

Regional Identity of Ukrainian Society in Socio-Humanitarian Discourse

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ABSTRACT. The purpose of this article is to review the development of regional studies, to understand the strategies of geopolitical dynamics in the Ukrainian space, civilisational and cultural features of regional development, and complex interdependencies between national and regional dimensions of the historical process. Attention is paid to the regional problems in Ukraine, related to the specificity of regional identities, different sociocultural values, and mental stereotypes. The application of methodological approaches of regionalism is seen as the most appropriate tool both for clarifying the conflict dimension in the formation of Ukrainian identity in the past, and for finding a constructive solution to the problem of conflict of identities in modern conditions. It has been proved that the scientific space of modern regional history is an acceptable field for the analysis of regional societies, the economic and demographic situation in the regions, individual and group, social and territorial identities, and local political and cultural preferences. It is emphasised that during the post-war recovery in Ukraine, regional characteristics took on a role of system-forming norms and structural and functional determinants. These effectively stimulate and strengthen the reconstruction processes in the regions and condition the formation of a nationwide safe spatial environment.

KEYWORDS: Ukrainian society, regional identity, regional conflicts, regional history, self-identification, regionalism, security environment.

Introduction

The main reason of the conflictogenity of regional problems in Ukraine lies in objective polyphony of its national being. The formation of Ukrainian geopolitical space in the historical retrospective took place in the context of instability, created not least by the acute confrontation with neighbouring states. The complex interaction of various region-forming factors – geopolitical, ethno-historical, linguistic-cultural, and religious on the one hand and economic, political and demographic on the other – has led to a specific type of intra-regional and relatively weak “horizontal” inter-regional relations. Due to the statelessness and dismemberment of Ukraine, the “centre-region” vertical determined the nature of these relations to a much greater extent than the natural interregional exchange of resources and cultural assets.

The fact that the territory of modern Ukraine was formed of parts that for centuries existed in different state organisms had a distinct impact not only on its regional structure, but also on its regional identity. Developing as part of different states, the Ukrainian ethnos not only experienced significant assimilation influences – Russian, Polish, Austrian, Hungarian and others – but also had to adapt to the forms of spatial development imposed on it. Modern Ukrainian regions differ from each other in their economic and social structure and public sentiments; they have different external orientations and specific ethno-confessional problems. The “eternal” questions “Who were we?”, “Who are we?”, “Who do we aspire to be?” arise again and again in the Ukrainian regional space. The dynamics of social development is largely determined by the potential for tension existing between the historical experience of the nation and the prospects of its aspirations: incomprehensible experience of the past leads to unrealistic projects and strategies of the future. Actualisation of the identity problem in the long process of “self-perception” is a reliable way to find answers to the tantalising question of self-identification of the Ukrainian nation.

The concept of “regional identity” has appeared in scientific discourse relatively recently, at the end of the twentieth century. The political backgrounds for its circulation in the post-Soviet space were created by the regionalisation of public consciousness associated with the crisis of general civil identity as a consequence of the collapse of the USSR. The cognitive backgrounds were global trends that manifested themselves in shifting the focus of research attention from the moment to space. Identification crises, arising against the background of the collapse of imperial-type state formations, create favourable conditions for the affirmation of identities as close to an individual’s personal space as possible. Among the identities based on the paradigm of territoriality, regional and local identities are those that represent an expressive local flavour.

Regional identity always reflects real regional interests to some extent. But to an even greater extent, it reflects perceptions typical of a given region. In general, the idea of “per-

ception” in Anderson’s understanding can be considered as the foundation of the conceptualisation of regional identity. In Michael Keating’s vision, the latter is a key element in the construction of the region as a socio-political space and institutional system¹. Different types of identities – cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious – coexist under the “umbrella” of regional identity, creating a somewhat contradictory and harmonious unity of diversity. The forms of social interaction between regional identity and its components can be represented as a short-term ideal of “harmony of differences”, but the antipode of this ideal can be social conflict. It can be triggered by a gradual or rapid and unexpected changes of the situation – socio-economic, political, spiritual-cultural, and socio-psychological².

