

Identity of historical areas of a city: interaction between nature and man

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Abstract. The article discusses the preservation of urban peculiarity, visual uniqueness and cultural identity in the world affected by globalisation processes. First of all, the urban identity as such is discussed, a study of literary sources helps identify factors that shape urban identity. Tangible and intangible factors are distinguished. Second, in order to reveal the problems of identification and fostering of the identity of historical parts of cities and to verify the urban identity shaping methodology described in this article, historical suburbs of Vilnius in the southeast part of the Old Town are analysed in detail. The performed research of peculiarities of the urban fabric of the historical suburbs has showed very vividly that both the man made physical environment and the features of the natural environment present are significant for urban identity. In the studied suburbs, expressive terrain, also a river and its valley play a significant role for the formation and identity of a place. Man made built-up, ensembles, street routes and even the built-up function adapted to natural conditions. The close interaction between natural conditions and human activities has led to the identity of these historical territories. It is noted that urban identity should not be perceived as unchanging – it is a process that is shaped rather deliberately. Urban design, architecture and landscape architecture are activities that help create urban identity.

Keywords: natural environment, man made environment, urban identity, historical suburbs, Vilnius

Introduction

In the context of the globalization process worldwide, more and more attention is paid to the preservation of the urban peculiarity, visual uniqueness and cultural identity. Urban identity is a complex, multi-layered set of features that a city acquired gradually, consistently developing in the course of history. The history of urbanism reveals that urban identity formed naturally, spontaneously, as a result of local processes [5]. Achievements in various fields, industrialisation and globalisation have created new opportunities for urban development, but at the same time also produced certain universal features that have led to similarity of cities [3]. Therefore, recently, the urban discourse has seen a comeback, in a broader sense, of certain notions of natural and cultural phenomena that were pushed into the margins of academic research during the period of the flourishing of modern scientific worldviews. One of them is the urban identity. It is not enough for a harmonious city to meet globalisation requirements, it is equally important to meet the higher socio-cultural needs of urban users. Thus, the issue of urban identity is becoming more and more relevant, as modern urbanism and architecture face the challenge how to preserve urban identity, at the same time meeting the contemporary needs of a global society.

Vilnius, as many post-socialist cities, sees a dual trend in urban development – almost uncontrolled urban sprawl and intensive construction in the central part of the city and even in some of its historical core. Construction in the city centre creates a tension between the trends of the new built-up and fashions affected by the globalisation

phenomenon and the survival of the urban heritage values. The article briefly touches upon the impact of globalization on the similarity of cities. A study of literary sources allows to highlight factors that shape urban identity. Theoretical ideas and hypotheses are illustrated with the results of the research of identity of historical parts of Vilnius city. The authors note that both man made physical environment and features of the existing natural situation are significant for urban identity.

Impact of globalisation on urban identity change

Globalisation in a general sense is a complex phenomenon that covers a wide range of areas, such as economy, culture, social life, politics, and forms the worldview of at least the last fifty years. The attitude to the phenomenon of globalisation is dual: on the one hand, it is an inevitable consequence of the processes of technological progress, which brings economic and political benefits. On the other hand, globalisation leads to deterioration of local, traditional cultures [9]. Three waves of globalisation are distinguished, which were determined by certain fundamental changes in the society [26]:

- 1) the first industrial revolution (the 19th century to 1914) – standardization of the production process;
- 2) urbanisation (period after WW2) – urban development due to the demographic boom;
- 3) the third industrial revolution – rapid technological development, development of new communication technologies, computerisation.

These achievements, on the one hand, have led to the progress of humanity, on the other hand, they

triggered the emergence of a global culture that diminished the importance of local cultures. According to R. Robertson who researched the globalisation phenomenon, globalisation happens when a larger and stronger culture meets a weaker one. Meeting of global influences with local traditions leads to certain changes in local culture, levelling [21]. Increased mobility allows one to feel the spatial closeness and this affects not only the contraction of space and time, but also the homogenisation of cultures. Places that are far away from each other become easily accessible and, in the long run, culturally close. The possibilities of closeness in the context of globalisation lead to the emergence of uniformity – for the first in history, the world becomes a unified social and cultural environment [5].

Globalisation affects different spheres of life, architecture and urban environment are not an exception. As a result of the first and second waves of globalisation, an international style formed in architecture that existed from 1925 to 1965. This architectural style was characterized by the application of universal, homogeneous principles in architecture and urban planning. Realising the influence of global culture, M. McLuhan said in 1962 that “electro-magnetic discoveries have recreated the simultaneous ‘field’ in all human affairs so that the human family now exists under conditions of a ‘global village’” [17]. Globalization also promotes the economic growth of cities and urban competition in the areas of urbanism and architecture. As a result of competition, cities see rising of skyscrapers, which have little to do with urban identity [8].

