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Media frames and constructs of social problem

ABSTRAKT

Ramy medialne a konstrukcja problemów społecznych

Głównym celem artykułu jest analiza problemu społecznego, jakim jest ubóstwo z perspektywy teorii konstruktów komunikacyjnych. Jak zauważają Autorki opis rzeczywistości za pomocą konstruktywistycznego podejścia do analizowanych treści umożliwia analizę problemów społecznych w kontekście wszechstronnych działań ludzkich.

Konstrukcje komunikacyjne różnią się poziomem konceptualizacji, tzn. stopniem spójności i logicznego podporządkowania pewnych zasad do omawianych treści. W artykule podkreślone zostało to, iż konstrukcje komunikacyjne pod względem konceptualizacji można rozpatrywać na czterech różnych poziomach: „zdrowego rozsądku”; eksperta; ideologicznym oraz na poziomie mediów. Wszystkie z wymienionych poziomów konceptualizacji konstrukcji komunikacyjnych odgrywają rolę w budowaniu problemów społecznych - w tym przypadku ubóstwa i mogą wpływać na projektowanie rzeczywistości politycznej, a także jej regulacji w ramach polityki społecznej.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: problem społeczny, komunikatywna konstrukcja problemów społecznych, konstrukt „zdrowego rozsądku”, konstrukt ekspercki; problem społeczny; konstrukcja ideologiczna, media

Socio-political projects on solving social problems are integral part of social policy in any state. Making reasonable decisions about where government resources will be directed is the area of political struggle of different actors in the process of social issues, which use communication technologies to succeed in this struggle. The status of a „social problem” emphasizes the need for decision-making within the framework of social policy to get out of difficult social circumstances. Awareness of a certain discomfort or a complex situation as a pressing social problem entails the search for its causes and is most often

associated with the identification of its carriers responsible for creating such discomfort, as well as the subjects or authorities responsible for its elimination. These problems are the most important subject for research and policy decisions all over the world.

But political decisions are often taken in the light not of the objective nature of the circumstances, but rather on the image of the social problem, which is either spontaneously formed at the level of „common sense,” or is created artificially by numerous actors in the field of social and political struggle in the form of so-called communicative constructs. A very important role in this process of problematization/deproblematization of complex social circumstances is played by mass media, which, in the form of media frames, in their own way, impose their vision of the situation on the public opinion. Therefore, the awareness of the existence of such constructs and frames, as well as the potential of their influence, is an extremely important task for sociology and political science.

Subjectivist tradition in the analysis of social problems is based on the sociology of social action of M. Weber. Within this tradition social problem is interpreted as such that does not exist without a subjective definition. The subjectivist tradition combines the approaches of the „value conflict” (W. Waller), the concept of the stages of the social problem (R. Fuller and R. Mayers), the stigmatization (G. Becker, E. Lemert), social constructionism (M. Spector, J. Kitsuse). The purpose of the study is to analyze the peculiarities of the constructs and media frames of the social problem of poverty at different levels of its construction and their respective influence on the political process.

Subjectivists believe that the social problem does not exist until it could be recognized by society. They focus on the very process of transforming the complex social circumstances into a social problem and on analyzing the role and contribution of those social forces that are tangent to this process. The subjectivist concept can help to trace how different subjects in the process of social problematization interpret the very problem, which arguments are put forward „in favor” of the social problem, what kind of projects of its regulation they offer.

The individual perception of an event or situation is determined by those cognitive structures that exist in his or her consciousness, resulting in an individual using not facts but representations about the surrounding world. Thus, the reality of the problem is a social construct, which means:

- it is interpreted through describing the problem of the subject of the process of social problematization, depending on their understanding;
- the reality of the problem in the interpretation of this subject is always „transformed”;
- the subject’s use of certain elements of „speech” (verbal or nonverbal) includes a hidden appeal to a variety of background knowledge of the public;

- the state and quality of the problem can be described by such states or qualities that are characteristic of other objects (possible metaphorical transitions);
- the subject always takes into account the temporal/ spatial perspective, and also evaluates the structure of his or her environment in terms of substantial/insubstantial, in other words, comprehend the world in terms of the background/ figure.

As a result of these processes, a certain construct of reality appears. This is a new object that reflects the world created by the subject. This new object is called the communicative construct of a social problem.

The process of social problematization (the transformation of complex social circumstances into a social problem that requires the political interference), according to the constructionists, takes place in several stages. They identify six stages in this process (or the natural history of the social problem), as the American sociologist J. Best calls it: claim-making - media coverage - public reaction - political intervention in the problem solving (policymaking) - social problem work - policy outcomes¹.

