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SOUND AND SOCIUM

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Abstract

The theme of sound and socium interconnection is comprehended in the context of problems in social ecology and problems of social security. The concept of audio-sociology is under consideration. The audio-sociological observations presented are structured according to some topics: sound and territorial structure; sound and labor activity, sound and power; sound and transport. In large measure, the authors rely on the concept of power-knowledge in Michel Foucault. Audio-sociology together with visual sociology should be considered as two parts of audio-visual sociology. All these trends of sociology can be of use in the course of the analysis of radio- and television broadcast, cinema, and also backgrounds in different social circumstances.

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Keywords: Audio-sociology; labor activity; power; sound; territorial structure; transport.

1. Introduction

As one of the peculiarities of post-non-classical sociology, one can mention, in a sense of “visual turn”, the occurrence of visual sociological researches and the increase of their significance in sociology. Visual direction updating is connected with the fact that a modern man obtains, transmits and produces a huge amount of visual information. Such means of media-communications as newspapers and magazines,

the Internet and TV, devices of updated telephony (smart-phones and so on) with potentialities of man constant being in on line mode, exchange with photo-, audio-, and video-messages resulted in a considerable increase of visual information amounts obtained, transmitted and produced by man. In this sense, a “visual turn” occurred not in sociology (Bogdanova, 2012; Pechurina, 2007), but in a social life and in culture that, in its turn, caused a “visual turn” in sociology and in a number of other sciences.

The matter consists in the fact that whether it is worth considering “visualization” of social life and culture as a part of a more general process – a process of their “audio-visualization”, that is, an explosive growth of audio-visual information amounts which henceforth man is doomed to deal with. An “audio-visual leap” has happened in our life, but sociology reacted to it with a “visual turn” and did not react with an “audio-visual one”. In other words, visual sociology is formed as an independent direction of researches, but in spite of the growth of audio-components in social life, audio-sociology did not appear, that is, sociology of sound. This paradox becomes stronger with the fact that in spite of the absence of sociology of sound in many respects due to H. Helmholtz, a German physicist and physiologist of the XIX century, as psycho-acoustics was formed in one of the fields of psycho-physics. Now this field of researches develops rather actively (Bysko, 2014; Mezshevich, 2010; Starikova, 2011). It is especially strange that there was nothing like that in sociology.

People communicate. Verbal communication is an exchange with sounds. The capacity of man and society and also nature and a techno-sphere to produce sounds is one of their most significant characteristics. As it is noted by I.V. Starikova, modern acoustic environment depends more and more upon man and to a greater extent is defined by man (Starikova, 2011). It is just this, from our point of view, which actualizes the emergence of audio-sociology, since modern sound environment is able to characterize modern man and society, socio-cultural processes and phenomena.

2. Methods

In the paper, we will try to present some of our audio-sociological observations having structured them according to some contexts: sound and territorial structure; sound and labor activity; sound and power; sound and transport. Audio-sociology is not exhausted with contexts mentioned, but they can reveal its analytical potential. We will show also that a general trend of our observations will correspond to the problems of social ecology and partly sociology of security.

3. Results

3.1. Sound and territorial structure

How is sound distributed to town? How does it change in a certain point in the course of time? How does it act in general depending on spatial-temporal characteristics? It is not a complete list of problems which can arise at the discussion of the “sound and territorial structure”.

From our point of view, in the audio-sociological context, it makes sense to distinguish according to their origin into:

- *social* (speech, singing, sound announcements and so on);

- *natural* (rustle of leaves, sound of wind, rain and so on), including *physiological* (sound of breathing, cold in the head, cough and so on);

- and *technogenic (anthropogenic)* (sound of machinery, machines, trains and so on).

It is clear that this classification is purely conventional; at least because of that, a train sound though is a sound of vehicle, but it is controlled by man. As well as singing, this is simultaneously a phenomenon of social and physiological type. And if singing occurs with the use of a microphone and special means, then it is also technogenic. In other words, it is extremely difficult to draw a clear distinction between sounds of different origin. In every particular sociological research, this problem can be necessarily specified according to the tasks of investigation and its trend.

In the context of the connection of a sound and a territorial structure, it is important that sounds of different origin should correlate differently at different periods of time and in different areas of space.