Spatial and territorial identities of regional communities acquire conflictogenic features and become a significant factor in political life in “multi-component societies”, where population groups are delimited by certain – primarily sociocultural and ideological – differences. These differences are formed by both long-term and short-term factors. The first includes features of the settlement network, ethnic composition, religiosity, historical identity, democratic and totalitarian attitudes, and unitary or autonomist stereotypes. The second includes the situational interests of regional elites, the deployment of information resources, the configuration of space and the influence of ongoing political processes. As a result of the interaction of these factors, a “pattern of regional development” is formed – a kind of “sociocultural code” of the region, which determines the type of reproduced regional identity³.

For regional identification, it is fundamentally important to understand the strength of territorial ties and the sustainability of territorial interests. According to Larysa Nahorna, the concept of regional identity can be viewed from different perspectives – as a socio-psychological sense of belonging to a regional community, and as a kind of resource that determines the role and place of the territory in the national space, and as a tactical weapon in the hands of local elites. Its political influence depends not so much on the strength of intra-regional “cohesion” as on the strength or weakness of national identity⁴.

Experts draw attention to the existence of two types of backgrounds for the formation of regional identity. Cultural backgrounds are formed due to the specificity of regional history, traditions, myths, language and religions. The identities of European regions are formed on this cultural basis. The second incentive for the formation of regional identities

¹ Michael Keating, *The New Regionalism in Western Europe. Territorial Restructuring and Political Change*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1998, pp. 67–75.

² *Etnopolitychni protsesy v Ukraini: rehionalni osoblyvosti*, Kyiv: IPIEND imeni I.F. Kurasa NAN Ukrainy, 2011, pp. 46–47.

³ Oleksandr Stehniy, “Rehionalnyi chynnyk rozvytku politychnoi kultury naseleння Ukrainy”, in: *Sotsiologhiia: teoriia, metody, marketynh*, 2005, no. 3, pp. 94–122.

⁴ Larysa Nahorna, *Rehionalna identychnist: ukrainskyi kontekst*, Kyiv: IPIEND imeni I.F. Kurasa NAN Ukrainy, 2008, pp. 72–80.

may be socio-economic pressures, rooted in interregional disparities in economic development. In this case, political demands come not only from traditionally problematic regions, but also from those that are considered prosperous but feel disadvantaged in some way. In both cases, the binary logic of “us versus them” and the “search for an enemy” can give regional identity an aggressive character.

What explains the “diffuse” state of identification of a significant part of the Ukrainian society, its readiness to identify itself with one or another value-symbolic core? What historical and geopolitical factors led to this situation? How did Russian aggression affect society and public opinion? And how did they, in turn, influence national and regional identity? It is extremely important to understand these issues. Obviously, any country is not a monolithic entity; it includes various differences – in the population composition, cultural characteristics, beliefs and public opinion. The only way to form an atmosphere of “polyphony” and co-creation in society, a kind of “creatosphere” that is an open dialogue and polylogue of all political actors. In such conditions, society expects from the sociohumanitarianists to give clear answers to the question – how and why conflicts of interests and values, even without entering the stage of public dialogue, quickly outgrow all conceivable civilisational frameworks and turn into the apotheosis of terrorism. And most importantly: is there a correlation between the growing threats and the possibilities of their scientific understanding?

Regional history as a discussion space

Since the space structure of the world will never be the same as it was in the last century, regional analytics should be based on a modern, radically updated foundation. If we talk about the main parameters of renewal, they go along the line of moving away from linearity and unambiguity. Today, society is seen as the sum of dissipative systems that generate, on the basis of self-organisation in time and space, many different forms of social being. Understanding the regional specifics of Ukrainian society requires the use of comparative approaches and the representation of the historical process on macro-, meso- and micro-levels, and the existing regional challenges require an effective and timely response.

