DOI:10.55337/36/TRYE3432

Vernacular Landscapes in the Carpathians: Materialized Imaginaries in Post-Soviet Ukraine

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Diverse landscapes and eclectic architecture emerged in the Carpathians after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This paper examines what imaginaries materialized about urbanity/urbanness, modernity, and people's relationships to place and authenticity in vernacular landscapes and architecture in the Boikivshchyna region in Ukraine. Landscape visual/textual analysis shows from the perspective of semiotics that local residents now relate more closely to modernity and progress, but have cut their rustic roots by disregarding both place identity and building traditions. Conspicuous consumption with urban and social status symbols is evident in affluent residents' houses and utilitarianism in the homes of the less wealthy.

Key words: rural landscapes, vernacular residential architecture, semiotics, Carpathians, Ukraine

1 Introduction

The landscapes of Ukraine's cities and villages underwent significant changes after the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially in the 2000s – as evident by the years of economic growth and increased welfare. People's dreams of comfort, wealth, status, and security have since become embodied in the new landscapes and houses, their architectural styles, fences, and yards. The landscapes of the Carpathians have and are changing in a unique way. Here local residents' imaginaries about urbanity/urbanness and modernity[1] have intervened with pre-modern folk traditions[2], resulting in an emergence of diverse and eclectic vernacular landscapes and architecture.

The purpose of this study is to identify what meanings are conveyed through vernacular landscapes and residential architecture, and how those meanings represent and reproduce broader social, cultural, and political structures. I am particularly interested what imaginaries suggest about urbanity/urbanness and modernity and how people's relationships to place**,** traditionality, and authenticity are materialized in vernacular rural landscapes and residential architecture of local people in the Boikivshchyna region after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Vernacularity is understood as something that is "local/native" in the sense of being inherent in the "ordinary" people of a certain area. Used commonly, the term "vernacular" refers to the names, language, art, and architecture of the "ordinary" people of a particular area or region,[3] often in contrast to so-called high culture.

Vernacular landscapes are landscapes created without architectural intervention or with limited input from architects. [4] Vernacular landscapes and architecture represent the specific historical and geographical belongings of a people and imaginaries about urbanity/urbanness and modernity, views and attitudes about what is and should be considered as "traditional" or "authentic."

In Western societies, there are strict architectural and urban planning regulations and/or specific regimes of aesthetic governmentality set up by homeowners or local municipalities;[5] in contrast, in Ukraine and other post-socialist countries landscapes, including heritage sites, urban planning regulations are absent or minor, especially regarding architectural styles and where the influence of architects is limited for various reasons.[6] On the one hand, as a result, vernacular landscapes and architecture in Ukraine more closely reflect peoples' tastes, preferences, aspirations, dreams, idylls about comfort, safety, status, and/or prosperity,[7] showcasing a high degree of human agency. Landscapes and architecture are however shaped by social structures (system of relations) such as national, economic, social, and gendering that constitute the social world and our everyday life.

This study contributes to a wider debate about how imaginaries in art and culture are part of the social constitution in the forms of construction, maintenance, legitimization, and resistance of various social structures. Landscape and especially architecture is a visual medium that transmits meanings to the public, similar to other visual media. While the focus on imaginary of urban citizens in the Carpathians in visual culture represents a rather subordinate view on rural areas and its residents, this study shifts the focus to local rural peoples' imaginaries about urbanity/urbanness and modernity embodied in vernacular landscapes and architecture. The visual/textual analysis from the perspective of semiotics shows an emergence of new aesthetics of vernacular architecture. The size and architectural styles of new residential houses, built after 1991, together with the use of elaborately decorated yards, demonstrate the degree to which the society there has turned to conspicuous consumption; it also shows a desire by the owners to emphasize their social status, real or imagined, and their affiliation to modernity and progress, but also shows how they are cutting their ties to their rustic roots and traditions. At the same time the size of new houses, often with three stories, are built with the expectation of keeping the traditional pre-modern extended family of three generations together under "one roof." The specific architecture regulations set in Ukraine, specifically in the Carpathian Mountains, give local residents agency to shape the built environment and express themselves through architecture. This expression could be opposite to the romanticized views of mountains held by urban dwellers, who often have a colonized and subordinative attitude toward rural areas. These views are typically embodied in narratives of national and folk traditions and identity preservation, or in the presentation of

landscapes as pleasurable for outsider urban dwellers and tourists. In this paper, I show the conditionality of architectural traditions over time and the significance of pre-modern architectural traditions for the future of the environment.

