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**MEMORY AND SOCIAL  
INTERACTIONS IN  
URBAN SPACE**

**ПАМ'ЯТЬ І СОЦІАЛЬНА  
ВЗАЄМОДІЯ У МІСЬКОМУ  
ПРОСТОРИ**

**Ключевые слова:** *идентичность, методология, городское пространство, наследие.*

**Боанжиу Габриэла. Память и социальное взаимодействие в городском пространстве.**

Изучение городского пространства румын в тесном взаимодействии с тем, что может называться культурной памятью общин, представляет собой дисциплину, которая непрерывно развивается и базируется на достижениях различных научных направлений. Выявление мест и практик, которые обеспечивают, хранят и перераспределяют память по отношению к обществу, подчеркнув их значение для поддержания жизни в сообществе, в последнее время становятся поводом для серьезных междисциплинарных исследований.

The study of the urban Romanian space in tight relation with what could be called the cultural memory of a community represents a discipline in continuous development, reuniting contributions from different scientific areas. The discovery of places and the practices that assure, conserve and redistribute the memory towards the community, the emphasizing of their importance in supporting life within a community is, lately, the main concern of some serious analysis developed in a multidisciplinary spirit. Only such an approach allows the recognition of the functioning connections of the urban space and its memory. The exhibitions held in museums with identity objects, the organizing of the habitable space or the visual manipulation of the city for the purpose of the ideological identifying, represent sometimes possible directions for a more profound examination of these relations.

The research is organized around fundamental concepts, such as the collective identity, the cultural memory - concepts that take shape at the confluence of some socio-human disciplines. The collective identity can be defined as "the capacity of some community of recognizing itself as a group; the attribute of the cohesion principle (ethnic identity, local identity, professional identity); resource for life within a society and for the collective acting" (D. Segrestin).

As for the concept of cultural memory, a step has already been made towards an interactive process between the collective memory and the institutionalized answer of a society that faces the challenge formulated by the necessity of patrimonialize

a past significant from the cultural-identitary point of view. The key concepts of the present research – cultural identity, collective memory and inter-ethnic communication – will be regarded from an interdisciplinary perspective, taking into consideration the practices of the popular culture in the urban environment, identifying specific elements of traditional or cultural-identitary traditions in the passive stock of the urban inhabitants' memory, considering both the ethnic specific for certain cities.

The present study, organized rather like a reflection on the viability of the methodology that will be used in the actual research, is structured as a questioning and substantiation of the epistemological and methodological status of the 'oral history' in the wide range of the socio-human sciences.

Considering the approaching of this concept, could be shaped two initial coordinates-interrogations that require a ramification: on one side can be questioned the capacity of the 'oral history' of conducting toward and substantiate a scientifically established knowledge, rigorous and viable, on the other side the researcher's attention must insist on the methodological valences that devolves upon the "oral history". In other words, what we can *know* and in what way (*methodos*) or *how* we can know, using the documents of 'oral history', in the same time contributing to the configuration of such collections. Actually, will be interrogated the double quality of the analyzed concept: that of method and document. We will notice during this process that this distinction (method-document), due to some consideration rather methodological,

will prove to be fecund, because it focalizes the attention on some positive valences of the concept, emphasizing its unity and oneness, discriminating/identifying/concealing its limitation and 'incriminating' the abuses.

A necessity almost constituent to any argumentation appears, organizing itself around this concept ('oral history') that represents a double reference of it, on one hand to the aspects of *orality* and on the other to the discourses that the *memory* emphasizes.

This approach, quite abstract and didacticist, will prove its viability if the 'ramification' of these references will entail new horizons, like the rapport *memory-identity*, for naming just an example regarding the possibilities of approaching this problems.

The exploratory character of the oral history collection becomes visible in the moment it is understood the fact that this "construction", beyond its dialogical aspect, represents a "provocation", a built instrument, because the oral history collection "answers", in some way, to a researching intention, to a working *interrogations-hypothesis* of the researcher; therefore "a life history represents especially the exploring of many possibilities: the details, the complexity of the emotional involvement set in motion the perception from its stagnant position allowing it to open for the sense or senses"<sup>1</sup>. Between them – researcher and interviewed, must be established a spontaneous relationship. The nature of human relationships favors the establishing of a dialog in which the researcher must own the ability of revealing himself as little as possible in order to avoid the producing of "predictable answers", causing in the same time revelations from the subject, who has already become dialog partner and not only an information source.