The critical awareness of the consequences of globalisation for cities has led to the emergence of a movement contrary to the international style – critical regionalism. The main idea of this movement is that local culture is not an unchanging given, but rather a deliberately shaped phenomenon. The survival of authentic cultures depends on our ability to preserve the essential forms of regionalist culture, while at the same time mastering the benefits of global culture. A key feature of critical regionalism is a contextual approach to the environment. The architecture that reflects the ideas of critical regionalism is created taking into account the local features – urban context, topography, local materials, history and other features characteristic of a place [8].

As the article is illustrated with a study of the historical parts of the city of Vilnius, it is worth noting that in Lithuania globalisation processes began much later than in Western Europe. The less developed economy has led to a slower urbanization of Lithuanian cities, therefore architectural movements that prevailed in Western Europe and

were linked to the deterioration of urban identity caused by globalisation, have largely not taken hold in Lithuania. The identity of Lithuanian cities was most broken by modernist urban planning, which applied typical, universal features of urban planning and architecture. As a response to the typical modernist architecture and urban planning of the second half of the 20th century that were destroying identity, examples of contextual urbanism were being created – one of them is the Lazdynai district project (architects V. Brėdikis, V. E. Čekanauskas, 1964–1967). The humane approach to nature, organic character, the search for the optimal scale were opposed to the then prevailing typical urban planning [16].

Factors that shape urban identity

As it has been mentioned, the problem of urban identity is becoming more and more relevant, as modern urbanism and architecture face the challenge how to preserve the local spirit but at the same time to achieve the result that meets the needs of a modern global society. The main idea of critical regionalism, which has been already discussed, and of other movements, which were aware of the negative influence of globalisation on the physical form of cities, is shaping and fostering of urban identity.

Identity is a multi-layered, complex phenomenon, characteristic of various fields of activity. Various definitions of this phenomenon are found in literature: in a general sense, it is a set of features of any system that sets it aside from other systems [14]. However, it is recognized that the concept of identity, given the multi-layered and interdisciplinary character of this phenomenon, is still not understood in the same way. The modern definition of identity first started to be used in social sciences in the middle of the 20th century. This concept was related to the interpretation of personality identity and described different social groups distinguished by certain features – belonging to ethnic, political, cultural and similar groups [10]. The importance of identity was soon realized not only in social but also in other sciences and the importance of the physical environment for the perception of identity of a person started to be discussed [5]. The identity of a place, according to this interpretation, must be shaped as a socio-cultural dimension, in which a person (community) can identify himself (itself) [12].

A similar approach to shaping of urban identity is revealed by Ch. Alexander and co-authors, who note factors shaping urban identity of a territory – continuity, uniqueness, significance, compatibility, cohesiveness [1] (Figure 1). The authors emphasize that these factors apply not only to urban fabric and the expression of its physical form but also to the

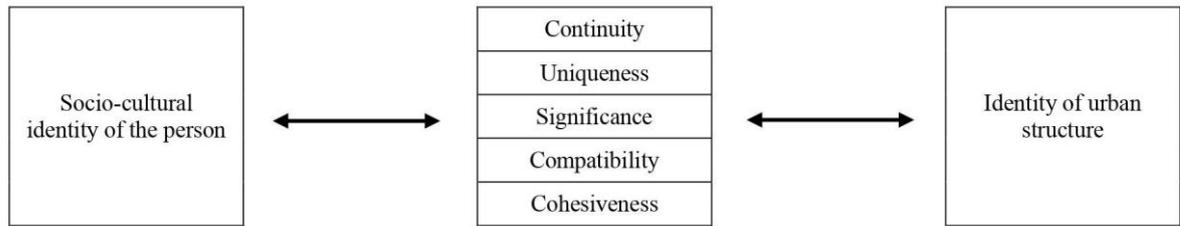


Fig. 1. Factors shaping the urban identity of a territory and socio-cultural identity of the person [prepared by the authors referring to [1]]

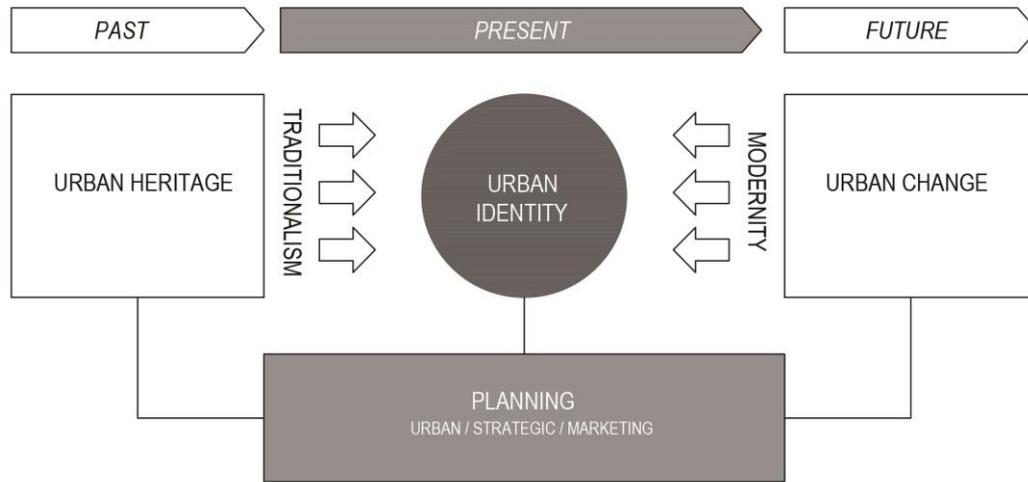


Fig. 2. Urban identity as a tool for urban planning and urban design [5]

resident of that place, i.e. how he identifies himself in a particular urban structure [12]. It is emphasized that identity shaping factors can be applied not only in urban planning, creating a physical form of the environment, but also in the field of social sciences. According to the author, identity of a place can be formed only if cooperation of these two areas is ensured [12].

