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**Яшанов С. М.**, д-р пед. наук, проф. (Україна, Київ, НПУ ім. М. П. Драгоманова)

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Концепція збірника базується на багатоплановому науковому висвітленні проблем сучасної науки в умовах полікультурного глобалізаційного суспільства. Основні рубрики охоплюють галузі історичних, філософських та політичних наук. Розрахований на фахівців гуманітарних та соціально-політичних наук.

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## URBAN TOPOS IN VIDEOGAMES

## ТОПОС МІСТА В ВІДЕОІГРАХ

**Horban O.,**Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, Professor,  
Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University (Kyiv, Ukraine),  
e-mail: som\_org@ukr.net**Maletska M.,**Bachelor of Philosophy, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv  
University (Kyiv, Ukraine), e-mail: som\_org@ukr.net**Chesnokov V.,**Postgraduate student of Philosophy, Borys  
Grinchenko Kyiv University (Kyiv, Ukraine),  
e-mail: som\_org@ukr.net**Горбань О.,**доктор філософських наук, професор,  
Київський університет ім. Бориса Грінченка  
(Київ, Україна), e-mail: som\_org@ukr.net**Малецька М.,**бакалавр філософії, Київський університет  
ім. Бориса Грінченка (Київ, Україна),  
e-mail: som\_org@ukr.net**Чесноков В.,**аспірант, Київський університет ім. Бориса  
Грінченка (Київ, Україна), e-mail: som\_org@ukr.net

*In the article, videogames as the specific phenomenon of modern social reality based on the specific way of human activity are disclosed. Creating virtual world, videogame often copy and or create unique state of virtuality borderline with the material world which includes replication, specific reflection and copies of real places and objects that have their features and rules of functioning.*

*The analysis of the components and symbols of the videogame space is important to understanding the influence of videogames on human consciousness and social relations. City may be one of the objects of videogame or the background for game actions. It is not only simple space inside other space; city and videogame may be considered complicated system of complex phenomena in their relations.*

*The urban topos is the dominant of the city space, space continuum of the city text. The analysis of the urban topos existing in videogames is important for the systematical researches of videogames as sociocultural phenomenon. Examining of topos in videogames is also actual for the urbanistic researches, because considering the urban topos as a part of virtual space may define further researches of the place and meaning of the city in modern society.*

*Analyzing classical concepts of the «topos» and «locus», authors of the article adopt the concept of urban topos as a «cultural and historical organism», which is constantly in the space of dynamics and development, which has its «anatomy», «physiology» and «soul», to the concept of the urban topos in videogames.*

*In conclusion, it is stated that there are at least two kinds of reflection of the urban topos in videogames: 1) reflection of the topos correlating with the real one, 2) topos unusual to the real understanding of it. With the help of the games of the first category we can understand the real city as well; videogames belonging to the second category may be helpful in experiments with different simulations.*

**Keywords:** game, videogame, city, «common place», topos, locus, videogame topos, setting, virtual reality, virtual space.

*Розглянуто особливий феномен сучасної соціальної реальності, що базується на специфічному способі людської діяльності, – відеоігри. Відеогра, створюючи віртуальний світ, часто копіює чи навіть створює унікальний стан пограничної віртуальності з матеріальним світом, що включає в себе відтворення, специфічне відображення та копіювання реальних місць та об'єктів, що мають свої особливості та правила функціонування.*

*Аналіз компонентів та символів простору відеоігор важливий для розуміння впливу відеоігор на людську свідомість та соціальні відносини. Місто може виступати в якості одного з об'єктів або фону для дій у відеоіграх. Це не просто простір всередині іншого простору; місто в відеоіграх можна вважати складною системою явищ у їх взаємозв'язку.*

*Топос міста є домінують міського простору, просторового континууму міського тексту. Аналіз топосу міста, що наявний в відеоіграх, важливий для комплексних системних досліджень відеоігор як соціокультурного феномену. Дослідження топосу в відеоіграх також актуально для урбаністичних досліджень, оскільки розгляд топосу міста як частини віртуального простору може визначити шлях подальших досліджень міста та значення міста в сучасному соціумі.*

