

Leonid Machulin

PhD in Philosophy, Head of the Information Centre at Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts;
Ukraine

lm1957@i.ua

CONCEPT “CITY” IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

Abstract: *The article considers the interpretation of the concept “city” as a product of man’s activity in works of historians and sociologists, economists and urbanologists, philosophers and ecologists. The author pays special attention at the statement about the role of a city, its spheres, levels, cultures, and subcultures. The article proves the necessity of the synthesis of philosophical understanding of a city itself as an object, the concept “city”, and factors of development of cities in different time and in different countries.*

Key words: *definition of the concept “city”, transformation of a city, philosophical understanding of the development of a city, interdisciplinary research of a city.*

Леонід Мачулін

кандидат філософських наук, начальник Інформаційного центру Харківської державної академії дизайну і мистецтв

lm1957@i.ua

ПОНЯТТЯ “МІСТО” У ПЛОЩИНІ МІЖДИСЦИПЛІНАРНИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ

Анотація: *розглядається питання трактовки поняття “місто” як продукта людської діяльності істориками та соціологами, економістами і урбанологами, філософами і екологами. Приділено увагу твердженням про призначення міста, його сфер, рівней, культур і субкультур. Доведено необхідність синтезу філософського розуміння самого міста, як об’єкта, поняття “місто”, факторів розвитку міст в різний час і в різних державах.*

Ключові слова: *дефініція поняття “місто”, трансформація міста, філософське розуміння розвитку міста, міждисциплінарне дослідження міста.*

Леонид Мачулин

**ПОНЯТИЕ “ГОРОД” В ПЛОСКОСТИ МЕЖДИСЦИПЛИНАРНЫХ
ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ**

Аннотация: *рассматривается вопрос трактовки понятия “город” как продукта человеческой деятельности историками и социологами, экономистами и урбанологами, философами и экологами. Уделено внимание утверждению о назначении города, его сфер, уровней, культур и субкультур. Доказана необходимость синтеза философского понимания самого города как объекта, понятия “город”, факторов развития городов в разное время и в разных государствах.*

Ключевые слова: *дефиниция понятия “город”, трансформация города, философское понимание развития города, междисциплинарное исследование города.*

© Leonid Machulin, 2016

Problem statement. Rise of the civilization of a new type, namely an informational civilization, significantly changes the understanding of the phenomenon of a city itself, as well as a city's cultural and anthropological status. In spite of the fact that cities play a major role in influences on the transformation and development of the society, there is a crisis in urban forms of a man's activity. Moreover, the urban culture is getting more massed and consuming, new forms of people's division arise and get deeper. A multicultural, sociocultural, and social-economical space of a modern city more and more often becomes an arena of various national, economical, political, confessional, interpersonal, and other conflicts. It undermines a spiritual function of a city although it used to be among its traditional functions. Under such circumstances it is reasonable to philosophically re-consider a concept of a city, as well as its human-creation potential in a new civilizational context.

Thus, a sociocultural essence of a city involves its being as a generator of new concepts, so an innovational space of a society in a way, and a system which gets more complicated on its own and in this way increases the level of its own organisation. A city constantly brings about new problems and it solves them itself. At that, on leaving one imbalanced state, a city creates another imbalanced state of a new level.

Relevance of the subject. Firstly, a city became an object of research long enough time ago and as a result many theories explaining this phenomenon have been developed. Secondly, specialists in many areas of knowledge have been interested in a city, namely they are experts in architecture, city planning and aesthetics, sociology and history. Thirdly, a concept "city" is a rather complex object to study. It can be considered in a wide range of research for its complete and in-depth description.

Analysis of recent research and publications. As an object for research, a city has drawn attention of historians and philosophers since the antique times. However, research of the city agenda began at the end of the 19th - beginning of the 20th centuries as a result of a fast urbanization caused by the industrial revolution (end of the 18th - 19th centuries). The urbanization had lasted for the whole 20th century and drew attention of representatives of practically all fields of science, namely culture study experts (G. Zimmel [2], A. Toynbi [3]), sociologists (M. Veber [4], M. Kastels [1]), economists A. Smit [5], D. Harvey [6], architects and urbanologists (Z. Gidion [7], K. Lynch [8], B. Horev [9], M. Mezhevich [10]), ethnologists and ecologists (O. Yanitskiy [11], V. Glazyichev [12]). Despite different disciplinary approaches, authors of scientific works on a city almost unanimously concluded that a term "city" is a polysemantic phenomenon and it cannot have a generally accepted definition. The researchers account it for at least three types of circumstances.

