

# Importance of spontaneous attractiveness for personalization of architectural environment of Lviv region small towns (Ukraine)

## Abstract

In modern conditions, the search for economic resources appears to be urgent for small towns, and tourism is one of them. To boost tourism it is necessary for the urban environment to be attractive, able to draw attention to its appearance or content, showing its distinctive and unique architectural features. Spontaneous architectural attractiveness may serve a crucial role when addressing this issue. It emerges naturally as a result of local individual creativity, and is especially typical for small towns with predominantly single-family houses. Creative approach to identification of spontaneous architectural attractants and their adequate use in the attractive image formation of urban environment can be determining when creating an architectural "face of the city". Involvement of spontaneously attractive constructions in formation of the attractiveness of urban environment is of special significance for small towns in Ukraine, in particular Lviv region.

Keywords: small town, spontaneous architectural attractiveness, Lviv region.

Architecture has always been and continues to be a major part of the urban culture being its material base. At the same time, it is itself an object of art which creates an environment where the culture, whether material or immaterial, 'high' or 'popular' has the opportunity to prove itself. In the last decades of the twentieth century there have been some changes with regard to the role of culture (in its broadest sense, as the activity opposite to manufacturing) in the urban development. The researchers note that if before the 60s the urban culture has included 'high' art only, then in the 70s the programs for urban culture development already included popular art as well, fully maintaining interest of inhabitants in it, and in the 90s the culture has already begun to be perceived as a tool for development and economic growth of the cities [4]. As well as in the culture, the architecture of any city in different proportions has examples of high architectural art, mass, 'popular' construction, sometimes there are ethnographic objects of folk architecture and unique examples of modern architecture initiative. It is the architecture that most of the modern European cities owe its popularity and attractiveness for tourists, urban ensembles and individual architectural places of interest. And if in big cities that have many sources of income, the architecture plays an important, but not decisive role in terms of their economic status, for the small towns exhibition of architectural environment often becomes a major source of income. Therefore, many scientific studies, including those in Poland [3; 5] and Ukraine [1; 6] address the problem of identity preservation for the environment of historical small towns, the objects of recreation and tourism. It is

generally accepted, that the basis for tourist popularity of a town is its historical, including architectural, heritage (i.e. the objects that by their place in the hierarchy of public importance correspond to the concept of 'high' culture) [7]. According to Slawomir Kamosinski, historical product of a place which is documentary proof of its civilization and cultural heritage, is subject to commercialization and promotion of that place [3]. But it turned out that not every small town has architectural places of interest of the appropriate level. For example, in Lviv region, there are small towns with a long history, but their architectural environment was destroyed by war and re-built in a new way under Soviet times. In the last century there was another relatively new town type, a worker's settlement at an industrial enterprise. The architectural environment of those towns is surely prevailed by 'popular', mass buildings, which are not recognized points of interest for tourists and, therefore, cannot be a source of economic growth for a town. However, architectural attractiveness of a small town is a feature that is subject to the targeted formation, through creative use of very different, sometimes unexpected specificities and resources of local architectural environment. In the absence of usual traditional attractants

it is necessary to apply the principle of 'flexibility in choosing attractants'. It is that in the process of choosing potential attractants in the urban environment, one should be guided by the 'presumption of innocence', avoid prejudice and standard approach and take into consideration and analysis also the objects endowed with natural or even negative attractiveness [2]. Spontaneous architectural attractiveness is especially important for small towns (up to 50 thousand residents). This is particularly due to the fact that their space is formed mainly by residential houses; many of them are private, which gives space for architectural experimentation. Also, a small number of residents and their 'uniformity' provide favourable conditions for communication among them and extension of such approaches to the development of their living space, a kind of local fashion.

Spontaneous architectural attractiveness is especially important for small towns of Lviv region. This is owing to considerable architectural activity of the residents and high concentration of cities and towns in the region, which increasingly threatens the possibility of visual identification of their space compared to other similar settlements.

This article examines the phenomenon of spontaneous attractiveness for architectural objects as one of the possible ways of forming attractiveness for the architectural environment of a small town in Lviv region of Ukraine, which, through a series of objective circumstances, is quite important for that area.

The problem of architectural attractiveness is particularly relevant in our time of total infatuation with tourism and travelling. Because of the development of rapid transport a person can in a short time see a large number of settlements. Therefore, there is a risk that they will see the same images over and over again, confusing them among themselves. Thus, a town, even with certain specificities, may remain in the memory as faceless, unremarkable, like many other towns seen by a person who travels during the day. Also the time that person devotes to getting to know a certain area or city is reduced. That is why architectural visual features of the settlement should not only be available, but easily visible at a glance.

