand, it lacks gloss, but at the same time, it has the spirit of Petersburg, the old one described by Dostoevsky. It's like, you know, there's a rose flower, and there's some unknown flower that's no less beautiful." (R4)

"A bit depressing, I would say. On the whole, yes. Why? The buildings give a sense of neglect and disrepair; that officials have given up on us, the development hasn't finished, like a lot was left unfinished and undone." (R2)

All respondents noted a sense of their social belonging to the district, the fact that the district is very familiar to them.

"I've been living here for the seventh year, I've kind of gotten used to it. I still criticize, but somehow, I like it and this church (Alexander Nevsky Lavra). I'm a religious person, and there's a church there too. Not only in the Lavra. And yes, I feel like a local and it seems to me, though slowly, but still, everything will be done for us. Everything will be fine, cozy." (R7)

"Yes, I really love Ligovka-Yamskaya. I find its history very interesting. I read and search for information about what was here before. Although I'm not from here, I feel very good about this place, it's close to me, I consider it my native home." (R14)

As for the social life of the district, tenants mentioned only volunteer clean-up days and their contentious attitude towards them.

"There are volunteer clean-up days, but I haven't gone to them. Because you kind of look at how the district administration spends money on cleaning, and nothing gets cleaned, and the motivation to go and clean it up yourself when a lot of money is spent on it is somewhat lacking." (R11)

"I have some feeling that in these volunteer clean-ups, I am somehow used by officials, that it is they who should have arranged the cleaning of this place, they have ignored this problem all this time. Or even worse, there is a wasteland here, there is a contract to clean it. That is, the city's budget pays money every year for a company that won the tender to clean this wasteland. They don't clean, and then we, the residents, must come out and clean it up instead of the officials." (R3)

Some respondents also noted interaction among tenants, friendly relations.

"We have very close interactions with neighbours because again we have lived in the same yard for many years, and everyone knows each other in our house. If something is needed, we turn to each other." (R6)

"When the children were little, I communicated with parents at playgrounds, at school, at kindergarten. People are nice, we talked. Neighbors are friendly, we are now in good friendly relations." (R2)

Thus, the Ligovka-Yamskaya district showcases a split between established residents and newcomers in modern developments like Tsarskaya Stolitsa, reflecting urban gentrification trends (Bernt 2016; Anokhin et al. 2017).

Residents describe the district as "quiet," "peaceful," and "culturally rich," aligning with ideas on urban identity.

Community interactions, like clean-up days, reveal a critical social fabric, questioning the efficacy of local governance.

Changes and Challenges. Discussing changes in the Ligovka-Yamskaya area over the past few years, respondents noted some changes in the external appearance of the municipal district, including restoration and the construction of new buildings. However, the attitude towards the new buildings site developments is rather negative.

“The only thing is that a new residential complex is now being built next to the church (Cathedral of the Feodorovskaya Icon of the Mother of God). Ideally, I would have liked a park there, but apparently, another residential complex is needed next to the other three residential complexes.” (R1)

“A new building is being constructed, which will be taller than the Cathedral of the Feodorovskaya Icon of the Mother of God. There is also new construction nearby. But these buildings almost all face the Botkinskaya Infectious Disease Hospital. It’s dilapidated, frightening, and the main building is made of red brick. The architecture leaves much to be desired. It’s not elegant, kind of like a crematorium.” (R6)

There is also an opinion that no desired changes have occurred, with criticism directed at the authorities.

“I noticed that in 2019 when Voytanovsky became the head of the district, everything became very bad. There’s even a budget published by the municipality. Previously, 20 million rubles were spent on the landscaping of the territory, and they really repaired roads, intra-block driveways, and courtyards. Every year the previous head, Kovalev, installed a new playground. Since 2019, absolutely nothing has been done.” (R3)

Residents cited the most acute problems of the district as the lack of greenery and parks, as mentioned earlier, but also poor conditions of intra-block driveways and insufficient attention to the maintenance of older buildings.

