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MEANINGS OF VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE:
A CONTEMPORARY DETACHED RESIDENTIAL HOUSE IN
VILNIUS COUNTY

Doctoral dissertation summary

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INTRODUCTION

The characteristics or problems of the human and society are revealed by local, so-called vernacular, architecture. Different economic, social, political, cultural, and climatic conditions in different areas have led to the development of construction practices that are specific to that area, culture, and ethnic group. These conditions have never been static, but industrialisation, modernisation, and globalisation have caused the strongest and most rapid weakening of architectural traditions, alignment of cultures, and the disappearance of local peculiarities, which had been developing quite consistently over many centuries. Brought about by the scale of these processes, these changes must not only be seen as losses: local phenomena of globalisation have emerged as a response, often drawing on the values of local cultural traditions and heritage in the process of identity building. These are just a few examples that show that the world has not become *a global village*.

Contemporary research is moving away from analysis limited to the collection of data on physical material. This methodological shift was strongly influenced by the structuralist ideas and research of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who saw the house as an object creating a human social organisation (Lévi-Strauss 1988[1979]); in research, architecture has come to be seen as a parallel of language and the human body (Norberg-Schulz 1985: 111; Carsten, Hugh-Jones 1995: 2; Daujotytė-Pakerienė 2019: 17). Since the late 1960s, the world has begun to explore local architecture as the (utilitarian) architecture that best suits the human's needs and reflecting their cultural and ethnic belonging. In Lithuania, such research best corresponds to the widely studied *folk, traditional architecture*. The concepts of vernacular and folk architecture are close not only linguistically, but also in terms of being created 'of and for the people' (Oliver 2006: XXVI): emphasis is placed on the possession

of construction know-how sufficient to enable people, households, or communities themselves to build the buildings they need (Oliver 2006: XXIII, XXVII-XXVIII). The transmission of construction knowledge in this way refers to traditions handed down from generation to generation, which raises the question of how vernacular architecture can be defined in today's post-traditional, technocratic society.

The image of the detached house as a good standard of living is widespread in Western society. The recent experience of the pandemic in society highlighted the importance of the house and home as a personal, private human space. In a time of an ecological crisis, the importance of the house as a safe place should only increase, but, according to Sigurd Bergman, the house and the sustainable architectural solutions that go with it can at the same time contribute to the transition from the Anthropocene to the Ecocene (Bergman 2021: 178).[1] This is also supported by research in Lithuania, which has examined traditional, ethnic architecture in the context of the contemporary climate crisis and has searched for environmentally friendly solutions (Parasonis, Keizikas et al. 2012; Keizikas, Andriušytė, Šiožinytė 2012; Varanauskaitė 2014b; Andriušytė 2018).

Vilnius County[2] was chosen for the study because its architecture has never been seen as a homogeneous vernacular

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[1] The Anthropocene is the geological period of the Earth that records the dominance of human economic activity and its impact on fundamental geochemical processes (Palmer 2020: 358). According to Bergman, the Ecocene is an optimistic scenario of the geological evolution of the Earth in which humans coexist peacefully on the Earth and interact with other life forms (Bergman 2021:150).

[2] As the dissertation focuses on contemporary vernacular architecture, for the purposes of this work the county, an administrative unit with its own centre (the city of Vilnius), was chosen as a contemporary term defining the research area in the broadest terms. The boundaries of counties are established by law, which states that counties consist of municipal territories characterised by common social, economic, and ethno-cultural

architecture due to the historical and political events and, consequently, cultural dynamics. Globalisation has only exacerbated these dynamics. After the restoration of independence, such processes as economic migration from various parts of Lithuania to the capital city, market conditions creating opportunities to build houses that meet people's wishes and possibilities, and, as a consequence, the expansion of the city boundaries, the increasing density of construction and the increasing cost of land in the city and its environs have begun to draw the contours of a distinctive, city-specific form of individual housing construction.

The research problem: local features of contemporary architecture and construction practices of individual detached housing in a location actively affected by globalisation and modernisation processes.

