

## CONFLICT OF VISIONS IN THE DISCUSSION ON THE DECOLONIZATION OF ODESA: A STUDY OF THE DYNAMICS IN FINDING SOLUTIONS FOR THE JOINT CONSTRUCTION OF THE FUTURE

### КОНФЛІКТ ВІЗІЙ У ДИСКУСІЇ ПРО ДЕКОЛОНІЗАЦІЮ ОДЕСИ: ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ДИНАМІКИ ПОШУКУ РІШЕНЬ ДЛЯ СПІЛЬНОГО БУДІВНИЦТВА МАЙБУТНЬОГО

*The article examines the situation of public concern around the implementation of the decolonization policy in Ukraine, namely the decision to dismantle monuments and rename streets in Odesa. Based on Bruno Latour's sociological approach, the author conducted actor-network mapping of the controversy and applied the optics of the analysis of modalities of existence to study participants' argumentations: how they are framing the situation, justifying their positions and defining the positions of their opponents. The transformation of urban space is viewed by the collective of decolonization supporters through the optics of the concepts of national security and cultural emancipation; in this context they legitimize their position by appealing to political and moral arguments, supported by referring to emotional reasoning. In such a way they are creating a segregationist discourse that partially excludes opponents as legitimate participants of the discussion. Their opponents, in turn, focus on the topic of compliance with democratic procedures and the preservation of cultural heritage; in their argumentation, local identity and diversity become the main points of resistance to undemocratic actions. The analysis reveals fundamentally different visions of the future of Ukraine and understanding of the threats and stakes of the war with the Russian Federation. A detailed analysis of the parties' arguments reveals an appeal to different "cosmoses" – ordered pictures of reality, although they appeal to the common fundamental values of democracy and the European choice. Instead of searching for the truth between these positions, Bruno Latour's approach suggests recognizing the legitimacy of opposing perspectives and seeking compromise solutions in the specific components of the controversy, that is, in our case, the balance between the imperatives of national security and democratic values, between the preservation of local diversity and cultural emancipation.*

**Key words:** actor-network theory, decolonization, politics of memory, modalities of existence.

*У статті досліджується ситуація публічного занепокоєння щодо впровадження політики деколонізації в Україні, а саме – рішення про демонтаж пам'ятників і перейменування вулиць в Одесі. На основі соціологічного підходу Бруно Латура автором проведено акторно-мережеве картографування контрверзи та застосовано оптику аналізу модальностей існування для дослідження аргументацій учасників за фреймування ситуації, обґрунтування їхніх позицій і визначення позицій опонентів. Трансформація міського простору розглядається колективом прихильників деколонізації через оптику концептів національної безпеки та культурної емансипації. Своєю позицією вони легітимізують за допомогою поєднання політичних і моральних аргументів, підкріплених емоційними характеристиками, створюють сегрегаційний дискурс, що частково виключає опонентів як легітимних учасників дискусії. Їхні опоненти фокусуються на темі дотримання демократичних процедур і збереженні культурної спадщини. У їхній аргументації локальна ідентичність і різноманітність стають головними точками опору недемократичним діям. Аналіз виявляє фундаментально різні бачення майбутнього України та розуміння загроз і ставок війни з Російською Федерацією. Детальний аналіз аргументації сторін виявляє звернення до різних «космосів» – упорядкованих картин реальності, хоча вони і апелюють до спільних фундаментальних цінностей демократії та європейського вибору. Замість пошуку істини між цими позиціями підхід Бруно Латура пропонує визнати легітимність протилежних перспектив і шукати компромісні рішення в конкретних складниках контрверзи, тобто, у нашому випадку, між збереженням локального розмаїття та культурною емансипацією.*

**Ключові слова:** акторно-мережева теорія, деколонізація, політика пам'яті, модальності існування.

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**Introduction.** The full-scale Russian military invasion triggered significant revision of the Ukrainian memory policy. The adoption and implementation of the so-called “Decolonization Law” intensified public discussions about rethinking of historical heritage and transformation of the public space of Ukrainian cities and towns. In general, such discussions did not receive significant publicity around the country, but in Odesa, the decision to demolish 19 monuments and rename 119 streets triggered a public outcry. Street pickets and a collective open appeal to UNESCO [14] and the Ukrainian authorities

became a form of protest to government decision. The signatories of the open letter called on the President of Ukraine to suspend the law and cancel the orders of the Regional State Administration on demolition of monuments and renaming the streets.

