

THE CONCEPT OF “MY FATHER’S HOME” AS AN ANCHOR FOR LATVIAN “SOLID IDENTITY” CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE ERA OF “LIQUID MODERNITY”

PhD Rūta Muktupāvela

Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvia

Dr.philol. Janīna Kursīte

University of Latvia, Latvia

Abstract

Liquid modernity is a concept proposed by Zygmunt Bauman that denotes modern tendencies in the development of the global capitalism economy. One of the main processes characterizing liquid modernity is human mobility, which in its turn results in a fragmented and indefinite identity and in the marginalization of local belonging. Mobility, especially in the form of long-term emigration, has become one of the major demographic problems Latvia has experienced. To provide solutions to the problems caused by emigration, in 2013 the Government of Latvia adopted an action plan to support re-emigration. The main idea of the plan refers basically to economic aspects. Obviously, it is not only economic factors that stimulate expatriates to return back home; psychological, emotional and symbolic aspects are no less significant. One of the most powerful symbols of re-emigration is home. The concept of home occupies one of the most important places in the process of self-categorization. It helps to organize self-knowledge and to recognize one’s own place in the surrounding environment (spatial and social, as well as mental) of emotions and memories.

What is home in the era of liquid modernity? The observations made during the fieldworks in Riga, Valka and in the Svētupe region (2013–2016) showed that home is one of the most stable concepts in the construction of Latvian identity and the concept “my father’s home” still exists in Latvian worldview as a mytheme and as a symbolic equivalent of the beginning, of harmonic existence and “source of happiness and strength”.

Keywords: *liquid modernity, emigration/re-emigration, countryside, local identity.*

“Liquid modernity” is a concept developed by Zygmunt Bauman and used in sociology and culture theory to denote the processes in the global economy and the formation of social and individual identity that have currently gained special relevance. Z. Bauman compares the modern changeable reality to a liquid, “The world I call “liquid”, because, like all liquids, it cannot stand still and keep its shape for long. Everything or almost everything in this world of ours keeps changing: fashions we follow and the object of our attention, things we dream of and things we fear, things we desire and things we loathe, reasons to be hopeful and reasons to be apprehensive” [Bauman 2010: 3]. While explaining and illustrating his concept of “liquid modernity”, Z. Bauman metaphorically separates the temporal and spatial dimensions, considering place a relatively stable or “solid” dimension and time a fluid or “liquid” dimension; furthermore, he would relate the “solid” state to era of modernity, while the category “liquid” relates to “nowadays,” which Bauman calls “late modernity”. Z. Bauman figuratively depicts the categories “solid” and “liquid,” using Henry Ford as a “durable” image and Bill Gates as a “transient” image. He characterizes the first as follows, “Heavy capitalism was obsessed with bulk and size, and, for that reason, also with boundaries, with making them tight and impenetrable. The genius of Henry Ford was to discover the way of keeping all the defenders of his industrial fortress inside the walls – to ward off the temptation to defect or change sides” [Bauman 2000: 14]. While of the latter he writes, “Bill Gates however, appeared to be a player who “flourishes in the midst of dislocation”” [Bauman 2000: 124]. [He feels] no regret when parting with possessions in which he took pride yesterday; it is the mind-boggling speed of circulation, of recycling, ageing, dumping and replacement which brings profit today – not the durability and lasting reliability of the product” [Bauman 2000: 14]. According to Bauman’s dyad – *solid versus liquid* – liquidity, fluidity and mobility are to be perceived as positive and progressive, “Who accelerates, wins, who stays put, loses” [Bauman, Tester 2001: 95].

One of the most important of the processes characterizing “liquid modernity” is human mobility that, in its turn, leads to the marginalisation of local belonging and a fragmented, indefinite identity [Bauman 2002]. Identity is the particularity, self-perception and selfhood that constitute every individual and begin to form in the process of inculturation, which consequently stimulates the development of a value system and normative and behavioural models helping individuals to fully exist and integrate themselves into the surrounding environment with a more or less pronounced self-awareness rooted in a specific culture. In this respect, one of the most relevant aspects of identity is belonging to a particular place by birth, location or residence, which in everyday communication is usually described as “home.” The etymological data testify to the close relationship between the notions “home” and “place,” for the word *home* usually denotes a place where a person resides permanently.