2 Landscape as a Medium

At the end of the 20th century, generating an understanding of landscape in social sciences changed from being a materialistic study of cultural landscapes[8] to analyzing landscape as text and a system of signs. Landscapes as text contain and convey meanings to the public and take into account the complex social, cultural, and politic processes.[9] The concept of landscape emphasizes the visual aspects of the surrounding.[10] In 2000 the Council of Europe initiated and adopted the European Landscape Convention in Florence, Italy, that follows this understanding: "Landscape is an area perceived by people whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."[11] In the broadest sense, a landscape is a part of the Earth visible to an observer from a certain position or location, and includes both physical but also social aspects such as gender, age, profession, social class, etc.[12]

Significant to this research, the most important landscape attribute is that it represents and reproduces broader social, cultural, and political structures. Landscape is a "created, lived, represented space, constructed as a result of struggle and compromises by competing and cooperating social actors with different identities, values and interests. It is both a thing and a social process."[13] Landscape is not only a "container of material forms," but it is actively involved in complex social processes. Landscapes are part of the construction of reality through their representation in architecture and other landscape elements that promote the interests of certain groups in society, giving their ideas and values tangible form.[14] Landscapes have both material and ideological aspects, and, in this sense, help to develop and reproduce social norms and relations.[15] James Duncan gives the following definition of landscape: it is "an ordered assemblage of objects visible from a particular location, which acts as a signifying system through which a social system is communicated, reproduced, experienced, or explored."[16] Landscape is primarily an instrument of cultural power and force, and landscape politics means that "landscapes carry symbolic or ideological meanings that reflect back and help produce social practices, lived relationships, and social identities, and also become sites of claiming or contesting authority over an area."[17]

Landscapes, and especially their architecture, are a visual medium that transmit certain meanings and senses to the public, similar to other visual media such as postcards, books, films or photos. Nancy Duncan and James Duncan argue: "Landscapes have an important inculcating effect as they tend to be taken for granted as tangible evidence of the naturalness of the social, political and economic practices and relations."[18] Referring to W. Mitchell, they note that in this approach,

the understanding of the landscape changes from what the landscape "is" or "means" to what it "does," and how it works as a cultural practice. Due to this quality, "landscapes play a central role in the practices and performance of place-based social identities, community values and social distinction."[19] In addition, Nancy Duncan and James Duncan with reference to Bondi explain that "ordinary dwellers of cities and suburbs regularly 'read' the landscape, unconsciously absorbing cultural messages about social relations."[20] Due to this, power structures support themselves and their interests "are made to seem natural and thus legitimized in the signifying environments that surround people."[21] In this approach, the aim is to understand how landscapes - material, represented and symbolic - are involved in the constitution (construction, maintenance, legitimization and resistance) of social structures (system of relations) such as national, economic or gendered.

3 Romanticization of the Carpathians' Rural Landscapes

With the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and the appearance of the first contaminated sites and environmental problems, the countryside and mountains began to be depicted as an idyllic place of harmony between man and nature with a slow rhythm of life without stress, as a kind of utopia or Arcadia. The mountains and their landscapes have been romanticized and idealized especially by urban elites and the bourgeoisie since the early 19th century.[22] In addition, in the late 18th century after the French Revolution, Romanticism and its appeal to folklore and folk art were disseminated into national projects. However, earlier mountains were considered by most people, especially in rural societies, as an inhospitable environment unsuitable or difficult for life. Hard work was required here to feed oneself and provide shelter and warmth.

In European architecture, folk motifs began to be actively used in the second half of the 19th century and into the early 20th century. This was preceded by the spread of the picturesque style, which combined the architectural heritage of the past, especially the Middle Ages, with the traditional folk motifs of different countries. At the end of the 19th century, construction of holiday villas was trending, especially in the Carpathian Mountains, as well as in areas with healing waters, such as Truskavets, Morshyn. Holiday villas and sanatoriums were first built using motifs adopted from Swiss wooden architectural designs. Later, Galician architects became interested in the wooden architecture of the Hutsul and Boikiv regions and began to use their motifs.[23] This style was called Zakopane, from the town of Zakopane, Poland, where most villas were built. Although the style is called Zakopane, it traces its rich artistic and architectural heritage to the Hutsul region. This style was especially popular in Galicia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Later, from 1900 to 1918, Ivan Levynskyi and the staff of his architectural bureau began to actively use folk motifs within the Art Nouveau style, primarily in the form of ceramic inserts and panels made by his factory. The architecture, created

by him in collaboration with Oleksandr Lushpynskyi, Tadeusz Obminskyi, Filemon Levytskyi, Alfred Zakharevych and Jozef Sosnovskyi, was called *Ukrainskyi Modern* (Ukrainian Art Nouveau).[24] In Soviet times, from the 1960s to the 1980s, the so-called Carpathian style emerged as a reaction to the monotony and the lack of style of the then dominant utilitarian modernist architecture. The buildings were complemented by roofs with triangular dormer windows. Folk traditional motifs were also used in the decoration of facades and interiors.

