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The Quality And Way
Of Life In Belarus:
Evolution And Possibilities
Of Transformation

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EVOLUTION AND POSSIBILITIES OF TRANSFORMATION

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Introduction

For nearly 20 years, the Eastern and Central European countries have been in the process of reforming their political system, economy, tenor and way of life. In the majority of these countries, the reforms have already been bringing positive results for many years, even though in each of them the process itself is at different stages. And only Belarus drops obviously out of the general context. Reforms in Belarus are declared as well, but are being carried out with appreciable originality, and their results give rise to very antilogous estimations which spread is very wide — from extremely rapturous to completely pessimistic. The changes initiated in Belarus are characterized as tinkering and discursive reforms, counter-reforms, the old Soviet orders' restitution and even «its own unique way». Longstanding supervision of political and economic changes' course in Belarus has offered a whole slew of explanations and interpretations of these reforms' peculiarity and contradictoriness.

Most of these explanations and interpretations see the reasons of both successes and failures of the processes that take place in Belarus, in subjective factors and frequently in personal qualities of Belarusan politics' concrete characters. It seems to us that the subjectivistic and personalistic explanations' possibilities are already depleted. It is necessary now to deal with deep factors and reasons. Errors or achievements of some people or political subjects and their will or

conservative points of view can for a while hamper the course of public processes or even turn them in the opposite direction. However, today it is clear yet that the unique “Belarusan way” is not just imposed by single political subjects’ actions, but is supported actively by Belarusian society as it is congruous with expectations and demands of a significant part of the country’s population. It is impossible to understand the political and economic processes in Belarus without perceiving the nature and bases of such public support and such coordination of the state policy on the part of the population. We are far from idea that expectations and aspirations of any or even the biggest part of the population coincide necessarily with national interests. It is more often active minorities that struggle for their chance to influence socio-political processes, whereas the passive majority only resists any changes or, with this or that degree of readiness, accepts them. Still, in the concrete Belarusian case, consentient resistance to democratic and market transformations and the same consentient acceptance of paternalistic and anti-market actions stand out particularly.

As a result of our long-term research and analysis of the Belarusian situation, we come to a conclusion that the reasons of such a state of affairs are rooted in the Belarusian population’s tenor and way of life. As a matter of fact, explanations of the Belarusian reforms’ course, which are based on specificity of mentality, values, modes of thought, etc., are also wide-spread enough. They appeal more often to these phenomena as to the objective facts which must be taken into account, but cannot be changed.

The prior reform attempts concerned the spheres of ideology, political power, state construction and management, economy and economic set-up. However, the tenor and way of life were perceived as something inviolable, which cannot be influenced in an artificial-technical way. All conservative approaches and explanations of why Belarus needs no changes or why those which are being carried out, are unsuccessful, are based on this very attitude.

In this work, we consider the lifeway sphere to be changing – from generation to generation, or even during a period comparable with

human life. Moreover, we believe that in the lifeway sphere it is possible and even necessary to have changes or reforms with apt concepts, notions, programmes and political will in order to implement them.

In the first part of this book, we describe how the tenor and way of life changed in Belarus during the second half of the 20th century when the USSR existed. In the same part, we characterize the latest decades' policy and state programmes. We proceed from the assumption that the Belarusian authorities' actions were based on the concepts, notions and categories suggested by public and human sciences. The Belarusian regime has been carrying out purposefully and consistently the programme built on the basis of the Soviet ideology and social science. In order to develop new programmes and to start launching reforms corresponding to modern global tendencies, thus including Belarus in the full-fledged all-European process, it is necessary to change the conceptual bases of humanitarian and social approaches, concepts and categories. Therefore, in the second part, we review possibilities and ways of constructing such concepts and categories which would make it possible to implement reforms in the lifeway sphere.

We see two directions of how to use the concepts we develop in the lifeway sphere. The first direction is to criticize Soviet social science and conceptualizations about human beings and society, which now prevail in Belarus, with a subsequent transition to new conceptual bases. This direction can only be realized with the help of a wide public dialogue, including not only ideological disputes, but also academic and scientific discussions, PR campaigns in the mass media, as well as higher education establishments' and schools' curricula freed from dogmatism. This book is a small contribution to this wide public dialogue which is yet to be started. The second direction is connected with the "cultural policy"¹ and the study programme we have been implementing since 1994. It develops and modifies according to both

¹ Matskevich U. Belarus Athwart Obviousness // Athwart Obviousness. Nevsky Prostor. 2006

changes of the socio-political situation and our own promotion and accumulation of knowledge and materials. In the third part, we describe briefly the study programme's section concerning the "cultural policy" which touches the lifeway sphere.

This book continues the series we started in 2007, – Belarus For Beginners. The book, just like the series itself, is for readers who only start to get acquainted with the Belarusian realities and whose knowledge and experience could be used in transformation and reform processes in Belarus. We consider it an extremely positive factor. Belarusian reformers, experts and analysts need a critical opinion from outside and cooperation with European and Russian scientific centres and expert communities. Our experience shows that the Belarusians themselves need the books from the Belarus For Beginners series, too. Unfortunately, we do not know our country very well, while there are obviously not enough research programmes which could help us study our country to the degree necessary to develop and reform it successfully.

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Industrialization and urbanization in Belarus's social history since the second half of the 20th century to the present day

System crisis — the beginning of Belarus's modern history

Belarus's modern history can formally begin on 27 July 1990, when the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed, or on 8 December 1991, when the agreements in the Bieiaviežskaja Pušča (White Tower Forest) were signed, the USSR was liquidated and sovereignty became real. However, a break with the past and a beginning of a new period of a country's history is always a process, not just a separate event. Therefore, Belarus's transition from being a part of the USSR to an independent state is a big historical period. For Belarus, this period begins at the late 1980s and ends at the late 1990s or even in the early 21st century.

By the beginning of this period, the majority of the Belarusian population was employed and received their means of subsistence by

working in the state sector of economy. The urban population worked in the field of industry, construction, transport and state-financed organizations (education, public health services, administration management), while the rural population worked in industrialized agriculture. Additional means of living were received from the so-called part-owner units. Most citizens of Belarus were satisfied with social benefits' distribution, had significant savings in the Soviet Savings Bank and could plan their own and their children's future.

A sharp change of the economic situation, world market conjuncture and the increase of the socialist economy's chaos destroyed the habitual forms of life. The early 1990s' inflation depreciated people's savings and spurred on the payment system crisis. Most enterprises could not pay salaries to their workers, while wages which were paid, would not suffice to maintain the habitual lifeway or to satisfy the most elementary needs, including even meal. Some enterprises had «to pay» their workers with their own produce instead of salaries.

The condition, in which the countries and nations on the post-Soviet space happened to be, soon began to be considered a **system crisis**. As a rule, the mention of the system crisis was not accompanied by conceptualization, analytics or reflexion, being treated very primitively as a «very complex and terrible crisis». One of few analytical notions of the system crisis offers a dissection of the whole system into five integral processes² — ideology crisis, authority crisis, state management crisis, economics crisis and lifeway crisis.

First, we shall briefly discuss the framework of the system crisis for the countries on the post-Soviet space. Let's consider the five integral parts of the system crises to be lapping waves. Simplifying a tad, it is possible to say that for the time being the intensity of a crisis grows until it reaches a certain culmination. After the culmination, a recession begins. The intensity of a crisis decreases as well, while public

² Matskevich U. Politics – Goal Or Means // Athwart Obviousness. Nevsky Prostor. 2006

conscience pushes the temperature and problematics away from the first place to the second, third and so on.

Perestroika's whole history had resulted in the first and most important question — which way of their development the newly independent countries were going to pick — capitalism or socialism. Essentially, all theoretical, political and public discussions reduced to this question; it was the basic question of the ideology crisis. The 1991 August in Moscow can be considered the culmination of the ideology crisis. Since then, society's ideological discussions gradually weakened.

After the ideology crisis, the authority crisis becomes much more topical. The basic question of this crisis is who will undertake responsibility for leading the country (Belarus) and its people according to the choice this nation has made while solving the ideology crisis. The intensity of the authority crisis increases together with the appearance and structurization of socio-political elites who enter the struggle for the right to rule the country during a transition period. The result of a positive solution is a democratic procedure of changing political subjects in power.

After the authority crisis, the countries with no democratic traditions face the state management crisis. It is not enough to build democratic rise-to-power mechanisms, it is necessary to construct such a system of state management which would be adapted to difficult transitional conditions. Even those countries that during their pre-Soviet period already had the necessary state institutions and mechanisms (Eastern Europe and the Baltic states), were to re-create them, to master them anew, to improve and adjust them again. Some countries, first of all Belarus and Ukraine, ought to create everything anew. Therefore, the moment of establishing a new state system becomes the culmination of the state management crisis.

When the country's Constitution is declared and institutionalization of state management institutions is completed, it is found out that management is not provided with resources — the national economy is on the down-grade. It is when within the framework of the system



crisis the economics crisis gains momentum; even though its intensity grew step by step before, it is now when it is realized as a problem of the newly created state management mechanism. Suddenly, it appears that economics problems need a structural reform, frequently a complete restructuration, and a country has to change its economic specialization so that to comply with the global division of labour. As a rule, if the economics crisis is solved positively, a country's economy is not only adapted to new conditions, but also is standardized and globalized.

Changes in public conscience and ideology, acquisition of skills in participating in political life, re-interpretation of the state's functions, first of all, in the sphere of relations between the state and the citizen and economic restructuration — all these lead to a cardinal revision of lifeway bases. The lifeway of people taking active part in public processes, starts to change from the very beginning of the period we characterize as the system crisis. However, it is only after the culmination of the economics crisis when the majority of the nation begins to perceive the lifeway cardinal changes. Economically and politically passive public groups face changes of consumer standards, quality of education and public health services, culture in all its displays, family relations and, in general, every day life. The moment when the majority of the population comprehends the change of these lifeway bases can be called the culmination of the lifeway crisis.

This analytically presented system crisis is idealization of reform experience for all countries with transitive economy. Each country can be more or less described with the help of such an idealized scheme. Some countries had almost an ideal system crisis — for example, Czech Republic or Hungary. Still, in the majority of countries, the general picture was far from being ideal. By the mid 1990s, the Belarusan situation was characterized by a syncretic mélange of all the components of the system crisis. Actually, all the waves of the system crisis collided and created interference.

From a formal-theoretical point of view, such a mélange means naturalization of a whole socio-political situation and a refusal from a rational attitude to public processes. From a practical point of view,

it means a loss of control over public processes and a refusal from reforms and reflections, which results in the situation when sequence of solving separate components of the system crisis changes and, as a matter of fact, *the whole complex of the accumulated crises starts to be realized and interpreted in lifeway terms.*

Political elites' irrationalism, entrepreneurship elites' weakness and the fact that the political class retreated from its responsibility to rule the country, had brought Belarus to a lifeway counterrevolution. Probably, this very meaning is to be found in the Belarusian author Aleś Adamovič's metaphor «Perestroika's Vendée». The Vendée is a symbol of conservatism, the traditional tenor and way of life and measurably justified fear of the irrational future. The irrational one because it is not cogitated, not analysed and not planned in rational categories. Concepts, notions, norms and conceptualizations of the tenor and quality of life, which were formed during accelerated industrialization of the Soviet type, had not been essentially criticized at all. Au contraire, they had become an irrecusable ground for decision making in political, economic and social spheres.

Lifeway crisis and the Soviet system restoration attempt

By 1991, huge masses of people had faced the necessity of changing cardinally their lifeway. Meantime, nobody was ready for that.