“Well, the older housing stock is a problem. Who will preserve it? How will it be repaired, saved from destruction, from mold, and all that? I would say later than integrating new buildings into an old district, and ours is really an old district of St. Petersburg, it also puts a certain load on the utilities. And whether builders think about it? This is important. Of course, it’s a question related to greening too.” (R4)

“I know for sure and from neighbours — it’s the repair of the road, especially intra-block ones, courtyards, repair of courtyards, and greening. Three things. Playgrounds are probably also in very bad shape. We need some kind of simple courtyard improvements.” (R13)

Overall, the sentiment towards new buildings developments is predominantly negative, with a preference for more community-oriented spaces like parks over additional residential complexes. Criticism is directed at local authorities for perceived neglect in maintaining and improving the

district, especially in older areas and public spaces. Key issues highlighted include inadequate green spaces, the poor condition of roads and public infrastructure, and the need for better care of historical buildings.

Ideal Urban Environment Vision. Transitioning to the topic of the ideal urban environment in the Ligovka-Yamskaya municipal district, it should be noted that for residents, the priority is primarily increasing green areas and spaces for relaxation.

"I dream of a district where there are parks, where residents can calmly walk in the evenings with their children and small pets, with ample parking in our courtyards, and good road surfaces. We need to install benches near entrances, add lampposts, and more flowers. It's necessary to green our courtyards because currently, we lack even lawns in some places." (R10)

"If we imagine a dream district, inside, of course, it should look like New Holland, but that's something unattainable, clearly not in the near future. Well, in the sense that the quality elements of this environment, it means not just laying tiles, but laying them well and beautifully, not just having flower beds from the Soviet Union, but beautiful ones with various grasses, correctly planted, which don't die the next year. Trees and squares, which are lacking here." (R11)

"Beautiful tiles, trees, some things like that. That's all I would like. And maybe a place, where there's a square on the way, where you can sit, relax, drink coffee, listen to the birds. The benches. I love benches, even though many worry that alcoholics might sit there, but if it's a nice, popular square, it will be fine. That's what's missing, actually, it's sad, and it's what I dream about. That's how I imagine it." (R15)

However, there were also suggestions about building a pedestrian bridge over the railway tracks at Moscow Station, and even about possibly constructing a fountain in the district.

"I often need to go to the other side (of the railway) for work, and I would build a pedestrian bridge. Of course, the railway is there, it can't be helped. Right from here, from these silly garages, which also spoil everything a bit. On the other hand, they protect us from the noise and dust from the railway, and it could be made pedestrian. People could get to the other side of their district, without having to go around through the station." (R8) (The responded depicted the bridge on the mental map — Appendix 6)

"I don't know why, but it seems like a fountain is missing now. Yes, maybe there's a lack of a fountain somewhere because in the summer, St. Petersburg should have fountains, and generally, it feels like there should be some beautiful place, well-maintained, of course, with trees and fountains." (R4) (The responded depicted the fountain on the mental map — Appendix 4)

Regarding initiatives aimed at improving the urban environment in the district, respondents were ready to support initiatives for greening and road repairs. At the same time, few are ready to actively participate in these initiatives, and again, residents are sceptical about volunteer clean-up days.

"I would support a greening initiative 100 percent, then playgrounds, as I mentioned, 100 percent and for some solutions specifically for road traffic, somewhere." (R7)

"I think my maximum would be to sign a petition or register somewhere, but actually doing something actively, I'm not ready." (R1)

"Well, I'm not too keen (on participating in initiatives). I also pay money for my housing fee. But I would go out on a clean-up day and clean up trash. Like everyone came out and planted trees. They brought tools and said here you are, let's plant trees. I would go and plant and take my children. It's interesting to plant. Then in a few years, you can go and see how your tree is growing, take care of it." (R8)

"Well, I would like to influence what will be in the district, but some initiatives like a clean-up day don't motivate me. Well, in terms of deciding whether we will have a square built or a school — That's what I would like because some decisions, yes, they break some logic of the districts, or to influence the removal of this fenced area near the church (Cathedral of the Feodorovskaya Icon of the Mother of God). Such more common activities in the form of festivals or clean-up days do not motivate me." (R11)

Despite the issues noted earlier, residents' views on the future of the district remain optimistic, with hopes for changes and gradual improvements in the surrounding urban environment of Ligovka-Yamskaya.