Objectives of the article. The objective of the article is to investigate the extent of previous research of the subject.

Research core material. Modern researchers consider a term "city" to be polysemantic and as a result they refuse to try and solve "a definition problem", or just give it varied definitions. National researchers classified attempts to formulate a definition "city" on the following criteria: territorial-demographic, political-administrative, economical, socio-structural, and sociocultural ones [13].

The territorial-demographic approach to the definition of a term "city" registers qualitative indices, such as habitation square, population, concentration of inhabitants, and specific aspects in organisation of dwelling territory, namely specific architecture, transport, and urban land improvement. However, this approach cannot be efficient in defining a term "city" for at least two reasons. Firstly, a qualitative basis, which is an outer feature, does not give a real

vision of a “city’s” essence and, secondly, the latter itself not always can show a real merge between a city and village.

The political-administrative approach to the definition of a term “city” claims that a city is a settlement with a certain territory which has been given some special administrative rights by the authority. A city is considered founded when the state authority signs an accord- ing act. However, what is important to us is the understanding of the specific features of set- tlements according to which the latter get classified. For example, in Russia before the revolu- tion the authority declared settlements to be cities or towns also thanks to petitions or patron- age, or even bribes. In his work “City and village in the European Russia” a well-known ge- ographer V. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky revealed in detail all the shaky arguments for given def- initions of a “city” and “village” which was harmful to public interests.

The economical approach to the definition of a term “city” is probably the most popu- lar. Accordingly, the economical features of a city are: 1) engineering-technological labour division into agriculture and industry; 2) labour division into assumption and production; 3) level of professional differentiation of labour; 4) financial-economical aspect: according to the predominant capital: industrial, trading, credit (private lender, bank); 5) industrial-economical aspect: according to type of production: material resources, services, information, etc.

The socio-structural approach claims that the most significant qualitative difference between a city and village is a characteristic, complex, and heterogeneous social structure and relationships. It is the predominance of “urban” activities that still differentiates a city from a “non-city”. In this sense a city is defined as a place where social structures (groups and insti- tutions) and role functions are concentrated. In the socio-structural sense a city is also charac- terized by a high level of sociocultural dynamics and mobility, as well as by expanding and updating of individuals’ role functions. Thus, it becomes an arena for innovative activity of social subjects which can be institutional, group or individual ones.

The major aspect in *the sociocultural approach* is recognition that cities attract people not only by an opportunity to work, but also to improve their social wellbeing and living com- fort. Apart from their vital needs, people also have over-biological, spiritual ones, namely a need in personal growth and self-realisation, creative activity, expanding their informational and cultural horizon, advancing their educational level, etc. Cities provide more opportunities for people to realize all those needs and, on the other hand, cities renew themselves and get transformed by getting “fresh blood”.

Thus, a sociocultural essence of a city communicates that a city is a generator of new concepts, a society’s innovative field, a system which gets more and more complex on its own and in this way advances the level of its organisation. A city constantly brings about problems and solves them itself. At that, on leaving one imbalanced state, a city creates another one [13].

As the preliminary analysis has shown, when studying cities in their various aspects, researchers not only apply different approaches, but they also use different principles to achieve their goals. Several principles stand out, namely the principles of historicism, self- organisation, and anthropologism.

1. *The principle of historicism* involves not just observing understanding of a city as a progressive historical phenomenon, but also studying its development: a) in an individual form; b) in a local form; c) in a specific sociocultural environment which has some specific characteristics enforcing the development. Changes in both different regions, social groups, and spheres of the society do not occur evenly. Neither society, no culture are able to influ- ence on the development of culture, but culture determines the development of a society.

