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### **INFLUENCE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY ON CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF UKRAINIAN POLISSIA: CASE STUDY OF PRYPIAT**

**Abstract.** *The article investigates the influence of the Soviet nuclear power industry on the cultural landscape of the Ukrainian Polissya on the example of the city Prip'yat, which was the first satellite nuclear city (atomgrad) in the Ukrainian SSR. In result of the accident on Chernobyl nuclear power plant, this city is known to the whole world and became a symbol of the crisis of the Soviet system. Despite this, there are few scientific works devoted to the impact of this city on the cultural landscape of Polissya before the Chernobyl accident. The main criteria for the construction of atomgrads and their functions have analyzed. It has concluded that on the one hand, they fulfilled pragmatic functions of servicing the nuclear power plants, and on the other hand, embodied the prevailing ideological, urban, ecological and scientific ambitions of the Soviet leadership. It has been proved the duality of planning of Prip'yat city. From one hand, the city's architectural decisions shows care about the population, manifested in a specific approach to urban space, which reflects the elements of the city garden, the minimal change in the environment, the dominant role of health, sports, education and socialist art. This demonstrates the implementation of a socialist understanding of the idea of «smart city» and the embodiment of the dream of communism. At the same time, these visual manifestations were not able to protect the population from radioactive influence before and during the Chornobyl accident due to the confidence in the safety of a peaceful atom, which manifested in a low risk culture and radiation prevention. It has been established that the formation of a special group of elite Soviet workers — nuclear workers — stimulated internal migration to this region and prompted some residents to change their ideological settings and life aspirations, obtaining the necessary education and building a career in this nuclear city. Author confirmed the conclusion of the famous American researcher Kate Brown, made in the book «Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and*

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*the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters», that for the receiving of material goods and social status many workers of nuclear power plant who lived in nuclear cities, neglected their health even life.*

**Key words:** nuclear power engineering, cultural landscape, Prip'yat, Polissya, Ukrainian SSR.

**Анотація.** Вплив радянської атомної енергетики на культурний ландшафт українського Полісся досліджено на прикладі міста Прип'ять, яке було першим на території Української РСР містом-супутником — атомоградом. Внаслідок аварії на Чорнобильській атомній станції це місто стало відоме на весь світ і стало символом кризи радянської системи. Не дивлячись на це, існує обмаль наукових праць, присвячених впливу цього міста на культурний ландшафт Полісся до аварії на ЧАЕС. Проаналізовано головні критерії будівництва атомоградів та їхні функції, які, з однієї сторони, виконували цілком прагматичні функції обслуговування АЕС, а, з іншої — втілювали пануючі ідеологічні, містобудівні, екологічні та наукові амбіції радянського керівництва. Зроблено висновок про дуалізм планування Прип'яті. В архітектурних рішеннях міста спостерігається турбота про населення, що проявилась у специфічному підході до міського простору, в якому відображені елементи міста-саду, мінімальної зміни навколишнього середовища, домінуючої ролі здоров'я, спорту, освіти і соціалістичного мистецтва. Це демонструє упровадження соціалістичного розуміння ідеї «смарт-міста» та втілення мрії про комунізм. Водночас ці візуальні прояви турботи не змогли убезпечити населення від радіоактивного впливу до і під час Чорнобильської аварії унаслідок упевненості у безпеці мирного атома, що проявилось у низькій культурі ризику і попередження радіаційної небезпеки. Доведено, що формування особливої групи елітних радянських працівників — атомників стимулювало внутрішню міграцію до цього регіону і спонукало деяких жителів до зміни своїх світоглядних установок і життєвих прагнень, отримання необхідної освіти і будівництва кар'єри в атомному містечку. Підтверджено висновок відомої американської дослідниці Кейт Браун, зроблений у книзі «Плутонія: ядерні сім'ї, атомні міста і великі радянські й американські плутонієві міста», про те, що задля доручення до матеріальних благ і соціального статусу багато робітників станції, що проживали в атомоградах, знехтували своїм здоров'ям і навіть життям.