Thus, in an industrial plant, there can prevail sounds of technogenic (anthropogenic) origin and somewhere out of town – of natural ones. At noon, in a public garden, the sounds of social origin can dominate, and at night – of natural one. During a hurricane in a town, natural sounds can dominate, but at the same time, because a hurricane can cause damages to electricity supply networks, that is, a hurricane is able to cause both sounds of an anthropogenic origin (say, a rather typical sound is peculiar to a short circuit of electric wiring). In a social sense, an artificial accompanying sound in some way defines, specifies an event in its development. The area of a consistent perceptibility of an accompanying sound in some way defines spatial boundaries of an event. At the same time, spatial boundaries of any action, event and the boundaries of a sound consistent perceptibility in a general case may not coincide between each other (for instance, a music sound outgoing from a dance pavilion is heard in residential areas adjacent to a dance pavilion, or vice versa, a lecturer's speech is not heard in a gallery).

People may live or work close to an industrial zone, railway or a highway, an airport, a range – all these things define a sound. The character of noises and sounds is significant here and defines many things. For example, a life or a work close to a fire company or a hospital supposes that man has often to face the sounds of siren, man turned out to be submerged in a certain sort of an audio-social context. Generally speaking, there are sounds typical for a town, and vice versa, common for countryside. A sound of siren is a characteristic feature of a city. In part, it is connected with that a city is a zone of a multidimensional risk. Reacting to the risks, different city municipal services have to act in the quickest possible way. A sound of siren is one of the signs of this efficiency. More than that, now a mega polis itself is associated with sirens and light beacons of special vehicles.

3.2. Sound and labor activity

What does an industrial epoch mean? It is also a roar of engines, machinery, that is, a definite sound and, at the same time, the reality of man within the limits of the operation of these machinery and equipment (including also sounds).

In various social-professional groups, there are some specific relations formed with a sound, hearing, and voice. The character of sound phenomena differs greatly between different professions. There are professions, for instance, musicians, poets, speech therapists, lecturers, sound producers, TV reporters,

DJs of broadcasting stations, the representatives of which work dealing directly with sound. They are professional hearers and sound producers.

Military acousticians represent a completely specific group of professional hearers. Thus, a submarine hydroacoustics is one of the most significant means of orientation in space of the greatest variety of objects (submarines, surface ships, torpedoes, mines). For definite professional groups, a sound is a purely side and sometimes harmful effect. Builders and workers of enterprises, roadmen encounter this situation as such. But in military science a sound of a shot, a sound of a burst of a sub-machine gun fire are, though in much, a side effect of shooting, but extremely significant in the sense of a psychological effect upon an enemy. For artillery, sound waves and acoustic reconnaissance analyzing them are enemies. For tank-men, a sound is a factor increasing considerably a risk for a tank unit to be spotted at its secret motion through a country, but the same sound is something deterrent for an enemy. Now let us address ourselves to industrial sociology. It is well-known that there are professions exerting an extremely pernicious influence upon auditory organs health. In the USSR and in post-Soviet Russia, a certain part of workers of some productions, unhealthy for hearing had and has congenital deafness or deaf-mutism. Physiological peculiarities of the deaf or deaf and dumb people, their deprivation on a criterion of hearing absence were a considerable factor in their professional socialization. It is interesting that a certain part of workers engaged in production pernicious for hearing who did not have congenital deafness or deaf-mutism and possessed completely healthy hearing, learnt a language of deaf and dumb people that, on the one hand, helped in work and, on the other hand, ensured a deeper integration of the deaf and deaf and dumb people in a labor collective. The tracing of human reaction to a noise is extremely significant for a sociological observation. For instance, in what is a security guard or a watchman engaged? One of the important duties of a sentry, a watchman or a security guard consists in a constant lending an attentive ear to silence and react to sounds in the course of a duty.

