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The Materials of Mass Media as the Dynamic Symbolic Model of Social Dynamics

Yulia Ye. Ponomaryova*

*Gubernator's Administration of Krasnoyarsk region,
110 Mira, Krasnoyarsk, 660021 Russia ¹*

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The possibilities and limitations in social changes' research made with monitoring and content-analysis of Mass Media messages are analyzed in the article. The information field is considered as the dynamic symbolic model of social reality through the functions of Mass Media Institute. The materials of the social dynamics research in 2001 – 2005 are presented..

Keywords: social changes, social dynamics, dynamic symbolic model, Mass Media, content-analysis.

The development of society, its reasons, tendencies, problems and perspectives are the problem of classical philosophy, sociology and anthropology. The search of the expedient and economical method of research, description and classification of the social dynamics remains one of the topical tendencies. Social changes and processes are traditionally fixed with the statistical data. This laborious process demands a great number of specialists, work with archives and it takes much time. The alternative of the quantitative sociological methods are the qualitative methods such as symbolic modeling. We shall consider the representation of social changes in the information field as a symbolic model. In this case the messages of Mass Media are considered as the material for the creating the dynamic symbolic model which draws attention to casually chosen moments of social development.

The dynamic symbolic model is the reflection of social reality and its changes in the information

space and it responds to the following demands: correspondence between the representation and the method of organization of the social world; correspondence between the apparatus used in the process of modeling and the conceptual apparatus of a modulated theory; correspondence between a theory and the social world.

In the broad sense, a model is usually understood as an analogue, "substitution" of an original (the fragment of reality), which under certain conditions reproduces some qualities of an original the researcher interested in. The reflection of social reality responds to all these demands in messages of Mass Media. We'll pay our attention to some questions of the sociology of Mass Communication for the basing of this thesis.

Consideration of Mass Media as a social institute comes from the postulate of their participation and reflection of social processes and changes. The information about current

* Corresponding author E-mail address: ponomareva@krskstate.ru

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events is apprehended by the society and individuals through Mass Media. Mass Media is the instrument of social changes in any trends and it is defined by the aims and needs of every concrete social historical situation.

The functions of the Mass Media social institute are disputed in a great number of scientific works. We will not stop on the detailed questions of Mass Media sociology but we'll point to the function which is expedient for the research of the social changes representation. One of the most wide-spread classifications of the Mass Media functions is the Laswell's macrosociological classification. He distinguishes following functions: informing as providing with orientation in surroundings; correlation of reaction of different parts of society and incentives of surroundings; social inheritance from one generation to another (Fedotova, 2004). Korkonosenko S. finds the purpose of Mass Media in "regulative and reorganizing influence on the social practice in accordance with actual social interests and aims of social progress" (Korkonosenko, 2002). We are interested in the function of informing and/or orientation in the surroundings. This obvious function of Mass Media often remains in the shadow of the research of public opinions and aspects of interaction of authorities and Mass Media.

In sociology Mass Media is understood as a phenomenon depended on society, and its main function is to influence on an audience with the given information. In fact, on the one hand, Mass Media form the public opinion and, on the other hand, they reflect that opinion; they are represented as the instrument of collecting and transmission of information. Mass Media play its inalienable part in the transmission of social values and in the regulation of behavior, creation, reproduction and transmission of the archetypes and myths of the contemporary culture. Mass Media make status to one or

another action, person or event. And nevertheless Lasarsfield and Merton emphasized that "Mass Media themselves don't influence on the society so much as it is often supposed" (Meril, 1997). The classics' opinion is supported by the contemporary researchers. D. Merrill: "Perhaps, Mass Media have power to focus our attention on certain things but that power doesn't make us act... probably, the Mass Media influence on the society is the indication of what is needed to be thought about but not the instruction what to think..." (Meril, 1997).

We shall be guided by the S. V. Borisnev's definition "Mass Media are social institutes which provide collecting, treatment and spreading information in a mass scale" (Borisnev, 2003). The information passes some subjective and objective stages of treatment in the process of collecting and transmission and nevertheless the media model of reality has its right to exist as, on the one hand, it reflects the life of society and, on the other hand, it forms that social life.

Dynamic symbolic model corresponds to the all demands for creating the model suggested by Y. M. Plotinskyi after C. Temple.

"The models are to include three types of correspondence: between the way of organization of the social world and the way of its description; between the apparatus used in the modeling process and the conceptual apparatus of a modeled theory; between a theory and the social world" (Plotinskyi, 1998).

We shall consider the correspondence of the media reflection and social reality. As an example we shall take the representations of the state reformation process and the social changes connected with it.

First of all, it's a way of organization of the social world. There are following elements (the most important ones) in the structure of the state reformation process: federal authority → regional authority → municipal, district and settlement

authorities → social categories of the citizens who take part in a reformed sphere.

The information field gives us quite detailed descriptions of all these elements.

On the second place, it's an apparatus. The theory of changes, and collecting, and transmission of information in the media field are based on social facts. A theory is a common, schematic and conceptual point of view on what is going on – it's macro, and some less important eventful aspects of social reality finds its reflection in the information field – it's micro.