In the process of social problematization (that is, the transformation of a private problem into a social one, or the transformation of complex social circumstances into a problem), the social problem is discussed within the framework of several constructs that describe and interpret it in different ways.

Communication constructs differ in terms of conceptualization, i.e. in the degree of logical coherence and subordination to certain principles of organization of content. By this criterion one can consider constructs of the level of „common sense“, expert communicative constructs, ideological communicative constructs.

Communicative construct of a social problem at the level of „common sense“ arises spontaneously as a result of unmanaged discussions available to the mass consumer information that are circulating in public communication space by formal and informal channels. This is a non-systematized, disordered, often contradictory presentation of the problem. The logic of „common sense“ does not seek complex explanations, but tries to explain „what everyone knows“ by simplified, contradictory schemes, each of which acts as a categorical imperative. At the heart of the functioning of communicative constructs at the level of „common sense“ are the peculiarities of self-organization of the communicative space by informal channels.

To illustrate the communicative constructs of social problem, we will try to analyze the discursive constructions of the „traditional“ social problem of poverty, for most of the developed countries of the world.

¹ J. Best, *Social problems*, W. W. Norton & Company Inc., New York 2008, p. 19.

The attitude to poverty has always fluctuated in the range of „problem - not a problem” since the times when it first began to be studied systematically. And in our times, the attitude to poverty at the level of „commonsense” has no definitive diagnosis: if poverty is to be considered as a problem, and if so, whose problem is it? -Society’s or an individual’s. In order to illustrate different views on poverty and the poor, we used the article „8 myths about poverty”², which demonstrates some of these myths circulating at the „common sense” level on the social problem

of poverty. It is noted that as soon, as the word „poverty” unfolds in the discussion, the whole variety of views is narrowed in the eyes of the opponents to two polar variants: the first position - „everyone can be rich” (and so the one who is not rich is guilty of his own inferiority and poverty), the second position „nobody can get rich” (and, accordingly, social circumstances are such that they do not give a man any chance to become rich). We also used the materials on a discussion „Poverty and how to fight it”³ and the article entitled „Does charity have to drive poverty” on the website of the Resource Center „Gurt”⁴.

The analysis of these materials proves that, firstly, the definition of poverty is constantly challenged, it is in itself a controversial issue. Poverty is an absolute shortage of resources (absolute poverty) or lack of resources taking into account the standards of a particular society (relative poverty)?

„What do we mean when we talk about poverty? It seems to me that everyone understands poverty as he wants to understand it. It seems that there may be one oligarch who for another one is poor, and one president may be richer than the president of another country, and so on. In general, looking at whom and whose resources (mostly financial) are compared „”⁵.

For each statement on poverty at the level of „common sense” there are some unspoken assumptions about the nature of society and the nature of poverty. Even such a brief statement „No One Must Be Poor” implies at least that:

- we live in a society in which there are equal opportunities for all;
- there are no external conditions that make people poor;
- if people are poor, then this is somehow due to their choice, so poverty is the result of a person's bad choices (how they live, how they work, how they spend money, etc.).

² Вісім міфів про бідність [Електронний ресурс]: - Режим доступу: <http://business-obuchenie.net/yak-rozbutisya-vid-bidnosti/8-mifiv-pro-bidnist.html> [1.01.2017]

³ Бедность и как с ней бороться [Електронний ресурс]: - Режим доступу: http://ver24.ru/?main=topic&id_topic=1501&print=1 [1.05.2017]

⁴ Чи має благодійництво спонукати бідність [Електронний ресурс]: -Режим доступу: (<http://gurt.org.ua/blogs>) [1.05.2017]

⁵ Бедность и как с ней бороться [Електронний ресурс]: - Режим доступу: http://ver24.ru/?main=topic&id_topic=1501&print=1 [1.05.2017]

Communicative constructs of a social problem at the level of „common sense” are not just random or one-time thoughts that people express under the influence of emotions. They represent social requirements, social expectations, which show the attitude of society to one phenomenon or another.

Experts, specialists are among the most influential subjects in the process of social prolematization. They have specialist knowledge that gives them the right to interpret social problems. Science depends on the assessment of evidence. Scientific theory must detect false prognostications, that is, predictions must pass the test, and if they are incorrect, the theory is rejected. Scientists conduct research to obtain evidence that can support or deny their theories; the more reliable evidence they will find, the more confidence the scientists have in the theories.

Expert constructs of social problems differ, no doubt, from constructs at the level of „common sense”. Science treats itself as free from values, neutral and non-political. Science has the right to name and to define the problem. It collects data, tests hypotheses and helps to formulate policies to address the problem. Scientists believe that science is out of the problem, a scientist is an observer, mediator, and assistant in solving problems.