The current state of historical science would seem to be responsible for the construction of a coherent system of regional history – both within national boundaries and on an international scale. But, oddly enough, it is the conceptualisation of “regional history” that is the “weak link” in the chain of historical knowledge. Despite its frequent use, it has rather blurred outlines, bizarrely combining historical knowledge about real-life and “represented” regions; the heritage of historians working “outside the centre”; the history of individual settlements, resettlements and means of communication, and an integral part of the general history, focused around the problems of individual regions. The subject field of regional history is expanding at the expense of the history of borders, border terri-

tories, the processes of regional consciousness and the corresponding identity formation, and the study of the “images” of individual territories. Ultimately, the concept of “regional history” can be understood as conducting branched studies of the regional space with excursions into related fields of socio-humanitarian knowledge – social psychology, cultural studies and conflictology. But it is unlikely that in this way it will be possible to find a counterpart to the German *Zeitraum*, which would bring the problem of the relationship between regional space and historical time outside the usual framework of metaphorical modelling.

Scientific reflection on regional history is now taking on disciplinary forms and this provides grounds for the optimistic conclusion that it has passed the primary stage of conceptualisation. However, there is still plenty of room for discussion. Many interesting opinions and reasonable proposals were expressed, in particular on the pages of twelve issues of the *Regional History of Ukraine* (*Регіональна історія України*), a collection of scientific articles of the Historical Regional Studies Department of the Institute of History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. The question, “what is regional history?” was raised repeatedly during these discussions, but has not received an unambiguous answer. Today, it remains largely a matter of taste or intuition: depending on the mood of the researcher, it could be the history of a particular regional community or a set of them, or more generally, any history “outside the centre” and the activities of local schools of history. In a generalised and systemic form, the concept of regional history covers the history of a certain delineated territory and settlements located on its territory (territorial-spatial approach). This is the history of a certain territorial and intellectual space of action of human communities (sociological approach); analysis of regional mentality in a historical retrospective (axiological approach); a spatially delineated product of historiographical knowledge (cultural-intellectual approach); the history of the formation of the system of regional studies (historiographical approach); and the study of discursive practices, regional identity and local consciousness (political science approach).

Regional history seeks its niche by proposing its own methods of research of “places” with an emphasis on the priorities of retrospective study of the region as a sociocultural integrity and the processes of demogenesis in it. The focus of attention is on the meso-level research of social processes, which are intermediate between the national and the local ones. It builds its scientific space on interdisciplinary junctions, drawing on the achievements of historical and social geography, anthropology, ethnology, urbanism and other related disciplines for regional analysis, based on the achievements of “regionalism” in historiography. It is interested not so much in facts, artefacts and mentifacts, but rather in their generalised types, and especially in specific regional cultural traditions.

The modern political practice associated with the formation of a new European space makes significant adjustments to the definition of the subject field of regional history. The

processes and mechanisms of the formation of supranational forms of governance and cross-border cooperation contribute to the understanding of regional specificity in the cross-border context as well. When, for example, Euroregions are studied in the historical dimension, the term “regional history” is legitimately applied in the interstate sense as well. The cross-border space requires increased attention precisely in the context of the formation of regional identity and culture, the presence of asymmetries in the demographic, economic and political spheres. This is a dualistic phenomenon, characterised both as a contact zone between several borderlands and as a mental construct, resulting from the transformation of global integration processes and the destruction of the modern notion of the “state-nation-territory” triad.

The spatial dimension of historical science has always been formed in a difficult way: political pressure, inconsistency in the efforts of different scientific schools, and a general underestimation of the regional approach to the study of political and ethnic history all come into play. In Ukraine, an additional complicating factor was territorial dismemberment, and to no lesser extent, the tendency to search for general patterns to the detriment of identifying local peculiarities inherent in Soviet historiography. The “local” studies were considered not only of little value, but also dangerous, because any emphasis on national specifics was perceived negatively by the authorities. As a result, domestic regional history did not have its own theoretical justification for a long time.

