

# Some notes on the issue of social stratification in Russia: lifestyle aspect

S. KOROTAEV, OVSEJ SHKARATAN, E. GASIUKOVA

Laboratory for Comparative Analysis of Post-Socialist Development, National Research University Higher School of Economics, M. Pionerskaya, 12, Moscow, 115054, Russia

E-mail sergey\_a.k@mail.ru; ovsey.shkaratan@gmail.com; lena-gasyukova@yandex.ru

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The modern tradition of stratification research has seen a lot of problems of both the ontological (global economic and social transformations brought about by shift to the post-industrial society) and epistemological nature. These problems are particularly pressing for the stratification scholars in Russia due to the lack of a long-standing tradition of social structure research as compared to developed countries, an abundance of contrary viewpoints, and highly contrasting lifestyles of Russians caused by significant economic inequality, as well as cultural and regional differences. The authors of this publication believe that viewing lifestyles as a stratification aspect and criterion may be one of the solutions to the crisis. The publication presents a critical review of the existing approaches to lifestyle groups research. The authors put forward a number of suggestions on applying this approach in the Russian social structure studies.

**Keywords:** lifestyle, social stratification, Russia, social groups, social diversity, social structure methodology

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The approach applied in the modern social stratification studies stipulates that classes are the basic structural elements in developed societies. Their operationalization is conducted through such parameters as income, education, type of employment, occupation, self-identity. Following the steps of foreign colleagues, many contemporary Russian sociologists tackle the problems of stratification measurement in a similar way (Mareeva 2015; Tichonova 2008: 82; Golenkova 1999: 42; Hahulina 1999). Lately, however, there have appeared opponents of this approach. Russian scholar L. Gudkov (2016) views the groups differentiated on this basis as nominal, and the applied scales do little to reveal the real groups and give an adequate picture of the social structure, according to him. For instance, self-evaluation of one's financial situation and social status is apparently connected to the respondent's positioning with regard to his or her small reference group or social network. This is supported both by qualitative observations (Iľin 2007: 57–59) and the data from representative surveys: the majority of respondents refer to themselves as “middle class” or believe they have a “middle status” (Gudkov 2016).

Using an income as a stratifying attribute is no less complicated. Since the income level, as well as the level of prices (food, housing, transportation) and, therefore, the cost of living can vary dramatically from region to region in Russia, attempts to develop a sort of a universal scale on the basis of this indicator do not seem promising. Setting any standards according to

the median or average income does not help either, as it is typically based on the assumption that average parameters in the regions of Russia are homologous. The formal level of education does not imply a differentiation potential because of the devaluation of higher education and a weak connection between the obtained qualification and further career (Mazina, Mazin 2011; Belocerkovskiy 2012). The brand of the educational institution and probably even the specific program are a significant indicator; however, developing rankings that would allow to compare the “power” of diplomas obtained in different years, regions and fields is hardly realistic.

A more general argument is that the class approach implies identifying groups according to their relational attributes and not only descriptive ones (Shkaratan 2012: 459–460). Applying a certain number of presumably secondary attributes characteristic of social groups in developed countries as the main criterion for establishing their equivalents in Russia (while implicitly assuming they are bound to exist) results in sets that are fairly random in numbers and amorphous in structure<sup>1</sup>, devoid of any attributes of real social groups and not applicable for cross-country comparisons. The obtained results are not so much a source of information about the society as the manifestation of an author’s position towards the social and, inevitably, political developments in the country.

Nowadays the problem of adoption, frequently noncritical, of foreign approaches and taxonomies in Russia is also complicated by the fact that researchers studying the stratification of developed societies have reached no consensus on key theoretical and methodological issues. The prevailing class approach was seriously debated in the 1990s and 2000s. Not only specific theoretical and methodological issues were criticized, but also the relevance of the approach to describing the world that changed drastically since the age of Marx and Weber was questioned<sup>2</sup>. One of the main issues with the approaches of neo-Marxism and neo-Weberianism that were dominant at that time was the incapability to identify real social groups (e. g. Soerensen 1991). Indeed, as the social and economic relations grew more complicated, the initial imperative to describe the social environment through antagonistic or competitive group relations (in which functional differences are determined by the possession of certain assets) made way for the analysis of inequality in resources and assets distribution that in terms of theory is still connected with exploitation and dominance (Savage, Warde, Devine 2005). De facto, in the stratification picture created by researchers, groups that could be characterized by a certain social homogeneity and a collective consciousness of any kind were replaced by nominal groups singled out on the basis of descriptive attributes. For instance, Goldthorpe, one of the most influential scholars in the field of class analysis, directly points out that his class scheme does not serve the purpose of identifying real groups<sup>3</sup> (Chan, Goldthorpe 2007a).