This situation leads to the problematization of the legal matter of fact (the order to implement the “Decolonization Law”) into a matter of concern [16]. Such controversies attract actors and networks into a dispute about the impact of these changes on the quality of communal life, appealing to various arguments and forming their own

diagnostic-mobilizing and proactive-prognostic positions. This, in turn, launched complex processes of formation of alliances of supporters and opponents of the implementation of the law. The unfolding of this discussion and the formation of opposing positions outlined differences not only in the approach to reinterpreting the past and the attitude to national and local features. Indirectly, these differences also indicate different types of understanding the meanings of the war with the Russian Federation and the visions of Ukraine's future.

The problematic aspects of this dispute are, in our opinion, certain epistemological limitations of a narrow repertoire of tools for creating and reproducing social representations by involved actors. The paradigms underlying the social imagination are clearly biased. Their rigid interpretative frameworks limit the structure of the discussion, in particular, in accordance with the stereotype of territorial-ethnic demarcation of the population of Ukraine, which dominated during the 2004–2014 election period. This is a stereotype of division into two conditionally rival political camps, with significant ideological differences and vectors: conditionally “pro-Ukrainian” and conditionally “pro-Russian”.

In the context of the war with the Russian Federation, which has radically changed the Ukrainian socio-political landscape [5], the tendency of the discussion about historical memory to reproduce a stereotype is, in our opinion, significantly conflict-generating. On the one hand, such a tendency can mobilize openly destructive anti-Ukrainian marginals. On the other hand, society loses sensitivity to the local contexts of its specific cell – the city of Odesa with its inhabitants and urban space. In general, the environment of problematization ignores the numerous social dimensions of reality that are revealed in the dispute. Communication between the parties in such a conventional channel is directed in the unproductive direction of mutual insults and “cancelling”, taking the subject of discussion out of the brackets. From the issues of reconfiguring urban space and rethinking historical heritage, the balance of public interests and factors, the public discussion is shifting to the ideological dimension: the conceptualization of the “correct” loyalty to the state and the corresponding essentialist labeling of the participants in the problem, the division into “ours” and “alien”. This complicates both the achievement of understanding on the issues of decolonization of the common space in Odesa, and the mission of developing a common narrative of the future of all of Ukraine, as a political nation.

At the beginning of the war, in the context of protection from the invader Ukrainian citizens demonstrated a high level of consolidation around common ideas like national sovereignty,

democratic system and independence of the country [10]. However, at present unresolved disputes, one of which we are analyzing, outline differences in the perception of these values. This, in turn, becomes a disintegrating factor for a society whose internal unity is essential for resistance against Russian neo-imperialism.

In our opinion, it is urgent to seek a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the ongoing controversy over the reinterpretation of historical heritage.

Bruno Latour's sociological actor-network perspective provides sensitive tools for epistemological overcoming such biases, and for detailed mapping and representation of participants interested in such a problem [18]. At the same time, the methodology of Latour's late works for analyzing modalities of existence [17] allows us to identify the realities to which actors refer in their arguments. This approach makes it possible to avoid reducing a multifaceted problem to exclusively political-ideological interpretations. This approach makes it possible to avoid reducing a multifaceted problem to exclusively political-ideological interpretations and creates epistemological opportunities for a complex understanding of the problem.

The goal of our work is to conduct actor-network mapping of the controversy around the problem of implementing the decolonization of Odesa and to identify how both camps mobilize different modes of realities to articulate their argumentations and detect the underlying prerequisites (fundamental assumptions) of the formation of ideological differences between the parties.