The linguistic data demonstrate that the semantic field of the word *home* combines such concepts as home and the family, and in this respect draws closer to each other even relatively distant languages, for example, the Germanic and Baltic languages. Namely, the word *home* is etymologically related to the Gothic *haims*, the Germanic **haima-*, which correspond to the word *šeima* in Lithuanian and the word *saimē* in Latvian. A similar correspondence exists also between the word *ciems* in Latvian and the word *heim* in Old High German, meaning "homeland" [Buck 1988: 459; Karulis 1992b: 142]. The Latvian word *māja* derives from the Finno-Ugric languages and etymologically relates to a place where people live, gather, or stay [Karulis 1992a: 561].

The concept of home occupies one of the most important places in the process of individual self-categorization, hence also in the process of identity construction. It helps to organize self-knowledge and to recognize one's own place in the surrounding environment (spatial and social, as well as mental) of emotions and memories. The childhood experience obtained at home influences also the adult attitude to the world, most often idealizing it. This concept is especially relevant in the traditional peasant culture inherited by the greater part of the population of contemporary Latvia. The historian of religion Mircea Eliade notes, "Habitations are not lightly changed, for it is not easy to abandon one's world. The house is not an object, a "machine to live in"; it is the universe that man constructs for himself by imitating the paradigmatic creation of the gods, the cosmogony. Every construction and every inauguration of a new dwelling are in some measure equivalent to a new beginning, a new life" [Eliade 1959: 56–57]. Perhaps for this reason one of the very first things that we ask upon meeting somebody is "Where is your home?" because identity is unthinkable without a relationship to places or things [Graumann 1983], which acquires various real and imaginary meanings [Castells 1997] for us and others who might be interested in these places and things. However, it should be recognised that our dynamic age of becoming rather than being is transforming the reactions and attitudes to atypical cultures and "homeless and placeless" individuals. A tramp or a homeless person encountered on public transport or in an underpass, who does not have any legitimatising social relationships either, provokes noticeable dislike if not fear. These are marginal persons in the social hierarchy, having a limited access to the minimal resources for subsisting, as it is indicated in the designation "a homeless person", somebody without a roof over their head, somebody without a home. These beings are usually identified with smells, dirtiness, diseases, in other words, with the intermediary condition of "human animals" rather than human beings. However, nowadays there are spreading completely different, positively evaluated forms of the culture of "placelessness" or "independent locality" that are being created by the elite social classes: well-paid information specialists, scientists, software

engineers, architects, photographers, designers, etc., who are in demand in a society of information technologies and knowledge, as their main resource is knowledge, information and creativity. Combining the career opportunities with the freedom of movement, these professionals form the lifestyle and culture of the so-called “digital nomads” [Russell 2013] designated by the neologism *mobo*, an abbreviation of the phrase “mobile bohemian.” Their lifestyle poignantly corresponds to the concept that home is both everywhere and nowhere put forward by “liquid modernity”, “I am everywhere at home, though (or because) that somewhere I’d call my home is nowhere. All in all, it is no longer one (refined) taste against another (vulgar) one (..) We need to be flexible” [Bauman 2010: 72].

It can be said that to some extent the contemporary Latvians also seek home in any place where there is a better job, warmer climate, or nicer, more attractive scenery, and perhaps it means that the true or only home no longer exists.

And yet what is home in the era of “liquid modernity”? Which concepts of home dominate in Latvia, a full-fledged European country? Is the home of “liquid modernity” a universal concept referring to the whole European world?

Latvia, one of the three Baltic States, has experienced the situation where its economic, political and social development as a welfare state, after the Second World War was actually paralyzed by the Soviet occupation for half a century. Like other Baltic States Latvia for fifty years was dominated by planned economy and communist ideology and, of course, remained closed to the way of life of the Western world. Democracy was supplanted by totalitarianism and private ownership by universal collectivization and nationalization, which were accompanied by mass deportations and russification. The Communist Party imposed upon the authentic Latvian art and culture Social Realism and internationalism with the ideological goal to create a new race of superhumans, so called *homo sovieticus*. It is self-evident that the discourse of national identity was also suppressed, even oppressed; therefore, the idea of renewal of national state as a political system became the leading motive in the Latvian struggle for independence at the end of the 20th century, while the well-being of Latvian people in public discourse has not been promoted as the main objective at that time. That idea prevails also in the popular saying from the period of the National Awakening “Though poor, but in a free Latvia.” (“*Kaut pastalās, bet brīvā Latvijā.*”)