The object of research: contemporary detached dwellings built within the boundaries of Vilnius County after 1990.

The aim of research: exploring the forms and meanings of contemporary individual residential architecture.

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features (Law on Administrative Units and their Boundaries of the Republic of Lithuania, Article 2, 1994[2022]). Among other Lithuanian counties, Vilnius County stands out for its size, history, and multicultural society. It is here that most of the decisions in political and cultural policy important to the people of Lithuania are made. The concepts of the environs and suburbs of Vilnius, which are known and applied in the historiography, were not chosen for this work, because the research areas include the areas within the current boundaries of the city and the slightly more distant areas, up to 50 km away from Vilnius; the suburbs eventually become an inseparable part of the city (Dijokienė 2009). The locations chosen were those that allowed to better reveal the picture of migration, the related architectural change, and the significance of Vilnius as a centre in this process. The transformation of former suburbs into integral parts of the city and the influence of the city on rural areas is also highlighted in the work of Stanislovas Čepinskas, who examines the architecture of the suburbs of Kaunas and the rural areas of Kaunas County in the interwar period (Čepinskas 2021).

Objectives:

1) to introduce the theoretical and methodological framework of the research and, on the basis of this framework, to identify the nature of the relationship between the human and architectural material;

2) to analyse the data collected in the studies on the key architectural elements and trends of contemporary individual houses and to reveal the multicultural peculiarities of vernacular architecture in the context of Lithuania;

3) to clarify the aspects of the detached dwelling house as an object extending the human body that reveals ethnic and cultural differences and the regional distinctiveness of Vilnius County;

4) to reveal the meanings and importance attributed to the contemporary detached house;

5) to provide house configurations that are best suited to today's concepts of eco-friendliness, which would contribute to the trajectory of societal movement from the Anthropocene to the Ecocene.

Relevance and novelty of the theme

The kind of contemporary residential architecture that best suits people's needs has remained an unexplored niche or problem among ethnologists, architectural historians, and architects since the restoration of Lithuania's independence. The problems of this type of construction reveal not only the peculiarities of vernacular architecture. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a new and broader approach to vernacular architecture and its research emerged, which contributes not only to a better understanding of contemporary society but also of monumental architecture (Guillery 2011a: 4). In the broad sense, vernacular architecture is defined as 'built from below', i.e., the design of a building is not only directly influenced by the individual and the architect but also by shared traditions and society (Guillery 2011b: X). Recent research has

begun to examine the processes of globalisation and modernisation that influence the changes in vernacular architecture and has highlighted the importance of the continuity of local building traditions in contemporary society. The terms *new/contemporary/neo-vernacular* architecture have been established to highlight all these aspects (Al-Haroun 2015: 91; Karatzas 2017: 168).

The term of vernacular architecture has not been widely used in Lithuanian historiography, although it was used in the contexts of different architecture (Lukšionytė-Tolvaišienė 2003: 172; Minkevičius 2014: 205; Puodžiūkienė 2014a: 5–6). In Lithuania, vernacular architecture has not been studied in a contemporary context. In studies, vernacular architecture has often been isolated from all buildings designed by architects (Puodžiūkienė 2014a: 5; Oliver 2006: XXIII, XXVII–XXVIII, 4). Since in current construction of detached houses, the contribution of the architect and other building professionals is compulsory and regulated by law,[3] contemporary ethnic or vernacular architecture close to it can no longer be considered in isolation from the architect's contribution to it. Accordingly, the established relationship between the architect and the house owner, their contribution to the architecture of the house – the tangible and intangible symbols that embody the values, cultural and ethnic identities of these two agents – have not been examined. New research into these issues will complement a broader ethnological, anthropological, and interdisciplinary scientific or

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[3] 'For all above-ground structures and those underground (underwater) structures intended for human habitation, work, or other uses (except for underground structures where people do not live or work but are present only for the purpose of maintenance of those structures (engineering networks, technical tunnels, etc.), in addition to the other prescribed parts of the building design, the architectural part of the building design shall be mandatory.' Law on Construction of the Republic of Lithuania, Article 25. 1996[2022].

construction development debate, and, most importantly, will shed light on the realities and identities of people's life.

