



Delft University of Technology

A Journey in Space and Time

de Wit, S.I.

Publication date

2022

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

The City and the Myth

Citation (APA)

de Wit, S. I. (2022). A Journey in Space and Time. In G. Resta (Ed.), *The City and the Myth* (pp. 18-21). Casa Editrice Libria.

Important note

To cite this publication, please use the final published version (if applicable). Please check the document version above.

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download, forward or distribute the text or part of it, without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license such as Creative Commons.

Takedown policy

Please contact us and provide details if you believe this document breaches copyrights. We will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Green Open Access added to TU Delft Institutional Repository

'You share, we take care!' - Taverne project

<https://www.openaccess.nl/en/you-share-we-take-care>

Otherwise as indicated in the copyright section: the publisher is the copyright holder of this work and the author uses the Dutch legislation to make this work public.

THE CITY
AND THE MYTH

edited by
Giuseppe Resta

L I B R I A

THE CITY AND THE MYTH
edited by **Giuseppe Resta**

series editor | **Antonio Carbone**

assistant editor | **Berna Göl**

cover design | **studio.sanne.dijkstra**

first edition | **October 2022**

publisher
Casa Editrice Libria
Melfi (Italia)
ed.libria@gmail.com
www.librianet.it

ISBN 9788867643011

©2022, COST Action Writing Urban Places and the authors. All rights reserved.

This publication is based upon work from COST Action Writing Urban Places, CA18126, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).
COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation.
www.cost.eu | www.writingurbanplaces.eu



A Journey in Space and Time

SASKIA DE WIT

Delft University of Technology

‘The city and the myth’ suggests a defining interrelation between the contemporary city of Çanakkale and what is believed to be the setting of the mythic Troy. However, it is not so straightforward to say anything conclusive about the impact of the myth of Troy on the city of Çanakkale, and that has mainly to do with geography. 25 kilometres of rolling agricultural fields separate the contemporary city from the archaeological site. Is the myth really the myth that belongs to this city? Can this friendly midsize city with its pleasant coast, derive its identity from the myth? And if not, then how does the myth of Troy influence contemporary Çanakkale?

Embarking on a workshop with the aim of exploring the narrative potential of the myth and the site, I set out with the assumption that the myth of Troy would overrule everything in Çanakkale (possibly informed by the fact that I had booked a hotel bearing the name Pelit Troya). I had expected a singular, romanticised, official narrative, defining the city’s formal identity, and erasing or overpowering the multitude of informal and multiple memories that make a city. Such an overpowering image, I assumed, would beg for unearthing those multiple counternarratives of the city. But this was not the case at all.

We travelled from Istanbul, a true metropolis with 15 to 20 million inhabitants, to the midsize city of Çanakkale of 300.000 and many tourists, to Troy, whose last inhabitants left around the year 500, current number of inhabitants zero. Human inhabitants, that is. From Istanbul to Çanakkale we crossed the Bosphorus, negotiating the daily traffic jams, along the Sea of Marmara, over the mountain ridge with its endless fields of sunflowers, and the ferry from the Gallipoli peninsula the Çanakkale. The next morning something interesting happened.

For half an hour we drove away from Çanakkale, until we discovered that the driver was taking us to the Gallipoli battlefields to the north, assuming that is where one goes when visiting Çanakkale. The battlefields are a reminder of the military campaign in World War I, led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In Turkey the campaign is regarded as a defining moment in the history of the state, a final surge in the defence of the motherland as the Ottoman Empire retreated. It formed the basis for the Turkish war of Independence and the declaration of the Republic of Turkey eight years later, with Atatürk as founder and president. Clearly, the myth of Troy was overruled by a different myth...

Instead of Troy, the battlefields have become the number one tourist destination, just as distant from the city, but more prominent on people's mind. Instead of the battleships of the invading Greeks, we see container boats continuously crossing the Dardanelles Strait, determining the image of contemporary Çanakkale with its lively shipping industry. Tourists come for seafood and *peynir helvasi* and stroll along the sea promenade.

The open, rural landscape that separates the Troy excavations from the city denies any form of a connection between the two locations, and the only visual reference to the myth in the city is a large Trojan horse statue. So, instead of trying to tone down a dominant presence, I discovered myself doing the exact opposite: searching for hints, clues and linkages that could expose a possible connection between the city and the myth, that could overcome a physical, temporal and mental distance, trying to discover the here in the there, the then in the now, the heroic in the prosaic.

The sea is conspicuously absent in Troy. Such an obvious presence in the war narratives and myths, and so defining in contemporary Çanakkale, with its seaside tourism and cargo boats. We even arrived by ferry. But it is absent from the landscape of the Troy excavations.



What still connects Troy and Çanakkale is the wind. Çanakkale is littered with trash. It is the wind that carries it everywhere, tearing open garbage bags, and spreading their contents through the streets. It is the same wind that blows all along the western coast. The same wind that filled the sails of the mythical Greek boats and brought them up to the Trojan shores. The same wind that – joining forces with the sea currents – filled the Troja bay with sediments thousands of years ago, transforming the port city of Troy into an inland town.

Searching for contemporary signifiers or symbols of myths and historical narratives, the first and most straightforward are statues. In Çanakkale the myth of Troy is represented by the Trojan Horse at the harbour, a giant steel and fibreglass film prop from the 2004 movie *Troy*. Not far from the horse are two colorful fibreglass statues of Snow White's dwarfs, looking at the sea. And compared to the horse, they receive an amount of attention that

<

The statues of Snow White's Dwarfs receive almost as much attention as the one of the Trojan horse, mixing old and contemporary myths, fiction and fable, high and low culture, here and anywhere.

is surprising. Tourists take selfies with the dwarfs as if they are an important local icon. What will the photo tell them about Çanakkale when they get home? Is Disney's Snow White the contemporary version of Helena of Troy?

Stray dogs are everywhere. These large, well-fed and content creatures are sleeping at sidewalks in Istanbul, at the roadside restaurant between highway entrances and exits, in little urban parks in Çanakkale, inside the Troy Museum, all over the archaeological site. The same sleeping dog seems to appear and reappear, crossing boundaries of space and time, and it is not hard to imagine it at the feet of the Trojan hero Hector.

There is no singular, large story that bridges the 30 kilometres and 3000 years between Troy and Çanakkale, that can clear the mists of fiction, myth, and fable. It is only through the messy heterogeneity of all those micro-stories that we can see possible connections and relations shimmering through...