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Symbolic discourse of street protests: walk through the provincial Yelets

Современные вызовы социально-экономического развития

Резюме: Мы приглашаем Вас на конференцию, которая состоится в Куявско-Поморской Высшей Школе, в центре города Быдгощи, на улице Торуньска 55–57. Это будет продолжением цикла ежегодных конференций, открытых в 2010 году нашим учебным заведением. Проводимые научные встречи, направленные на более широкий межкультурный диалог и обмен идеями по проблемам современного мира широкой группой экономистов, юристов, педагогов, богословов, культурологов, политологов, социологов, историков, медиа-экспертов и представителей других дисциплин.

Для участия в конференции приглашаем всех людей, независимо от вероисповеданий, чтобы обсудить проблемы современного мира с точки зрения культурных, правовых и экономических норм. Она также служит платформой для обучения по широкому спектру направлений, осуществляемых различными обществами в огромном глобализирующем мире.

Рабочими языками конференции будут английский и польский. Статьи после положительной рецензии будут опубликованы в научных публикациях

Ключевые слова: уличные протесты, символизм, мощность.

Symboliczny dyskurs ulicznych protestów: spacer po prowincji Jelec

Streszczenie: Artykuł analizuje cechy protestów ulicznych na współczesnej rosyjskiej prowincji. Autora interesuje symboliczny wymiar protestów ulicznych. Przyjmuje się, iż symbole protestu i ich rozpowszechnienie tworzy nową protestacyjną rzeczywistość.

Dostrzegalny wzrost praktyk ukrytego protestu przyczynia się do rosnącego znaczenia symbolicznego języka, w którym pisze się list protestacyjny. Ponadto artykuł zwraca uwagę na działania władzy, która zapobiegając delegitimacji również produkuje swoje symbole.

Słowa kluczowe: protesty uliczne, symbolika, władza.

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Calls street protests in modern Russia, signaled the arrival of a new political reality in December 2011, along with the right political meanings, contain a number of meanings that exist among the various discourses. It is difficult to imagine that street protests are no economic reasons. It is difficult to perceive the street protest as a whole without trying to make out his social nature, seen in this particular prerequisites for the future expansion. Finally, the political street protest in modern Russia can be considered in the symbolic discourse. Protest as a new political reality was originally placed in the already well-established space – the cities texts, which has its symbolic content – characters memetic zones, urban myths.

In this article, the author tries to present a street protest in a symbolic context. As already noted, the presence of the protest to the original predefined symbolic area, it could allow to consider how these or other symbols or provoke subject to the protest action, or, on the contrary, it is grafted conformal behavioral line. Hence, opposition to the government and opposition is well worth considering, and through opposition of meanings, their symbolic meanings collapsed. Both the authorities and the opposition, in the interests of their own political legitimacy are always ready to create a symbolic area, keeping it at a certain voltage. It characterizes the relations of power and the opposition at all levels of politics. In this article, the author tries to show the street protest opportunity on the example of Yelets (Russia, Lipetsk region). It is in the spatial continuum of the Russian province and will be considered by street protests.

Certainly, the authorities there are more opportunities to create characters, celebrate their urban space, holding, thus, a street protest. Control of the characters is another indication of relentless capitalization government is stepping up its supremacy in the world of symbols, as well as the economy.

The authority notes all possible discourses, where the formation of meanings. This feature has been noted Roland Barthes passage about the «power, nesting in all discourse, even if they are born in anarchy»¹. The point of view of Roland Barthes harmonizes with the wonderful idea of Guy Debord, expressed in the «society of the spectacle». Noting the total character of the authorities, as well as its consequences – total performance, the French theorist May 1968, spoke about the desire of the authorities to the planting of the play. Planting means the elimination of freedom and alternative. Restrictions apply to the interpretation of reality. The power builds the most convenient format for the show itself, which «recreates itself in every discourse, where before was still an independent point of view»².

Indeed, the effect of power on the social body is so strong that it is spreading to the symbolic discourse. Society feels the need for a symbolic resolution policy, having a particular sensitivity to its metaphors, supplied to recipients

¹ R. Bart, *Selected Works. Semiotics. Poetics*, Progress Publishers. Univer, Moscow 1989, p. 547.

