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REPRESENTATION OF CITY CULTURAL MEMORY NARRATIVES IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

Narratives are one of the means of transmitting the cultural memory of the city, with the help of which images of the past are structured and the processes of the present are explained. The article is devoted to the analysis of ways to represent the narratives of the cultural memory of the city in the digital era, due to the multifactorial influence of digitalization on various aspects of social and cultural life. In the digital era, the processes of transmitting symbolic information about the city acquire a qualitatively new effect, since the trends of digitalization of society increase the range of tools and trajectories for the representation of urban narratives that construct the cultural memory of the city. The author, adhering to a communicative approach, demonstrates that plot texts about the city's past are now reproduced in digital communication, assuming the presence of a virtual source of narrative posted on the Internet, including social communities. In addition, new media often become a digital intermediary in the transmission of urban narrative, as the most important mediator of digital communication on the Internet. The interactive nature of the representation of plot texts about the city's past implies the presence of active users of digital content who create and replicate memorable information about the city. The knowledge of how narratives about the city's past are represented in digital communication can be used in applied research aimed at studying the prediction and formation of the cultural memory of the city.

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1. Introduction

The issues of the cultural memory of the city occupy a special place in the modern culturological discourse due to the so-called "commemorative boom" and the rapid development of interdisciplinary research that has developed around "Memory studies". We cannot but agree with Olick (2016), who emphasizes that modern researchers consider the past as a platform "on which one can fight not only for interests and resources..., but also for the very identity that primarily supports and organizes these interests" (p. 49).

Modern researchers understand cultural memory as a result of the interaction of the past and the present in a socio-cultural context (Erll, 2008, p. 2). Moreover, in cultural memory, based on the cultural position of Assmann (2011), the past is not preserved as such, but rather is galvanized (resurrected) in symbols that seem to illuminate the changing present (p. 19). As for the cultural memory of the city, we understand it as "a complex space for storing, broadcasting and updating the cultural meanings of the city" (Fedotova, 2020b, p. 131) as significant elements of urban culture for citizens, including urban narratives that convey vivid images of the city's past.

Narratives are one of the means of transmitting the cultural memory of the city, with the help of which images of the past are structured and the processes of the present are explained. According to scientists, collective memory is materialized, objectified in the present with the help of narratives (Wertsch, 2009, p. 5).

The most important feature of the narrative is its ability to express the collective experience of a particular community, to represent and actualize certain episodes of the cultural memory of the city. With the help of narratives that make communication processes meaningful, images of the past are transmitted in certain contexts, as well as within the framework of a particular interpretation.

Urban narratives, which include not only myths and legends, but also other various plot texts, thanks to their conciseness, explain various episodes of the past to most people, thereby setting the attitude to the present, which is directly related to the consolidation of certain cultural meanings in the collective memory. Studying the functional processes of cultural memory of the city, provokes the necessity to address certain questions, the most urgent of which are: how are the narratives of the city's past presented in the urban environment; how are they inscribed in the urban reality?

Meanwhile, the modern era, marked by digitalization, causes the transformation of all spheres of human activity, which also applies to the functioning of narratives that represent images of the past in modern communication practices.

2. Problem Statement

In the modern era, digital communications have become particularly important, which are determined by the value of technical innovations, the spread of electronic devices and information technologies. Within the framework of digital communications, a large number of people interact on the Internet. In this regard, the accumulation of social experience often occurs in a virtual environment characterized by the efficiency of information exchange and the dynamic updating of the everyday values of those communities that are included in digital communications.

The importance of studying the socio-cultural consequences caused by digitalization is confirmed by a number of studies. As scientists emphasize, digital media today have a dominant influence on people's daily life and social behavior (Leyva & Beckett, 2020). The digital age causes social and cultural risks, one of which is a radical change in the daily life of young people, and fragmentation, individualization of society (Kravchenko, 2019, p. 50). Digital communications affect the definition of identity boundaries, causing "the merging of the digital and real "I" into a single digital public identity" (Lisenkova, 2020, p. 65). In addition, nowadays "the kingdom of mass media and the production of spectacles is replacing the machine production of goods, the cult of consumption is replacing the cult of labor, the motive of compensation is replacing the maintenance of existence as the main motive of labor" (Dudnik, 2020, p. 17). Finally, digital culture forms a special type of media consumption among the modern generation, including those associated with the processes of socialization and self-actualization (Dunas & Vartanov, 2020, pp. 186-203) in a virtual space that minimizes the private sphere to the detriment of widespread transparency (Nazarov, 2018).

The digital transformation of society has also affected the functioning of the cultural memory of the city, as well as the specifics of the presentation and structuring of urban narratives. The communicative trajectories and carriers of narratives are changing, with the help of which a collective attitude to the images of the past is formed, which directly influences the processes of understanding urban reality. The digital code is now becoming part of the city's narrative processes in the form of digital content on the web, which is a collage of fragments of the city's cultural memory. In this regard, one of the most important problems of the contemporary society in the framework of urban research is the fragmentation of knowledge about how urban narratives are represented in the digital age and what practices determine the specifics of this process.