**Ключові слова:** атомна енергетика, культурний ландшафт, Прип'ять, Полісся, Українська РСР.

**Аннотация.** Влияние советской атомной энергетики на культурный ландшафт украинского Полесья исследовано на примере города Припять, который был первым на территории Украинской РСР городом-спутником — атомоградом. Вследствие аварии на Чернобыльской атомной станции этот город стал известен на весь мир и превратился в символ кризиса советской системы. Несмотря на это, научных трудов, посвященных влиянию этого города на культурный ландшафт Полесья до аварии ЧАЭС, недостаточно. Проанализированы основные критерии строительства атомоградов и их функции, которые, с одной стороны, выполняли вполне прагматические функции обслуживания АЭС, а, с другой — воплощали господствующие идеологические, градостроительные, экологические и научные амбиции советского руководства. Подготовлено вывод о дуализме планирования Припяти. В архитектурных решениях города наблюдается забота о населении, что проявилось в специфическом подходе к городскому пространству, в котором отображены элементы города-сада, минимальном изменении окружающей среды, доминирующей роли здоровья, спорта, образования и социалистического искусства. Это демонстрирует реализацию социалистического понимания идеи «смарт-города» и воплощения идеи о коммунизме. Одновременно эти визуальные проявления заботы не смогли обезопасить население от радиоактивного влияния до и после Чернобыльской аварии вследствие уверенности в безопасности мирного атома, что проявилось в низкой культуре риска и предупреждения радиационной опасности. Доказано, что формирование особой группы элитных советских работников — атомщиков стимулировало внутреннюю миграцию в этот регион и стимулировало некоторых жителей к изменению своих мировоззренческих установок и жизненных устремлений, получения необходимого образования и формирования карьеры в атомном городке. Подтвержден вывод известной американской исследовательницы Кейт Браун, высказанный в книге «Плутония: ядерные семьи, атомные города и большие советские и американские плутониевые города» о том, что с целью приобщения к материальным благам и социальному статусу многие работники станции, которые проживали в атомоградах, пренебрегли своим здоровьем и даже жизнью.

**Ключевые слова:** атомная энергетика, культурный ландшафт, Припять, Полесье, Украинская ССР.

**Formulation of the problem.** The formation of a bipolar world after World War II induces the Soviet Union to intensify the struggle for world leadership. Nuclear energy played an important role in promoting this position. It should have been not only provide the economy with cheap electricity and save valuable hydrocarbons (oil and gas), but also demonstrate the benefits of the socialist system. According to the ambitious plans of the Soviet leadership on the territory of the USSR, 9 nuclear power plants (NPPs) were to be built. During 1977–1989, 16 nuclear reactors with a total capacity of 14,800 MW were built at Zaporizhzhya, Rivne, Khmelnytsky, Chernobyl and South-Ukrainian nuclear power plants. Parallel were build satellite nuclear cities (atomgrads), inhabited by the builders and service personnel of the nuclear power plant. Atomgrads were a unique phenomenon in the history of Soviet urban planning, which has no analogues in the world. On the one hand, they carried out quite pragmatic functions of servicing the nuclear power plants and on the other hand, they embodied the dominant ideological, urban, ecological and scientific ambitions of the Soviet leadership, reflected in special architectural decisions that significantly changed the cultural landscape of Ukraine, in particular Polissya, where majority of them located.

**Analysis of previous studies and publications.** The investigation of atomgrad's influence on the cultural landscape of Polissya has not become the subject of in-depth studies in Ukrainian historical science. The researchers mainly focus on the problem of radioactive pollution of the Pripyat city after the Chernobyl accident and the evacuation of its inhabitants, transforming the city into a dead zone. N. Baranivska studied social transformations in the Ukrainian society as a result of the Chernobyl accident.

On the contrary, this problem has generated much more interest of foreign researchers (A. Agirrechu, K. Brown, D. Holloway, M. Huber, M. Kuznetsov, R.H. Rowland, R.Z. Sagdeev, J. Stadelbauer, V. Tikhonov, M. Sergeeva, A.V. Wendland, K. Zisk etc.).

