

Finding Ways to Significant Life Changes for the Better: Professional Discourses and Algorithm to Study Ways Preferred by the Population*



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Abstract. Considering the problem of finding ways of significant life changes for the better as fundamental, the author focuses on the research subjects. He compares the guidelines of two important discourses: “Where is Russia going?..” and “Modernization of the Russian economy”, as well as the nature of their dialogue with the federal authorities. Using the results of these comparisons and based on summarizing diagnose assessments of the state of the Russian society produced by Russian scientists in 2017, the author proposes a methodology for a qualitatively new content of respondents’ surveys: it is important not to be limited by finding out the opinions about population’s pressing issues, but to identify the population’s preferences about significant life changes for the better. For this purpose, the author proposes an algorithm of successive stages of surveys. Being aware of the complex objectives and debatable proposals, the author considers it appropriate to announce a competition for best proposals to identify significant life changes for the better preferred by the population.

Key words: professional discourse community; comparison of discourse on similar problems; unfair problem status, significant life changes for the better (SLCB); algorithm for studying preferred SLCB ways.

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The search for significant changes in the life of the society and the entire population for the better is a fundamental problem of functioning and regulation of a democratically organized society. Its consideration should begin with the clarification of *subjects* that offer their understanding of the realia and ways to change them to the public and government, rather than with the content of the desired methods and their models. The range of potential subjects in the modern society is extensive. In its most general form, these are state bodies and civil society structures that interact on-line.

In this article, I focus on a limited number of actors involved in the search for ways to significantly change the life of the society and the entire population of Russia for the better. On the example of two professional discourse communities that are intellectually important for the entire post-Soviet period, I will try to compare their content guidelines and the nature of their dialogue with federal authorities, and then present assessment diagnoses of the state and prospects of the Russian society made by the scientists in the “anniversary-revolutionary” 2017 and offer an algorithm to empirically study the population’s preferred ways of significant life changes for the better.

The emergence of problem-oriented discourse communities of professional social scientists is one of the signs of the civil society development in the post-Soviet Russia. Starting with the Perestroika period, the critical attitude to the life realia has been increasing among Russian citizens; many questions arise “from the bottom up”, to which there are no answers “from above”. These include questions from competent experts-scientists for whom identifying the questions and searching for answers is the main purpose of professional activity. As a result of the self-organization processes of civic-responsible professionals working in various knowledge fields related to human and their communities, intellectually

significant network structures of the civil society emerged. The semi-formal “invisible colleges” appear on different “platforms”: at universities, research institutions, scientific journals and other formal structures supporting the initiatives of intellectuals working in them – from federal (in Moscow and Saint Petersburg) to regional structures (in Yekaterinburg, Tyumen, Kursk and other major cities). The materials of these discourses are usually published in collections of papers and scientific journals, which expands their intellectual influence beyond the circles of direct discourse participants. The content of such discourses, as well as the civil meanings of the discourse communities of professionals must be researched separately, especially those productive on the basis of a comparative approach.

The nature of two sociologists’ discourses on changes in the Russian society

Two discourses became the most famous and influential: (1) the annual international Symposium on the issue important for all Russians: “Where is Russia heading?..”, which existed in 1993–2003 at the site of the InterCenter – an Interdisciplinary Academic Center for Social Sciences, and (2) a highly topical discourse “Modernization of the Russian economy” held mainly in 2003–2010 in the framework of international conferences of the Higher School of Economics (HSE), which since 2000 are held annually in April (in everyday life called the April conferences). As can be seen from the titles of these discourses, their subjects differ. However their problems are very similar: in both cases we are talking about understanding the meanings and ways of changes in the post-Soviet Russia – its society, economy and politics. They can therefore be the subject of comparisons, especially when trends and benchmarks at the macro level are discussed. Given the format of the article, I will refer mainly to the positions of the coordinators of the two discourses.

The symposium “**Where is Russia heading?..**” was organized by academician T.I. Zaslavskaya. Ten symposiums were already held. They consistently dealt with the main issues related to the cross-cutting topic. When summing up the results of the ten-year period, the coordinator recalled: “The first symposium of the InterCenter was held in December, 1993 – two months after the shelling of the White House and just a few days after the dramatic defeat of the Democrats at the State Duma election. Russia was then at a “point of uncertainty” which could open trajectories leading to fundamentally different sides. The “swings of the history scales” was felt by wide circles of the society. Millions of Russians wondered: what is happening in Russia? Who, on what grounds and in whose interests redistributes power and property?.. What changes should be expected in the near and more distant future?” [1].