*Аналізуючи класичні концепції «топос» і «локус», автори статті адаптують концепцію М. Анциферова щодо топосу міста як «культурно-історичного організму» з власними «анатомією», «фізіологією» та «душею» та міста, яке постійно знаходиться в просторі динаміки та розвитку, до концепту топосу міста у відеоіграх.*

*Зроблено висновок щодо наявності двох видів відображення топосу міста в відеоіграх: 1) відображення, що корелюється з реальним та 2) топос, незвичний для розуміння в реальності. З допомогою ігор першої категорії можна зрозуміти також справжнє місто, ігри другої категорії можуть стати в нагоді в експериментах з симуляцією та моделями.*

**Ключові слова:** гра, відеогра, місто, «спільне місце», топос, локус, топос відеоігри, сеттінг, віртуальна реальність, віртуальний простір.

(стаття друкується мовою оригіналу)

**Problem statement.** The modernity is characterized with the processes of wide informatization and virtualization. Human life is taking place in both real and virtual spaces, which are still perceived as new and unusual for human consciousness. Virtual spaces are formed not merely alongside with real, they are interwoven into real. Social life depends on the technical progress even more than in past times. Virtual reality is also making material reality more complicated. It influences on the perception of social and cultural relations, views on politics etc. Specific reflections and copies of real places and objects appear inside virtual spaces; these objects have their own specific features and rules of functioning.

Videogames are new specific phenomenon which has become widely popular and actual for last twenty years. The number of people interested in videogames one way or another is increasing annually [10]. Videogames are complex phenomenon that has the special position among other products of culture and media. They also form their own place with objects which have special game sense inside the virtual reality. The specificity of videogames is caused by the complexity of this phenomenon. Videogames are games and understanding of this game nature is important to differ them from other culture products, as literature and films. In videogames real and virtual stop being opposite categories and increasingly become parts of a single continuum, in which we find people, their communication practices and their acts of social life. Players are more than users, they become spect-authors, themselves producers of the game's contents, and the game becomes more and more experience [9, c. 51].

The analysis of components and symbols of the videogame space is important to understand the influence of videogames on human consciousness and social relations. The city may appear as one of the objects or as the background for videogame actions. It is not only a simple space inside other space; the city and videogame may be considered a system of complex phenomena in their connection. The city appears as center of many dimensions of modern life. The space of the city deserves special study from the point of view of postnonclassical ontological views.

This space is closely connected with social space as a socially developed part of the space of nature, although it has certain specific features, with the space of culture, with the living space. Unlike natural, urban space has a special structure, subordinate to the tasks and functions of human activity. The territorial and geographic ties of individual social institutions within urban space are traditionally correlated with the order of organization of city life. The city in any of its manifestations and incarnations is, first of all, an organization, and, therefore, implies the existence of a certain spatial and temporal order. Sacred, social and private forms of city life are always correlated in a strictly defined way, forming their own complex structure.

The city, even the huge one, always is a spatial and temporal singularity, a geographical and topographical feature, a special point with which a certain mythology, sacred construction, existential experience is connected. The city is always associated with the circulation, repetition, cycle, period. And it, even the smallest one, always is a center that has a certain neighborhood. The city is associated with a certain spatial expansion, it «stretches tentacles» farther and farther away, it is a spatially developing structure. Unlike other settlements, urban space always has a significant vertical component, the city is growing not only far and wide, but also up.

Speaking about the city it is necessary to introduce multi-level meanings of the concept of «space»: space as physical, geographical, topological, social and cultural spaces [18, c. 73]. Videogame spaces may be characterized with the same meanings and terms. The urban topos is the dominant of the city space, space continuum of the city text. Contemporary man is a citizen of chaotic, complex life times and spaces, moving in daily labyrinths like a videogamer intent on passing tests, overcoming obstacles, solving riddles, dominating fear and anxiety over not being able to dominate it, not able to create feather and wax wings like Daedalus to escape from the closing path [9, c. 50]. Real cities are imagining more and more fictitious ones, and real citizens are more and more at ease when passing from one to the other: is the citizen's identity becoming blended? As Herz wonders, are videogames, «on-line games, metaphors of human experience? And if so, where does the metaphor stop?» [5]. The analysis of the topos of the city present in videogames is important for further researches on videogames as social and cultural phenomenon. It is also actual for urban studies because considering the topos of the city as a part of virtual space can determine the further studies on the place and meaning of the city in modern society.

