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URBIS ET ORBIS: NON-EUCLIDEAN SPACE OF HISTORY

Abstract. A social space is superimposed on the civilization map of the world whereas a social time is correlated with the duration of civilization existence. Within own civilization the concept space is non-homogeneous, there are “singled out points” — “concept factories”. As social structures, cities may exist rather long, sometimes during several millennia, but as concept centers they are limited by the duration of civilization existence. If civilization is a “concept universe”, nobody and nothing may cross the boundaries, which include cities as well. Death of civilization leads to reboot cultural and historical space-time. Reformatted olds concepts are not preserved, but there may be reception of old concepts and their new interpretation. However, even in case of genetic links presence, they are the other concepts and not modified old ones. Under certain circumstances may take place “rebranding” when attractive name is connected to the concept of absolutely different order to attach to it authority of the past.

Keywords: polis, city, concept, historical space, historical time, Ancient Rome, history, religion, civilization, philosophy of history, Pax Romana, Roman idea, theology.

Halapsis, Alexis V. "Urbis et Orbis: Non-Euclidean Space of History." *Evropský filozofický a historický diskurz* 1, no. 2 (2015): 37–42.

Introduction

A human is a being engaged in generation, exchange and consumption of concepts. I speak of “concepts” and not of “ideas” intentionally, as mostly intellectuals are involved in generation of the latter, and very often, they are the main consumers. A government and a family, a trade and a military field, a theatre and a sport, a visual art and a music bear the impress of religious and philosophical concept that define architectonics of particular society and distinguish it from others.

Concepts may serve for “internal consumption”, for example, when a person looks for a meaning of his/her own life or set priorities. However, the majority of concepts that can be observed in the process of history comprehension (if the latter is not of a purely biographic nature) is associated with social and cultural patterns, in the production of which manifold “teams of authors” are involved. Certain concept units become strategic for civilizations, spatial boundaries of which are determined at the map not by national borders, but by conceptual limits.

In addition to concept generation, a human being is actively engaged in conceptual redefining — *re*-thinking; and at the same time, one should make the difference between natural transformation and conceptual nostalgia. Natural transformation of concepts is carried out within the conceptual continuity, particularly — ontological projects of local civilizations. At civilization change (or civilization emergence), a total reformatting of conceptual space takes place — space not only in metaphorical sense, but also in topological, since civilizations have geographical boundaries, although not always clearly determined. Civilization gaps mean conceptual reset; here, rethinking takes place as sensing of unimportant concepts that *have done their time*, but due to certain reasons have not decomposed completely. Oftentimes, conceptual nostalgia has the form of mockery, but sometimes it turns into rather successful projects. However, even in the latter case, duplicated concept does not repeat the original, but only imitate it, as it obtains its refuge and prime justification from another metaphysical source.

Thus, though social structures are always full of cultural and historical concepts, it does not mean that they are surely annihilated at civilization collapse — many of them can be filled with new concepts. In sociological terms, it will be the *same* structures, but at another level of development, and in cultural and historical terms it will be *other* matters. Social structure is the “body” and cultural and historical concept — “soul”. It is like conversed metempsychosis: “souls” die and “body” continues its existence, filled with new “souls”. From “body” point of view, one may speak of *durability* of structure that while epochs change transformation preserves its authenticity, but from “soul” point of view (as well as from “religious” one) they are *different* essences that are linked to each other only formally and superficially. It is clear there no question as to what opinion is “correct”, since admissibility/inadmissibility of that or another representation is defined only by the nature of discourse and research tasks.

Concepts appear in different places — it may be tent, where Moses wrote to *Torah*, or Qaddafi worked over *The Green Book*, it may be a monk's cell or university lecture hall, prison ward or Wartburg castle. However, the greater part of concepts significant *for us* has been generated and continues to be generated *in cities*.

Oswald Spengler said that world-history is the history of civic man¹, — the phrase that is natural for a Western man, for whom presence of cities is maturity certificate of society and its historical full-value; we don't call each society that builds cities a "civilization", but each civilization is just obliged to build cities. This is quite logical, as though high concentration of *human material* does not guarantee prominent intellectual, religious, social, technological, etc. results, there will not be any result with such concentration. However, now, I am interested in cities not as administrative, trade, military, transport, etc. centres, but as "factories of concepts".

What is the role of cities in the world history and whether it possible to consider them as "stability islands" in ugly sea of human history? The attempt to answer this question is objective of this article.