The **hypothesis** is raised that the individual architecture of contemporary society still reflects the identity and ethnic differences of the inhabitants of the houses and creates the architectural distinctiveness of Vilnius County.

The defended theses

1. In architectural research, scientific anthropological and ethnological discourse did not presuppose a change in the object of research in comparison with the research into traditional, ethnic, vernacular architecture; rather, it helped to reveal the divide between the subject and the object. In this way, the meanings and values of architecture as a constructed environment are revealed.

2. Contemporary individual residential architecture in Vilnius County corresponds to the main features of the concept of vernacular architecture: the principle of the utilitarian nature of the construction is very pronounced; the continuity of certain construction traditions is observed; the house owners are actively involved in the process of construction of their house.

3. Despite the universalisation and global practices brought about by modernisation, contemporary architecture of individual residential houses is characterised by the features of vernacular architecture and ethnic and cultural differences of the people who built it.

4. Construction of detached houses is dominated by the approach of ecology for the benefit of the human, but due to policy implemented and environmental movements, a societal trajectory towards a deeper and more holistic ecology that encompasses the sustainability of the existence of humans across the global ecosystem is observed.

Research methods

The ethnographic field research was carried out using the in-depth interview method: the first questionnaire of structured open-ended questions was administered to 29 house owners[4] in July-October 2016 and August 2022, and the second questionnaire of structured open-ended questions was administered to the architects, who were interviewed between February and July 2016. A total of 44 house owners and 20 architects were interviewed. The search for respondents was carried out through contacts among relatives, acquaintances, on the internet, and by walking and driving around the neighbourhoods of detached houses within the boundaries of the city of Vilnius and Vilnius County. Architects and/or their offices designing detached houses were searched for on the internet; contacts with architects were also found in the circle of relatives, acquaintances, or simply by walking around and looking for architects' offices (mostly in Vilnius). Some of the interviews were unannounced, others were arranged by phone or email. The study used a photo-fixation method to complement and illustrate the research material: the photographs capture the architecture of the owners' houses, the most important parts and details of houses. The selection of the object of the research and the respondents was assisted by the participant observation method, which involved driving around Vilnius County, and by the similar netnography[5] method. In the research, this method was used to monitor social networking groups related to construction, which helped to shed

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[4] For the purposes of the dissertation, the owners of a house are the individuals living in it, who, at the time of the interviews, indicated that they or their parents owned the house.

[5] According to its developer Robert Kozinets, the method of *netnography* (net+ethnography) is based on one basic principle of participatory ethnographic observation, but at the same time it also resorts to digital access, e.g., in the research on social networks. In this way, the difference from face-to-face research carried out through online access, i.e., *online ethnography*, is emphasised (Kozinets 2015: 23).

light on relevant current construction issues. The main data from the field research is complemented by a survey carried out in March 2022, in which five builders were interviewed on the basis of two pre-prepared open-ended questionnaires. The data they provided helped to clarify and supplement several aspects of the research, such as the custom of end-of-construction celebrations, and the phenomenon of the spread of clay and straw houses in contemporary construction.

The collected data were processed and analysed using analytical descriptive, interpretative, historical, and comparative methods. The historical comparative method was used to compare the data of ethnographic research with historiographical discourses and manuscript data. The use of this method helped to reveal the shifts in contemporary residential construction. The analytical descriptive method helps to reveal the trends and diversity of contemporary construction of detached houses, while the comparative method makes it possible to spot the differences in attitudes towards the architecture and construction of detached houses between different societal groups (owners, architects, and builders).

Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three parts, conclusions, a list of references and sources, a list of research papers and conference presentations on the subject of the dissertation.

The introductory part specifies the research problem, defines the object of the work, the aim, the objectives, the relevance and novelty of the work, presents the hypothesis, the defended statements, specifies the methods used in the research, defines the main concepts used in the work, and reviews the historiography related to the object of the work.