In its extreme form, such approach implies that respondents are represented as separate points in the imaginary anisotropic space, with values along the axes corresponding to resources/capital (economic, cultural, symbolic, social, etc.) that constitute individual attributes of respondents (see, e. g. Grusky 2001). In such a space, the existence of clearly outlined

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, the proportion of the middle class may vary from 22% of the working population (Shkaratan 2012: 389) to 40% of the economically active population (Gorshkov 2015).

<sup>2</sup> According to Dorling (2014), the division of societies into classes emerged along with industrialization, when relations between individuals started being determined through their relations to machines. It is mass production, and not the market as such that is a condition of their existence. The decline of industrial system leads to the decline of classes.

<sup>3</sup> At the same time, it is clear that the majority of researchers relying on this or other class schemes, would like to see some resemblance of real groups in classes. For instance, scholars (Le Roux, Rouanet, Savage, Warde 2008) suggest a correction of Goldthorpe’s aggregated scheme based on cultural consumption data.

boundaries between large sets and, hence, the existence of real “classes” is contingent. Thus, according to Grusky, the existence of classes is just one of the forms of statistical arrangement of points in the resources space (Grusky 2008). The number and the structure of the identified classes are determined through econometric analysis and evaluated according to formal statistical criteria<sup>4</sup>. At the same time, it is not clear to what extent this result is only an artefact of the chosen model (sample size, parameters set and the method of their operationalization, and other features of the model). Without any theoretical justification of the defined boundaries between the classes and of the data on the relation between the established structure and social behaviour, such inductive approach is no less vulnerable to criticism than a priori constructions of neo-Marxists and neo-Weberianists (see, e. g. the critical commentary on (Savage et al. 2013) in (Mills 2014; Bradley 2014)).

Among the solutions to this crisis, the most promising one, in the opinion of the authors of this article, is the introduction of lifestyle elements as the main stratification criteria. According to one of the definitions, a lifestyle is a relatively stable pattern of organizing everyday life within the framework of a given life situation, taking into account available resources. A lifestyle may include the practices of everyday routines, gainful employment, consumption, free time activities, preferences, attitudes and values, participation in the activities of non-governmental and religious organizations and groups, as well as plans for the future, with the planning horizon being a specific feature of each lifestyle (see Bögenhold 2001; Mochmann, El-Menouar 2005).

Groups of individuals following a similar lifestyle can be viewed as real social groups based on this attribute alone. Lifestyle elements listed above can be unified by the notion of the group’s culture. The differences between such groups are not a result of theoretical speculations, but are visible to any engaged social actor. A lifestyle group (referred to by some authors as milieu<sup>5</sup>) allows a direct behaviour analysis instead of attempts to predict social behaviour judging by a set of resources. The nature of relation between resources and behaviour can also be included in the research agenda, under such approach (Bögenhold 2001).

The authors of this article believe that the advantages of viewing lifestyle differences as an element of social inequality are particularly significant for the Russian case. This can be supported by the following arguments: the lack of a history in stratification research that exists in Western countries, and the ensuing wide spectrum of quite frequently opposite views of the Russian society, complicated by the inevitable ideological bias in discussions on this matter<sup>6</sup>. For this reason, switching to the notion of lifestyle seems particularly promising for the analysis of social inequality in Russia.

The problem lies in the fact that there is no established research method that would allow one to fully realize the above-mentioned potential advantages of the approach. That is why in this article, the authors undertake a critical examination of applying the group lifestyle concept in stratification research and put forward several suggestions on employing this approach to inequality research in Russia.

<sup>4</sup> Research of this kind was conducted on the basis of data from Russia (Shkaratan, Yastrebov 2009; Shkaratan 2012: 378–392). In the space of attributes under consideration, the group with the least amount of resources comprised 74% of the entire population.

<sup>5</sup> Considering the variety of both notions’ interpretations, they can be treated as synonyms, although the publication (Mochmann, El-Menouar 2005) mentions a difference between these two terms in the tradition of electoral research.

<sup>6</sup> For a review of positions see (Shkaratan 2012: 274–311, 368–371, 453–462).

## LIFESTYLE<sup>7</sup> AS AN ASPECT OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY

The idea that a lifestyle, meaning primarily a certain consumption pattern, as well as manners, traditions, values, and ideals, serves to demonstrate and reinforce social inequality, goes as far back as to Veblen (Berzano, Genova 2015: 4–6).