The oral history always reveals itself in its double quality of method but also of document, an 'open' document as we mentioned, due to the graduate character of the research, correlated with the phenomena's dynamic.

Further more, an ethnological viable document allows new opportunities, new approaches, new starting points, new interrogations. In this respect Ricœur highlighted that: "at the epistemological level, the autonomy of history toward the memory it is distinguished with intensity at the level of explanation/comprehension. (...) there is no document without a question and no question without an explanation project. The document becomes proof particularly in comparison with the explanation"<sup>2</sup>.

Although Ricœur is referring at the historic document, the extrapolation can be done in the folklorist area either, taking into consideration the characteristics of archiving and historizing the socio-cultural facts. So, he asserted that "nothing is itself a document, even if any past residuum is potential evidence. For the historian, the document is not simply given, as might suggest the idea of vestige. It is searched and found. More, it is circumscribed

and, therefore, constitutes, instituted as document through interrogation"<sup>3</sup>.

The author makes a direct referring at the oral history documents, evidencing "the same characterization of the document, through the applied interrogation, is pertinent for a category of unwritten evidences, recorded oral evidences that the micro-history and the present history intensely use. They play an important role in the conflict between the survivors' memory and the already written history. Or, these oral testimonies represent documents only after they have been recorded; at that moment, they abandoned the oral sphere for entering into the written one, estranging from the role of usual conversation evidence. Then, one could appreciate that the memory was registered and documented. Its object is no more a remembrance in the proper sense of the word, meaning that is no longer involved in a relation of continuity and approaching with the present of the conscience"<sup>4</sup>.

The working hypothesis includes the explanation, the initial interrogation, and the entire argumentative intervention is organized around this point, the ulterior interpretation depending on its theorized viability. In the same time, the oral history collection doesn't waste its valences during a single researching cycle, because it can involve new opportunities, new approaches or achievements in time and space, ulterior comparative studies etc., extending the area of the preoccupations that generated it.

Although the border line between the qualitative-quantitative studies is a very strict one, as regards the acquiring of some viable results is necessary the cumulative use of different techniques and methods of investigation. The qualitative methods involve a greater freedom concerning both the thematic and the interviewed people.

Characterized by fluidity, improvisation, the qualitative studies are realized in an open horizon, not without any organization. Therefore it is preferable in a spontaneous context that will entail the active implication of the interviewed people in the dialog, in an ambiance that, although it aims for the recording, must keep and favor the development of genuine dialogue.

This attitude will favor the opening, the spontaneous orientation of the approached theme towards ramifications that were ignored before, but that would prove to be fecund on the way. The rigor, the pre-established structure of the questionnaires or field investigation – methods with a quantitative tint, will complete in an extent, sometimes statistic manner, the elements observed at the level of a small community, but viable organization of them can't be done without realizing an orienting, pilot qualitative study.

The methodological, sociologized super-rationalization, specific to the quantitative methods, sometimes prove to be too rigid when portraying some aspects from the socio-cultural field of some particular cases, even unusual, comparing to the

general situation, losing in this way the relevant information. The role of the qualitative studies, among which the oral history method is very often used, is a major one, especially in such “minor”, but relevant for the entire community cases. We might take as fecund such an orientation of the oral history method on the relevant case, on some “talking persons”, through whom the community, the social structures can be regarded as mirrors of some particular situations in the ‘lived event (of life)’ under the circumstances of our theme of investigation – the status of propriety and the dynamic of mentalities in the post-communist period.

Must also be mentioned the possibilities of manipulation in directions without any scientific ground of some oral history documents, “the enthusiasm for *life histories* leads to some exaggerations, either regarded as object or method of study. From the ethnologic, anthropologic or narrative point of view, the relativity and the fragmentarism induced by the absolutization of an individual perspective can lead to interpretations without scientific value”<sup>5</sup>.