Firstly, because people planned (consciously or unconsciously) their life in terms of the previous situation. Career promotion, acquisition of property (first of all, housing), education, family planning, provisions for the future, etc. — everything people care about, had become null and void. All savings were eaten by inflation; career achievements lost their appeal and sense; high grades and knowledge which would mean somebody's good prospects before, were useless now. The bare necessities' satisfaction demanded absolutely different actions and behaviour than a year or two ago. The overwhelming majority of people had no samples or plans of how to organize their life in the

new conditions. People used to think in the categories and concepts formed for years and decades, and to apply the Soviet system of values and ideology they learnt, mastered and accepted, considering it unshakable.

Secondly, in the neighbouring countries (Poland, Lithuania) and partially in Belarus, market prospects and opportunities began to appear. Confused and lost people did not consider those opportunities and prospects as their own. They had neither sufficient qualification and preparation, nor desire to use them. Therefore, the market started to spread and «grasp» the Belarusian population in its most primitive and unattractive forms. At the late 1980s — the early 1990s, it was difficult to find a person in Belarus who had never made «shuttle trips» to foreign countries in order to buy or sell some goods. Extemporaneous markets were full of «sellers» ashamed of their «business»³. Most of them did not leave their previous work. They were engaged in shuttle and retail trade, having just left a factory, school and office, or simultaneously with their basic «work». Such people's conceptualizations of life were connected to how they had lived before Perestroika, but not to the opening market prospects and opportunities. People did not choose a new lifeway, but were pushed into it contrary to their will. Those few who during that period could re-orient and meaningfully move, using the newly appeared opportunities, did not spur the others to learn the new way, but caused envy and irritation.

Thirdly, the country had neither infrastructure to provide the new forms of life and activity, nor normative and legal base to regulate them; there was no political will to rule the processes of changes either. Still, there were lots of problems needed to be solved. Thus, these problems'

³ In some towns, especially in western Belarus, similar markets were created by Poles back in the 1980s when there were an economic crisis and martial law in Poland. The «trouble-free» Belarusians used to treat disdainfully such vendors, but in the 1990s they themselves became the same sellers, and snobbery turned into the feeling of humiliation.

.....

solution accepted archaic forms on the verge and sometimes behind the brink of civilization and morals. Organized crime stepped out of the shade and began influencing and corrupting all spheres of life. For a very short period of time, organized crime became a more effective power in the country if compared to the state, while corrupted relations' unwritten norms and rules substituted the law and ethics.

By 1994, all unsolved components of the system crisis became too hard to bear — the country could not exist in the uncontrolled decay mode any longer. A radical political decision was ripening — Soviet revanchism and counter-Perestroika. The elected first president of independent Belarus offered a programme of returning to the Soviet orders, restoring the Soviet lifeway and continuing the Soviet variant of industrialization and urbanization, but now in separately taken sovereign Belarus, with all attributes inherent in these processes and characteristics. Then political slogan «Let Plants Work Again» was his choice's quintessence, explaining this new industrialization and urbanization programme. During several years, marketing and external economic activities provided Belarusan industry's return to the old markets and began to develop new ones. Agriculture was not that lucky. All attempts to restore the demand for industrial agricultural produce failed. The illusion that agricultural industrialization continues was supported by grants and irretrievable credits, while food shortages were filled with import.

By the beginning of the 21st century, the large industrial centres' social structure had been stabilized; plants had started working, though the number of people working in the industry remained at the crisis years' level. The people who were «freed» during the crisis, tried to work in the sphere of shadow economy and primitive shuttle and retail trade, but since the late 1990s these spheres were put in order, too. Primitive forms of trade were turned into industrialized and technologized ones. Spontaneous markets and retail trade units were closed, giving place to shopping centres and supermarkets. Trade spheres' technologization led to a reduction of employment in this sphere. New workplaces were created in housing and communal services, an infrastructure providing cities' life, and

in the administration management sphere. These measures stabilized the social situation and limited unemployment. However, all these processes only took place in cities and industrial centres. Towns' and rural territories' life did not change at all.

Today, it is very difficult to evaluate the changes which have taken place in the social structure and lifeway due to the new wave of industrialization and urbanization. As the case stands, it is hard to understand what is new and what is just modified old. Since 1994, the policy and economy have been built on the basis of the ideas, projects and approaches borrowed from the previous period of the country's development. Therefore, when this wave of industrialization and urbanization was launched, there was no need in any scientific theoretical and research support. In a substantial sense, science and universities suffered not only during the 1990s' crisis, but also continued to degrade and collapse during the period of a relative recovery and stabilization. Though in the higher education sphere during this period new workplaces appeared and the number of students and tutors sharply increased, it was only a quantitative growth which did not demand any development of science, new ideas and approaches.

Thus, as a result of the 1990s' crisis, the most intellect-intensive spheres were destroyed, while stabilization's approaches and concepts did not resolve this sphere's problems, but aggravated them, which led to the current state when the country's statistical system is destroyed, as well as all analysis, research and intellectual support of the processes happening in Belarus, especially reforms' implementation.

If we look at how Belarusian social and political science, publicism and state ideology describe and analyse the political and socio-cultural processes of modern Belarus, we shall see that there are two big and distinct groups of approaches. The first group, despite its internal variety of methodology and theory, describes the processes taking place in Belarus as positive, seeing some development in them. The other group only sees negative tendencies, examining them through a prism of degradation and decline. The majority of official ideologists, political scientists and economists belong to the first group. Among

them, there is Yuriy Shevtsov whose book *United Nation*⁴ states there is no other alternative but industrialization in Belarus. Realizing that at the present stage industrialization cannot develop in the same forms and approaches as in the second half of the 20th century, Shevtsov has to explain divergences and innovations of the current stage of Belarusian industrialization. He explains them by Belarus's specific geoeconomic conditions, the Chernobyl catastrophe's aftermath and the international competition and struggle for economic development resources. Nevertheless, he believes that industrialization's reanimation is the only correct approach, denying any possibility and necessity of carrying out reforms similar to those which are being implemented in the neighbouring countries, including Russia. He tries to present the «Belarusian way» as the standard and example not only for Belarus, but also for Russia and other CIS countries.

If to briefly characterize the other group of approaches⁵, then it is necessary to allocate one, but basic problem. Being based on the concepts and categories borrowed from modern European social and political sciences, this group's representatives can show the abnormality and falseness of the approaches and decisions the Belarusian state uses to rule public relations. Still, they do not problematize the parameters and criteria accepted in the analysis of socio-economic development, and that is why this group's researchers are compelled to state these processes' positive dynamics and a growth of not all, but significant number of socio-economic parameters. What remains unclear is why wrong and erroneous actions allow the Belarusian state to develop and socio-economic parameters to improve.

If we think that the Belarusian state's policy during its independence period was a continuation or reanimation of the policy of the previous

⁴ Shevtsov Y. *United Nation. Belarus's Phenomenon*. 2005.

⁵ Examples of works in the given approach are Romanchuk Y. *In quest of economic miracle*. – Minsk, Centr Mizesa, 2008. – 488 p., Zlotnikov L. *In chancery of populism: ideology, politics and economy in independent Belarus / Collected works*. – Minsk: Encyclopaedis, 2002. – 512 p.

period when Belarus was a part of the USSR, then it is necessary to consider what was done then because everything we have now, has not appeared out of the blue, but had its prehistory.

Crucial processes of the Soviet Byelorussian history of the second half of the 20th century

Starting our excursion into the history of changes and transformations of the lifeway sphere in our country, it is necessary to allocate the basic socio-cultural processes which set the understanding and explanation of reality (conceptual and categorial apparatus), as well as directions and ways of socio-economic and political activity in this sphere. The most significant processes which defined the country's socio-historical situation during several decades, are the ones of speeded industrialization and urbanization. They still determine the modern state of affairs in Belarus.

In due time, these processes constituted the meaning and contents of social thinking and activity's development all over the world (at least, in that part of the world which was influenced by the European civilization). Nowadays, they are coming to an end. It does not mean a complete termination of industrialization and urbanization, but only the fact that they determine socio-historical development no longer. Today, they are being influenced by much more powerful processes such as globalization, westernization and informatization. The modern state of affairs with the quality and way of life in Belarus is the result of the specific course of the country's accelerated industrialization and urbanization, while the further work with them will be defined by restructuration of all areas of life within the framework of globalization, westernization and informatization.

We shall also consider some aspects and specificity of Belarus's processes of industrialization and urbanization. For this purpose, we shall shortly stop to define the basic categories and the context they will be used in our reasoning. We understand industrialization as a transformation of economic activities in the country which is characterized not by

economic factors and categories, but industrial-technological ones. We are only interested in the side of this process, which influences most of all the quality and way of life of people, i.e. organization of large industrial complexes, which changes the employment pattern of the population, monopolization and nationalization of property, standardization of consumption and way of life. Besides, we shall have to pay special attention to industrialization of agriculture. Generally speaking, historical forms of industrialization in various countries do not necessarily assume industrialization of agriculture. The influence of industrialization on the rural way of life and agricultural production is high anyway. Industrialization of agricultural production in Byelorussia, as well as the whole Soviet Union, had a number of features which are of a special interest for us.

We understand urbanization as a fast quantitative growth of the population in cities. We realize that such understanding of urbanization can seem a little bit narrowed. Still, we deliberately separate the process of urbanization from that of urban development. The growth of the urban population is not necessarily accompanied by the urban development and formation of corresponding social organization and way of life. Moreover, the quantitative growth may lead to degradation or urban regress. In this respect, the important aspect of urbanization in Byelorussia is the sources replenishing the urban population. The main source was the in-migration from Byelorussian villages; it determined Byelorussian urbanization's specificity as a quantitative growth of the urban population. The process of the urban growth without any urban development can be illustrated by a historical study of Byelorussian «miastečkas» (townships) which back in the 19th century in eastern Byelorussia and until 1939 in western Byelorussia had all attributes of a city with some elements of self-management, a complex social structure, neighbourhood, coexistence and interaction of various communities (Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant). From 2,000—3,000 to 10,000—15,000 people would live in such miastečkas. During Soviet industrialization and urbanization, these townships increased their sizes, but lost their self-management and communal variety — they

became mono-communal with no attributes of urban life. Anyway, a study devoted to urban development, is yet to be carried out.

Thus, we think that the key processes specifying the basic parameters and directions of changes of the quality and way of life in Belarus, are urbanization and industrialization. During these processes, not only the number of the rural and urban population changes, there is also a lifeway transformation connected to transmission, production or change of norms, behaviour patterns, ways of understanding the world and brainwork. The basic categories in which this sphere is seized and understood, and the objects of transformations are the urban and rural ways of life.

Many modern nations experienced in their history a period of more or less large urbanization and industrialization. England began to turn into an industrial country in the 18th century, during the first industrial revolution. The majority of European nations had this period during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Byelorussia passed the stages of speeded urbanization and industrialization after World War II. These processes' intensity peak was in the 1970s and 1980s. Studying Byelorussian society, this circumstance cannot be ignored — on the contrary, it is crucial for understanding, interpretation and explanation of everything that is happening to Belarusan society.

Accelerated urbanization and industrialization's gradual development

The historical roots of the current state of affairs in Belarus have to be traced back to the late 19th century, but World War II has left such a strong brand on our country and nation that, on the one hand, many processes which had begun before the war, were broken and stopped because of it. And, on the other hand, World War II's shambles, losses and catastrophes provoked so powerful processes of recovery that life on this territory as though began from scratch. Of course, this «as though» allows us to review the post-war period of the Byelorussian history as a complete and continuous one filled with one content and

the same meanings, and to see the previous history as a background which cannot be bypassed or cancelled, but which, alas, could not influence post-war development⁶.

So, within the framework of our theme, the period since 1944 and to this day can be considered as one and, according to its key process, characterized as the epoch of industrialization and urbanization. However, even this complete period which continued for several decades, cannot be homogeneous. We have allocated some stages within this epoch of industrialization and urbanization in Byelorussia.

The first stage — since the summer of 1944 to the mid 1960s — the post-war reconstruction and start of industrialization. Byelorussia's hugest human losses during World War II, nevertheless, did not practically change the ratio of the urban and rural population in the country⁷.