Weber introduces the concept of status ranked according to the associated prestige which serves as one of the three separate stratification axes, along with the economic (class) and political (party) axes. Status groups are differentiated on the basis of goods consumption principles represented by lifestyles that can be viewed by the society as more or less prestigious. A group receives recognition through the appropriation of status prestige, relying upon the economic power. Generally, these two areas turn out to be interrelated, for, according to Weber, the social background defines resources that affect professional standing and, hence, material and non-material consumption (lifestyle), and prestige, as well as opportunities in life and economic interests marked by the class position. A lifestyle can be interpreted as the culture of a certain social community, marking its boundaries. The differences between lifestyles are mostly defined by education (Weber 2001).

Further progress in the development of the lifestyle concept is connected with the ideas of Bourdieu. His widely acclaimed approach has become, as of today, commonplace, being a starting point for almost any cultural or lifestyle study in the context of social inequality. *Habitus* is the key notion here. Being a system of established dispositions, *habitus* is a principle that initiates and organizes practices and preferences (tastes). Representing internalized social relations, *habitus* allows individuals to act freely within the framework of certain rules and restrictions associated with living conditions (Bourdieu 1990b: 53–55). At the same time, it does not impose rigid behaviour patterns, but allows to “feel the play” – to invent and improvise within the constraints of the rules, being guided by well-known examples (Bourdieu 1990a: 61–63). An individual’s practices are objectively in accordance with one another; each can become a metaphor of any other. They are also objectively synchronized with the practices of all class members (Bourdieu 1984: 173).

Marking the differences, a lifestyle reflects or represents social inequality. Bourdieu speaks about a close connection between a lifestyle and cultural capital, namely one of its elements, embodiment, which is to a certain extent acquired and employed unconsciously and implicitly (for instance, manners or speech). Capital of this kind requires efforts and time to be acquired, and its yield depends on the extent of its shortage. A *habitus* tied with the inherited cultural capital ensures the reproduction of inequality (Bourdieu 1986).

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<sup>7</sup> By turning to lifestyle examination, we follow the sociological tradition of the concept’s analysis that allows one to reveal the diversity of individuals’ social positions. There is another approach, though – a concept that stems from the diversity of individuals’ psychological and behavioural profiles (Berzano, Genova 2015). Within this tradition, researchers have developed various tools for identifying and typifying these profiles or lifestyles. They include AIO (Activities, Interests, Opinions) (Wells, William, Tigert, Douglas 1971), a technique for values measurement and behaviour classification; LOV (Kahle, Beatty, Homer 1986; Kahle 1983), a method of measuring values corresponding to social roles; VALS (Mitchell, 1983) and VALS2 (supplemented by the analysis of individuals’ personal potential and resources) (Berzano, Genova 2015: 32–32), an instrument for identifying values differentiation among individuals. Other similar methods have been developed as well: Rokeach Value Survey (Rokeach 1973); Schwartz and Bilsky value systems (Schwartz, Bilsky 1990). However, applying one of these methods in our research is not justified due to still ambiguous procedures of data collection and issues with their validity and reliability; as compared to classic social and demographic indicators, these lifestyles methodologies have smaller predictive power (Kahle, Valette-Florence 2012: 189).

## PROBLEM OF CULTURAL CAPITAL

Considering that the concept of cultural capital has become widespread in lifestyle studies, certain related issues should be discussed. In our view, the utility of cultural capital, at least in the form operationalized by Bourdieu in *Distinction* (1984), is overestimated by contemporary scholars. The following points can be made in support of this argument: (1) in the modern world, tastes and competencies in the field of art that, according to Bourdieu, constitute a significant part of cultural capital, have a weak connection with the social position; their ability to yield dividends is questionable; (2) there are combinations of skills and practices that, functioning like cultural capital, as per Bourdieu, may serve as the source of prestige and have liquidity, while having a completely opposite meaning compared to the notion of cultural capital; (3) this is the most radical statement: there exists a huge diversity of “cultural capitals” in local social areas that bring prestige and yield. In fact, the latter is the result of consistent application of the field theory to the social stratification problem. The following arguments can be suggested in support of the above-listed three statements:

(1) Since the 1960s, the hierarchy of preferences in the field of arts has significantly changed due to such phenomena as commercialization and the associated spread of mass culture that incorporated many elements previously pertaining to high culture only<sup>8</sup> (Holt 1998). In addition to that, the adoption of popular genre elements by artists (for instance, pop art) has contributed to the dilution of cultural hierarchies in the society (Prior 2005).