Expert communicative constructs are generally distributed among a narrow circle of scholars who are investigating this problem and are not perceived (at least in detail) by mass consciousness. The sign of an expert construct is its lack of value, neutrality, that is, zero orientation. Lack of a valuable approach implies a position: „the phenomenon has the following characteristics, but decide for yourself how to evaluate it.” This is not always in favor of the development of society (as in the example of the invention of the hydrogen bomb), but this is a requirement of „scientific” and expert purity.

The expert communicative construct refers to a systematic approach to the problem, which combines nature, causes, manifestations, consequences. This is not just a statement, it is a complex, abstract statement which does not only declare, but also argues. Experts try to reconcile reasons, motivations, consequences, to form a logical chain, in order to explain why one is connected with another or causes yet another.

In general, two concepts of poverty prevail in modern scientific literature, in the opinion of the Ukrainian researcher A. Fljashnikova⁶, from which the nature of its definitions follows. The first one is that poverty is an absolute category, which assumes that there is a certain set of benefits and they provide the primary physiological needs of a person. Poverty, according to the absolute concept, is, in essence, the inability to receive the revenues necessary to ensure the minimum

⁶ Фляшнікова А., *Бідність і багатство в наукових теоріях і сучасних дослідженнях* [Електронний ресурс]:/А.Фляшнікова// Режим доступу: <http://www.politik.org.ua/vid/magcontent.php3?m=1&n=29&c=446> [1.05.2017]

living needs. The second concept of relative poverty was spread in the post-war period, especially in the late 1960s and 1970s. Proponents of this concept believe that poverty is a relative concept. Compared with past centuries, modern poor people live much better; and compared to the poor in developing countries, the poor in developed countries - are wealthy⁷. Therefore, the poor are those individuals or families who lack the resources to participate in public life, to afford a certain type of food, recreation, habits, etc. In addition to controversy around the terms (absolute, relative poverty), considerations about the forms of poverty (objective and subjective, absolute and relative, temporary, stagnant, latent, etc.), scientists offer holistic concepts of poverty, which combine the method and the level of explanation of the causes of this social problem.

The attempt to build a system of expert constructs of the social problem of poverty in sociological science was made in the article of Russian sociologist S. Yaroshenko „Four Sociological Explanations of Poverty (Experience in the Analysis of Foreign Literature)”⁸. Expert constructs of poverty are built at the intersection of two dimensions: the level of explanation (individual/ society) and the way of explanation (determinism/ constructionism). If the level of explanation involves the elimination of the causes of poverty from the characteristics of the individual or social system, then the method of explanation - the correlation with „deterministic” or „ constructionist „ (voluntarist) analytic traditions. The choice of these bases due to the genealogy of sociological notions of poverty. The first reflects the strategy of analysis, the second - a method of sociological argumentation within the positivist or interpretive (hermeneutic) doctrine.

Appeal to expert constructs of social problems is related to the public's desire to receive information based on high quality evidence from unbiased professionals. As a rule, it is assumed that experts should be impartial judges that their scientific discoveries and theoretical constructs are based on facts, not on thoughts. However, experts often appear to be stakeholders, adherents of certain positions or policies, so they do not necessarily rely solely on their expertise. The ideal of the scientist-expert as an objective, impartial observer does not always correspond to the reality in which the scientist may have a commitment to a particular position, which, in turn, affects the formation of his conclusions.

The ideological constructs of the social problem are very specific. One of the directions in which the perspective of meaning, study and solving social problems developed is the binding of social design to social interests, power, and ideology. At the same time, this is the answer to the question, why some complex social

⁷ M. Hamilton, M. Hirszowicz, *Class and Inequality in pre-industrial, capitalist and communist societies*, Wheatsheaf books, St. Martins Press, New York 1987, p. 106-108.

⁸ Ярошенко С. С. *Четыре социологических объяснения бедности (опыт анализа зарубежной литературы)* [Электронный ресурс]: /С. С.Ярошенко// Социологические исследования = СОЦИС. -2006. -№7. -С. 34-42. - Режим доступу: <http://ecsocman.hse.ru /data/968/626/1219/yaroshenko.pdf> [1.05.2017]

circumstances are described as problems, while others do not get that status. From this perspective, society is characterized by forms of inequality between social groups, for example, between different classes, between men and women, or between different ethnic groups. Dominant groups in society try to use a set of ideas that justify/ legitimize existing forms of inequality in society and their dominant positions in them. For example, groups or classes that control most of the wealth distribute ideas about the need and even the desirability of these models of economic inequality. In addition, they refer to the fact that wealth reflects social virtues or achievements (wealth is a reward for „risk“). They put forward the argument that inequality is needed in order to encourage everyone's aspiration to succeed. They argue that wealth is the responsibility of preserving public goods for future generations. Such a set of ideas that legitimize the dominant positions of a particular social group, as a rule, is called an ideology.