The rising tide of interest in its conceptualisation at the turn of the millennium is associated with two groups of factors. First, there was a change in historiographical priorities all over the world in the last third of the twentieth century. The epistemological revolution, though it affected historiography later than related fields of socio-humanitarian knowledge, nevertheless forced all its subdisciplines to rethink their methodological and theoretical foundations. Global formalised schemes have clearly given way to an anthropologically oriented social history, the history of everyday life and the history of settlements. The concept of “new local history” began to affect the search for a way out of the traditional “historiographical provincialism”, and a new view of the “place” – not as a peripheral, but as a specific sociocultural object – was consolidated. Secondly, due to the collapse of the USSR, a turbulent process of searching for new identities and the formation of national historiographies was going on its territory. Under these conditions, redefined regionalism turned out to be not only a form of local self-determination, but also a powerful incentive to overcome provincialism and national self-affirmation. The history of the region was transformed into a localised national history, which required appropriate theoretical and methodological support.

We would like to hope that the twenty-first century will turn out to be a milestone in this regard, as today we are witnessing not only a rapid accumulation of scientific knowledge about regions, but also their theoretical and methodological understanding on a new

philosophical basis. It is clear that this process is fuelled by the natural desire of scientists to influence modern integration processes – in particular, the formation of a pan-European regional space. But to no lesser extent there is also a purely cognitive interest in the study of regional cultures and their mutual influences, in clarifying the place and role of localities in those sociocultural processes that have taken place and are taking place in the Ukrainian space.

Synergetic potential of historical regional science

The complexity of studying regional problems in the Ukrainian context is due to their interweaving with ethno-national issues. Building its own structure of national policy on the territory of the USSR, the ruling Communist Party actually created a regional system, although it never noted this. It was believed that with the “complete and final” resolution of the national question, regional problems would automatically disappear. Neither the practice of administrative-compulsory establishment of borders between the republics, nor the principles of production location, or, moreover, the process of formation of regional self-consciousness were the object of serious scientific analysis. There is no need to talk about the policy of ethnic persecution and deportation, which was kept completely quiet. In the meantime, the problems thus created have led to many obstacles both to organising the cohabitation of regional communities and to understanding their dramatic history.

Since minimal interest towards regional problems in the USSR was maintained only in the field of economic science, regionalism was more often called “regional economics”. Cultural, ethno-demographic, political-legal aspects of regional development were not studied at all. It was considered that historical and economic geography create sufficient space for regional specificity research and therefore there was no need to create a separate theory of regionalistics. It was only in the 1990s that trends in building the theoretical coordinates of regional studies began to emerge in the post-Soviet space.

The most productive approach of modern historical regionalism is historical-genetic, which helps to create an understanding of the evolution of local communities’ self-organisation forms and the corresponding principles of socio-normative culture. The object of research is not primarily a part of any territory, but an independent spatially organised community based on the unity of political, organisational and industrial culture. The regional cross-section in this interpretation provides a great deal for understanding cultural identity, which is fundamentally regional. First of all, we are talking about the specific features of identity and mentality, which arise under the influence of geographical, economic and political conditions and subsequently turn into a stable dominant of world perception and value orientations.

Systematic studies of regional identity are largely driven by the latest achievements of spatial sociology, which represent the region not only as a territory, but also as an integra-

tive model of space organisation that determines one or another type of social action. The integrative level in regional studies is a kind of “control unit” for the process of cognitive activity. At this level, not only is the integrative construct of the region defined, but also the theoretical foundations, methodology and methods of studying regional specifics are generated, criteria for territorial homogeneity, functional self-organisation and restructuring of regions are developed, and regional development concepts are elaborated.