This post-war period is traditionally (and properly) linked to the economic restoration. Still, it is also necessary to name other processes. *Firstly*, together with and as though inside the recovery processes, new enterprises which had not existed before the war, were created. First of all, the large machine-building giants — automobile and tractor plants

⁶ As a result of our studies of Belarusan towns, we can state that their past, whatever rich and interesting it might be, is practically useless when it comes to the understanding of their modern life. The thing is that after the war there were completely other processes of urban life organization, which were not connected at all to the previous samples and norms. The overwhelming majority of the urban population (especially in towns) was the Jews (70—90%) who were put to death or evicted. Thus, there was nobody who could spread the pre-war urban life norms. New norms began to appear from the ground up, being influenced directly by the processes of accelerated urbanization and industrialization.

⁷ In 1941, before the war, the urban population was 1,968,700 people; the rural population was 7,123,300 people, or 21,7% and 78,3%. In 1950, the urban population was 1,619,500 people; the rural population was 6,089,500 people, or 21% and 79%.

which required experts' migration to Byelorussia from outside and the labour migration from villages to cities. Therefore, the ratio of the urban and rural populations started to change. *Secondly*, together with the regenerative and constructive processes, there were *destructive* ones such as, first of all, *forcible trans-border repatriation*, eviction of the Polish-Catholic population from Byelorussia to Poland, resettlement of the Orthodox population from Łomża and Białystok areas (which were mandated to Poland) to Brest Voblaść (Region), as well as Byelorussian families' *eviction into banishment and GULAG*, and in the 1950s — to follow *the unbroken soil in Kazakhstan*. The violent displacement of people was accompanied by an intensive *collectivization* in western areas, including Brest, Hrodna and later liquidated Maiadziemna Regions. It was of a softer character unlike the pre-war collectivization in eastern areas. However, it did destroy the traditional way of life.

The consequences of the population's deportations and the collectivization were extremely destructive concerning the traditionally existed way of life, people's traditionally developed self-identification, family life, moral and psychological features of the Byelorussian peasantry.

One more process which had seriously influenced lifeway changes, was melioration (irrigation engineering) in Polesia (Poleśsie, southern Belarus, Brest and Homiel Regions). Unfortunately, there are no sufficient studies of this process, and we cannot unequivocally qualify this betterment of land and processes of changing traditional forms of rural tenor and way of life. There were both negative and positive sides. To estimate these social phenomena, special additional researches are needed.

As for the collectivization in western Byelorussia: if not to take into account Stalin's repressions against the population of the occupied areas and punitive actions against anti-Soviet resistance, it would be possible to agree that the collectivization in western Byelorussia had a softer character unlike the pre-war one in the eastern areas. Firstly, because it was conducted considering pre-war experience, had higher materiel support and was accompanied by the beginning of

industrialization of agriculture. With regard to mentality and discipline of the western Byelorussian peasantry, these processes allowed Hrodna and Brest Regions to be the first in agriculture practically during all the following decades. However, it should not veneer destruction of the traditional way of life.

Taking it into account, even back in the 1990s, in the western areas which only became a part of the USSR in 1939, it would be possible (if not the current state policy) to have restitutions and create farm enterprises on the basis of peasants' family property, as they were still alive then. However, time is lost now, and today there are almost no people of active working age, who are interested and can restore all that was lost during the post-war collectivization.

As for cities and the urban population, the 1944—1965 period can be considered to be complete and homogeneous, but when it comes to the rural population, this period is to be subdivided in two subgroups. The first of them is characterized by Stalin's attitude to the collective farms' (*kolkhoz*) peasantry, when collective farmers (*kolkhozniks*) were completely deprived of economic independence, political and civic rights. They had no rights to freely move even inside the country because of the «propiska» (Soviet certificate of domicile) severe institution and the absence of passports. They were «paid» with what they produced, which led to economic enslavement and an even bigger restriction of freedom. The second subgroup is the time of Nikita Khrushchev's reforms when collective farmers received the equal rights with all other citizens, and when they started to receive money and pensions. The rights of the urban population and the *kolkhoz* peasantry only became equal completely in the mid 1960s.

Thus, during the course of speeded urbanization and industrialization, the basic categories in the lifeway sphere became the «urban» and «rural» populations. This division was adequate to the tasks assigned by the Soviet authorities concerning the country's life. Accordingly, the basic characteristics of life became attached to these definitions and desirable samples of the urban and rural ways of life. These samples were filled with new contents and meaning according to

industrialization and urbanization's goals. The rural way of life of Soviet people was thought to be opposite to the rustic way of life. The same can be said about the urban way of life. During industrialization, it was characterized, first of all, by its attachment to industry and production, instead of a city as a special method of life organization.

The second stage (the late 1960s — 1981) can be associated with Mašeraŭ⁸, even though it began with the economic reforms in the USSR in the late 1960s. The previous period's economy, despite Khrushchev's Thaw and his reforms, still had all features of Stalin's approach. In general, this approach is characterized by the fact that all economic problems, all needs and requirements of industrialization were solved by administrative-headstrong methods: if the labour power was needed — then a lot of people were resettled from one place to another; if there was a tax deficiency — then confiscations or compulsory bonds were used.

In the mid 1960s, such methods of management of the national economy were recognized to be inefficient. It is possible to consider the 1960s' reforms to be an attempt to go from military-administrative methods of management to administrative-economic ones. There were efforts to spur economically the sphere of commodity production, but the transfer of economics to economic forms was inconsistent and unfinished. Nonetheless, even such inconsistent economic reforms resulted in the fact that in the Soviet Union some segments of the market, in particular the labour power market, appeared. Still, the less qualified labour power was, to the greater degree it was controlled by market mechanisms. There was no market of qualified experts and professionals with higher education. There was a mechanism of all-Union appointments boards which used to distribute experts among various regions of the USSR.

⁸ Piotr Mašeraŭ, or Pyotr Masherov — in Russian, (1918–1980) — the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) in 1965–1980.

Liberation of the kolkhoz peasantry and a growth of labour efficiency and productivity in agriculture had results unexpected for the BSSR political elite, i.e. Byelorussia's competitive advantage over other regions. It turned out that, even though there is no mineral wealth, Byelorussia's main fortune is the disciplined labour force which, being freed from bonded kolkhoz dependence, GULAG and scheduled deportations, was ready to migrate from villages to cities within Byelorussia only. The potential of this labour force was very big. The Party and economic elite of Byelorussia headed by Mašeraŭ, managed to provide conditions in order to use this potential:

The first condition — lobbying in the structures of the State Planning Committee and at the level of the USSR Council of Ministers of the placement on the territory of Byelorussia new productions which needed not raw material resources, but human ones. In the 1960s, such productions were chemical, radio-electronic and light industry.

The second condition — to improve the quality of the disciplined labour power, i.e. professional education. Since the mid 1960s, Byelorussia began to be in the lead in the USSR concerning the rate, level and quality of developing a vocational training system. Vocational schools prepared skilled workers for enterprises, while higher education establishments prepared tutors for vocational schools. The higher education development followed in the wake of the industrial production development. The initial need in the qualified personnel with higher education was solved with the help of the all-Union appointments boards which sent people from other regions to the BSSR. It created a disproportion in the educational level of local residents and that of migrants. Migrants from other regions had a relatively higher level of education, thus occupying the place of the cultural elite in Byelorussian cities. This elite used to consume the cultural values, but not to create them. It led to the situation when there was a great demand for the Russian language cultural production, but almost no demand for the Byelorussian language one. Byelorussian culture and traditions

were neglected, and it created a sharp contrast between the relative socio-economic progress and culture in decline. As a result, after the USSR disintegrated, in Belarus there was no nationally responsible elite who could promote the idea of building an independent national state.

Mašeraŭ industrialization policy in Byelorussia was a logical continuation of the previous stage of developing and changing the character of the country's population. During this period, the urban population grew on the average 150,000 people per year. By 1976, the urban population was more than 50%, and by the end of this period it constituted 57% of all inhabitants of the BSSR. The basic source was the in-migration from villages to cities.

At the same time, the agro-industrial sector's industrialization accelerated its pace, resulting in increasing labour productivity and a lot of unemployed people. In rural areas, there were no other forms of employment, except for industrial animal husbandry and agribusiness, therefore the unemployed rustic population moved to cities where there were jobs for low-qualified workers or learners' positions in vocational schools.

It must be said that during all these years, dynamics of changing the proportion between the urban and rural populations was rather steady. During the post-war period, the rural population's share reduced on the average 1% per year. Considering the high rates of urbanization, this evenness was a precondition of urbanization's rather harmonious course. During this period, the BSSR as an administrative region in the structure of the USSR turned from an agrarian into industrial-agrarian area. The population change was harmonized with the changes of the population's educational level, occupation and forms of employment.

However, during such accelerated urbanization, this evenness and as if harmonicity did not stimulate adequate public comprehension of the actual changes. Having turned into industrial-agrarian society with the urban population's prevalence, with still high rates of urbanization,

with cities' overwhelming economic domination, the Byelorussians still perceived themselves as a rural nation⁹. Thus, it is necessary to note that rural life organization was cardinally changed — it had nothing to do with pre-industrial agriculture's rustic way and quality of life any longer.

Industrial production and consentaneous organization of all sides of life both in cities and villages was finally fixed not only in Soviet managers' and politicians' theory and practice, but also in the language of social studies which used to justify, describe and explain this practice. What even more important is that it was fixed in the ordinary language, knowledge and brainwork, with the help of which the common Soviet people evaluated and planned their lives.

The third stage is conditionally called «Perestroika» (1981—1991), even though in Byelorussia this stage's beginning had nothing to do with Gorbachev's Perestroika because it began after Mašeraŭ death and lasted till the Union's débâcle and the moment of real independence. Byelorussia's development during the previous decades was not spontaneous. In order to realize the arisen competitive advantage of Byelorussia as a region in the structure of the USSR, it was needed to have the BSSR main chiefs' administrative talent and the Party and economic elites' very original, but still patriotism or even nationalism. The Byelorussian rulers managed to get benefits for the nation from the BSSR's geoeconomic situation in the structure of the USSR. Probably, bosses of some other union republics behaved in the same way, even if they resorted to different strategies and understood advantages and benefits variously. The following decades had put everything in their proper places. Georgia seemed to be rich and prosperous, but in the 1990s it became effete. Modest Lithuania inherited not only the Ignalina A-plant and Mažeikiai refinery, but also the best in the Soviet Union network of highways. And what had Belarus received?

⁹ By virtue of inertia of public consciousness, even in the third millennium the Belarusians still consider themselves a peasants' nation, and they use this circumstance to explain various political phenomena and absurdities, as well as their cultural inertness.

The 1980s in the developed countries of the world can be characterized as a post-industrial epoch, while Byelorussia in this period entered a phase of its best industrial blossoming. The decade after death showed his economic policy's efficiency, at least, in the short term. Since the 1970s, the Soviet Union entered the time of its economic and cultural stagnation. For Byelorussia, this period became the time of a relative economic well-being and the beginning of its cultural revival.

In the 1980s, most industrial enterprises built during the previous period, reached their full capacity. Capital investments to fixed assets scheduled during the previous period, continued to arrive to Byelorussia. Moreover, unlike the other regions of the Soviet Union, these capital investments were not plundered. Byelorussia kept its rates of industrialization and urbanization like during the previous period and strengthened its positions as an industrial-agrarian country. By the last year of the USSR's existence, the urban population constituted 67%. The 1980s' relative well-doing made the Byelorussians to have an illusion of development and even a complex of their superiority over the other regions of the empire falling into stagnation. The illusion of development was caused by the fact that actively working enterprises' incomes were seen by everybody, whereas the wear factor of equipment, amortization charges' disproportion and capital investments' reduction could only be noticed by experts. But in the 1980s, in Byelorussia, there was no talented and patriotic Party and economic elite who could see these unobvious negative sides of the economic situation. The experts who knew that objective information and understood the consequences, worked in the structures of the State Planning Committee and the Council of Ministers in Moscow.