Personalization of the architectural space of the town has not only an economic, tourist, but also an important ideological basis, as allows it to be identified by both local residents and visitors. Architectural attractiveness can occur in different ways: visualization of the space semantic content, visual features, highlighting and underlining of existing historical characteristics or by creating new objects, which are designed to be architectural and spatial attractants. Also, architectural attractiveness can occur spontaneously, voluntarily, not as a planned direction of the space development, but as individual or collective, social initiative of the very residents. We can talk about spontaneous attractiveness as a *fait accompli*. It is difficult to be planned in advance. However, we cannot say that any initiative of people, whether individual or collective, has to be attractive. Sometimes architectural ideas are borrowed from other areas or cities. For example, in the cities and towns of Lviv region there are cases of repeated half-timbering motifs and traditional architecture of Western Europe-

an countries. This, to some extent, confuses people, preventing them from identification of the cultural space and territory in which they currently are. Also, the use of borrowed motifs pushes into the background local specificities of architectural space arrangement and does not allow visitors or transit travelers to access them. As a result, choosing this way not only falsifies visual characteristics of the space, but also impoverishes cultural diversity globally.

Spontaneous architectural attractiveness is a common phenomenon, especially in the post-Soviet territories. At certain times here, the building legislation had not been perceived as binding, and the architecture itself and architects were considered (in the 50s-60s) as dying and unnecessary activity within construction. This situation has developed the habit of not sticking to advices of city planners and architects, with regard both to owners of private houses and city administration. This often leads to negative consequences primarily of aesthetic, but sometimes functional nature. As a result, we have examples of apartment houses with glazed balconies, historic buildings with 'stuck' lampshades and selectively painted facades. At the same time, however, this situation has certain positive aspects too. The lack of professional advice often gives full scope to imagination of the owners of private houses. In small towns and villages, for example, a very common is the use of river stones in construction of fences. Work of local craftsmen is actively used. In Lviv region it is common to see the facades ornamented with pieces of mirror, unusual facing materials (e.g. facades decorated with ceramic tiles), often you can see narrative paintings. Forged products are popular, especially in fences.

Maintaining folk traditions is the most common cause of spontaneous architectural attractiveness. The challenge for attractiveness of a specific town which should stand out against others is promotion of these traditions in other localities of the country or even some countries. On the one hand, this likens a specific town to the other ones, on the other hand - shows its affiliation to the larger region, so-called regional or group attractiveness. Examples of such attractiveness can be seen most clearly in the very planning structure, as well as in some features of outdoor and citywide surrounding area. In the cities of Lviv region at the crossroads the crosses or statues are placed. Similar traditions exist in the countries of Central Europe. Thus, the



Il.1. Chapel in the yard (Borynia, Lviv region, Ukraine)

presence of such roadside crosses indicates the identity of the city to this very cultural band. In some small towns the chapels which the locals often place in their yards have a critical role to play (il.1). As to the planning scheme, especially on the outskirts of the city, where land plots have until recently not been strictly regulated in size, planning is quite free, irregular, more close to the rural one. This also corresponds to the local town-planning traditions, as well as the way that the houses on the site are located. All these features are a manifestation of certain traditions that are saved in the collective consciousness. In the town of Borynia it is common to see the crosses just in the courtyard. Just as in Central Europe, in the cities of Lviv region there is a cult of storks. Telegraph poles and roofs with their nests are an important feature of the territory.

However, there are local folk traditions that can promote formation of the architectural attractiveness of a certain city or town. In Lviv region, the town of Lopatyn may be an example. Its residential houses have decorative corners (il. 2). Moreover, this feature is present both in old and new houses. This is clearly highlighting for the urban space, eye-catching and promising for formation of the visual attractiveness of the town. In the town of Velykyi Lubin, there is a large number of houses with tiled roofs. Given the fact that this material is not very popular nowadays, you can use it to form the concept of the town attractiveness based exactly on the tile surface. The town of Dobrotvir has chosen fruit trees for the urban garden. As a result, in spring all private and public planted spaces bloom and attract many bees, creating a special atmosphere.

Especially important to the architectural attractiveness of small towns of Lviv region is the presence in their space of traditional elements of other cultures. Their exhibition is important for two reasons. Firstly, these elements are a clear demonstration of the historical development of the town, and secondly, they ensure for the town the increased attendance and interest from representatives of these cultures. In Lviv region the traces of Jewish and Polish architecture are most common, and less of German one.

Considering all these circumstances, for small towns, and particularly for small towns of Lviv region it is very important to recognize and detect signs of spontaneous architectural attractiveness in their building environment and try in some cases contribute to their spreading, maintain and develop local peculiarities in formation of the urban architectural environment.