A City and the World

What is a "city"? In modern Denmark the "city" is the settlement with population of more than 200 persons, in Japan — not less than 40 thousand, in Israel and Sweden this term is not legally fixed. As to ancient settlement identification, there is also no agreement: historians and sociologists propose different criteria, none of which is indisputable. Population, presence of the city walls, market, permanent post, self-government, etc. — in some cases, these parameters are suitable for criteria, in other — not. Today, when it comes to "urban man", it is assumed that his main activity is not associated with farming. However, even this criterion is not universal. Max Weber noted:

Historically, the relation of the city to agriculture has in no way been unambiguous and simple. There were and are 'agrarian cities' (*Ackerbürgerstädte*), which as market centers and seats of the typically urban trades are sharply differentiated from the average village, but in which a broad stratum of the burghers produces food for their own consumption and even for the market... If today we are quite correct in regarding the typical 'townsman' as a man who does not grow his own food, the contrary was originally true for the majority of typical cities (*poleis*) of Antiquity².

As we see, the term "urban man", notwithstanding apparent evidence of identification (resident of large settlement), does not form integral image in cultural and historical sense, and this means that talking about him/her is meaning in context spiritual development of cities and places, occupied by some of them in the world history.

Of course, it is incorrectly to compare cities with pyramids, which even time is afraid of. Nevertheless, some of them preserve under conditions of full reboot of cultural and historical matrix, going through countries, nations and civilizations, and continue to exist in the world, filled with new concepts. Today, any person may go to Tunisia and visit Carthage. However, is this Carthage the same as the one destroyed at the behest of Cato the Elder? Obviously not. Maybe it is Carthage that was rebuilt by the Romans and that became the administrative centre of Roman province Africa? Also unlikely. It is rather the fragment of former glory that gives somebody the possibility to cash in history, and others — to comment on a Facebook photo: "I was in Carthage".

Not everything that happens with people gets into history. And the issue is not only in the lack of information and absence of interest. Many things are just not worth being registered in history. The history registers supreme and unfavourable, as well as ordinary, but not in its individuality (as contrasted to the former and the latter), but in its generic character. It is applied not only to people. Nations and countries play different roles in the world history, and notwithstanding our declarations as to history "generality", there will always be "outlined" nations and "especial" countries. The same situation is with cities. There are cities — not very large, not very rich, but we remember them thousands of years on; and there are "simply" cities. What do we remember "especial" cities for?

Every such city is an entire world, full of concepts, and its citizens are the team. The idea of self-governed community, in which every free adult man participates in decision making (through election of leaders or through participation in public gathering) may not emerge in large state (like ancient Persia or Egypt) due to technical issues of organization of such type of government. As certain reincarnation of tribal (military) democracy it emerges in communities rather large to leave trace in history, while rather

¹ Spengler, O. (1928). *The Decline of the West: Perspectives of World-History* (Vol. II). (C. F. Atkinson, Trans.) New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, p. 90.

² Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and Society: An outline of Interpretive Sociology*. (G. Roth, & C. Wittich, Eds.) Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, p. 1217–1218.

compact for its members to feel integrity of their interests. Plato wrote that the State to increase so far as is consistent with unity³. No one modern city lives as if there boundaries *another* world below it; ancient polis lived only in this way.

However, in the scope of world history, only few cities have followed these principles; the latter charm is associated not with their prevalence, but with the fact that they have laid the foundation for traditions, the successors of which are considered Europeans.

The city-commune in the fun meaning of the word appeared as a mass phenomenon only in the Occident; the Near East (Syria, Phoenicia, and perhaps Mesopotamia) also knew it, but only as a temporary structure. Elsewhere one finds nothing but rudiments. To develop into a city-commune, a settlement had to be of the nonagricultural-commercial type, at least to a relative extent, and to be equipped with the following features: 1. a fortification; 2. a market; 3. its own court of law and, at least in part, autonomous law; 4. an associational structure (*Verbandscharakter*) and, connected therewith, 5. at least partial autonomy and autocephaly, which includes administration by authorities in whose appointment the burghers could in some form participate⁴.

Free urban man was the citizen and the citizen — urban man. Even if the Greek spent most of his life making trips, lived in other lands, travelled, he considered himself and legally was the citizen of Corinth, Ephesus, Sparta, Miletus, or some other “port of registration”, where there were his altars and hearth and where he, like Odysseus, returned.

Initially, Roman citizenship has the same meaning. Roman citizen is a Roman urbanite, even though most of the time such “urbanite” spent outside pomerium, busy with farming or wars. The idea of “non-urban citizenship” is the late Roman invention; the Romans came to such idea due to City development to the sizes of Empire and necessity to assimilate conquered nations and introduce them to “empire work”. Such imperial “citizenship” — is the bridge between its ancient understanding (free and legally full-value polis citizen is the “urban man” and modern, where city registration does not play any role (of course, if it is not modern city-state like Singapore).