Staying in such illusory self-flattery, Byelorussian society accepted Perestroika passively — they could neither use the new opportunities, nor get prepared for the future troubles. The biggest of these troubles, unexpected and unpredictable, was the Chernobyl catastrophe.

A lot of materials are written about the Chernobyl catastrophe, including those about its economic aftermath and influence on the

Belarusans' lifeway¹⁰. It is the Chernobyl catastrophe that has resulted in the most significant after World War II and fast changes of the population's resettlement. As a result, not only settlement maps, but also these of economic activities and territories' agricultural suitability, were changed. Hundreds of thousands of people changed not just their residence, but their types of settlement and lifeway, too. Among all other consequences, the Chernobyl catastrophe revealed the brightest image of disproportions in Byelorussia's economic development.

Byelorussia's economy developed not in the nation's interests, but in the interests of the huge empire called the USSR. For this reason, even having kept its high level of production, both industrial and agricultural, in 1991 Byelorussia appeared in the same pitiable position, just like all other splinters of the empire. Still, in despite of the traditional Soviet ideas, it is not the manufacturing strength, but industrial relations that are the most important for economic development. The 1990s' naive economic consciousness called it «a break of economic ties». By the end of Perestroika, it became obvious that Byelorussian economy was incoherent as it was not adjusted at all to Byelorussia's needs, requirements and possibilities. All economic, technological and marketing connections were not joined in the structure of Byelorussia as a separate country — they were built to satisfy the whole system of the USSR.

Comparing the previous, Mašeraŭ stage of industrialization and urbanization of Byelorussia and this one, it becomes perfectly clear that the industrial giants created in Byelorussia in the 1960s—1970s, were only effective within the framework of the Soviet economic system, i.e. their task was not commodity production, but money from the Union's budget. When this budget was depleted, it was necessary to urgently re-orient industrial resources to commodity production, to search for new markets, i.e. to get engaged in international trade.

¹⁰ Lych G.M., Pateeva Z.G. Chernobyl catastrophe: socio-economic problems and the ways to solve them. Minsk: Law and economics, 1999; Shevtsov Y. United Nation. Belarus's Phenomenon. 2005

However, in Belarus, there were neither necessary structures (akin to the USSR's Ministry of Foreign Trade and other departments, all of which were in Moscow), nor experts. Basically, there was no marketing activity as such. Marketing and international trade experts did not exist. Meantime, Soviet political economics science had all necessary theoretical understanding of such specialists, but they were thought to be irrelevant and abstract, valid for capitalism only. The absence of new knowledge and new understanding during the USSR's débâcle was the main reason of all economic problems.

The penury of knowledge and cogitative means to solve rationally the situation with numerous crises, had allowed the new Belarusian authorities to use the former Soviet lifeway norms and standards as substantiation and justification of their conservative revanche. They had become the basis of the Belarusian state policy at a new stage of the country's current history.

This is the background of the present state of affairs in Belarus. This is the Belarus that the first government of the independent state had inherited. Neither first government, nor all subsequent governments of the regime which was established after 1994, could work out a programme to settle the country's matters — they have failed to re-orient Belarus according to the requests of the modernity. In the beginning of this chapter, we have characterized the Belarusian state's action programme as a continuation of the Soviet industrialization and urbanization programme. Now, we would like to complete this characteristic with a description of the socio-demographic position and to summarize the results of speeded industrialization and urbanization processes.

Industrialization and urbanization's after-effects in the Belarusians' lifeway sphere

Not delving into a detailed analysis, we shall present a clear-cut picture of the socio-demographic parameters which clearly characterize the condition of Belarusian society.

Before 1994, the population of the Republic had been growing constantly¹¹ and had reached 10,243,000 people, but since 1995 it has been reducing, and in the year of 2000 Belarus was a 10-million nation no longer, which is qualified by UN experts as a threat of becoming a small and endangered nation. In 1993, the positive balance of the natural population growth became negative. By 2004, the birth rate was 9,1 (with a view to 1,000 people); the death rate was 14,3; thus, the natural increase was 5,2. As of 2005, 9,800,000 people lived in Belarus (according to the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of the Republic of Belarus).

While there was a general reduction of the country's population, the number of city dwellers kept growing even after 1994. In 1994, there were 6,927,000 city dwellers, in 2005 — 7,055,000 people. The basic gain of the urban population happens due to the increase of the capital's population; in 1994—2005 it has increased by 100,000 people. The rural population decreases fast: from 3,316,500 people in 1994 down to 2,744,200 people in 2005.

Here, it is necessary to note that the expected lifespan parameter increases steadily, and in 2005 it was 69 years (for comparison, in Russia — 66,1; in Ukraine — 68,1; in economically advanced countries — 80 years).

The external migration, as a source of increasing the population, does not cover losses. The main migratory exchange is with Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan — 91,5% of all who have arrived in the Republic. The balance of migration from former Soviet republics reached its peak in 1992, then it began to reduce, and in 2004 it was only 4,700 people, among whom 37% were those who were more than 50 years old.

¹¹ If compared to other Soviet republics, World War II's demographic aftermath in Byelorussia was the most negative. Only in 1972 did the country surpass its antebellum number of inhabitants, while Latvia and Estonia did it in 1950, Georgia and Moldavia — in 1953, Russia and Azerbaijan — in 1955, Ukraine — in 1959, and Lithuania — in 1965.

The reduction of the population's natural increase and a growing life expectancy result in an essential skewness in the population's age-sex structure. In 2005, people who were older than 65, constituted 14,5% of all population (in 1990 — 10,5%). A nation where this parameter is more than 7% is considered to be old. Every fifth inhabitant of the Republic is a pensioner, while in rural areas it is every third. In its turn, the number of children who are younger than 15, reduces (from 23,1% in 1990 down to 15,6% in 2005).

As for the quality and way of life, the important parameters are not only the population's number and age structure, but also *a distribution of the rural and urban populations*. Today, 28,0% of the population live in rural areas of Belarus, while 72% are city dwellers. The demographic skewness mentioned above, touches first of all the country's rural dwellers, which can be seen in the deformation of the rural population's age-sex structure caused by the negative natural increase, a high in-migration and the outflow of the youth. If among urbanites' natural increase in 2005 was 1,4, then among rural dwellers this parameter was 15,0. The share of working age people in villages is 31,5%, in cities — 17,2%. The population's death in villages is 23,6%, in cities — 10,6%; the number of reproductive age women in cities is 10% higher than the number of men, in villages — 15% lower.

Among various regions of Belarus, the least urbanized are Brest and Hrodna Regions — there, the percentage ratio of city and rural dwellers is 63,0 : 37,0 and 65,7 : 34,3¹². The most urbanized (except for Minsk) is Mahiloŭ Region (73,4 : 26,6).

Comparing several parameters of life of the urban and rural populations, the 2004 official data show that the structure of the urban

¹² Considering this parameter, a separate position is occupied by Minsk Region, as the city of Minsk is excluded from calculations, while in the other Regions the Regions' capitals are included. Thus, Minsk Region's rural population is 45,8%.

and rural populations' expenses is the same. However, a subjective evaluation of the income level differs considerably. One third of city dwellers say that their incomes allow them «to lead a normal life», whereas there is only 21% among rural dwellers who can say the same.

According to the basic *spheres of employment*, the population of Belarus is distributed as follows¹³. In industry — 26,8%; in agriculture — 10,7%; trade and public catering — 12,4%; education — 10,5%; construction — 7,7%; transport and communications — 7,6%. For the latest 15 years, employment has decreased most essentially in agriculture (by 8,4%), industry (by 4,1%) and construction (by 3,4%). There has been an increase in trade and public catering (by 6%) and some other insignificant branches.

The educational level of the Belarusian labour power is changing. Since 1995, the number of workers with higher education has increased in various regions on the average by 4—5%; in the capital — by 8,3%. As of 2005, among workers 34,4% in Minsk and about 18—19% in Regions have higher education. The educational level of cities differs sharply from that of villages. In 1999, among 1,000 people of urbanites, there were 176 people with higher education; among the rural population — less than 60 people.

The character of the processes of accelerated industrialization and urbanization described above, and the socio-demographic picture of modern Belarus allow us to think of *Belarusian society's way and quality of life*.

It is clear that the majority of modern city dwellers of active working age or those who are finishing their labour activity, are typical marginals — people who were born in villages, but started to work and had families in cities. Thus, today's younger generation is the first

¹³ According to the 2004 data. Belarus's Agriculture. A statistical tabulation of the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of the Republic of Belarus. Minsk, 2005.

urban massive generation. It means that neither older, nor younger generations of adults have no steady cultural traditions and urban roots. Still, they constitute the overwhelming majority of the urban population — therefore, the hereditary urbanites with urban traditions are being dissolved among them. Being a dispersed minority, they do not influence the course of urban life.

Speeded urbanization's obvious aftermath for urban life are described and analysed very well. For the sake of justice, it is necessary to admit that Belarus managed partially to avoid the most unattractive negative consequences of accelerated industrialization and urbanization for the urban population and the nation as a whole. As a rule, cities' fast growth results in their population's proletarianization. In such settlements, public morality and rectitude have regulating functions no longer, therefore asocial behaviour patterns start to dominate there. Belarus managed to carry out its urbanization without it thanks to several factors:

1) *Migrants' very high degree of social security.* Byelorussian urbanization's high rates were accompanied by not less high rates of housing construction (Khrushchev's programmes, development of large-panel construction). Besides, Byelorussian vocational-oriented education (if compared to that in other parts of the USSR) reached the highest level. It provided people with a chance to continue their education. Thus, migrants from villages to cities were given: A) jobs; B) accommodation (first, hostels and public housing, then the usual Soviet apartment buildings); C) education and possibilities to continue it.

Well, it must be marked that social illnesses did occur in cities which were the very first to enter the period of industrialization and growth (e.g. Vorša), as well as the cities which industrialization was not carried out according to the usual Byelorussian variant (e.g. Švietiahorsk, the majority of which population was not local, but brought here from Russia or other regions of the USSR).

2) *Byelorussian industrialization and urbanization were carried out together with relatively high development of*

infrastructure, transport and communications. The period of Byelorussia's accelerated industrialization and modernization took place in the second half of the 20th century when the countries of the first and the second world (as they were usually called those years) had already entered their post-industrial stage of development. At the beginning, it allowed to keep steady and close connections between families created by young migrants in cities, and their parents in villages, thus impeding the processes of traditional morality and rectitude's erosion and destruction and supporting the nation's social health. These connections' stability began to weaken by the 1980s—1990s when there was so huge rural lifeway degradation that villages could not influence city dwellers any more.

3) *Byelorussian speeded industrialization and modernization's last years coincided with the beginning of cardinal changes in Eastern Europe, which brought Byelorussia and the region's other nations back to the all-European history and normal development.* That is, being one of the last European nations to go through the stage of industrialization and urbanization¹⁴, Byelorussia did not miss the beginning of all-European deindustrialization. It joined globalization processes practically together with the majority of its neighbouring countries.

Quite another thing is the aftermath for the rural population, rural way of life, culture and villages' infrastructure. These consequences are rather destructive, but described and understood insufficiently.

1. *Catastrophic demographic skewness.* Migration to cities touches, first of all, the rural youth, thus instantly affecting the birth rate and accelerating the population's demographic ageing which rates in some districts coincide with a human body's physical ageing.

¹⁴We may not presume to evaluate cultural-historical processes of some other European nations who, as it seems to us, have not had the stage of industrialization and urbanization, or who have not completed it yet, e.g. Romania, Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova and former Yugoslav republics, except for Slovenia.