In Russian historiography, atomgrad has considered a type of science towns (naukograd), which G. Lappo calls the cities with a high concentration of intellectual and scientific and technical potential — scientific, educational and production organizations and industries, scientists and specialists [1, p.21]. Atomgrades are characterized as monospecialized cities associated with the nuclear complex. Russian researchers emphasize that they have scientific, research and production complex, which enterprises carry out scientific research and engaged in the production and using technologies in the field of nuclear physics and nuclear chemistry [2, p. 45]. In the concept given by German researcher A.V. Wendland, atomgrad is seen as a small industrial city (from 30 000 to 80 000 inhabitants), designed to serve the needs of large commercial objects such as nuclear power plants [3]. Therefore, we can state the existing of common view on these cities in the historiography. As for the main trends of research, mostly scientists make a retrospective analysis which gives possibility to assess their development in Soviet and post-Soviet period as well as to discuss the prospects in the 21st century. As for the geographical criteria, the main subject of interest is the nuclear cities located in Russia.

Particular attention deserves a book of the famous American researcher K. Brown «Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters» in which she made a comparative analysis of the Richmond

satellite nuclear city in the United States with its Russian counterpart, the city of Oszek built in 1950s. The author concludes that despite the difference in the political system between the US and the USSR, the two cities have a number of similar features. First of all, they reflect the nuclear ambitions of their countries and their workers — «nuclear communities» which formed in the process of development of nuclear plants [4]. A.V. Wendland has implemented several research projects on the territory of Ukraine and devoted a number of scientific works to the problem of Ukrainian nuclear cities. One of them «Atomogrady. Nuclear Cities between Utopia and Disaster in East Central Europe 1965-2011» reveals political, economic, social and technical aspects of the functioning of these cities before and after the Chernobyl accident.

Despite a number of fundamental research, we suppose that existing historiography gives fragmented picture of the influence of atomgrads on the cultural landscape of Ukraine. This is especially true for the research of Ukrainian scientists, which requires filling the existing gap.

**The purpose of the article** is to analyze the influence of nuclear energy on cultural landscape of Ukrainian Polissia: on the case study of Pryriat

**Main results of the study.** Although the construction of Prip'yat began on February 4, 1970, it received the status of the city in 1979, according to the decree of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR No. 1264/686. The city-making enterprise became the largest NPP in Europe — Chornobyl located at a distance of 2 km. Prip'yat became the ninth in the Soviet Union atomgrad, and the first — in the territory of the Ukrainian USSR.

In the Soviet Union, the spatial criterion for the construction of such nuclear cities determined by the specific landscape chosen by Soviet engineers for the location of NPPs. It had to provide the existence of large unused agricultural or forest areas, which allowed the development of the large-scale construction of industrial and residential facilities; water facilities for cooling of reactors; convenient transportation; the possibility of integration transmission lines into existing infrastructure, moderate distances from large industrial centers that required large electricity production.

Prip'yat fully met these criteria. It located near same-name river which was part of the Dnipro River basin; on the territory of Polissia — a geographical, historical and ethnographic region. It included the northern territories of Volyn, Rivne, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy regions of Ukraine, the southern part of the Brest region of Belarus, the eastern Pidlashshia region of Poland and the southwest territory of the modern Kaluga region of Russia. The unique natural landscape consisted of forests (over 2.5 million hectares) interspersed with bogs. Due to the mild climate, this area inhabited by many species of flora and fauna. Local communities perceived Polissia not only as the place of rich natural resources (mainly mushrooms and berries) provided important source of food and income but also as the extremely scenic landscape that had a great aesthetic value.

Except the direct function of service the NPP, Prip'yat had designed as a major transshipment junction. The nearby Yanov railway station on the Chernihiv-Ovruch site, the pier of the river navigation on the Prip'yat River and highways transformed atomgrad into a convenient hub for transport in Polissia region. The city was located at a distance of 110 km. from the capital of Ukraine — Kyiv, one of the largest industrial centers in the republic which population at that time exceeded one million.

Construction of Pripyat was declared the All-Union deal and Komsomol activists from all corners of the USSR arrived to this place on the appeal of the Communist Party.