After 1991, when the Baltic States regained independence and could return on the political map of the world as full-fledged states, Latvia desperately tried to make up for lost time and single-mindedly moved back towards the Western European lifestyle. For example, the visionary document entitled *The National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014–2020* states, “In 2020, Latvia will be a country that is Latvian in character and self-confident, secure and resident-friendly, green and well-tended,

prosperous, effective and competitive – and a home to industrious, well-educated, creative, healthy and happy people. Through joint efforts we, all the residents of Latvia, can make this goal a reality" [Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre 2012: 4].

It is a beautiful vision; yet, it cannot be achieved without being open to the world and human mobility. After regaining independence, post-Soviet Latvia faced serious economic problems; it had to re-enter market economy and establish an independent monetary policy that led to a crisis and problems in the banking sector. These developments consequently had an impact on the demographic processes.

Despite the emotional elation and patriotic feelings, as early as the beginning of the 1990s thousands of the residents of Latvia went to the Western countries to seek a better life. As a result, after the downfall of the Soviet system, the population of Latvia decreased dramatically. Especially painful were the initial stages of the economic transformation (1992–1993), when more than 3 percent of the population left the country. The second wave of emigration was caused by the last economic crises; in 2008–2011, more than 5 percent of the population left Latvia. At present the population of Latvia is 1.95 million [Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia 2017a: 8], and the statistics show that, since regaining independence in 1991, Latvia has lost 18.85 percent of the population because of the long-term emigration [Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia 2017a: 16–17]. Hence population mobility has become one of the greatest challenges Latvia has ever faced.

Long-term emigration is not tourism, although many might think so. Losers can be on both sides – emigration weakens their mother country, because it loses economically active people, labour and taxpayers. Emigration can also have a negative psychological impact on individuals preventing them from living fulfilled lives; emigrants sometimes complain of unease, the symptoms of depression, apathy and disorientation [Jablonskaitė 2014]. The loss of the familiar environment, home and fatherland also causes identity problems. To solve the issues related to emigration, as early as in 1995 the Government of Latvia passed the Repatriation Law, whose goal was to establish the main conditions and guarantees for the permanent resettlement of the persons of Latvian and Livonian (which is one of the native ethnoses in Latvia) extraction to Latvia [Latvijas Republikas Saeima 2016]. However, the law did not yield the expected results and the emigration from Latvia even increased, especially in the years of the economic recession as it was mentioned above. In 2013, reacting to this situation, the Cabinet prepared a plan for re-emigration support measures for 2013–2016 that focused on maintaining ties with the Latvian diaspora and providing mostly informative support functions to the expatriates who are considering the possibility or have already decided to return to Latvia and work there, as well as to those who wish to found a company or to develop business contacts with Latvia [Latvijas Republikas Ministru kabinets 2013].

In 2017, the Ministry of Economics carried out the assessment of this plan and concluded that it had not produced the intended results, as one of the main factors that could efficiently contribute to the process of re-emigration, is economic growth, jobs and significant increase of salaries. Unfortunately, in these areas Latvia is still not in the best condition at all. According to the assessment authors' opinion, the effectiveness of the plan cannot be measured by the number of re-emigrants, because there is a free movement of labour within the European Union, and both emigrants and re-emigrants do not intend to declare their places of residence immediately. Thus, they concluded, this re-emigration plan is more likely to be seen as a message to the diaspora that the authorities are eager to support those emigrants, who hope or have already decided to return to Latvia. Therefore, the main benefit of this plan is the identification of the diaspora's potential in cultural, economic, scientific and other fields [Latvijas Republikas Ekonomikas ministrija 2017].

