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# IDEA AND MYTH OF THE CITY FROM THE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH VIEWPOINT

The city is, probably, listed as a research object which study is insufficient using methods from one area of science. In the article the attention is focused on the heuristic potential of use of constructionist philosophical approach for the purpose of research of the process of building and functioning of the social space of the city, in particular the explication of idea of the city in the form of myth of the city. The understanding of the cultural idea of the city is enunciated through the appeal to the concept "myth of the city". The myth of the city is represented as the actual reality, the system of self-concepts of the local community (city people) encoded with the help of symbolic mythological means verbalized in the city narrative and objectified in the city space. If we are to talk about a city in general, rather than about typical set of micro-districts, it is worth paying attention to those components that provide the city space with an individual sound and position. None city exists aimlessly, each city has its own idea. The idea of the city is embodied in the myth of the city (this includes everyday knowledge of the city, its historical subjects, collective vision of the city's future by townspeople). Each city has its own myth, and the inhabitants of these cities live in their mythological reality united by a mythological narrative. Such mythological realities become apparent when the carriers of different mythological narratives collide (meet) with each other. Proceeding from this background, the article tried to answer the question: what is the form of "city's elusive spirit" (in terms of V. Benmin) and how can we research it. Based on the theory of monomyth of Joseph Campbell the understanding of the single architectonics of the myth of the city being common to myths of different cities has been proposed.
**Keywords:** philosophy of the city, myth of the city, idea of the city, city space designing, construction of myth.

**Introduction.** In the theoretical studies of the city by means of philosophic sciences (philosophy of the city) the greater focus is placed currently on the myth of the city as the form of awareness of the city. This is because the city as something that belongs to the culture (as opposed to nature) is the space of symbols and cultural values. The mythological plots of the cities are popular with the researchers and give the possibility to involve numerous narrative materials concerned with the myths of Ukrainian and European cities such as Kramatorsk, Ostrog, Netishyn, Slavyansk, Slavutich[1], Donetsk[2], Berlin[3], Florence[4], Venice[5] etc. in order to "give them the possibility to speak for themselves"[6]. The cultural historian Robert Darnton in "The Great Cat Massacre" suggested that "the city can be read just like a fairy tale or philosophical text"[7]. This particular possibility to read and understand the city pushes its researchers

[1] Тимошенко, Д. (2017). В «депрессивных» городах Донбасса нет депрессии – исследователи. *Радио свобода.* <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28778420.html> (2021, May, 29).

[2] Сидорова, К. (2012). Витоки та розвиток донецького регіонального міфу. *Філософія і політологія в контексті сучасної культури, 4 (2)*, 222-229.

[3] Haerdter, M. (2005). The Myth of the Centre. *Neme* <http://www.neme.org/texts/the-myth-of-the-center#foot5> (2021, May, 10); Weiss-Sussex, G. (2011). Berlin: Myth and Memorialization. *The Cultural Identities of European Cities,* 145-164. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0353-0060-4.

[4] Зиммель, Г. (2002) Флоренция. *ЛОГОС, 3, 31,* 24-36.

5 Burke, P. (2011). Myths of Venice. *The Cultural Identities of European Cities*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Peter Lang Verlag, 77-91. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0353-0060-4

[6] Кэмпбелл, Дж. (2018). *Тысячеликий герой.* СПб: Питер, 352.

[7] Бёрк, П. (2015). *Что такое культуральная история?* Москва: ИД Высшей школы экономики, 64.

into the networks of mythological plots of this text. At the same time, there is still no general idea of the "myth of the city" due to the difficulties in agreement in respect of universal definition of the city and the variety of myth concepts.

