Екологічна ідентичність у контексті екологічної комунікації: українська візія

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Досліджено специфіку феномена «екологічна ідентичність», який формується на основі знань та досвіду взаємодії з довкіллям у контексті взаємовпливу екосистеми і людського соціокультурного простору. За таких умов процес інтерпретації життєвого досвіду не лише уможливлює переосмислення спогадів, подій та обставин особистого життя, але й формує екологічний погляд людини, що, у свою чергу, призводить до змін особистості, формуючи нове ставлення до навколишнього середовища та формуючи активну соціальну позицію щодо питань охорони природи.

Методологією основою є теорії від сприйняття місцевості (локального місця) до ідеї біорегіоналізму, та вчення про екологічну ідентичність як компонент людської ідентичності в епоху Антропоцену (С. Клейтон), яке апеляє до взаємозв’язку з довкіллям, визначено способи нашого сприйняття і поведінки у контексті сучасних «зелених» ініціатив та політики «сталого розвитку».

На прикладі пост-Чорнобильського комунікативного дискурсу визначено, у якій мірі процес самоідентифікації з певним місцем пов’язаний з розвитком місцевих знань та екологічної грамотності, що призводить до формування глибокої екологічної свідомості та трансформації сучасного екологічного комунікативного простору.

Ключові слова: екологічна ідентичність; еко-комунікації; Чорнобиль; пост-Чорнобильський комунікативний дискурс; Антропоцен.

1. Introduction

As at the basis of the Eastern Partnership lies a shared commitment to fundamental values, including human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as sustainable development of the society, the idea of finding common values of our nations and societies is of acute interest. And the common values of common sustainable development within this Partnership can be based only on common Ecological Consciousness and Ecological Thinking.

In this concern the special focus is put on the academic aspects of researching the environmental issues not only at the level of oral/written interpersonal communication, not only the reaction of mass media agents to the environmental issues, but also the cultural, literary, artistic, folk, and even religious expressions involving environmental themes, which all together shape the ecological identity as a national feature within the contemporary vision of ecological communications studies.

The process of interpreting life experience transcends human’s socio-cultural space and includes the "connection to the land", meaning the human refinement in the ecosystem and his/her experience of interaction with the...
natural environment. Knowledge and experience, forming the person’s ecological outlook, can ultimately cause a rethinking of memories, events and circumstances of his/her personal life – so called, the “ecological identification process”. That in turn results in personality’s changes, shaping a new attitude to the environment and forming an active social position concerning the issues of nature conservation.

From a variety of research perspectives, there has been the recognition that human’s ecological identity has important implications for pro-environmental attitudes and environmental behaviors such as energy efficiency (Clayton & Opotow, 2003), green consumerism (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992), recycling (Mannetti, Pierro, & Livi, 2004), and environmental activism (Fielding, McDonald, & Louis, 2008). Some of these perspectives emphasize the inclusion of nature within human’s cognitive representations of the self (Schultz, 2002; Schultz, Shriver, Tabanico, & Khazian, 2004), and some use the notion of environmental identity (e.g., Clayton & Opotow, 2003) or environment identity [1, p. 181–186].

**Research Methods.** The methodological toolkit for researching the issue includes the variety of theories on location acceptance (local space) and the idea of behaviorism, as well as scholar studies on ecological/environmental identity in the time of the Anthropocene (S. Clayton), appealing to the close connection to the environment as a component of personal identity in the Anthropocene, which shapes our world reception and actions in the context of “green initiatives” and “sustainable development” policy.

### 2. Results and discussion

Constant living in or regular visiting the same locations, humans develop a strong connection, even affinity with the place, land or water objects. Many refer to a sense of place, related to the development of localized realization of their dwelling place through constant learning the place. The process of self-identification with a definite place is closely related with the development of local knowledge and ecological literacy. These steps result in shaping a profound ecological consciousness where humans’ ecological identity refer to the same values, mainly based on the same religious identity, and the same measures of caring about the local nature.

The recognition of ecological identity is an essential issue for the future of humanity as well as the planet, where people can be equal partners within ecosystem.

As for the terminology the resources in this environmental humanities provide the range of terms to describe the ecological identity, among those are “environmental identity”, “ecological identity”, “environment identity”, “ecological self” etc.