"Well, they have started restoration, which has been ongoing for several years in our district. The district begins to look visually better; they have started cleaning it more often. Despite the fact that I'm still not completely satisfied, it's better than it was. And I think it will become more comfortable to live in the district and I hope this will continue." (R1)

"Oh, I want to believe that it will be pleasant here. There will be development of the territory in the Tsarskaya Stolitsa and around. I think there will be more recreational zones, changes in general." (R7)

"I'm sure that what I said, our authorities should finally see and make a park, square, walking areas... Just such a place we have is wonderful and historically significant." (R12)

However, there were also some pessimistic views on the future of the district:

"I don't know, it will probably stay as it is (about the future of the district)..." (R11)

It is interesting to explore in more detail the opinions about the participation of the residents themselves in shaping the future of the district. Respondents agreed that residents generally don't decide anything, and do not influence the future of the district due to their passivity or lack of interest.

"I think that residents themselves do not realize the power they have, and while such a passive mass, they don't understand the opportunity they have to influence decisions. I think residents have the opportunity to influence through public organizations and some campaigns, maybe, although it's hard to say now, but nevertheless, like that." (R4)

"It's not us who participate. All municipalities with their residents should be like mom and dad for us. And take care of us. They are paid for this. Because at one time Yeltsin, who formed these municipal districts, to show what democracy is in Russia." (R6)

"All the residents are lazy. Everyone wants everything, but no one wants to do anything. We all want things to appear magically, like from a genie, and that's it." (R8)

To summarize, Residents of the Ligovka-Yamskaya district envision their ideal urban environment as one significantly enriched with green spaces, parks, and well-maintained public areas, emphasizing the desire for more accessible and aesthetic urban spaces that facilitate relaxation. The expressed need for improved pedestrian infrastructures, such as walkways and bridges, highlights a broader aspiration for a more interconnected and pedestrian-friendly neighbourhood. Although new constructions are generally viewed with scepticism due to concerns over architectural harmony and the preservation of the district's historical character, there is a clear call for thoughtful urban planning that respects the local context while enhancing the quality of urban life. Residents are ready to support initiatives that promise to beautify and maintain their surroundings, although active participation remains limited, revealing a gap between the desire for a better environment and the willingness to contribute actively to these changes.

Mental maps. The use of mental maps in this study has provided some insights into how residents perceive their urban environment in both its current state and their ideal vision for the future. These maps, analysed alongside narrative descriptions from interviews, reveal a layered understanding of personal and communal urban experiences.

Current and Ideal Urban Depictions. Current State: The mental maps commonly depict limited greenery and recreational facilities, echoing respondents' concerns about the deficiency of parks and general greenery within the district.

Ideal State: The respondents envision a significant increase in green spaces, including parks and leisure facilities. These enhanced spaces are desired to foster greater social interaction and relaxation, reflecting a communal need for more engaging and welcoming public areas.

Respondents have specific desires for the transformation of their environment:

R1 wishes to see a youth activity centre. (Appendix 3)

R4 desires more flowers, landscaped flower beds, and a fountain. (Appendix 4)

R7 hopes for additional green zones. (Appendix 5)

R8 wants a large number of trees, a park, a pond, and a stadium. (Appendix 6)

Key Aspects of the Neighbourhood. Several key landmarks and features are recurrently depicted across the maps:

Infrastructure and Landmarks: Three out of four respondents illustrated significant local landmarks such as the Moscow Railway Station and the Alexander Nevsky Lavra. Other notable depictions include the Feodorovsky Cathedral, highlighted by half of the respondents, along with local shops and bakeries.

Neglected and Underutilized Spaces: All maps feature vacant lots and garages, areas that respondents see as underutilized or neglected.

