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COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTENT RECONFIGURATION: THE ANECDOTES OF THE SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET ERA

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Abstract: *The article considers the phenomenon of collective memory as a resource of social interaction, legitimization of social practices. In particular, attention is paid to aspects of reconfiguration of the content of the collective memory of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Societies remember differently. Ukrainian society has a traumatic social experience gained as a result of the transformational processes of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the formation of an independent state, a democratic political order. The phenomenon of memory is considered in more detail on the example of the results of the study of collective memory reflected in anecdotes. The authors noted that the anecdote is a mechanism for translating cultural meanings into the memory of societies. The anecdote represents the symbolic systems of objective manifestations of collective memory. Based on the analysis of the results of the research by the method of content analysis using the online program Voyant Tools, reconfigurations of the content of anecdotes were recorded: from political to private; from local toponymic discourse to global; from ridiculing the policy of the state to the experience of society through the humor of the historical events of the formation of independent Ukraine.*

Keywords: *Cultural Memory; Soviet Period; Post-Soviet Period; Social Memory; Anecdote*

INTRODUCTION

The modern global society is a social reality in which tectonic institutional social changes occur due to the processes of technologization, digitalization, virtualization, visualization, commercialization, and medicalization. The modern world for an individual is no longer clear and steady, but, on the contrary, unpredictable, 'fluid', saturated with risks. The situation is complicated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which, due to quarantine restrictions, has changed the functioning of almost all social institutions of the society,

the lifestyle of people, and accelerated certain social processes. The processes of global international stratification and increasing social inequality have begun. All countries of the world have accumulated economic, social, political, and other resources to overcome current problems. It is important to understand and realize what historical and socio-cultural heritage the states have entered the pandemic world with. How this will allow implementing measures to ensure the safety of citizens and choose a progressive vector of domestic and foreign policy.

The Ukrainian society is a part of the global world, and therefore it is characterized by the above-mentioned societal and institutional processes. Ukraine has in its historical and socio-cultural heritage the peculiarities of overcoming the totalitarian and authoritarian past and establishing a democratic political system. These powerful transformational processes have become a source of collective memory. In the context of this situation, the problem of collective memory as a resource of social interaction, legitimization of social practices becomes relevant.

Sociological interest in the phenomenon of collective memory is due to the search for mechanisms that form and support sociality. We are impressed by A. Filippov's idea of the relationship between past and present events. The scientist, reflecting on the phenomenon of event, argues his ideas with the concept of the sociologist G. Mead, and notes that the present symbolizes and reconstructs its past, which manifests itself in new events of the present. The memory of the past is necessary for constructing social interaction, since it acts as a 'cultural model', thanks to it, ideas about the approved forms of social action of an individual are formed. Memory provides information, designs meaning for the present, evokes emotions, empathy, and provides social identification (Filippov 2004).

In this case, the possibilities of analyzing social memory are based on the understanding that this phenomenon unfolds in two planes: global and local. Thus, at the first level, cross-cultural transformation processes have affected various spheres of society's life. Without a doubt, these processes have also affected the sphere of public memorization and memory in general. Collective memory is a complex multicomponent phenomenon that connects the past with modern reality, thereby both reproducing and forming new symbolic meanings and aspects of understanding. A certain value-symbolic reconfiguration takes place.

The focus of our research is fixed on defining the reconfiguration of social memory, or rather, collective memory, as its variety, at the local level. In this case, an important area of scientific research is to define the reconstruction of collective memory at the level of local social processes after the collapse of the USSR and the formation and development of Ukrainian society. We are speaking rather about reflecting the content components of collective memory, searching for mechanisms for adapting cultural meanings. One of these mechanisms, in our opinion, is an anecdote that represents sign systems of objective manifestations of collective memory.

