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Social Well-being during Post-Soviet Transformations:
New Configuration vs Old Mechanism

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*‘Any change, even a change for the better,
is always accompanied by drawbacks and discomforts’
(Arnold Bennet, English novelist)*

In situation of long-time social transformation in Ukraine it is important to gain a deeper understanding of how people experience subjective aspects of their lives and to identify the structural, social and individual factors associated with different levels and profiles of well-being in modern conditions. Subjective rather than objective aspects of well-being will be taken into account to create the monitoring view of the transformations’ perception and consequence. Analyzing subjective well-being is a key target variable of economic policy. Also the consequences of public support can be seen as a precondition of a successful transformation process in Ukraine. So it is important to study direct and indirect factors that influence on this success, same as find appropriate concepts and schemes for analyses.

The focus of this paper will be *the measurement of the social well-being* during Post-Soviet transformations; in same time *the individualism-collectivism/communitarianism value continuum* will be used as a theoretical framework to study this field. These aspects will be considered through the prism of specific value continuum of Ukrainians that is influenced by Soviet past (for example, paternalism as an echo of old life strategies) and present level of life.

Theoretical ideas will be supported by empirical data from annual *Ukrainian social monitoring* (Institute of Sociology, National Academy of Science of Ukraine (NASU) (1994-2009) and *European Social Survey* (second, third and fourth waves (2004-2009))¹.

The value conception of S.Schwartz

The value conception of S. Schwartz is relevant for the study of values in modern comparative research. S. Schwartz has selected values sets identified by previous researchers and added other values from religious and philosophical writings on the values in different cultures. To clarify author’s position, it is important to note, that *values are seen as goals, which serve as guidelines for human life, and thus are the criteria according to which people forms their attitudes to the world, including the criteria for choosing their behavioural strategies, assessments of something, and others' actions.* The concept includes the dimensions of self-mastery, harmony with nature,

¹ European Social Survey (ESS) - all-European monitoring project, an international comparative sociological survey. The project is directed by a Central Coordinating Team led by Roger Jowell at the Centre for Comparative Social Surveys, City University, UK. (in Ukraine research field was conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the NASU).

intellectual and effective autonomy, conservatism, preference for hierarchy, and societal or egalitarian commitment gives an opportunity for a very wide and detailed analysis of different aspects of social activities (*Schwartz' Value Circle*). In general, values which are in people's preferences and attitudes impact their behaviour including their actions as economic, political agents and social life participants.

The social well-being indicators

For our research the *social well-being concept* seeks to gain a systematic understanding of *subjective* aspects of people's lives, with a view to describing how well-being varies across time, identifying main structural, social and individual factors associated with different levels/profiles of well-being.

The social well-being indicator measures 1. *how* people feel their connections with others; 2. the strength of those relationships. It is comprised of two component indicators which measure *supportive relationships* and *trust and belonging*. These can be thought of representing people's experiences of their individualistic (relationships represent the strong connections people experience with those who are close to them) and communitarianistic relationships (relationships the more numerous connections people establish with those they encounter in broader social spheres). The importance of understanding well-being as an *active* process (how well people function), rather than just a *passive* process (how good do they feel) is underlined, especially in the situation under social transformations, that brings us to the analysis of life strategies also.

This paper focuses on the next sub-indicators: positive feelings, absence of negative feelings, satisfying life, vitality, resilience and self-esteem, positive functioning, supportive relationships, trust and belonging.

Some preliminary results of the data analysis

Data from annual Ukrainian social monitoring (1994-2009) and European Social Survey (2004-2009) show that the overwhelming majority of people live under extremely poor economic conditions and experience material difficulties, in the same time the majority of Ukrainians does not cherish any hopes as for some improvement in their family financial position within next five year, the majority of respondents expresses profound dissatisfaction with their living and everyday conditions, after 2005 people again feel pessimism and disappointment same as cherish less hopes for have stability in future (but this situation isn't worst in comparison with other European Union countries). Anyway we need to see differences (if they are)/periods of changing in social well-being during last 19 years and distinguish new characteristics of life strategies used by Ukrainians.