2. *Economic behaviour's transformation*, i.e. people's attitude to the soil and husbandry methods. Rural economy is impossible without property inheritance processes. The population's ageing and the absence of children and the youth in villages make inheritance, in particular the eigne estate, senseless. Households without inheritors degrade and die before their owners do. It has to do not just with the absence of any economic progress, but also lifeway preservation and its subsequent degradation.

3. *Villages' physical extinction*. Today's absence of many villages is explained by the USSR's agricultural policy in the 1960s—1970s when the term «unpromising villages» was coined, which was followed by a programme of amalgamating collective farms and resettling collective farmers from hamlets and «unpromising villages» to amalgamated villages and so-called «agricultural towns». For the latest 50 years, the map of Belarus has lost a huge number of rural settlements and individual farmsteads.

4. *Socio-psychological consequences*. Usually, a person from rural areas who has moved into a city considers it to be a lucky and positive step. Accordingly, those who still live in the country, are thought to be losers by those who have now moved into cities, and even by rural dwellers as well. About 22% of today's rural population of Belarus would like to change their social status, i.e. they are ready to become urbanites¹⁵. The low status of rural life generates different complexes and, together with economic hopelessness, leads to alcohol abuse and other social defects. The number of suicides in villages is higher than among city dwellers¹⁶.

5. *Socio-cultural consequences*. No matter whether the rural population constitutes the largest or the smallest part of the nation, it

¹⁵ Smirnova R. A. The Belarusian peasantry's socio-economic activity in the conditions of socio-economic reforms // Social and socio-cultural processes in Belarus. Minsk, 2005, pp. 87—98.

¹⁶ The population of the Republic of Belarus. A statistical tabulation of the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of the Republic of Belarus. Minsk, 2005.

is still the traditionally conservative core of the nation, the keeper of ethnic traditions, national characteristic features, mentality, etc. In a sense, the rural population's condition is the sign of the nation's health. Well, for the Belarusian nation, the keepers of traditions, mentality and national characteristic traits are «losers» with their extremely inefficient economic behaviour.

All together, the aftermath of accelerated industrialization and urbanization actually destroys the norms and traditions of rural life, thus resulting in rural lifeway degradation. In this respect, it is necessary to review these processes' specificity which determined the ways the rural and urban ways of life were formed in Belarus.

The first, substantially determining factor is that *industrialization touched all branches of economy, including agriculture*. It is essentially important to note that industrialization of agriculture resulted in the formation and implementation of the industrial approach to development of not only rural territories, but also the rural way of life. This approach provides that the development purpose is in manufacture and, accordingly, in the maintenance of the investment value of rural territories. The quality and way of life of people who live on these territories, is not a task of development — it has a secondary, derivative value. The only important task is to augment the population's power of consumption. Rural communities, both in the eyes of local authorities and inhabitants themselves, are self-valuable no longer — now it is just a population living and working on this territory. The industrial approach to development of agriculture caused all consequences concerning destruction and degradation of the rural lifeway as a special way of social organization.

The second important factor which defined the consequences of Byelorussian industrialization and urbanization, is *the absence of the third sector* (public associations and local communities) *developing together with these processes*. In the conditions of speeded industrialization, they register and keep the lifeway bases,

saving them from ablation and degradation, thus preventing the population from marginalization and lumpen-proletarianization. In the Soviet system, there were no such associations, even though there were attempts to paper over the cracks. As a result, our atomized society is not protected from destructive processes and not ready to create and master new cultural norms, values, forms of activity and thinking.

The third factor is linked to the first two — it is *want of working local self-government*. The existing self-government institutions, local Soviets (councils), are included in the general administrative state system. Even if they can decide anything, they can only have a consultative role. All decisions about development of territories, construction of necessary establishments, e.g. educational ones, and creation of an infrastructure (roads, transport), etc., are «sent down» by the administrative vertical. The same way the resource support is «sent down» in order to perform these decisions. Local Soviets have neither rights to make decisions, nor resources to implement them. Lack of real administrative practice deforms them to the position of a local ruler — all he or she has to do is to obey, being a part of the state control system. Correspondingly, there are apt norms and rules of behaviour and brainwork accepted by local rulers who already think that they (norms) are self-evident and should not be changed.

Thus, discussing the problems of the quality and way of life, we can state that unfortunately there is *want of stable and established samples and standards which would be traditional and autochthonous for Belarus and could act as norms and samples in behaviour of any social groups or layers of the population*. It is valid for both rural and urban ways of life because the first one is actually destroyed and the second one is not formed yet.

The current distinctions between life in cities and villages are caused, first of all, by the living standards' inequality. There are certain discrepancies between these or those opportunities in

consumption, movement and career, which depend on where you dwell — in villages there is one circle of opportunities, in cities — another. This distinction is brightly expressed in the present standards of rural and urban life, which do not allow us to speak about equal opportunities concerning various lifestyles. First of all, it concerns the availability of information, development of opportunities of physical movement and social mobility, i.e. a change of one's social status.

Nowadays, in Belarus, there are inertial processes of accelerated industrialization and urbanization started 30—40 years ago; at the same time, they are overlapped by growing deindustrialization and reverse migration from cities back to villages, that may be caused by globalization processes (which Belarus cannot escape, no matter whether the country's authorities want it or not. These processes can be seen in a wide spread of the unified standards of living and the creation of the common infrastructure of services which does not depend on where you dwell. The most indicative is the expansion of the sphere of the common consumer and ecological standards. Besides, mass communication means' development creates conditions for the information availability of different lifestyles, thus expanding varieties of one's choices. Communications and transport technologies' development widens possibilities to live various ways of life.

Globalization processes do not allow any country to be isolated. The transparency of territorial, social and cultural borders caused by globalization, concerns all countries. Therefore, countermeasures against these processes and a desire to save one's isolated position become a problem and a challenge for the neighbouring countries. Besides, the unified standards are spread through international treaties and interstate agreements.

Thus, Belarusian society is in a balancing unstable condition when fundamental constitutive processes are overlapping and creating a freakish interaction which essence cannot be realized by hackneyed concepts of interjacent transitional societies.



So, we have presented a picture of the actual condition in the lifeway sphere and the prehistory of activity and management in this sphere. Now, we have to review another side of this sphere. We are to investigate not historical and empirical material, but the **modes of thought** concerning this sphere, which *have defined its present condition* and to set other ways and tools of thought and activity that *will make it possible to change this sphere*.

Anent the construction of the concepts of the quality and way of life

Concepts and actions

We have already described the situation in the sphere of the quality and way of life in modern Belarus as the one which needs to be reformed. We think that in order to start solving the current Belarusian system crisis, the first thing to do is to reform this sphere, i.e. to solve the lifeway crisis.

The essence of the lifeway crisis is that new individual and collective forms of life organization, improvement of the quality of life and a choice of a lifestyle contradict the forms and ways of making decisions and regulations which exist right now in society and the state. Despite the state programmes aimed at working with the standard of living, this sphere is developing spontaneously as the programmes do not take into account globalization processes and are still based on industrialization and urbanization. Globalization processes create conditions for a wide, practically unlimited choice of new samples and standards of life, which are being adjusted spontaneously to the Belarusian situation. One can struggle against them or pretend that they do not exist — this is what is now happening in Belarusian social,

administrative and political practice. Still, such an approach does not help settle this matter — it only aggravates the crisis. New social phenomena, structures, connections and subjects are left outside the frameworks of the understanding, explanation and rational attitude, including the legislative regulation.

To restore this sphere's manageability and to reform it, there is a need in taking into account the current processes, but it is impossible within the framework of the old system of concepts and categories grounded on the tasks of industrialization. To recognize the existence and possibilities of an unlimited expansion of lifeway varieties which appear due to globalization processes, it is necessary to review the understanding of what Belarusian society must be, and how it can be ruled, and it demands to redefine the whole complex of concepts and categories which the social practice is based on.

In any practice, people can do only the things they know how to do, they can only target purposes they understand. The understanding is supported by certain concepts and categories. If the only categories with the help of which politicians, social scientists and managers describe a human life, are quantitative categories, then according to them both state policy and programme of development (or, more exactly, not development, but growth) are carried out. While the basic categories in the lifeway sphere, within the framework of urbanization and industrialization programmes, are the urban and rural ways of life, this sphere's reforming opportunities will be limited by a change of quantity indicators (standards) describing these ways of life. When today a local Belarusian ruler has a task to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of his/her Region or District, a spectrum of decisions he/she can make, is limited to the frameworks of his/her understanding of the lifeway the rural or urban dwellers must have. If in a town there is a problem with employment, then according to the Soviet industrial understanding of the urban lifeway, this problem's solution is to provide the townsfolk with workplaces at enterprises with the wages corresponding to the established standards of urban life. In this scheme of thought and management, there is no place to such variants as

maximal mobility's support and entrepreneurial activity's stimulation; varieties of employment forms are not implied.

Thus, *we connect an opportunity to transform the sphere of the quality and way of life with the development of new concepts and categories with the help of which this sphere can be studied and understood, and which can help build a programme of its reforming*. The main problem is that Belarusian humane studies have neither formed, nor developed any conceptualizations, concepts or categories to describe, explain or understand the whole set of phenomena, events and processes concerning the modern organization of the Belarusians' tenor and way(s) of life.

Cultural policy in the lifeway sphere

Theorization in humanitarian areas of knowledge differs essentially from theorizing in natural sciences, first of all, by its applied character. Humanitarian doctrinization strings along with pragmatics. Thereby, it is very difficult to objectify humanitarian concepts. Dealing with such concepts, we have to find out their purpose, instrumental sense and status, as well as what and what for these concepts will be used, what their task is in this or that sphere of activity. Here, we shall formulate the practical reasons and problems that have induced us to redefine and reconsider the concepts and categories in the lifeway sphere.

This work is a continuation of the wide programme of activities started in 1994 by the Humanitarian Techniques Agency (HTA), which we call the «**cultural policy**»¹⁷.

In general, the cultural policy can be described as follows:

1. We proceed from the assumption that people's acts and actions are determined and regulated *by their knowledge and*

¹⁷ Matskevich U. Belarus Athwart Obviousness // Athwart Obviousness. Nevsky Prostor. 2006

understanding, and there is nothing in the results of people's acts and actions that they did not have before in their knowledge and understanding. To change results and consequences of people's actions and behaviour, the cultural policy focuses its efforts on knowledge and understanding, on management of knowledge and understanding. This is what differs it from the usual policy which tries to influence purposes, motives and reasons of people's behaviour and actions. Therefore, if society would like to change its social reality (e.g. to carry out a reform, or live through a transitional period), then, using the cultural policy, it is necessary to begin with epistemology and hermeneutics, i.e. to change and improve people's knowledge and understanding. And only after that, it is possible to start the usual, habitual political actions.

2. The basic way and method of implementing the cultural policy is a wide *public-political dialogue*. One has to learn how to have a quality dialogue. Dialogue is a subject of a cultural politician's organization and care; it does not arise by itself as something organically inherent in people (unlike simple-hearted figures of the third sector believe, considering democratic procedures to be incident to human nature). To include a person in dialogue, it is necessary to combine in a person, as a subject of the policy, two different plans — the plan of brainwork, or concepts and categories' handling, and the plan of a communicative action, or a dialogue participant's expression of messages and offers for another person. It is only possible to achieve the real equality and owelty in dialogue, if there is good preliminary work and each participant's preparation. The language of dialogue (the conceptual-categorical apparatus) needs to be prepared as well, so that it would not only catch phenomena's essence, but also enter dialogue. The majority of categories of Soviet social science are not suitable for communication; they have an «objective», obligate character; they are not discussed, but only learnt by heart. The contraposition of the urban and rural ways of life does not presuppose any dialogue concerning the lifeways themselves; it does not presuppose new lifeways' «birth» and new social groups' formation.

Thus, the cultural policy programme sets two basic frameworks of our work:

1. Concepts and categories as the basic subject of any socio-cultural and political activity.
2. The recognition of a person's freedom of choice and management of his/her life through his/her inclusion in dialogue with other individual or collective subjects.