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There are two types of sign systems: written culture and oral tradition. In the context of our scientific search, it is relevant to consider folklore as an element of oral tradition. After all, anecdote, as a part of folklore, reflects a certain reflection on recorded events and in its informational content can resist official discourse, which makes it independent of the political situation, a carrier of social memory. Therefore, the study of such a memory carrier independent of subjective influence is very relevant in the context of comparing two periods, and thus it is possible to record certain reconfigurations that occurred in the collective memory of Ukrainian society.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Since the 20s of the twentieth century, social researchers have turned to defining the content of the phenomenon of social memory. Today we have a sufficient body of theoretical and methodological interpretations of this phenomenon. However, as a part of the proposed scientific research, we shall try to analyze the main approaches and justify the one that will be used for further analysis of collective memory. The phenomenon of social memory, due to its content diversity, the multiplicity of forms of fixation and retranslation, has an interdisciplinary character. The functional approach focuses on the social memory of individual groups in terms of the role it plays in maintaining their integrity and sustainability. M. Halbwachs declared a collective a subject of memory, considering memory a collective function. He distinguished between individual (autobiographical) and collective (social) memory. At the same time, the latter is an integral part of social thinking along with the mental activity. The content of memory is recollections, that is, collective representations (ideas, judgments, images) that are subject to changes under the influence of time and circumstances. So, first of all, M. Halbwachs determined the social essence of memory and its structural components (Hatton 2004, 191-204).

M. Halbwachs states that "a person evokes his recollections in his memory through the framework of social memory. In other words, the various groups into which society is divided can reconstruct their past at any time" (Halbwachs 2007, 336). Thus, according to the concept of social memory by M. Halbwachs, it can be said that this phenomenon is dynamic and directly related to the identification and value mechanisms of a particular society. Also, the sociologist must draw attention to the constructive nature of social memory, that is, the property of certain elements of memory to become actual in a specific period of society's life. However, collective memory is not identical to historical events. Social groups only remember events that are important to them for certain reasons. Therefore, collective memory has the character of multiplicity, in contrast to historical memory (Halbwachs 2007, 7-8). So, collective memory consists of specific symbols and images, significant reminiscences. Any idea can acquire the characteristics of collective memory on the condition that it takes a certain form, and

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vice versa, a social event, a social phenomenon imprinted in collective memory becomes the carrier of the corresponding idea. The formed images of collective memory are presented in certain forms, one of which, in our opinion, is an anecdote.

J. Assmann continues to develop the ideas of M. Halbwachs as a part of his concept of 'cultural memory'. According to which, two types of memory can be distinguished: communicative, which is used in everyday life, and cultural, which has a sacred meaning. Communicative memory is dynamic and short-term and plays an important role in social processes, while cultural memory is static and long-term, has a sacred meaning, and is used in ritual communication (Assmann 2004, 11-25). Images of collective memory can move from cultural memory to the space of communicative memory and, thus, lose their meaning, because they are short-term and quickly forgotten. Therefore, cultural memory is metaphorical and is reflected in language constructions, as well as collective memory. The latter, in this case, forms a certain symbolic reality, that represents stereotypes, ideas about social events, and social phenomena. An example of retranslation of these contents of collective memory, in our opinion, can be anecdotes.

The integrational sociological direction adds knowledge about the specifics of cultural memory and its reconfiguration. In this context, J. Rebane proposed an informational approach and defined social memory as a set of non-hereditary socio-cultural means and information systems. He identified the main groups of social information presenters: 1) subjects such as labor results and tools of production; 2) objective social relations; 3) language and non-linguistic semiotic means capable of transferring information (Rebane 1982, 44-54).

For further research of the specifics of social memory in the modern post-Soviet space, it is necessary first of all to identify those social elements within the framework of which it manifests itself. In identifying these elements, we are based on the information approach of J. Rebane. The scientist believes that although human is the main carrier of social memory, there are other types of carriers: products of human activity that have relative independence from human consciousness; tools of production that express the labor results ('material culture'); objective social relations based on production relations; language and other sign systems capable of transferring information (Rebane 1982, 165-166). Quite important for our further research is that J. Rebane, as a part of the information approach, defined certain points and aspects of the social reality of various nature and content, which can be translators of information about the past. Such a reality, in our opinion, can be an anecdote in the context of the dynamics of cultural, informational, and collective memory. I. A. Mankevich claims that anecdote belongs to the most enduring folklore genre that preserves, unlike other genre types, amazing mobility and productivity towards new texts, and stimulates the active interest of specialists in various humanitarian fields.