Spontaneous attractiveness of the architectural space in a small town can sometimes be associated not only with the individual initiative of residents, but also with industrial and technological objects. They appear to be spontaneous architecturally attractive objects as choice of the site for their construction depends not so much on town-planning composition as on what specific area in the town is most functionally suitable. Also, these objects often include quite high spatial elements, which, again, are not regulated with the matter of aesthetics, but above all with technical requirements. As a result, these industrial facilities appear in the most unfavourable places from an architectural point of view. In small towns of Western Ukraine during the Soviet period, for political reasons, industrial facilities received a privilege, and it was even very good from the ideological point of view when the view of the old Catholic Church tower was covered with high chimney of some small factory. Therefore, almost in every town we can find these spatial elements and, accordingly, an architect cannot pretend they do not exist in the urban panorama and also can not destroy them on functional and economic reasons. Especially these objects are visible in the panorama of small towns which due to their small size form a single spatial composi-



Il. 2. Decorative corner of residential house in Lopatyn (Lviv region, Ukraine)  
 Il. 3. Technological objects in Stebnyk (Lviv region, Ukraine)



tion. That is why the anthropogenic objects are often united with other urban dominants. The situation is most difficult in historical cities. In addition, it is important to try, as much as possible, to involve such objects in space-functional system of the town. This may include arrangement of viewing platforms, additional illumination, and corresponding colour solution, facilitating access to these objects and using them as semantic attractants. Examples of towns that create their attractiveness exactly on industrial sites are Dobrotvir with a thermal power plant and Stebnyk with many mining towers that form a special attractive view of the whole town (il. 3). In many cases, spontaneous attractiveness adversely affects the architectural image of the towns as often prevents from viewing the important meaningful objects, the monuments, churches and architectural places of interest. These are facilities which became visually attractive by accident or have been designed as attractive, but the project has not considered the impact of this facility on the overall appearance of the urban environment. Mainly those are motels, roadside recreational complexes, shopping centres, gas stations, etc., that is the objects mostly at the outskirts of the town that are first to come into the view of visitors. Spontaneously attractive can be urban objects with bright coloured facades, original individual buildings, small architectural forms of trading purposes. At the same time, however, on the basis of contrast, such objects can sometimes be used under the principle of anti-advertising. They bring disharmony, colour and compositional imbalance in the common 'correct' town-planning composition, causing with the viewer a surge of emotions and contributing to saving in the memory the image of the urban environment for a long time.

For small towns of Ukraine and Lviv region in particular, the issue of such objects is very important. This is due to a lot of factors, the main of which is the legislative and financial 'passivity' of state authorities in the process of architectural space formation, not only with regard to small settlements, but often the major cities of national importance.

An example here may be the town of Hirnyk. Built as a worker's settlement, during the privatization, its long single-storey residential houses which were designed for several families, each owner executed according to their preferences

and abilities. As a result the houses appear to be very heterogeneous, often painted in different bright colours. This situation is not specific to Lviv region neither in view of house types, nor of their finishing, so it can be used as a component for the attractiveness formation. Also, almost every settlement has the buildings that are some kind of benchmarks in the urban environment. Particularly striking example of the town with a large number of such objects is Slavske. The famous resort with a large number of original private houses. Some of them claim to be the citywide visual dominants.

In the town of Bibrka in the very centre near the main transit road is a house with the wall painted in green colour. In the same town at the entrance, there is a gas station which has both visual and highly developed semantic and functional attractiveness. So, these two objects in a strange way effectively compete with those available in the town and visible in the panorama architectural places of interest, in particular with the Catholic Church.

The town of Skole has buildings that can become local visual dominants. For example, a residential house with originally decorated facade and one with an oval entrance (il. 4) Also, spontaneously attractive for the town is the building of shopping purpose which is located directly near the railway station. There are many similar examples.

Of course, the easiest solution would be a ban and re-construction of spontaneous objects that bring dissonance in the urban composition. However, much more effective and easier to implement is another approach - the acceptance, adaptation, neutralization or even purposeful development and highlighting of such, undesirable at first glance, features of the environment. This way, of course, re-



II. 4. Local visual dominant in Skole (Lviv region, Ukraine)

quires active popularization among and informing the local population, and after some spontaneous architectural feature will take a worthy place in the system of formation of the architectural attractiveness of the town, the active advertising and involvement in the identification system of urban environment through virtual and material informative means and facilities (municipal emblems, entry signposts with relevant semantic and visual look and contents, etc.).

Involvement of 'dissonant' objects in the system of formation of the architectural attractiveness of the town requires from the architect significant creativity and ability to adapt to existing environmental conditions, look for hidden opportunities for its profitable operation to create a kind of attractive image. As a result, it should be noted that spontaneous architectural attractiveness is an integral part of the urban space and represents its full element, because it shows directly such living environment in which most residents of the district, city, region, country stay comfortable. Spontaneous architectural attractiveness often reflects the cultures and traditions of a territory. Therefore, it is important not only as architectural and spatial component, but as some local spiritual heritage. Also, spontaneous architectural attractiveness shows the town space not only as an architectural work of art, but also as a functioning facility with its technical specifications that unexpectedly interfere in the architectural panorama and the urban space.

Objects that form spontaneous town attractiveness should not be discarded in the process of formation of architectural attractiveness of the urban environment. Their role should be thoroughly studied and analysed, since in such a spontaneous, uncontrolled situation there is a big probability of random, useless, distracting visual effects. But in many cases they need to be involved to the formation of urban space to

emphasize its individuality.

Under the conditions prevailing in small towns of Lviv region, the problem of individualization of their space is urgent, and spontaneous architectural attractiveness can become one of the major sources for the solution.

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