In their envisioned changes, respondents expressed a desire for:

Road repairs (R7),

Restoration of old buildings (R4),

Conversion of vacant lots into functional areas like preschools and dog parks (R7),

A bridge over railway tracks and possibly a new exhibition center (R8).

Verbal Annotations and Visual Representation. Interestingly, respondents often annotated their maps with text to clarify their visual representations — a method not initially requested. This suggests a level of discomfort or frustration with the mental mapping method, possibly due to doubts about their artistic abilities or the effectiveness of visuals alone in conveying their thoughts. By supplementing or replacing map elements with text, respondents felt more confident in being understood accurately, unlike when relying solely on drawings.

Relevant Studies on Mental Mapping Challenges. The studies highlight similar challenges with mental mapping in urban studies. For example, originally Lynch first popularized the concept but also noted the difficulty participants face when trying to translate their spatial understanding into visual forms (Lynch 1960).

Kitchin also discusses the cognitive overload that often occurs when non-experts are asked to draw maps, which can lead to simplified or incomplete representations of space (Kitchin 1994).

Despite the challenges associated with the mental mapping method and the relatively small number of maps collected, this technique is an intriguing addition to the study. It offers a unique way to complement interview data, providing visual insights into the residents' perspectives on their living environment.

Conclusion

This thesis has systematically examined the perceptions of residents regarding the current urban environment in the Ligovka-Yamskaya Municipal District, alongside their visions for an ideal urban landscape. By juxtaposing residents' current experiences against their aspirations, both congruities and divergences have been uncovered, offering critical insights for urban development.

Residents value the district's central location, robust transportation network, and rich cultural landmarks, which significantly enhance their quality of life. However, concerns are raised about the inadequacy of green spaces, the state of public infrastructure, and building increase that mark their urban experience.

Residents' ideal visions emphasize a greener, more accessible, and socially cohesive urban environment. They envisage a district where the preservation of historical charm is harmoniously blended with modern conveniences to foster a lively, inclusive urban space.

Integrated Recommendations. *Enhancing Urban Greenery and Leisure Spaces.* Prioritize the expansion and maintenance of parks and recreational areas to address the green space deficiency. Initiatives could include transforming underutilized plots and vacant lots into community gardens or small parks, which would not only beautify the district but also serve as focal points for community interaction. This aligns with Gehl's principles of human-centric urban design, which emphasize the necessity of vibrant public life and pedestrian-friendly environments (Gehl 2010).

Infrastructure and Safety Improvements. Comprehensive plans to renovate aging infrastructure are essential. This includes upgrading road and sidewalk conditions to enhance safety and accessibility. Improving the aesthetic and functional aspects of pedestrian zones and integrating dedicated bicycle lanes would encourage non-motorized transport and contribute to residents' safety

and well-being. Jacobs' critique of urban renewal practices emphasizes the importance of community engagement and mixed-use areas to foster a sense of community and at the same time enhance safety perceptions through natural surveillance (Jacobs 1961).

Cultural and Community Engagement. Strengthen community bonds by leveraging the district's cultural assets. This could involve revitalizing local landmarks and historical sites as centers of community activity, offering spaces for cultural events and workshops that reflect the district's heritage. Promoting active community engagement through more inclusive planning processes can ensure that redevelopment efforts align with the residents' desires and respect the area's historical context. This connects with Lowenthal's exploration of the complex relationship between memory, history, and place, suggesting a deep-rooted connection to the area's cultural heritage (Lowenthal 1985).

Promotion of Community-driven Initiatives. Encouraging local involvement through well-organized, transparent volunteer initiatives can enhance community spirit and ensure the sustainability of urban improvements. These initiatives should be clearly beneficial, providing visible enhancements to the urban landscape, such as community clean-ups, green space development, and cultural activities that foster a sense of pride and ownership among residents. This approach is supported by Castells' examination of the informational city and its impact on social organization and spatial arrangements (Castells 1989).

Thus, by adopting a holistic approach to urban development that integrates these recommendations, planners and policymakers can foster an urban environment in Ligovka-Yamskaya that not only meets the practical needs of its residents but also enriches their social and cultural experiences.