**Analysis of recent studies.** The concept of the «topos» was studied in different scientific areas. In literature the most complete research on the topos was carried out by E. Curtius. His book «European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages» represents topoi in literature through the human history and culture changes. The general concept of «topos» was studied by T. Subbotina and A. Bulhakova. Y. Lotman introduces the concept of «locus», which sometimes is associated with «topos». V. Turkina analyses topos as

complex concept which is closely connected with its spatial manifestations.

Before analyzing videogames we should appeal to the research on games. The famous culturologist J. Huizinga studied videogames as part and ground of culture. We should also appeal to H.–G. Gadamer, who stated that the special game spirit, which is based on game rules and game space, defines the game and becomes the basis of player's satisfaction. Videogames in general are the subject of research of so-called game studies. G. Frasca studied videogames in many aspects, he also examined the reflection of city in videogames. However, the question of urban topos and topos in general in connection with videogames have not been studied yet.

Thus, **the purpose of our research** is to examine the topos of the city in videogames. According to the purpose, the main tasks of our research are to analyze the concept of the «topos» and to disclose the urban topos present in videogames.

**Presentation of the basic material.** Modern urban studies pay great attention to the concept of the «topos». Topos is a complicated concept which basic meaning is related to the literary studies. In book «European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages» by E. Curtius topos is considered as the specific rhetorical phenomenon. Analyzing literature, especially epics, poems and different speeches, E. Curtius notes that: «Essentially, every oration (including panegyrics) must make some proposition or thing plausible. It must adduce in its favor arguments which address themselves to the hearer's mind or heart. Now, there is a whole series of such arguments, which can be used on the most diverse occasions. They are intellectual themes, suitable for development and modification at the orator's pleasure. In Greek they are called κοινὸι τόποι, in Latin, loci communes; in earlier German, Gemeinorter. Lessing and Kant still use the word. About 1770, Gemeinplatz was formed after the English «common place». We cannot use the word, since it has lost its original application. We shall therefore retain the Greek topos. To elucidate its meaning – a topos of the most general sort is «emphasis on inability to do justice to the subject»; a topos of panegyric: «praise of forebears and their deeds». In Antiquity collections of such topoi were made. The science of topoi – called «topics» – was set forth in separate treatises. ... By it the topoi too acquire a new function. They become clichés, which can be used in any form of literature, they spread to all spheres of life with which literature deals and to which it gives form. In late Antiquity we see the new ethos give birth to new topoi» [3, c. 70].

So, E. Curtius understands topos as a convention or motif of the oratory, the main idea and argumentation. He examines the development of different topoi from the ancient literature and shows the examples of the use of topoi in different genres of narratives, reveals the origin of these topoi. E. Curtius notes that some of the topoi has special meaning according to the period of human history when it was formed or used. Topos may become actual in many years after it was formed. E. Curtius explains it using the example of the topos «Old woman and girl» and its use in different literature,

including Balzac's works. He summarizes that «Here we can observe the way in which, after a millennium and a half, a seemingly long-outworn topos can become rejuvenated. This is only comprehensible by the fact that it is rooted in the deeper strata of the soul. It belongs to the stock of archaic proto-images in the collective unconscious» [3, c. 105].

E. Curtius does not pay attention to the similarity or difference between topos and locus. The term «locus» was introduced by the researcher Y. Lotman. He also divides the space into «opened» and «closed». These types of space are directly related to locus. Locus itself is connection of the character of the narrative with its functional field of actions and something that they «bring with them» [16, c. 256]. The «opened» and «closed» locus has different features and, according to Y. Lotman, create specific condition of actions. He notes that «... the more intensive the fantasy of space is, the more measureless it is relatively to others» [16, c. 264–265].

