

Conception of socio-cultural identity in the modern theory of architecture

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Abstract – In this paper methodologically substantiate the study of the architectural environment of a modern city by its belonging to different socio-cultural communities as a cultural resource in situation of multiculturalism and globalization.

The aim of the research was to provide rationalization for using the concept of socio-cultural identity as the key to system view on the problem of humanization of the modern city's environment. The study concluded that the architectural environment should be seen as a major unifying force that opposes the trend of globalization and a major resource for the coexistence of the local socio-cultural differences.

Key words – architectural environment, globalization, socio-cultural identity, theory, sustainability.

I. Introduction

Recently, studies related to the issue of globalization, aimed at studying the aftereffects of the common cultural phenomenon and ways to overcome the crisis caused by it, one of which is an "identity crisis", have become increasingly relevant among the humanities. The concept of identity is relatively new for architectural theory but it is being developed actively as a possible tool for the confrontation of total cultural depersonalization tendency. This tendency is also evident in Ukraine where a loss of individual characteristics of the architectural environment and its global unification is being observed everywhere. In this regard, there is a need for research the concept of socio-cultural identity in architectural theory as a part of humanization movement of architectural environment of modern cities.

II. Analysis of existing research

The professional scientific literature on the subject has begun to appear mostly in Western Europe and the United States not so long ago, where the results of large-scale construction of "globalization" era have already become clearly visible - unified and impersonal urban architectural environment.

In the United States, mainly, works on this subject are located in the field of environment approach, which has "appeared" on the basis of environment and behavioral psychology studies. Kevin Lynch can be called the main theorist and practitioner of environment approach in urban planning and architectural design of the United States. In his works he used and had been consistently developing R.G. Barker's «place-behavior» concept, H. Proshansky's «place-identity» concept and I.Altman's «place attachment» concept, according to which the

environment was defined as a field of a person's self-identification in respect of the physical world [1,2,3], as evidenced by the multiple references in Lynch's works [4]. Another well-known methodologist of the U.S. architectural design tendency is Amos Rapoport. The scientist advances the idea that the architectural form is a sequence of a whole range of social and cultural factors in a general sense. And the lifestyle, including all cultural, financial and social aspects, is the most important of them [5].

Also a rising tide of interest for national traditions, that had found its way in the 70-80s as part of post-modernism, has become another reaction to the process of globalization. This tendency is clearly evident in architectural theory and practice of such authors as Charles Jencks, Charles Moore, Robert Venturi, Mario Botta, Arata Isozaki, Tadao Ando, Alvar Aalto.

At the same time, a number of studies devoted to the national features of former republics' architecture, took place in the Soviet theory of architecture. Depending on a researcher's open mindedness, the specific architectural forms and features of population lifestyle have been linked to larger systems. A.V. Ikonnikov, O. Khan-Magomedov, Yu.S. Yaralov, A.O.Tamanyan, M.A. Useynov, I.G. Gainutdinov are among such researchers.

The modern Ukrainian researchers developing the problem of national identity in architecture and urban planning include B.S. Cherkes, I.A. Fomin, M.V. Bezv, and others. However, despite its importance, the issue of national identity reflects only one facet of the architectural environment research as a resource providing stability and variety of socio-cultural identity of an individual and society.

III. Research results

The concept of identity is fairly new to the humanities. It has been introduced and was widely used in scientific use in the late 60s of the twentieth century through the works of American psychologist Erik Erikson. He has proved that identity was the foundation of any person. It provides an internal continuity and identity, and has a dynamic nature, combining natural instincts, needs, abilities, and cultural identities and stable social roles [6].

A well-known French philosopher Paul Ricoeur tried to explain this semantic duality, which is expressed in the relationship between persistence and variability of identity. He judged from the etymology of the word "identity", where the base of the word comes from two Latin bases: "iten" ("remarkably similar", "the same", and "similar") and "ipse" ("selfhood"). Consequently, the synthesis of two dialectical meanings takes place: stability - the variability in time and self identity - otherness [7].

Since the second half of the 70s, the concept of identity has deeply embedded in the lexicon of social sciences and humanities. In general, it means that a person recognizes and experiences his/her membership to a particular social and cultural group by opposition to the existence of other groups. Thus, the identity construction requires distinguishing itself from the other, and on the other hand the identity mechanism is implemented by mutual

correlation and communicative interaction with others. Summarizing it can be said that a concept of “socio-cultural identity” in the modern humanities is understood as a complex of stable features that allow a particular group of people to distinguish themselves from others and implement the fundamental human need to belong to a community and culture, and to form the respect to himself, others, society and the world as a whole [8,9].