Fixing these frameworks determines for us a set of tasks which are to be solved during the development of concepts and categories for reforming the lifeway sphere. Discussing these tasks and possibilities of their solution, we shall reveal the required concepts and categories, and then the programme of a lifeway research.

Principles of humanitarian concepts' development

After the frameworks of our work are declared, the first question is why we cannot simply borrow entirely modern western humanitarian knowledge and use it. At various times, we have already criticized studies and elaborations in various humanitarian spheres dedicated to Belarus¹⁸. As a rule, these studies and elaborations' mistakes and disadvantages are caused by *uncritical borrowings of theories and approaches developed in others socio-cultural situations and their irreflexive usage in the specific Belarusian situation*.

We are far from the idea that it has no sense to borrow concepts and categories from other approaches and theories at all, but then it is important to adapt reflectively and reconsider such concepts. It assumes a critical analysis of the borrowed theory or approach, i.e. to find out what is valid and invariant in it, what is situational and occasional, and what is the ratio between them. Something valid and invariant can be applied in various socio-cultural situations. The rest is closely

¹⁸ Matskevich U. Athwart Obviousness. Nevsky Prostor. 2006

linked to the conditions and circumstances of the situation, which material was used during the construction of the theory. Therefore, direct borrowings of concepts, categories and especially conclusions received in one situation, and their use in another situation are inadmissible. Well, to differ valid components of any theory from situational and individual ones is not so easy — it demands a good orientation in a situation. The knowledge and understanding of a socio-cultural situation is not congenital and aprioristic, it can be gained as a result of studies and analyses. It assumes the presence of special theoretical and methodological conceptualizations. It is possible to say that an attempt to borrow ready-made theories, concepts and conceptualizations developed for one socio-cultural situation, and to use them in another situation, will not save a researcher's work and efforts, but will demand much more expenses and efforts.

One of the first texts of the HTA's research programme called Belarus Athwart Obviousness, studied a methodological question of how to research and analyse individualized and unique objects. We shall not come back to the discussion of this question here, but, having referred to it, we shall fix the principle of humanitarian researches, which is as follows: **in humanitarian knowledge, there are no such concepts and categories which can be applied in any research.** Any situation we are going to study, must be somehow categorized and formalized in notions. For our work, it means that we have to categorize our situation, to find its similarities and distinctions if compared to the situations where concepts we are grounded on, have already been developed.

In order to do so, it is necessary to mention some more principles of humanitarian theorization. First of all, it is the *historicity principle*. On the one hand, historicity of humanitarian knowledge means that it is true only for certain time, a concrete epoch, and loses its value during other epoch. On the other hand, unlike natural-scientific knowledge, social-humanitarian one is characterized by simultaneity or synchronism of diverse knowledges' existence which allows people to solve these problems. Natural-scientific knowledge is valid irrespective

of its practical relevancy. If there is no need in every day measuring electric resistance, it does not influence Ohm's law at all. If we need to use it, we shall use it in the same kind it was formulated and is applied. Quite another thing is human resistance to changes and innovations. Having comprehended and measured people's degree of resistance to changes in one situation, we cannot straightforwardly use this knowledge in other situation. We can remember it as a precedent and reach out to it by analogy, that's it. In every new historical situation, we will have to analyze anew the reasons and nature of human behaviour and actions.

Big humanitarian or social concepts, approaches and theories are linked closely to the historical situation generated them. The logic laws of consumption used by Marxism and other concepts of political economy, cannot explain behaviour of people of the modern western consumer society, while the concepts of the 1960s—1970s' consumer society do not help understand the Soviet people's consumer behaviour, and then we have to state that the category of «consumption», as applied to 1970s—1980s' western consumer society and as applied to the USSR's goods deficit economy of the same time, is to be filled with different meanings and contents. In these different socio-cultural or historical situations, there are different not only ways of needs' satisfaction, but needs themselves, too. Therefore, it is impossible to transfer the whole set of western humanitarian knowledge to the Soviet Union of the same time and to the transitive societies appeared after the USSR's disintegration. It can neither be applied to modern information globalizing society in the West. It is true for any big set of humanitarian knowledge pegged to its cultural-historical situation.

Thus, the particularity of humanitarian knowledge is that during each cultural-historical epoch, every society which tries to independently develop, must create for itself a corresponding set of humanitarian and public knowledge. While Belarusian engineers can easily use achievements of American physicists or Japanese chemists, nobody can save Belarusian scholars and social scientists from the

necessity of creating our own Belarusian theories and concepts of Belarusian society. That is why every country ought to have applicable institutes to develop concepts and investigate society in all its aspects, and every research or elaboration should have technical or basic tasks which do not only stipulate *what knowledge and about what is to be received*, but also *what for, with what purposes and in what conditions this knowledge will be applied and used*.

The necessity of designating purposes and conditions for conceptual work actualizes the role and value of **pragmatics** for the formation of humanitarian concepts and categories. Sometimes, there is temptation to describe people's social and individual life with the help of quasi naturalistic subjectivistic concepts, categories and parameters, e.g. particularly natural-science parameters (applied to study nature) such as the average temperature parameters of air. These parameters can easily help us compare conditions of life in various cities and regions. Being based on such comparisons, we can conclude whether it is comfortable or not to live in this or that place. However, as soon as we pass from descriptions and comparisons to decision making, it turns out that these comparisons and descriptions are completely useless without additional knowledge for whom this decision is made. Say, various physiological parameters of a human body can consider one and the same environmental conditions to be either comfortable, or absolutely not suitable for life. Therefore, *we should have one categories and concepts describing environments, conditions and situations, and other categories and concepts for decision making*.

Besides, we must have *different concepts and categories for public, political and social decision making and for individual decision making*. In this case, humanitarian concepts and categories' formulation and definition is determined by what decisions and by whom will be made with the use of these concepts and categories.

As for the question of *what decisions and by whom are to be made on the basis of the categories we develop*. It is not such a simple question, as sometimes it would be desirable to think. Liberal and democratic approaches are grounded on priority of personal

individual decisions concerning one's own life organization over common or external ones. Socialist and etatistic ones prefer common, communal and state decisions. As nobody has never denied people's social essence and human nature, nobody denies that everybody's life is partly determined by his/her own decisions and partly by what is decided by his/her family, public institutions, the state, etc. It is possible to talk about a balance of common and individual decisions and about concurrence or nonconcurrence of concept and categories used during this or that decision making. Perhaps, one of the most widespread types of the social conflict is when a certain person has his/her idea of what is good for him/her, while other people try to cram their ideas down this certain person's throat.

The Belarusian state says it is a social state. Let's imagine that the state is guided by the most «good intentions», but its authoritative type and a high degree of its economy's nationalization break the balance of people's individual decisions and the state ones. Never have Belarusian humanitarian and social studies asked the question of how well the state ideology's and the Belarusian people's concepts, categories and notions are coordinated, even though there might be some speculative allegations concerning the Belarusian mentality and the state which nature is ostensibly based on this mentality. However, these allegations have nothing to do with the coordination procedure; they are only used to justify the state decisions.

Developing the conceptual-categorical apparatus and theoretical conceptualizations within the framework of the cultural policy, we proceed from the understanding that the concepts and categories we offer, can be used in public and state reforming programmes, provided there is a procedure of coordinating Belarusian citizens' conceptualizations. It means that these categories must make it possible *to have a dialogue between various subjects* (from an individual to the state) and *to coordinate decisions* in the field organizing and regulating social life.

Having understood these requirements for work with the concepts and categories from the lifeway sphere, we can fix the contextual,

historical and pragmatic **differences of our situation**, on the one hand, from the situation in the USSR and, on the other hand, from the situation in modern western societies.

As for the categorial apparatus of the Soviet, and later Belarusian social science, it is necessary to stress:

— Firstly, a discrepancy between the social processes thought to be crucial in both socio-cultural situations, i.e. industrialization and urbanization in the Soviet situation, and informatization and globalization in the modern situation.

— Secondly, a difference, or even opposition, between conceptualizations about subjects, ways and methods of implementing social and political reforms, as well as about subjects, ways and methods of monitoring and ruling various sides of life and its organization. For us, it is a dialogue and coordination — for Soviet social science, it is consistent patterns' implementation with the help of the authorities and force.

As for the categorial apparatus of modern western knowledge, there are distinctions of another sort. These distinctions have to do with *concepts' suitability for a situation of developing and using of what is already present, and their unfitness for a situation of reforming and creating a new organization of social life*. In Belarus and Europe, the same processes are at different stages or phases, and something which is true at a final stage, can be completely not true at an initial stage. The categories and concepts we need, should solve the questions of reorganizing the lifeway sphere, instead of keeping and improving the quality of life.

Performativity of the «lifeway» as a humanitarian concept

In general, the problem of performativity of humanitarian knowledge can be defined as follows — Had there been any social and humanitarian phenomena before someone named, conceptualized and realized them, and they became a study object? It is possible to ask a naive question of

whether there had been any lifeway before this category was put into practice of the humane studies and ordinary language? In all naivety of such a question, it is interesting to analyse its possible answers. In fact, for example, such an answer is probable — if people lived before, and lives of different people were not the same, it is reasonable to assume that those distinctions in lives can be called different ways of life — thus, the lifeway did exist. Such reasoning is not less naive than the question. Certainly, people lived differently, but thought about it and explained the difference in other categories (not in the lifeway categories), and therefore, their attitude to it was different.

Let's imagine a city of incipient capitalism with Protestant ethics, which was of M. Veber's interest — for example, Geneva, Strasbourg or Boston in New England. Was it possible in these cities to think of various ways of life? Rather doubtfully. Protestant ethics would demand a rather strict norm of life organization, regulating any necessary and casual deflections. When there is so strict regulation and a detailed description of norms of life, there is no need in such a category as lifeway. The category «lifeway» could be used here only as a tool of a typological method to stress distinctions in lives of different people. **The «lifeway» in itself has no own contents.** It is possible to fix and describe any available distinctions only by adding to the «lifeway» a certain substantial concept. E.g. «the urban way of life» or «the rural way of life». Still, using these categories like this, we do not enrich their contents and knowledge. For this purpose, the categories «city» and «village» are enough. If they are developed deeply enough, they include norms of life organization and behaviour in cities and villages. The traditional social system did develop them quite well.

Where does the usage of the category «lifeway» get us? One can understand it when we use this category not to describe already known, described or understood distinctions in people's lives, but to seek for still unknown and undescribed ones. Well, the very attempt to describe and fix new differences is *not just a study procedure, but an action changing society's social structure and norms regulating its life.*

In the context of early capitalist city during the Reformation, the use of the category «lifeway» would be equivalent to a call for a revolutionary change of the existing order or would lead to obstruction and exile of everyone who would defend their right to have a way of life, which would be distinct from the normalized one. Certainly, even in those conditions limited by the Protestant community, people in cities could and did live differently, but those differences were perceived as variations of one norm, one idea or ontology of life. Someone was rich, someone was poor, someone had children and big families, and someone remained single. However, the regulation of time, behaviour, consumption, entertainment and even intimacies did not differ much.

This reasoning explains the distinction of the use of the category «lifeway» and its role in public relations' regulation.

The lifeway as *the typological method's instrumental category makes it possible to describe and normalize day-to-day life in the frameworks of society's structure which already exists and cannot be changed*. This use is typical of traditional closed societies. Reasoning about a way of life in this context, it always has a concrete definition — urban, rural, bourgeois, aristocratic, etc.

In its turn, *the lifeway as a legal category can be used in practical and political goals to change the social structure and social relations*, i.e. the category «lifeway» can be used to substantiate the right to live not like others, with its help it is possible to achieve freedom from regulations and instructions. The performative character of the category «lifeway» is revealed by the fact that something which was considered deviation from normal life or a norm's variation, is now thought to be as a completely lawful norm, and it is typical of modern open societies. This category's various substantial filling and usage sets a corresponding social, political and administrative practice.