Based on this approach, we set ourselves the following tasks: 1. To identify key actors and their network associations in the discussion about the implementation of the “Decolonization Law” in Odesa. 2. To analyze the interpretative frameworks through which both camps view the problem, construct their own political subjectivity, define the opponent. 3. To compare the visions of the present and future of Ukraine of both camps. 4. To analyze the outlined possibilities for compromise in building the common good in common existence.

The empirical material of our research includes legislative acts and official statements focusing on their interpretation and implementation of government representatives; responses and reactions to them issued in media by actors in the form of public appeals and statements, reflecting their attitudes and arguments in the discussion; interviews with key participants.

**Actors and networks participating in controversy.** The dispute over the implementation of the “Decolonization Law” has attracted actors at different levels. Despite the specificity of each participant's position and its influence on the

controversy's trajectory, two situational coalitions of people and institutions are identified united by their attitudes toward changes in city space and fundamental visions of Ukraine's future.

The alliance of decolonization supporters includes state authorities operating at two levels: the national one, implementing a policy of memory, and the local one – and local administration-represented by the Regional Military Administration head Oleh Kiper who ensures the implementation of the law in Odesa. The institution providing expert support for the implementation of the law is the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UINM).

An important role in determining the direction of public debate on this matter of concern play such media actors as bloggers, journalists, intellectuals, and other public commentators of a national-liberal and nationalist ideological orientation.

The positional map of opposing camp consists of both those who do not accept the policy of decolonization at all, and those who do not deny its necessity, but is against particular details of its implementation in Odesa, which contrasts with the unified approach of the supporters of radical decolonization camp. At the political level, the main actors are the city authorities, in particular Mayor Trukhanov, and municipal institutions responsible for the preservation of cultural heritage.

The core of the opposition public initiative consists of representatives of the local intellectual and expert community, including historians, local historians, urbanists, artists, architects. A special role is played by experts working outside Ukraine, such as researcher Anastasia Pylyavska, who initiated the appeal to UNESCO. Their position abroad, she argues, allows them to maintain status as local community representatives and be free from the restrictions and risks of social ostracism associated with opposition stances in Ukraine.

The “Decolonization Law” and open letter to UNESCO are the main texts among non-human actors enrolled in the issue.

Certain material actors like the Pushkin monument, streets named after prominent Russian-speaking Odesans like Babel, Ilf and Petrov, and Zhvanetsky, function as obligatory passage points [13] in the discussion, requiring each party to articulate their attitude. Attitudes toward them structures positions and classifies participants in terms of their vision of the policy of decolonization. These objects act simultaneously as material artifacts with their own history and as symbols of different stages of the past.

Another important contextual actor is war. Structuring of the discussion and argumentations is affected by the way the parties define war's nature, threats, and stakes.

**Framing the Controversy and Constructing Political Subjectivity.** Decolonization advocates

use concepts of cultural emancipation and national security to articulate the interpretative scheme of the controversy that they translate in public discourse. In the national security dimension, the issue of markers of Russian imperialism in cultural heritage sites, in particular local monuments, is seen as an important component of Russian military aggression, because Odesa's public space is defined as an important aspect of the national security topos with all its threats and corresponding security measures.

Thus, symbols of Russian culture in the city of Odesa are interpreted as indirect instruments of military aggression against Ukraine, and their rejection is considered in the context of the fight against the enemy. Myroslava Barchuk, a journalist, vice president of the Ukrainian PEN Club, representing the side of supporters of decisive decolonization, articulates the following narrative, referring to the postcolonial methodology of identification of referential connections between cultural objects and expansionist political-violent practices of the former metropolis: “For Russia, culture is inseparable from politics and conquest. On the one hand, it is a Trojan horse with which Russia promotes its narratives to colonized peoples. On the other, it is a smokescreen that masks Russian aggression and crimes from the world” [1].

At the same time, Russian and Soviet monuments, symbols and narratives are seen as forcibly imposed, opposing both the political sovereignty and the autonomy of Ukrainian citizens as individuals, and elements of Ukrainian culture and identity are seen as authentic, though, they are oppressed by the imperial domination of the past, and therefore require psychological and emotional liberation: “We are liberating ourselves from the Russian-Soviet mask, under which the real face of our culture and our land was hidden” [1].