On the third place, it's correspondence between the theory of changes and social reality.

Revealing the function of the authorities in all levels, Mass Media often turn to the moments of realization one or another reform. An audience takes interest in the reforming process of some certain sphere as it has its influence on the everyday life of the majority, the interest of an audience influences upon ratings of one or another side of Mass Media, and, as a result, displaying of the state reformation process is useful for the both sides.

Thus we are about to consider the information field as the space of the dynamic symbolic model which draws our attention to casually chosen moments of the state reformation process.

Using the method of content-analysis and the classification of social changes on the seven levels of society (natural, demographic changes, changes in the industrial sphere, administrative system, social organization, social structure, changes in the spiritual sphere of the society), we have researched the reflection of the social dynamics in the information space according to the seven reforms: housing and communal complex, local government, education, health, pensionary, privilege system (coin reform), passport reform.

The period of the research – 2001 – 2005 years.

The selection involved the messages of such Mass Media as “Afontovo”, Channel 7, TVK, KGTRK, “Enisey Region”, “Prima”, “Krasnoyarsk's Worker”, “Today's Paper”, “Moscow Member of the Komsomol”, “News World”, “Eye-Witness”, “City News”, “Krasnoyarsk Paper”, “News”, “Arguments and Facts”, “Evening Krasnoyarsk”, “Kansk Gazette”, “Soviet By-Angara”, “Screen-Inform”, “By-Chulymsk Bulletin”, “Soviet By-Chulymye”, “Dzerzhinec”, “Enisey's Truth”, “Daybreak of Enisey”, “Power of Labour”, “Tubinsk News”, “Lenin's Spark”, “Angarsk's Worker”, “Trans-Polar Truth”, “Today's Papers” from Achinsk, Kansk, Zheleznogorsk, Zelenogorsk cities.

The information field, devoted to the reformation process and according social changes, is presented mainly with the analytical materials of TV news and press.

The dynamics of the social development in the process of state reformation given in Mass Media is presented in the Table 1.

The dynamics of social development in the process of state reformation is presented in Mass Media as follows:

Mass Media connect the housing and communal reform with the changes in the administrative system and social structure. The changes in the industry sphere take only third place in Mass Media.

The local government reform, first of all, is presented with the changes in the administrative system and industrial sphere. The changes in the spiritual sphere and social structure are on the third and fourth places. In that case in Mass Media there is a prevalence of the reflections of those changes to which the work of the subject of authority is directed.

According to the Mass Media content-analysis information, the education reform is connected mainly with the changes in the administrative system and takes the second

Table 1

Name of Reform	Levels of Social Changes						
	Natural	Demographic	In the Administrative System	In the Industrial Sphere	In the Social Structure	In the Social Organization	In the Spiritual Sphere
Housing and Communal	0,88	2,24	36,7	22,7	37,4	0,28	2,24
Local Government	2,24	0,3	37	21,4	17,5	0,9	19,6
Pensionary System	0	17,7	58,5	12,6	9,9	0	0,3
Education	0	3,8	63	11,15	7,7	0	13,4
Health	0	16,1	61,54	14,1	5	0	0,6
Privilege System	0	0	35,52	25,17	22,1	16,9	0
Passport Reform	0	18,3	55,37	0,9	24,7	0	0

place, and the changes in the spiritual sphere are far behind.

The health reform is mainly presented with the changes in the administrative system, the changes in the demographic sphere are on the second place.

Mass Media connect the reform of the pensionary system with the changes in the administrative system and demographic sphere.

The reform of the privilege system (coin reform) is conditioned by the changes in the administrative system, industrial sphere and social structure.

The passport reform depends on the changes in the administrative system and social structure.

The main level of the social dynamics connected with the reforms is the changes of the administrative system in different fields. Firstly, this can be explained by displaying of the reformation in the authorities' function, secondly, by the orientation of many reforms. Unfortunately, the substantial part of the reforms, which is not connected with the administrative changes, is faintly reflected in the information field. For example, the education reform is presented as the

changes in the administrative system in 63% of the materials and only in 13% – as the changes in the spiritual sphere.

The information space considered as the dynamic symbolic model of social reality reflects a large spectrum of the state reforms. Monitoring and analysis of social development with the help of the content-analysis of Mass Media messages allow to get common idea about the social dynamics and to evaluate the efficiency of the influence of the reforms on the reformed sphere.

Symbolic modeling of social changes with the help of Mass Media materials has its considerable limitation. Mass Media objectively cannot embrace the whole spectrum of social changes and give information in the limits of its information politics. On the other hand, comprehension, interpretation and interiorization of events and phenomena are carried out by an individual with the help of Mass Media. Guided by one of the functions of the Mass Media social institute – informing – and appealing to the concept of symbolic model, we come to a conclusion that it's possible to use the materials of Mass Media for analysis of the social changes' representations. In other words, such research has

its right to exist as Mass Media in the functions of informing and correction of behavior create the dynamic symbolic model of social reality. This model responds to all main demands of modeling of social processes and changes and, consequently, represents these changes.

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