² G. Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, Ravager, Moscow 2011, p. 14.

through controlled channels of communication. All social, political and cultural systems are structured and can be expressed in a symbolic context.

Looking at the Yelets spatial plan, the researcher is unlikely to not pay attention to its dependence on the numerous barriers anyway, constraints limiting the freedom of the individual and his right to political protest. The existence of barriers is largely due to the power and expressing its total institutions, concentrating a significant cultural and symbolic capital. Power control city together with the fact that it includes. Initially, urban space, concentrating in himself the characters and generating them, a kind of memetic areas at the urban body, one way or another, act as barriers to physical and spiritual order. They constrain the physical body and the freedom of expression of the individual, exposing the limits of his election.

The highest symbolic concentration mentioned in the direct center of any city. It is in the city center of power is converted into the total control machine over the lives of individuals. Centre – located in the residences of power, departure rituals, executions, mass demonstrations and tourist traffic. In the center located the most important objects of the architectural passport of the urban space.

The central area of the town has always been associated with the state machine – the official residence of the government, on the one hand, and with civil society represents a very specific form – the markets, booths, pubs – a meeting place of the townspeople. There are usually criticized and power. There are plans to counter its repressive machine – it is there, and formed the basis for the future of street protests. Our point of view is consonant with the Mikhail Bakhtin's position, who saw in the central square of «an amazing time-space where all the higher authorities – from the state to the truth – were specifically presented and implemented, were visibly in cash. And in this particular chronotope committed and comprehensive disclosure and review of the life of a citizen, made public its verification of citizenship»³.

The symbolic value of the center is difficult to overestimate, as well as his tremendous symbolic metamorphosis. The center opens unpredictable moods power able to execute as well as mercy. Finally, the idea that the revolution take place «in the political center, implicitly influence the philosophy and political choices of political actors»⁴.

Since the December protests (and even before) in modern Russia there is a practice of care from the center due to the power of elemental delegitimation immunity. It is in this context we are considering the problem takes on a symbolic extension. One surprising that in those Russian cities where protests actualized practice, there is a shortage of empty space that can accommodate the protesters citizens. For example, in Moscow the same problem acutely declared itself in February 2012, when there was competition in the meetings between

³ M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Literature and Aesthetics*, Art Literature, 1975, p. 282.

⁴ A.V. Skiperskikh, *The discourse of political power in a fairy text: Invitation to the slow reading*, MUP Yelets Typography, Yelets 2011, p. 56.

the government and non-systemic opposition. The authorities satisfied with the situation, working to preserve their positions when «the role of the Kremlin as its spatial manifestation. Monopoly executive expressed restriction of public access to the surrounding streets of the Kremlin, pass control of entire neighborhoods China-town»⁵. Kremlin as it rises above the other monuments and sites of urban topography – the power for a long time it assigns a symbolic and physical body.

Power can not be interested in the protest rally at the windows, prone protect themselves and avoid late medieval Prague reminiscences «ejected from the windows». The current situation with spatial passport coming off the city center and hence symbolic meanings belongs entirely to the initiative by the authority. For example, Moscow for the last 20 years, has lost about 30% of public spaces, came under restrictions in the form of physical barriers as well as legal regulations. Prospects for the development discourse of street protest considered when designing policy and ceremonial spaces. So in Moscow, «Parliamentary Centre is still thought of as a building with a closed mode of operation, rather than as a public and symbolic objects as saturated zone, the provision of modern transport and information infrastructure»⁶.

Similar restrictions apply to the lower levels of politics. Speaking of Yelets, should recognize the similar problems related to the ritual, ceremonial places that are under the full control of the city administration. Loss of control over them means a loss of opportunity to fill their space and formulate a semantic field, unfolding in front of an audience.

In Yelets there are 17 public spaces – 4 square, 8 parks and public gardens. Each public space could include protest action. Of course, we are not talking about the streets, because one can hardly turn around protesters properly, so as not to obstruct the movement of citizens. So, we are talking about the following spaces:

Square – 4 – Lenin Square, Vermishev Square, Victory Square, Red Square.

Public Gardens – 8 – Ann Gayterova Square, Kharchenko Square, Komsomol Square, Solomentsev Square, Prishvin Square, Afghans Square, Pushkin Square, Khrennikov Square.

