

THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

IDENTITY THROUGH MATERIAL – local materials in contemporary dwelling architecture, on examples from selected European mountain areas

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The subject of this doctoral dissertation is the material-identity relationship on the example of dwelling architecture in chosen European mountainous areas. The proposed approach to the issue of architectural identity aims to present an alternative view to the dominant approach focused on formal aspects of architecture, underlying the importance of building culture (*Baukultur*) continuity. This approach also facilitates the comparative analyse of examples set in different contexts like Polish Carpathian arc and selected Alpine areas.

Mountainous regions, especially pressed by mass tourism, are today threatened by a certain *incoherency* in the method of using traditional building materials caused by the domination of the visual form over the structural logic of the building. This indicates a strong tendency to maintain the picturesque imagery of contemporary mountain architecture, even at the cost of losing its authenticity, integrity and coherence.

These observations, supported by the author's study of user experiences, raised the research questions: How are traditional, *local materials* used today in the architecture of mountainous areas? How have they changed? What does the term *local building material* mean today? Does the way they are used actually still support identity of local architecture? What conditions must be met for *local materials* to act as a carrier of identity in the contemporary architecture of mountainous areas?

Thus, the claim of the thesis formulated in this dissertation reads as follows:

Integrity in the use of *local materials*, considered as a tool of coherent and adequate meaningful narration, is the value which supports the identity of contemporary *dwelling* architecture in European mountain areas.

To answer this scientific problem the contemporary architecture of two outstanding, exemplary Alpine areas: Vorarlberg in Austria and the canton of Grisons in Switzerland has been closely examined and compared with architecture emerging in the Polish mountains.

The phenomenological method has been adopted, supplemented with a narrative approach and qualitative studies. The research was conducted based on numerous study trips and field visits; all projects selected for case studies were visited by the author. The narrative method of analysing contemporary architecture uniting its functional and aesthetic aspects, sensory experience, emotions, meanings, memory and history and a priori aspects of cognition, accentuated the narrative potential of contemporary *local materials*.

Discussing the relationship between *material*, *identity* and *dwelling* in architecture served as a basis for further analysis and facilitated research perspective inspired by the *material in depth* concept proposed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

In first place the analysis of the identity features of archetypal *dwelling* architecture on examples from selected areas was conducted, confirming the assumption that, despite significant difference in contexts, the archetypal architecture of these regions had a common denominator resulting from similar conditions and pastoral culture. This concluded in a synthesis defining a set of features that constitute the essence of the old archetypal architecture of mountain areas, paying attention to the role of the material as a carrier of its identity. Both in the Carpathian and Alpine areas, the old architecture was simple, authentic and economically optimized, its artistic form resulted directly from the adopted structure and functional purposes, emphasizing the unity and integrity of the whole.

Subsequently the transformation process of archetypal forms into stereotyped images and ideas was analysed. A similar process concerned the Alpine and Carpathian area. Under the illusionist image of a mountain idyll, picturesque forms of invented traditions were formed: *the Swiss chalet, the Tyrolean house or the Zakopane style villa*. Traditional forms have been petrified over time, manifesting themselves in the contemporary pseudo-stylish, kitsch and camp architecture of mountain resorts, which largely fits into the contemporary aesthetics of hyperreality.

In the second part the analysis of the *material - identity* relationship in contemporary dwelling architecture was carried out using examples from selected mountain areas. The contemporary meaning of the concept of *local materials* was redefined, taking into account the phenomenon of *material transformation*. An outline of a certain typology was proposed based on the use of local materials and modern technologies, as well as trends regarding the evolution of the idea of a *mountain house*. In the study the research *triangulation method* was adopted, with the aim of gaining diverse perspective on the subject. The first preliminary study based on the user-experience methodology analysed direct user accounts - phenomenographies collected in the form of in-depth interviews. This study verified theoretical considerations and issues related to stereotypical images and the idea of a *mountain house*.

The second study including comparative analysis of selected examples of approximately 90 modern houses from the selected research areas was used to outline certain typologies in the use of local materials and technologies, the phenomenon of *material transformation* and trends in the evolution of the idea of a *mountain house*.

The third study consisted of a detailed analysis of 12 case study houses. The examples have been grouped according to the key themes of their meaningful narration. Examples of modern houses in the Polish Carpathians and selected Alpine regions served to verify how modern architecture can possibly transcend stereotypes and go back to its roots.

The analysis used the method of narrative meaning, paying attention to the narrative potential of the material as a carrier of architectural identity. The analysed examples of contemporary architecture were verified towards previously determined archetypal set of features. These studies confirmed the contemporary role of local material, used as a tool of a coherent and adequate meaningful narration, supporting the identity of contemporary architecture of *dwelling* in mountain areas.

Key words: mountain architecture, *dwelling*, *local materials*, identity, integrity, *Baukultur*, mountain house, archetype, invented tradition, new simplicity, new sensuality, modern alpine architecture

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