One can think, that the government, highlighting the economic aspects, is doing its best to get emigrants back, nevertheless, it is clear that the desire to return home is encouraged or inhibited not only by the business environment and economic factors; no less important are the psychological, emotional and symbolic aspects. Regarding those aspects, it is clear, that idea of re-emigration is hardly imaginable without the symbol of home. For instance, in 2016 the Latvian Institute, which is the main governmental body for the promotion of Latvia's positive image, has very clearly articulated symbolic meaning of home in the context of its social initiative *#GribuTeviAtpakaļ* (I want you back): "We invite residents of Latvia to address their exiled family and friends with a personal and emotional message: you are important to us, and Latvia will always be your home" [Latvijas institūts 2016].

Home is one of the strongest impulses and symbols of re-emigration, which integrates thoughts, memories and dreams [Bachelard 1994: 7]. An old Latvian proverb states, "A dry crust of bread in your father's home tastes better than a roast abroad" ("*Tēva mājās garoza gardāka nekā svešās mājās cepetis*"). In constructing the national and local Latvian identity the concept of home or "my father's home" is a very stable element. So, what is the Latvian "my father's home" like?

Historically, the density of population in Latvia has always been relatively low, at present about 33 people per square kilometre, in the interwar period 30 people per square kilometre [Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia 2016]. Perhaps this is the reason why Latvians have traditionally lived in separate farmsteads, which still occupy a very important place among the concepts of the Latvian home [Ločmele 2011]. The farmstead is a separate dwelling or several separate dwellings and outbuildings functionally related to this dwelling or these dwellings located in a territory which

is primarily used for agriculture or forestry [Latvijas Republikas Saeima 2015]. The traditional Latvian farmstead is included in the Latvian Cultural Canon, a list of the most excellent and outstanding Latvian works of art and cultural values, initiated by the Ministry of Culture, altogether 99 cultural values of Latvia. The symbolic relevance of the Latvian farmstead was attested to by its depiction on the twenty-Lat bill of the now historical national currency.

The traditional country house in Latvia has been corner-jointed log buildings with gabled roofs made of wooden shingles, straw, reeds, or tiles. But, of course, a sense of home and belonging was created not only by buildings, but also by their content and surroundings, such as self-made objects, tools, the trees planted around the house, flower-beds, front yard and orchards; as remembered by one of the informants: "Our house stood on the bank of a river stream. When summer came, there were irises blooming in a round flower-bed. Oaks grew along the bank, there was a large apple orchard next to the house, on the other side there was a small coppice" [Margarita Kaltigina, Rīga, 2014].

On the whole, Latvians were rather conservative in their choice of a dwelling and gave preference to wooden buildings. Wooden architecture dominates in the cultural landscape of the Latvian countryside and has formed the concept of "Latvianness." It is based on the striving for the natural: buildings are made of wood; clothes are sewn of linen and wool; living dialects and folklore are used in speech; the houses are painted in warm, unpretentious and calming hues; the feeling for the seasonal cycles and a considerate attitude to nature and domestic animals prevail in agriculture. And the most important thing is that the house and other buildings should be filled with people, domestic animals and the goods harvested from the tilled land. Traditionally, Latvians have had a rather broad concept of home including not only the house in it, but also outbuildings and even small structures such as beehives, artificial bird nests and dog kennels. Every being from humans to domestic animals, insects (bees) and birds had their own place in this well-organized environment. This idea, that has been formed over centuries, of orderly environment in which each subject has its own place, still prevails in the concept of archetypal Latvian "father's home".

Historically, the idiom "my father's home" or "my father's farmstead", as Latvians sing in their folksongs, is still strongly associated with the economic growth of interwar period, and is attributed to President Kārlis Ulmanis. This period was one of the most important cognitive anchors for the National Awakening at the end of the 20th century and still, especially in the memories of older people, performs the function of mythical "Golden Age". Therefore, the ideology of regaining national independence was based on the ambition to reconstruct the idealized Latvia of the interwar period, when the economy and social relationships were built on the basis of traditional rural culture. This may be the reason why at the beginning of independence there was a

growth in the number of farmers despite the difficulties and risks of the economic reform while making transition from collective farming to individual farming and market economy. Some people were motivated to move to the countryside and revert to the lifestyle of their ancestors. As a result of denationalization, they regained the landed estates of their parents and grandparents and started farming [Ločmele 2011: 33]. Consequently, agriculture and countryside continued to be ideological cornerstones of national identity: “In the 1980s, I decided to move from Riga to the countryside. I bought a house and 4 hectares of land in the vicinity of Svētciems. I liked to work the land; I planted potatoes, kept rabbits, hens. Still I have very nice memories of this time. It felt good. I don’t know whether you can call it happiness, because there are different shades and degrees of happiness. Most probably the years spent at the house in Svētciems were happy, because I could do with my life whatever I liked” [Vilis Radziņš, Korģene, 2014].