Some authors try to solve the problem of the cultural consumption expansion by introducing additional axes of cultural capital, related, for instance, to leisure activities that are popular among educated young people (Savage et al. 2013). A solution of this kind is highly vulnerable to criticism as there are no obvious grounds for identifying such activity forms with any sort of capital, as well as no evidence of such “capital’s” liquidity (Mills 2014).

Similarly, there are no obvious reasons to believe, aside from the tradition, in the ability of cultural capital operationalized through highbrow tastes and competencies to bring any sort of yield. A survey conducted among the personnel of companies operating in highly competitive business fields revealed that cultural preferences associated with the social positions do not manifest themselves in the working environment: colleagues prefer to discuss themes that are equally interesting to employees of all levels (for example, sports or family). At the same time, inequality becomes apparent in business relevant activity forms: senior managers read business magazines more often and are savvy about upscale restaurants that are often used as a place for negotiations. Therefore, it can be concluded that the classic cultural capital is meaningful in specific fields only, like the academic community (Erickson 1996). Groups that would be prone to view it as one of the main criteria for personal evaluation are extremely small.

(2) Some authors point out that specific forms of embodied cultural competencies characteristic of relatively low-status groups can also bring dividends (including financial ones) in the corresponding social environment (Bradley 2014).

Such examples can be provided on the basis of Russian experience, too. Taking into account a widespread presence of prison culture elements in everyday practices of the Russian population (language, moral standards, preferences)<sup>9</sup>, it is easy to agree with the fact that

<sup>8</sup> A social difference can manifest itself not in the set of consumed objects, but in the manner of their consumption (Holt 1998).

<sup>9</sup> See (Khanipov 2008; Oleinik 2003; Stephenson 2016). Expressions borrowed from jail slang can be common even among the most high-profile politicians.

deep involvement in criminal subculture expressed through corresponding discourse skills can be a source of social prestige. Jail slang makes speakers sound more convincing, as well as indicates certain connections and willingness to resort to violence to defend their position. On the contrary, “intelligent” appearance associated with the traditional cultural capital can be a sign of weakness for a significant part of the Russian population, indicating that interests of such person can be ignored.

(3) According to Bourdieu, every agent, depending on the social position, constructs an imaginary social space that determines mutual positioning of other participants. This positioning depends not only on participants’ “objective” characteristics but also on a view point, that’s why is being subjective (Bourdieu 1984: 169). The prestige and cultural capital hierarchy is also relative and in certain fields can oppose the reference frame of the external observer (e. g. Bourdieu 1995: 81–85). Despite this extremely important theoretical point, Bourdieu relies in his work (1984) on the existence of a single cultural capital axis that represents the relation between respondents’ preferences and the preferences of the dominant class. The author constructs the space of lifestyles, as if judging from his own social position and, therefore, ignoring the possibility of different viewpoints among other social groups<sup>10</sup>. Bourdieu’s single cultural capital axis, reflecting both his personal view and the state of the French society in the 1960s is nevertheless not exactly adequate in terms of the latest research.

The above-listed arguments make us question the validity of a universal cultural capital, while an attempt to identify the entire spectrum of cultural practices with the dividend potential appears to be unrealistic. For the same reason, *it would make sense to discard the category of “cultural capital” in the meaning of capital as such. Such step will allow to analyze and differentiate the space of cultural consumption without using one-sided interpretations.* At the same time, the main problem lies not even in the fact that authors “incorrectly” interpret the data, “finding” some cultural capital in it, but in the fact that they proceed from the necessity of identifying this capital as early as at the stage of research design.

## VISUAL ART AND MUSIC CONSUMPTION AS A FEATURE OF LIFESTYLE

One of the most important lifestyle markers, according to Bourdieu (1984), is aesthetic preferences, namely, in the fields of painting and music. As compared to other parameters used by the scholar, music and art preferences are much easier to study by means of formalized surveys, and the results of such surveys helped conduct the most detailed and convincing mapping of the lifestyles space. All this has facilitated the shift in researchers’ interests towards these lifestyle aspects. However, the results of British studies in the field of cultural consumption (Chan, Goldthorpe 2005, 2007b; Silvia 2006), indicate respondents’ low involvement in the consumption of each art type even among the most privileged groups. It is difficult to make any conclusions about the social structure based on these data. Of course, the high art in the modern world can be notably less significant for elites’ self-identity than in France in the 1960s<sup>11</sup>. But, more importantly, an independent analysis of consumption within separate genres, art types or leisure

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<sup>10</sup> This is evident, for instance, from the structure of sampling and questions: the upper, middle and working classes are represented in an approximately equal proportion, irrespective of each group’s real size. The overrepresentation of bourgeois groups has allowed to pinpoint even small-sized fractions within this class, while the high level of the working class homogeneity, reflected in its poor command of high culture, allows one to engage a relatively small number of respondents (Bourdieu 1984: 505, 512–518).