European Social Survey data analysis shows that Ukrainian value continuum consists from the extremely high manifestation of the values entering into a category of Preservation (Security, Conformity, and Tradition); on the contrary, the extremely low expressiveness of the values entering into the opposite category of the Openness to changes (Self-direction, Hedonism and Stimulation). In addition, the value of Benevolence is extremely low and the value of Power is extremely high. This picture reflects the possible ways of continuing transformations (orientations). Also data shows that the family is still the main and in many cases the only resource for the survival of those who need social support in Ukraine. That is why Ukrainians agree to the idea that their families must be the main priority in men's and women's life.

Excessive involvement in families and housework makes it impossible for Ukraine to eliminate traditional stereotypes related to the position of women in family and society.

The stagnation after 2005 could be an illustration of either exhaustion of the population's adaptive opportunities or of the growth of social claims caused by change of authority and greater hopes for the post revolutionary future (after the events of 2004). Today Ukrainians could be characterized by high prudence, need for protection from the strong state, conservatism, and fear of social condemnation. As a consequence, there is a rather weak need for innovation, creativity, freedom, and independence. Furthermore, people are less willing to care about each other as they care just about their own families (this situation can be characterized by so called 'narrow' responsibility).

The transformation into 'what'?

Social well-being during Soviet period can be characterized by absence of fear for the future, care and support expectations for government, enterprise management, trade union etc., low level of claims, low level of labor service, mass was provided with a merge but guaranteed living wage².

New configurations of life strategies in the middle of 1990-s were influenced by an anticipating the future with pessimistic predictions, needs for social stability, living in the atmosphere of distrust on micro- and macro-level (to other people, to political and social institutions), low level of satisfying with own life, afraid of ruling and law-enforcement authorities, adapting oneself to the new social, economical and political conditions, people demonstrate adherence to the soviet standards of life.

Nowadays the majority of Ukrainians doesn't enjoy any privileges in their daily life and possibilities for market economy still. According to the surveys, the atmosphere of distrust of people to people, to the government and social institutions is very characteristic for all social groups still (except period 2004-2005 when it was higher). The level of paternalist attitudes is quite high, whereas there is some positive dynamics related to the increasing amount of those relied on themselves. Changes in the economic and social environment, and in people's attitudes, have led to a weakening in the ties between families, community and the workplace, in same time people and society in general are not sufficiently enjoying the values of these ties. Family is very important (that is usual for society lying in the part of collectivistic continuum scale) but mostly as the main resource of surviving. From other side, the well-being of families and the future of children remain the principal consolidating values as for the common values of everyday life for all ages. One more characteristic that must to be noted is the decreasing of the nostalgia about Soviet past that can be explained by new generation coming. Also it is important that in comparison with Soviet past political behavior same as political life gradually became a part of Ukrainians' everyday life.

Social structure of Ukrainian society seems to be a hybrid system of mutually penetrating types of social homogeneity and inequality as a result of the social changes during last 19 years. There is a gap between social groups having high life chances and groups whose life chances are very restricted by local opportunities (biggest part of society). As a result, present economic and social well-being of ***main part*** of Ukrainians determinates the using the ***exclusion*** (rejection to

² Vil S.Bakirov, Post-Soviet Way of Life: Ukrainian Peculiarities // Changing Diversity: Vectors, Dimensions and Content of Post-Communist Transformation / Ed. By O.D.Kutsenko; co-edited by S.S. Babenko. – V.N.Karazin Kharkiv National University Publisher, 2004. – 368 p.

adapt to changes), *survival* (decrease reproduction at the level of physical survival, decrease of social status and life chances) or *adaptation* (it can be used in two ways: attempt to save minimal acceptable status or reproduction own status by adaptation, enforced balancing, using all possible opportunities, including some new one) life-course strategies (but not the *achievement* life-course strategy (self-realization, using new opportunities, expanded reproduction of social status³). Those values, attitudes and life-course strategies that are institutionalized in society shapes the limits of the changeability of the societal system: only achievement strategy that isn't using by majority has great influence on the process of social change.

³ Typology of life-course strategy is created by Svetlana S. Babenko (Sv.S.Babenko, Social Mechanism of Post-Soviet Transformation: Agency-Structural Perspective // Changing Diversity: Vectors, Dimensions and Content of Post-Communist Transformation / Ed. By O.D.Kutsenko; co-edited by S.S. Babenko. – V.N.Karazin Kharkiv National University Publisher, 2004. – 368 p.