However, as the economy developed, especially after Latvia became a member state of the European Union, agriculture lost its privileged status as the historical mode of living and was placed on an equal footing with other areas of the national economy, the government declaring agriculture a business [Ločmele 2011: 35]. Hence, the traditional Latvian farmstead had to start performing the alien function of a tourist attraction [Ločmele 2011: 34] as a place where city-dwellers and foreigners could enjoy “peace, beauty, pristine nature, a little bit of heaven on earth” [Ločmele 2011: 42]. Soon the farmstead took on another important function: the production of ecological food. And nowadays the countryside can also offer rather exotic occupations that by no means associate with the peaceful Latvian farmstead; for example, there are places where exotic animals, such as ostriches, are raised or Zimbabwean crocodile fillets are imported from afar and prepared [Ločmele 2011: 38]. These are activities that do not really fit in the picture of the idealized archetypal Latvian “father’s home”.

In modern Latvia, the concept of home and its place in the hierarchy of values are certainly influenced by several factors: the development of technologies (access to the Internet), the prevalence of scientific knowledge, human mobility and the level of welfare in comparison to the so-called First World Countries. The traditional rural or peasant culture has also lost its former significance and becomes marginal. At the same time, archetypal thinking changes very slowly, and it is to be expected that even nowadays symbol of “my father’s home” would appear as one of the most stable anchors of local identity. The experience gained in “father’s home” becomes the point of reference for the later experiences, including re-emigration: “I don’t want to take out loans, because it is the same thing as buying a ticket to London. I’m trying to develop a microenterprise on my own. I’m staying here at my father’s home, all will be well!” says Sintija Pickēna (27) from Liepāja in the west of Latvia. Sintija’s

sister has lived and worked in England since 2006, "Financially it is much easier, but my heart still is full of Latvia and home, the winds and the sea at Liepāja, which are calling me back. Nature there is beautiful. You understand it only after you have left" [Goldbergs 2014].

Informant Laila Ozoliņa, who lives in the provincial town of Valka in northern Latvia, has a similar opinion. She is sure that it was the place, and only the place where she had spent her childhood, where all the paths were known to her and where she had listened to her grandmother's stories and advice, that affected her decision not to stay abroad, though she thought about it and it seemed possible. It is because of emigration that "parents turn into cash machines for their children who have been left behind" [Laila Ozoliņa, Valka, 2013]. When Laila emigrated, her son, who was only 8 at the time, was left with his grandmother. Laila had plans to stay in England for a longer time, because the employers offered her a higher position and career possibilities. She called her mother to ask if she should stay or come back home. "Everything is alright, stay there! And your son is OK," mother told her. There was only one thing: her son was drawing a thick black cross across each calendar day spent without mommy. Laila came back home the next day. Now she is sure that a country house is a vital necessity for each Latvian family. Her son now is a grown-up, and he has decided to have such a house as his great grandparents had – a farmstead. He has decided to earn money abroad, so that he might build a house in the countryside of Latvia.

Abundant data about Latvian concept of home were obtained in the course of fieldwork carried out in rural areas of Latvia, in the Svētupe region in Vidzeme, within the framework of the project "The Svētupe River of Vidzeme in Mythic and Real Cultural Space", financed by the Latvian Council of Science. The project was run by the Research Centre of the Latvian Academy of Culture from 2013 to 2016 with the purpose of providing an in-depth study of the cultural-historical territories and local identity of the people living on both sides of the Svētupe River.

The Svētupe river of Vidzeme is a 48 km long river in the west of Latvia. Many objects of cultural heritage, such as the Livs' sacrificial caves, the Jaunupe dam, the lamprey weirs at Svētciems, watermills, manors, etc. are located on its banks. The Svētupe is remarkable for the fact that it flows through a cultural space created by Livonians, an autochthonous Finno-Ugric people of Latvia, who have dwelt on its banks since ancient times. To explore the river, its vicinity, and the culture of people living there – their houses, belongings and the cultural landscape – researchers resorted to archive materials (dating from the 17th century) and photographs (dating from the late 19th century to the present day), as well as the data about the Svētupe region obtained during the fieldwork.