Based on sociological, historical and geographical knowledge, modern regional studies are able to identify patterns of regional development, and directly influence regional programming and the development of managerial decisions. The problem is that the efforts of scientists of different profiles are poorly coordinated, and spatial approaches mainly remain in the field of geographical analysis. Meanwhile, at the current stage of developing a system of goals aimed at post-war regional reconstruction, the state needs strategic planning based on the search for invariants, the activation of knowledge-intensive sectors of science and a high degree of synchronisation of scientific research. The development of regional studies at the intersection of many scientific disciplines can satisfy these needs and turn it into an important factor in optimising regional policy. Within the framework of regional studies, there is an understanding of the strategic priorities of regional development, the content of regional concepts and scientific paradigms that are used in modelling the processes of regionalisation.

The applied function of regional studies, which is implemented in the study of the specifics of social dynamics in the region for theoretical and methodological justification of regional planning and forecasting, is significantly updated in modern realities. The importance of regional studies also lies in the formation of a system of knowledge of the patterns and paradigms of regional development, principles of regional governance, and generation of algorithms of harmonisation of national and regional interests. The mismatch between national and regional interests is objective: there have always been, and obviously will be, some contradictions between them. To avoid artificially exacerbating them, each state should keep the whole complex conglomerate of both national and regional priorities in view and under research attention.

The problem of stability of the pan-European regional space, which Ukraine aspires to join, makes especially high demands for the development of a universal theory of regional studies. The primary task is to strengthen the attention of authorities to all aspects of regional development, including its scientific support. Not only the new European integration interests and the demand to restructure regional policy, but also the objective of taking into account regional identity peculiarities dictate the need to clearly define the place and role of scientific regional studies in understanding the socio-spatial transformations. The fact that the dynamics of Ukrainian regionalisation in historical retrospect is inscribed in the infinitely complex interweaving of European spatial and temporal pro-

cesses makes it important to develop a methodology of regional “cross-links” research in the European historical and cultural space.

A branch of cultural regionalism has already been conceptualised in cultural geography, exploring both the objective basis of cultural differences in the regional context and their subjective reflection in the regional consciousness. Culturological approaches, actively used in geohistorical research, are focused on the analysis of the processes of formation of mentalities, identities and the specific chronotope of regional societies. The ratio of social and cultural dominants changes significantly in favour of the latter. The study of the geospatial structure of society is considered as the basis for the development of the theory and methodology of geocultural disciplines with an emphasis on the system-forming factor of the “integral” territorial organisation – social regionalization⁵.

That is why regionalists offer an evolutionary-genetic paradigm as a priority, related to the need to comprehend the inherited socio-economic and cultural factors. Wherever the unity of the past, present and future is intentionally or unprofessionally disturbed, social perturbations and even violations of the natural rhythm of progressive development cannot be ruled out. It is enough to remember how the seventy-year epic of directive-planning totalitarianism in the USSR turned out to be a self-restraining development. The task of overcoming the imbalances and deformations that are the legacy of the Soviet system is inconceivable without a clear understanding of their origins and manifestations.

The potential of regional science should also be understood in the context of shaping Ukraine’s future security environment. In a regionally diverse state such as Ukraine, the primary goal of the security strategy is the preservation of territorial integrity and geopolitical stability. Taking into account the global and European experience of post-war reconstruction, the principles of differentiation and segmentation of socio-economic policy for different types of communities and regions should be the basis for modelling strategies for Ukraine’s post-war development. The basic list of measures is determined by criteria of the level of damage caused by the war to specific spatial segments, as well as taking into account the specificity of post-war security challenges for each of them. In the context of Ukraine’s reconstruction planning and forecasting the future security environment for the development of regions, it is proposed to distinguish three macro-regions: eastern (frontier), central (backbone) and western (rear). According to the presented macro-regional division, it is reasonable to define optimal strategies for further development of the state, to plan the placement of production facilities and the system of settlement, and to revise transport corridors and logistics⁶. Such regional differentiation should be integrated into the new State Regional Development Strategy of Ukraine, which will be

⁵ Oleh Shablii, *Suspilna heohrafiia*, in 2 books, book 1: *Problemy teorii, istorii ta metodyky doslidzhennia*, Lviv: Vydavnychiy tsentr LNU, 2015, pp. 304–312.