Quality of life: freedom of choice or determinacy

As our work aims to change the country's management policy and social programmes, it is first necessary to formulate what we want

to achieve in the lifeway sphere. Therefore, we shall begin with the category «**quality of life**» as it has a modal, evaluative character («good — bad», «qualitative — poor»). This category's contents set criteria to evaluate life and ways to work with social reality.

Let's understand how this category is used in various research traditions.

In *modern western science*, this concept is developed well enough and has measurable parameters and indicators used widely in political and social-administrative practice. *The quality of life* is a set of material, social-demographic, political and other conditions of life and the level of their development. This category underlines the estimation of the democratization level, the state of the population's health, the condition of environment, education possibilities, a degree of social security, etc. That is, it measures «the essential circumstances of the population's life, which determine the degree of every person's dignity and personal liberty»¹⁹.

As a result, this concept fixes the widest spectrum of human needs and the requirement to create conditions for their implementation regardless any social, economic, ethnic and other characteristics of a person. It is not connected directly to concepts and categories fixing the qualitative and substantial side of life organization (tenors or styles of life). It rather fixes the presence or absence of conditions implementing different ways, types, tenors and styles of life. It is supposed that a choice of a lifeway happens freely within the framework of available conditions. Therefore, tasks of social and political practice are to improve these conditions, thus improving the quality of life.

Soviet social science has a completely different approach defining the quality of life. Actually, it had no category «quality of life» at all because of its basic understanding of life organization. Like in any

¹⁹ Krupnov Y. The quality of life. // http://www.kroupnov.ru/5/178_1.shtml

closed public system, all characteristics and sides of life (estimation, tenor, level, etc.) were considered to be a determined division into classes, layers or groups. The classes and layers themselves were determined on the basis of ordered and objective characteristics such as origin, birthplace, etc. The question to estimate or compare characteristics of life could only concern dynamics of these or those, first of all quantitative characteristics within the framework of each class or layer separately, but not between them.

However, as an alternative to the Western «quality of life», Soviet social science began to develop another concept — «a lifeway» — with its modal and descriptive sides²⁰. This category fixed qualitative and substantial differences of life organization in different layers. The lifeway provided a certain description of how this or that social layer's daily life is arranged. On the other hand, the lifeway had a normative and ideological status, as a description of a **paragon** way of people's daily life organization. The quality of life was described directly by substantial lifeway characteristics, comparing the Soviet workers and collective farmers' real life and the way it should be. For that matter, the most indicative (and most ideological) was «the socialist lifeway» concentrating all advantages of Soviet society over bourgeois one. That was the way (a description of how something must be) that was used to make administrative decisions, thus limiting the understanding of those who made decisions, about paragon or allowable methods of people's daily life organization.

Thus, the question of the quality of life was only possible within the framework of the already available social categories (rural / urban dwellers; workers / collective farmers / intelligentsia) which were tethered to the ironclad social structure. The question's essence was

²⁰ «A way of life (lifeway) is a Soviet sociologic notion which characterizes concrete socio-cultural interiors (typical forms, methods and mechanisms) of social subjects' life.» Abushenko V. Way of a life // Sociology: Encyclopedia — Minsk, Knizhny Dom, 2003.

whether the real lifeway corresponded to the idealized and ideological understanding about requirements of this or that group of people. The needs were growing (thanks to the Soviet state) — the lifeway was changing.

Here, the «lifeway» is always secondary, though with its help one can describe and normalize something, but the term itself was set by the objective social structure. Therefore, there cannot be more ways of life than social groups or layers. A new lifeway which is not included in the available understanding about the social structure, can be thought to be a marginal phenomenon needed to be «rectified». A new way of life can neither change the social structure and social relations, nor become a basis for examining a new layer, class or group. Due to such concepts of the tenor and quality of life, new ways of life penetrating now to Belarus, are considered to be marginal. Their existence and their carriers are not taken into account when administrative decisions about «qualitative life» organization are made.

Even though for the latest decades, the categorial apparatus of Belarusian science and administrative practice has accepted the Western concept «quality of life», it has not changed the mode of thought and activity in this sphere because they have borrowed the already standardized parameters and indicators of measuring the conditions of life, which can formally be applied to any society. To change anything in this sphere, it is necessary to formulate such a concept that would reflect and fix a transformation of the bases in the understanding of «qualitative» and «poor-quality» life.

It makes us define **the «quality of life» as a characteristic which sets freedom of choice and a possibility to implement any way of life.**

It presupposes, firstly, the presence of **a variety of probable ways of life** and, secondly, **a possibility of their implementation**. Still, can we choose and implement a chosen way of life individually, or is this choice a result of social interactions? It is obvious we influence each other's lifeways, both choice and implementation. If we influence, we need to concord. Therefore, the category of the quality of life must

included **conditions for a dialogue and coordination of different ways of life.**

This understanding of the quality of life is close to modern Western conceptualizations. However, there are essential distinctions, too. To solve our problem and to radically change our practice of working with ways of life, we underline *activity and the artificial attitude* to this sphere. It also concerns the creation of the lifeways' variety, securance of possibilities of their implementation and formation of mechanisms of their coordination. In Western societies, this category is now applied to estimate satisfactoriness and development of conditions of implementing any way of life. Thus, it stresses *dynamics of parameters' growth or decrease*. It is now more important for us to fix qualitative changes of principles and modes of work in this sphere.

The suggested category of the quality of life sets other, if compared to the Soviet variant, ratios between the categories of the level and way of life. In closed Soviet society, both tenor and level of living are two characteristics of life of these or those classes, groups or layers. A change of the standard of living of concrete groups or layers would mean a change of their consumer goods basket. In its turn, it would result in a growth of needs and new methods to satisfy these needs. As a result of a growth of the standard of living, the way of life would change as well. Still, a growth of the standard of living would not change one way of life into another — urban into rural, workers' into intelligentsia's. A growth of the standard of living would replace an old urban way of life by a new urban one. So, the lifeway characteristics are changed after changes of the standard of living.

The category of the quality of life we introduce, sets an inverted ratio. If it is important for us to have a possibility of choosing from a wide spectrum of ways (samples) of life, which does not depend on a person's belonging to social layers or groups, then the standard of living becomes a necessary **task** or **condition**, without which it is impossible to use this freedom and to implement this or that way of life. The standard of living becomes «dependent» on what way of life is chosen. For one way of life, a set of material, social and other benefits can be very high, for others —

very low, but every time this set is caused not by a person's belonging to a social layer, group or class, but by his/her chosen way of life.

Handling of the concept «way of life»

Having formulated the category «quality of life», we need to change and reconsider the category «way of life». Let's review the contradiction between **variability of a way of life** and **multiplication of a way of life**. It is possible to ask a naive question, «Can a way of life change?» The first reaction to such a question is surprise, «Of course! All in this world changes.» Certainly, all in this world changes, but why does a way of life have to change, when it is more likely that they multiply? If someone does not like to live the way others do, he/she can start to live the way he/she wants. Having accepted the category «way of life», the modern public opinion allows it and even spurs everyone to live they ways they consider necessary and correct. We have already discussed it when we spoke about performativity of the category «way of life».

If we admit lifeway variability, then we recognize its objective contents and independent existence, i.e. there is something that can change, and something that changes. Then a «way of life» cannot remain only an instrumental category of the typological method of knowledge and an instrumental political category used to achieve freedom and to legitimize diversity. A way of life can be found in reality, described and measured in its invariance (statics), on the one hand, and in its variability (dynamics), on the other. Such an objectivization of a way of life opens completely different prospects of its research. In practice, objectively existing phenomena are a subject for control, regulation, management and legislative registration.

It is especially eloquently revealed in the sphere of intimate relations and sex. The infamous phrase «There's no sex in the USSR» is not so senseless and silly as it might seem. Sex in the USSR was a really intimate sphere, it was not spoken about; at the level of life public regulation, sex only drew attention if it crossed the line of criminal code. Sex was not talked about, but non-reflexion norms concerning the allowable forms of sexual relations (marriage), place and time, allowable ways and poses,

etc., were kept. Only in society with pluralism of lifeways was there a need in regulating sexual relations, and now this process is in its most active stage (at least, regarding homosexual relations). Such a regulation became possible when this sphere was recognized to be independent and objectively existing. If there is such an attitude, then it is a subject for study and fixation, including legislative one.

These reasoning about lifeway variability or multiplication allow us to fix two moments encased in the etymology of the word «way» («tenor»).

Firstly, *a way of life is a certain way of human life or group of people*, i.e. typicality, regularity, qualitative specificity, variety of different displays. This is something which can be changed and objectified, and which dynamics can be studied.

Secondly, *a way of life is a depiction, picture, ectype, fixed norm and standard*. In this quality, it cannot be changed; every change is a new way of life which, being fixed in a sample, can become a subject of spread and implementation.

These two different aspects of a «way of life» demand completely different strategies of research. Objectivization and regulation need quantity indicators (prevalence and occurrence of this or that way of life, characteristics of consumption, availability of social benefits, etc.), including variability or conservatism, social mobility, etc. To create and present a wide spectrum of lifeways, it is necessary to carry out a hermeneutic work with samples, their fixation and presentation.

At this stage of development of humanitarian knowledge, we have the necessary tools to study a way of life and the whole sphere of human relations, connected with it. Still, we do not know precisely what phenomena must be researched and analysed first. It is necessary to find out what and why it must be done, and to understand what in this sphere is **natural** and what **artificial**, where lifeway role models and dandyism are possible and where lifeway ecology is needed.

In the lifeway sphere, everything is the result of human activity and thought or, at least, is indirectly generated by this activity. *However, it*

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does not have to do with what things, objects and phenomena are, but how people treat and what people think about these things, objects and phenomena. This attitude is revealed by the categories used to describe and understand things. Therefore, developing and formulating concepts and categories, it is necessary to take into account this circumstance — an artificial or natural attitude.

The thing is that, reviewing social phenomena and processes in the lifeway sphere, a widespread mistake is to treat them as natural or quasi natural ones, as if they exist objectively and have nothing to do with what people think and know about them. The existence of natural objects and phenomena does not depend on knowledge about them, but the same cannot be said about artificial processes and phenomena. The artificial attitude assumes that we examine social phenomena as a result and a subject of people's purposeful activity. If we want to change the sphere of the quality and way of life, we need *to artificialize* in this sphere's phenomena and processes.

If for whatever reasons we do not know, are not able, cannot or do not want to treat processes and phenomena as artificial ones, then they, as a matter of fact, become quasi-natural and start to exist per se (at least, for those who perceive them so); social processes and phenomena *naturalize*.

Some social processes could be generated by people's creativity and activity, and could be supervised by people. Still, preservation of control demands a certain qualification and preparation. These phenomena's artificiality or naturalness become to depend on preservation of people's preparation and qualification. If for some reasons the due skill level is not kept, the processes are no longer controlled by people and start to naturalize. This phenomenon can be described by the term borrowed from Marxism, — *alienation*. Social processes and phenomena begin to naturalize when *the doer starts to alienate from his/her control over these processes*.

As for the lifeway sphere's processes and phenomena, it is also possible to speak about a person's alienation from his/her control in this sphere. If a way of life depends on a plethora of prerequisites,

conditions and circumstances incommensurable to a person's possibilities, then his/her control becomes impossible. It is necessary to admit that the majority of people in most cultures cannot control the lifeway sphere, but now we are discussing *a basic possibility of an artificial or natural attitude to the lifeway sphere's processes and phenomena*. Only does the presence of this basic possibility make our work meaningful.