A common feature of all ideologies is to justify the validity of existing social measures through the argumentation of their „naturalness“ (and hence, desirability and inevitability). Any structural design of inequality can create an interest (in preserving or changing the existing order). These interests may be the basis for ideologies that seek to legally challenge these inequalities. That is, an ideology is a collection of ideas that try to justify/legitimize (or to question) social order and inequality. It is in this way that ideological constructs are connected to the designation of problems in the process of social design.

Ideologies are involved in determining who exactly and what exactly can be a social problem. It is clear that those who challenge the existing social organization are likely to be identified as offenders, agitators or demagogues, who seek to cause unnecessary social upheaval and disappointment. In addition, the problems themselves can be qualified as utopian, unnatural, because other ways of organizing the social world do not exist.

Ideologies form the collective perception of social problems (resource allocation, immigration, abortion, etc.) based on the group self-identification scheme, the elements of which are: identity criteria, the nature of group activities, goals, values, availability or lack of resources for the implementation of collective goals. Ideologies are polarized by the known opposition of „theirs are alien“. Such polarization is „coded“ in all ideological communicative constructs, including ideological constructions of social problems. Ideological constructs, as a rule, are formed on the strategies of positive self-presentation and negative presentation of „strangers“. This strategy works at all semantic levels, emphasizing „our“ positive, true representations and „their“ wrong, false, untrue ideas.

Consequently, the existence of groups that compete for domination in society determines the existence of competing ideologies. This competition also manifests itself in the identification of social problems. In this context, one can mention the conflicts between capitalist and socialist ideologies that tried to

challenge or change structural inequality in a capitalist society, the conflict between patriarchal and feminist ideologies about gender inequality, or between racist and anti-racist ideologies around inequality of race and ethnicity. Establishing an agenda, identifying complex social circumstances as social problems is one of the main ideological conflicts in which competing ideologies struggle for domination in society. Socialist ideology defines inequality and its consequences as a social problem, feminist ideology determines gender differences in income, work and access to power as social problems, anti-racist ideology tries to construct inequalities (in income and rights of representatives of various races) and other aspects of racism as social problems.

The ideological discourse on poverty is one of the most important criteria for achieving a social effect in social policy⁹.

Thus, the analysis of ideological constructs solves several important tasks in the process of constructing of social problems. First, the ideological construct of a social problem gives a clue as to who says that one or another complex social circumstance is a problem, whose interests serve such a definition. The ideological discourse reminds that the process of identifying problems is neither obvious, nor neutral, it is socially motivated. Secondly, ideology draws attention to what kinds of projects are proposed or are meant to solve social problems. They are also socially motivated. Thirdly, the idea of a conflict of ideologies reminds that, as a rule, there is more than one definition of a social problem - both in determining which conditions area social problem, and in the way that any particular problem must be defined and interpreted

The media play a special role in the process of social problem-making. All forms of media interfere in the process of constructing problems. The process of social problem-making/problemization begins with the stage of the formulation of claims, preceding the media intervention. At this stage, activists or experts present initial requirements. If these claim makers are insiders, who do not have access to policy makers, they usually expect to convey their demands to a wider audience. Articles in newspapers, scenes on television, episodes from talk shows can convey these demands to millions of people, to the public, as well as to politicians. Nevertheless, media intervention almost inevitably changes the presented claims.

Media representatives have their own limitations and formats: they work under the press of deadlines, and thus do not have enough time to get acquainted in detail with the requirements they present; their presentations are often limited (for example, newspapers can print only a few newspaper plane units, television has only a few minutes to present a story); they have to make their plot

⁹ З.А. Калов, *Особенности реализации моделей социальной политики* [Электронный ресурс]: / З. А. Калов, Ф. М. Куршаева, Л. У. Хациева // Часть 1.PDF (102 К) - Режим доступа: <http://www.science-education.ru/29-1105>, p. 106-108 [1.05.2017]

interesting enough that the audience drew attention, want to see or to hear it. Therefore, the media broadcasts and transforms the applicants' claims in what are called secondary requirements, which are typically shorter, more dramatic, less ideological than primary claims.