During the implementation of the project, the living space of the Svētupe inhabitants, the demographic situation, everyday occupation, the peculiarity of

mentality, etc. were identified, based on the study of historical sources and archival materials to the findings obtained *in situ*. For the collection of empirical data, mainly qualitative data acquisition methods were used, such as observation and participant observation, interviewing informants in their natural location to determine culturally significant elements (in-depth interviews), visual and audio-visual fixation of places, cases and events, collection of artifacts, including photos, and processing them through visual research methods. One of the most significant aspects of the study was the identification of inhabited houses with detailed histories of the Svētupe vicinity kins, setting the time-frame from the first references in parish registers to modern testimonies of where on the planet this or that descendant of the Vidzeme Liv families, who were once living on the shores of the Svētupe, is residing at the moment, or whose houses have experienced irreparable destruction. In the course of the research, a detailed study of 45 farmsteads was carried out, the history of the past and present farmsteads was researched and the testimonies and life stories of the present-day residents were collected [see more in Muktupāvela 2015; Kursīte, Noriņa 2016].

The unique nature of the cultural space along the Svētupe river of Vidzeme lies in the interaction between two different native ethnies of Latvia over the centuries. The last Livs of Vidzeme, who spoke their own language until the middle of the 19th century, once lived on its banks. Livs are one of the Baltic Finnish ethnic groups; their historical location is in the north-western part of Kurzeme and Vidzeme regions in Latvia. According to the 2011 census, 250 individuals in Latvia defined themselves as Livs [Muktupāvela, Treimane 2016]. Linguistically, Livs are Finno-Ugrians and therefore differ from Latvians, who represent the Indo-European family of languages. The relicts of the Livonian language survive in the names of farmsteads in the Svētupe region that have been registered since the 17th century. One might suppose that, because of different mentality, the houses and other structures they built would differ, as it happens, for example, in Latgale, the eastern region of Latvia, with Latvian and Russian houses. Perhaps once it was so, but, judging by the photographs and interview evidence, in the 20th century it was no longer true. None of the people interviewed nowadays could name any differences, “In my time, Livs and Latvians had mixed so much that no one mentioned Livs or spoke of them aloud. It could be felt a little in the local speech, though” [Anita Emse 2013].

Within the project, the concept of home was investigated in close connection to the life histories’ approach, that is because houses become *something* only together with the people living in them, because they fill houses with life and give them shape and content. One can even say that the house is an extension of human body, and it is not accidental that people sometimes draw parallels between houses and human bodies (for example, speaking about a heavily-built man), or liken the human head or

mind to a house roof. For instance, in Latvian culture a woman without a husband is sometimes compared to a house without a roof. But humans also, especially in the rural areas, became *something* only if they had a house. Working in the archives of the local history museum and questioning the informants, we became convinced that each house had its own biography or life history, usually spanning over several generations. In the course of the research, the farmsteads with the longest histories were selected, for they had been stable points of reference to several generations. As long as there is continuity, people would put time and effort into maintaining the places created by themselves or their ancestors. Symbolically, houses can reflect two different types of thinking and acting; some people can build a house for themselves, their children and grandchildren, becoming the hosts and owners and, thereby, creating a socially prosperous and stable social stratum. This aspect is still perceived as an important feature of Latvian identity. Another possibility is to live in or become a resident in a house built by somebody else. Nowadays it means simply renting or buying a flat, but in the 19th and the first part of the 20th century Latvia it meant becoming a farm-hand or a tenant, which is a rather unfavourable outcome for the Latvian traditional mentality. For instance, the owner of the farmstead *Unguriņi* on the bank of the Svētupe river in Viļķene municipality describes the days he has to spend in Riga city in his flat in a multi-storey house as follows, "To me living in Riga feels like to a cat wading through water – one day is fine, two days are too much, on the third day I'm fed up with it" [Zigfrīds Podiņš, Viļķene, 2015].