This vision is supported by references to historical facts that debunk myths about “Russian Odesa”: “Odesa is increasingly ceasing to be distinct from the all-Ukrainian context and is uniting with other corners of the country. Forgotten pages of the city's history are being revealed to Odesans – stories about fighting side by side with other Ukrainians” [7].

Thus, the interpretative optics of decolonization supporters forms a picture of reality at the intersection of three modalities: political (cleansing from potentially dangerous symbols), moral (restoration of historical justice) and psycho-emotional (cultural emancipation). Such a multidimensional system of argumentation is based on substantiation by historical facts and presents decolonization as a natural and fair socio-political process. Thus, a discursive basis is created for the legitimization of legally defined mechanisms for the implementation of

decolonization policy, which in the legal dimension is declared as “protection of the cultural and information space of Ukraine” by means of “liquidation of symbols of Russian imperial policy” [5].

In such a picture, the political subjectivity of the supporters of the controversy is presented and justified: they act on behalf of the interests of the Ukrainian state and nation, and supported by referencing moral, security, and emancipatory reasoning.

Similarly, opponents of decolonization build their interpretation of the controversy through a combination of the optics of democratic procedures and the preservation of local cultural heritage, criticizing the aforementioned legislative and administrative mechanisms of decolonization: they see authoritarian tendencies in them.

The neglect of democratic procedures and values is articulated as one of the main points of concern: “The reassessment of the past should take place democratically, with the discussion and implementation of world practices of problematizing the past, and not the worst Soviet approach, when “no monument – no problem” [2]. This political aspect of the argument is closely intertwined with the ethical problematization of the community’s right to self-determination. Violation of democratic procedures is associated with ignoring the principle of representation – the alienation of the local community from participation in the process of adopting changes: “the decision on monuments is imposed from above <...> is felt by a certain violence”.

The importance of applying such procedures is associated with another key optics of this camp – an appeal to the need to preserve the local cultural heritage and identity of the city, the peculiarity of which is leveled by the unified approach of decolonization policy. This local feature is opposed both to the national approach to constructing identity and to the imperial narrative, articulating itself as an independent value with a deep emotional connection: “We didn’t want to lose our Odesa flavor, our identity. This has nothing to do with the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. This is Odesa and this is the DNA of Odesans” [8].

At the same time, this narrative is reinforced by an appeal to international expert recognition – Odesa’s status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a Creative Literary City: “The arbitrary dismantling of Odesa’s tangible and intangible world heritage, including monuments that were built by and belong to its community, not only tears holes in the city’s architectural canvas. It strikes a blow at Odesa’s cultural memory and its legendary identity as a haven of cosmopolitan freedom” [14].

Thus, the interpretive optics of opponents of decolonization constructs a picture of reality through the interaction of political (protection

of democratic procedures), moral (right to self-determination) and emotional (attachment to local identity) modalities.

Such a system of argumentation, supported by the objective recognition of the special status of the city, interprets the policy of decolonization as a threat to democracy and cultural authenticity.

Thus, the political subjectivity of opponents of radical decolonization is constructed: they present themselves as defenders of the interests of the local community and the values of democracy.

**Defining the opponents.** The strategy of defining the opponents for the pro-decolonization team is created through their generalized ideologic image. The basis for ideological attribution appears to be the criticism of public rhetorics and argumentation. Ideological self-representation of the signees, as the defenders of the European, “cosmopolitan” values, is deconstructed as a manipulative strategy that calls to save the trace of the Russian Culture and ignore its Ukrainian component: “The authors of the Odesa letter to UNESCO use the adjective “cosmopolitan” 5 times, yet, their demand focuses on saving elements of solely Russian-Soviet heritage. The Ukrainian context of Odesa is not mentioned at all” [1]. Analytic forms of deconstruction of the content of the application to UNESCO become the foundation for delegitimization of the referential basis of the letter. The supporters of the decolonial status quo reveal factual inaccuracies and manipulative interpretations, like naming the monument to Katherine the Second “iconic” despite the fact that it is only a replica of the original memorial and was erected in 2004, as well as a romanticization of Pushkin, by calling him an “oppositional poet”, and highlighting that the reason for his visit to Odesa was the exile. The deconstruction of such generalizations is used to discredit both – the document and its author. At the same time, negative characteristics that are used by the supporters of the resolute decolonization and discrediting of the separate objects, are being extrapolated on the whole group of the letter signees.