In a deeper perspective, urban identity can be perceived not as a physical dimension allowing persons or communities to self-identify, but also as a distinct phenomenon characterizing the urban structure, which formed in the long-term development of the urban structure [5]. Urban identity, in this regard, describes the uniqueness of the city itself or its part in the context of other cities (their parts). Modern perception of identity of physical structure of the city is linked to the definition of *genius loci* that goes back even to the times of the Ancient Rome. *Genius loci* (Latin) is a protective spirit that accompanies a person throughout his life and determines the character and destiny of the person. This spirit protected not only people but also cities [19]. The modern concept of the local spirit came from this myth of the Ancient Rome. According to C. Norberg-Shulz, a place is

a space with a certain character. The local spirit is the intangible characteristic of a space, which makes it a place, and architecture is a means of highlighting the local spirit [19]. The works of C. Norberg-Schulz drew a line between the abstract space which is not present anywhere but exists at the same time and the specific expression of such a space that is perceived by use of senses in a certain place, which can be identified and described, distinguished from other places referring to certain characteristics that are specific only of that place [22]. Ph. Sheldrake, English researcher of place, memory and city creation issues, says: “<...> the ‘World’ is not simply a neutral collection of raw data but is something we interpret and to which we give meaning. <...> ‘Place’ is a fundamental category of the way we experience our human existence. <...> ‘Place’ is interpreted space defined in relation to communities of people or to human significance more broadly” [23]. It can be said that urban identity becomes a tool for contextual but inevitable urban changes (Figure 2).

In terms of the concept of urban identity, it is important to identify the definition of city image and the differences between these two concepts. The concept of city image is associated more with the

TABLE 1

Factors that shape urban identity [prepared by the authors referring to 24; 27]

Factors that shape urban identity		
Tangible		Intangible
Natural	Anthropogenic	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Climate ▪ Geography ▪ Topography ▪ Hydrography ▪ Vegetation ▪ Surface materials and textures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Network of streets ▪ Land holdings: boundaries of possessions, land use types ▪ Public urban spaces and their systems (squares, green squares, parks, gardens) ▪ Built-up: buildings (their form, scale, details), building complexes, built-up structure ▪ Archaeological sites ▪ Monuments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Historical events, commemorations, celebrations, festivals ▪ Traditional culture ▪ Religion (myths, rites, beliefs) ▪ Traditional practices (crafts, local construction traditions) ▪ Value system ▪ Rules (legal regulation, customs) ▪ Economy

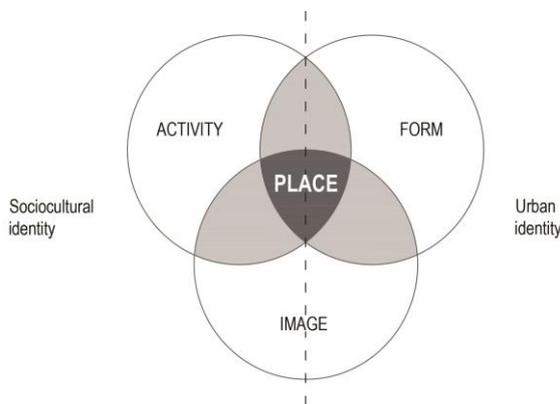


Fig. 3. Groups of identity shaping factors [prepared by the authors referring to [4, 18]

impact of the physical form of the city on the external environment, while urban identity is a phenomenon that shapes the internal structure of the city. Urban identity is a more complex phenomenon than city image [11], because it covers not only the physical form of the city, but also the intangible aspects of the perception of the city.

The modern concept of urban identity is based on identification of identity shaping factors [5]. Literature highlights various factors that shape the identity of the area, including land management schemes, especially those formed at an early stage of development, types of architectural objects, the structure of the local economic system, features of the natural environment, topography of the area, main transport corridors and/or accesses to the business districts in the city centre and elsewhere, also important sights [20]. Thus, identity should be perceived not only as certain features of the physical form of the urban fabric, but also as meanings that arise in the historical development of the city. In summary, the identity of the urban structure is mostly shaped by its physical form – built-up that creates certain space parameters and an exceptional atmosphere [19]. However, in addition to physical factors, intangible factors must also be pointed out – history, traditions, culture, memory and other

subjectively perceived features inherent in development of the city [13].