The first part introduces the theoretical approach and gives an overview of the ethnographic field research. The second part looks

at contemporary individual residential architecture, the material of the house, its diversity, and the motives for human choice in the context of the development of the detached dwelling house. The third part of the dissertation analyses the contemporary detached house through the trope of the house as a continuation of the human. This part deals with those aspects of the house where the interaction of the human and their mind with the matter of the house can be observed: symbols indicating ethnic and cultural identity, symbolic actions related to the construction of the house and to the stage of settling in it; the concept of ecology and the significance of ecology in the construction of the house are analysed, and the type of the contemporary individual eco-house that is best suited to a holistic notion of ecology is sought for.

Key concepts used in the dissertation

Contemporary detached dwelling houses are single flat dwellings built after 1990 to individual or customised standard architectural designs. It also includes reconstructed houses, where the building materials, architectural and design solutions are in line with these construction trends. Due to lack of individuality, this concept does not include typical private (single-flat, semi-detached) houses in neighbourhoods (e.g., 'Pušyno slėnis', 'Smėlyno kvartalas' in Vilnius, 'Gulbinų šilas' in Vilnius district, and the like) which are being built by legal entities (property developers). They are designed by architects or their teams, and the owner's ethnic, national, cultural, or other conceptual contribution to the exterior architecture of the house is considered to be barely, if at all, visible. For the same reasons, a conscious attempt was made not to interview the owners of semi-detached dwellings that are often joined by a garage wall (one such owner was interviewed).

Traditional architecture is understood as building practices that have evolved over time and have become part of the local ethnic and cultural identity. Although they have many common points, the concepts of traditional and ethnic architecture, including culture, are not identical. Traditional architecture is a term used to describe construction in rural areas up to the mid-twentieth century.

The concept of *traditional architecture* is not clearly defined in works dealing with architecture; in Lithuanian historiography, the term is often identified with Lithuanian *wooden*, *rural* or *ethnic* architecture (Jomantas 2002; Lazauskaitė 2011: 402; Puodžiūkienė 2014a: 5; Bertašiūtė, Karvelytė Balbierienė 2015; Stanikūnas 2016). During the Soviet period, such architecture was often described as *peasant*, *folk* (Bielinskis ir kt. 1957; Čerbulėnas 1958; Žilėnas 1958; Butkevičius 1964b; Šešelgis ir kt. 1965), but in today's historiography, the term *folk* architecture is avoided because of its connotations with Soviet society and the *working class* (Puodžiūkienė 2014a: 5).

The chronological boundaries of traditional architectural research do not coincide either. Some scholars study buildings from ancient times to the early twentieth century, when architect-designed projects proliferated (Puodžiūkienė 2014a: 5). Others studied buildings constructed up to the middle of the twentieth century, when consistent development of traditional culture was interrupted by industrialisation and globalisation (Andriušytė 2010: 120; Bertašiūtė, Andriušytė 2011: 14). Still others examined construction traditions covering the period from the second half of the nineteenth century, after the abolition of serfdom, to the mid-twentieth century, when 'the direction of ethno-social […] processes in Lithuania not only diminished the ethnicity of material production techniques and technology, but also narrowed down the frame of the whole material culture of the ethnos as the object of ethnology' (Čiubrinskas 1993: 2).

Ethnic architecture reveals the construction by different ethnic groups living in Lithuania using various building materials. It is based on the provision that in the context of Lithuania, ethnic architecture includes not only the building practices of the Lithuanian ethnic group but also those of other ethnic groups that lived here (Puodžiūkienė 2014a: 5). In this work, ethnic architecture is considered as not having a strictly defined chronological framework, which implies the possibility of studying it as a contemporary object. Ethnic architecture differs from traditional architecture, but in many respects the concept of ethnic architecture coincides with the term of vernacular architecture; they are also identified in the works of architectural researchers (Puodžiūkienė 2014a: 5).