Parks – 5 – City Park, Children’s Park, Park 40th Anniversary of October, Park Railway, Peter Park.

At first glance, it seems that the protest action can fill any of the 17 spaces, but, in fact, is not the case.

Several public spaces immediately drop out of the number of potential venues for the protest rally. The protest action could not be carried out on the territory of the city parks, because it required site preparation, snow removal (according to Yelets, we could often see too much snow in the streets). If you consider the options with the areas, it would appear that two of the four urban areas belong to the sacred sites, the control of which is the principal task of

⁵ Y. Bocharov, E. Syrenko, Strategy close policy, “Kommersant-Vlast” 2012, Number 10, p. 24.

⁶ Tamže, p. 25.

preserving the legitimacy of the government. Lenin Square and Red Square are home to a significant symbolic capital, through which the city government is fueling your body. It was there that go rituals of power – parades, ceremonies, school proms. In Red Square, a memorial stele in honor of the Yelets as a city of military glory. In Red Square, held a rally in support of All-Russian political party «United Russia» during the election campaign in Yelets City Parliament of the 5th convocation. The power to fill the space exclusively for their own benefit.

As for the remaining urban areas – Vermisheva and Victory, they initially may not be of interest to non-system opposition due to the fact that in these areas is intense car traffic. Authorities only once conceded to the organizers Lenin Square, and even then it did in the bitter cold. The ruling elite hoped that the meeting would be unlikely. However, contrary to her expectations, the meeting was held, and even some protesters were rooted in numbers. It was a great surprise to the ruling elite. Failure to provide a central area of the city for other reasons rally was driven by the installation of the Christmas tree (24 December 2011) and mass celebrations of Carnival (February 26, 2012).

The most likely venue for the protest actions in Yelets were urban parks. But there were some limitations. In this sense, the remote possibility of the meeting was the agreement in relation to the Khrennikov square in front of the city administration. This space for meeting was important from a political point of view, the space could already be the story of protest. One day, in the square already withdrawn their supporters deputies, disbanded in 2005 the City Parliament. Going there Yelets entrepreneurs, unhappy working conditions and the closing of the market. Both cases have had a great response, which attracted a federal city media. City authority seems to deliberately not going to create a sort of Yelets Hyde Park, so as not to saturate a particular locus of urban protest meanings and symbols. Noteworthy is the fact that all Yelets street protest meetings were held in different places.

The power is not interested in expending their own symbolic capital, which slowly filled powers vessels during its development. Therefore, the Yelets administration is interested in providing protesters least expensive room for protest splash of energy (low-cost in terms of symbolic costs). Of course, the best option for power is, in general, the absence of any initiatives «from below» to establish the practice of street protests. But if the protest is still asserting itself, then the power is doing everything to its effects were vivid and memorable. It was at this moment, the authorities have the support of the very geometry of the city – architectural design. With its help, but as it gradually to the body of the individual protester unpleasant restrictions will be imposed.

City buildings and topographic objects can be compared with the petrified people. The authorities have also successfully manages, as well as the living, which make up the social fabric. The main thing for the power not to leave the city (and society) without a host. Recall how in the «Plague» by Albert Camus mayor of Oran Algeria, Plagued, ready to leave town last only once to be evacuated all of its residents.

Failure of management codes can lead to a loss of confidence, a decrease of legitimacy, which often forces the authorities for the safety of his position to use the unpopular measures. This was at one time spoke T.Garr, notes that «the loss of coherence is not always determined to upset the public order, which, in turn, leads to violence»⁷.

Continuing the argument about total institutions can not touch the problem of the existence of total Yelets religious institutions that form the semantic field around itself and the special barrier environment. Religious institutions develop in the individual custom specifications that impose significant restrictions on its behavior.

The high concentration of total religious institutions in Yelets, following the Polish author A.Borovsky, makes us speak about a specific ethno landscape inherent in a given space⁸. Yelets ethno landscape, which clearly silhouetted church domes and bell towers under restoration, acts restriction imposed on street protests.

Yelets ethno landscape is also a peculiar form, invisible to the clutch circuits symbolic violence – Latent part of the overall pyramid of violence, on top of which is piled subjective violence, carried out by following S.Zhizhek – «social agents, evil people, disciplined repressive apparatuses, fanatical crowds»⁹.