Regarding the feasibility of residents' wishes, it is important to note that the Municipal District is the closest administrative unit to the population. The effectiveness of urban improvements heavily relies on the collaboration between the Municipal District, the district administration, and the city government. This interaction is crucial for implementing sustainable urban development that aligns with residents' aspirations, enhancing livability, and strengthening community ties.

By adopting these recommendations, urban planners and policymakers can transform Ligovka-Yamskaya into a model of sustainable urban development, characterized by enhanced livability, stronger community ties, and a balanced integration of historical preservation with modern urban necessities.

*Appendix I***Participant characteristics**

	Age	Gender	Time lived in Ligovka- Yamskaya	Level of education	Area of professional activity
R1	21	F	20	Unfinished higher education	None
R2	61	F	61	Higher education	Pensioner
R3	36	M	6	Higher education	Programmer
R4	44	F	5	Higher education	Teacher
R5	24	F	6	Unfinished higher education	Sales manager
R6	62	F	8	Higher education	Pensioner
R7	40	F	10	Higher education	State service
R8	47	M	7	Higher education	Enforcement authorities
R9	38	F	5	Secondary education	Business
R10	54	F	7	Higher education	Industrial Safety Engineer
R11	23	F	7	Unfinished higher education	None
R12	51	F	21	Higher education	Individual entrepreneur construction company
R13	45	M	15	Higher education	Auto repair shop owner
R14	38	F	10	Higher education	Marketing Manager
R15	42	M	10	Higher education	System Administrator

Interview guide

Biography and demographic data:

- Age
- Gender
- Place of residence
- The level of education
- The field of professional activity
- Could you tell me a little about yourself and how long you have lived in the Ligovka-Yamskaya area?
- What motivated you to move here and what keeps you in this area?

Perception of the urban environment at the present time:

- What does a comfortable area for living mean to you? Ideally, what are its characteristics for you personally?
- Is the Ligovka-Yamskaya area comfortable for your stay? Why?
- Have you ever thought about changing your place of residence? Why?
- How do you assess the current state of the urban environment in Ligovka-Yamskaya?
 - green spaces (trees, shrubs, etc.)?
 - parks?
 - cleanliness of the area (cleaning of garbage, snow, leaves, etc.)?
 - condition of buildings and courtyards of residential buildings?
 - street lighting?
 - safety?
 - social infrastructure (clinics, schools, etc.)?
 - transport infrastructure?
 - playgrounds?
 - sports grounds?
 - roads?
 - pedestrian areas, sidewalks?

Social and cultural aspects:

- Which objects of the urban environment of Ligovka-Yamskaya are the most significant for you?
- How do you assess the state of cultural recreation sites (museums, etc.) in Ligovka-Yamskaya?
- Is Ligovka-Yamskaya a typical district of St. Petersburg? Is it possible to judge the whole of St. Petersburg by the example of this area?

Community and space:

- What kind of people live here? Is it possible to talk about the specifics of the people who live here?
- What is the general atmosphere of this area, in what words would you describe it?
- Do you feel socially connected to this area? Do you consider the area your home?
- Can you tell us about any experiences of social interactions in the area? (cleaning day, communication on playgrounds, conversations with neighbors)
- To what extent are you and your neighbors (if known) involved in the community activities of the area? Did you participate in the cleaning day? Meetings of homeowners?

Changes and challenges:

- Have you noticed any significant changes in the Ligovka-Yamskaya area since you have been living here?
- Has the appearance of the district changed in the last 2–3 years? If so, how exactly? (Reconstruction, construction of new buildings?)
- Can you identify any elements of the urban environment of Ligovka-Yamskaya that negatively affect the quality of your life in the area?
- In your opinion, what are the most acute problems that the Ligovka-Yamskaya district may face today?