Vernacular architecture is architecture that is locally defined and implies certain peculiarities and common features due to the locally prevailing social, cultural, economic, and climatic conditions. According to Irena Regina Merkienė, the arbitrary territory of local culture is defined not on the basis of size but on the basis of the relationship between the object researched and the geographical context (Merkienė 2007: 40). This work draws on notions of vernacular architecture which, despite their differences, view vernacular architecture as a utilitarian construction typical of ordinary people rather than public and/or grand design[6] buildings (Rapoport 1969: 2; 5; Norberg-Schulz 1985: 94; Oliver 2006: 4). For the purposes of this dissertation, the term of vernacular architecture is considered to be close to ethnic architecture as neither of them are strictly defined by their chronological boundaries. In this work, the slight differentiating element is that unlike ethnic architecture,

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[6] Such architecture is considered to reflect the culture of the elite, whose function is to impress, to show the power and good taste of the owner and/or the expertise of the building professionals (architects, designers) (Rapoport 1969: 2).

vernacular architecture is based not on an ethnic group or groups but on a defined location.

Symbolic actions are all the acts that take place during the construction of the house and the move and settling in the new house. These actions are associated with the beliefs that they will lead to a smooth construction process, a strong and durable building, and happy, healthy, and wealthy inhabitants. Symbolic actions are analysed on the basis of the construction customs studied by Vytis Čiubrinskas, which were characterised by their ritual nature, pre-Christian and Christian faiths (Čiubrinskas 1990: 123; 1991: 59-60; 123; 1993: 1–2). In this work, a symbolic action is also analysed as a tradition that is inherited and passed on in contemporary society.

Ecology in this work encompasses all construction solutions that help to implement the ideas to reduce pollution, promote biodiversity, and improve human health, which have emerged as a response to the phenomena identified as the climate crisis. In this work, the concept of ecology is seen as encompassing environmental movements, the concept of sustainable development, which is linked to the policy of a holistically perceived ecology.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The dissertation research revealed how contemporary detached houses in Vilnius County distinguish the architecture of the area, which corresponds to the notion of vernacular architecture. The matter of the construction, which is described as 'built from below', reveals the characteristics of the individual who built it: their ethnic and cultural identity, the needs of modern life, etc. The concept of vernacular architecture as responsive to human needs underlies the relationship between the human and architecture. Such detached houses in Vilnius County are built despite the technocratic nature of society and the architect's mandatory, regulated contribution to contemporary construction.

The architectural peculiarities were revealed through the use of *emic* and *etic* perspectives and methodological approach, which made it possible to focus not only on the material object of the research but also on the residential dwellings that are in line with the human-architectural relationship. In summary, the selection criteria applied to the owners of contemporary detached houses in the study helped to select those respondents the majority of whom were actively involved in the process of construction of their own house by taking part in the design, construction, and finishing of the house. Family members, relatives, and friends are often involved in the process, and in this way the existing construction knowledge is taken up, passed on, and put into practice.

2. A multicultural society determines that when looking for a location to buy a plot of land, not only the natural but also the cultural environment becomes significant, and the owner chooses the environment that best suits their identity, or, conversely, avoids an area that is associated with the *other*. Pragmatic reasons often lead to the choice of an existing, inherited plot, but in such cases the links of the area to parents, grandparents, and their homes are also

important. The latter motive is most typical of the respondents of Polish origin, whose places of birth and of residence coincided with or were within the boundaries of the historical Vilnius region. Informants of Lithuanian origin avoided settling in areas densely populated by Poles and Belarusians. Multiculturalism also leads to a dual nature of the relationship with the environment, which is reflected in the architecture of the house: a house that stands out from the surroundings seems to declare that the owners of the house do not identify themselves with the dominant, usually cultural, constructed environment and, conversely, the architectural expression that is less dissonant with the surroundings is chosen more often in the environment of preference.

The benefits of modern life offered by the city remain important to people: the respondents stressed the importance of transport and other urban communications, and the city remains an important location of services and work even in areas further away from the centre. The blurring boundaries between the urban and the rural, the mixing of the functions of these areas in the suburbs of Vilnius and in settlements further afield is illustrated by cases of repeated migration, when people leave their flats in the city for more remote areas closer to nature. Since the restoration of independence, the boundaries of the city of Vilnius have expanded to include the areas of allotment gardens and former villages. The intensive process of migration in Vilnius County has led to rising real estate prices, which emphasises the importance of the house as *a roof over one's head*.