Significant changes have occurred in the vicinity of the Svētupe river, just like in the whole country since the 1990s, i. e., since the restoration of national independence, these changes have affected both the demographic situation and the outer appearance and interior of houses, as well as the surroundings. The inhabitants of the Svētupe area, just as it has happened to other regions of Latvia, were affected by the economical emigration, not only external, but also internal. The idealization of rural way of life, which was a topical idea at the beginning of National Awakening period, decreased fairly quickly due to economic difficulties. During the last years, a part of the former Svētupe inhabitants, especially the young ones, have moved to cities and towns – to Riga, Limbaži, Salacgrīva and others. Thus, the abandoned, empty houses, unless they are bought by some prosperous people from other parts of Latvia, become subject to gradual destruction. And also nowadays, two simultaneous processes take place, on the one hand, rural inhabitants migrate away from the Svētupe feeling no longer attached to their "father's home", to the river and its vicinity; on the other hand, their place is occupied by urban dwellers, who are still longing for a secluded place in nature, where to spend their weekends and summer holidays. Unfortunately, the newcomers do not always appreciate the previous traditional way of life and the state of matters. They usually have no sentiments to the place as the "father's home",

therefore they display little effort to preserve the previous appearance and situation of buildings and of adjacent territory. Of course, this is not always possible for purely utilitarian reasons, as many household buildings such as cowshed or barn have no practical application today, as it used to be in the olden days, when the rural way of life was unimaginable without agricultural activities. In modern situation these buildings are transformed into garage or warehouse, guesthouse or even into artist's workshop.

As it was said before, in the very beginning of the 1990s in the vicinity of Svētupe many owners re-established their ancestors' ownership of land and houses, which had been confiscated by the Soviet power, and their owners deported to Siberia. In most cases these houses, having forcibly become the collective property of Soviet kolkhozes, were gradually ruined as no-one's property. The legal heirs, having regained the property in the early 1990s, had either to invest huge amounts of money to restore it or to build everything anew. Not always the building or restoration of houses was done with respect to Latvian wooden architecture traditions. However, it should be noted that field work research indicates a positive tendency: slowly, but purposefully, slate roofs, so characteristic for the Soviet-time rural architecture, have been replaced by environment-friendly materials, plastic window frames have been replaced by wooden frames. Probably, persons, having regained their ancestors' property, are also paying certain effort to restore its symbolic meaning as their father's home. Therefore, they are doing their best to clean up the territory around the house and to make it nice. Thus, in the vicinity of the Svētupe, in some way, degradation caused by emigration coexists with the efforts to restore and preserve harmonious environment.

While doing interviews and watching local economic, social and cultural activities, it became clear that this is a critical transition period for the people living in the Svētupe vicinity. To make a certain place to prosper economically, it is necessary that the local inhabitants have their local consciousness, their attachment to the place. The Soviet power in fifty years managed to swap the consciousness of many people from "this is my father's home, this is our place therefore it should be preserved and put in order" to "this is not my business". It is possible to say that the Svētupe and its people in respect to the concrete living place can be considered as Latvia and its people in miniature. The sociocultural orientation is certainly towards the West, but it has been interrupted by collective traumas and inferiority complexes from the years of the Soviet rule. Yet the inferiority complexes and neglecting attitudes towards the Svētupe are not dominating in the local consciousness. The dominant determination of the Svētupe inhabitants, not always clearly articulated, is to put in order their living place, while keeping in esteem the feeling of the native or the "father's home". For example, Gunta Lūse, who was born and grew up at the

Svētupe and who has been working for 42 years as the head of local municipality, has commented with pride: "My father was, after all, an extraordinary honest man, and extraordinary hardworking, too. And he had cattle-shed with all automatic watering appliances in those times (..) And he always said, if not the Soviet times, his house would be for all tourists to admire! It was built differently at all. All country houses are usually similar, – a room behind kitchen and two more rooms. All toilets are outside around the corner, but our father had a toilet built inside" [Gunta Lūse, Pāle, 2013]. It is worth mentioning that Gunta Lūse's daughter Inga Brieze, a hostess of the *Lāči* farm in Pāle parish, has been living for some time in emigration, in England, and her comparison of houses here and there is as follows: "It was the Latvian silence in rural houses and spaciousness of fields, what I was missing in England. I and my husband were young, we wanted to kiss, but there was no place without the ever-present somebody with his or her "hello!". Having returned to Latvia and living in the countryside, we are happy" [Inga Brieze, Pāle, 2015].