⁶ Anatolii Tkachuk, Yurii Tretiak, “Vidnovlennia Ukrainy. Rehionalnyi aspekt”, in: *Dzerkalo tyzhnia*, 10-06-2022.

focused on defining new priorities of post-war reconstruction of the territories, taking into account local realities and potential opportunities. However, it should be realised that without reliance on theoretical concepts and scientific expertise, a positive result is unlikely to be achieved.

Regional contexts of identity conflicts

The crisis events of the current times force us to reflect once again on the causes of weak civic identity and the absence of a consolidating national idea in Ukraine. As value determinants change, the construction of identities by contraposition intensifies. An unfavourable or negative identity quickly emerges, the extreme manifestation of which is the so-called polemical identity – with rejection of any creative potential of political strategies⁷. The most appropriate dimension for analysing such situations is to examine them through the prism of the phenomenon of “identity conflict”, which is becoming the main type of contemporary conflict challenges. The problem of identity change and identity search is typical for most countries in the world and is universal at the “stage of transition” when old identities have lost relevance, and new ones have not yet been formed. Identities emerge in times of change, when new meanings and sociocultural dominants are being constructed. “Identity exists only in the noise of battle; it falls asleep and cannot be heard when the noise of battle subsides. Identity is simultaneously a struggle against disintegration and fragmentation, an attempt to devour and, at the same time, a courageous resistance to devouring”⁸.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the concept of identity is increasingly becoming associated not so much with self-realisation and the achievement of personal freedom, but with social conflicts due to endless “identity wars”. Olivier Mongin draws attention to the “obsession with identity” as one of the essential causes of the crisis of democracy, “sagging in the empty abstraction of the political nation”⁹. It is quite easy to agree with those who believe that the very concept of identity is far from perfect. But no one has yet suggested a better term for reproducing the complex and ambiguous process of socialisation of the individual. Despite its certain vagueness and instability, it is regarded as the civilisational brand of the nation and the basic foundation of the system of social cognition.

In the process of historical development, individuals and societies go through several phases of the process of self-awareness, forming for this purpose a network of connections or confrontations with other groups, a circle of their own preferences and adherence

⁷ Olena Zlobina, Oleksandr Reznik, “Hromadianskyi prostir Ukrainy: stupin identyfikatsii ta chynnyky konsolidatsii”, in: *Sotsiologhiia: teoriia, metody, marketynh*, 2006, no. 2, pp. 178–179.

⁸ Zygmunt Bauman, *Plynni chasy. Zhyttia v dobu nepevnosti*, Kyiv: Krytyka, 2013, pp. 185–186.

⁹ Olivier Mongin, *Vykyky skeptysyzmu. Zminy intelektualnoho peizazhu Frantsii*, Kyiv: Dukh i Litera, 2011, pp. 117–118.

to a value system. Positive and negative emotions dominating in this process determine the “motivation of perceptions”, which affects the whole system of society’s worldview, stimulating the division into “their own” and “someone else’s”. A thinking person always – consciously or unconsciously – tries to relate their actions and deeds to the norms accepted by the community. In this sense, identity is a category that shapes values and meanings regardless of specific temporal parameters. It is characteristic of the individual and the group to be in constant search for sources that guarantee their embeddedness; in Simone Weil’s vision it is the first need of the soul, although it is difficult to define. Each individual seeks inclusion in the algorithm of a community, united automatically by their place of birth, their profession and their environment. The individual needs to perceive almost the totality of the moral, intellectual, spiritual life “through the mediation of those circles in which the individual naturally enters”¹⁰. If such needs of the soul do not find fulfilment and realisation, an identification conflict arises.