If not mentioning the potential nuancedness of the voices, positions, and other personal characteristics of the signees, the criticism of the “decolonizers” categorizes the “appellants” as a united political camp that presents a danger to the national security of the State.

A significant role in such political generalization plays the negative reputation of the city mayor, Hennadii Trukhanov, whose name is also among the signees. The image of Trukhanov, who established himself as a corrupted politic, who translates pro-Russian attitudes, is being projected onto the whole collective of the opponents of the resolute decolonization: “Following the example of the Odesa mayor, Hennadii Trukhanov, famous for his perennial

pro-Russian activity, the signees began to support the popularization of the pro-Russian messages, which aim to save the domination of the symbols of the “Russian world” in the public space of the main city in the Ukrainian South and thus, discredit Ukrainian Government” [2].

Such interpretation equates the disloyalty to the separate aspects of decolonization policy to the disloyalty to the government in general and becomes the foundation for moral condemnation and delegitimization of the civil position of the opponents, as the politically motivated action against the fighting the aggressor: “People that spread such narratives do not want us to win the war with Russia” [4].

The additional strengthening mechanism of the political accusations and moral condemnation appears to be the emotional rejection of the opponents. The classification of the opponents presents a whole specter of labels, defining them under certain categories: from “unintentional supporters of the RF [aggression]” to “Russophiles”, from “vatniks” to “scoundrels who hold on to Russia”.

People who fall under such categorization become the object of despise that morally deserve disrespect because of their political rigidity: “If a person doesn’t see National Security as the highest value, they are worthless, and there is nothing to do with them” (from interview).

Thus, the military context not only supports the radicalization of the estimations, but also creates the segregational moral discourse that polarises opposition between “real patriots” who support governmental politics and “hidden enemies” who allegedly stand against it and, therefore, support the aggressor. This creates conditions for social pressure and isolation of the opponents to minimize their public influence.

The representatives of the oppositional camp deny the accusations of disloyalty, calling them illogical and immoral, appealing to facts of personal active participation in the events of national formation on the Maidan of Dignity and development of cultural and public institutions, as well as the participation of many of the signees of the UNESCO letter in the war actions against Russia. Among these people are soldiers, activists, volunteers, and those who informationally advocate Ukraine in the West, like the author of the letter, researcher-anthropologist from Cambridge, Anastasia Piliavska, or poet Boris Khersonskyi, who says: “I talk a lot about the situation in Ukraine and do my best to debunk the Russian narrative” [11].

These references become an instrument that fights moral condemnation and protects from the emotional rejection of the opponents.

At the same time, the most radicalized moral criticism and emotional stigmatization from proponents of decolonization are

being instrumentalized by the oppositional camp, as evidence of the authoritarian tendencies in actions of the authorities and the “decolonizers”.

The actions the State takes are being interpreted as the break of the democratic procedures and principles: “The renaming process seems to go out of hand <...> the decisions are made by the simplified mechanisms, bypassing commissions, and surveys of citizens” (from interview), and their radical support in the public sphere is seen as the limitation of civil pluralism: “The moment alternative opinions appear, their bearers are being labeled as enemies of the State” [9].

This becomes the basis for the appearance of moral condemnation and the neglect of the basic values that present fundamental differences between Ukrainian and Russian society. The “appellants” blame the resolute part of the decolonizers for “approaching the enemy in terms of worldview”: “Ukraine rashly turns into Putin’s Russia” [12].