An ideal urban environment:

- What, in your opinion, needs to be changed in the current state of the urban environment of Ligovka-Yamskaya?
- What aspects of the Ligovka-Yamskaya urban environment would you like to improve first? Please explain why these aspects are the most important to you.
- What initiatives would you like to participate in to improve the urban environment in your area?
- Are there any specific projects or programs that you would support or suggest?
- How do you imagine the ideal urban environment of Ligovka-Yamskaya? Please describe what elements and features should be present in it so that you feel as comfortable as possible.

Vision of the future:

- Looking ahead, what are your expectations regarding the future of Ligovka-Yamskaya?
- How do you imagine the role of residents in shaping the future of the district?

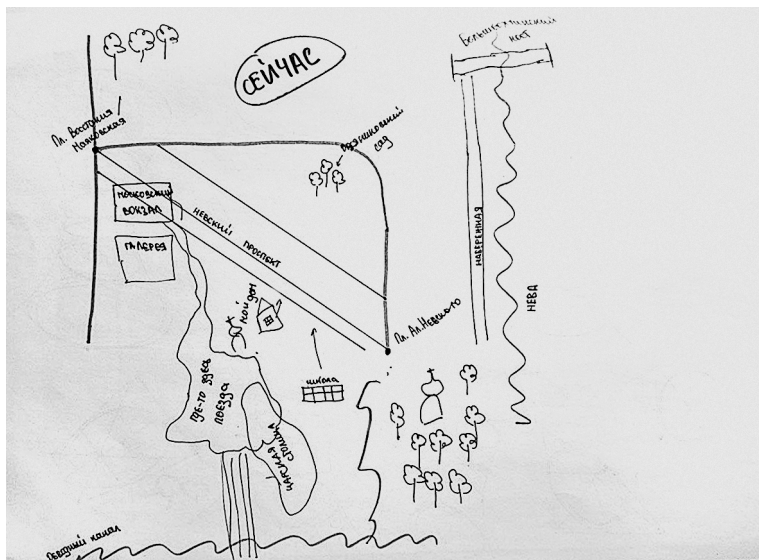
The method of mental maps:

Mental maps are visualizations of how you perceive the space around you. It can be a drawing reflecting your personal idea of the area, for example, places that you like, routes that you often walk, places that, in your opinion, require improvement. By creating a mental map, you share your unique vision and feelings about the environment, important sites and places in your area. It does not require artistic skills — your feelings and thoughts about the area are important.

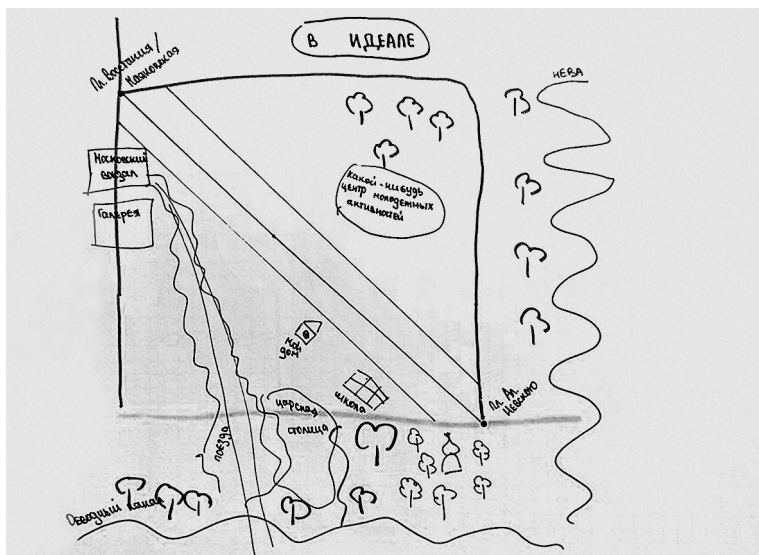
I will ask you to draw two maps: one showing your current perception of the neighborhood's environment, and the second your vision of the area's ideal urban environment.

These maps can be both detailed and more generalized; the main thing is that they reflect your personal impressions and preferences.