Regional identity conflicts can be usefully considered in the context of the territorial constructivist paradigm as a result of geopolitical transformations and territorial changes. The importance of territorial parameters in history is steadily growing, and in this context the problem of correlation of macro-, meso- and micro-levels in historical analysis is presented in a new light. Sociological nominalism is being replaced by a constructivist methodological strategy, where the main subject of research is the totality of objective and subjective factors reflected in social dynamics. This strategy focuses on tracing the influence of the spatial and social environment on the way of life, consciousness and behaviour of people, close monitoring of destructive social practices, factors of disintegration and fragmentation, and mechanisms of formation of hybrid identities.

Hybrid spaces are presented as territories with a “different” cultural basis and identity of societies, which are formed as a result of socio-political processes and crisis states. This format of socio-economic and political-cultural relations endows spatial systems with the properties of “transformability”, “flexibility” and “locality”. Homi K. Bhabha refers to spaces located between nations, in the “gaps” between them, as cultural hybrids. Although the ability of cultural hybrids to mimic and reincarnate is high, in general such “hybridity” tends to degenerate into exclusion and “homelessness”. In a crisis situation in a complex multicultural system, a type of “hybrid” identity quickly emerges, for which the boundaries between “their own” and “someone else’s” lose rigidity and conditions for multiple forms of self-awareness and “cultural intersection” are formed¹¹. This intersection is a manifestation of society’s pragmatic approach to the ways of staying in a dysfunctional and transformational space, an attempt to develop and represent its own logic of regional development.

¹⁰ Simone Weil, *Ukorinennia. Lyst do kliryka*, Kyiv: Dukh i Litera, 1998, p. 36.

¹¹ Homi K. Bhabha, “Culture’s in-between”, in: *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London: Sage Publications, 2011, pp. 53–60.

The state of hybrid identity entails a situational “switching” of cultural codes and causes the formation of new self-identification matrices that can influence the value dominants of the local society, worldview positions and mentality. Such a sociocultural format implies a constant readiness for change and adaptation to external challenges. Mobilisation during the conflict of archetypal images associated with the heroic or dramatic past of each of the interacting communities is capable of permanently fixing the negative image of the opposite side in the public consciousness. Gradually, a local cross-border identity is being formed – with its own spatial preferences and a characteristic “mental map”, which determines the system of values and the atmosphere of interaction. A particularly difficult situation arises where the boundaries between certain areas have either been drawn arbitrarily or have already been objects of conflict.

Undoubtedly, the future civilisational development of Ukraine should be a response to the challenges of the time. The main super task is to minimise the influence of the past traumas and probable risks, because most conflicts in the modern world are generated by identity crises arising on the basis of mistrust, rearchaisation of consciousness, social alienation and political incompetence. We hope that modern regional-spatial paradigms will help us to finally discover an algorithm for finding a response to the main challenge of the twenty-first century – the challenge of hypertrophied to a dangerous limit and highly politicised cultural and civilisational distinctions. Reaction to spatial challenges in the modern world becomes an indicator of civility and competitiveness, and this is what fuels the confidence that regional identity is not going to become “lost” or “confused” in the face of powerful onslaught of globalisation.

Conclusions

The “explosion” of interest in the problem of the construction and functioning of identities, caused by the collapse of the USSR, is today significantly enhanced by the realities of the hybrid war against Ukraine unleashed by the Russian Federation. We have to admit that the problem of the influence of scientific knowledge on mass consciousness still seems to be insufficiently clarified. To find out how and why a significant part of the citizens of Ukraine was powerfully influenced by the ideas of the Russian world, it is necessary to rethink the entire process of the formation of regional identities with the obligatory clarification of how and when the mechanisms of conflict dynamics were triggered.