Media interfere in the process of social problem-making in various forms, the essence of which is to articulate the frames of a social problem, using all existing communicative constructs of a social problem. Media frames are specific package of social problems in a structure that meets the public's needs to get information about the problem in a convenient, often entertaining form. Understanding that the perception of the significance of any problem depends on the content and structure of the narrative, led to the development of the concept of framing as a process based on cognitive schemes. Frames are among the cognitive schemes that allocate some components of the situation/message and, accordingly, some intelligible actions and inferences, and exclude others, thus forming a system of preconditions (or gestalts perception) for interpreting the situation/message. Frames are used by journalists to present information and reduce the complexity of problem, in a way that resonates with underlying themes the audience can use to understand it¹⁰. Frame building is influenced not just by media, but also by the original claim makers, experts, policy makers, and others who have an interest in shaping the problem. Individuals then use these frames to form impressions on certain issues about which they receive information. Frames provide them with the tools to process complex issues, which they could otherwise not understand. When interpreted in this way framing is unavoidable, since it is needed to make communication meaningful.

There are „frames in mind” and „frames in communication”¹¹. If the former there are cognitive schemes that include archetypal roles, norms of behavior, sequence of actions and reactions of typical participants with typical attributes, along with social sanctions and assessments, then the latter contain the definition of the situation as a problem, the diagnosis of its causes and consequences, moral evaluation and ways to solve it¹². In other words, „frames in communication” express the socio-cultural scenarios in a natural language.

Functions of symbolic markers in the text as the implementation of the „frame in communication” are performed by language clichés and stamps, case-law statements, case names and metaphors¹³. These verbal markers are associated

¹⁰ D. A. Scheufele, D. Tewksbury, *Framing, agenda setting, and priming: The evolution of three media effects models*, [in:] „*Journal of Communication*” № 57 (1), 2007, pp. 11-12.

¹¹ D. A. Scheufele, *Framing as a theory of media effects*, [in:] „*Journal of Communication*”, № 49, 1999.

¹² R. M. Entman, *Framing: toward clarification of a fractured paradigm*, [in:] „*Journal of Communication*”, № 43 (4), 1993.

¹³ Д. Б. Гудков, *Прецедентные феномены в текстах политического дискурса // Язык СМИ как объект междисциплинарного исследования /М.Н.Володина (отв. ред.). М. 2003 [Электронный ресурс] Режим доступу: http://www.evartist.narod.ru/text12/09.htm#э_18 [1.05.2017]*

with „frames in mind” and automatically activate the specific cognitive schema in the recipient. The basis of media publications is the media frame that activates the cognitive scheme for interpreting the described event or problem¹⁴ that is, play the role of triggers of specific perception and behavior. Media frame is the key idea of the „media packaging of interpretation”¹⁵, which attributes the theme to specific socio-cultural meanings.

Between 2014 and 2016 we conducted a study of expert constructs and media frames for the social problem of poverty in Ukraine. The purpose of the planned study was to find out how the media frames of the social problem of poverty issue are in line with expert assessments. At the first phase 15 experts from academics, journalists, opinion leaders and politicians were interviewed. During the second stage of the study, a frame analysis of 56 sources (Internet publications on various ideological grounds) was conducted.

At the expert level, during the analysis of expert interviews, a number of constructs of the social problem of poverty in Ukraine were identified, in particular.

1. Consumer Philosophy of Poverty/Consumerism in Poverty. The construct „Consumerism in Poverty” demonstrates the position of people irresponsible for their own poverty - since their passivity provokes degradation of opportunities. The system of social protection, which has not changed since the times of the USSR, educates the so-called consumer philosophy - a person considers it normal that one cannot work and receive various types of social assistance, only by virtue of which they can meet their needs, including those for which this social assistance was not foreseen. One of the characteristic behavioral features within this construct is the conscious rejection of laws - in particular, non-payment of taxes. Key thesis: „Everyone wants to take from a big pocket, but nobody want to put anything into it.” Avoiding obligations and perceiving the state as an entity that constantly blames someone for something, but nobody is to blame for the state, forms the minds of people exclusively at the level of consumerism.

2. „Awareness (informing)”. Within this „Awareness (informing)” or the „open rules of the game” construct, poverty as a social problem appears more at the spiritual and educational level than in the material one. The logic of reasoning within this construct is reduced to the maxim „Why we are poor? Because we are uninformed”. In the 90s, a student was perceived as a personification of poverty , because for a scholarship of 9 hryvnias he could not buy anything, not even textbooks. However, despite the significant growth of scholarships and purchasing power of students in our time, the society still holds the idea of a student as

¹⁴ R. M. Entman, *Framing U.S. coverage of international news: Contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran air incidents*, [in:] „Journal of Communication”, 1991, № 41 (4).

¹⁵ W. A. Gamson, Modigliani A., *The changing culture of affirmative action*, [in:] *Research in political sociology*, [in]: R. G. Braungart, M. M. Braungart (eds.).Greenwich: JAI, 1987, p. 137-177.

a personification of poverty and financial insolvency. Nowadays, a much wider range of people has access to wealth, but the poverty level has not changed significantly over the past decades. This is due to the fact that the problem of poverty lies not only in the level of income and is solved not only by economic growth, but also through the internal perception of each individual's poverty.