"Traditionalism" and a return to nature had also manifested themselves in new trends in urban planning, such as the Ebenezer Howard Garden City. The concept of the "garden city" had been spreading in Britain since 1898 and aimed to combine the best advantages of a village and a city into one settlement or neighborhood. For example, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the suburb of Kastelivka in Lviv was designed by Yulian Zakharevych and Ivan Levynskyi under the influence of Howard's ideas.[25]

4 Boikyvshchyna Rural Landscapes and its Transformations

4.1 Folk cultural landscapes of the Boikyvshchyna region

Folk cultural landscapes of Boikyvshchyna are known for its sprawling villages, some of them twelve kilometers in length, above rivers with specific chain-like planning[26] and predominantly wooden houses in past and multi-tiered dome churches, with some even inscribed on the UNESCO heritage list.[27] People who inhabit this part of the Carpathians are known in academia and beyond as Boykos (*boiky* in Ukrainian), that together with Lemkos and Hutsuls (*lemky* and *hutsuly* in Ukrainian), settled in neighboring areas, and are considered as the mountain communities of Ukraine, but the region also includes the borderland areas of Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. These three groups differ by dialects, ways of doing agriculture, and by their material and non-material cultures. The largest mountain urban settlements of Boikyvshchyna are Skole, Turka, Slavske, Nyzhni Vorota, Mizhhir'ia (formerly named Volove or Volove Pole) and Volovets. The cities located in the foothills of Boikyvshchyna include Stryi, Tricity of Drohobych, Truskavets, and Boryslav, and the neighboring town of Skhidnytsia. The following are found on the border of the Boikyvshchyna region: Stebnyk, Staryi Sambir, Ustriky Dolishni (in Poland), Kalush, Bolekhiv, Dolyna, Bohorodchany, Rozhniativ, Dobromyl, Sanok (in Poland), Ivano-Frankivsk, and Zhydachiv.[28]

As is typical of pre-modern landscapes, the shape of settlements, street networks, and chain system of buildings were caused by the environment and by the presence of river terraces and the configuration of the slopes (Figures 1-2). However, administrative regulations also had an impact on settlements and land use. The German law planned system of land use was applied in the 14th century in those places where arable land agriculture prevailed (over livestock farming) and the villages were state-owned, the so-called *korolivshchyna* (crown land). Here the

settlement chain system was characterized also by the existence of the same size agriculture fields for all the inhabitants of the settlement.[29] Parallel-wide strips or parcels were known as *lany* (the name comes from unit of measurement in medieval Europe). Estates were placed on these parcels one next to the other in a row. However, in Boikivshchyna, as in other parts of the Carpathians unsuitable for arable land agriculture, the Wallachian law system was widespread with a scattered planning system and a predominance for livestock farming, which is generally typical of mountainous areas.

Figures 1-2: Folk cultural landscapes of the Boikivshchyna region: the villages of Titkivci (left) and Uzhok (right) in Zakarpattia region. Photograph by Roman Lozynskyi.

Figure 3: Typical wooden house of the Boikyvshchyna region with a high thatched roof and gallery near the village of Ternavka near Skole town, 1933. Photograph by Henryk Poddebski.[30]

Distinctive wooden houses with high thatched roofs and galleries and columns on the main facades were built by peasants until the 1940s in Boikyvshchyna (Figure 3). Villas or summertime houses were built by affluent urban dwellers according to the so-called Zakopane style: a mix of *hutsul* traditional wooden architecture with modern Swiss mountain resort architectural elements.[31] From the 1960s to the late 1980s, simple single-story unified modern detached houses were built with four rooms without galleries but with mansards and small balconies (or without) over the central part. Houses built in the 1980s were also constructed with one

and half or two stories.

4.2 Rural landscapes during Soviet times and after 1991

In the Soviet Union spatial planning of villages was subordinated to the collective form of agriculture with the lack of support for the so-called "unpromising" villages. The construction in rural areas was carried out without the participation of architects, of whom there were very few in the district *raiony* (centers), and they were engaged in the usual so-called "fitting" of standard projects, such as schools, administrative buildings, and clinics. However, in the 1950s, well-developed practical recommendations were issued for constructing detached houses, taking into account regional and natural conditions, especially climatic conditions. The circulation of such publications was small and inaccessible even to most architects, teachers, and students. Thus, rural residents and even local architects did not have access to specialized literature in the field of architecture.

Architectural forms in rural areas have never been regulated, neither in the Austro-Hungarian empire nor in interwar Poland (Second Polish Republic) or in the USSR. Only utilitarian and technical regulations were present such as fire regulations and functional zoning laws, for example, the distance from neighboring buildings and engineering aspects such as basement depth or wall thickness.[32] The homogeneity of both the architectural style and the number of floors associated with the new detached houses in rural areas in Soviet times was due to economic reasons, usually under pressure from communist authorities that regulated the amount of construction materials bought by peasants or provided as state help for kolkhoz workers.[33] Theoretically, rural dwellers could even build a two-story estate in rural areas, but in practice there was not always enough money or building materials to build second floors. On the other hand, there was an unspoken rule amidst the cultural and social norms that conspicuous consumption was not welcomed;[34] yet, this social norm started to change in the 1980s. However, in Soviet times, emphasis was placed on the typification of buildings, and a few had the courage to oppose the system and build a house with some uncommon forms. As a result, from the 1960s to the late 1980s, four-room detached houses with a mansard over the central part were built despite there being distinctive and unique local traditions in architecture (see the house on the right side in the left photo (Figures 5-6). However, in rural areas the houses' facades were still decorated in different ways and in some cases, in remote areas determined by climate condition or scarcity of modern building materials, the local traditions in housing constructions were kept.[35]

Since the late 1980s and especially after the collapse of the socialist system, changes in landscapes, their urban planning, architecture, and agriculture were influenced by several important conditions and phenomena, most of which are relevant today. There was the economic crisis of the 1990s, the weakening of any

regulations and/or control over them with corruption and nepotism, land policy changes - land distribution, privatization, and introduction of land market for housing and personal farming use (up to 2 hectares) in the 2000s, emergence of a new class of affluent people, increased access to new materials and information, tourism development, and labor emigration to European Union countries.

