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Cultural Space and National Culture: Theorizing to Reshaping

Summary

The book offers a critical overview of various theories of the cultural space developed by Ukrainian and foreign scholars in the last decades. It also proposes a way to overcome the crisis that the theorizing of national culture and its space is currently going through because of the difficulties of comprehending the globalization and its impact on modern nations. Among those reviewed and analyzed are: the theories of the public sphere developed by J. Habermas and later by J. Keane, F. Jameson's idea of the postmodern hyperspace, the set of global 'scapes' designed by A. Appadurai, the concept of the semiosphere elaborated by Y. Lotman, and others.

The analysis of the shortcomings of the existing concepts of the cultural space, both territory-related (anthropological) and abstract (structural), serves as a starting point for the development of a new approach to the modeling of national cultural space. The book also proposes a set of general postulates that update the theoretical model of national cultural space for the age of globalization.

The model is based upon John Keane's concept of a public sphere as "a particular type of spatial relationship between two or more people, usually connected by a certain means of communication (television, radio, satellite, email, fax, etc.) in which non-violent controversies erupt... concerning the power relations operating within their given milieu of interaction and/or within wider milieux of social and political structures"; there being micro-public spheres (on the local level), meso-public spheres (comprising millions of people on the level of the territorial nation-state), and macro-public spheres on the global level. It is argued that public spheres tend to share not only means and codes of communication, but also collective identities (local, 'tribal', ethnic, national, etc.). A national cultural space is therefore defined as a set of meso-public and micro-public spheres sharing a non-exclusive national identity, possibly a set of values, but not necessarily the same national territory/jurisdiction.

Also, new definitions are proposed for unity and integrity of a national cultural space. Both are better defined in a negative way, namely: a national cultural space lacks unity if a substantial part of the national population exists beyond it, possibly

participating in some other nation-state's public spheres instead. Lack of integrity of national cultural space, on the other hand, means that there are influential public spheres in the national territory whose identities defy or undermine the identity of the core nation and/or its sovereignty.

Such situations are often perceived as policy problems, or even as national security problems, to be solved by various means, from linguistic regulations for the media to minimum quotas for national cultural products. These measures, however, could be not very effective, for regulating the existing public spheres doesn't change their identities. To develop new ones using the new media could be a better policy.

The book also offers a new conceptual approach to modeling a space shaped by a culture in the age of globalization and the ubiquitous presence of digital media technologies. Two conceptual models of such a space are proposed hereby: the topological model (describing an idealized cultural space as a topological set), and the polyspheric one. The latter is based upon Yuri Lotman's concept of the semiosphere and John Keane's notion of the public sphere adopted for the case of cultural sphere by the author. In particular, mirroring Lotman's idea of the nucleus of the semiosphere, and following Keane's observation that nowadays, "the old dominance of state-structured and territorially bounded public life mediated by radio, television and newspapers is coming to an end", and there are now plenty of big and small public spheres, usually formed around some influential media outlet or network, it is suggested that, in a model presenting such a public sphere as a set of interconnected elements, there should be one special element, the generator, that generates most of the cultural content communicated within this public sphere. The model also includes the axiom that all elements of a public sphere (members of its audience, texts of culture offered within it, media outlets and other platforms generating its cultural content), as well as the public sphere as a whole, do possess identities, not necessarily single and permanent.

The polyspheric model of cultural space then serves as a foundation for developing a new concept of national cultural space as an aggregate of all public spheres which either share the same national identity or at least have identities culturally compatible with it. Such a cultural space, seen as a constellation of public spheres, remains linked to the territory inhabited by a nation but is not limited by it. Neither is the dominant identity of a public sphere completely determined by the identity of its generator, although the correlation between them is strong.

The polyspheric model is also used to redefine the notions of integrity and

completeness of cultural space of a particular country (nation). It is suggested that we understand a nation's cultural space as complete when all its members (citizens) participate in public spheres with corresponding national identities, while integrity of the nation's cultural space is understood as a condition of all public spheres active in a country possessing non-conflicting identities.