The citizenship in medieval Italian city-republics and burghers in the Holy Roman Empire follow logical continuation of this line. In the latter, every free city resident (*Bürger*) had his/her “civil rights” (*Bürgerrecht*), as opposed to the villager — vassal of feudal lord. Just there the principle: “*Stadtluft macht frei*” (“city air brings freedom”) emerged. That is to say, the legal status of inhabitants of the medieval *free* (Freistadt) and *imperial* (Reichsstadt) cities or Italian republics is also defined by their urban identity. Funny transformation expected the French equivalent of the German *Bürger* — “*bourgeois*”, from which the Marxists dazzled the whole class, opposed not only to the urban men of art (who will call starving artist or poet as “bourgeois”?), but also to city proletariat.

City self-government is not only, and in philosophical terms not to some extent is a political system (it provided various forms of government), but rather assignment of *responsibility*. The citizens of classical polis had not only political rights, but also obligations to community, and particularly — to protect it against enemies. The citizen that did not participate in the polis life and was not interested in its affairs was inadequate, idiot (*ιδιώτης* — a private individual). Servius Tullius granted citizenship to the plebeians, and gave them not only the right to vote (that, given the property qualification, was more symbolic act at that time), but also bound them with obligation to participate in city territorial army. Polis citizenship — is a collective (historical) responsibility; the citizen is not just an object, but also the subject. Why is this important?

Subjectivity implies participation in the “generation of concepts”, within which the community (rather than its leader!) is of sacred value. For this purpose, the community needs *exclusive* access to sacred, “special bonds” in superior world. In other words, the community must have powerful patron in heaven; otherwise, it would simply dissolve in the human environment. The patron gives the community original concepts (on which others are stung subsequently) and supports it “from above”. Settlement without patron saint cannot play an independent role in history as the producer of concepts. Each antique polis had its gods, and one that had not — was not a polis.

Fustel de Coulanges stated that the founders of Greek and Latin cities were considered as gods. He wrote:

The founder was the man who accomplished the religious act without which a city could not exist. He established the hearth where the sacred fire was eternally to burn. He it was, who, by his prayers and his rites, called the gods, and fixed them forever in the new city... During his life men saw in him the author of a religion and the father of a city; after death

³ Plato. *Republic*. IV. 423b.

⁴ Weber, M. Op. cit., p. 1226.

he became a common ancestor for all the generations that succeeded him. He was for the city what the first ancestor was for the family — a *Lar familiaris*. His memory was perpetuated like the hearth-fire which he had lighted. Men established a worship for him, and believed him to be a god; and the city adored him as its providence⁵.

At positivist approach to the matter, one could make the conclusion that any founder of new city became a god “automatically”, though hardly anyone thinks that the Romans, for example, had deified Romulus to keep up with their neighbours. In case we consider this matter from the point of view of concept evolution, then causal relationship will look differently: Romulus became god not because he had founded the great society, but because the society became great, as god had founded it. City, named after the lucky adventurer, would never become a centre of world Empire; quite another thing — the city founded by god. Actually, after Romulus had named the city after himself, he had no choice — he had to become god; otherwise, his project would fall to pieces soon after death of its founder.

A city features houses, churches, people, but its identity is not in them. When fire destroys all the buildings, the city can survive; the same thing with temples. As to people, the situation is somewhat more complicated; however, people themselves do not feature the city, either. The identity of the city is in its “spirit”, in traditions, legends, in everything that makes the *city cult*. For our contemporary, his/her urban identity has either no meaning or purely symbolic one. Our cities are *settlements* above all (and only then — administrative, economic, industrial, transportation, etc. units); they are very secular, even if there are churches at every corner. “Religiosity of urbanite” — is not a synonym for “urban religiosity”. Since the “urbanite” may be “social atom”, living in his/her own little world, where the city serves as a means “to escape from people” (paradoxical situation — most of lonely people live in modern megacities), and may be an active member of the urban community, where not only the “touch of elbows”, realization of interconnection with others (“team spirit”), and religious interpretation of this fact (unity) are developed. The difference between our cities (at least between the cities of one state) is reduced only to *urban flavor*. The gods were the “soul”⁶ of ancient cities; our cities are soulless. It is either bad or good, it is a statement of the fact that our cities do not need gods *any more* (although it does not mean that their inhabitants do not need them).