Distribution and privatization of land for housing (up to 25 acres) contributed to the intensive construction of detached houses and commercial buildings by the wealthier class, as well as for the less affluent. In addition, it has been legally possible to change the functional purpose of land use from private small-scale farmland (up to 2 hectares) to being able to build on the land. Due to the commodification of land, its chaotic and speculative distribution and privatization took place. In the 1990s and the early 2000s, such a distribution often preceded the development of spatial plans for settlements. At the same time, master plans and regulations have not performed as intended due to the many ways to circumvent them, the most common of which has been to make changes to the detailed plans of the area. At the same time, adverse economic conditions in the 1990s and later decades resulted in a significant number of houses being built without the involvement of architects.[36]

In post-socialist conditions, where architectural and urban planning regulations are absent or insignificant, and the influence of architects is limited for various reasons, an important characteristic of landscapes and their architecture is that the level of their vernacularity is significant. Such unregulated landscapes reflect the daily lives of people who change the landscape according to their needs, preferences and values reflected through architectural styles of residential houses and their elements (windows, balconies, and terraces), as well as fences and gates, yard decorations, and the use of garden plots. Houses built after 1991 are larger than those from the Soviet time with two stories and free architectural styles and balconies of various styles, towers, terraces, and decorative elements like weathervanes or wrought iron decorations. The number of both solid and less transparent fences as well as decorated gates grew. Land plots started to become used more for gardens or as a lawn with a swing, gazebo, and decorations – statuette, figurine, often also with religious motives. In some cases, it is difficult to see the use of yards behind high fences. Residents' land plots of older houses are used more for small-scale family farming, however recreational elements such as swings are also evident.

5 The New Aesthetics of Vernacular Landscapes, its Semiotics and Materialized Imaginaries

5.1 Visual/textual landscape analysis

The application of structuralist semiotics is key to this study focused on the meanings conveyed through vernacular landscapes and its residential architecture. Semiotics – the study of signs and sign systems with a focus on the communication

of meanings and how messages are encoded and decoded – is important in this research.[37] From the perspective of semiotics, all landscape elements perform a symbolic function and are signs; in our case, markers of belonging to a social class, a certain lifestyle, views on traditionality and authenticity. The goal of a landscape researcher is to identify individual signs, codes, and meanings among neutral physical/material elements[38] and to find "spatial clues, site-specific interrelationships, and insights."[39] Paul Groth stresses, although within cultural landscape studies visual approach is central, that good landscape observation in a field is a process not only of seeing, but also of thinking, and he warns against 'superficial fieldwork.'[40] Two extremes can be found in fieldwork – too detailed of an accumulative focus on site or too broad of a theorized focus on wide scale sites. It is important to find balance between the two in research.[41] A researcher should have good "seeing" skills as well as analytical skills and be prepared in order to "know where to look and how to interpret what is seen."[42] P. Lewis emphasizes that "messages" transmitted by the landscape are not transmitted in obvious ways.[43] For example, we should focus on answering the question not only "What does something look like?", But also "How does it work, who made it, why, when, and what does it tell us about how our neighborhood works?"[44] Thus, it is important to observe more than the artifacts found in the landscape; the key is to go further to elucidate the processes, relationships, and social structures in the landscape. Structuralist semiotics is predominant among the semiotic approaches used by researchers and originates from the works of Ferdinand de Saussure.[45] In the structuralist approach, landscapes as texts are considered as having elements organized in a certain order that can be translated into language, read, and interpreted.[46]

Figure 4: Skhidnytsia town panorama. Photo from open sources.

The town of Skhidnytsia (Figure 4), categorized as a semiurban settlement in Ukraine by the administrative division, is located near the cities of Drohobych, Truskavets, and Boryslav. Before World War II Truskavets was known as fashionable

resort in the Austro-Hungary empire and interwar Poland and later as one of the most prestigious in the USSR for its healing mineral water. Boryslav was known as "Galician California" for its rich oil deposits discovered at the beginning of the 20th century and for its adverse living conditions for the working class, and Drohobych: a trade and manufacturing city with a significant Jewish community. Skhidnytsia, a village until the middle of 20th century, started attracting people with its healing mineral waters. Thereby transforming it into a small town in Soviet times. However, Skhidnytsia is now still considered as more of a countryside-oriented resort, while Truskavets is urban.