The configuration of the oral history collection needs a double attention, either methodological or deontological. On this ground, the methodological requirements are intersecting with those of professional ethic. They can easily be correlated with the binominal objectivity-subjectivity, and the realization of any ethnological document must be related to this problems. Thus, “taking into consideration the context variables that confer a unique character to each performance within the oral cultures, must accept the fact that the ethnological documents are partial fictive creations, a result of integrating the significance transmitted by the creator (interpret) in the subjective issues area of the researcher’s competence and objectives”<sup>6</sup>.

The life history is intrinsically connected to the ‘memory’, as prime substrate that needs investigations. The reference that Paul Ricœur specifies in his work *The memory, the history, the forgetting* when mentioning „the notions and words history” proves to be „instructive” in our case as well. Thus, he highlighted: “the Greeks had two words *mnēmē* and *anamnēsis* for designating on one side the memory that emerges in a such passive way that its appearance within the spirit can be characterized as affection – *pathos* –, on the other side, the memory as object of a quest named usually remembrance, effort for remembering. Successively, found and looked after, the memory situates itself at the crossing of semantics and pragmatics. To remember means to have a memory or to be in the situation of searching for a memory. In this respect, the question *how?* asked by *anamnēsis* tends to detach itself from the question *what?* asked in a stricter way by *mnēmē*”. Therefore, it treats the chosen path, “from *what?* to *who?*, go beyond *how?* – from recollection to the reflected memory, passing through reminiscence (or remembrance)”<sup>7</sup>. The discourse on the methodological and deontological aspects of config-

uration, respectively the consulting of oral history collections can be built around this fix axel that Ricœur mentioned, that of the double hypostasis of the memory – as a passive recollection, under the badge of affection that appears spontaneously, respectively of ‘remembrance’ that involves an ‘effort for remembering’.

The respecting of some deontological principles the moment the data are collected must represent essential problems within any study that involves the field researching, due to the implication that it has on the results of the researching regarded as an assemblage and especially on the assurance, on the creation of a trust and confidentiality climate that will not allow the respondent to hide certain events, opinions, representations or images. The life history is “never the pure reality, but its representation”<sup>8</sup>, or exactly this thing is fundamental for the researching that refers to the property’s images in the dynamic of the contemporary mentalities. It is intended the deciphering of some modalities regarding the assembling of significations, the senses of the property’s image, of their connection with different social, cultural (inheritance, migration, mobility, collectivization, urbanization etc.) aspects, and also the reconstruction of the mental elaboration’s process of the social practices specific for some periods of time more or less recent.

The memory can be, or rather is necessary to be correlated with the concept of identity, which we will approach in our research as “relational manifestation”, surpassing the alternatives objectivism/subjectivism. The identity is not an immutable “offering”, but “it is constantly constructed and reconstructed within the social exchanges”. Therefore it is conferred an important share to the relational situation and to the actor that confers significance, the identification being now at the same level with the differentiation.

The relation memory – identity is intrinsic for every study that aims the configuration of the oral history collection because “every self history implies the relation with the other from the near or the larger group, with the other similar or different. So, it is a manner for the identity quest, for the expression of certain opinions, beliefs, values on which it is created an individual or collective existence.

The specific of an autobiographical narration is that of expressing, either implicit or explicit, such a horizon of representations, related with concrete circumstances from the living that are rendered, judged, evaluated, retroactive interpreted, according to the events that captured them, to what the one who lived them became or what he thinks he became and also to the present events”<sup>9</sup>. The research of the quotidian life, of the small fact that proves to be significant on the way, opens a fecund horizon for the folklorist research because, “confronted with the complexity of the lived event, many common places or stereotypes are taken down and exposed to questions and to problematization (...)”<sup>10</sup>.