Some of the participants in the discussion supplement the moral condemnation with emotional rejection, comparing the actions of the opponents with Soviet purges, and blaming the division of society and incitement of hatred, adding that such a social situation benefits the enemy, who is one for both sides.

Meanwhile, the active part of the coalition, which articulates its identity as Russian-speaking Ukrainians, unfolds ideological criticism, regarding the actions of their opponents as manifestations of radical nationalism, that aims at the discrimination of linguistic and ethnic groups of the Ukrainian population, and interpret the initiatives on toponymic purification of the city as ones done in the spirit of linguistic prejudice.

Such practice is being condemned, as it goes against the moral principles that have become symbols of the Ukrainian Euromaidan – dignity and freedom. The participant of the Maidan, Odesa journalist and activist Leonid Shtekel, points out the paradoxical unprincipledness of his former Maidan companions, who now, for the sake of an ideological goal, support authoritarian practices of the local government, which previously was on the other side of the barricades: “In Odesa, there appeared a touching alliance between the nationalist groups, that were once on the Euromaidan, and the current head of the administration, who fell under lustration during Yanucovich’s presidency” [9].

Proponents of decolonization answer such accusations with an example of the Street of Amvrosii Buchma, the prominent actor of the twentieth century, which was renamed due to cooperation of the personal with Soviet authorities, completely disregarding his great impact in the development of the Ukrainian linguistic culture, instead, adding to the toponymic context

names of Russian-speaking Odessians from the period of Independence – Kira Muratova and Oleksandr Royburd. This reinforces the existing counter-argument that considers the politics of renaming as one that does not fully correspond to the modern national idea and the democratic procedure enshrined in law but is driven by a rigid nationalist agenda [4].

The very fact of such ideological framing is interpreted as a reproduction of the Russian imperial optics, which sees the “natural process of rethinking identity” as “something painful”. As Myroslava Barchuk notes: “the rejection of Russian identity has always been a threat to the empire and has been labeled as Ukrainian nationalism or extremism” [1].

Both camps use psychological references for defining the opponent. Activist Leonid Shtekel pathologizes the radical pro-Ukrainian position, resorting to the dictionary of psychological diagnosis, calling it an “inferiority complex” [12]. Similarly, supporters of decolonization interpret resistance to change through the cultural-psychological concept of the “postcolonial syndrome” [1]. That is how Myroslava Barchuk explains the behavior of opponents as psycho-emotional dependence that creates grounds for “the impossibility of mental emancipation from imperial culture, the feeling of the culture of the former metropolis as higher, and own culture as secondary” [1].

As we see, the analysis of the strategies of defining opponents shows how both sides deepen the split by mutually delegitimizing each other’s positions as morally discredited, supporting their assessments by appealing to emotional arguments and referential facts.

**Defining the Boundaries of Potential Compromises.** The camp of opponents of radical decolonization articulate ways of achieving compromises, particularly pointing to the need for a more nuanced and personal approach for dealing with concrete artifacts and symbols, taking into account each role in forming city identity, its emotional ties to people, and dimension of its ethical characteristics. Odesa poet Borys Khersonsyi for example notes that out of 19 monuments, he is concerned with only three, articulating new contexts of one of them: “Pushkin, Babel, and the Alexander Column, which has long been depersonalized and is not a tool of ideology any more” [11].

To make such a nuanced approach possible in practice, the opposing camp insists that it is important to create conditions for a comprehensive expertise of the issue.

Objective factors limit the possibility of implementing a compromise – main among them is the war, which obstructs the mobilization of intellectual and material resources for more democratic procedures and intensifies the

emotional aspect of the issue, turning it into an ideological confrontation.

According to the opponents of the “Decolonization Law”, a compromise solution might entail freezing the issue and postponing it until the end of the war: “A complex legacy needs to be worked on, not simply brushed aside with decrees that narrowly interpret vaguely worded laws <...> Time is needed. That is why “simple solutions” must be postponed until the moment when the spirit of the law condemning and prohibiting the propaganda of Russian imperial policies can be implemented, not just its letter” [2].