The rational nature of construction influenced the style of the houses. Despite the architect's role, with limited finances, style is given a secondary role, thus maintaining a divide from the high-design buildings created by architects that are intended to showcase one's status. In the ethnographic field research, the majority of respondents, tended to emphasise the utilitarian qualities of the house rather than its stylistic qualities, and only some respondents

took it upon themselves to evaluate the style of their own house. The most common styles attributed to houses were rural, contemporary/modern, and Scandinavian, and in a few cases the style was defined as in-between traditional/rural and contemporary. Due to historical circumstances, migration, and mobility, an important part of the stylistic diversity of Vilnius County is made up of houses identified with *other* cultures: not only those of Lithuania Minor, but also Slavic and Scandinavian.

Both in rural and in urban areas, masonry remains the dominant technology in the county replacing log (timber) construction, which prevailed until the middle of the twentieth century: this is shown by the different types of blocks most often chosen for the construction and the bricklaying skills often possessed by owners. Nonetheless, wood is given great importance in construction as this raw material is romanticised due to nostalgic feelings: for the informants, wood is associated with warmth, cosiness, and their parental home. Architects tend to emphasise the possibilities of the use of wood and its prospects for use in the façades of the building, while the owners of the houses stress the importance of the choice of wood for the interior. The best qualities of wood in house architecture are increasingly being taken up by the choice of timber-framed houses, which often use natural materials in their finishes. The prevalence of timber-frame construction results in a persistent opposition between wood and masonry. Timber frame construction meets many of the already established needs of contemporary society: it is an optional extra during the reconstruction of a house, it is a technology that allows houses to be built very quickly, and it meets energy efficiency requirements. Houses of small floor area are easy to build with one's own hands; by choosing to insulate them with straw and plaster with clay, the cost of building the walls is minimised, and the health and environmental aspects are realised. Despite the lack of construction knowledge, the owners of such houses were characterised not only

by the creativity that emerged during the construction process, but also by a distinctive worldview that led to the choice of such a structure.

The choice of the form of the house plan and the roof structure is dominated by ethnic, local construction traditions: rectangular house plans and gabled roof structures. Such a choice is based not on a conscious continuity of construction traditions but rather on pragmatic reasons such as the availability of relevant building knowledge and the desire not to stand out from the environment, which is particularly important in protected areas. Gable roofs dominate due to the belief that this form of roof provides the best protection against precipitation. Yet even here structural changes are observed, which have been brought about by the influence of the *other* culture and the emergence of new building materials and technologies to ensure the impermeability of the walls of the house. Due to the extension of the walls of the ground floor perpendicularly, some of the gabled roofs are built much flatter, thus creating more functional attic spaces. The structural importance of the roof has been reduced and the architectural diversity of the roof – and of the house as a whole – has increased with the advent of measures for better protection of the walls of the house from precipitation. While the durability of roofing materials remains important, they are also chosen for their aesthetic qualities. Although seldom chosen, such roofing materials as straw, tiles, and roofing shingle are often romanticised and often identified with eco-friendliness. The leaning towards traditionalism is reflected not only in the choice of these types of roof coverings, but also ones that imitate them, such as the corrugated metal sheeting that was prevalent among the houses surveyed. As in the case of decoration, there is a distinction between a tendency towards traditionalism and modernity or minimalism, and in the latter case steel roofing is chosen.