The theoretical concept "myth of the city" arises in the studies as an aggregate, intuitively comprehensible idea and is used in several dimensions: firstly, for (de)constructing of ideas of local residents about their city (myths of the city), secondly, for (de)constructing of ideas about the certain city that external actors have, and in such a case the confusion arises in distinguishing between the local mythological plots and the myth of the city as a whole. Also, there are studies aimed at the identification of myth of city living regardless of local plots[1]. In particular, the Australian research team deconstructing the ideas about city living (describing them as the myths of the city) hopes to use this knowledge for the prediction and forecasting in the city planning and city development concepts and development of recommendations for the city authorities.

**Research task.** Taking into account the relevance and growing research and practical interest in the topic of the myth of the city, we will try to outline the range of issues, which may arise in the process of research of the myth of the city, and identify provisionally the directions for the search of answers to these issues:

What is the myth of the city and in what form does it exist? How the myth can help to understand the essence of the city and the mechanisms of formation of the image of the city? How the cultural theory of myth can be used for the exploration of the city and how can we research the myth of the city? Can a myth (myth of the city) be constructed? What is the mechanics of constructing the myth of the city?

**Statement of basic materials.** The starting point for this study is the concept of constructing the ideas about the territory (region) outlined by the borders with the help of myth-making "from the bottom" and "from above" of A. Golovneva. The researcher rests on the theory of social constructivism (P. Berger), according to which the knower not only perceives reality as a given, but builds it actively through the language and cultural systems. In such a way the constructs arise, due to which and through which the objective reality is conceptualized for understanding. The researcher tries to "analyze the mythology as the method of the city identity construction"[2]. Within the framework of such approach "the images of the city are the elements of the city identity construction" and "one of the methods of the city identity construction is the mythologization of the city, i.e. the formation of its image with the use of mythological methods of thinking"[3]. In this research article we will try to apply this research optics to the myth of the city relying upon the achievements of the followers of constructionist theory in understanding of the social reality and phenomenological approach to the objects of the every-day world, in which the city (as the community of city people) is, without doubt, one of these objects.

The city itself as the set of material objects does not require the evidence of its existence; it exists actually in space and time. But the cultural idea of the city as specifically organized, symphonically combined integrity of social and cultural senses has the constructed character for the society as any phenomenon of the social world. Such cultural idea is the part of the senses of the social world. In order to clarify the constructed nature of the idea of the city we will follow the approach to the understanding of the social worlds proposed by Peter Berger in respect of the social reality in general. According to P. Berger the social medium is the product of human activity and does not exist without people. But the social world structures are created by the people ex nihilo, are unstable and require certain grounds for their existence, preservation and transfer to future generations[4]. It is implemented through socialization, which provides that the individual belongs to the community and ensures that such individual shares the ideology of this community. The grounds for this are created by the legitimation of the social world structures, which provides the common understanding of the social reality phenomena by the community.

The idea of the city as socially constructed idea is legitimated in the myth. The myth of the city in this sense is the instrument of entrenchment of gestalt of a particular city for its residents. In order to reply to the question whether it is possible to speak about the myth of the city in general or vice versa there are many unrelated myths of particular cities it is necessary to use the collective publication "Own logic of cities.

[1] Boschetti, F., Gaffier, C., Price, J., Moglia, M., Walker, I. (2017). Myths of the City. *Sustainability Science, 12 (4)*, 611-620. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11625-017-0436-2

[2] Головнева, Е. В. (2016). Мифологизация как способ конструирования городской идентичности (Екатеринбург на интернет-форумах). *Уральский исторический вестник, 3 (52),* 43-51.

[3] Ibid, 44.

[4] Бергер, П. Л. (2019). *Священная завеса. Элементы социологической теории религии.* Москва: Новое литературное обозрение, 44.