This interpretation is basically supported by John Montgomery [18] as well, by highlighting three factors that shape local identity – activity, form, and image (Figure 3). It can be said that activity shapes urban identity through certain sociocultural tools, the image is certain meanings that are important not only for the physical formation of the form of the city, but also for its recognition, while the form is the formation of urban fabric – the field of activity for architects and urbanists.

In summary, it can be stated that literature distinguishes tangible and intangible factors that shape urban identity. Tangible factors are further divided into natural (topography, geography, hydrography, vegetation and other natural features of the territory) and artificial or anthropogenic (all man made physical forms – built-up, network of streets, public spaces and their systems, land holdings, parks, gardens, etc.). These tangible factors can be assessed physically and they often become the main tools of urban design. Since the city is not merely a physical form, intangible factors that shape identity are equally important: various historical events, commemorations, celebrations, festivals, religious rites related to a place, certain values, rules and the like prevailing in that territory [24; 27] (Table 1).

Identity of Vilnius historical areas: interactions between natural and anthropogenic structures

In order to reveal the problems of identification and fostering of the identity of historical parts of cities and to verify the urban identity shaping methodology described in this article, historical suburbs of Vilnius in the southeast part of the Old Town are analysed in detail. The historical suburbs of Vilnius have been examined at both the general city level and at local levels. At the general city level, the role and specificity of historical suburbs in

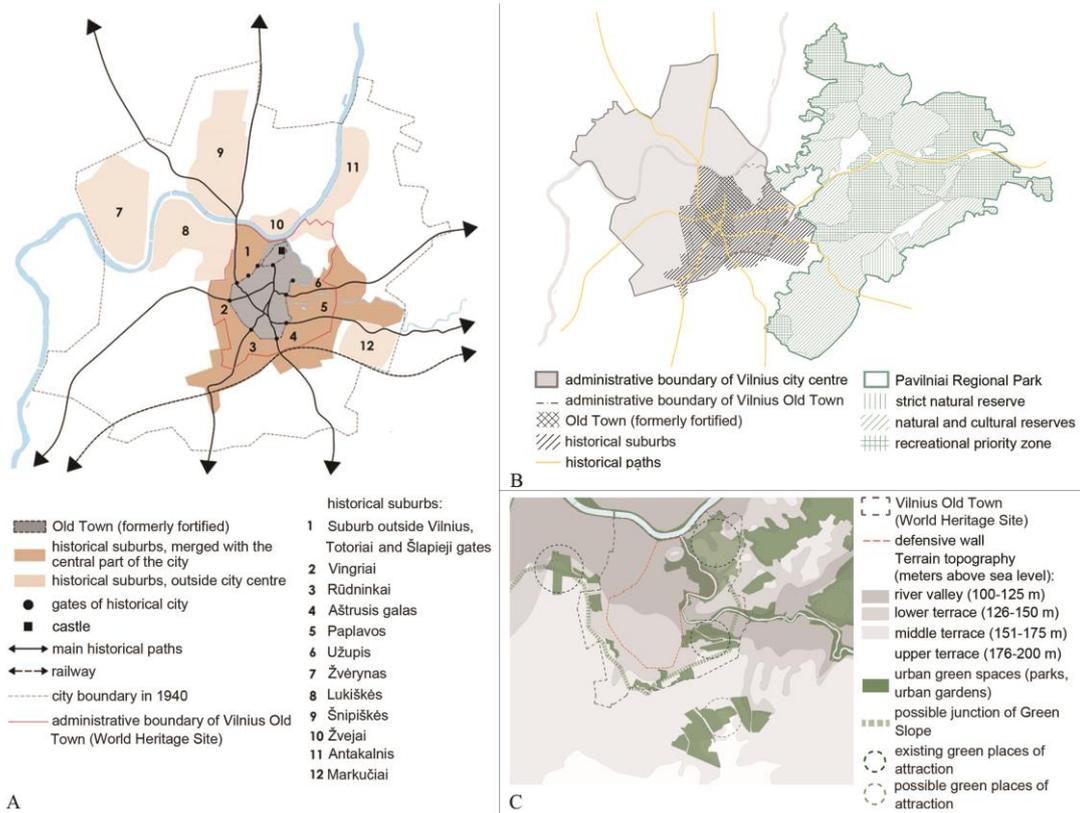


Fig. 4. Historical suburbs of Vilnius in the urban structure of the city: A – location of historic suburbs; B – interaction between the Pavilniai Regional Park and the city centre; C – natural situation of historic suburbs [7, 25]

the urban structure of the central part of the city are determined. Conclusions of the urban analysis of this level can in the future lead to proposals for alternative development of Vilnius historical suburbs. On the local scale, urban structures of individual historic suburbs are examined, individual features of the urban structure of each suburb are sought, on the basis of which regulations for built-up of the suburbs can be proposed.