Anecdote responds to significant events of today, aging and growing a 'beard' along with the news of yesterday (Mankevich 2005, 94-97). So, anecdote as an element of modern folklore, due to its unique features, is a fairly vivid representative of collective memory in the form of a joke, 'black' humor, because it performs the function of fixing events and values of society in a certain time frame.

We find the confirmation of this idea within the framework of the theory of transformation of laughter culture of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods by I. Kaspe. Kaspe defines anecdote as a mechanism for adapting cultural meanings, integrated into the communicative process, inserted in a certain socio-cultural situation. Thus, according to him, an anecdote in Soviet times ridiculed the official ideology and at the same time remaining within the framework of a relatively stable unofficial value-normative structure. Post-Soviet anecdote is a construct at the time of the collapse of the Soviet system. "Humanity breaks up with its past with a smile", this is how Kaspe, in our opinion, defines the function of anecdote as a carrier of collective memory (Kaspe 2000, 327-334). And by engaging J. Assmann's ideas, we can assume that the content modes of anecdote, depending on socio-cultural conditions and the significance of historical events, acquire signs of cultural and communicative memory.

So, according to the presented theoretical perspectives on the content of social (collective) memory, we shall try to determine the points of reconfiguration of its content through the study of anecdote as a space of representation of memory elements.

RECONFIGURATIONS OF THE CONTENT OF ANECDOTES

To study the reconfiguration of content modes represented in anecdotes of the Soviet and modern periods, we used the content analysis method, which is based on a quantitative and qualitative methodology. This is due, firstly, to the fact that we are studying such a type of translator of social (collective) memory as a sign system, which by its nature manifests itself in the form of text, and therefore content analysis allows us to analyze the text according to certain indicators. Secondly, this is because this method is effective in the context of comparing the information content of Soviet and modern anecdotes. After all, with its help, we can distinguish the content features of thematic content from all the massive scope of anecdotes and compare them within two time periods.

In our study, the objects are anecdotes of various topics of two time periods: late Soviet (1945-1991) and modern (1991-2018). This is due to the general goal of our research, which is to compare the thematic content of two-time groups of anecdotes as carriers of certain information. These groups of anecdotes were selected to trace the information transformation of collective memory during the transition from a closed (Soviet) to an open (post-Soviet) society using a specific sign system (humorous

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folklore). The selection was created based on two databases of anecdotes of different topics following the period, selected using search queries on the internet. At the first stage, websites were selected based on the popularity criterion from the search query in Google, the indication of the period of anecdotes on the website following two created databases, and a non-fixed thematic set of anecdotes on a particular website. This way two databases of anecdotes of the Soviet and modern era were created. The Soviet database has a volume of 2033 anecdotes, and the modern database has a volume of 1842 anecdotes. At the second stage, a continuous sampling method was applied to two databases of anecdotes. To calculate the data, the Voyant tools online program was used, which calculates the frequency of words in the text, which is convenient for large amounts of information. The codifier consisted of nine blocks, which allowed identifying certain content characteristics: thematic sphere, historical events, mention of geographical toponyms, historical figures and personalities, gender characteristics of characters, the social sphere and activity of the character (social roles), status characteristics of the character, the type of social relations (confrontation, consolidation), represented values (material, post-material).

As part of understanding anecdote as a codification system that represents meaningful perspectives of collective memory, we shall analyze quantitative results and certain qualitative observations through the prism of comparing the information specifics of two databases of anecdotes.