Religious ethno landscape «catch» eyes. This is the first thing that is willing to pay attention to the enchanted traveler and intellectual. Domes of churches emphasize the presence of a credible and strong institutions ontologically, rather than existing at that time the political institutions. I.Domnikov appreciated Yelets beauty only in this context: «we enter the dace, and I must say that the old – a year older than Moscow – Yelets incredibly beautiful, with dozens of churches on the convex streets in the hills and is likely to survive the Korolev with his elite, with its newspapers and commissions»¹⁰.

Religious outlines Yelets ethno landscape referents are the authoritative interlocutors with direct knowing subject. Let us remember, as in “Life of Arsenyev” religious ethno landscape conditioned city linguistic world of the Bunins hero – «there at the entrance to his ancient monastery... <...> The closer the cathedral, the louder, heavier, thicker and more solemn roar of the cathedral bells»¹¹.

Walking in space will certainly visit marked objects that make up the religious landscape in itself is a systemic violence. This is a certain way the individual disciplines, balances it, balancing his doubts, providing a unique opportunity to swell his dreams, but, the truth and narrows the range of interpretations. «For

⁷ T. Garr, *Why people are rebelling*, Peter, St. Petersburg 2005, p. 192.

⁸ A. Borowski, *Religion, intellectuals and power (religious institutions in the landscape of Polish cities)*, Ethnoconfessional Intellectuals in the world: the way of choice, Moscow State Humanitarian University, Moscow 2011, p. 474.

⁹ S. Zhizhek, *Violence*, Publishing House «Europe», Moscow 2010, p. 14.

¹⁰ I. Domnikov, *Russian Running on the rake*, [Http://domnikov.novayagazeta.ru/1999-18.shtml](http://domnikov.novayagazeta.ru/1999-18.shtml) [22.05.2013].

¹¹ I. Bunin, *Life of Arsenyev. Novels and short stories*, Pravda, Moscow 1989, p. 107–109.

some reason, they are often left on Saturday, so that on the same day in the evening I had to go to vespers, in the little church of the Exaltation of standing in one of the back alleys near the school»¹² – Bunin's lyrical hero recalls that he had to experience when his parents leaving Yelets.

Religious ethno landscape permeates the city's topography passport, regardless of time of day or the season. Religious ethno landscape invades the dream of a subject to places near and dear ones. That's why once I. Bunin write about the features Yelets weather, not forgetting, however, to make out in the snow, blizzard hordes of their moral spies, «sometimes for weeks wore impenetrable, Asian snowstorms, which loomed just the city bell tower»¹³.

Cross absorbs ethno landscape, speaking with the eternal guardian, reformatory and the conductor to the higher powers. Cross centers around the temple and the structures themselves move. In the poem «Magdalena» Boris Pasternak says:

The ranks of the convoy rebuild,
And riders will start leaving.
Like a tornado in the storm over his head
Will be to break this cross the sky.

B. Pasternak. Magdalena.

If the lyrical hero of Ivan Bunin and Boris Pasternak city bell tower erected by higher powers seem not susceptible mercy of the elements, it is more aesthetically comparison we see in B.I. Antonich. The cross on the Lviv St. Yura Cathedral compares them with huge key:

Calling the night in the St. Yura square.
Like a mighty cross key¹⁴.

B.I. Antonich. the night in the St. Yura square.

Of course, for an intellectual, which matures revolt against the system, ethno landscape offers a lot of these «delicious». Cracks city walls are the original map, which is applied while years lived subjects in this urban space. The walls of both discipline and dismiss – often the subject of running along them, as if running away from fate, from time to time, from the noise of history.

Particular relevance this has to the religious content of urban topography – a tasty theme understanding of God, his slow, leisurely comprehension. Subject realization of God is relevant to almost any intellectual chronotope. Thoughts on the death of an intellectual limitations dictate and limit any philosophical reconstruction. Especially contribute to these reflections walking around the city. Thus, the symbolic discourse of street protests causes individual topographical manifestations – architectural versions of total institutions, limited the body of

¹² Tamže, p. 16.