3. Research Questions

Studies of the cultural memory of the city are closely connected with a special understanding of the city as a symbolic space of movement and representation of cultural meanings. In this case, the city appears as "a specific, complex cultural construct that embodies ... fundamental aesthetic, social and ideological attitudes of people" (Avanesov, 2018, p. 10), it "ceases to be an administrative or economic object, but is understood as a place that is formed through collective actions" (Fedotova, 2020a, p. 125).

The symbolic nature of the city's cultural memory makes it possible to consider it as a reservoir for storing urban narratives and to focus on those symbolic means that are necessary for interpretation of cultural meanings that form images of the city's past and present. Urban narratives represent a meaningful collective experience of the city; through them, the representation of the city's past takes place. Urban narratives fill the fragments of the cultural memory of the city with meaning in the plot texts, where by narrating about certain images of the city's past, they are given certain significance and, consequently, form the involvement of citizens with the city. They are the means of transmitting and updating certain fragments of the cultural memory of the city.

The means of transmitting memorable information about the city are a variety of intermediaries that citizens encounter in the urban environment, which, by symbolizing reality, connect the past and present of the city, thereby causing citizens to experience a collective sense of place. Hence, the study of

the peculiarities of the urban narrative representation of the cultural memory of the city makes it possible to reveal how the images of the city's past are represented in the present. Moreover, different ways of representing the same narrative affect the interpretation of collective experience in different ways (for example, emotionally or cognitively, visually or verbally). In other words, different ways of representing narratives reproduce different images of the past.

Therefore, the research question of this work is not related to the semantics of narrative, but to the ways of presenting urban narratives in the digital era, the specifics of which are determined by the digitalization trends of social life.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to analyze the ways of representing the narratives of the cultural memory of the city, which acquire a particular specificity in the digital era, causing a digital transformation of the processes of structuring collective experience in relation to the preservation and presentation of episodes of the city's past.

5. Research Methods

Since the research topic has an interdisciplinary character, this paper is based on an interdisciplinary approach aimed at integrating scientific developments from different branches of knowledge (anthropology, philosophy, sociology). The research methodology assumes a culturological approach, with the help of which the process of representation of urban narratives is modeled. In addition, the work uses a communicative approach that allows us to focus on the ways of encoding and distributing urban narratives.

6. Findings

Traditionally, the ways of representing the narratives of the cultural memory of the city include festivals, monuments, photographs, biographies, films and many other means that convey plot texts about the city's past.

One of the ways to analyze the features of the narrative structuring process in an urban environment is to use a typology based on the division of all mediators transmitting memorable information into "hard" and "soft". In this case, the hard ways of representing the narratives of the cultural memory of the city are materialized in the urban environment and often form the "spirit of the place" (monuments, architectural compositions, etc.). They are more permanent and stable, they broadcast episodes of the city's past through visual forms and are therefore firmly embedded in the space of the city. Whereas soft ways of representing the narratives of the cultural memory of the city are much more diverse and dynamic. Their peculiarity lies in their flexibility and impermanence, constant revision of actual fragments of the cultural memory of the city (renaming streets or recording melodies).

Meanwhile, in the digital era, which has influenced the processes of encoding and broadcasting images of the city's past, the traditional view on the processes of representation of urban narratives can be rethought on the basis of increasing the importance of the digital communication space that connects a

large number of people on the Internet. Digital communications have become essential in modern society, including in the processes of urban narratives representation.

In particular, due to the development of the digital environment in which urban narratives are broadcast, soft mediators of memorable information have become particularly important, which implies the presence of constant dynamics and processes of presenting the narrative in digital formats. In addition, digitalization has also affected the process of transmitting memorable information by hard means of representing narratives, since architectural compositions or monuments that contain stories about the city's past can now be placed on web portals or become part of visual messages in digital communications.

Let's consider what features the representation of urban narratives has acquired in the framework of digital communications, and as an example, we will use the narrative about the history of the Hanseatic League in Veliky Novgorod. In recent years, the Hanseatic narrative has taken an increasingly prominent place in the discourse of Veliky Novgorod, especially after the city joined the new Hanseatic League. The Hanseatic narrative tells about the glorious past of medieval Novgorod and the history of the economic miracle of the Novgorod Republic, which had close ties with the European Hanseatic League.