The thematic sphere of anecdotes' content is presented as the following spheres: politics, socio-cultural sphere, economic, family and private, ethnic, gender, and religious sphere. By comparing the thematic sphere of late Soviet and modern anecdotes, we can identify differences in the thematic and informational content of Soviet and modern anecdotes as carriers of collective memory. We can see that in the context of Soviet anecdotes, the most popular topic is political (22.7%).

Based on the indicator groups of words in this subcategory, this is most often a reference to certain political subjects, a political system (communism), and state projects (anti-alcohol campaign). Given the humorous and sarcastic genre of this folklore element, we can say that each topic is to a certain extent an object of ridicule. Therefore, a significant amount of political topics in Soviet anecdotes shows us the presentation of social memory in the USSR through the context of contrasting to the official Soviet discourse in the past and idealizing the memory of Soviet politics today. And the largest volume of this thematic sphere in comparison with others shows us the relevance of the problem of politics in Soviet society and the significant representation of political discourse in the social memory of Soviet society. The following topics in the Soviet anecdotes are slightly inferior in volume: economic (19.4%), and socio-cultural (18.3%). They, as related topics to the political one, also demonstrate ridiculing the system elements of the Soviet state structure. In the context of the economic sphere, this is primarily a reference to destructive manifestations of the economy (deficit, queues), and

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socio-cultural topics are represented by a reference to negative, deviant mass phenomena of the Soviet reality (crimes, alcoholism). Elements of other topics are mentioned to a lesser extent: ethnic (most often, it's a reference to representatives of ethnic groups - the Chukchi, the Armenians, and the foreigners) (15.3%), family and private (13.4%), gender (9.5%) and the religious topic is the least mentioned (1.4%). These, to a certain extent, more everyday topics reflecting ethnic memory, family memory, and gender memory, in Soviet anecdotes have faded into the background due to the significant actualization of reflection on political, economic, and socio-cultural events of the past Soviet reality.

In modern anecdotes, the most popular and ridiculed are the institution of the family, gender, and ethnic issues. The content mode of anecdotes moves to the family and household sphere (34%) of mentions. Political topics, in contrast to Soviet anecdotes, are less represented (11.8%). This trend is also evident in socio-cultural and economic topics (11.6%) and (9.3%), respectively. Religious topics are presented less than in Soviet anecdotes (0.7%). Thus, comparing the thematic sphere of Soviet and modern anecdotes, we noticed a certain mirror pattern.

In Soviet anecdotes, certain global elements (politics, economy, society as a whole) were most often ridiculed, while in modern anecdotes, the emphasis shifts more to the interpersonal and identification level (family, gender, ethnicity). So, within the framework of our scientific goals, we can say that the Soviet anecdote most often represents elements of collective memory that reflect a societal level of social reality, in particular, the institution of the state, while the modern anecdote more reflects an everyday level (interpersonal systems), in particular, family memory, gender memory, ethnic memory (ethnic identification). The content reconfiguration took place from the topics of the public sphere to the private one.

Regarding the consideration of specific historical events, Soviet anecdotes most often mention state projects (de-Stalinization, Glasnost, anti-alcohol campaign, etc., and to a lesser extent, the events of the early USSR are mentioned, namely collectivization, industrialization) (53.9%) (Figure 1). This confirms that political discourse prevailed in the collective memory of Soviet society. The second most popular group of historical events is crisis and violence periods (the majority of references were to the Great Patriotic War, the Afghan war, and the October Revolution) (33.7%). Events of international relations (mostly represented by the Cold War with the United States) have 9.1% of mentions. Cultural events (the Olympics) were the least mentioned (3.3%).

In modern Ukrainian anecdotes, crisis and violent events are most often mentioned (45.3%), to a greater extent this is a reflection on a wide range of traumatic events, from the Holodomor of the 30s of the XX century to modern events (the Maidans, ATO). Events of international relations are also often mentioned (28.6%) (These are mostly indicator words related to European integration and relations with the

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Russian Federation). State projects (lustration, decentralization, etc.) are slightly represented (21.6%). Cultural events (Eurovision, Euro 2012) are the least mentioned.