While Y. Lotman, distinguishing the «closed» and «opened» space structures of the text, connects the alien and the cold with the first and the warmth and security with the second, in the diology of P. Hoiavichynska, on the contrary, the «closed» space is designated with feeling of close and native, while the «opened» space is marked with mostly unknown, dangerous and cold, and only occasionally – with reliability, security. In this interpretation of the pair of «closed / opened» space, the «opened» topos is explained as:

- the city tops as an alien, dangerous and «closed» locus;
- the locus of the house as a native, close;
- the locus of park or theater which is also «closed», but alien, unknown and dangerous.

Such representation of topos in the novels of P. Hoiavichynska and locus and its component shows that the latter has both individual and general features, that are connected with the topics which it is included in [15, c. 113–114].

T. Subbotina notes that in the humanitarian discourse «the concept of «topos» is formed as synonymous with the concepts of «category of culture» or «image of culture» [17, c. 112]. According to A. Bulhakova, the feature of the topos is a dialectical unity of a historically changing «stable» in semantics and structure of space, the topos, which «on the one hand, acts as a stable unit, which reflects a single perception of objects and phenomena of reality by people, and on the other hand, acts as a unit that absorbs the «spirit» of the epoch and the uniqueness of the author's vision of the world» [12, p. 206]. A. Bulhakova examines the topos of the World and distinguishes it on different subtopoi. For example, the subtopos «world – book» referred to the text nature of the reality and human consciousness [12, p. 207]. She also shows as topoi may be modified with the time changes and in new areas.

The concept of «topos» transfers from the area of philosophy and cultural studies to the spectrum of city and urban literature, in the center of which a person is always placed in the spatial dimension of the city.

V. Turkina argues that the city acquires characteristics of the topos, a space with dynamically

variable topological and metric parameters. Characteristics of the city are dynamism and variability, chaos of landscape and architectural features, expansion, absence of a clearly expressed structure [18, c. 79]. V. Turkina considers city as special architectural topos and virtual space with its own temporal characteristics.

According to V. Turkina, any space has such characteristics as connectivity and continuity. Virtual space is generally determined by the existence of a set of singularities. V. Turkina states that inhabitants, people, citizens, individuals are the main features of the urban topos. Moving elements in a city, and especially people and their activities, are as essential as its stationary material parts. As a result, the city appears as a gigantic dynamically changing collage, where linear and flat coexist with three-dimensional, where subspaces of large dimensions arise [18, c. 82–83].

M. Antsyferov understands the urban topos as a «cultural and historical organism», which is constantly in the space of dynamics and development. M. Antsyferov («Ways of studying the city as a social organism») explores in detail the structure of the urban topos, distinguishing the «anatomy», «physiology», «soul» of the city. The objects of the study of the «anatomy» of the city are the location, external form, architectonics, which, therefore, become exponents of the topos. M. Antsyferov reveals the «physiology» of the city through the functions of activity of society (residential, transport, etc.). However, exploring the «soul of the city» as an individual organism which focuses the emotional and value aspect of the unity of structural elements, it is important to consider architectonics, landscapes, which refer to the understanding of actual parameters of the «anatomy» of the city. In addition, in the work «Past and myth of St. Petersburg» the scientist distinguishes the features of the city which help to outline its topos in general, namely: 1) landscape, 2) places inhabited before the foundation, 3) place of origin, 4) general characteristics of the view [11].

Some of named characteristics may be used to describe videogames, which appear complex phenomenon if the modernity. There is no general definition of videogame in modern scientific discourse, however, there is a plenty of them describing videogame as primarily the game. There were several attempts to give the definition of videogames which would include all main features of them [6]. In 2017, famous videogame researcher R. Bergonse proposed the complex definition of videogame that was based on its five essential properties. He defined videogames as «a mode of interaction between a player, a machine with an electronic visual display, and possibly other players, that is mediated by a meaningful fictional context, and sustained by an emotional attachment between the player and the outcomes of her actions within this fictional context» [2, c. 253]. However, this point of view was widely criticized by scientific community. In 2019, Finnish philosopher Jonne Arjoranta published critical remarks, stating that R. Bergonse ignored several previous researches that did not fit in his conception, and other essential

features related to defining videogame. For example, the definition of R. Bergonse excludes zero-player games and games that are not played on «electronic visual displays», like Johann Sebastian Joust or games in the Audio Game Hub. Bergonse also failed to consider the fact that videogames are games at least to some extent [1, c. 1].