<sup>11</sup> See (Holt 1998) with regard to the USA.

activities<sup>12</sup> dismisses the fact that when choosing an activity, people can consider alternatives without confining themselves to certain genres or fields. In reality, when deciding how to spend a day off with friends, a person can choose between a bar and a jazz concert, but before that they can attend an art exhibition or go to movies. That is why it is not productive to divide leisure activities into separate areas (including cases when several such areas are examined within one study); instead, a more holistic take on leisure activities is needed.

## DISTINCTIONS THROUGH LEISURE PRACTICES

The CCSE survey encompassed a wide spectrum of leisure activities and interests, such as TV, cinema, books, music and visual art, eating out, sports. Some works contained a comprehensive analysis of these data (Gayo-Cal, Savage, Warde 2006; Le Roux, Rouanet, Savage, Warde 2008). Despite certain differences in the methodology and the list of parameters under review, the general result is that the space of leisure activities is organized around two main axes, one of them corresponding to education, income and professional standing, and the other one to age. Thus, the first axis may be interpreted as the total (economic and cultural) capital, which is similar to Bourdieu's result. The second axis represents the changing fashion and changes in preferences at different points in a person's life. As for the leisure space, the diversity of activity types grows along with the education level and social status. Older representatives of the upper strata gravitate toward the traditional, legitimized culture, with their preferences requiring particular competence and material expenses (opera, French restaurants, home library), while younger respondents prefer "popular" types of music, cinema and literature, are into sports, and go to pubs and Asian restaurants. Moving down the social ladder, participation in leisure activities dramatically declines, with a widespread rejection of practices associated with high culture among younger people and with contemporary popular culture among older ones. Instead, the amount of time spent in front of TV grows.

On the one hand, the CCSE project results represent a rather comprehensive picture of cultural and leisure practices of the British population, and this picture can be interpreted in terms of social structure. The analysis results are similar to those of Bourdieu, demonstrating the differentiating potential of lifestyle practices. On the other hand, the logic of this project, as well as of Bourdieu's work, is based on the opposition of "high" and "low" levels of culture. With a few exceptions, the description of the emerged cultural space is confined to the image of a descending degree of involvement in various activities, ending in avoidance and even rejection of some practices<sup>13</sup>. At the same time, Bourdieu's original approach is much broader. The numerical analysis of data from the survey on aesthetic preferences and going out practices is just one of the elements of his work, along with many qualitative observations that are no less important for describing cultural differences, especially when talking about the working class culture, as well as data on material goods consumption, primarily food products.

<sup>12</sup> Leisure activities related to information consumption are a notable exception. The vast majority of the British population watch TV (Bennett 2006) and read newspapers (Chan, Goldthorpe 2007c) on a regular basis. The newspapers example is also interesting because newspapers are equally accessible to everyone and most people read just one of them. As a result, the preferences analysis is not complicated by the differing degrees of participation in reading and by the competition with other forms of information consumption, which ensures the credibility and visibility of the cited work's results (the choice of newspapers is a constant parameter that is strongly connected with the social status and education).

<sup>13</sup> TV watching is a meaningful exception. This type of activity is more characteristic of deprived social groups. It is also noteworthy to mention the love for country and Western music, as well as watching social sports, Westerns and musicals among older manual labourers and the rejection of reality TV and the cheapest eating places among upper classes (Gayo-Cal, Savage, Warde 2006).

## NUTRITION AS A MARKER OF LIFESTYLE

According to studies' results, specific food products consumed by an individual depend on the social position (occupation, income, education) (Warde 1997; Hulshofetal et al. 2003; Lallukka, Laaksonen, Rahkonen, Roos, Lahelma 2007), family status and other lifestyle parameters (for instance, physical activity) (Deshmukh-Taskar, Nicklas, Yang, Berenson 2007).

As per Western European studies, upper and middle classes are characterized by a more healthier approach to food as compared to lower ones, with the difference between upper and middle groups being less significant.

Differences in nutrition are also revealed with the introduction of additional parameters of lifestyle differentiation. For instance, married couples follow diet plans more rigorously than those who were married before but are single now (Roos et al. 1998). At the same time, another correlation has been discovered in the USA (Deshmukh-Taskar 2007): adult married couples have quick meals more often and eat more food than unmarried couples. If there are small children in the family, mothers eat healthier food, which is irrelevant to fathers (Roos et al. 1998).