In the study of vernacular landscapes and residential architecture of Carpathians in Boikivchyna region in Ukraine after 1991 and how they reflect peoples' imagination of tradition and authenticity, the structuralist semiotics of the landscape was applied. Landscape visual analysis of Skhidnytsia was conducted in summer 2021 with focus on residential architecture built in three different periods - before 1940s, 1940s – 1980s and after 1991. The aim of visual landscape analysis was to trace changes in the dominant elements of the vernacular landscape - the architectural styles of detached houses since the beginning of XX century, as well as gates and fences since the late 1980s and to identify current use and look of yards. Attention was paid to the visual dominants of the landscape - architectural as well as fences, gates and yard styles and their elements (color and size of houses, windows, balconies, terraces, decorations etc.). For instance, the architectural styles of detached houses, their fences and gates, namely such elements as rounded windows, terraces, weather vanes and the presence of lawns, places for rest and decoration (statues, swings) from a semiotic perspective perform a symbolic function and are signs - markers of belonging to a social class and a certain lifestyle. The research shows similarities with architecture studies of Vintila Mihailescu[47] and Sonia Hirt[48] in Romania and Bulgaria respectively, as those countries were under the same socialist conditions as Ukraine. However, I emphasize that local residence agency and actions expressed through current vernacular architecture do not diverge, but are similar to folk vernacular architecture.

5.2 Conspicuous consumption and elsewhereness landscapes

In the Soviet Union there were economic, political, cultural, and social limitations of owners' self-expression through architecture.[49] After the collapse of the Soviet Union, residential architecture of detached houses became a tangible expression of people's values and tastes, indicating belongings to a particular class and way of life. There is a demonstrative emphasis on individualism and status through architecture, namely size and styles of houses, expensive fences and gates, various decorations, and even private chapels. Such elements of the yard as the presence of lawn, places for rest (gazebo and swings) and decoration (statues and garden figurines) from the perspective of semiotics also perform a symbolic function and

are markers of higher social class and lifestyle. Often the "traditional" aspect of the architecture manifests itself in houses with a hint of "feudalism" as evident in the style of towers, weathervanes, rounded windows, and entrances with Greek and Roman imperial architectural elements. Anthropologist Vintila Mihailescu, in his house owners' interview study, argues that the architectural style and size of the new detached houses also reflect the success of the hard work of male and female workers abroad and calls them "houses of the proud."[50] Tourism has also influenced the size of houses, with some being built as guesthouses to accommodate visitors. Additionally, the availability of cheap heating in the 1990s and 2000s contributed to the construction of larger homes.

New architectural styles and yards however, show disregard for traditional folk houses and place identity, and the spread of the phenomenon of elsewhereness in architecture and landscape. Elsewhereness characterizes places that have no connection with the local cultural context, since architectural styles are simply copied from other countries and/or times with even fictional styles possible, ultimately destroying the sense of the place.[51] Sonia Hirt recognizes similar processes in Bulgaria and calls them "Las-Vegas-ization" - an architectural approach using a mixture of different styles borrowed from different periods and cultures and the creation of something like "time-space compression."[52]

The emergence of the phenomenon „elsewhereness" in post-socialist countries was influenced by several conditions – the formation of a new wealthy class of people, the absence of stylistic architectural regulations, and the availability of information and new building materials. However, the phenomenon of „elsewhereness" has a global dimension. Imports of Western and especially American values in housing preferences and consumption and the reduction of local diversity of landscapes is common in many "less developed" countries.[53] Marc Anthrop argues that new cultural landscapes are usually imposed rather than integrated into local natural and cultural contexts.[54] Frequent changes of states and their political formations with shifts in the systems of values and private property rights and the deportation and extermination of peoples,[55] negatively affected the relation of people with the landscapes and led to the emergence of detachment and alienation,[56] which is reflected materially and symbolically in landscapes. Another possible reason for the spread of the elsewhereness phenomenon is that Ukrainian vernacular pre-modern architecture is associated with rusticality and poverty. Ukraine's historically rural population, even the wealthy, has been less affluent in the European context, and traditional rural architecture does not offer comfortable solutions to new needs. In addition, in some areas pre-modern traditional landscapes are difficult to recognize and find in the field or they are dilapidated.

5.3 Imaginaries materialized – the connection of local people to modernity and progress

The described above residential architecture and yards most broadly shows that local people want to relate to modernity and progress and cut their ties to their rustic roots and traditions. Urban and higher social status symbols such as well-maintained lawns, swings, yards, and gates adorned with lion statues or paintings on natural stones of older wooden houses in bright colors is common and are a must for local people. At the same time the size of new houses, often with three stories, is built with the expectation of keeping the traditional pre-modern extended family with three generations together under "one roof" – where married couples live with both their children and parents (Figures 5-6). Thus, behind the modern exterior of the new house hides the pre-modern desire about extended family. However, the large size of some houses is also due to the influence of tourism, as they were built as guesthouses to accommodate tourists. In addition, in the 1990s and 2000s the construction of houses of considerable size was also influenced by the cheapness of the heating.