New approaches in Urban science", which defends the idea that the city as the independent subject is lost in numerous studies of the facts of city living. But according to the authors of "Own logic of cities" the different quantitative measurements of the life of city people are not identical to the city itself[1], that is why the previous urban tradition of considering the city only as the mirror of social processes should be revised. In the mentioned study the own logic of cities means that "the city has the basic structures, which permeate all spheres of its life. They are not necessarily unique – on the contrary it is quite probable that there are several cities, which develop according to the same structural models"[2]. Consequently, it is a case of the existence of the basic models of development not for each particular city, but the specific general model of the city, which may be common according to the structure, but is filled with different content for each particular city. It gives the possibility to talk simultaneously about the myth of the city as the general concept, which may be theoretically studied and understood thanks to the inductive method: the study of individual myths of the cities will give the general concept of the essence and structure of any myth of the city in general. And at the same time, such universally applicable myth of the city does not exclude the existence of the unique myths of the cities, which characterize the particular cities with unique plots like the myth of Venice, which will be mentioned below.

It should be noted that in this study the myth is understood in the broadest sense: as the reality, which determines the world view and world perception of the person. The myths of the cities tell about the city and the role of the city in the cultural reality, about the mission of the city and its idea. Each city arises and develops according to the predominant cultural and social sense, which either was laid in the process of city designing or was consensually accepted by the urban commune as the main benchmark for collective living. In the first case the idea of the city specifies coordinates for the city people living (this is the case for the cities of industrial age, for example the single-industry cities, cities – factories). In the second case it is referred to the local reflection of predominant cultural values (for example, embodiment of "freedom", "multiculturality"). This is implemented in different ways, but the above indicated process fits in and is corrected also through the cultural "grand narratives" embodied in the regional (urban) mythology. Within the framework of tradition of approaching to the surrounding reality as to the text the ideas about the history, the past and the future, the person and the society, the life and the world in general arose as the stories – narratives and if the stories are united by one and the same topic and single core these are the metanarratives or grand narratives. According to V.I. Dodonova "they [*grand narratives*] are the epistemological construct legitimizing the ways of thinking, social institutions and the entire social system creating thereby the global world view"[3].

Here are some examples of implementation of the idea of the city in the myth of the city. The first example is the myths of Venice studied by Peter Burke. One of these myths the researcher names the perception of "Venice as the city-woman". This myth embodies the idea of Venice as the object of desire. "Venice is personified as a beautiful majestic woman in the paintings of Tintoretto. Venice was associated with Venus in 16th century poems. For Venetian poet Giovanni Francesco Busenello the city was 'the queen of the sea, the goddess of the waves'"[4]. Further the idea verbalized in the myth is entrenched and spread through figurative references. "This image becomes more and more common in the writings of foreign visitors in 19th century so much that one can speak of "feminization" of the city. Byron called Venice the goddess or "queen of the ocean"[5].

The other example of implementation of the practical idea of the city in the myth is the "colonial" myth of Berlin. "The idea of Berlin as the city of the last settlers, pleasure-seekers and not the people, who rooted in the existing culture, was more strongly perceived by Karl Scheffler and he described Berlin as the "colonial city" summarizing in this one word the character of the city as the outpost of traders, for whom it is insufficient to develop slowly as well as the existing culture and society are not enough. This concept of the "colonial city" found the great resonance among the writers of Berlin"[6]. This colonial myth was transformed into the myth of the "city without the past", which in the positive connotations is communicated through the image of Berlin as the "city of changes – the city, which never looks back at the past"[7].

[1] Беркинг, Х., Лёв, М. (ред.) (2017). *Собственная логика городов: Новые подходы в урбанистике*. Москва: Новое литературное обозрение, 29.

[2] Ibid, 48-49.

[3] Додонова, В. І. (2011). *Постнекласичний дискурс соціальної раціональності*. Донецьк: ДонНУ, 283.

[4] Burke, P. (2011). Myths of Venice. *The Cultural Identities of European Cities*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Peter Lang Verlag, 84. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0353-0060-4

[5] Ibid, 84.

[6] Weiss-Sussex, G. (2011). Berlin: Myth and Memorialization. *The Cultural Identities of European Cities*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Peter Lang Verlag, 147. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0353-0060-4.

[7] Ibid, 146.