The cultural, social, economic, and technological changes in Vilnius County are also reflected in the change and proliferation of other structural elements. One of them is terraces, which have become common in contemporary architecture of detached houses and, one the one hand, have become one of the main places of relaxation, and on the other, where various household chores are carried out, meals are eaten, and, in the summertime, they also serve as an extension of the social function of living rooms. From the architectural point of view, the various structural elements of a house are of great aesthetic importance, often contributing to a more homogeneous house plan or, conversely, adding variety to it. Despite the changes in architectural forms, terraces and other structural elements of the house take over the former functions of the porches and shelters, which shows that construction traditions are changing with new elements taking over the functions of the old ones. The overlapping functions of the structural elements of the house, for example, when balconies are placed at the entrance to the house and serve as a shelter, show that contemporary construction in Vilnius County continues to follow such ideas as 'form follows function', 'less is more'. The architecture designed meets human needs of a comfortable life but is severely constrained by financial limitations.

Contemporary, modern architecture does not abound in decorative elements. The structural elements take over the decorative functions of the house. Matching or contrasting colours are chosen for wall finishes. Elements of Baltic, ethnic, and rural culture, which are classified as traditionalism in architectural theory, were found during research. These stylised modernised elements reveal the notion of a *tradition invented* by humans.

3. It should be stressed that contemporary vernacular architecture is characterised by distinct symbols that reveal different ethnic and cultural identities of the house owners. Contrary to the beliefs of the scholars who studied traditions at the end of the twentieth century,

modernisation and globalisation have not abolished the ethnicity of material culture, nor have they diminished its significance as an object of ethnology. One of the most striking symbols is the use of urban and manorial details, often characteristic of masonry architecture, such as decorative balconies and columns, in the construction of the houses of the Polish respondents. In the construction of houses of other ethnic groups, these elements are characterised by more modest architectural expression and functionality. Cases of consciously declared identity in architecture were rare. Symbols of identity included signs of ethnic Baltic culture and national symbols. Lithuanian and Polish respondents decorate their houses with wooden decorative elements typical of ethnic local architecture, for example, lintels and shutters. In the exteriors of houses, greater importance is given not to the display of one's own identity but to distancing oneself from the *other*, *foreign* culture: the Lithuanian respondents emphasised their desire not to identify themselves with Slavic, especially Polish, culture.

The choice of house colours has become a distinction between *the self* and *the other,* and another distinct *material register* of a person's ethnic and cultural identity. Vibrant colours are attributed to Slavic, in particular Polish culture. For Lithuanians, such colours on the facades of houses often caused cognitive dissonance. Contemporary construction of detached houses in Vilnius County retains the colours of nature that prevailed in ethnic culture, in the ethnographic regions of Dzūkija and Aukštaitija: yellow and brown, although identified as traditional colours, are usually used in combinations with other colours in the facades. They were chosen by respondents of different nationalities, which is why such a choice is not considered to be a continuity of the traditions of the ethnic Lithuanian culture, but rather of the local cultural tradition. Due to the architectural influences of Scandinavia and Lithuania Minor, pastel and rich colours, such as dark red, became common. Scandinavian minimalism becomes a counterbalance not only to the

widespread Slavic culture, but also to the manifestations of traditionalism in architecture, thus reinforcing the fact that in architecture, identity can be shown or created not only retrospectively but also prospectively, which can be realised through the concept of a broader region.

4. In Vilnius County, a wreath of completion is still often placed over buildings during construction. There has been a marked increase in its hanging, although the symbolic meanings of this tradition are often no longer known. Money is placed into and on the foundations, although the respondents were more inclined to attribute this practice to the prerogative of builders, just like the hanging of the wreath. The functions of symbolic actions as protection against disasters and as a guarantee of a good life have disappeared in contemporary society. Such practices are often labelled as superstitions, fantasies, and games, while symbolic actions also survive in the form of the oral tradition. Although the ritual actions of settling in a new house have withered away, the function of the housewarming as social recognition and a celebration of the completion of the construction of a house or part of a house has remained important to people. Due to intensive migration processes, the local tradition fuses with the features of symbolic actions typical of other ethnographic regions and with *other* culture. No pronounced differences in the symbolic actions among the representatives of different ethnic groups in Vilnius County were observed.