Being primarily games, videogames create the special space of its unfolding. According to famous culturologist J. Huizinga, game is «played out» within certain limits of time and place. It contains its own course and meaning [7, c. 9].

H.–G. Gadamer also pays attention to games and the game space in his work «Truth and Method». He considers the game as a concept that, in his opinion, plays a significant role in aesthetics. H.–G. Gadamer regards the game as primarily an artistic, creative phenomenon. His thought that the subject of the game is not a player is also interesting. He thinks that the game achieves its embodiment through the player at best. H.–G. Gadamer considers the game itself as the subject of the game. The game attracts the player and engages him in action.

This is expressed in its own particular game spirit. This spirit does not mean the mood or the state of mind of the one who plays; according to H.–G. Gadamer, the different mental states of those who play games, game satisfaction and the tendency to certain games is a rather consequence than a reason of the differences between the games. The games themselves differ with their spirit. It is based on the fact that they represent and organize the game motion in a different way. H.–G. Gadamer talks about the rules of the game as an important component of the game space. The game space in which the game passes correlates to the internal laws of the game and is limited with them, it is set from the inside, through the order that determines the game movement, than from the outside. The spirit of the game, its essence, is thus formed from the rules and order that attribute a certain way to filling the game space [13, c. 134–142].

The game spirit, described by H.–G. Gadamer, in our opinion has some similarities with topos in general. The game spirit, similarly to the topos in literature, may be considered as general motif, main idea that goes through the whole game. If we talk about the urban topos as a particular, it is reflected inside the game space. The category of setting, in our opinion, is connected with the category of the urban topos. Setting is defined as «the surroundings or environment (spatial or temporal) in which the game takes place». Currently the foci under setting are divided into two sub-categories: «spatial» (i.e., Asian, Casino, Castle, Desert, Game show, Hospital, Nature, Ocean, Rural, School, Space, Spaceship, Tundra, Urban, Virtual worlds, and Western) and «temporal» (i.e., Cyberpunk, Futuristic, Gothic, Historic, Medieval, Modern, Renaissance, and Steampunk) [8, c. 134]. Videogames may be classified and analyzed on the basis of setting [14, c. 24]. These categories are more than simple description of place and time where narrative of the game unfolds. Setting may connect the narrative and gameplay of videogame; it also may include

characteristics of the «anatomy», «physiology» and «soul». The external forms of videogame may be described as «anatomy», similarly to the anatomy of city; the «physiology» of videogames may be revealed through the activity of a player; the «soul» of videogames is the special organism of the game itself and may be compared with the game spirit. So, the structure of videogame in general may be described with terms that describe the topos of the city. It makes videogame space partially similar to the city space in general.

Speaking about the urban topos as the part of videogame, first of all we should mention games, where «the city» itself is a kind of setting or place for player's activity. The topos of these game cities is often similar with the topos of real cities. For example, in «True Crime: New York City» videogame player acts as a New York police officer and in the process of game he have to move around New York. The city inside this game appears not only as a landscape where narrative unfolds. We can see people living and working in New York, car traffic etc., so, the «physiology» of this city is disclosed in the game. New York in «True Crime» lives in its own spatial and temporal dimension, however, it is built like real-life time and space. The architecture of it also remains close to the real architecture, reflecting clearly the «anatomy» of the New York topos. The unity of characteristics creates the reflection of the «soul» of the real city in videogame space.

In this case, in «True Crime» the city is playable, player may interact with its filling. Shops, houses, cars and other people are present to interact with the player. Such presence makes the game city «alive» more than if it was only the static background. With the help of games where cities are present as a part of setting and game space player can learn about the cities in general.