Figures 5-6: New vernacular landscapes in the Boikyvshchyna region. (Left photo) Architecture from three periods, village of Synevyrska Poliana. Photo by Liubomyr Parkhuts. (Right photo) "Proud" houses in the town of Turka. Photo by Roman Lozynskyi

5.4 Conditionality of traditions and constant relationality between pre-modern folk and current vernacular residential architecture.

The pre-modern folk vernacular cultural landscape which often is called "traditional" is first and foremost an expression of utilitarianism - creating comfort with reduced time and resources. Such landscapes reflect the most practical and effective, in terms of effort and resources, methods of building construction, and agriculture and farming. The concept of "tradition" is conditional. Traditional is something that has proven to be practical and effective over time, so it has been widely used and repeated through time. However, over time new materials and technologies have been emerging that made it easier to achieve the goal - creating comfort with reduced time and resources; they became widespread and themselves

became new traditions - again until something newer and more practical had been invented. For these reasons, we no longer see roofs covered with straw, reeds, or shingles. They have been replaced by more practical, durable, and safe materials. Tastes and habits in construction were also present in pre-modern landscapes, mainly in the form of decoration, but the defining feature of vernacular landscapes was utilitarianism and efficiency in the condition of available technologies and building materials.

For most people in Ukraine, with their modest wealth, the determining factors are practicality, functionality, and price, as it was a century ago. People are improving houses by adding external house insulation, replacing wooden windows with plastic ones, using metal sheets to build fences - that is, they use materials that are easy to install and provide better protection, require less care, are more durable and relatively cheap. The correlation between "price-quality-protection" and "time for installation-care" is decisive. Thus, the current vernacular architecture is not discordant with the pre-modern vernacular architecture as the goal and meaning is the same as it was centuries ago, although the form does differ. The current vernacular landscapes are also adequate/rational for the needs of our time, and they are new folk landscapes, because they are widespread. However, as it was already described, nowadays the tastes and conspicuous consumption of peasants, which were also in the 19th century to a lesser extent, are present to a greater extent.

Thus, techniques and forms of construction are constantly evolving. More practical and efficient are displacing the old, and therefore what is now called traditional folk, two centuries ago it was not, but on the contrary - was considered as new. For these reasons to call on local residents to protect or to build "traditional" houses, arguing that it preserves national, "ethnic" traditions and identity, is a naive and simplistic view. Questions arise about the traditionality of specific periods, the stages of the landscape, and the architectural developments. In addition, wooden houses from the past no longer meet the conditions and needs of our time. They need to be modernized, especially internal planning regarding current living and leisure needs. Proper timber harvesting for construction, fire safety together with water, gas, and electricity supply for such houses are more expensive than for modern ones. In the 21st century, pre-modern folk landscapes and architecture are a valuable source of knowledge about the harmonious relationship between humans and the environment, about energy efficiency, aesthetics, health, and the formation of a stronger connection between people and the environment.

6 Conclusion

Vernacular landscapes and the new residential architecture of the Boikivshchyna region in the Carpathians are visual mediums that convey specific meanings that help us understand local imaginaries about urbanity/urbanness and modernity,

and also the people's relationship to place**,** traditionality, and authenticity. The Carpathians are contact zones, where local cultures, imaginaries about urbanity/urbanness and modernity, cultures brought from labor emigration and tourism' impact are intertwined and reflected in eclectic landscapes and architecture.

The visual/textual analysis of residential architecture and yards from the perspective of semiotics shows local residents' conspicuous consumption, desire to emphasize social status, and their affiliation to modernity and progress. New architecture shows disregard for the traditions of folk houses construction and place identity, and the spread phenomenon of elsewhereness in architecture and landscape. Such elements of the yard as the presence of lawn, places for rest (gazebo, swings) and decoration (statues, garden figurines) from the perspective of semiotics perform a symbolic function and are markers of higher social class and lifestyle. The size of new houses, often with three stories, shows desire of keeping traditional pre-modern extended family with three generations in one house. Thus, behind the modern exterior of the new house hides the pre-modern desire about extended family. The architectural style and size of new detached houses for locals also express success of hard work of male and female workers abroad and could be considered as "houses of proud." Tourism and cheap heating in the 1990s and 2000s led to the construction of larger homes, including guesthouses for tourists.

New residential architecture, especially homes built by the less affluent, also shows utilitarianism – the desire of creating comfort by reducing time and money for construction and care. From this point of view, current vernacular and pre-modern folk architecture have the same goal and meaning and are similar, though the forms differ. Referring to the new materialism, which brings the agency of non-human actors in constitution of social world, in our case building materials, a clear correlation between pre-modern folk vernacular architecture and current vernacularity is evident. The utilitarianism of pre-modern vernacular architecture and its efficiency – the ratio of availability, durability, comfort, and ease of care, were decisive in the formation of folk landscapes and remain so now in new vernacular architecture of the less wealthy residents. Thus, the contradiction between premodern folk and present-day vernacular architecture is exaggerated as their logic is the same, and with the current growing conspicuous consumption also present in the 19th century in peasant architecture as well, but to a less extent. Creating architectural regulations for local communities with the aim of fully preserving pre-modern architecture is a colonial and subaltern view to the countryside: it is a forced involvement of romanticized and simplified national narratives and determined by the capitalist economy through landscape consumption by urban dwellers who are outsiders. Taking into account the present ecological crisis, the interpretation of pre-modern landscapes with the aim of protecting the environment as natural and upholding cultural values is far more relevant.