In Part 3 of the book, the author attempts at a retrospective overview of the long process of formation and transformation of the cultural space of Ukraine, from the times of Kievan Rus until our days, using the polyspheric model as an interpretative tool. This approach seems to show, i. a., that in certain periods of Ukraine's history, more than one national cultural space existed in its territory.

Part 4 of the book offers a critical review of the numerous attempts of reforms in Ukraine's cultural and media policies that have had among their goals a formation of an integrated national cultural space. The visions of the main problems of Ukraine's cultural space and of main goals of its reforming, put forward by key actors in this process, their projects of cultural and media policy reforms are also analyzed in detail.

One may conclude that, by applying the polyspheric model in a study of processes of cultural development of modern society and/or of transformation of its cultural space, a new, fresh analytic perspective is obtained. Through this perspective, various important aspects of modern cultures and their public spheres and complicated relations between them can be seen more graphically.

The polyspheric model can also be used in studies of early modern cultures and cultural spaces, so as to analyze complex relations between public spheres created by various classes, ethnic, regional, religious groups in a pre-modern society (for instance, in mediaeval and early modern Ukraine), their mutual cultural influences and various identities created and transformed by their participation in the public spheres. It is argued that, in Ukrainian case, such an analysis would demonstrate that the long and often conflicted process of development of the cultural space of what is now Ukraine, there have been both mutually productive co-operation of, and bitter rivalry between the several cultural spaces with different nominal and discursive identities that have co-existed in Ukrainian territory, some of which even aspired to become national ones. In particular, there were massive attempts to either assimilate ethnically Ukrainian groups and their elites into greater (imperial) public spheres (and, consequently, imperial cultural spaces) or at least redefine public spheres with culturally Ukrainian audiences and contents as merely regional, peripheral elements

of imperial cultural spaces (that of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, then that of Russian Empire, then that of the USSR), thereby depriving them of their distinct national identity.

Consequently, after the collapse of the USSR and the proclamation of Ukraine's independence, its cultural space was not a tight-knit system of public spheres sharing the same cultural codes and national identity, but rather a peripheral part of the bigger post-Soviet cultural space, with virtually all Ukrainians sharing cultural competence with other ex-Soviet societies but not necessarily their identities, especially civic ones. For sure, there were numerous public spheres with Ukrainian identity, but their combined audiences did not include all population of Ukraine, and millions of Ukrainian citizens had little Ukrainian cultural competence and did not share Ukrainian identity. In fact, these people remained a part of the post-Soviet cultural space whose content-generating elements were predominantly in Russia. Hence the policy problem of facilitating the formation of a complete and integrated cultural space of Ukrainian nation-state, that is, one including all Ukrainians in its audience and sharing Ukrainian national identity with its constituting public spheres.

During the previous two decades, there have been a number of attempts to design and implement large-scale reforms in cultural and media policy of Ukraine, in particular, to create a system of state protectionism for Ukrainian national culture. Most of these reform projects, however, were based upon theoretic concepts and cultural realities of the early 20th century, when national identities were closely related to ethnic and geographic origin, the national cultural space was synonymous to national territory, and its integrity usually meant linguistic and cultural homogeneity, to be achieved by means of 'modernization', that is, introduction of general public education and formation of a national network of public service broadcasting.

Still, these policies did bring about some positive changes for Ukrainian culture and for the nation's cultural space. The tax incentives for national film production and for book publishing introduced at the beginning of the 21st century, did help Ukrainian cultural industries to overcome the transformational crisis they suffered in the 1990s, and Ukrainian content quotas for radio and TV stations introduced in 2015 made the presence of Ukrainian cultural product in the national cultural space much more palpable. On the other hand, state support has been so far focused on Ukrainian-language cultural content, overlooking those public spheres and content generators which, though having definitely Ukrainian civic identity, still use

Russian or another minority language. From the 'polyspheric perspective' on the national cultural space, this is a policy drawback.