Valeriy Tovbych
IT in Architecture Department, Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture

Anna Viazovska
Urban Planning Department, Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture

Yuriy Kryvoruchko (yurikryv@gmail.com)
Department of Architecture, National University Lviv Polytechnic

Place and people: landscape as a basis of development and preservation of cultural identity

Miejsce i ludzie: krajobraz jako podstawa dla zachowania i rozwoju tożsamości kulturowej

Abstract

Processes of globalization and urbanization are the main factors of changes in our environment and social foundations. Culture, traditions, customs, mythology are tightly bonded with the geographical environment and the land itself, which also defined the way of economic activity and the lifestyle of inhabitants. Identity may become apparent through landscape in two principal ways. On the one hand, landscape can represent and identify the certain culture by means of its visual image. On the other hand, the manifestation of deep links of landscape and its inhabitants by means of reviling emotional, visual and semantic connections of man to a land, affords to strengthen people's feeling of belonging, rooting and thus safety, which is exceptionally essential in our era of non-stable uncertain modernity.

Keywords: globalization, culture, identity, landscape

Streszczenie

Procesy globalizacji i urbanizacji są głównymi czynnikami zmian w środowisku i podstawach społeczeństwa. Kultura, tradycje, obyczaje, mitologia są ściśle związane z warunkami geograficznymi i samą Ziemią, które determinują charakter działalności gospodarczej i styl życia ludzi. Tożsamość przejawia się w krajobrazie w dwóch aspektach. Z jednej strony krajobraz może być wizualnym symbolem i identyfikatorem konkretnej kultury. Z drugiej strony, określenie głębokich powiązań krajobrazu i jego mieszkańców przez kulturę, tradycje, system emocjonalnych i zmysłowych powiązań, skojarzeń semantycznych i relacji zezwalają wzmocnić poczucie przynależności, zakorzenienia, a tym samym i bezpieczeństwa, co jest szczególnie ważne w dobie zmiennej, nieokreślonej, „płynnej" teraźniejszości.

Słowa kluczowe: globalizacja, kultura, tożsamość, krajobraz

1. Introduction

Processes of globalization and urbanization are the most evident and dominant tendencies of today. Since the middle of 20th century, the population has increased four times and continues to grow, and for the first time in history, more than a half of Earth's inhabitants live in cities. The future of our planet is urban, and, according to the leading researchers of contemporary social conditions, including Peter Caltrope [5] and Saskia Sassen [16], the urban region is replacing the city as the basic pattern of settlement. Urban regions emerge as a result of constant sprawl and decentralization of large cities, and agglomeration of two or more cities into one spacious structure. These new urban realities are polycentric, complex, multi-cultural and heterogeneous. Spatial expansion of urban areas and globalization can negatively influence the uniqueness and sustainability of the environment, whether is it urban or natural. As a response to the issue, scientific discourse on the concept of identity has emerged in the last few decades. To keep the identity of the environment and to enhance the feeling of one's belonging and attachment to place is the task of no less importance today, than the questions of ecology and sustainability. It is about providing a reliable 'fulcrum' for people in rapidly changing conditions and developing world as a safe place for different cultures. Otherwise, the local struggle for identity can turn into a large and quite global conflict as soon as countries and nations are too far interconnected to stay uninvolved [9].

Next chapter of the article examines how and why globalization actualizes the questions of locality and identity. The article is seeking to revile and examine connections between place identity and human attachment to place and a landscape as a social and cultural construction, a common field of interest for the different disciplines.