Today, the names do not mean a lot; anyway, hardly anyone associates the name of the city with its destiny. Only habit does not allow us to designate our city as many streets in the United States through simple numbering. However, in the ancient world other laws were in force. Names of not all but some ancient cities were a concentrated statement of metaphysical project, linking many concepts into one idea. Accordingly, a city with the name, linked to certain concept, became part of this concept that gave the city a possibility to occupy key position in the world, where the concept served as a guide to action, but lost its importance, if, for some reason, it failed.

Let us consider Athens. Athena is the goddess of wisdom, crafts, righteous war; she was the polis inventor. It would have been strange if dedicated to her city had not become the leading one in Greece. The political significance of Athens decreased after geopolitical projects of Philip II of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great, when inefficiency of old polis system and system of concepts, defining level of war “justice” became obvious (the idea of world conquest badly fit with the principle *pro aris et focis*). The goddess Athena, inventor of the polis, had lost to Jupiter (Jupiter, not Zeus!) even before the Romans conquered her city; Macedonian “Romans” took her away from the political pedestal. However, the goddess has retained her position of wisdom personification for several centuries, and the city continued to use her fame as cultural and intellectual centre; in this sense, Apostle Paul, in particular, uses the city name in the context of opposition to Jerusalem. After closure of the Academy in 529, Justinian finally expelled Athena from Athens. She, the most honoured Greek goddess, went last under the pressure of Christ. The name of the city lost its meaning; it became just a name without connotation. In Christian world, the city, dedicated to the pagan goddess, could not have any value, and Athens disappear from the horizon of the world history, it turned into remote province and museum. Ancient Athens is an entire world, modern Athens is just a settlement. The world, where these cities were developing, the world of pagan gods, this world disappeared, and the concepts disappeared along with it, as the ancient cities were the core producers of them.

Similarly to the Roman Empire that had not managed to “digest” Christianity, the city, named after the pagan god, could not preserve its importance in the Christian world. Rome had all the chances to repeat the fate of Babylon, Carthage and other cities, whose ancient grandeur turned to dust. Actually, everything led to this. In the early Middle Ages, the Forum became the place for

⁵ Fustel de Coulanges. (1877). *The Ancient City: A Study of the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (3 ed.). (W. Small, Trans.) Boston, MA; New York, NY: Lee and Shepard; Charles T. Dillingham, p. 188.

⁶ Halapsis, A. V. (2015). On the Nature of the Gods, or Epistemological Polytheism as History Comprehension Method. *Evropský filozofický a historický diskurz*, 1(1), 53–59.

cattle grazing (hence the name *Campo Vaccino* — “pasture for cows”). Rome was rescued from the oblivion thanks to the bishop of Rome, who began to play especial role in the Church; and in the course of time Gregory VII began to claim to political leadership in the Christian world. Gradually the “Romulus city” turned into a “city of St. Peter”; the Apostle authority gave Rome the possibility to preserve its religious influence on the account of concept change.

Very much to the point the idea of the “Eternal City” occurred. Albius Tibullus called⁷ Rome in such a way, but I do not think that natural for poets metaphorical style of exposition would produce a noticeable impression, if there were no corresponding prerequisites. Tibullus did not create Roman eternity; he just successfully expressed *common opinion* that was not just a bragging, but a *religious concept*, rooted to the apotheosis of king-founder. Rome “shall be the capital of the world”⁸ and Romans “will reach the utmost heights peak of human power”⁹, — that was the will of gods, conveyed by Romulus — one of them. “The expulsion of gods” cannot but influence the concept: if the gods of Rome are demons (St. Augustine), it is impossible to speak of “sacred rights” for world control and claims for “eternity”. One can even conditionally specify the date of the “Rome eternity” end. It was 393 — the year of death of Emperor Flavius Claudius Julianus, nicknamed “Julian the Apostate” by Christian writers. His short-term reign was the last political stake of the Roman gods; when it was lost, they left the city, taking with them the ancient concepts. Now, the “Eternal City” is a beautiful metaphor to attract tourists, but for Romans, it was the promise of heaven¹⁰, similar to coming of the Messiah for Jews. In fact, Ancient Rome is connected with modern one only through geographic location; the same refers to other ancient cities that have *survived their time* (Phanariotes — funny phenomenon of lost in time — five and a half centuries passed and they had not noticed that Constantinople disappeared).