In Russia, the correlation between food consumption and the social status is different than in developed countries. Representatives of well-to-do population in Russia (especially men) are more often overweight (Gremchenko, Roshhina 2016; Grigor'eva 2012). The Rosstat data as of 2013 confirm these conclusions, despite that diets of the well-off groups of population are more diverse and include high-calorie products and foods rich in vitamins (Rosstat 2013; Tables: 4.5, 14.3, 28.6). Occupation and gender also determine some of the differences. Men who are white-collar workers and men employed in the service industry are more prone to be overweight than blue-collar workers. Women who have graduated from a vocational school, who are employed in the service industry or are manual workers are 1.5–2 times more likely overweight than professional women with higher education (Grigor'eva 2012).

Thus, there are obvious differences between lower classes and the rest of the population, when it comes to comparing diets. Depending on the combination of additional parameters (gender, occupation, education, marital status, etc.), one can reveal other differences between social groups on the basis of food consumption.

## QUALITATIVE STUDIES OF LIFESTYLE DIFFERENCES

The publication (Holt 1998) focuses on verifying the relation between cultural capital<sup>14</sup> and consumption patterns, which, according to Bourdieu, exists. Using qualitative methods, the author managed to identify interesting and non-trivial differences in consumption practices of the upper and lower social classes. People with a small cultural capital pay attention to the materialistic side of things and their quantitative characteristics (luxury cars, latest gadgets, fashionable clothes), but not to the aesthetic and contemplative qualities. Often, well-to-do representatives of this group live in bigger houses than those with better education, despite the bigger income of the latter. This is well familiar to people in Russia and some other post-communist countries where the new rich invested their fortunes in high-status cars, watches, and outrageously big apartments and mansions, with the architecture and interiors being ridiculed by the media and the intelligent public. Besides, groups on the opposite sides of the cultural capital spectrum differ in their attitude towards work. For the one side, work is associated with achievements, career growth and creativity, while for the other side work is an inevitable evil and is opposed to a more pleasant part of life that has to do with consumption.

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<sup>14</sup> Cultural capital was operationalized through education and the occupational status of respondent and his father.

Although Holt identifies qualitative differences in the lifestyles of opposite social groups, it is impossible to understand the structure of the entire social space using the same approach, at least because of the small size and selective nature of the sampling. The qualitative approach allows to turn to the direct experience of individuals who are competent actors, capable of classifying and determining a social position by a minimum number of attributes that can hardly be fully explicated and algorithmized. By comparing the evaluations of various respondents, the researcher can construct a conventional picture of the social space, as well as make and verify assumptions on the importance and differentiating potential of given criteria. The most famous work of such kind is the project “Yankee City” implemented under the supervision of W. L. Warner (Warner 1963: 35–61). Detailed interviews of small American town residents showed that income and occupation are significant, but not comprehensive factors of stratification. Of no less importance are the individual’s behaviour (speech, manners), social network, participation in public organizations, origin. What sets this work aside from others is the fact that the social space parameters, as well as the boundaries of this space, were not predetermined *a priori*, but established inductively based on the actors’ statements. And different factors were of most significance for boundaries between the groups. Such approach implies that the lifestyle space is not a projection of the existing (in terms of research methodology) social inequality space, but is a source that determines the latter. A difference in lifestyles turns from an indicator into a generating force, with its significance being established empirically.

Implementation of a study similar to “Yankee City” requires considerable resources and is possible only for a smaller community, while its results can hardly be extrapolated to the entire society. However, one of the elements of this work, namely, the application of data on respondents’ social connections for identifying the social space structure can be used in qualitative studies as well.

### SUMMARIZING SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS THROUGH THE STRUCTURE OF FRIENDSHIP

Laumann was one of the first to propose the numerical analysis of the social relations structure (Laumann, Guttman 1966). The author proceeded from the fact that people are inclined to establish voluntary social contacts (friendship, marriage) with those who are “like them” or, in other words, have a similar lifestyle. Therefore, one can reveal the social proximity of groups by comparing the profiles of friendships or marriages. Occupational groups were selected as a starting point in this and all the following studies. These groups had to a certain extent guarantee the social homogeneity of their members (as mentioned before, such assumption is widespread). Knowing the occupational status of the respondent and his/her best friend or spouse, one can obtain a social contact profile for representatives of each occupation. Analyzing the proximity of these profiles with the use of multidimensional scaling allowed one to receive a one- or a multi-dimensional space of social distances between the groups. A similar approach was applied for the stratification scale CAMSIS (Prandy, Lambert 2003), as well as by Chan and Goldthorpe (2004) for developing the scale of social status operationalized through the nature of social relations.