Structure of Vilnius historical core: the city and its suburbs

The structure of the Vilnius layout and space is an example of a naturally emerged organism of a city, with almost all traces of its development visible. The city layout formed in an organic way, its structure was mainly determined by roads and topographical conditions. As the Vilnius city street network developed according to the principle of natural adaptation, city blocks of various shapes came into existence, a large majority of which are in the form of an elongated irregular rectangle and triangle. At the beginning of the 16th century (1503–1522), the core of the city, limited by water bodies, was surrounded by a defensive wall. The wall affected the development not only of the city layout – streets leading to the gates in the wall acquired greater significance in the city layout.

It significantly changed the volumetric and spatial composition of the city. The built-up in the territories within the walls was getting denser, the walls and gate towers added to the panorama. This part of the city kind of separated from the rest of the territory, acquired the nature of a fortress, began to dominate the valley, especially since it contained the main accent – the Upper Castle.

Even before the city was surrounded by the wall, suburbs were already growing near the main roads to the city. The suburbs were different from the city centre by their built-up characteristics, but Vilnius is special because its closest historical suburbs have grown into one with the core of the old city – sometimes it is even difficult to draw a line between them. It is more pronounced only where natural obstacles still exist to this day. But these natural barriers do not separate the suburbs from the city context. These boundaries often connect different parts of the city rather than separate them (Figure 4 A) [7].

Peculiarities of natural morphostructure of the historical core of Vilnius

The uniqueness and exclusivity of the townscape of the city of Vilnius and particularly of its historical core – the Old Town and historical suburbs surrounding it – is determined by the very rich

diversity of the natural environment and the harmony of urban fabric and natural context. The valleys and slopes of the Neris and Vilnia rivers, green pine woods form a valuable landscape that shapes a characteristic multi-faceted townscape of Vilnius city. The Neris migration corridor of national importance is a structural part of the natural framework of Vilnius that has various significance for the urban composition in different parts of the city. In the centre of the city, the Neris valley has lost its protective-ecological compensatory function that is important for the natural areas of the framework. However, the wide observation field of the valley that is visible from the Gediminas Castle Hill – the most important semantic landmark and compositional centre of the Old Town of Vilnius – identifies the uniqueness of the city of Vilnius [6]. According to landscape architects I. M. Daujotaitė and G. M. Laukaitytė-Malžinskienė, only those cities that have preserved the old town and natural topographic heritage remain distinctive and interesting [6]. The topographic heritage of the city is one of the most important natural factors determining the development of urban structure, and not only the structure of its greenery but also the characteristic diversity of the spatial structure of the townscape and the peculiarity of the view [2].

The natural basis has determined not only the unique position of the historical suburbs in relation to the Old Town, but also the formation of the urban character of these structures. The analysis of the natural and urban situation of the historical suburbs shows the dependence between the natural basis of the historical suburbs and the character of the built-up. The suburbs that are in the middle of the current central part of the city (the suburb outside Vilnius, Totoriai and Šlapieji gates and Vingriai suburb), which formed in the lower terrace of the Neris river valley, have undergone a smaller influence of the natural framework, acquired the urban fabric characteristic of the city centre, harmoniously integrated into the urban structure of the central part of the city and the signs of the former existence of the historical suburbs are scarce here. Meanwhile, the historical suburbs in the southeast part of the Old Town (Aštrusis-Subačius suburb, Užupis, Paupys) are affected by natural formations more than by the urban development of the city centre. These suburbs, being in the zone of influence of the Pavilniai Regional Park, which is a part of the active natural framework, were less urbanized in the long term due to the complicated topographic conditions, and the natural element remained more active there, with the characteristic sensitive interaction between the natural and urbanized environment. Therefore, in the formation of the urban fabric of the historical suburbs in the zone of influence of the Pavilniai Regional Park, the distinctiveness of the

territories can be revealed by creating connections with the natural surroundings of the Pavilniai Regional Park (Figure 4 B, C).

Elements of the urban identity of Vilnius historical suburbs

One of the main factors that led to the peculiarities of structures of the historic suburbs in the southeast part of the Old Town is the natural conditions for the formation of the historical suburbs. The historical suburbs of Vilnius are located on green hills, embracing the historic core of the city, which finds itself in kind of a bowl, the church towers – the unique dominant elements of the architecture – appear on the green background of low hills [15]. Thus, the topographical situation of Vilnius historic suburbs is unique in that the boundary of the upper terrace of the Neris valley, which runs through their territories, frames the historical core of the city and gives the territory the exposition possibilities.

The Old Town is surrounded not only by slopes, but also by important natural objects of attraction in the city – the Kalnai Park, the Bernardine Garden, the Kūdros Park, the Missionary Gardens in the eastern part of the Old Town and the Reformatai Square, the Cvirka Square, the Tauras Hill in the western part. The system of these local natural elements is complemented by the Belmont Forest area and the Vingis Park. These green zones of attraction on different sides of the Old Town connect along the defensive wall of the city, in the place of the former defensive bulwark, but the green connection is not sufficiently formed. Study of the experience of other cities has allowed to notice that one way to form a structural boundary between the old town and historical suburbs is to create green public urban spaces outside the defensive wall in the place of the former defensive field. In the case of Vilnius, local public spaces could be formed outside the former city gates, thus giving meaning to the boundary between the historical suburbs and the Old Town and creating a connection between natural objects of attraction in the east and in the west, which surround the Old Town.