It is possible to assume that one of the main dominating tendencies of the socio-historical development is a person's achievement of his/her increasing control over his/her lifeway and development of methods and ways of ruling this sphere. This assumption leads to an additional criterion — societies' division in traditional (closed) and modern (open) ones. Traditional societies are characterized by such humanitarian knowledge and such a language describing the lifeway sphere's processes and phenomena, which make it totally impossible to manage this sphere's processes and phenomena. While open societies are characterized by the spread of humanitarian knowledge and the professional languages using the concepts and categories which admit an artificial attitude to the lifeway sphere's processes and phenomena. The important thing is to have this basic possibility to control and manage this sphere. This possibility makes it possible to overcome a person's alienation from his/her activity. It goes without saying that open societies do not always allow everyone to manage and control the lifeway sphere either.

Our approach and the conceptualizations introduced by us, presuppose that the concept «way of life» must describe both natural and artificial phenomena and processes, with their subsequent possibility to artificialize or naturalize. It can be achieved by clearing the two aspects of the concept «way of life» we have already mentioned before.

The first aspect is a way of life as a certain set of norms, according to which human life or groups of people are organized; this is how a person lives. As a rule, he/she gets in a situation of implementation of one of norms and considers it to be reality, natural environment. With the

lapse of time, this environment can change; people's lifeways change as well. Except special situations, it is not considered to be a purposeful and organized process. In this respect, a way or ways of life are to be studied, described and fixed. Understanding lifeways' varieties and substantial differences, we can perceive the country's actual life, as well as prevalence and substantial filling of these or those norms and ways of life.

The second aspect has to do with the artificial side of the concept «way of life» and an attitude to a «lifeway» as to a sign or a sample which is an element of dialogue and coordination between various social subjects. Here, not a substantial description and objective characteristics of prevalence of this or that way of life, but its fixation as a norm or a sample which should be included in dialogue, is important. In this quality, a lifeway is an element of making administrative and political decision aimed at providing conditions for existence and coexistences of lifeways' varieties in one space and possibilities to implement these varieties.

Summing up our thoughts concerning the concepts «way and quality of life», it is necessary to fix the following. In order to provide the quality of life as a possibility to choose freely any lifeway, it is necessary to admit that:

— all methods of life organization available right now in Belarusian society, are of a cultural and social value;

— all of them have the right to exist and to be included in public attitudes' building.

However, just acknowledgement will not suffice because one has to settle a number of matters in order to provide the quality of life.

1. Inventory, description and fixation of all available ways of life. This inventory lifeways in Belarus is not a one-off action which is ended by compiling a closed list. It must be a constant research work and monitoring of lifeways within the framework of an open list. Here, lifeways must appear phenomenally-descriptively with examples, standards and samples. *We are to study, describe and fix samples all varieties of lifeways which exist and can exist in Belarus.*

2. Study of conditions and possibilities of spreading and implementating each of the found and described ways of life. The spread of norms and ways of life organization, as well as mechanisms and conditions of their implementation, are the characteristics of this or that lifeway's existence in social reality. Therefore, except for a phenomenal description of a lifeway itself as a certain norm, sample and standard, it is necessary for us to study and fix the following moments:

- subjects who implement various ways of life (carriers)
- forms of organization and institutionalization spreading various ways of life (schools, apprentice trainings, presentations, etc.) and implementing them (forms of organization, special conditions, etc.)
- subjects who purposefully spread these or those ways of life and whose care and responsibility are to reproduce these ways of life. Such subjects cannot be separate people; the task of spreading a way of life can only be proportionate to groups and communities
- spreading and implementing infrastructures. The presence of material, human, technical and other conditions necessary to implement a certain way of life.

3. Securance of a possibility to implement different ways of life. In order to create such conditions, lifeways must be described by not substantial characteristics, but the general *formal parameters*:

- *Space* needed to implement this or that way of life: geographical and social one
- *Time*: ratios in this or that way of life of free and necessary time
- *Intensity*: characteristics of rate, mobility and rhythm of this or that way of life
- *Modality*: estimations of ways of life like worthy or unworthy, modern or not, good or bad

The political and administrative decisions aimed at supporting the quality of life, must not be based on a concrete description of a paragon,

worthy way of life; their task is to maintain the implementation infrastructure for all available and probable ways of life. This infrastructure's parameters can be grounded on the characteristics of necessary space, time, mobility, etc. The difference between the available and necessary characteristics is the basis for decision making. It means that one is to make decisions which provide a possibility to implement in certain space the ways of life with maximally various characteristics. For example, a city ought to provide a possibility to conduct lives with different tempos and intensity; there should be possibilities for high geographical and social mobility and a chance to lead a sedentary life, as well as a possibility for people themselves to decide what is good and what is bad.

4. Securance of representation a wide variety of lifeways for a person to choose from. Speaking about variety, we can say that it is only possible when in one space people share their different lifeways, thus supporting the quality of life and creating the basis for decision making. Different lifeways' sharing in one geographical space is only possible when, for instance, the «propiska» (Soviet-esque address registration) is cancelled, the visa regime is changed and infrastructures are developed, etc. This sharing in different socio-cultural characteristics needs freedom to pick a school for children, to organize not closed cultural actions, but open and free concerts, where cultures can be shared and where people can observe various lifeways and make their choices.

Accordingly, ways of life in practice of political and administrative decisions must be set not descriptively, but formally and systematically, by characteristics of space, time, intensity, etc. These characteristics have a quantitative concept.

Realizing these tasks' immensity and systematic character, we understand that the first step to carry out them is to organize studies of the lifeway sphere in modern Belarus with the use of the suggested categorial apparatus. During such a research, we shall have a chance not only to receive a picture of an actual condition of the quality and way of life in Belarus, but also to develop and fill with the contents the categories we are working on.

Lifeway Study Programme within the scope of Belarus's modern social history and cultural policy

Formulating this study programme, we assign a task to verify the positions and reasoning we have made by way of describing Belarus's social history and development of the concepts «quality and way of life». The received results are to be superimposed on the theoretical and conceptual results presented in this book so that one can have a qualitative and adequate tool to describe and understand the lifeway sphere, to make administrative decisions and to organize activity in this sphere.

The carried out analysis of the changes which have taken place during the latest 15 years in the social sphere, does not allow us to provide a full description of the current state of affairs, but it enables us to see the problem places, to formulate directions of research activity and to locate it.

Repeated industrialization and urbanization do not restore cities' and industrial centres' social structure they had in the late 1980s. They are still industrial cities, but with an essentially complicated social structure. As for towns, their case is absolutely different because

they either had no industrial manufacture before, or it was destroyed during the crisis years.

Towns are a kind of a laboratory where one can observe lifeways' dynamics and changes. It would be possible to expect that the process of urbanization will touch towns as well, and there will be normalization and culturization, and that they will lift themselves up to cities by acquiring an urban way of life. Towns are a natural model or a prototype of negative and destructive tendencies in cities. On the other hand, being close to rural territories, such towns could become the leaders and fashion-makers of normalization and modernization of a rural way of life. Still, inverse tendencies when towns are trapped by negative tendencies working in rural territories in the context of accelerated and badly controlled industrialization and urbanization, are possible, too.

On the one hand, industrialization and urbanization have brought Belarus to today's situation when towns are less valuable than large industrial centres and do not influence any processes across the nation. On the other hand, the crisis phenomena and concurrent problems, as well as social tensions, are more manifest in towns. Therefore, lifeways' change and erosion in towns are of a big interest for researchers. Even though social processes touching a way of life in cities are more visible as they influence the whole country's life, their study requires much more expenses and resources, including large research centres, but today academic and universitarian science is not able to assign such tasks. As the research potential is only kept by small groups and resource-poor factories of thought, towns are the optimal object of studies within the framework of our theme.

The study's purpose is to find and describe the state of affairs in the sphere we study, thus creating the basis of innovative programmes to improve the quality of life in order to provide all concerned with new ideas, concepts and categories.

The study's target is modern Belarusan towns' lifeways. Proceeding from the described above lifeways' conceptualizations,

this target includes both *various lifeways' substantial side* (a phenomenal description) and *prevalence degree estimation*, as well as *conditions and characteristics of administrative and political practice* concerning ways of life, and *conditions that help support their spread, presentation, comprehension and implementation*.

The study's object includes various subjects' plans concerning organization of their life and the country's life (comprising state programmes, local development programmes and personal plans) together with the existing conditions of these plans' implementation and their resources' supply.

Basic hypotheses

1. Division into rural and urban ways of life is inadequate to modern conditions;
2. Organization of urban and rural environments in modern Belarus does not correspond to lifeways' teething diversification;
3. The local development programmes carried out by the Belarusian state, do not correspond to people's needs and requirements under the changed circumstances and do not provide the appropriate quality of life;
4. Those who develop and implement these programmes, have no theoretical and conceptual support to achieve their goals;

Expeditions' organization and the probing procedure

1. We arrive in a town and use an expert method to estimate the level and standards of life in it, thus defining a ratio of urban and rural types of a way of life.
2. We look for the town's places where we can expect to find various lifeways' displays. Among such places, there can be museums, houses of culture, Orthodox and Catholic churches, leisure areas, workshops, clubs, etc.
3. We visit these places and search for people whose lifeway includes these places' functional use (readers, theatre-goers, the merchants,

believers) or the brightest representatives of lifeways professionally connected with these places (culture workers, librarians, pastors, etc.)

4. We study the town's environment and infrastructure and seek for the signs of lifeways different from the most widespread and traditional ones.

5. We find out the local residents' basic kinds of employment according to the discovered lifeways and the ways they spend their spare time.

6. We research the places, ways and intensity of communications and intersections of various lifeways.

7. We collect opinions and conceptualizations of various lifeways' representatives about their town's development and changes and about their own plans for the future.

8. We investigate the development programmes carried out in this town.

9. We find out the degree of citizens' participation in defining their town's development programmes, their involvement into these programmes' implementation and the degree of the local authorities' and local community's influence on their own plans' implementation.

10. We find out whether the local residents are interested in the innovational ideas and initiatives that we can discover in this town or that we can offer them. We try to estimate and understand their reaction to these offers.

Aperçu of our expeditions' first results

In lieu of Conclusion

At the present time, we are in the beginning of the planned study programme's implementation. During 2007—2008, we have visited with expeditions 15 towns. Practically in all these towns, we have found lifeways' teething diversification, urban and rural lifeways' eclecticism, entwinement and interfusion of lifeways traditional for Soviet towns and rural areas and those which are quite new. Simultaneously, there are towns' disorderly organization and infrastructure for nearly all lifeways everywhere. In towns, it is not possible to lead the habitual Soviet life any longer, but they are not adapted to new ways of life either. Almost everywhere, Belarusan towns' inhabitants are isolated from their participation in planning local development, are unaware of the available programmes and plans and, unfortunately, neither consider it a problem, nor care a fig for this side of their lives' organization.

For active people, the rifest method to implement their own life's plans is to migrate to cities or other countries. There is a pressing need in forward planning and programming local development. In none of the towns we have visited, we have found no local subjects able to do such planning and programming. Moreover, in the majority of these towns, it is impossible to find even those who would be ready to

cooperate with external subjects. Only in a few towns we have visited, we managed to meet people, microcommunities or organizations interested in changing their own town and ready to cooperate with other subjects, communities and organizations in order to carry out these changes.

We have managed to establish a steady cooperation with some of these towns. Within the scope of this cooperation, we try to somehow surmount the ossification and conservatism of the towns' narrow-minded environment, the local authorities' inertness and the local development subjects' incertitude of their own forces and possibilities. It makes us optimistic. We are compelled to consider the local development potential to be very insignificant. Therefore, the contradiction between the slowly, but still changing way of life and towns' environment and infrastructure which are not adapted to these changes, is going to increase in the short run and to result in the alternative: either uncontrollable migration and towns' deterioration, or accelerated scheduled modernization.

Our aperçus (brief reviews) and reports on the towns can be found at our web-site <http://methodology.by>. In the near future, our expeditions' results are going to be published as a book.

Right now we can only diagnosticate an imperative need in Belarusan towns' modernization, whereas development of local development programmes adequate to new conditions, demands a deeper and detailed description and a discussion of the study's already received and planned results.