*Therefore, how the myth can help to understand the essence of the city and the mechanisms of formation of the image of the city?* Georg Simmel notes the unity of the territory and the atmosphere of its existence in the minds of people, he writes in the essay "Florence": "What mysterious and nevertheless allegedly seen by the naked eye perceptible unity weaves the landscape, the life of its lines and the odor of this earth with the spirit, which is its fruit, with the history of European individual, which has got its form here, with the arts, which is generated by this land"[1]. This is the example of attempt to grasp the feeling of the "spirit of the earth" (later "elusive spirit of the city" by B. Benjamin), the pronouncement of the myth of locally delineated territory. Yu.M. Lotman, speaking about the symbolic spaces and more specifically about the geographic space (as one of the forms of spatial construction of the world in the minds of the individual, area of semiotic modeling), sets forth the interesting thesis concerning the dependence of geographic space on the character of the common world models, the part of which it is[2]. Another point of view, which does not lie in the superiority of the human activity, but in the territory, belongs to C. Hübner. The author speaks of temenos (in a near sense "temenos" is the area of the temple) as the halidom fits into the mythic landscape, where the God lives or Arche indwells and recovers constantly[3]. The temenoses are the building elements of the cosmos, which contain that, which gives them the possibility to have any changeable content and they are organized by means of this content and are in the continuous unity with it[4].

Art project *The City Mythologema* is the apt example of which might illustrate these considerations. Project intended to "find city's identity through history, narrative from city inhabitants. This is often some details, nuances, a story that most people recall"[5]. *Code of the City* team wanted people to look at themselves from the outside. The City Mythologema Project from the *Code of the City* organization was implemented in six Ukrainian cities: Slavyansk, Kramatorsk, Netishyn, Ostrog, Slavutich and Kremenchug. The City Mythologema Project objective was to initiate discussion of local myths and narratives among local communities, detect the townspeople narrative about themselves, collective consciousness, identity. Conversations were analysed later by artists. The main plot or a vivid image that they had selected was visualised in murals in some unpopular public space.

Under this approach project team created several new city visual symbols: the "Krazosaur" (artist Igor Zaydel) for the city of Kremenchug – known for its KRaZ Auto Plant and archaeologists' discovery of a unique dinosaur nearby. The artist combined these stories in such a creature as a "Krazosaur". Stylized alphabet for the city of Ostrog. This city is a centre of writing, and is proud of its academy. White angel is the symbol of the city of Slavutich. It could be said that the project in Slavutich was failed. Local residents did not like the way that the artist wanted to present them.

*How can the myth theory be used for the research of the city? Can the myth (myth of the city) be constructed?* First of all, we will pay attention to what the myth describes for its carrier. As A. Belokobylskiy notes "the reality, which surrounds the primitive person, is realized with the help of images formed by ontological systemacity". Demonstrating the world in the sense bearing, practically significant intersubjective images, it [mythic world view] sets the common field of activity for the initial collective and thereby acts as the guarantee of its survival. Actualizing the objects of this activity with the help of different classification and rituals, the myth gives them the certain meaning and reveals them for the mythic subject"[6]. Therefore, the myth describes the entire universe, in which the carrier exists. As the researcher of the myth of Berlin Haerdter Michael has noted it talks about the functioning of our perception in conflict with what we perceive, which constitutes what we call the "reality". The myth shall be understood to mean "all that we carry as our mental and physical outfit, our hereditary or genetic heritage, heritage of our real or fictional past, past creative acts and collective inventions, fruits of our own idea, self-analysis and projection into the future, our fears and hopes". Our "mythic" constitution gives us the possibility to talk about the modernity of the past[7].

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[1] Зиммель, Г. (2002) Флоренция. *ЛОГОС, 3, 31,* 28.

[2] Лотман, Ю. (1996). *Внутри мыслящих миров. Человек – текст – семиосфера – история*. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 239.

[3] Хюбнер, К. (1996*). Истина мифа*, 146.