G. Frasca notes the following about videogame cities: «Behaviour patterns, those are the key to the urban living organism. «Sim City» may be the classic example of a virtual city, but there are many more. The violent urban jungles of the «Grand Theft Auto» series offer a much more grim perspective of metropolitan social interaction. Massively multiplayer online games such as «World of Warcraft» include not just one but several cities and towns, each one with their own economy and features. ... You do not read simulations: you experiment with them. Experimentation involves taking risks, making mistakes, testing the boundaries of the system. By playing «Sim City», I do not learn anything about a specific city, but rather I explore the behaviour patterns that make all cities work. The virtual tourists visiting «Sim City» bring back home strange souvenirs. Not postcards, but rather sociological and urban rules. You learn about crime rates and urban planning, where to build schools, about the need for green spaces, taxes and the challenge of creating a network of highways. Sure, these rules are usually incomplete stereotypes, abstractions, simplifications, but still the videogame player as a virtual tourist approaches the subject with an inquisitive, critical attitude. In other words, she learns about the mechanics of the place she just visited, rather than returning back home with yet another cheesy watercolour depicting

the New York skyline. Videogames are a new way to recreate reality» [4, c. 80–81]. In our opinion, the reflection of the urban topos in videogames is the way to understand the real one.

The city can be present in videogames not only as location for actions. We should mention games where the city is a unit, part of the strategy or commerce, where it has unusual meaning, sights and structure.

Sometimes city is a unit on the map, reflected with one or group of buildings. Acting with such city (often the fantastic one), player opens special menu, where he can find information about city condition and functions. Such cities are often reduces to the function of producing unites of army and resources. However, they also have their topos, different from the real one.

In such videogames as «Heroes of Might and Magic» series, «Disciples» series, «King's Bounty» series cities are present as the castle or same building with army and some places inside of it. Player may look into the town and act through the interaction with city menu. In «Disciples III: Renaissance», as well as in «Heroes of Might and Magic V», player can see buildings inside the town, but his view of it remains at the level of interaction with in-game menu. So, the topos of these towns is mostly reflected through the architecture and menu, player cannot see the life inside the town.

Another reflection of cities is present in «Civilization» series. Here player may settle the city and watch its development from the very start. During the game process, city becomes closer to the modern ones, but player still can see the exterior and a menu of city control. Such cities have their own specified topos. They still have clear «anatomy» from the view outside the city, however, player cannot look inside of it to see the life of citizens. So, the «physiology» of such city is hidden from player, but it exists according to changes of city's condition. For example, in «Civilization V» citizens may be satisfied with their life; if they are unhappy, they may raise rebellion against the ruler of their county, the player. It is also hard to speak about the «soul» of such city. However, if we use the characteristics of landscape, places inhabited before the foundation, place of origin and general characteristics of the view, such cities also have specific topos, because they correspond to all of them. This topos may differ from real urban topos, but it is also present and connected with the gameplay and game context.

**Conclusions.** As a result of an analysis of the concept of «topos» in general it is concluded that topos is the main idea and general motif. Topos of the city is more complicated concept than topos itself. It may be characterized with the categories of «anatomy», «physiology», «soul». The «anatomy» correlates with the exterior and architecture of the city, the «physiology» – with people actions and «soul» is living organism of the city which focuses the emotional and value aspect of the unity of structural elements. Disclosing urban topos in videogames we can conclude that there are at least two kinds of reflection of the urban topos in videogames: reflection correlating with the real one and topos unusual to the real understanding of it. With

the help of the games of the first category we can understand the real city as well; videogames belonging to the second category may be helpful in experiments with different simulations.

It was also stated that videogames itself are partially similar with the urban topos. Some of them may be characterized the same way as topos of the city. According to this, further study of the connection between the structure of videogame and city is needed to understand deeply relations between virtual and real and influence on player's life and consciousness. Topos of the city is also important for further scientific analysis based on the improved classification of the structure of videogame in general the background where the actions of videogame take place in particular. It is important in order to develop the methodology of further studies which would help with conceptualization and systematization of declared object.

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