Quite often a sentry, a watchman or a security guard are people who are like an acoustician on a submarine when he is engaged in analyzing a complex acoustic situation, knows about types and features of noises arisen. So, if enterprises, a road, a railway or a transport junction are next to the object of protection, then a complex acoustic situation takes place which man has to deal with. Furthermore, deliberate criminals can choose purposefully a moment of strong but common noises (for example, the passage of a freight train and so on) for their crimes. Detective literature and films may show some crimes developed according to this scheme of crimes, for instance, a murder during a solemn gun shot or salute salvos. In this case, it seems as if some other latent sound was deliberately hidden under a legitimate sound. Say, a sound of a revolver shot is masked by a sound of a train passing, by drum-beat, cheers or salute salvos. As a result of this, the sense of some sound bifurcates into some opposite senses. People acquainted directly with the activity of a watchman, a security guard or a sentry justify that during a duty, the attention may gradually or immediately drop or increase, a wake and a sleep may go into each other; at that, a sleep is often light. A sound exerts a considerable influence upon it. A light intensity of a sleep supposes that even during a sleep man is strained and responds to sounds, noises, rustles and so on. It does not give an opportunity to human organism to recreate itself, and as a result, a person having slept ten hours may feel bad, having neither rest, nor good sleep. Under these conditions a chronic sleep deprivation, shattering a nervous system, can occur; all this can later result in serious health disturbances (abnormal arterial pressure, immunity decrease and other illnesses). Various models of the reaction to

noises are formed among workers of the fields discussed. Two extreme models consist in that a worker does not respond to noises at all (excluding a case when it is exceptional), and, vice versa, a worker responds to every even unimportant noise, listens constantly to and always goes to a noise origin to identify it and to analyze a process. The second model of a behavior, it goes without saying, decreases the threshold of a reaction exhausts a nervous system as a result of which a so-called anxious person may be formed. A sound has many other connections with labor and a profession. In an educational institution, a working day is a sequence of lessons and intervals between them. A bell is a signal of the beginning of the next period. In this sense, a sound of a bell organizes a temporary structure of a day of studies, defines a definite disciplinary space.

A concept of a disciplinary space (Alasaniya, 2015; Ilin, 2011; Kazantsev, 2015; Sokuler, 1998), as it is well-known, is formed on the basis of Foucault's researches (an outstanding French philosopher).

Regarding a disciplinary space of an educational institution, we emphasize: there are psycho-acoustic researches according to which a noise of a school interval has a negative impact upon school children at their fulfillment of tasks which becomes apparent in a considerable increase of mistakes (Pinchuk, 2007). In this sense, a school bell divides time into periods when a moderate noise is admissible, and when it is prohibitive, it cuts it into certain intervals, controls time, and through it, an educational process. As a result, unwanted sounds during an interval turn out to be legitimate and non-legitimate during lessons. The same phenomenon in different situations looks differently, takes a different sense. In the industrial epoch, there were sirens sounding at enterprises, in districts or in a town before the beginning and before the end of a working day. The sound of a siren organized a social-temporary continuum dividing it into the time of work and that of rest specifying a disciplinary space.

So, as we see, a sound has a semiotic (sign) concept, and due to this, it is able to organize a social chronotop and control it in a certain way.

3.3. Sound and power

We have already spoken of sirens as special audio-social phenomena. If we recollect the Hellenic (ancient Greek) mythology, there sirens are associated not only with fascinating singing, but also with a danger. Now not without reason sirens are called sound devices urged to signal about danger, for instance, about oncoming natural disaster.

The motion of special (operative) transport (police, fire-engines, ambulance and so on) in special cases, in case of emergency is accompanied with special sound and light signals, that is, with the sound of siren and light beacons functioning. This phenomenon has some very significant social senses. One of them consists in that a certain service has to act in a quickest possible way in case of emergency and, as a consequence, a corresponding vehicle, on the one hand, requires the right of free motion, and, on the other hand, the vehicle itself is a source of increased danger under conditions of such motion. In our society a siren signal means also that somewhere has happened something extraordinary and forces and means of corresponding services are concentrated there. But it also means that something coming off of a common life course has happened (act of terrorism, explosion of domestic gas, traffic accident, fire and so on). The authorities failed to prevent it. But if the authorities failed to do it, then the power is either weak, or it is not power at all. That is, a suspicion arises, if something is out of power control, then,

generally speaking, in the “zone of disaster”, there is no power; there is *other* power there. Not in vain, experts point out that any act of terrorism is, in a considerable sense, a subversive activity against the authorities, a detriment to belief in the potentialities of the authorities. In case of an act of terrorism in the place of carrying out it de facto an alternative power is realized catching a monopoly for a force from the legitimate power. In such a way, the undermining of the basis itself in the authoritative apparatus takes place.

In similar cases, if the government wants to preserve itself, it must cut short negative phenomena (arrest lawbreakers, start to eliminate consequences of damages, recovery of victims and so on) and restore a control of situation, and show that it controls the events occurred in the center of disaster. A siren is a social sign of that the certain authorities function on the territory and try to take control over the situation in disorder, the situation in the “zone of a disaster”. To a great extent, in this problem, we are situated in the context of Foucault’s concept of authorities-knowledge (Sokuler, 1998).