Tendencies in historical development get matured as an uprising of external sociocultural locuses does on the body of a traditional system. New appears as a separate and individual case of deviation from traditional. Historical logic is the logic of individualization and not of generalisation. Cities were and are very different in their structures and functions, that is why it is so difficult to classify them. However, the variety of the urban form itself affirms the principles of diversity and innovation. J. Habermas defined the sociocultural concept of the modern (the principle of a modern society) as an “incomplete project”, on-going process of the social construction. The accelerate dynamics of sociocultural changes in cities caused in the end a postmodern situation. The society had been changing not through the quantitative growth, but the qualitative diversity of cities and urban life.

2. *The principle of self-organisation* in its various modifications is widely used in study and description of complex social systems. In their research authors rely on the theoretical-methodological potential of synergetics which is the theory on self-organisation, as well as of the theory of self-developing systems. Synergetics studies common factors for transfers like “order B out of order A”, “chaos out of order”, “order out of chaos”. In the context of synergetics the process of the urban civilization creation is realized through numerous and individual deviations from an established structure and traditions.

3. *The principle of anthropologism* (the anthropic principle). This principle declares that the major and ultimate subject of human sciences is man, and their task is identification and solving man's problems. The urban environment is a unity of place, space of interaction, time, and man themselves. The gnoseological focus (a concentration point for research interests) of a city's life must be city dwellers with their needs, interests, values, and goals, as well as peculiarities of their personality and behaviour. A city is a special organisation of a man's life environment, an urban environment. A city is also a special form of organisation of a man's spiritual life, production and satisfaction of their spiritual needs in specific forms.

Is there a paradigmatic approach to studying a city as a phenomenon in general? Many researchers set this question and there were different answers depending on their understanding of the system itself, the ultimate goal, and ways to solve the task. We think that it is impossible to find essential non-temporal characteristics of a city as a sociocultural system of a specific type if approaching a question of foundation and development of a city as a cumulative increase of mass of sociocultural changes and innovations. Such approach will not solve the problem of foundation and character of system features of a city. Thus, the variability of the phenomenon of a city points at the search of an integral scientific approach which would consider all the sides and circumstances of the urban life. The author believes that such an approach can be designed and implemented by means of the philosophical reflection thanks to its ability to rise to the meta-theoretical level and realize the generalization and systematization of the material under study, as well as interdisciplinary synthesis.

Although the philosophical-methodological approach is applied in almost all research on a city, philosophical problems sound louder in the context of two aspects, namely: 1) the gnoseological aspect which deals with the cognition process of a city; 2) the system aspect when a city is considered as a system, as well as when researchers say about the necessity in both the system analysis of urban processes and the system approach to designing and managing a city. A synthesis of the philosophical reflection and theoretical-methodological ideas in sociology of a city can be heuristically fruitful as early as in the stage of developing a definition of a term “city”.

Conclusions. We conclude that most often a city as an object is studied by segments in the following aspects: the territorial-settlement, economical, city-planning, historical, psy-

chological, semiotic, sociological, and philosophical-methodological. The conducted analysis of the extent of previous research of the subject has shown that neither a city itself, nor a definition of a term “city” have become a subject of special established philosophical research. Moreover, a number of factors enable us to conclude that scientists’ knowledge about one of the most significant phenomena of the mankind’s development is of the fragmentary character. These factors are the following: the complexity of the research of a changing phenomenon, an attempt of a simultaneous research of a city using methods of different sciences, an inconsiderate period of study of a city by modern sciences (approximately a hundred years), and lack of actually philosophical literature on the city agenda. No fundamental philosophical research has been done which can solve a question about the cultural-anthropological status of a city as a product of modernization. Neither has been done research on the influence of the globalization processes on the sociocultural transformations of a city and its cultural-anthropological functions in the national aspect. Furthermore, the science needs a philosophical re-interpretation of the synthesis of different cultures in a city and mechanisms for performing such a synthesis. Also there is no research about a correlation between types of cities and types of cultures, as well as there is no philosophical analysis of a role and place of a city in the state development, etc. Thus, it is necessary not to look for a general scientific definition of a term “city”, as in different epochs in different countries there were different grounds for establishing cities and their functioning. It is also necessary to synthesize a philosophical consideration of development of cities in different times, in different countries, and in different formations.

Further research prospects in the area of a city and concept “city” lies in the context of the interdisciplinary research.