The research shows that ecological ideas are becoming increasingly important in the sphere of detached dwellings and that ecological decisions in this field have already become an important part of human health (the human body). Drawing on different societal groups (architects, owners of detached houses), the *emic* of these groups and researcher's *etic* perspective, and the methodological section of ecology as coming 'top-down' and 'from below' revealed that the concept of ecology varies among house

owners and architects encompassing multiple and often contradictory aspects, but that Arne Naess's division of ecology into *shallow* and *deep* forms the basis of a discernible trajectory towards ecological awareness. Influenced not only by people's individual awareness, but also by policy imposed 'from above', ecological ideas are beginning to approach the norms of the social order. In Vilnius County, the image of an eco-friendly house based on the choice of traditional building materials is evident among the respondents. Here, as in the grand narrative of Lithuania, wood plays an important role: wooden building materials and other natural materials (clay, stone) are the ones most closely identified with ecology.

5. In summary, unambiguously ecological solutions in construction are not possible. This is due not only to differences in attitudes towards ecology, but also to environmental conditions, which vary in different locations. Depending on such conditions, even the natural building materials that the respondents most often identify with ecology are questioned from the ecological point of view in terms of their durability and the cost of transportation. An analysis of the ecological practices identified by the house owners and architects showed that solutions friendly to human health and the environment are applied at all stages of the construction process – in design, construction, and exploitation. An approach to ecology, which is based not only on gaining benefit from nature but also on conserving all natural resources and the application of ecological ideas at all stages of the construction and life cycle of the house considering local conditions can significantly contribute to the societal shift towards the Ecocene.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS ON THE THEME OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Varanauskaitė, Viktorija. 2014. Architektūros modelis „Nuo medžio prie mūro" remiantis Lietuvos didžiuoju naratyvu [The architectural model 'from wood to masonry' according to the grand narrative], *Logos* 79: 213–222.

2. Varanauskaitė, Viktorija. 2014. Ekologinė statyba ir senųjų statybos tradicijų sintezė [Ecological construction and the synthesis of the old construction traditions], *Gimtasai kraštas* 7: 48–55.

3. Varanauskaitė, Viktorija. 2014. Molio statiniai: ar egzistuoja visada alternatyva buvusios statybos tradicijos? [Clay buildings: do alternative construction traditions exist?], *Tradicija ir dabartis* 9: 112–124.

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CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS ON THE THEME OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Varanauskaitė, Viktorija. 2015. 'Detecting National Identity in Architecture's Patterns of Lithuania', 11th Conference on Baltic Studies in Europe 'Traditions, Transitions, Transfers, 6–10 September 2015, Marburg (Germany).

2. Varanauskaitė, Viktorija. 2015. 'Architektūra ir naratyvai: XIX a. pab. - XX a. pr. Lietuvos intelektualų indėlis' [Architecture and Narratives: Contribution of Lithuanian Intellectuals of the late Nineteenth-Early Twentieth Century], international academic conference 'Jaunieji humanitarai ir Kazimieras Būga' [Young Humanities Scholars and Kazimieras Būga], 26-27 October 2015, Vilnius.

3. Varanauskaitė V. 2016. 'Etniškumo tyrimai šiuolaikinėje Lietuvos architektūroje' [Ethnicity Research in Contemporary Lithuanian Architecture], 1st National Conference of Doctoral Students 'Veritas Ethnologica' 28 January 2016, Kaunas.

4. Varanauskaitė, Viktorija. 2016. 'Finding the Other in the Contemporary Society: Cases of Architecture', 6th International Academic Young Folklorists' Conference 'Us and Them: Exploring the Margins',1-3 June 2016, Vilnius.

STUDY VISITS

1. 20-23 August 2015, Cesis, Latvia. Participation in 'Baltic Summer School of Anthropology' themed 'Applied Anthropology'. Lectures, seminars and workshops on applied anthropology.

2. 4-5 November 2016, Tartu, Estonia. Participation in the international symposium 'Why the World Needs Anthropologists: Humanise IT'. Lectures, participation in the practical workshop 'Expanding Ethnographic Boundaries by Cross-disciplinary Collaboration with Design and Creative Methods'.

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Doctoral dissertation summary

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