The Symposium was attended by recognized experts in Economics, Sociology, History, Political sciences and other knowledge fields, mainly from Russia, but also from the US, UK, France, Italy, Germany, other Western countries, the colleagues from Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine and other CIS countries. Where, according to their expert estimates, did Russia come in 10 years? Of course, there is a very wide range of estimates, including my own as a member’s of a set of symposia. I think that in general, Zaslavskaya has managed to summarize the estimates of the majority of participants of this discourse community: “eventually, today we have a socially divided society with a poorly developed middle class and a deprived largely downgraded majority of citizens ... At one pole of the society there is the class of employees virtually deprived of private property, and at the other – the class of owners and managers of capital as a self-growing property... In order *to reverse* this trend, to achieve the balance of the social

structure and effective use of preserved human potential, there is only one way – to implement *a new, society-oriented cycle of institutional and structural reforms...* We are talking about social and democratic reforms” [2].

These were the scientific and civil guidelines of the discourse community of professionals on ways to change life for the better. They were formed as a result of their profound questions about the post-Soviet transformation of Russia and the search for scientifically grounded answers. The questions and answers contained a lot of reasonable criticism and constructive proposals addressed to Russia’s authorities, the entire political class. However, the recipients did not respond to any questions or answers. The dialogue between the discourse community and the authorities did not arise. It is important to add that there as well was no dialogue between the authorities and formally organized professionals working at the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS). Based on the proved conclusions about the harmfulness of privatization of the 1990s, which took place spontaneously yet guided by the market reform, being aware of the need for a goal-oriented strategy of transformation, the scientists of the RAS Department for Economics in September 1998 in an open letter to the President, the Federal Assembly and the Government of the Russian Federation said: “the hugest flaw of the reform is that it has lost its target focus. Its meaning and ultimate goal has been lost, and when there is no goal, it is impossible to achieve success” [3]. However the answer “from above” did not follow. Soon, however, B.N. Yeltsin, when stepping down from his presidency, apologized to the Russians for the mistakes, yet did not specify which mistakes exactly.

A different attitude was demonstrated by the federal government to another discourse community emerged in 2000 in the framework of the previously named HSE April conferences.

These conferences are openly supported by the Government of the Russian Federation, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis. It became firmly established as the main discourse platform of the liberal-pragmatic area of the Russian Economics. They are organized under the chairmanship of the ex-Minister of Economy (1994–1997), President of the Liberal Mission Foundation, HSE academic supervisor, professor E.G. Yasin. They directly involve deputy prime ministers, ministers of the Russian Government, a large number of Russian economists and representatives of related disciplines, the representatives of the mentioned international organizations, as well as prominent foreign economists.

As noted above, these conferences on “**Modernization of the Russian economy**” has been held since 2003, i.e. 10 years after the start of the shock reform, when the revolutionary stage of the transformation of the Russian economy and society ended and a new stage began – a large-scale modernization. The 2003 conference was devoted to the “results and prospects” of these transformations called modernization. In his main report, E.G. Yassin stated: “The meaning of restructuring or modernization is clear: to transform Soviet enterprises into market companies, change equipment, introduce most advanced technologies in all sectors, develop products competitive in the country and in global markets, and therefore – dramatically increase productivity and efficiency, reduce costs, and train personnel capable of solving these problems in every company” [4].

In contrast to the InterCenter symposium, HSE conferences rarely covered the term “transformation”. Instead, the term “modernization” was used. Instead of the question “where is Russia heading?” practice-oriented questions about the ways to change prevailed, objectives were set for further liberalization

and de-bureaucratization of new structures and relations, of to be more specific, the *rationalization* of chaotic economic and other relations in the society.

The content of the problems discussed at HSE April conferences was often similar to those of the InterCenter, some specialists actively participated in both conferences. Despite this, discussions on each platform were based on “political correctness” – as if unaware of the positions of their opponents acting on another platform and almost without considering their arguments. Although internal discussions often took place – “among themselves”, between experts working on the same platform (such discussions were cultivated in the InterCenter and supported in the HSE).

There is a significant difference between the positions of communities from two platforms on the issue of the correlation between formal institutions and real practices. In this article, I will only compare the positions of the platform leaders. The initiative to discuss the problem emerged at the InterCenter platform (in 2002). In the initial report made by T.I. Zaslavskaya, the topical issue was *the social factors* in divergence of formal legal standards and real practices. A comprehensive scheme of the social mechanism of dissemination of illegal practices was proposed. In this mechanism, among many factors of illegal behavior of officials in relations with business, the private interests of mid-level officials are of key importance. Their motivation is the fact that “in Russia, the transaction costs of informal problem-solving are significantly lower than those following formal standards...” The legal aspect of liberal reforms required particular attention from politicians, but they did not think about it or give it due importance. As a result, Russians’ illegal activities, previously relatively concealed, broke free and erupted, taking over almost the entire society” [5].