2. Globalization and *Glocalization*

Globalization has started with the development of informational and communication technologies at the close of 1960's. As a result, the character of economic, political, technological and cultural foundations all over the world has changed [9]. Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman [3] offers 'liquidity' and 'lightness' as basic metaphors for our modernity. The previous period of industrialization, accumulation and territorial expansion scientist defines as 'heavy' and 'solid' modernity. Wealth and power used to be rooted to a place, "big and immobile like coal or ironstone deposits". Emperies spread and filled all corners of the planet unless were stopped by the more powerful ones. Model for the industrial society was Fordism, which had overcome its primordial occupation in production process organization and largely influenced social regulation and mass consumption. It was based on national markets priority, large-scaled capital-intensive enterprises, inflexible production and bureaucratic structures. The basic Fordism principals of industrial standardization and centralization of control have shaped the industrialization process in the former USSR to a great extent. Communism just tried to adjust Fordism to the needs of planning economy and purify it from the unpredictability of market forces. Hence, in the era of heavy modernity,

control and labor were tied together for a long time by the conglomerates of big plants, machines and working force. Neither capital nor labor wanted and was able to move [3]. In mid-1970s Fordism crises became evident, as the immaterial sector of production including services, information, innovative technologies and knowledge gained the leading role in economies of developed nations facilitating a new, more flexible, networked global economy. As Bauman [2] writes, the last quarter of 20th century became a big struggle of capital for the independence from space, in order to release centers of control and management from territorial constraints. Computerization and virtualization of financial sector all over the world provoked the emergence of the global financial market. This alongside with the national politics of economic liberalization has resulted in the uncontrolled flux of capital, which became exterritorial, changeable and unfixed. Capital can now travel fast and on its own, and its fluidity has turned into a reason of uncertainty for all. Transnational companies are becoming so global that it is often difficult, if not impossible, to define their national affiliation regarding financial sources or production process. The mobility of financial elite has brought us to the unseen before segregation of power from its obligations to territorially fixed groups of people – workers, local communities, future generations, who can be used and left with the results of that exploitation [3]. Thus, the absence of responsibility for the consequences is one of the biggest threats of globalization.

Globalization as the process of transferring of national states' authorities to the international level [2] has the opposite side, which is the process of 'localization' or 'territorialization'. The scale of the national state appears to be not just too small to confront the big issues, but also too big to solve the local ones [9]. Integration and fragmentation, globalization and localization are complementary processes, so the hybrid word '*glocalization*' tends to illustrate the results of global redistribution of influence, power and freedom of actions [4]. Hence, next to the blurring of national borders, unification of standards and norms, and ascending of the international institutions, the local cultures revival is evident. Sociologist Manuel Castells [6] states that cultural values and identity are expressed in terms of places and locality, whereas functionality, resources and power are conveyed in notions of global flows. In the world that works according to the 'space of flows' logic, people live in 'space of places'. 'Space of flows' does not eliminate, but augments the 'space of places', and strengthen the issues of locality and cultural identity as a result. Unfortunately, the local answer to the globalization risks and pressure turns quite often into an intensification of demands for an autonomy, local nationalism and fundamentalism. Some of the last examples are Scottish demand for sovereignty and a referendum on that point in September 2014, Quebec separation movement, The Venetian independence referendum of 2014, unofficial but illustrative, as soon as the majority have voted positively, or attempts of Spanish Catalonia to gain a vast autonomy. This is not to mention the Islamic fundamentalism rise, which is already quite a threat to the large territories. Of course, all those examples have strong historical and cultural drivers for the tension, though the reaction to globalization and control remission from the national governments is quite obvious, according to Giddens [9].
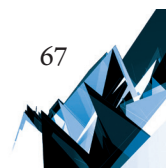
3. Culture and Land