Also, one of the main theses within this construct is that the resolution of poverty is possible, if the problem is affected by educational activities involving NGOs, through training seminars, courses for those who would like to establish a business, advertising credit programs. Instead, a knowledgeable society must know and follow the well-known and generally accepted rules of the game.

3. The construct „Sudden Poverty”, which relates primarily to displaced persons and is associated with a sharp change in life and stress, is a new one in the context of political development in Ukraine. Poverty is a situation when a person does not have access to social services or does not know, where to go to adapt to the environment. In this context, the utterance - „poverty is not only a physical, but also a moral problem”, partly resounds with the previous construct. It is not determined only by the lack of financial resources, but also by the lack of understanding, that poverty is the social status of a person, which is closely linked to the fact that a person does not feel safe. In the situation in which our state is located now, it's difficult to speak about the sense of security, because „the state says that it is making reforms and fights against the Russian aggression. The question is not about the development, but about the survival of the state - therefore, poverty can be considered as a natural result of this process”.

4. The construct of „Poverty as a Political Slogan” is basically focused on the fact that political options for dealing with certain problems are the core of unwarranted populism, declarative intentions. The importance of any problem, including poverty, in this situation is determined by the proximity of the election. During the election process, poverty is receiving a new impetus for shaping as a social problem, its relevance becomes more significant, and various ways of solving this problem are proposed. However, once the voter has voted, everything returns to the same state that was before the election. Moreover, the poverty of the population is beneficial to the political elites who cultivate the consumer philosophy, which is transformed into „cheap voices” during the election marathon, which are bought up for small amounts or grocery sets, and the authorities manipulate by social consciousness through raising social standards not to the necessary level, but only so much as to provoke people's enthusiasm for new feeds from the state.

5. The construct „Poverty of Penny Aid”. System of social protection arises as a monolith, so the system sees people only when they come for help. The system seeks to keep track of all those who need to help. At the same time, „sociality” appears as a factor in forming the image of civil servant/politician, social

assistance is used to blow up the image, PR, self-giving. This construct closely interacts with the previous one. Any political elite that has had the power to this day has not reformed the system of social protection, has not monetized privileges that would teach people the responsibility for the funds received. According to experts, the social system in Ukraine works as a drug for a drug addict: the government gives from time to time a „dose” to socially unprotected layers, which make up the majority of the population. The purpose of such „feeds” is to achieve certain political goals: victory in elections, prevention or leveling of protests.

At the second stage of our study, a frame-analysis of thematic articles representing various Ukrainian editions, as much as possible covering the territory and reflecting the time dynamics, was conducted to confirm or refute the expert constructs of poverty.

The boundaries of the study are due to historical processes that, in our opinion, were key to changing state political vectors, which, in turn, are the driving force behind social policy, which is designed to resolve social problems, including the problem of poverty.

Cycles of election campaigns are accompanied by processes of problematization and deproblematization, when different political movements and parties put on the shield as a social problem some difficult life situations, most often poverty. The latter turns into a specific instrument used to criticize the ruling political elite for manipulating public opinion, in general, for the active struggle to promote group interests. With the election victory, the interest in the problem become much weaker. That is why the stages in which we considered the frames of the problems of poverty related to the elections and those critical moments in the political process of the Ukrainian state, which fall into revolutionary events and waves of protests.

The first period is connected with the largest protest since Ukraine's proclamation of independence in 2001, which was named „Ukraine without Kuchma”. The reason for public discontent was the alleged murder of journalist Georgiy Gongadze, and through the promulgation of the so-called „Melnichenko tapes” the main suspect was the president of Ukraine L. Kuchma. The same year there were regular elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. It is these social disasters and a partial change in the structure of power and opposition that were embodied in approaches to the regulation of social problems.

At the turn of 2004 and 2005 there was the first major effective protest in independent Ukraine, the so called Orange Revolution. Executive power, geopolitical benchmarks, and political goals of the state have completely changed in Ukraine.

In 2006, regular elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine took place, as a result of which the teams of „orange” leaders Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko were defeated and former Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych returned to power, effectively restoring the power of the group that ruled in the early 2000s.

In 2007 and 2008 - there were held extraordinary elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the returning of Yulia Tymoshenko to the post of prime minister and the global financial crisis in 2008, which forced the authorities in Ukraine to further „socialize their policies.

In 2010, there were elections of the President of Ukraine, in which Viktor Yanukovych won. There was another change of power and political orientations with tendencies to strengthen the regime due to the abolition of the 2004 constitutional reform, as well as authoritarian forms of government. In accordance with the change of the system of power, the system of social requirements and problems was also changed.