[4] Ibid, 148.

[5] Тимошенко, Д. (2017). В «депрессивных» городах Донбасса нет депрессии – исследователи. *Радио свобода.* <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28778420.html> (2021, May, 29).

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[7] Haerdter, M. (2005). The Myth of the Centre. *Neme* <http://www.neme.org/texts/the-myth-of-the-center#foot5> [in English]. (2021, May, 10).

Using the mythic principle in respect of the city the researchers come to the view concerning the enduring relevance of the myth for the urban community and the preservation in European culture of its functional purpose laid down in antiquity[1]. In particular, professor David Braund conducted the special study of the historical functions of the myths in the cities of the eastern Black Sea coast. The researcher found that "every city of the ancient world developed its own myth or the basis for this myth: in fact, such myths had the tendency to multiplication due to the altering conditions so that Rome, for example, had at the very least thirty notably different myth concerning the establishment concentrated around the figure of Romulus and Aeneas"[2]. The affiliation with the single civilizational field and the oneness/ understandability of mythic plots of one or other Greek city gave the possibility to develop the interstate relations in the ancient world. The cities established the friendly relations on the basis of the relations between the different myths concerning the establishment: "they pretended to the special relationship (oikeiotes), kinship (syngeneia) and even brotherhood (adelphotes) on the basis of such myths"[3].

If we talk about the myth as the living actual reality, then we can raise the question in this way: if we proceed from the position of the social constructivism, according to which the idea of reality is the constructs and the gestalt of the reality is constructed, then the myth of the city is also constructed. The constructivist nature of the social myth is usually noted when we are talking about the policy or advertising (Rolan Bart developed the theory related to the techniques of creation of manipulative myths). But if we are not talking about the artificially created myths, but about the "natural" process, *what could be the mechanics of construction of the myth of the city and of which "constructions" does it consist?*

The architectonics (composition, structure) of the myth of the city can be presented as the set of mythologeme, mythemes, mythonyms, which have the archetypic basis, which fits the myth of the city into the universal cultural context of the civilization space, because it duplicates the cultural grand narratives of the epoch. Namely the set of mythologeme, mythemes, mythonyms describes relevantly the features of mythologized space, mythologized time and stable images-symbols, which form the basis of the world view of the local community. According to S. Kordonsky "the main part of the mythologeme is the explanation of why exists something that exist and why it functions so and not otherwise"; therefore, the mythologem can be considered as the "interpretation of the social reality on the basis of stable figurative models"[4]. The next logical element of the myth is the mytheme – the content – related unit, which acts as the image or concept. The term "mytheme" was developed by C. Levi-Strauss[5]. Levi-Strauss concluded that the mythemes form the synchro-diachronic structure of the myth that gives the possibility to achieve its main goal and namely: to give the logical model for solution of any contradiction. The smallest unit of meaning of the myth is the mythonym, which fulfills the nominative function. In any historic period, there is the limited number of myths in pure form, such that are perceived as the genuine and undeniable truth. The famous researcher of the myths Joseph Campbell developed the influential concept of "monomyth", which is based on the idea of oneness of components of any plot of the "myth of the hero's journey"[6]. On the one hand, the constituent constructions of any myth can be moved down to the several stage schemes; on the other hand, each myth includes necessarily these components.

Applying the theory of monomyth to the myth of the city we see that the myth of establishment of the city may be such universal, necessarily reproducible theme. For any city, the myth of establishment is the universal mythologem. A lot of different myths collected like as from the construction kits are unwound from the myth of origin/creation/establishment of the city. At first (during the dominance of classical mythological world view) "the establishment of the city was considered to be the God-like act: this is why the Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors were so proud of their ability to establish new cities. Therefore, each city required the origin that would be more than human[7]. Also these myths of establishment