The planning of the city fully provided the idea of a limited change in the natural landscape, which was a peculiarity of the «nuclear» industrial landscapes in the Soviet Union. It implemented in «triangular» principle of urban building developed by a group of Moscow architects under the leadership of N. Ostozhenko. Subsequently, after the preliminary approval, Kyiv architects made their own changes in the design of the city, which were more in line with the natural landscape of the territory. For that time, such form of urban planning was unique. This idea also used in the construction of some other Soviet nuclear cities. In particular, some districts of Pripyat identical with residential neighborhoods of Kurchatov and Semipalatinsk-21, Volgograd and Togliatti automgrads.

The principle of «triangular» building is characterized by the mixture of standard-level and high-level buildings. A distinctive feature of such construction is the visual space and free space between the buildings. Unlike the «old» Soviet cities with narrow streets and dense buildings, Pripyat like other similar cities was designed with the purpose of creating convenience of living. In addition to the conscious increase in free urban space, this goal also achieved by the special, even-edged arrangement of streets and avenues. This made impossible occurring of traffic jams.

Pripyat is a city with a clearly determined center. The peculiar face of the city provided by a composition of microdistricts, located in radius around it. Traditionally, administrative buildings (city council), leisure facilities, culture and recreation (cinema «Prometheus», the Palace of Culture «Energetik», «Polissia» hotel), food and grocery stores were located in the city center. Although in the former Soviet Union 19 palaces of culture and 11 cinema theatres built according to the same project, Pripyat the city can be regarded as a standard of uniqueness of the Soviet architecture and at the same time its redundancy. By the end of 1988, two large shopping centers (one of them «Pripyat Zori»), a palace of pioneers, a new cinema, a palace of art «Jubilee», a hotel «Zhovten», two sports complexes — «Chernigov» and «Prypiatchanin» had to be built in the city. According to the project of cities development, at the intersection of the Avenue of Builders and the street of Lesia Ukrainka it planned to build a signal transponder height of 52 meters. The city widely used light advertising, bright panels and decorative ceramics on the facades of buildings.

The streets and avenues of the city mainly had traditional for the Soviet era names. In addition to the ideological names — Lenin Avenue, streets of Druzhby Narodiv and Heroes of Stalingrad, there were also the Naberezhnaia street, the Boulevard of Builders. The idea of peaceful atom represented in Kurchatov street. And only one street — named of Lesia Ukrainka reflected the national-cultural component in this socialist urban landscape.

Pripyat had appropriate infrastructure. Thus, the total area of the housing stock was 658, 700 m<sup>2</sup>, it consisted of 160 houses, 13 414 apartments, 18 dormitories for single beds for 7621 seats, 8 family dormitories and hotel-type houses for 1206 rooms for 49,400 inhabitants. In the city located: 15 kindergardens for 4980 places; 5 secondary schools for 6786 places; 1 technical school for 600 places; 1 hospital for 410 beds; a school of arts for 312 places; cinema for 1220 places. In Pripyat also were: 3 medical centers; 25 stores; 27 catering places; 10 sports halls; 3 swimming

pools; 10 shooting ranges; 2 stadiums; 28 artesian wells; 1 park; 35 children's playgrounds.

Transformation of the natural landscape during the construction of atomgrads carried out in accordance with the principles of standardization, rationalization, transnational aesthetics and a specific approach to urban space. It included elements of the city garden, the dominant role of health, sports, education and socialist art — all components that were the priorities in the Soviet society and had to testify the concern of the Communist Party about the Soviet citizens.

Particular attention deserves the natural landscape of the city. In Pripyat were planted 18 136 trees, 249 247 shrubs, 33 582 bush roses [7]. The settlers from Pripyat remember him as a garden city, which drowned in flowers. The most popular type of rest was outdoor recreation, sunbathe and swimming in Pripyat River, gathering of blueberries and mushrooms in the forests around Chernobyl NPP. Many residents of the city, who were interviewed by the author of this article, feel nostalgia on the nature of this territory, its unique aesthetics.