It is clear that on the way of careful consideration of both favourable and inhibiting factors of advancement in the field of self-identification the problem is not simplified, but, on the contrary, becomes more complicated. But the certainty that regional modelling and forecasting in Ukrainian history deserves a special perspective of its study prompts an in-depth analysis of the relevant social background and special methods of retrospection. It makes us seek new approaches to comprehension of both manifestations of “attrac-

tion–repulsion” in Ukrainian history, and appropriate – traditional and non-traditional – reflections on these topics.

It should always be remembered that identity priorities form the basic basis for self-identification of both an individual and a local community. The traditional archetypes of “fate” and “return” exert such a strong pressure on the public consciousness that feelings of disadvantage and victimhood permeate the entire contexture of social life. Conservative vestiges of the distant past, echoes of the former dismemberment, “revolutionary” experiments of the Soviet times, the consequences of the confrontation between regional elites – all this determines regional bipolarity in Ukraine, which manifests itself both in various assessments of the past and in the choice of strategies for the future.

The possibilities of science, as well as authorities, in influencing the logic of value orientations are quite limited. Cultural diversity, not to mention political and ideological confrontations, comes into conflict with integration trends to a greater or lesser extent. But each society has a stock of general social values that can unite it. In modern realities, an in-depth analysis of the influence of political and ideological factors on the formation of national identity, tracing the dynamics of regional heterogeneity and value distinctions, is one of the priority areas for Ukrainian socio-humanitarian studies.

We hope that regional studies can cope with these difficult tasks. Its focus on the study of objective processes and trends of regionalisation, patterns of spatial dynamics of social, economic and political phenomena creates the preconditions for comprehension, reproduction and representation of “cultural codes” of regional spaces as meaningful reference points of subjective reality that can influence the motivations and stereotypes of society. The emphasis on the regional perspective allows us to evaluate the role of the region in transmitting the values of world and national culture, to understand its historical uniqueness and, at the same time, its involvement in the economic, political and cultural space of the country. It is becoming increasingly axiomatic that such an assessment is possible only on the basis of solid scientific developments, which represent a significant change in the theory of knowledge and contribute to the formation of innovative scientific environment.

Jaroslava Vermenych

Ukrainos visuomenės regioninė tapatybė: socialinis-humanitarinis diskursas

SANTRAUKA

Straipsnio tikslas – aktualizuoti regioninio požiūrio taikymą siekiant suvokti geopolitinės dinamikos strategijas Ukrainos erdvėje, civilizacinius ir kultūrinius regionų raidos ypatumus, sudėtingą nacionalinių ir regioninių dimensijų tarpusavio priklausomybę istoriniame procese. Dėmesys telktas regioninių konfliktinių problemų Ukrainoje priežastims, susijusioms su specifine regionų tapatybe, skirtingomis socialinėmis ir kultūrinėmis vertybėmis ir mentaliniais stereotipais. Regionalizmo metodologinių priėgų taikymas laikomas tinkamiausiu įrankiu tiek norint išsiaiškinti konflikto dimensiją Ukrainos tapatybės formavimesi praeityje, tiek ieškant konstruktyvaus „tapatumų konflikto“ problemos sprendimo dabartyje. Įrodyta, kad šiuolaikinės regioninės istorijos mokslinė erdvė yra priimtinas laukas analizuoti regionines visuomenes, ekonominę ir demografinę padėtį regionuose, individualius ir grupinius, socialinius ir teritorinius tapatumus, vietos politines ir kultūrinės preferencijas. Pažymima, kad pokario Ukrainos atkūrimo sąlygomis regioniniai ypatumai įgijo sistemą formuojančių normų ir struktūrinių bei funkcinų determinantų vaidmenį, kurie veiksmingai skatina ir stiprina at(si)kūrimo procesus regionuose ir sąlygoja visos šalies saugios erdvinės aplinkos formavimą.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: Ukrainos visuomenė, regioninis identitetas, regioniniai konfliktai, regiono istorija, saviidentifikacija, regionalizmas, saugumo aplinka.

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