The social relations analysis was conducted on the Russian material as well (Yastrebov 2009). The results indicate a crystallization of two groups on the opposite ends of the social space in 1994–2006 – blue-collar workers, on the one hand, and professionals and senior and middle-level managers, on the other hand. At the same time, the entrepreneurs group was almost equally distant from the two groups during the entire period.

The use of occupational groups<sup>15</sup> as starting points for the social space construction is a commonplace in the above-mentioned studies. It is only acceptable when groups are socially homogeneous, however, there are reasons to question that.

<sup>15</sup> At the same time, it is not important if the authors believe in their reality, like Grusky, or view them as proxy variables, like Chan and Goldthorpe.

## ARE OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS A REASONABLE PROXY FOR REAL GROUPS?

Grusky, one of the advocates for viewing occupations as real social groups, proposed the following arguments in support of his position: a person's identity is to a large extent connected with his or her occupation; there are institutes that create social boundaries between occupations (licensing, trade unions, education, evaluations); recognition of common interests and, hence, the willingness for collective actions; acquisition by the representative of a certain occupation of an associated habitus through secondary socialization. At the same time, the author admits that far from all occupations will likely be real groups (Grusky 2001).

The authors (Savage et al. 2013) criticized the notion that occupations mark real social groups. For instance, income variation in the same occupational group has significantly increased in Great Britain in recent years, and one and the same occupation name can imply jobs that will dramatically differ in terms of qualification level, autonomy and career prospects. Moreover, the latent class analysis conducted by the authors revealed no connection between specific occupation and the identified classes.

A more traditional criticism of occupation-based approaches can be added here: uncertainty of the dependents' status; the status depending not only on one's own occupation, but on the partner's occupation as well (it is logical that spouses should belong to the same social group); occupational status being determined, among other things, by age and marital status (Prandy, Lambert 2003).

Even more objections come to mind when attempting to view occupations as real groups in the Russian conditions (Shkaratan, Sergeev 2000): insufficiently institutionalized professions (Mansurov, Yurchenko 2005; Lonkila 1998), lack of trade unions, licensing, etc.; the education system not meeting the demands of the labour markets, widespread employment outside one's degree field, low geographical mobility and the associated lack of a single labour market. All these factors contribute to a weak connection between the occupation and other social characteristics of an individual, low homogeneity of occupational groups, and unpredictability of career trajectories for outside observers, with the information about them having a local and contextual nature.

## SOCIO-GEOGRAPHICAL DIVERSITY IN RUSSIA

Geography remains a substantial factor determining an individual's life chances and lifestyle. Individuals dislocation, that is the place where they eat, work, socialize with friends and acquaintances, and spend their free time, is the main identifier of their social position (Burrows, Gane 2006). The place itself is defined by such factors as inclusion into the global economy and involvement in the space of flows. An isolated place expelled from the network of goods and services circulating in the world (information, in the first place) confines this territory to economic and social stagnation (Castells 2010).

Russia is characterized by territorial division into regions that serve as hubs connecting the country's economy to the global processes and the remaining declining regions that lose any prospects of economic development and foreign investments. This social and economic differentiation can be illustrated by the generalized typology of lifestyles in the form of four zones in Russia ("four Russias") proposed by Zubarevich (Zubarevich 2012). The author singles out the zone of progressive cities with a developed infrastructure and elements of post-industrial economy; territories that are characterized by the ethos of the Soviet past and rather low living standards; agricultural regions where subsistence farming and foraging are the only source of livelihood, and suburban industrial zones, deprivation regions without any production<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Moreover, each of the four Russias is not homogenous either. For instance, Russia No. 1, that is cities with the population over 500,000 people, is associated with the highly dynamic processes in various fields of activity. Smaller cities are associated with stability and a quieter pace of life.

The social isolation of regions is enforced by certain administrative restrictions (for instance, the institute of resident registration), material restrictions (high cost of moving as compared to the median income of population), infrastructure restrictions (lack of roads; decline of smaller commercial aviation that was the important means of transportation in many regions during the Soviet times<sup>17</sup>). Russia is characterized by low geographic mobility: about 52–54% of the entire population live at the same place they were born (Gudkov, Zorkaya 2013). An entire generation of young people have ever visited not only Moscow but their regional centers as well (Il'in 2010). It is the place of birth that mainly determines the life prospects and lifestyle of the majority of Russians.