¹³ I. Bunin, *Life of Arsenyev. Novels and short stories*, Pravda, Moscow 1989, p. 116.

¹⁴ B. I. Antonych, *Three rings*, Chronicle, Lviv 2008, p. 114.

an intellectual, squeezing it with their walls and foundations. But reading topographical signs is passed through an intellectual walk is open to question. How to read a potential subject of protest these signs? Will they be for him a warning, provocation dreams and deepening memory, or, conversely, whether they spur it to a new rebellion? The intellectual is still slowly wanders through the city, like the hero of the Swiss writer B.Sandrar, «striking the playing kids ball»¹⁵.

Is it not a barrier hindering the political activity of the subject, attractive topographic feature? Resolute comparison requires further development and refinement that postpones indefinitely the need of a frontal collision with power. If you allow the religious ethno landscape, the subject turns to the beholder. Potential subject of protest prefer political revolt – an aesthetic that disrupts the usual stereotypes of perception and reasoning scheme.

Eager mouth... drink the wine of the clavicle;
The sky's pale cheeks with a golden beauty spot.
And the top of the dome looks like the paps she-wolf
Having fed Romulus and Remus and asleep.

Brodsky I. Roman Elegies (1981).

The city with its houses and churches keeps the subject in a strong dependence of himself and of his own dreams, Edify subject to periods of thorny Asian snowstorms. Religious objects can be submitted to a particular subject, not only in Yelets, but also in other cities. By the way, ethno landscape can be presented as a kind of surface on which are superimposed symbols. At the moment, for example, are popular souvenirs in the form of magnets, which are placed on the city's landmarks. In Yelets the most popular religious theme souvenirs. In the context of our study we can conclude that the gift series also supports a certain hint of curbing political freedom of the individual.

Dream displaces rather not protest, and already another daydream. The subject in protesting condition can fully devote her, instead of trying political articulation. Dreaming distracting and tempting with its amazing symbolic inheritance, a few muffling desire rebellion. Of course, the subject with pleasure will try to isolate it from the surrounding ethno landscape a most tasty details and features, in order to try to assign a value to them or arrange them as part of its explanatory scheme. The presence of the prospects for such an experience can distract from the subject of the articulation of political demands. Ethno landscape as narrative is more authoritative ideological construct, rather than finding the truth in the political activity.

At the same time, there is another part of society, are more willing to reflect on is not about the messages and values, and about the form itself – the immediate sign of his presentation. The message is addressed to the audience, but the isolation it becomes a lot more intellectual part of it. Once, Jean Baudrillard remarks,

¹⁵ B. Sandrar, *Prince – Ripper or Zhenomor*, Text, Moscow 2005.

«handed the message to the masses, and they are only interested in a signed. The masses – those who are blinded by the game characters and enslaved stereotypes are those who accept anything as long as it was spectacular»¹⁶.

Ethno landscape made of total institutions, constraining and disciplining of the subject. In a similar symbolic trap caught many citizens supportive of the rule in times of crisis of legitimacy. But, obviously, that the protest rallies did not just happen in Yelets.

An American professor, who came to Yelets, in a personal conversation with the author ironically noted oddity stereotype Yelets as most religious place in Russia. «The most religious place in Russia – say American counterpart – remand prison and two colonies». Comment is largely responsible for the issue of Yelets mystery, its special mental construct. It can be assumed that the number of personnel problems organizations in Yelets traditionally «closed» due to contingent ever to work in prisons. But but if there are staffing problems in schools and colleges, universities and cultural institutions?

Can these institutions constrain the subject of the protest articulations? Can these institutions suppress subject to final?

Experience shows Yelets street protests – not fully. The fact of street protests said in favor of the necessity of rebellion, calling for some individuals to political action. So, after all the desire to limit the release of total institutions so elated the subject? Michel Foucault once said that it is the result of a revolt penetration «of subjectivity in history and revive her with his breath»¹⁷. What is not being involved in a soluble stories can inspire the subject of street protests – the provincial intellectual, student, dissenting in general?

Internal rebellion, which we define a form of externalization, can not be understood by the audience as the need to protest reflection, therefore is it somehow too dull. The attack on Yelets peaceful rhythm is itself a challenge to those institutions that define the rhythm and discipline of the provincial individual. At the same time – it is also a challenge to public opinion, the emerging mass taste – provincial philistines.