In 2014, an event was held in Ukraine, which was later called the „Revolution of Dignity”, which resulted in the overthrowing power after mass shootings of peaceful rallies, Russia's aggression towards Crimea, and separatist riots in eastern Ukraine. In April 2014, a counterterrorist operation begun in Ukraine, which, in its size and resources, has actually become a fully fledged war, and that has definitely changed the government's policy in the social sphere. In addition, economic conditions before the default in the state and lack of funds have made adjustments to ensure social protection of the population.

The question of which „reality” dominates within the framework of media discourse is of great importance to the future of social policy. Groups competing with each other often struggle to impose their own definition of a problem on others and thus influence the policy of regulation of this problem. The method of the frame analysis that we use in the context of sociological discourse analysis involves analyzing media texts using the matrix of frames (Ch. Ryan), and proposes the definition of a frame as a holistic representation structure of knowledge that the individual uses in both familiar situations, and in new, specific problem situations.

In order to analyze the frames that appear in the media, Ch. Ryan her work „Prime Time Activism”¹⁶ (1991) presented a so-called framing matrix that can be characterized in seven aspects: (1) the name of the frame; (2) a key position or a brief description of the original argument of the frame; (3) a metaphor or analogy with some other well-known political sphere that is proposed by the frame; (4) key well-said words that are repeated in the frame; (5) visual images that provoke a frame; (6) the source of the problem as it offers the frame; (7)

¹⁶ C. Ryan, *Prime time activism: Media strategies for grassroots organizing*, South End Press, Boston 1991, p. 295.

a predictable solution to the problem; (8) call to the principle of the frame or the basic human values to which the frame refers.

We used only a part of this framing matrix ((1) the name of the frame; (2) a key position or a brief description of the original argument of the frame), since the scope of the scientific article does not allow it to be submitted in full.

By applying this technique we managed to distinguish such frames of the social problem of poverty as „Arithmetic of poverty”, „Poor Consumption as a Delayed Life”, „Poverty as a Shame for the State”, „Poverty of Opportunities as a Consequence of Paternalism”, „Poverty as a Lack of Middle Class”, „Post-Soviet Culture of Poverty”, „Economic Reforms”, „Poverty as a Pre-election Slogan”, „The Effect of Poverty” (Crisis-War) (see Diagram No. 1).

These frames are represented in the table, where a key position or a brief description of the original argument of the frame is given to the frame name. Each of the frames has its own answer to the question of what constitutes a problem of poverty and what potential ways of its regulation may be.

Diagram No. 1

No	Frame	A key position or a brief description of the original argument of the frame
1	„Arithmetic of Poverty”	How a person can survive within the specified minimum of money, which makes it impossible to meet the general needs
2	„Poor Consumption as a Delayed Life”	How to survive in a situation where in order to survive people have postponed to meet priority needs
3	„Poverty as a Shame for the State”	Can people consider themselves a civilized country, in which poverty prevails
4	„Poverty of Opportunities as a Consequence of Paternalism”	Can a poor person expect parental care from the state and cease to be poor?
5	„Poverty as a Lack of Middle Class”	Can we call rich a society without a middle class?
6	„Post-Soviet Culture of Poverty”,	Can a person who has a Soviet habit to save on everything cease to be a poor person?
7	„Economic Reforms”	Is it possible to regulate the poverty issue under the reform slogan?
8	„Poverty as a Pre-election Slogan”	What is the problem of poverty during the struggle for power? How to eliminate poverty quickly and to get power?
9	„The Effect of Poverty” (Crisis-War)	Is it possible to avoid a state of sudden poverty? A new wave of poverty came, new „poor” came - settlers from Donbas and Crimea, who lost their homes, jobs and savings.

All media frames are superimposed, in part or in full, on expert constructs. In particular, the construct of „Consumerism in Poverty” of expert opinion is responsible for the content of such media frames as „Poverty of Opportunities as a Consequence of Paternalism”, and „Post-Soviet Culture of Poverty”. These two frames are also displayed in media texts during the studied periods.

The frame „Poverty of Opportunities as a Consequence of Paternalism”, prevails in media in the early 2000s, almost completely disappears after the Orange Revolution and returns to low positions during the time of President

V. Yanukovich, when the policy of power is directed towards forming a sense of dependence of the population on the state.

The frame of the „Post-Soviet Culture of Poverty” is becoming less and less visible over time, playing against the legacy of the USSR, and can only artificially be fueled by pro-Russian political parties, this frame has returned to media in 2006-2007 under the time of the government of Viktor Yanukovich.

In general, one can record the tendency to reduce the perception of the social problem of poverty in the key to Soviet psychology, to reduce the dependence of citizens on state care.