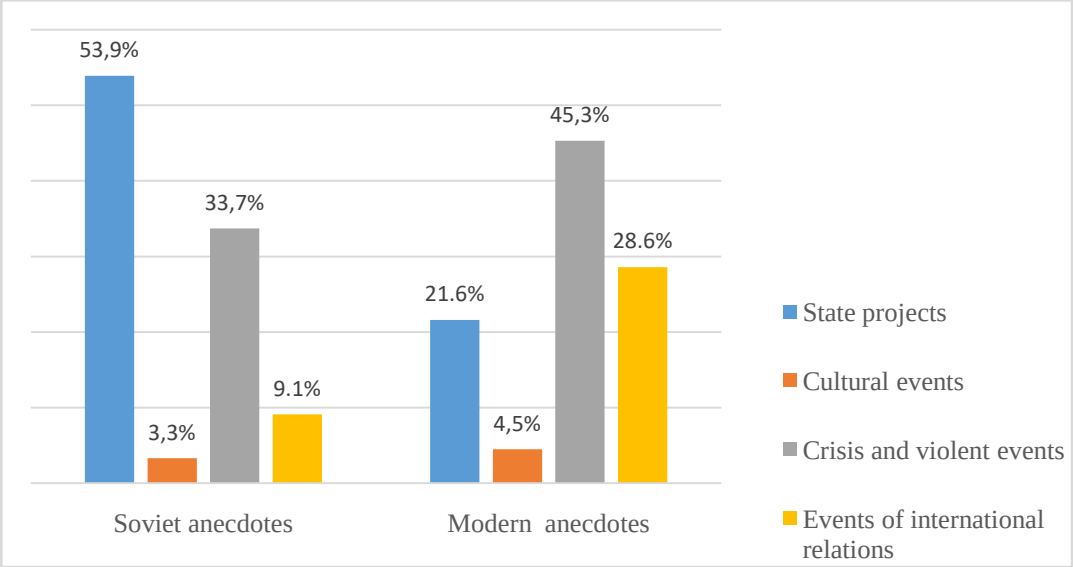


Figure 1: Reflection of Historical Events in Anecdotes (Source: Authors' depiction)

So, comparing the mention of specific historical events in Soviet and modern anecdotes, we concluded that in Soviet anecdotes, historical events are more related to political topics, which once again confirms the dominance of political discourse in social memory. In modern anecdotes, we see the dominance of traumatic memory.

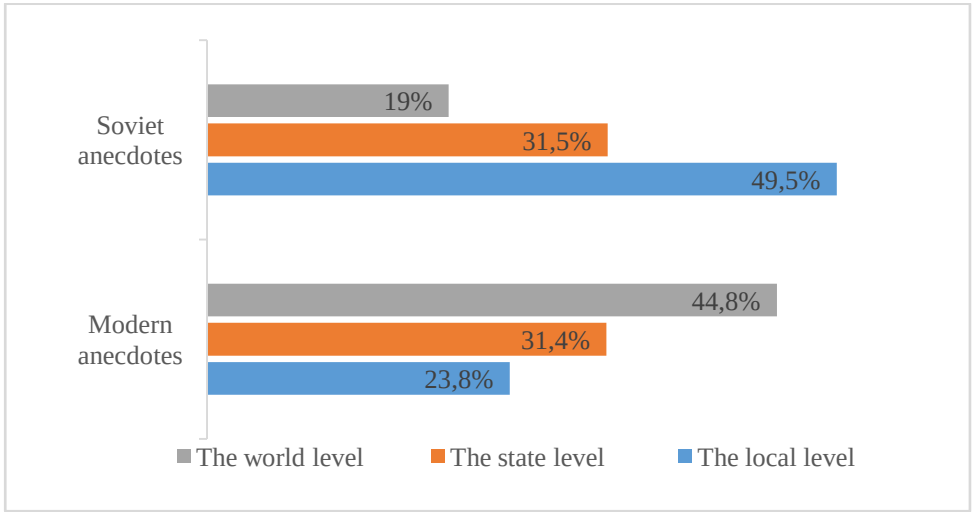


Figure 2: Levels of Mentioning Historical/Geographical Toponyms in Anecdotes (Source: Authors' depiction)