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[1] Braund, D. (1996). The Historical Function of Myths in the Cities of the Eastern Black Sea Coast.
*Collection de l'Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Antiquité. Besancon: Université de Franche-Comté,* 11-20.
<https://www.persee.fr/doc/ista_0000-0000_1996_act_613_1_1476> (2021, May, 18).
[2] Ibid., 11.
[3] Ibid., 12.
[4] Кордонский, С. (2000). *Мифологемы и идеологемы*. Москва: Наука, 121.
[5] Леви-Строс, К. (2001). *Структурная антропология*. Москва: Наука, 218.
[6] Кэмпбелл, Дж. (2018). *Тысячеликий герой*. СПб: Питер, 352.
[7] Braund, D. (1996). The Historical Function of Myths in the Cities of the Eastern Black Sea Coast.
*Collection de l'Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Antiquité. Besancon: Université de Franche-Comté,* 12.
<https://www.persee.fr/doc/ista_0000-0000_1996_act_613_1_1476> (2021, May, 18).

"gave the cities the place in the classical world combining them into the network of Greco-Roman mythology: such myths explained how the city became the gateway city and legitimated its existence as the part of the Greco-Roman world"[1].

For a comprehensive discussion of the topic, it is necessary to add that there is one more approach to the explication of the myth of the city. It consists in the reconstruction of the idea of the myth of the city not on the basis of mythologeme-mythemes, but on the basis of the Western cultural theory of understanding of the myth as "the broad idea of society and how it should be managed"[2]. This approach was used by the group of Australian researchers, who using the online-questioning of five hundred citizens of Australia, assessed three sets of the key "convictions", which form the convictions of residents of three big cities: Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. The researchers grouped the differences in their perceptions and thoughts into three large groups of myths: the dominant myth is the myth of "cultural city" (73%), followed by the "anti-urban myth" (15%) and the myth of "mighty city" (12%). The first myth of "cultural city" represents the belief in what the cities do, combines the positive attitude towards the life in the big cities and growth of the cities and supports the greater public participation in the city development and the variety. The second "anti-urban" myth represents the strong negative attitude towards the city living, the city development and the impact of the cities on the social well-being and environment. The cities look like they lost their cultural identity as a result of globalization. The third myth of "mighty city" includes two sets of convictions: the first one is that the city living is better than in other places; and the second one is related to the probability of improvement of the growth of the cities and the technologic progress[3]. The researchers see the value of such approach in the possibility of effective transformation of the cities, because currently it is reported that namely the cities are the main engine of culture and economy and the basis for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This responsibility of the cities is in fact the responsibility of the city people, so it is important to understand what ideas of the city and the expectations its resident has.

**Conclusions.**

As shown above, the myth of the city is the practical instrument being symmetrically important for the preservation of the community of the city people and for the safe cultural transformation of the cities. The application of P. Berger's theory of social constructivism to the city as one of the "social worlds" made it possible to enunciate the problem of preservation of stability of the idea of this "urban world" through the legitimating function of the myth of the city. On the basis that the reality is the constructs and the gestalt of the reality is constructed we conclude that the myth of the city is also constructed. Based on the J. Campbell's theory of monomyth it was found that the myth of establishment of the city may be the universal necessarily reproducible theme. Other elements of "mythological construction kit" are the mythologeme, mythemes and mythonyms, which tend towards the central plot – the myth of origin of the city.

At the same time the filling of these mythic blocks is dependent on the values prevailing in the culture, which makes it possible to construct continuously not the historical myth of the city, but the myth, which is actual and real for its carriers. On the other hand, the myth of the city acts as the instrument of entrenchment of the gestalt of the particular city for its residents. In this case, the elements of the structure of the myth of the city identified in the study may be used as the model for analysis of the cultural idea of any city that opens up one more research field in the philosophy of the city and may be the subject for the further studies.

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4. Boschetti, F., Gaffier, C., Price, J., Moglia, M., Walker, I. (2017). Myths of the City. *Sustainability Science*, *12 (4)*, 611-620. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11625-017-0436-2. [in English].
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