This vision moves from the sense of locality (a local place) to the idea of bioregionalism the basic idea of which is that every region is generally self-sufficient and there is much more focus on a local sense, on a sense of place and less emphasis on national identity [2].

It was in 1949, that A. Leopold in his “A Sand County Almanac” (1949) observed that people working closely with nature develop particular convictions and values with respect to the land, phenomena described as a ‘land ethic’ [3].

He creates an entire ethic, which he calls a land ethic, around the idea that “all non-humans and all ecosystems should be treated ethically. Because they’re entities with rights, not just characters-of-our-own-devising”.


This scholar clearly demonstrates that all the aspects of environmental studies as well as environmental humanities can significantly depend on personal reflection. Due to his work, the notion of environmental identity can be launched Answering the questions – what do I know about the place where I live? Where do things come from? How do I connect to the Earth? – a person can identify himself/herself as a being within the environment while learning from it. Answering all these questions can launch the process of developing a sense of “the self” as a human being within natural and social ecological systems in
The close connection with their other components [4].

Thomashow M. defines ecological identity as a reflexive process of recognizing “the self” as an ecologically embedded, constructed one from interactions with human and nonhuman phenomena. He considered that “nature becomes an object of identification” for the self, the result of a confluence of factors, including “perception of the ecosystem” and the direct, embodied experience of environment [4, p. 3].

Thomashow M. says that it is ecological literacy complements ecological identity so well because both are based on the places ‘where people learn about nature, the importance of direct experience, the clarity of a reflective orientation’. It is a deep caring for landscapes and a sheer sense of wonder and delight gained from nature-based experiences that are integral to ecological identity [4].

The complex of ecological identity in its individual dimension is raised in The Universe Story (1992) by Th. Berry and B. Swimme. They mention that ecological identity is distinguished and fostered in the process of becoming “fully human”. According to their common opinion eco-identity is an important component of shaping a human’s selfhood. They say: “...While being fathers, mothers, professors, artists, players, activists..., we are “earthlings”. The amalgamation of all just mentioned roles makes the identity”. They mention that “…the individual “self” can find its complex understanding concerning a family’s self, a community’s self, earthly self, and the Universe’s self.” The importance and topicality of eco-identity formation result from the urgent character of realizing the ways of communing with the environment but not exploiting it. This includes the working out their possibility for reconsidering human-nature relations.

So Berry states that this definite historical moment – the moment of entering a new geologic era, called “Ecozoic era” – is when the Earth calls out to us to initiate a new ecological beginning, leading to a resacralization of the Nature itself. And this new era demands to launch the formation of eco-identity [5].

It is Eco-psychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind (1995) edited by Th. Roszak and others that greatly promoted the idea of ecological identity formation while connecting it with human’s psychological health – both individual as well as collective ones. The collective edition gives the basis for realizing that the natural world enters our mind and subconsciousness and is not limited to our surrounding environment [6].

In 2007 the team of “sustainable development” founders (J. Seed, P. Fleming, J. Macy) published Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings is co-authored by (2007). Due to Macy’s words, the newest attitude towards environment demands a renewed spiritual outlook. She stresses the idea about the mutual of interconnections of everything within the environment, resulting from her religious beliefs – Buddhism in particular. J. Macy emphasizes a human’s attitude – mainly a self-centered as well as anthropocentric one - that ruins the environment. The authors stress the idea of avoiding the dominating role of human beings as the initial stage in the process of shaping and developing the category of ecological identity [7].

Scholars J. Stets and C. Biga define ecological (environmental in his definition) as “the meanings that one attributes to the self as they relate to the environment” [8, p. 171].

The significant contribution into defining ecological identity as a component of human identity in the age of the Anthropocene was made by D. S. Clayton with her achievements presented in The Oxford Handbook of Environmental and Conservation Psychology (2012). She writes that under contemporary “green” initiatives and “sustainable development” policy a human can develop so-called “ecological” (environmental) identity), which she defines as a sense of interconnection with some unhuman environment, which affects the ways of our perception and behavior towards the world. Also she emphasizes that ecological identity is our belief that the environment is an important part of the common unity [9, p. 167].