The media frames „Arithmetic of Poverty” and „Poor Consumption as a Delayed Life” are related to the construct of experts „Poverty as Penny Aid”. Until 2007, these frames occupied key positions, as the level of social assistance was so low that it was impossible to survive only on state payments. Only with economic growth, this frame gradually shifts to the background, although it has a stable position in terms of media and experts' attention.

As the research results have shown, poverty has become an active tool of political struggle relatively recently. The media frame „Poverty as a Pre-election Slogan” and spiritually close to him „Poverty as a Shame for the State”, are identical to the expert concept of „Poverty as a Political Slogan”. The frequency of mentioning in the media of these frames coincides with the waves of election campaigns, the quality and accents are related to the positions of those political forces that are in power or in the opposition.

In particular, in the periods 2000-2003 and 2006-2007, the frame „Poverty as a Shame for the State” was used more often. This was due to the fact that the political elites that were at that time in power, identified themselves with the state, thus opposition speaking of poverty, emphasized this situation in the form of a shame of the state, that is, power. By contrast, in 2004-2005 and 2008-2009, when there were elites in power who represented pluralism and liberal politics, criticizing the state did not make sense, therefore, they concentrated exclusively on poverty as a phenomenon. In general, poverty in politics today is seen as an effective tool of struggle through a constant decline in living standards over the last eight years.

In expert opinion, we also highlighted the construct „Awareness (informing)”, which is reflected in the media through the frameworks of „Economic Reforms” and „Poverty as a Lack of Middle Class”. The middle class was the main indicator of the success of the state and the goal of virtually all political programs of the period 2000-2007, which was reflected in the media. Its absence showed a failure of economic reforms, about which in the background of the goal „middle class” they practically did not speak until 2008, when the priorities have been changed. Since 2008, the theme of economic change to overcome poverty has prevalent over the static middle class as a paradigm. Also, due to the fact that the relative

economic growth before the crisis in 2008 contributed to the early formation of the middle class that brought to the fore the economy.

In recent years, poverty in Ukraine has accumulated not only the level of incomes and awareness of its condition, but also the situation of internally displaced persons, who, according to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, accounted for more than 1.6 million people. In expert thoughts and media, this phenomenon was reflected in the frameworks of „Sudden Poverty” and „The Effect of Poverty (Crisis-War)” respectively. This frame has taken its first position in the media during the years of the global economic crisis of 2008 and the period of hostilities in the part of Donbas in 2014-2016. The causes of poverty in this perspective are not controlled by government or non-governmental organizations, but this only means that efforts to overcome poverty in this perspective need to be made even more, and ways to overcome the problem must be unique and new, on what, in general are directed media texts.

In summary we can say that expert constructs and media frames though constitutionally different, but the semantic filling and content match.

Consequently, the communicative constructs of social problems exist on several levels of social consciousness:

- in the form of a nonconceptual communicative construct of „common sense”, which is spontaneously, unformalized, contradictory and serves as a kind of „repository” of mass representations of complex social circumstances as potential social problems;
- in the form of a conceptual expert construct which is created in the desk conditions within the limits of scientific activity, the aim of which is to rationalize, explain, put forward a hypothesis, prove or refute assumptions at the level of „common sense”;
- in the form of a specifically conceptual communicative ideological construct that is created to perform a certain pragmatic function - to mobilize supporters to solve a particular social problem, taking into account the interest of a certain social group.
- in the form of media frames, which generally reflect not only the real dynamics of the real problem, but also the waves of public interest in this problem, created either by complex social or economic circumstances, or by artificial efforts by the actors of the political process.

Further development of this topic is possible in the direction of analysis, how accurately public opinion reflects the dynamics of the image of the social problem demonstrated by expert constructs and media frames; the extent to which these or other media frames serve the purposes and interests of ideological constructs of a social problem; how effective are media frames in terms of potential impact on public opinion.

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Media frames and constructs of social problem

Summary

This article analyzes the features of the social problem of poverty communicative constructs. The constructionist procedural approach to the description of social reality makes it possible to see social problems as a result of actors versatile activity. In the process of social problematization

(i.e. converting private problems into social or transformation of complex social circumstances into the problem), the problem is discussed within a few constructs that describe and interpret it in different ways.

Communication constructs differ in the level of conceptualization, i.e. the degree of coherence and logical subordination of certain principles of the content. It is noted that communication constructs in terms of conceptualization could be viewed at the „common sense”, expert and ideological levels and at the level of mass media. Communication constructs of all levels play a role in the social problems construction (these roles are analyzed on the example of „traditional” social problem of poverty) and may affect the design of political reality, its regulation in the course of social policy.

Key words: social problem, communicative construction of social problems, the construct of „common sense”, expert construct of a social problem; ideological construct, media frame