The socio-cultural identity is a basic life requirement for the formation of the individuality and is based on a solidarity of language, territory, historical memory and concept of the world, cultural traditions and ways of life; at the moment, the problems of its protection and formation are generally recognized as major in the field of architectural and design engineering of the urban environment.

In connection with the humanistic turn in modern science the concept of identity, developed mainly in the field of sociological knowledge, has found its practical application in other fields of the humanities - philosophy, anthropology, geography, linguistics, philology, art history, etc. Architectural science is also not an exception; the theory of architecture faces the problem of building and developing relations between the architectural environment and its inhabitants' lifestyle. On the one hand it may seem that this problem is not new and it has been developed even in Soviet period. But upon a closer view it reveals that the post-war development of the architectural environment of Soviet cities mainly was determined by the rational principles of economic planning where the human factor has only been involved as a productive resource as, according to the Soviet ideology, there was no social differentiation of the population. Thus, any social and cultural differences among the population remained out of the question, not to mention orienting them in architectural design.

It must be said that such attitude to the development of cities environment took place in the West (mainly in Germany and the USA). As a part of the “school of spatial analysis” and “regional science” in the field of philosophy of determinism and positivism this model has been actively developed by such scholars as Walter Isard, Fred K. Schaefer, Walter Christaller, August Lösch and others [10,11]. The only difference was that the population was considered not as a labor force, but as a consumer. However, the high day of this tendency ended in the mid-70s due to severe financial crisis which in fact terminated that total urbanization, which took place after the war, and encouraged the qualitative changes in the development of the architectural environment of cities towards an elitist segregation in line with the policy of neo-liberalism [12].

From that time until today there have been some changes in this direction because of the “humanistic turn” - due to the strengthening social democratic policy in Western Europe, social research have been actively involved into the design process and “participation programs” have been created. Thus, in the early 80's, first in the United States and later in Western Europe (particularly in England and Germany) a humanistic

oriented movement “New Urbanism” has appeared. At the moment, this movement is internationally recognized as the most successful and humane solution to the problems of the urban and suburban environment, it focuses mainly on the aspect of territorial identity. On a smaller scale of the specific loci of urban areas a special architectural design movement, aimed at the formation of a special type of urban public environment – “placemaking”, has been formed. This movement is focused primarily on the strengthening of social interaction and social control in certain areas of the urban environment, with which users identify themselves by the territorial belonging. At the moment, the concept is one of the leading in architectural and design planning of the urban environment in a number of European countries (Denmark, England, Germany, Austria, France, etc.) and is carried out at the state level [13]

However, in spite of a general movement towards European integration, social studies in Ukraine so far are rare and concern either economics – are designed to forecast a payback of the designed project and its attractiveness to potential customers, or political - as a PR for potential voters. Mainly the architectural design and education are still based on the customer and the architect's subjective views of a certain “potential consumer” and Ukrainian national construction regulations, as if objectively reflecting the real human needs in the figures. V.L. Glazychev can be called the founder of “humanistic turn” in the domestic theory of architecture and urban planning. In the late 70th of the XX century, he suggested a radically new approach to the problem of urban development in relation to the political conditions of the time. Claiming the need to appeal architecture to the sociological knowledge he said that the truly humane architecture is only possible if “we refuse using the term “a person” always and on every occasion: “a person needs”, “a person wants”, “a person can't”, etc. Sociology of architecture does not use the word “person” not because of losing the connection with the humanities, but because for the sociology of architecture there are no “people in general”, but specific groups of people in different situations, whose tastes, interests, preferences, skills, habit vary considerably” [14]. Thus emphasizing the importance of architecture research aimed to explore tools of correlation between a formed architectural environment and culturally diverse community living there, for which the architectural environment is a “life environment.” Thus, in his fundamental, summarizing many years' experience work “The Urban Environment. Technology of the Development: Indispensable Guide” the scientist built steps for the formation of the urban environment as follows: the first step was the construction of social and ecological interpretation of the urban environment, as directly related to both the livability of environment and physical health of the inhabitants. The next step in the urban environment formation considered to be the social and economic level, as for the obvious reasons it is the power structures that determine the development of the city and regulate the funds allocated to it, and the moment of relationship building between the

government and the people of the city is undeniably important.