The main consequence of the lack of territorial homogeneity in Russia and its main problem is the missing connection between labour markets, which, according to Gudkov (Gudkov 2016), is caused primarily by the specific state administration structure, organization of authority and its interests that restrict the vertical mobility of the population. A large proportion of the population (10–15 million people) (Plyusnin, Zausaeva, Zhidkevich, Pozanenko 2013: 273) temporarily leave for the big cities or industrial centers for the sake of extra earnings, thus becoming wandering workers<sup>18</sup>. Russian wandering workers are a diverse group including self-employed entrepreneurs, hired professional workers (rotation workers) who venture into distant return migration, and construction workers moving from one site to another. The diversity of wandering labour reflects the diversity of workers' lifestyles.

The isolation of local labour markets manifests itself also in the industry stratification, in combination with the social and geographical stratification. Many regions have a historically developed specialization profile defined by dominant types of activity or industry. Although city-forming industries have lost their functions of creating the social infrastructure in cities (as it was in the USSR), they continue to determine the lifestyles of people in different regions. This reflects in the differentiation of wages across various industries (the industry element in wages differentiation is comparable with the education and profession element (Luk'yanova 2011)) and unequal financing of regions by the central government (the state starts investing more funds in defense industries and associated scientific fields (Il'in 2008)). The lack of homogeneity results in different technological and infrastructure resources, as well as material resources for residents. The industry profile is also important: some require a large number of highly skilled workers and professionals, other, the same profitable, industries imply a routine performance of automated tasks<sup>19</sup>.

Thus, Russia presents completely opposite social structures, with differing pace of life, flows intensity, worldviews, and economic possibilities for residents. On the one hand, this is an additional argument for abandoning the resource approach and including lifestyles as an element of stratification, for the same formal parameters of resources possession may reveal completely different social conditions. The relation between an individual's social characteristics and the availability of resources may vary across regions. On the other hand, taking into account considerable differences in lifestyles in the Russian territorial entities, one should expect different criteria that could mark the boundaries between lifestyle groups. For this reason, with the lack of research on this matter in view, conducting a study on the basis of a sample that represents the entire population may prove to be unproductive. A solution at this

<sup>17</sup> There were 315 active civil aerodromes in Russia in 2012, while in 1992 the number was as big as 1302 (Popkov 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Wandering work is a type of labour migration that is temporary in nature and implies returning back.

<sup>19</sup> For instance, in the Tyumen region, one of the richest regions in Russia, where fuel industry is the main income source, the biggest proportion of the population have blue-collar jobs or middle-skills jobs (Tyumenstat (a); Tyumenstat (b)). The Tyumen region is in the risk zone because of the high number of people suffering from alcoholism or HIV-infected (Danilin, Isaev, Kapustin, Mezentseva, Smirnov 2015).

point might be focusing on specific types of territorial entities, like cities with a million-plus population. The social space of such cities has the most complicated and diverse structure, so the task of its mapping is of a significant heuristic value. Such cities are of primary economic and social importance for the country. Being included in the space of flows (as per Castells), they serve as mediators connecting regions to the global economy. Considering the relatively high mobility of city residents and their involvement in the global informational space, one can expect that the stratification structure and the lifestyle spaces of these cities are rather similar and common patterns prevail over particular details related to the local specifics.

## CONCLUSIONS

The majority of modern approaches to studying stratification are based on the principles and ideas that were relevant in the late-industrial society with the corresponding economic system and the welfare state. By now, their potential of explaining the social structure in developed countries becomes questionable. Applying the concept of lifestyle group in stratification studies may help overcome the crisis in this field. It is particularly relevant for research on the Russian society which combines elements archaic even for a late industrial society with the latest trends of the globalized world. Taking into account the variety of theoretical and practical difficulties associated with the application of this approach, the authors of this publication have put forward several suggestions on how to conduct a study like this with the Russian empirical material:

- Studying lifestyles as a phenomenon generating social inequality both on theoretical and methodological levels;
- Taking into consideration that the availability of resources is needed to maintain a certain lifestyle, but it does not determine it;
- Selecting analysis parameters that have both qualitative and quantitative variations;
- Inductive approach in defining lifestyle parameters is preferred over the dominance of theoretical rules and principles typical for the social group of academic scholars;
- Taking into account the variations of parameters that could serve as group markers in different parts of the social space, it seems reasonable to focus on separate groups or communities (for instance, residents of big cities) and not study the entire population.

Of course, the reviewed aspects of applying the suggested approach do not cover all the existing problems associated with its practical use, and the suggestions do not represent a finished research program. Nevertheless, the authors believe that further empirical and theoretical studies in this direction can contribute to progress in the stratification research.

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S. KOROTAEV, OVSEJ SHKARATAN, E. GASIUKOVA

## Mintys apie Rusijos socialinę stratifikaciją: gyvenimo būdo aspektas