Appendix 3



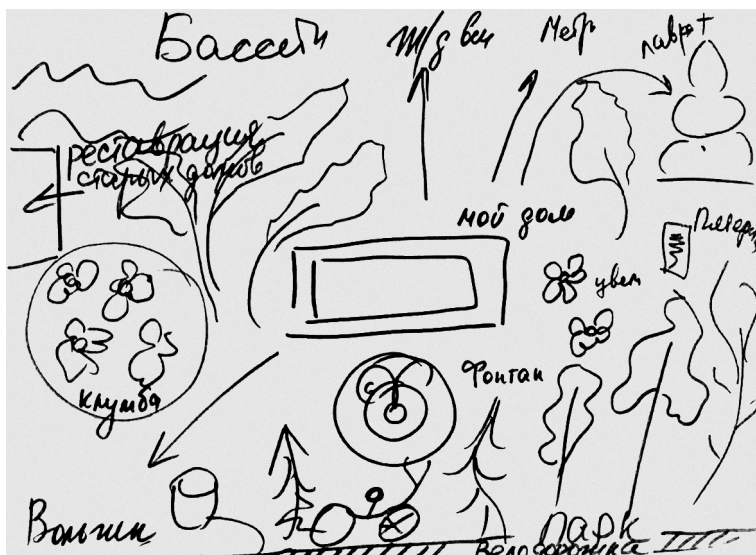
(R1 map — current urban environment)



(R1 map — ideal urban environment)

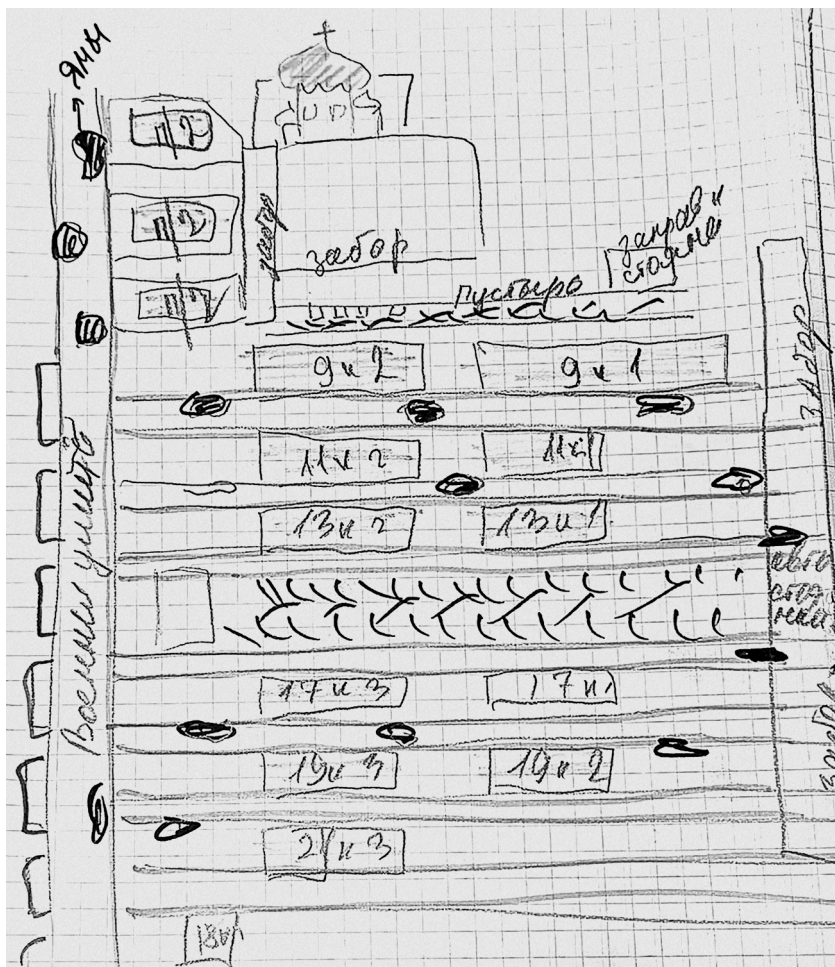


(R4 map — current urban environment)