Acknowledgement: This paper was written with the financial support of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies' Bukowsky Research Grant funding from the Ihor Roman Bukowsky Sustainable Development Endowment Fund. I am grateful to Mykola Maydanskyi, Alla Martyniuk-Medvetska and Liubomyr Parkhuts for their consultations in the fields of ecology and architecture. Any inaccuracies are my responsibility and are in no way associated with the consultants, who are well-versed in their respective professional areas.

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Endnotes

1 While the concept of 'modernity' is controversial and debatable, this term is used to denote a distinctive period with special characteristics that started in early of the Italian Renaissance and lasted till the end of Industrial revolution. This period is characterized by the desire to rationally understand the world, finding order within and achieving mastery over nature. From this point of view, 'modernity' is synonymous to progress, that affects most areas of life, for instance "from the medicalization of bodies and environments to the rationalization of urban life through the discourse of planning". Science and the pursuit of knowledge was central and manifested itself most strongly in the European enlightenment. John Wylie, "Modernity" in The Dictionary of Human Geography, 5th. ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 471-474.

2 Pre-modern folk traditions are traditions that formed in pre-modern times and predominantly characterize rural societies that have not been influenced by urbanization and industrialization and are heavily dependent on the natural environment, the cyclical changes of the seasons, and agriculture.

3 "Vernacular," Cambridge Dictionary, Accessed April 20, 2023, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/vernacular.

4 Opposite to vernacular are formal and/or regulated landscapes and architecture. The division is conditional and vague as when architects are involved, a degree of vernacularity is also present – architects embody the wishes of the clients.

5 Ben Gerlofs, "Edge city or bust: dismantling a regime of aesthetic governmentality in Oak Brook, Illinois," *Urban Geography* (38:6, 2017), 813-833, https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2016.1168976; James Duncan and Nancy Duncan, *Landscapes of Privilege: The Politics of the Aesthetic in an American Suburb (1st ed.)* (New York: Routledge, 2004), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203505755.

6 However, Ukrainian historical sites are protected by law and architecture regulations exist though their implementation is not always performed on an appropriate level.

7 Based on the works of Peirce Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscape" in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays,* ed. Donald W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 11–32; James Duncan and Nancy Duncan., *Landscapes of Privilege: The Politics of the Aesthetic in an American Suburb (1st ed.)* (New York: Routledge, 2004), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203505755; Donald W. Meinig, "Symbolic Landscapes. Some idealizations of American communities" in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays,* ed. Donald W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 164-192.

8 Since the beginning of the 20th century prior to the cultural turn in the 1980s, the study of landscapes in geography was influenced by Carl Sauer (USA) and the ideas of Paul Vidal de la Blache (France). Attention was paid mainly to traditional or folk landscapes of rural, pre-industrial, pre-modern societies and their centuries-old knowledge, customs and traditions in architecture, land use, agriculture, and farming. This area of study in human geography became known as the Berkeley Landscape School.

9 James Duncan and Nancy Duncan, "Doing Landscape Interpretation" in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography,* ed. DeLyser Dydia et al. (London, UK: SAGE, 2010), 225-247; Ken Foote and Maoz Azaryahu, "Semiotics" in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2009), 89-94; Steve Hoelscher, "Cultural Landscape" in *Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2009), 75-78; John Wylie, "Landscape" in *The Dictionary of Human Geography, 5th. ed.* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 409-411.

10 Paul Groth, "Frameworks for Cultural Landscape Study" in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes,* eds. Paul Groth, Todd W. Bressi (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 1-21; Steve Hoelscher, "Landscape Iconography" in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Amsterdam: Elsevier,

2009), 132-139; Karen M. Morin, "Landscape Perception" in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2009), 140-145; John Wylie, "Landscape" in *The Dictionary of Human Geography, 5th. ed.* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 409-411.

11 European Landscape Convention. 2000, accessed April 20, 2023, https://rm.coe.int/1680080621.

12 Karen M. Morin, "Landscape Perception" in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2009), 140-145.

13 Donald Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000)

14 James Duncan and Nancy Duncan, "Doing Landscape Interpretation" in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography,* ed. DeLyser Dydia et al. (London, UK: SAGE, 2010), 225-247

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 238.

19 Ibid., 238.

20 Ibid. p. 231.

21 Ibid. p. 231.

22 This view was simplistic and characteristic of a new class of urban bourgeoisie who had the time and money to enjoy the countryside, but had no real experience of living in it. Urban residents did not know all the worries of the peasants, for example, regarding the harvest, weather changes or the state of health of their own and domestic animals.