All these facts bring us to the idea of heterogeneity of historical space. The historical space is the space of social and cultural concepts. In this context “Space” is not only a metaphor. Concepts really have topological and even geographic associations; this rule becomes ineffective only under conditions of modern globalization¹¹. When the world began to turn in the Global Village¹² (*Mega-oecumene*, upon my terminology¹³), the role of cities in spiritual development of humankind began to decline, although their value as a social, industrial, administrative, financial, etc. centre-nodes retained. This is a direct consequence of the city cult disappearance, as observed above. Even in case the concepts emerge today in the cities, they no longer have the “city registration”, being directed not inside the city walls, but outside. Ancient cities have disappeared long ago; medieval cities almost disappeared too: open-air museums that certain settlements of later times ascribe to *their* “historical part” are *living cities* not more than Parthenon — is an acting pagan temple. At such a point, the issue is not based on new buildings, since it applies to settlements, reverently preserving the past; even such cities are unable to keep the concepts at their orbits, they do not attract them anymore. However, the ancient city was the centre of spiritual attraction to a greater or lesser extent. The largest centres of “religious substance” accumulation were (and still are) local civilizations. “Substance” features ideas and concepts. Coined as the result of civilization functioning “funnels” and other heterogeneities of historical space can attract both whole societies (“barbarians” who have fallen under the spell of high culture) and those “social atoms”, who due to certain reasons became “free”, breaking away the field of attraction of akin societies (missionary phenomenon).

One may push further analogy with astrophysics, but it is not my objective, taking into account that any analogy is conditional. Nevertheless, I consider it necessary to note that immersion into history will be farce, if the “traveller” considers people from other epochs “same as he/she is”, and these epochs — as an “early version” of his/her own. History is not a fancy-dress party. Each epoch and each culture define their particular space-time metric of reality, which rests upon basic for ancient people concepts that were produced by human groups of various sizes (including, but not limited to city communities) at interpretation of religious and philosophical ideas. Comprehension of history can claim to authenticity only when the researcher is able to find the internal mythological structure of other “worlds” behind external newsworthiness, and even to recognize own “laws of nature” in such worlds.

⁷ Tibullus. II. V. 23.

⁸ Livius. *Ab urbe condita*. I. 16. 7

⁹ Plutarch. *Romulus*. XXVIII.

¹⁰ Halapsis, A. V. (2014). Iovem Imperium, or Sacred Aspects of Roman “Globalization”. *Scientific cognition: methodology and technology*, 33(2), 173–178.

¹¹ Халапсис, А.В. (2006). Темпоральная и топологическая определенность мира истории как метафизическая проблема. *Грани*, 6(50), 67–72.

¹² McLuhan, M. (1962). *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

¹³ Халапсис А. В. (2008). *Постнеклассическая метафизика истории*. Днепропетровск: Инновация.

Conclusions

1. Social (in particular, cultural and historical) space is superimposed on the civilization map of the world whereas the social (cultural and historical) time is correlated with the duration of civilization existence. In the first approximation, one can say that social space terminates with the boundaries of civilization, and social time is up at the completion of civilizational project. At a more thorough study of this issue, it appears that social concepts may extend the boundaries of civilizations and affect its “contacts” — other civilizations (to the extent the concepts of one civilization influence the development of another) and “barbaric environment”. I call such history metric an “oocumene”.

2. Within own civilization the concept space is non-homogeneous, there are “singled out points” — “concept factories”. These “points” may represent, depending on initial civilization patterns, various essences. It may be temples and convents, tents and palaces, castles and universities, etc. In the ancient Mediterranean world, such factories represented by cities (poleis).

3. As social structures, cities may exist rather long, sometimes during several millennia, but as concept centres they are limited by the duration of civilization existence. If civilization is a “concept universe”, nobody and nothing may cross the boundaries, which include cities as well. Death of civilization leads to reboot cultural and historical space-time. At the same time, reformatted olds concepts are not preserved, but there may be reception of old concepts and their new interpretation (for example, repeated “recovery” of the Roman Empire or the Olympiads renewal). However, even in case of genetic links presence, they are the *other* concepts and not modified old ones. Under certain circumstances may take place “rebranding” — reception of the second order — when attractive name is connected to the concept of absolutely different order to attach to it authority of the past.

4. A “community” subjectivity as a sacred essence was the core aspect for an ancient polis; that is why the city cult becomes essential. In medieval cities the idea of “urban community” is preserved that is partially reflected in the cult of the patron saints of the city (analogue of the “city’s gods”), but under conditions of Christian monotheism it did not played such an important organizing role.

5. Since the second half of the XX century, there has been new reformatting of the history world. We still shall adapt to space and time metric of such “New World”.

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