Ethnic feelings and aspirations for the preservation of originality of the cultures are deeply embedded in human consciousness. The issue today is to ensure the safe existence of a plurality of ethnic and national identities in the globalized world. And the answer may be found in the land itself, as soon as culture, traditions, customs, mythology are tightly bonded with the geographical environment, as well as economic activity and lifestyle of its inhabitants. Humankind is a part of nature; we exist within nature and are subordinated to its laws. Even distinctive features of national character depend on the environment. Geography can answer a lot of historical questions so far. Cosgrove [7] admits that for historians, the ongoing reconnection with the questions of space and spatiality is significant because "recognizing that *where* events occur contributes a great deal toward understanding *how* and *why* they occur". The scientific attempt to explain the way of social development, economic activity and culture through the lens of the geographical conditions, including relief and climate, had become popular in sixteen and seventeen centuries in Europe, especially in France, and is known as 'geographical determinism'. Later the enhancing deep and organic links between culture and the land was used to strengthen the national feelings. According to Cosgrove [7], in nineteen century Germany, after the unification of the country, the questions of the relationship between nation, state, and space were dominant in geography. All over Europe, the revival of regional literature and folk culture emerged alongside with the need in preserving the authentic character of the nation. In America, parkways were designed "to provide citizens with sentiments of national pride in the dramatic landscape vistas opened up from their automobile windshields" [7]. It was even such pragmatic item as a topographical map, the series of which were developed for the military purposes in European countries in the late eighteenth century that served for national consolidation as well by means of visual and artistic enhancing of distinctive features of the land. For example, on British maps archaeological sites were emphasized with the lettering denoting different historical periods; on French maps, the population of every commune was highlighted in a remembrance of the great losses in wars and revolutions of the nineteenth century. The most spectacular was Swiss map named after cartographer Guillaume-Henri Dufour. The defining element of the territory, The Alps, is visually enhanced and dramatized with the help of hatching and shading, so the mountainous topography seems very deep and almost tactile. The borders between different Swiss cantons yield to the consolidating power of the unique relief. So, the Dufour map, as stated on the Federal Office of Topography website, "became a symbol for the emergence of the modern Swiss nation founded in 1848" [19]. Cosgrove [7] gives the following conclusion to the tendency: "these topographic series act as pictorial expressions of national landscapes and their role in constituting and expressing cultural identities within the boundaries of national space".

4. Landscape as social and natural construction

The connection between landscape and national or ethnic identity was effectively exploited much earlier, though it has not been very widely known until recently. In fact, it is this deep link that was at the heart of the Northern European landscape art of sixteen and seventeen centuries [7, 15, 1]. As Kenneth Olwig [15] points out, that was the time of a local search for alternatives "not only to the universalism of the Roman Catholic church, but to the universalism of written, codified, Roman law which that church had introduced to Northern European society". So, the local communities turned to legal principles that were embodied in customary Northern-European law and rooted to the land itself. Originally, painted landscape was "imbued with meanings, etched by custom in the land, that were at the heart of the major political, legal, and cultural issues of the time" [15]. The landscape itself was understood as a phenomenon shaped by both natural and cultural forces. Community with the common laws and traditions and the land they worked on formed a 'landscape'. This understanding of landscape has quite faded when the genre of landscape painting was taken to England where it became popular as an art of representation of pastoral countryside scenes, and it was not until the last few decades when landscape have been finally reconnected with its original sense. For example, Olwig [15] agues for landscape to be conceived as a nexus of community, justice, nature and environmental equity; Cosgrove [7] supports the point as he writes that "the unity of fellowship and rights within the community and the space over which fellowship and rights held sway constituted the *Landschaft*"; and a prominent American landscape architect J.B. Jackson [10] stated that "landscape is not a natural feature of the environment but a synthetic space, a man-made system of spaces superimposed on the face of the land […] to serve as infrastructure or background for our collective existence; and if background seems inappropriately modest we should remember that in our modern use of the word it means that which underscores not only our identity and presence, but also our history". So, landscapes mirror the cultures that have made them, and they are strongly related to people. Landscapes do not only contain the traces of cultural formation over time but are also the products of the culture. Thus, it can be stated that landscape has an embedded power to support people's identity.