The author emphasizes that the sources of identity can be numerous and include a person’s values, social affiliation and property. Basing on these categories S. Clayton raises the issue about the urgency and importance of environment in terms of ecological identity formation. This scholar stresses some reasons for that. She emphasizes ecological identity to be a source for a range of psychological meanings and the
implementation of personally meaningful motives, distinguished by its social and political significance [9, p. 167].

S. Clayton emphasizes that the concept of ecological identity combines two aspects: on one hand, emotional intimacy and identification with nature, on the other hand — it is environmental focus of behavior. She points out, that "identity is both a product and coercion: the set of beliefs regarding the personality (self), and a coercion for a specific way of interaction with the world" [9, p. 46]. According to S. Clayton, the ecological identity as a encouraging force can have a significant impact on the direction of personal, social and political behavior [9, p. 115].

The explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant on April 26, 1986, not only was a watershed event in the Ukrainian ecological consciousness formation, but also influenced and clarified/revealed many aspects of diverse “Nature-Human-Society” relationship.

For the Ukrainians Chernobyl became not only the milestone of ecological memory but also it has become a factor of identity, included the Ukrainians’ national values, social affiliation and property. Chernobyl is a source for psychological meanings and the implementation of personally meaningful motives, distinguished by its social and political significance.

Ukraine’s ecological identity is based on the definite historical event and its wider connotation about “Human-Nature” oppression.

Chernobyl as a factor of shaping Ukraine’s ecological identity could demonstrate in what way the national (including social and political) component impacts results from the set of a human’s characteristic features, while basing on bioregionalism and environmentalism in Ukraine can be considered as a background for shaping identity. Initially such eco-slanted social movements (supporting those suffered the disaster, protecting the surviving nature) dealt with the post-disaster events, which cared about radiated nature and forced moving population, but then they encouraged “a politicised aspect of a personal identity trait or a politics of the self” [10].

According to I. Young and S. Aronowitz, identity is considered as a “the types of political activities”. So, post-Chernobyl communicative discourse shaped the identity which was the amalgamation of those movements which challenged the hegemony (Science-Human) and power of decision-making structures (dealing with the Reactor and mainly with the Exclusion Zone), and movements of cultural identity. Regarded as the ways how people construe themselves in relationship to Chernobyl disaster, showing that all these features of ecological identity, manifested in personality, values, actions and a sense of self, resulted in the situation when Chernobyl itself becomes an object of identification.

The explosion at Chernobyl nuclear power plant became an impetus to create fictional-nonfictional works that profoundly reconsider the scientific discoveries and achievements. The accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant produced a peculiar surge of ecologically-directed publications as well as enabling the appearance of "ecological nonfiction/documentaries" (so-called “writings on ecological affairs”) and “ecological memoirs” (representing the “writer’s ecological approach”). Ukrainian literary responses to the nuclear accident were extremely dynamic; among them are documentary notes/nonfiction works such as Yuriy Shcherbak, Reasons and Consequences (1986), Yuriy Shcherbak, Chernobyl (1989), Volodymyr Yavorivsky, Maria with Mugwort at the End of the Century (1988), Ivan Druch, Chernobyl Madonna (1988), Borys Oliynyk, Seven (1988), Lidiya Viryna, At That Fire Night (1989), Vitaliy Mykulskiy, Fire Destructors (1996) and others.

Within the post-Chernobyl communicative discourse “Chernobyl” as a subject of new literary works inspired such poets as B. Oliynyk, Y. Shcherbak, V. Yavorivsky, S. Yovenko, I. Drach, L. Kostenko to devote their works to this disaster. But the critics’ responses to these and other works were restrained and low-key. Sometimes a newly published work went by unnoticed.

Reconsidering Chernobyl as a factor of shaping Ukrainian ecological identity, humans in Ukraine started to accept Chernobyl as the lost paradise, as a part of “private historical memory” Chernobyl as an unhealthy fascination (by A. Korzeniowska-Bihun), and even as a litmus test that shows the attitude of the authorities towards their own society both in the 1980s (and even in the time before Maydan 2013/2014).