The opposing camp rejects such compromises, interpreting requests for postponement and the search for alternative solutions as procrastination and sabotage of state policy [2]. From their perspective, the existing procedures are sufficiently democratic and efficient both in terms of representing the voice of the community and in terms of time frame.

**From the Confrontation of Visions to Cosmopolitics.** Analysis of the controversy reveals fundamentally different visions of Ukraine’s future, formed during the war. Although both camps appeal to the common values of democracy and European choice, a closer examination of their arguments reveals a reference to different cosmosis – worlds of ordered reality.

The cornerstone in understanding these worlds is the interpretation of the war with the Russian Federation.

For supporters of radical decolonization, the war is a confirmation of the fidelity of their beliefs: the existential struggle with the enemy has been going on for centuries and will end only when everything hostile is uprooted, because this is a war primarily for the political and ethnic identity of Ukrainians, they are crucial aspects of society for maintaining high level of solidarity and resilience.

The break with the imperial past is interpreted as an important step towards new ideals of the European future, so democratic values are viewed primarily in the context of the struggle to preserve sovereignty.

A significant part of the opponents of radical changes has a different point of view on the main problem of the war.

Namely: the main political confrontation is seen in the struggle between democratic and authoritarian models. Such manifestations of democratic values, cultural diversity and multiple identities are not seen as a threat to national sovereignty, but on the contrary, national sovereignty is seen in the context of protecting these fundamental components of a free society.

Thus, the alternative point of view sees the key to the stability and resilience of society in its openness and inclusion of representatives of different political and ethnic groups. Maidan

and European values are interpreted primarily as pluralism, freedom of expression, the implementation of democracy through inclusive procedures and public dialogue.

So, we see that each of the parties has a logical and solid system of argumentation.

Such an approach implies a reference to a certain real “objective reality” that is independent from what actors think and say. But Bruno Latour’s approach criticizes this belief: “it often ends up justifying absolutism. As soon as an ultimate substratum of truth is postulated, actors start claiming to have privileged access to it”.

War becomes a powerful catalyst in strengthening one’s own beliefs and gives them existential significance as the only true ones for the survival of the entire society. It turns out that during war, finding compromises for the common good is especially difficult, because instead we see how each camp builds its own “cosmos” – an ordered vision of reality, where all elements are connected and reinforce each other.

Thus, the illusory “objective truth” around which all disputes are waged becomes the main obstacle to mutual understanding and avoiding fight for a single correct solution. That is why it is so important to search for institutional mechanisms that would allow different visions to coexist and to make possibilities for conducting cosmopolitics – creating a common world [18].

**Conclusions.** An actor-network analysis of the Odesa decolonization controversy shows how enrolled actors shape and stabilize interactions through different modes of existence.

The position of radical supporters of decolonization is based on their understanding of national security and the desire to be free from Russia’s influence on culture and the assessment of historical events. In their view, the decolonization of the country, in particular, of the urban space, lies in the plane of the obligatory, since it concerns the security and even the survival of the Ukrainian state and nation. They argue their position by referring to the political situation, appealing to historical justice and the need to escape from the pressure of imperial ambitions in the past of the former metropolis, and now – de jure of the neighboring state.

At the same time, those who disagree with the policy of decolonization refer to freedom of speech and the right to express different points of view as elements of democracy, protecting local identity as part of a multinational country and multicultural society. In their opinion, the recognition by the international community of Odesa’s cultural heritage and the need to adhere to the principles of democracy legitimize this position.

Supporters of decolonization put national security as the main thing, while their opponents refer to democracy and their rights to identify

themselves, considering radical changes to be a violation of their freedom. It’s difficult to maintain a productive conversation with such an opposing stance.

The first step away from that “dead end” could be some agreement to single out the contexts of decolonization such as: individual rights and freedoms, security, historical memory, cultural identity, and to look at each of them separately. This approach requires at least an admission that the problem is complex and to solve it, the opposite points of view must be legitimized, even if the opponents do not agree with them.

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