5. Identity: sense of belonging and sense of place

Experiencing a deep connection with a place is a guarantee for an ethnic or national group to feel safe in our era of non-stable, uncertain fast and 'liquid' modernity. The concept of identity, according to Kaymaz [11] is linked to the concepts of language, culture, minority/majority, dissimilarity, self/other, individuality and sense of belonging. When we meet someone new we often represent ourselves by mentioning the place we were born or where we have grown up, as well as we can mention our country or nationality. Our identification relies on a certain territory so far. Life does not exist in a vacuum, it happens in places and therefore is deeply rooted in them. The social connections among people cannot be studied
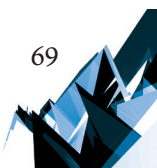
without taking into account the spatial structure of a city or region they inhabit. There is a mutual influence of people and space, and Henri Lefebvre [12] argues that people are "producing space" during their life and work activity, as well as space significantly influences the formation of social structure. Christopher Tilley [17], author of the Phenomenology of Landscape, states that landscape does not exist without people, and "to be a human – is to be fundamentally connected to a place". Hence, understanding the principle of the spatial structure of any historic landscape is the key to grasp the way of its inhabitants' thinking. There are semantic differences between concepts of 'space' and 'place', and one of them is the meaning and values society and individuals puts in it: when *space* is assigned with meanings, it becomes a *place.* The emotional bonds with a place are essential for psychological balance and well-being, for the feeling of safety and sense of community [11]. People tend to hold to familiar symbols and connections that define their identity. Kevin Lynch [13], in his Image of the City, had mentioned few very interesting examples on the point. For instance, when Maasai people in Eastern Africa were moved to the reservation, they took the names of their native hills, rivers and valleys and gave them to the landscape features on the new territory. He had also writhed on immigrants from Sweden in the USA who looked for a special 'Swedish' landscape to settle in, and English colonists who brought recognizable urban and architectural elements such as telephone boxes, handrails, typical decoration details to the Indian cities [13]. In his phenomenological works, Norwegian architect, Christian Norberg-Schulz, examines the questions of existential rooting of people in the territory. He compares Norwegian people to deep woods with a soft ground, covered with leaves; to the rough rocky shores with islands and cliffs, washed by the waves; to the vast mountain valleys and waterfalls; to the snowfalls and light winter nights. He thinks that native landscape is always within people and, as soon as the identity comes from childhood, it stays there forever [14].

The sense of belonging naturally presumes the existence of the image of the place, whether it may be collective or individual. Landscape can represent and identify a certain culture by means of its visual image, which can be converted into well-recognizable 'brand' for the outer world. Recognizable place identity can be formed on the basis of the distinctive features. Among the elements of place identity, there are significant natural features, history, culture, familiar names as well as special social values based on a lifestyle and traditions. Cities and regions are searching for the individual image nowadays. Readable and perceived authenticity of place helps to compete on a global scale for the human, financial and informational flows [8]. Although, however important the visual image is, the identity of a place is not only what we see, but also what we experience within a certain place, how do we perceive it with all our senses. Yi Fu Tuan [18] thinks that it is the special experience what gives a place its identity and aura: "experience is a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality. These modes range from the more direct and passive senses of smell, taste, and touch, to active visual perception and the indirect mode of symbolization". Experience is the key action in the development of human-place bond [11]. We may refer once again to J.B. Jackson [10] writing, who was particularly interested in vernacular or 'inhabited', as he called them, landscapes. These are the places of which character and individuality comes from the sets of habits and customs accumulated by people over the centuries of a slow adaptation
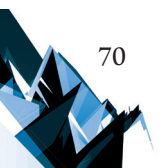
to a place – "to the local topography and weather and soil, and to the people, the superfamily which lived there: a special accent, a special way of dressing, a special form of greeting; special dances and holidays – all the picturesque idiosyncrasies that are the stuff of tourist folklore, and then some: passwords and gestures, taboos and secrets–secret places and secret events that exclude the outsider more effectively than any boundary. Strange how many of these customs, these ways of identifying an inhabited landscape and its inhabitants are sensory: the unmistakable taste of a local dish or a local wine, the smell of certain seasons, the sound of a local song!" [10]. So, these are not just physical and visible features and the history, that makes the sense of the place, but there is its spirit, which can be perceived irrationally but cannot be totally grasped. It is weaved in one's impressions, associations, feelings, it evokes the imagination and leaves afterward deep, rich and complex aftertaste. Spirit of a place is something that stays the same in constantly changing conditions.

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