Each such event in Yelets noted some scandal or bright managerial decision. Moreover, some solutions have come on their own, without being planned, what comes as a surprise for the participants of the rally. So on the day of the first actions was trampled flag of «United Russia», which caused a storm of favorable comments on the Internet¹⁸.

The process of political legitimation looks like build-up of symbolic capital is hampered by such manifestations of disagreement – the refusal of power literally read all the messages. The episode with the flag of «United Russia» is easily visible in the perspective of losing power of control over the symbolic turnover.

¹⁶ J. Baudrillard, *In the shadow of the silent majority, or the end of the social*, Ural University Publishing House, Ekaterinburg 2000, p. 14.

¹⁷ M. Foucault, *Rebel useless?*, “NZ” 2011, Number 5 (79), p. 18–19.

¹⁸ *In Yelets trampled flag of “United Russia”* // <http://gorod48.ru/news/53993/> [07.06.2012].

The power is no longer prepared to keep society in a state of consensus on the only possible perception of characters. The local authority is too low credibility. Thus, in the symbolic area of some of the voids formed.

Non-systemic opposition has attempted to fill the vacuum symbolic. In winter 2012 in Yelets was trendy orange. Street protest at February 26, 2012, was released into the sky cartoon Putin on orange balloons, and during the actual event, participants heard tangerines with stickers, refer to civil projects. The «orange» theme is widely used in a number of street protests and political performances of «Filling the void» and «Rocking the boat yellow» and «Livny ice», which produced the art group «23:59». The orange color is really fashionable. This trend is trying to use and during the elections to the Yelets city parliament. Orange colors are chosen by some candidates as conceptual solutions, which are built on the basis of the electoral campaign in the City Council of Deputies June 17, 2012.

Orange color has become a symbol, taken to its brand art group «23:59». Initially, there was the belief that the bright, the revolutionary color, irritating Yelets gloomy tradesman, will give shares of provocation and passion.

These examples demonstrate how the symbolic discourse of street protests affected the protest new practices in their structuring and ideological design.

Symbolic discourse of street protests in Yelets find yourself in the other alternative locations. For Yelets protest characteristic emphasis on literary sources. In street protest placard shape could be used and the political collage. For the first time in a political protest became a graphic artistic dimension. There are political graffiti and graffiti political content. Talking about some general trends, it is necessary to note the desire non-systemic opposition to the use of a rather subtle methods of communication with the audience, aimed at the practice of meditation. Of course, the intellectual protest doomed the prospects for effective communication with a wider audience. Although some form of placard clearly point to the problem of stagnation of power, as the urgent need to change it. Symbolic discourse of street protests in Yelets, its originality and the author's character, according to a special, unique phenomenon of provincial protest itself. It is somewhere between art and revolutionary activism afoot and future relationships and arrangements.

Along with the aforementioned characteristics of operating in a symbolic political protest in the Russian province acting as a kind of private parties to protest, it should be noted and more authoritative general narrative – Russian protest itself, its total, diffuse, which decays to private. Using some of the symbolic and borrowing schemes (orange, white ribbon, features protest vocabulary, etc.) still refer to a more thorough researcher authoritative text – the all-Russian political protest.

With regard to the Russian provinces, probably difficult to ascertain any attempts to penetrate the mass collective of Dionysus in the Apollonian body, which, in a sense, allows local authorities to penetrate the sense of self and the rapture of the usefulness of each other. At the same time, the emergence of even small cracks in the political structure will certainly help to fill them opposition

texts and symbols present in them. Such a situation, in itself, frees the author from having to recognize the power monopoly of the symbolic.

During our walk through the provincial Yelets, it seemed to us that the symbolic discourse of street protests in Yelets is difficult to control as the ruling and opposition actors. In the case of trying to usurp his will, inevitably, mismatching it any unambiguous reading. Symbolic discourse leaves its presence on the political work of the actors, at the same time, acting as a catalyst for their activity and suppressing this activity by the maximum concentration of the symbolic.

As for the total institution represented in the urban topography, their symbolic inheritance, on the contrary, appears quite strong repressive structure conducive to the ruling elite legitimation.