(R4 map — ideal urban environment)

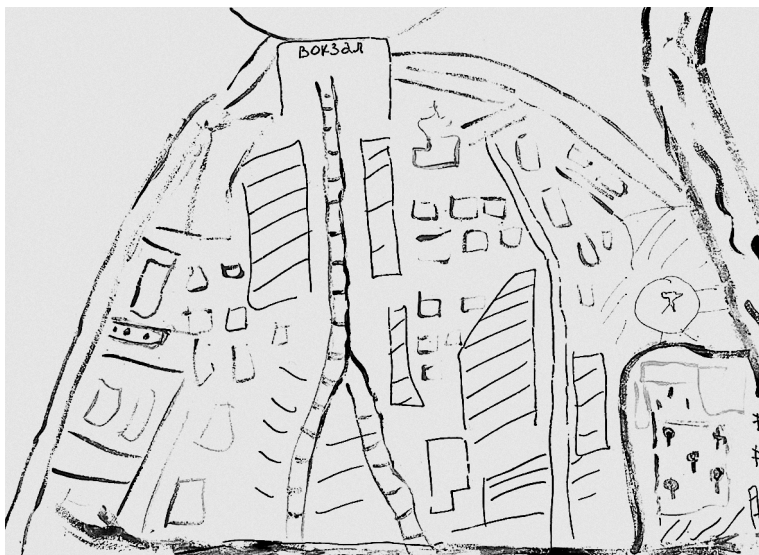
Appendix 5



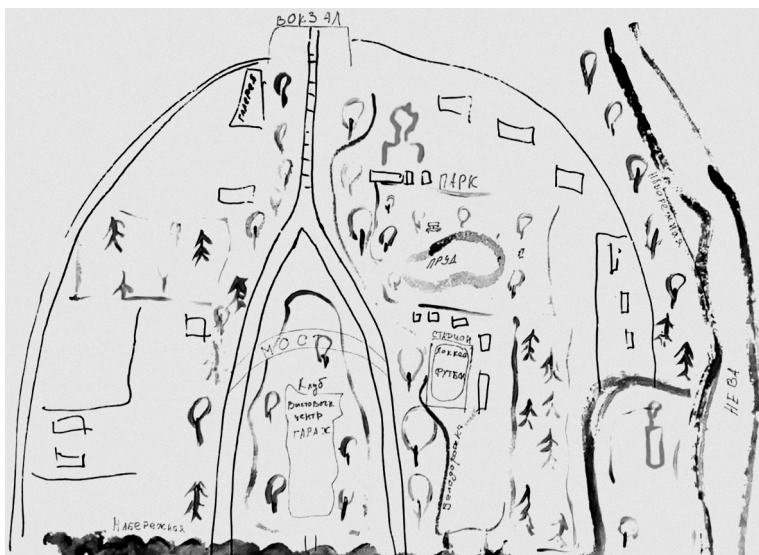
(R7 map — current urban environment)

(R7 map – ideal urban environment)

Appendix 6



(R8 map — current urban environment)



(R8 map — ideal urban environment)

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**ST. PETERSBURG RESIDENTS' VISIONS
OF A PERFECT URBAN ENVIRONMENT
(USING LIGOVKA-YAMSKAYA MUNICIPAL DISTRICT
AS AN EXAMPLE)**

Abstract. The study investigates residents' perceptions of the urban environment in the Ligovka-Yamskaya Municipal District through in-depth interviews and mental mapping. It examines views on infrastructure, public spaces, safety, and visions of an ideal urban landscape. The findings highlight the benefits of the district's central location, transport network, and cultural landmarks, as well as issues with the lack of green spaces and aging infrastructure. Recommendations include expanding parks, updating infrastructure, and promoting non-motorized transport. It also suggests enhancing cultural and community engagement through the revitalization of historical sites and volunteer initiatives. The study emphasizes the importance of sustainable development, improving living conditions, and strengthening community ties.

Keywords: residents' perceptions, urban environment, infrastructure, green spaces, public spaces, sustainable development.

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