The topographic basis has led to the unique significance of the historical suburbs for the volumetric spatial composition of the Old Town. As already mentioned, the historical suburbs are located on the green slopes surrounding the historical core, thus forming the background for the Old Town panoramas. In addition, the main compositional core of the historical suburbs – the Missionary Monastery with the Church of the Ascension and the Visitation Convent with the Church of the Holy Heart of Jesus – form a compositional system together with the Gediminas Castle Hill and the Tauras Hill (Figure 5).

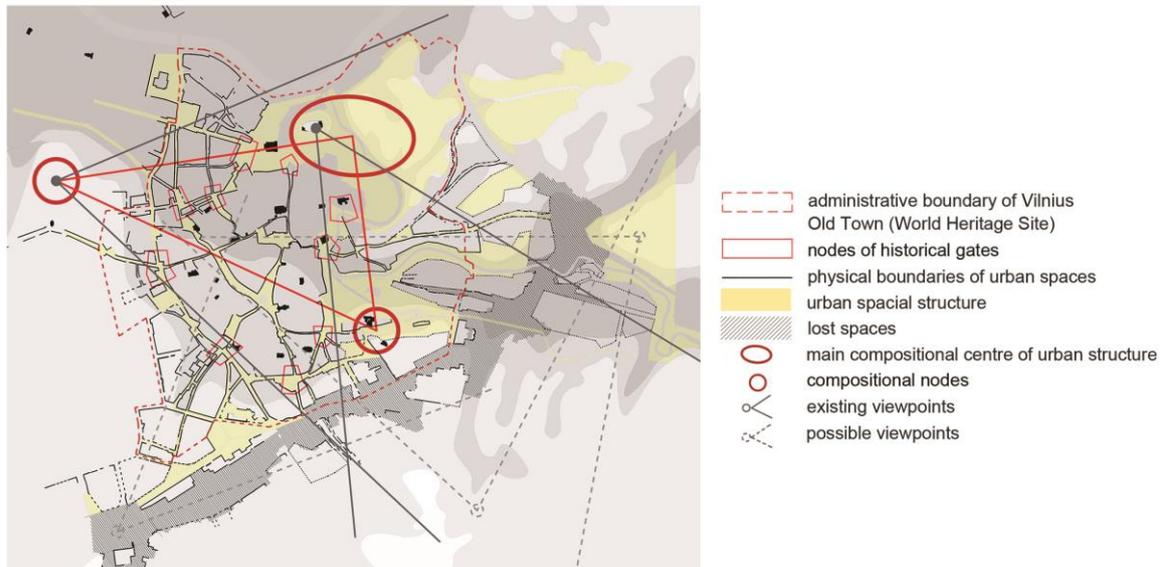


Fig. 5. Compositional scheme of the Vilnius historical core and its historical suburbs [25]

This compositional system is based on the interaction between the hills that frame the Old Town and the objects that mark different historical periods. Though the compositional core of the Church of the Holy Heart of Jesus and the Church of the Ascension, which is in the territory of the historic suburbs, is active in its form, this compositional core has not been given a functional meaning. Therefore, in order to enable this compositional system, it is important that the complexes of the Missionary Monastery and the Visitation Convent are not only the compositional but also a functional centre of the historic suburbs in the southeast part of the Old Town. It is important to emphasize that the compositional core of the Missionary Monastery and the Visitation Convent can be viewed not only from the side of the historical core and the city centre but also from the surrounding areas – the Rasos Forest Park, the hill at the crossing of Drujos and Belmonto streets. This expands the compositional boundaries of the zone of influence of the historical core of the city to the surrounding areas in the southeast of the Old Town and creates new compositional preconditions for the emergence of connections with the areas that are poorly integrated into the city structure.

The historic suburbs in the southeast part of the Old Town are characterized by open, often unformed spaces, with a large portion of greenery – parks, green squares, green slopes. The system of public spaces of the historical suburbs in the southeast part of the Old Town has been affected by the opening of the railway and bypass spatial corridors. Creation of the infrastructure spatial corridors, which are important for the city transport system, has, however, put an end to the former