5.4. Sound and transport

It is interesting that vehicles habitual for us, as a rule, are supplied with devices for acoustic signals. Audible warning signals are used by cyclists and motorists, and train drivers. They give signals warning of a danger to their vehicles driven by them. Now let us pass to journey circumstances of man. Nowadays, many people undertaking journeys by train solve a problem of vehicle noises with the aid of ear-phones connected up to their phones. One switched on favorite music and is absorbed in other sound and notional space. But, really, there is not only a positive side, but a negative one in this case. For instance, it seems to the authors that a habit common in Russia in former times of a communication with travel fellow companions in a train decreased considerably now than it was before. In any case communicative means widespread now contribute to it, and in that way confirm the thesis mentioned. In this sense it is clear that modern information-communicative means promote not so much our communication, as our disconnection, our rapid individualization.

In the context of the topic “sound and transport”, let us pass to the analysis of the case which D.M. Koshlakov, one of the authors of the paper, could observe in April, 2016. When coming back from Moscow, the author got off from an electric train at a small railway station. It was getting already dark. Some passengers having got off from the same train were waiting the train passing by them in order to have an opportunity to cross over the groundwork and to get an opposite side. Hardly had the train went by, when a young man began to walk rapidly across the railroad and nearly fell under a train consisting of some cars and rushing at full speed from the opposite direction. An engine driver of the train from the opposite direction reacted quickly, the stock whistled with a loud whistle, and the young man stopped at a safe distance from the groundwork on which the train was already rushing. If we analyze this case, then here it is possible to emphasize some significant moments. People were waiting the electric train from which they got off when it passed by them and people failed to bear in mind that other train was approaching from the opposite direction. It seemed to people that the train they got off passed by and a danger was already over and the way was free, but it turned out to be an error. It was dark, an evening tiredness and, what was more important, “low-noise” of the opposite stock increased a riskiness of this error.

In the meantime, from this case, it is possible to draw the moral, some significant audio-sociological conclusions. First, during recent years, the speed of trains motion within the precincts of a town and beyond it increased tangibly, but trains noise indices dropped as a result of which it becomes more difficult to notice an approaching danger and to react to it in time becomes more difficult, and hence the risks connected with railway transport (technological progress brings not only life improvement, but gives rise to risks, forms a society of a risk). Secondly, such sound effects are possible which themselves may become a source of threats. So, in the example under consideration, people looked aside upon one danger (waiting a train passing by) and did not notice other danger approaching – a train rushing from the opposite side.

Practice shows that there were such railway traffic accidents when a man with the ear-phone on the ears did not hear an approaching train and had not time to react to a danger. A partial or complete inattention of one of the participants of the motion from the objective audio continuum is able to cause not only risks, but grave human tragedies.

The following is significant from the point of view of road safety in an audio-sociological sense. Now in Russia among some young motorists, the following style of behavior is commonly used: motoring on roads or stopping in a place occurs not only with loud music switched on in a passenger compartment, but at the same time, with windows open as a result of which all people around participating in road traffic (pedestrians, passengers and drivers) and hearing extremely noisy sounds become irritable and inattentive. In this situation, it turns out that a customary sound continuum is broken not only in a motor car of a motorist who switched the music on, but it is broken among all participants of traffic. In this case, all of them are in an increased risk area, and the growth of this risk is determined by unreasonably loud sounds of music.

From our point of vision, the highway regulations must prohibit listening to too loud music and sounds in a motor car, on a carriageway and close to it for security purposes.

4. Conclusion

As we see, audio-sociology possesses a great number of substantial examples (we denoted only some of them). It is our deep conviction that audio-sociology must be directed to the analysis of sound processes and phenomena through sociological methods and the consideration of all this as indices of just social processes. The task of sociologist investigating sound phenomena consists in revealing the concealed social regularities, senses and other essences hidden behind the frontage of phenomena, that is, in passing from a phenomenological view upon reality to a numerological vision of it, from the analysis of phenomena to the analysis of essences generating these phenomena.

From our point of view, audio-sociology together with visual sociology should be considered as two parts of audio-visual sociology. All these trends of sociology must be and can be of use in the course of the analysis of radio- and television broadcast, cinema, and also backgrounds in different social circumstances.

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