23 Roman Lozynskyi, *Cultural Landscapes of Galicia (Ukraine): The Ethics of Human-Nature Relation* (Lviv: Ladex, 2020), https://archive.org/details/20201213_20201213_0758/mode/2up.

24 The architectural style of Ukrainian Art Nouveau was also widespread in the same and later years in other parts of Ukraine. In particular, it was used by Opanas Slastion in designing schools of the Lokhvytsia Zemstvo in the Poltava region.

25 Roman Lozynskyi, *Cultural Landscapes of Galicia (Ukraine): The Ethics of Human-Nature Relation* (Lviv: Ladex, 2020), https://archive.org/details/20201213_20201213_0758/mode/2up.

26 The overall form of the settlement has an elongated linear character, but the development system of the settlements, i.e., the arrangement of buildings, is irregular.

27 Roman Lozynskyi, *Cultural Landscapes of Galicia (Ukraine)*.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 National Digital Archive in Poland. Distributed under CC0 1.0 Universal / public domain license. Accessed October 15, 2020, https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/en/jednostka/-/jednostka/22929082/obiekty/789274.

31 Ibid.

32 Roman Lozynskyi, *Cultural Landscapes of Galicia (Ukraine): The Ethics of Human-Nature Relation* (Lviv: Ladex, 2020), https://archive.org/details/20201213_20201213_0758/mode/2up.

33 Ibid.

34 Conspicuous consumption was present in Soviet Union, however to a less extent than in Western countries, and it was determined by communist regimes and was different through time.

35 Roman Lozynskyi, *Cultural Landscapes of Galicia (Ukraine): The Ethics of Human-Nature Relation*

(Lviv: Ladex, 2020), https://archive.org/details/20201213_20201213_0758/mode/2up.

36 Ibid.

37 Ken Foote and Maoz Azaryahu, "Semiotics" in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2009), 89-94

38 Kati Lindström, Kull, Kalevi and Palang, Hannes, "Semiotic study of landscapes: An overview from semiology to ecosemiotics," *Sign Systems Studies*, no. 39 (2011):12-36.

39 Paul Groth, "Frameworks for Cultural Landscape Study" in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes,* eds. Paul Groth, Todd W. Bressi (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 1-21.

40 Ibid. p. 15

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid. p. 18

43 P. Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscape," in D. Meinig, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 11-32.

44 Ibid. p. 26

45 Ibid.

46 Karen M. Morin, "Landscape Perception" in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2009), 140-145.

47 Vintila Mihailescu, "Reading a House. Migration, Households and Modernity in Post-communist Rural Romania" in *Brave New World – Romanian Migrants' Dream Houses,* eds. Raluca Betea, Beate Wild (Bucharest: Romanian Cultural Institute, 2016), 48-57.

48 Sonia Hirt, *Iron Curtains Gates, Suburbs, and Privatization of Space in the Post-Socialist City* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley & Sons., 2012).

49 Although in Ukraine and other socialist countries the level of regulations was significant, the rural areas had more freedom of detached houses' architecture style construction as people could negotiate on the spot, and x these practices and networks were inherited after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

50 Vintila Mihailescu, "Reading a House. Migration, Households and Modernity" in *Brave New World – Romanian Migrants' Dream Houses,* eds. Raluca Betea and Beate Wild (Bucharest: Romanian Cultural Institute, 2016), 48-57.

51 William Norton, *Cultural Geography: environments, landscapes, identities, inequalities* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

52 Sonia Hirt, *Iron Curtains Gates, Suburbs, and Privatization of Space in the Post-Socialist City* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley & Sons., 2012).

53 Robin M. Leichenko and William D. Solecki, "Exporting the American Dream: The Globalization of Suburban Consumption Landscapes," *Regional Studies* 39, no. 2 (April 2005), 241–253.

54 Marc Antrop, "Why Landscapes of the Past are Important for the Future," *Landscape and Urban Planning* 70 (2005), 21–34, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2003.10.002.

55 Ukrainian society only in the 20th century has experienced a few changes of states and its political administrations with different socio-economic formations with different ideologies: the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires; nation-states with the development of capitalist economic - Poland in the western part of present-day Ukraine, Romania in the present-day Bukovyna region, and Czechoslovakia in the Transcarpathian region; the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with socialist economic; and a return to market economy in a specific post-socialist form. The rights, responsibilities, property, and land regulations of citizens, including the peasant class, were different under different administrations. They, in turn, formed relations - citizen-administration, periphery-

center, dweller-property, and overall, with land, place and landscape. Through the form of ownership and the level of self-governance and rights of people and communities, their connection and specific practices with the land and landscape were formed. The established practices, values, and understandings are stable and spread for many generations to come, as evidenced by the examples of East and West Germany or former borders of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires in Poland and Ukraine.

56 Hannes Palang, Anu Printsmann, Eva K. Gyuro, Mimi Urbanc, Ewa Skowronek and Witold Woloshyn, "The Forgotten Rural Landscapes of Central and Eastern Europe," *Landscape Ecology* 21 (2006), 347–357, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10980-004-4313-x.