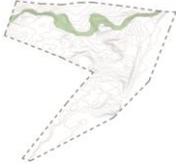
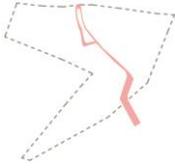
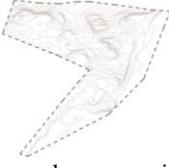
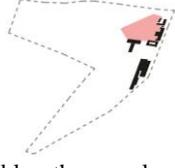
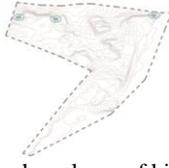
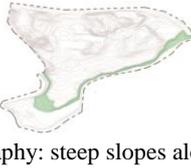
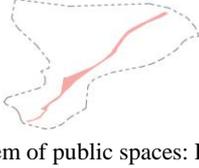
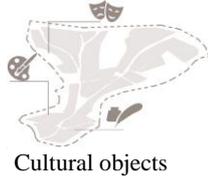
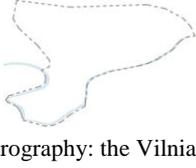
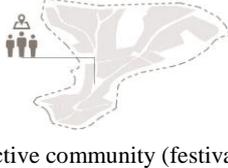
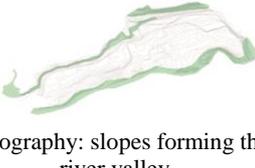
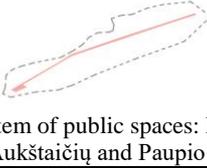
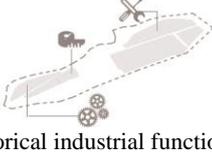
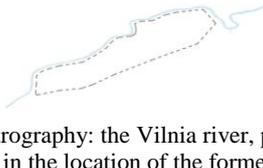
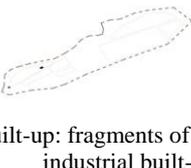
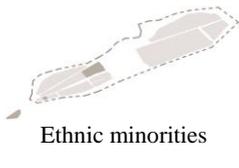
system of public spaces in the historic suburbs and has led to the appearance of lost spaces along these engineering corridors (Figure 5).

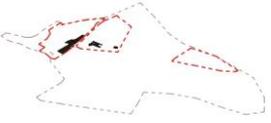
The morphology of the built-up in the Vilnius historical suburbs vividly reflects natural, economic, functional differences of suburban structures. The topographical basis had the major effect on the formation of the urban fabric of the historical suburbs. The built-up in the northwest part of the historical core (the suburb outside Vilnius, Totoriai and Šlapieji gates and Vingriai suburb), which is in the valley of the Neris river and is marked by level terrain, formed more consistently and faster than in the southeast part of the historical core, which is marked by a very complicated topography. Therefore, these suburbs saw the formation of a perimetric built-up, which is characteristic of the historical centre of the city. Meanwhile, the urban fabric in the Aštrusis galas–Subačius, Paupys, Užupis suburbs, which are in the expressive terrain zone, is of a different character – the built-up is extensive, with the perimetric open morphotype of built-up, homesteads, urban villas. These areas also have many converted former industrial territories, where parts of the blocks remain not yet formed, with free built-up. Given that the built-up was formed here under the influence of complicated topography and in order to highlight this urban peculiarity of the historic suburbs, the new built-up in the converted zones and unformed parts of the blocks should be characterized by a sensitive interaction between terrain and urbanized elements.

In summary of the results of urban analysis of the Vilnius historical suburbs in the southeast part of the Old Town, factors forming the identity of each suburb are identified, which can become the basis of the suburban development model (Table 2):

TABLE 2

Factors shaping urban identity of Vilnius historic suburbs in the southeast part of the Old Town
[prepared by the authors]

Factors that shape urban identity		
Tangible		Intangible
Natural	Anthropogenic	
<i>Rūdininkai suburb</i>		
 Topography: slope surrounding the Old Town	 System of public spaces: Rūdininkai historical tract	 Historical crafts
 Topography: expressive relief	 Ensembles: the complex of railway and bus stations	 Historical market places
 Hydrography: places of historical springs	 Built-up: perimetric	 Ethnic minorities
<i>Užupis suburb</i>		
 Topography: steep slopes along the watercourse	 System of public spaces: Polock historical tract and squares	 Cultural objects
 Hydrography: the Vilnia river	 Built-up: open perimetric	 Active community (festivals, celebrations, commemorations, community traditions)
<i>Paupys suburb</i>		
 Topography: slopes forming the river valley	 System of public spaces: Routes of Aukštaičių and Paupio streets	 Historical industrial function
 Hydrography: the Vilnia river, ponds in the location of the former watercourse	 Built-up: fragments of historical industrial built-up	 Ethnic minorities

<i>Aštrusis galas – Subačius suburb</i>		
 Topography: slope surrounding the Old Town	 System of public spaces: historical gardens and parks	 Public objects
 Topography: hills in the territory	 Ensembles: natural-urban complexes (monasteries, churches)	 Various religious practices
 Hydrography: places of historical springs	 Built-up: various built-up morphotypes	 Ethnic minorities

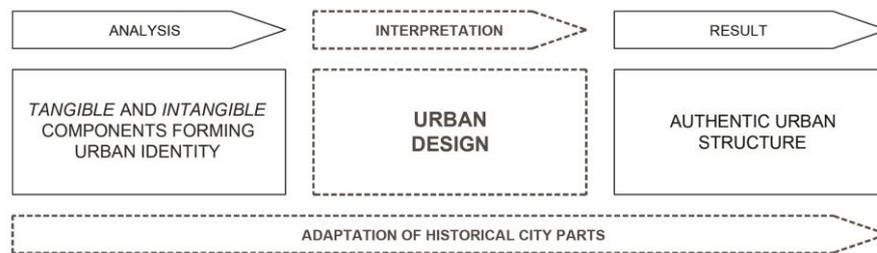


Fig. 6. Methodological scheme for shaping urban identity
[prepared by the authors referring to the material in sources analysed]