We know that the representations are continually reconstructing themselves, deteriorating, amplifying or perishing. Ricœur emphasized the necessity of avoiding the confusion “between the confirmed facts and the happened events. A vigilant epistemology warn us against the illusion of believing that what we call a fact coincides with what had really happened and even with the living recollection kept by the witnesses, as if the fact would have been asleep until the moment the historians extracted it. This illusion against which Henri Marrou had been fighting in *De la connaissance historique* (Paris, Du Seuil Publishing House, 1954), maintained for a long time the belief that the historic fact isn’t fundamentally different by the empiric fact from the experimental sciences of nature”<sup>11</sup>. The distinction between the historic fact and the remembered real event must be taken into consideration. So, “the fact is not the event, rendered to life by a witness-science, but the content of an enunciation that desires to represent it. As a result, always should be written: the fact that one thing or another had happened. This way, the fact can be regarded as constructed by the procedure that extracts it from a range of documents, about which we can assert that they establish. This reciprocity between construction (through the procedure of complex documentation) and the establishing that (on the basis of the document) expresses the epistemological status specific for the historic fact. The sentential character of the historic fact (meaning: the fact that) governs the modality of truth or false of the fact”<sup>12</sup>.

We consider the middle path as being the most prolific, meaning that the combining of the two approaches, that of writing the autobiography independently by the researcher’s presence and of the controlled drawing up and recording, in order to limit as much as possible their disadvantages and to fully enjoy the advantages of both approaches – challenges of the remembrance effort. We can talk about three types of interview – directive, non-directive and semi-directive.

As their naming indicates, the first type takes into account the obtaining of some answers at the pre-established questions that will be used in statistic purposes, the second type refers to an indirect and open approach of the interlocutor, being encouraged to adopt a spontaneous discourse. Because of the impossibility of constructing ‘total neutrality’, since the simple presence of the researcher represents a distortion factor of a normal communication situation, the non-directive interview is always, in different extents, a semi-directive one<sup>13</sup>.

They represent ideal types of interviews, in fact there are mixed interviews, but the most viable seems to be the semi-directive one because, assuming both flaws and advantages of the other two types of interview, will be able to foresee the eventual deviations or to use their fecund valences.

‘The authenticity’ of the configured document can be questioned, considering that this represents actually the product of the interaction researcher-

interlocutor; can we therefore talk about the epistemic substrate of the remembrance effort when ‘the provocation’ of the memory pushes the methodology towards the experiment? Certainly yes, because the practice of the ethno-folkloric researching contributed at the elaboration of some rules that the researcher must bear in mind in his field work and not only, for not altering or vitiating the quality of document of the collected material. Thus, the building of a trustful relation appears as one of the preliminary conditions for proper development of the interview. For this, the researcher must have patience and must familiarize himself with the studied subject because he can’t just pretend to talk spontaneously about personal events from his life. Also, as a general rule, he must provide information with reference to his person. The analysis of the conditions of producing the story (the relation researcher/subject, the situation of the interview, the conditions of realization) appears as one of the essential stages of the research. Because we can consider the biography a common production, it is necessary an ethnographic reflection regarding the activity of investigation and the studied object. Far from aspiring at the perfect neutrality, this is about the revealing of any form of subjectivity induced by the presence of the researcher, in order to integrate it in the analysis and to notify it in the moment of publishing<sup>14</sup>.

So, the interpretation of the story must include the analysis of its conditions of production in order to validate the authenticity. In the same time it presumes a triple reference at the three levels of reality connected with the discourse: *the formal reality, the represented reality and the lived reality*<sup>15</sup>. The first covers the area of law and norms. The second concerns the representations, the moral and the ideologies. Finally, the third level refers to the social practice, the behaviors and the actions of the individuals. One of the main tasks of the researcher is, therefore, to unravel the contradictions from the domain of law and of practice, in order to determine the way in which are interiorized the norms<sup>16</sup>. So, this approach seems to be able to substantiate the theme of our research that is the status of the property and the dynamic of mentality from the post-communist period, considering the complexity of the correlations that can be made in this respect.

The provoking and the investigation of the personal narrations, the consulting, respectively the configuration on the oral history collections needs permanent methodological and deontological references, the interdisciplinary studies being able to answer to such scientific requirements and even more, such a measure aspires to contribute at constant elaborations and redefinitions of its methodology.