Firstly, in digital communications, in which symbolic information about the city's past is encoded, the source of the narrative can now be virtual, for example, the official web portal of the city or virtual communities, including individual producers of digital content (social networks, blogs, tags, chats). Thus, the material forms of the Hanseatic narrative (the Hanseatic fountain and the monument to the Hanseatic days), the recent installation of which is largely due to the actualization of the Hanseatic narrative in the city, can now be seen not only in the space of the urban environment, but also in digital format. The visual content of the hard means of transmitting the Hanseatic narrative is present both on the bloggers' web pages and on the city's Internet resources, including in videos, thereby virtually scaling and replicating the story about the Hanseatic past of Veliky Novgorod for different target audiences.

It should be noted that the dominant way of presenting story content about the images of the city's past today is the video format, which in the digital era has become the most popular way of representing any information due to the emergence of available technologies for creating (not necessarily professional) video texts that synthesize sound, picture, frame movement. In particular, in the digital communications of Veliky Novgorod, the Hanseatic narrative is represented not only by the historical documentary film "Russian Hansa. A look through time...", where the image of Veliky Novgorod is artistically constructed based on its Hanseatic history, but also by video clips of tourists who visited the city and posted, for example, video files on the web page about the monument to the Hanseatic days.

Secondly, digital devices and technologies, as well as innovative means of interaction ("WhatsApp", "Skype") and, above all, new media are the intermediaries for transmitting narratives of the cultural memory of the city. It should be noted that the media are the most important representative of the narratives of the cultural memory of the city. Meanwhile, the media representation of the narratives of the cultural memory of the city in the digital era has also acquired its own characteristics.

The media of mass communication today are not so much television, the press, theater, radio, cinema, but also digital platforms of digital media. Now urban narratives are presented not so much in print, but, for example, in computer games based on images of the medieval past.

In the digital space of any city, soft ways of representing urban narratives are of particular importance, which is typical in general for the dynamic and regularly updated virtual environment of the Internet. Thus, in the digital media of Veliky Novgorod, the Hanseatic narrative is presented in the virtual toponymy of the city, reflecting the real names associated with the Hansa, which are assigned to objects of the urban environment (Hanseatic souvenir, the Hanseatic Embankment planned for opening, the Hansa Hotel). Digital news media also participate in the representation of the Hanseatic narrative, for example, transmitting information about events that are designed to generate and update information about the images of the Hansa in the cultural memory of Veliky Novgorod (for example, in the coverage of events of Hanseatic forums or Hanseatic lessons in the city's schools).

Moreover, social networks, as part of digital media, serve as an intermediary and translator of the appearance of various symbolic forms representing the Hanseatic narrative. So, with the help of social networks, the user can virtually visit exhibitions that update the Hanseatic past of Veliky Novgorod (for example, see a review of visiting the exhibition "Novgorod and the Hansa: a window to Europe" with a demonstration of coins, bullions and other artifacts that symbolize the close ties of ancient Novgorod with European cities).

Thirdly, the perception of messages in which the narrative of the cultural memory of the city is packed becomes virtual, which implies the presence of an interactive communicative space and an active user who becomes a participant in the interpretation of the urban narrative. Since the texts of digital communications are often at the stage of possible editing, urban narratives can now be created, replicated, commented on by individuals who take an active position on the Internet, which affects the structuring of the cultural memory of the city through digital communication channels.

The texts of social network users implement a fundamentally new practice of generating and representing urban narratives in the digital age. It is important to note that social media has a different structure than traditional media, where "content can be transferred between users without significant third-party filtering, fact checking and editorial evaluation" (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017, p. 213). Digital content is often created by the average person and is not checked for authenticity. Therefore, the representation of narratives of the cultural memory of the city, symbolically encoding memorable information about the city, posted, for example, on Facebook groups or blogs, is characterized not only by the general availability, philistine level, dynamic appearance and elimination of content, but also by the absence of official censorship and verification of texts for authenticity. In this regard, scientists are increasingly fixing the relevance of studying issues of cultural and information security, which is becoming the most important subject for studying the consequences of the onset of the digital age (Astakhova, 2020, pp. 56-64). On the other hand, this situation causes difficulties in managing cultural memory and developing a symbolic policy of the city's memory, the construction of which can be carried out spontaneously and, above all, in the virtual space of the Internet.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that in the digital era, the processes of transmitting symbolic information about the city acquire a qualitatively new effect, since the trends of digitalization of society increase the range of tools and communication for representing urban narratives that construct the cultural

memory of the city. Plot texts about the city's past are now stored and reproduced not only through traditional means (a book or a teacher's story), but also in digital communication, assuming the presence of a virtual source of narrative posted on the Internet, including social communities.

Finally, new media often become a digital intermediary in the transmission of urban narratives as the most important mediator of digital communication on the Internet, as well as the interactive nature of the representation of plot texts about the city's past, including with the participation of active users of digital content who create and replicate memorable information about the city. The knowledge of how the symbolic production of memorable information about the city takes place in digital communication can be used in applied research aimed at studying the prediction and formation of the cultural memory of the city, when interpreting and governing the city's past.

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