Hundorova N. in her monograph "Post-Chernobyl Library. Ukrainian Postmodern" notes that Chernobyl gave birth to a new era in Ukraine’s
national identity – it launched not only postmodernism but a new postmodernism consciousness as well [11, p. 12].

Due to M. Kolesnikov, considering the correlation between “ecological culture” and “ecological competence”, we should stress that ecological identity can be regarded as a forward step from the simple level of increasing the ecological literacy towards the process of shaping a person as a subject of ecological culture in the system “ecological literacy / ecological education / ecological competence / ecological culture / ecological mentality” [12, p. 72].

3. Conclusions

Studying post-Chernobyl communicative discourse demonstrates that Chernobyl as a factor of ecological identity formation within Chernobyl narration studies can be correlated with the acute issues of environmental humanities researches. This aspect of the research faces the issues at the edge of humanities and science while regarding Chernobyl in the view of political representation as well as ethics. Under such circumstances ecological identity is studied in its relation to conceptions of the natural, technology, wideness, atom, nuclear and in its relation to the material distribution of environmental hazards.

In Ukraine’s context identity studies take place in close connection with cultural, political and social meanings closely associated with Chernobyl’s environmental debate under the shadow of post-Chernobyl communicative discourse. The multidisciplinary debates allow studying a historical event in its close connection with human, animal, and technological studies in the contemporary eco-centered studies while stressing the development and maintenance of identity, and the related issues of identification concerning the place and a real historical event.

Bringing research and writing in environmental philosophy, ethics, cultural studies, and literature under a single umbrella gives an opportunity not only to reread the Chernobyl disaster, not only to reconsider ecological identity within environmental humanities, but also fosters the debates about “nuclear diplomacy” in Central/Eastern Europe.
СУХЕНКО И. Н. ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ЕКОЛОГІЧНОЇ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ: УКРАЇНСЬКА ВІЗІЯ

Исследована специфика феномена «экологическая идентичность», который формируется на основе знаний и опыта взаимодействия с окружающей природой в контексте взаимовлияния экосистемы и социокультурного пространства человека. В таких условиях процесс интерпретации жизненного опыта не только предполагает пересмысление воспоминаний, событий и обстоятельств личной жизни, но и формирует экологический взгляд человека, что, в свою очередь, ведет к изменениям личности, формирует экологический взгляд человека, что, в свою очередь, ведет к изменениям личности, формирует активную социальную позицию в вопросах защиты природы. Методологической основой являются теории от восприятия местности до идеи биорегионализма, и учение об экологической идентичности как компоненте идентичности человека в эпоху Антропоцена (С. Клейтон), которая апеллирует к взаимосвязи с окружающей средой, определяет способы нашего восприятия и поведения в контексте современных “зеленых” инициатив и политики устойчивого развития. На примере пост-Чернобыльского коммуникативного дискурса определено, каким образом процесс самоидентификации с определенным местом связан с развитием местных знаний и экологической грамотности, что приводит к формированию “глубокого” экологического сознания и трансформациям современного экологического коммуникативного пространства.

Ключевые слова: экологическая идентичность; эко-коммуникация; Чернобыль; пост-Чернобыльский коммуникативный дискурс; Антропоцен.

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The methodological toolkit for researching the issue includes the variety of theories on location acceptance (local space) and the idea of behaviorism, as well as scholar studies on ecological/environmental identity in the time of the Anthropocene (S. Clayton), appealing to the close connection to the environment as a component of personal identity in the Anthropocene, which shapes our world reception and actions in the context of “green initiatives” and “sustainable development” policy.

Studying post-Chernobyl communicative discourse demonstrates that Chernobyl as a factor of ecological identity formation within Chernobyl narration studies can be correlated with the acute issues of
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It is for the first time that the scholarship emphasis is put on researching the specificity of “ecological identity”, shaped by the knowledge of the environment and the experience of the interconnections between the eco-system and the human social and cultural space on the example of the post-Chernobyl communicative discourse.

The results of the research can be used for further studying “ecological consciousness” and “ecological thinking” as the common values of sustainable development within the Eastern Partnership.

**Keywords:** ecological identity, eco-communications, Chernobyl, post-Chernobyl communicative discourse, the Anthropocene.