1. The identity of *Rūdninkai* suburb is formed by the background urban built-up, the railway station complex and the intangible heritage of historical crafts, market places and culture signs of ethnic minorities, as well as by expressive topography and places of historical springs.
2. The identity of *Užupis* suburb is formed by landscape elements – expressive topography formed by the Vilnia river slopes and the background built-up, characteristic of the historical core, which appeared as a feature of a complete independent urban structure. The intangible layers that identify the suburb are the community with its traditions and artistic objects of attraction.
3. The main layers of identity of *Paupys* suburb are the slopes along the Vilnia river watercourse and fragments of the historical industrial built-up. The intangible heritage of the historical industry makes the suburb unique.
4. The identity of *Aštrusis galas–Subačius* suburb is formed by the natural features of the territory – hills and the slope that surrounds the Old Town, zones of different built-up, natural-urban complexes with the heritage of gardens and parks and public complexes that create intangible sociocultural relations.

Discussions and Conclusions

One of the main reasons why urban planning is increasingly turning to the identity aspect is the consequences of globalization for the physical form of cities. On the one hand, globalization promotes the expansion and development of cities but, as global trends are used in urban planning, the connection of the territory with its historical, natural, social and cultural context is being lost. Understanding the significance of identity for both the physical form of the city and its socio-cultural life, a way is sought to adapt the historical parts of the city, which no longer meet the needs of a global society, to contemporary needs by strengthening the local spirit rather than losing it.

The article notes that the urban identity is influenced by tangible and intangible factors. Tangible factors are divided into natural (topography, geography, hydrography, vegetation and other natural features of the territory) and anthropogenic (all man made physical forms – built-up, network of streets, public spaces and their systems, land holdings, parks, gardens, etc.). These tangible factors can be assessed physically and they often become the main tools of urban design. Intangible factors that shape identity are equally important: various historical events,

commemorations, celebrations, festivals, religious rites related to a place, certain values, rules and the like prevailing in that territory.

The performed research of peculiarities of the urban fabric of the historical suburbs in the southeast part of the Old Town of Vilnius has showed very vividly that both the man made physical environment and the features of the natural environment present are significant for urban identity. In the studied suburbs, expressive terrain, also the river and its valley play a significant role for the formation and identity of a place. Man made built-up, ensembles, street routes and even the built-up function adapted to natural conditions.

Urban identity should be perceived as the entirety of multi-layered factors that shape a territory, distinguishing one particular territory from others.

Urban identity is shaped by tangible and intangible factors. A different combination of these factors creates the identity of each location. Urban identity should not be perceived as unchanging – it is a process that is shaped rather deliberately. Urban design, architecture and landscape architecture are those activities that help shape urban identity of a territory. In the reconstruction of historical parts of cities, in order to achieve a contextual architectural and urban solution, an analysis should be carried out first of all, during which the factors shaping the identity of the territory should be distinguished and evaluated. The factors distinguished during the urban design process should be interpreted and integrated into the urban fabric of a new quality. The aim is urban structure that has identity, local spirit (Figure 6).

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Kopsavilkums. Rakstā apskatīta pilsētvides savdabības, vizuālās unikalitātes un kultūras identitātes saglabāšana globalizācijas procesu skartajā pasaulē. Vispirms tiek apspriesta pilsētvides identitāte kā tāda, kur caur literatūras avotu izpēti tiek identificēti pilsētas veidojošie faktori. Tiek izdalīti materiālie un nemateriālie faktori. Pētījumā, lai atklātu pilsētu vēsturisko daļu identifikācijas un identitātes veicināšanas problēmas un pārbaudītu šajā rakstā aprakstīto pilsētvides identitātes veidošanas metodoloģiju, detalizēti tiek analizēta Viļņas vēsturiskās priekšpilsētas dienvidaustrumu daļa. Veiktais pētījums, par vēsturisko priekšpilsētas pilsētvides audumu, ļoti spilgti parādījis, ka pilsētvides identitātei ir nozīmīga gan cilvēka veidotā fiziskā vide, gan klātesošās dabas vides īpatnības. Nozīmīgu lomu pilsētvides identitātes veidošanā ieņem izteismīgais reljefs. Pētījumā konstatēts, ka sabiedrības veidotā apbūve, ansamblī, ielu struktūra, tiek racionāli pielāgota esošajiem dabas apstākļiem. Ciešā mijiedarbība starp dabas apstākļiem un cilvēka darbību ir radījusi šo vēsturisko teritoriju identitāti. Tiek atzīmēts, ka pilsētvides identitāti nevajadzētu uztvert kā nemainīgu – tas ir process, kas tiek veidots diezgan apzināti. Pilsētas dizains, arhitektūra un ainavu arhitektūra ir aktivitātes, kas palīdz veidot pilsētas identitāti.