The specific relations between man and nature in Pripyat demonstrate the difference between visual and invisible manifestation of care on residents of the city. From one perspective, we can see the visual environmental friendliness of urban planning: surrounding forests, greenery of the city, wide streets... All these should have been protect them from polluting the atmosphere with harmful emissions of transport and industrial production. From other perspective, smart spatial planning decisions were unable to protect people from the radioactive pollution. The belief in the safety of the nuclear power, which was propagated by the Soviet science, was the result of insufficient research on monitoring the impact of radiation on the environment and human health. In addition, the secrecy around the NPPs and nuclear cities, allowed to hide the data that could show its danger of leak of radiation and necessity of introduction of more rigorous measures of control and living standards.

K. Braun in her book stresses the formation of chronic radiation syndrome among residents of Ozersk and their descendants, high morbidity and mortality from cancer and a number of chronic diseases. Wide research on the impact of the radiation on people, in particular inhabitants of the territories surrounding NPP, started only after the Chernobyl. Most of researchers support the opinion that despite the improvement of safety systems that took place in NPPs during the 1970s-1980s, there were periodically leaks of radiation that harmed the landscape and made it unsafe for permanent residence. However, due to the absence of official data we can only suppose this. Since the beginning of the construction of Pripyat and until 1986, safety aspects were not reflected in its functioning, both in the material culture and in the culture of risk and prevention of radiation hazard.

The main focus in the functioning of Pripyat was done on the development of social infrastructure and fulfillment of the ideological function: the city had to implement the dream of communism. Compared to the residents of other cities in Ukrainian SSR, employees of Pripyat quickly received apartments, had social benefits, access to scarce goods and higher wages, although there were certainly some elements of social differentiation within its community. High solvency of the inhabitants of the city attracted locals who organized spontaneous markets near its walls where sold «environmentally friendly products» — berries and mushrooms, products of rural households. This created not only the additional source of income,

but also a good communication channel. From face-to face informal communication residents of local communities received the information about life in the «communist paradise» in Pripyat.

As a result of many social advantages, Pripyat has affected the migration processes in the region. First of all, it refers to the residents from the surrounding villages, who sought to receive highly paid and skilled work, make a career and join the group of elite workers of the Soviet society. This led many of them to receive needed education and skills that were needed in the atomgrad. At the same time, the city was closed; before getting there to work, it was necessary to pass a serious selection.

In his book «Cities of Russia. View of the geographer» G. Lappo notes that in the geographical, administrative and practical sense, the inhabitants of the atomgraphs were isolated, the cities were excluded from the «wide» life, which made them peculiar zones in the USSR [9]. However, these zones were privileged; in our view, the access to the social benefits compensated the absent of freedom in atomograds. As mentioned K.Brown, they sold their freedom, health and often life for social privileges [4, p.113]. This is indicated by the tendency to find work in atomic cities: those who want to get there have always been much more than those who sought to leave this city.

A.V.Wendland believes that the Soviet atomgrads were a new type of commune, in which a new type of Soviet nuclear worker was formed [5]. We agree with this statement, however want to emphasize that, in addition to the purely professional qualities associated with the chosen profession, these workers and their families had a sense of choice and elitism. They were proud of their profession and realized the privileged position in Soviet society. This formed additional loyalty to the Soviet government and a steady faith in the chosen by the Soviet government path. In fact, they visualized the image of a new Soviet man, a young (middle age of Pripyat's inhabitants was 26 years old) communist fighter who, with conscientious and inspiring work brought the bright closer the bright future — communism. Nuclear cities have played a decisive role in propagating a peaceful atom, as well as in specific Soviet cultural representations of science, nuclear technology and electricity.

**Conclusions.** Atomgrads including Pripyat, had a significant impact on the Polissia cultural landscape. Their construction and development demonstrated the implementation of the socialist understanding of the idea of the smart city, although the Chernobyl accident clearly shows that the visual benefits of nuclear satellite cities, which had, moreover, an ideological coloration, concealed the danger of radiation for the lives and health of their inhabitants. At the same time, the formation of a special group of elite Soviet workers (nuclear workers) stimulated internal migration to this region and prompted some residents to change their ideological attitudes and life aspirations, obtaining the necessary education and building a career in an atomic town.

The prospect of further research may be an in-depth study of changes in the consciousness of Polissia inhabitants associated with the development of Pripyat nuclear city.

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