The social and cultural interpretation has been proposed as the third step. With all the understanding that the first two steps also belong to the culture, yet V.L. Glazychev actualizes the social and cultural moment itself, which reflects the interaction between the urban environment as a materialized culture and daily life of its inhabitants as living carriers of non-material culture, implementing it in their lifestyle. And if in the traditional culture this relationship has been implemented for centuries as if by itself and did not even reveal the existence, in the context of globalization, multiculturalism and the growth of urban areas this relationship has been lost and there was a new problem for the human community.

The author himself draws attention to the danger of narrow ecological approach to the problems of the urban environment stating: "The emphasis on the relationship between the urban environment and the living organism involves the weakening of attention to the relationship between the environment and a social person. The city as a nature phenomenon begins to crowd the city as a cultural phenomenon..." and emphasis on the need for research in this field from the point of view of strategic management of the city [15]. Thus, V.L. Glazychev became the first one of national theorists of architecture who actualized the social and cultural problems of architecture and stated about the necessity of a separate discipline – "Sociology of Architecture", the main task of which, in his opinion, would be a challenge to find "bridges" between the level of society and architecture, which would be transformed in clear knowledge.

The current situation of globalization, and an already formed basis of social and ecological concepts are pushing the architectural knowledge to a new social and cultural level, where the values are in particular the differences in worldview and lifestyle, and the approach to problems of preservation and reproduction of these differences in the architectural environment represents the next stage of the humanization of the modern city. In connection with such humanistic formulation of the question a concept of socio-cultural identity is seen as a key point, which allows to build a system of the relationship between the urban environment as a "life environment" and the life style of its inhabitants on the ground of the architectural environment belonging to different social and cultural communities as a supporting and ensuring that variability resource.

As already mentioned, the first research step in this direction was the appeal to the question of national identity in architecture the priority and undoubted importance of which was largely determined by the situation of establishment of Ukrainian nationhood. This resulted in an increased attention to the legislative protection of the architectural heritage and the reconstruction of historical heritage-listed buildings, which are the symbols of the nation – first of all religious architecture and traditional housing. However, the restoration of historic architectural symbols of the country is only the first step towards the concept building of socio-cultural identity which has been implemented

pointwise and mostly within the historical centers not covering the entire objective-spatial environment of cities.

In this connection here becomes a very complex problem of creating a system view on the issue, which would have contributed to the development of the urban environment in a humanistic way aimed at sustentation its local uniqueness and authenticity taking into account the particular social and cultural situation and the implementation of adaptive mechanisms for sustainable community identity. Thus, the concept of socio-cultural identity as the connection of two dialectically opposing mechanisms - sustainable authenticity and adaptive variability, meet the stated problem of common cultural globalization in the best way, and can become a basis for the construction of social and cultural interpretation of the architectural environment of the modern city.

Therefore, the next step in construction of holistic system knowledge must be the development of mechanisms for the implementation of this concept at all levels of the architectural environment of the city. This task must be methodologically unfolded in two directions:

- The scientific definition of a concept of "architectural environment of the city" as to how it should and can meet the unique social and cultural territory and way of life of its inhabitants, that is, clarification of how the architectural environment is involved in the design process of socio-cultural identity, and how the fundamental mechanism of a person's life is realized.

- The development of project activity and architectural thinking mechanisms, that is, the definition of how this gained knowledge can be integrated into the process of architectural design and into the field of vocational education.

Conclusion

The article specifies that the present situation of globalization and multiculturalism is an important supposition, which puts the study of the architectural environment of the modern city, in terms of its social and cultural interpretation, in a number of pressing problems of the theory of architecture. It has been argued that the main idea of a building a system view at the identified problem is the concept of socio-cultural identity which allows investigating the architectural environment of the city according to its belonging to different social and cultural communities as a cultural resource maintaining and ensuring this variability.

It has been found that at the moment, national and territorial types of socio-cultural identity can be called more or less assimilated by European architectural science. However, there are others which are still virtually unexplored in theory and are not articulated in the architectural practice - regional, ethnic, subcultural, anthropological, gender, age, etc. The problem is just beings being recognized and explored in the domestic architecture. Due to the national culture of mentality and historical past, the direct borrowing of European architectural developments is incorrect and impossible. That is why there is a need for research aimed at the

understanding related to the current conditions of Ukrainian reality.

It has been stated that the architecture should be considered as a major force which opposes a unifying tendency of globalization, and as a major resource which allows the local social and cultural differences coexist and communicate with each other.

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