It is worthwhile to mention, that people, who care about their homes, usually take the responsibility to care about the whole vicinity. For example, the aforementioned Gunta Lūse together with some other local inhabitants founded an association "Svētupe", whose aim was to clean the river, to make it suitable for canoeing and to tidy its banks. Unfortunately, for some bureaucratic limitations the association could not realize these lofty ideas. Yet it continued its existence, and its members in 2009 put in order the vicinity of a cultural object, well-known in Latvia – Livonian sacred cave, they made pathways, staircases, erected information stands, and set the site for the popular science and music project "Nature concert-hall" in Kuiķule [Tiesnese 2009]. The local belonging first of all means responsibility for the living place [Inglis 2009]. The aforementioned initiative is an excellent illustration to the positive correlation between high level awareness of local identity and the readiness to take care of, to look after and to keep in order the factors forming local identity such as cultural landscape, traditions, language and social ties, which, in their turn, enrich national culture in general [Bonaiuto et al. 1996].

Finally, we can say that there are many places in Latvia, which hold imprints of history and are attractive both to local inhabitants and to tourists and researchers. We cannot (except with the help of archaeology and, in some cases, of folklore and chronicles) have an insight into the history of our living places more than, conditionally, for some three to five hundred years. Thus, a question rises naturally: "What is left over from certain place after some 300 or 500 years?" The inhabitants of one or another place have changed countless times – they have moved elsewhere, have died, new ones are born, have intermarried and divorced. This is like a three hundred years old anthill, where nothing can be really discovered without in-depth family tree studies. Living houses in normal conditions have a longer existence than

humans, anyway, they also wear down in a couple of hundred years, they fall apart, burn down or are burnt down, get modernized, thus preserving the only link with the past – the name of the house (it is a tradition in rural Latvia to identify houses by name). Nowadays the practical need for some buildings (kiln-house, threshing-floor, bath-house, granary), necessary in the olden days' farming, has been lost, therefore they are seldom preserved properly.

In the context of the research, a rhetoric question has arisen: "What will happen to this strong local identity mytheme "my father's home" in future? Will it continue to exist in Latvian consciousness or, in the situation of the liquid modernity, will it become only a meaningless idiom?"

It may seem that modern Latvians have their homes everywhere, and this might be a conclusion that the true or the only home does not exist at all. At the same time, this statement might be, more likely, an exaggeration, as almost everybody in Latvia is subconsciously inclined to their own constant place, that is, if not for generations inherited father's house, then at least a private house or apartment. Both among older rural inhabitants and younger urban dwellers there are many, who would say: "Every Latvian has his roots in the countryside house" [Edgars Efeja, Rīga, 2013].

Conclusion

In the conditions of Bauman's "liquid modernity" and in the situation of indefinite place identity it is just the local belonging, having the concept "my father's house" as its figurative equivalent in Latvian, that can provide a feeling of stability.

The field research, carried out in the vicinity of the Svētupe river, shows that the inhabitants of Latvian province cannot be unambiguously treated as a product of "liquid modernity". In spite of real emigration tendencies in the state, their common practices and identity in general bear witness to explicit "solidity". Country people know very clearly, who they are and where is their home, as well as home of their parents and their children, what natural and cultural values are in their vicinity. The more people link themselves to a certain place and the more explicit are marks of their local identity, the less they emphasize and then also pay notice to the negative sides and shortcomings of their living space.

One can agree, that the liquid modernity pertains to a significant part of the Western society, but the question is, how far one can go in attributing it to such a Western country as Latvia?

A third of Latvian population live in the countryside [Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia 2017b]. According to Latvian normative demographic documents, a town is defined as an inhabited place with no less than two thousand permanent residents, and it may happen that some historically defined towns have less than two thousand inhabitants [Statistical Bureau of Latvia 2017b] – this can still be regarded as rural

environment in Western European or Asian contexts. Technically it means that about two thirds of all Latvian inhabitants, except those 700 thousand living in the capital Riga, can be considered as peasants who still live with the sense of solid, not liquid modernity, and they have a clear and explicit sense of local belonging or local identity, and are keeping the related identity narrative, and they usually know very well what is their home and their "father's home".

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