Regarding the levels of geographical toponyms presented in Soviet and modern anecdotes (Figure 2), we see that in Soviet anecdotes the local level (city, town) is most mentioned (49.5%), then the state level (31.5%), and the world level (19%). In modern anecdotes, the situation is almost mirror-like: the world level is most mentioned (44.8%), then the state level (31.4%), and the local level (23.8%).

So, within the framework of the mirror results obtained, we concluded that in a closed (Soviet) society, due to the conditions of the 'Iron Curtain', the information of the extra-Soviet space was less relevant, and its lack was compensated by an increase in information of regional content (anecdotes about Odesa). In the conditions of Ukrainian open society and due to the overlap of globalization processes, the mention of world-class information increases (anecdotes about other countries).

Thus, we have identified the content points of reconfiguration of collective memory, namely: in Soviet anecdotes, a more regional context is presented, while in modern anecdotes the global level is relevant; the Soviet anecdote most often represents elements of social memory that reflect macro-system phenomena of social reality, in particular, the institution of the state, politics, while the modern anecdote reflects the everyday level (interpersonal systems), in particular, family memory, gender memory, ethnic memory (ethnic identification); the dominance of political discourse in the collective memory of the Soviet era, and in modern anecdotes, we note the dominance of traumatic memory.

CONCLUSION

In general, we can confirm such a problem's importance, taking into account the formation of a paradigm space for comprehension of the phenomenon of collective memory through the analysis of anecdotes as a mechanism for adapting cultural meanings about the past. Memory through an anecdote acquires signs of collective memory, if it is significant for social communities and society, or communicative memory, in the opposite situation. On the other hand, the content of modern anecdotes retranslates certain ideas about the present and thereby forms a landscape of samples of stereotypes, social attitudes about 'culturally approved' forms of social behavior in society. The specifics of anecdote as a folklore genre allow us to identify specifically unofficial discourse, which is relevant for the Soviet era. It was during that period that the duality of consciousness of the mentality of Ukrainians was formed, which today is one of the determining factors in the formation of modern social practices of individuals, public consciousness, and public opinion.

Having characterized the general trends of collective memory, we analyzed its internal information structure in the context of post-Soviet transformation. To do this, as part of the information approach, we have chosen such an objective memory carrier as an anecdote. It can reflect certain events of the past in its humorous style and quickly

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spread in society. Based on the obtained results of the content analysis, we identified the aspects of reconfiguration of the collective memory contents in Soviet and modern anecdotes.

Firstly, Soviet anecdotes tend in their topics more to the societal level (politics, economics, society as a whole), while in modern anecdotes, the topics of identification and interpersonal nature (family, gender, and ethnic issues) are more popular.

Secondly, given the mention of specific events, Soviet anecdotes most often ridicule events related to the activities of the state, while in modern anecdotes the most significant amount is occupied by events of a traumatic nature (war, revolutions).

Thirdly, given the mentioned levels of toponyms, Soviet anecdotes focus mostly on the local level, namely, certain cities or villages within the Soviet Union are mentioned, which to a certain extent is associated with the specifics of a closed society. Meanwhile, modern anecdotes of an open society focus on the world level, which is explained by the globalization processes.

So, in Soviet anecdotes, conveying collective memory is characterized by an emphasis, in general terms, on macro-system objects, including political and economic realities, and territorial localization in the Soviet space itself. While in modern anecdotes, the memory of certain macro-system events fades into the background, against the background of updating topics related to family, ethnic, and gender memory; and territorial localization shifts from the internal geography of the state to the world level. Further research within the framework of this problem is promising in the direction of applying a semiotic approach, a method of analyzing metaphors for analyzing the code system of texts, in particular anecdotes.

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