## References:

<sup>1</sup>Vultur, Smaranda, Memoria salvată – Evreii din Banat, ieri și azi [The saved memory – The Jews from

Banat, yesterday and today], Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2002, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>. Ricœur, Paul, Memoria, istoria, uitarea [The memory, the history, the forgetting], Amarcord Publishing House, Timișoara, 2001, p. 221-222.

<sup>3</sup>. Ibidem, p. 216.

<sup>4</sup>. Ibidem, p. 216-217.

<sup>5</sup>. Fruntelată, Ioan R., Narațiunile personale în etnologia războiului [The personal narrations in the ethnology of war], Ager Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup>. Ibidem, p. 12-13

<sup>7</sup>. Ricœur, Paul, Memoria, istoria, uitarea [The memory, the history, the forgetting], Amarcord Publishing House, Timișoara, 2001

<sup>8</sup>. Fruntelată, Ioana Ruxandra, Narațiunile personale – problematica definirii [The personal narrations – the problematic of definition], in “Studii și comunicări de etnologie” [Studies and dissertations regarding the ethnology], volume XIII, Imago Publishing House, Sibiu, 1999, p. 88.

<sup>9</sup>. Vultur, Smaranda, Memoria salvată – Evreii din Banat, ieri și azi [The saved memory – The Jews from Banat, yesterday and today], Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2002, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup>. Ricœur, Paul, op. cit., p. 217.

<sup>11</sup>. Ibidem.

<sup>12</sup>. Ibidem

<sup>13</sup>. Blanchet A. et. al., L'entretien de recherche dans les science sociales, Dundod, Paris, 1985 apud Geraud, Marie-Odile, Leservoisiere, Olivier and Richard Pottier, Noțiunile-cheie ale etnologiei – analize și texte [The key concepts of the ethnology - analyses and texts], Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2001, p. 41-42.

<sup>14</sup>. Geraud, Marie-Odile, Leservoisiere, Olivier and Richard Pottier, op. cit., p. 44

<sup>15</sup>. Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup>. Geraud, Marie-Odile, Leservoisiere, Olivier and Richard Pottier, op. cit., p. 44.

**Боанжіу Габріела. Пам'ять і соціальна взаємодія у міському просторі.** Вивчення міського простору румунів у тісній взаємодії з тим, що може називатися культурною пам'яттю громади, являє собою дисципліну, що безперервно розвивається та базується на досягненнях різних наукових напрямків. Виявлення місцевостей та практик, які забезпечують, зберігають та перерозподіляють пам'ять по відношенню до суспільства, підкресливши їх значення для підтримки життя у співтоваристві, останнім часом стають приводом для серйозних міждисциплінарних досліджень.

Антропологічні та психологічні студії з питання суспільної, національної та індивідуальної пам'яті в урбаністичному середовищі, а також спроба відслідкувати шляхи та етапи їх реалізації в закритих чи різношарових соціальних, етнографічних групах ставиться за мету дослідження. Пам'ять і соціальна взаємодія є генетично пов'язаними поняттями: з одного боку спільна пам'ять продукує взаємодію в соціальних групах спільного середовища (в нашому дослідженні – міського простору). Однак, соціальна взаємодія, яка триває певний час приводить до створення суміжної, спільної пам'яті. Алгоритм такого подвійного переходу від питання «що?» до «хто?» через

шлях, який можна окреслити «як?». Етнографічна база дослідження полягає в його методології та у просторовому виборі – урбаністичне середовище. Соціологічна складова – базується у пошукові ідентичності етнографічних одиниць у заданій площині.

Що стосується поняття культурної пам'яті, крок вже зроблений в сторону інтерактивного процесу між колективною пам'яттю та інституційною відповіддю суспільства, що ставить завдання сформульоване необхідністю патрімоніалізму як значного минулого з точки зору культурної ідентифікації. Це дослідження, організоване швидше як відображення життєздатності методології, яка буде використовуватися в практичних дослідженнях, структурована у вигляді анкетування та обґрунтування епістемологічного і методологічного статусу "усної історії" в широкому діапазоні соціально-антропологічної науки.

**Ключові слова:** ідентичність, методологія, міський простір, спадщина.

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