Список літератури:

1. *Кастельс М.* Информационная эпоха: экономика, общество и культура / М. Кастельс ; пер. с англ. под науч. ред. О. И. Шкаратана. — М. : ГУ ВШЭ, 2000. — 608 с.
2. *Зиммель Г.* Большие города и духовная жизнь / Г. Зиммель // Логос. — 2002. — № 3/4. — С. 23–34.
3. *Тойнби А.* Постижение истории / А. Тойнби. — М. : Наука, 1991. — 736 с.
4. *Вебер М.* История хозяйства. Город : пер. с нем. / М. Вебер. — М. : КАНОН-пресс-Ц : Кучково поле, 2001. — 576 с.
5. *Смит А.* Исследование о природе и причинах богатства народов / А. Смит. — М. : [Эксмо](#), 2007. — 960 с. — (Серия “Антология экономической мысли”).
6. *Харвей Д.* Экономическая теория, макро- и микроэкономика / Д. Харвей. — М. : Юнити-Дана, 2011. — 704 с.
7. *Гидион З.* Пространство, время, архитектура / З. Гидион ; сокр. пер. с нем. М. В. Леонене, И. Л. Черня. — М. : Стройиздат, 1984. — 456 с.
8. *Линч К.* Образ города : пер. с англ. / К. Линч. — М. : Стройиздат, 1982. — 328 с.
9. *Хорев Б. С.* Территориальная организация общества / Б. С. Хорев. — М., 1981. — 320 с.
10. *Межевич М. Н.* Город: проблемы социального развития / М. Н. Межевич, А. В. Дмитриев. — Л. : Наука, 1982. — 176 с.
11. *Яницкий О. Н.* Города. Экологическая перспектива / О. Н. Яницкий. — М. : Мысль, 1987. — 278 с.

12. Глазычев В. Л. Социально-экологическая интерпретация городской среды / В. Л. Глазычев. — М. : Наука. 1984. — 180 с.

13. Радионова Л. А. Город в социокультурном измерении / Л. А. Радионова // Коммунальное хозяйство городов. Сер. Экономические науки : науч.-техн. сб. — Харьков, 2002. — Вып. 37. — С. 213–218.

References:

1. *Castells M.* The information age: economy, society and culture / M. Kastel's ; per. s angl. pod nauch. red. O. I. Shkaratana. — M. : GU VShJe, 2000. — 608 s.

2. *Simmel G.* The metropolis and mental life / G. Zimmel' // Logos. — 2002. — № 3/4. — S. 23–34.

3. *Toynbee A.* A study of history / A. Tojnbi. — M. : Nauka, 1991. — 736 s.

4. *Weber M.* The history of economy. The city : per. s nem. / M. Veber. — M. : KANON-press-C : Kuchkovo pole, 2001. — 576 s.

5. *Smith A.* An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations / M. Veber. — M. : KANON-press-C : Kuchkovo pole, 2001. — 576 s.

6. *Harvey D.* Economic theory, macro- and microeconomics / D. Harvej. — M. : Juniti-Dana, 2011. — 704 s.

7. *Giedion S.* Space, time and architecture / Z. Gidion ; sokr. per. s nem. M. V. Leonene, I. L. Chernja. — M. : Strojizdat, 1984. — 456 s.

8. *Lynch K.* The image of the city: per. s angl. / K. Linch. — M. : Strojizdat, 1982. — 328 s.

9. *Khorev B.S.* The territorial organisation of the society / B. S. Horev. — M., 1981. — 320 s.

10. *Mezhevich M.N.* The city: problems of the social development / M. N. Mezhevich, A. V. Dmitriev. — L. : Nauka, 1982. — 176 s.

11. *Yanitsky O.N.* Cities. The ecological prospects / O. N. Janickij. — M. : Mysl'. 1987. — 278 c.

12. *Glazychev V.L.* The social-ecological interpretation of the urban environment / V. L. Glazychev. — M. : Nauka. 1984. — 180 s.

13. *Radionova L.A.* The city in the sociocultural context / L. A. Radionova // Kommunal'noe hozjajstvo gorodov. Ser. Jekonomicheskie nauki : nauch.-tehn. sb. — Har'kov, 2002. — Vyp. 37. — S. 213–218.

Стаття надійшла до редакційної колегії 4.03.2016