In 2005, the 6th HSE April conference was devoted to a similar range of problems. It was opened by a large report of the team of authors presented by E.G. Yasin. Justifying the topic of the conference, the authors noted: “Today we are facing a fundamental issue of why so many institutional reforms (including quite reasonable ones) did not produce the expected result; why they failed, were not entrenched in business practices, or their consequences were very contradictory and unforeseen [6].

In the final section (“Conclusions: what should be corrected in the policy?”) the speakers noted: “creating incentives and mechanisms was one of the main objectives of the reforms in all countries with transitional economies. Russian reformers and their Western advisers in the early 1990s expected that competition would be brought along with the introduction of market mechanisms and democratic institutions. They relied on the policy of importing institutions with a focus on the “best examples” typical for the most developed countries. In practice, however, they faced serious problems related to the adaptation of such institutions. Since reforms in the majority of cases were limited to the adoption of a package of legal regulations, the corresponding practices of economic actors were not investigated or corrected. Reforms were (and still are) “from law to law”, ignoring the fact that they are systematically neglected or opportunistically used by economic actors... The way out of the trap of a weak market and an inefficient current state for Russia is, in our opinion, associated with the transition from the policy of borrowing to the policy of developing institutions – with a gradual introduction and integration into the existing system of mechanisms and institutions that, in particular, would stimulate innovation in the remaining non-competitive environment” [7].

Thus, the speakers well aware of the practical action of the reformers, confirmed

the thesis of T.I. Zaslavskaya that the legal aspect of liberal reforms required especially much attention from politicians, but they did not think about it or did not attach due importance to it. However, their report lacked assessment of the social impact of such practices and focused on how to “grow” institutions. They proposed “two methods of target institutional change – upgrading of the existing institutional designs and cultivating new ones” [8].

The authors of the report aptly recalled that a similar methodology in terms of “transplantation” was earlier suggested by academician V.M. Polterovich [9]. At the same conference, he (co-authored) delivered a report where he criticized the methodology of the Washington consensus adopted by the Russian reformers: “The painful experience has clearly demonstrated that the recommendations of the Washington consensus cannot be considered as universal recipes”, and the results of their application in many countries “seem discouraging” [10]. He also concluded: “The analysis shows that the tools and methods of industrial policy must be suitable to the stage of economic development... Russia has not yet fulfilled the objectives of the second stage and is already trying to pursue economic policy characteristic of the third and fourth stage” [11].

The conference proceedings also include a speech by E.T. Gaidar who added his “fly in the ointment”: “the idea of growing institutions rather than borrowing is correct. But, in my opinion, the solution to this problem is more difficult than it seems to the authors” [12].

I believe that the main difficulty lies in the fact that “growing institutions” can be effective only within the framework of a sound strategy of institutional change, which implies setting its main socio-economic goal.

In general, the idea of the report was supported by the representatives of the

economic block of the Russian Government: Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Zhukov, Minister of economic development and trade G.O. Gref, Minister of Finance A.L. Kudrin. The representatives of the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development also expressed their support. As can be seen, this discussion platform is supported by the Russian Government and leading international financial organizations. Their representatives, personally participating in the conferences, perceive the conclusions and recommendations of their participants and raise their comments. This serves as an incentive for active creative work of participants, which lacks among experts who do not sense state interest in the results of their research.

The support for HSE conferences by the Russian Government can be judged by the assessments of Deputy Prime Minister A.D. Zhukov. “First of all, I would like to thank the hosts of the conference – the Higher School of Economics. It has been for the sixth time that Moscow welcomes such serious public including leading Russian and foreign experts. Judging by the experience of the previous five conferences, I would like to say that their results are always important for the government and have always created a very good framework in terms of practical application. I think that the topic stated at this conference is relevant”. He also added: “However, it is impossible to reform without making rather painful decisions. It is impossible to gradually grow reforms, especially institutional reforms”. In fact, “people are tired of reforms”... So maybe we should not use the word “reforms” and use some other expressions such as gradual changes for the better” [13].

Surprisingly, the value of this proposal is that it focuses on a specific goal of reforms – changes for the better understood and supported by the population. Yet the most important thing is what real changes take place. They can be judged by the diagnoses made by

Russian scientists in recent years and summed up in 2017, mainly in the context of the 100th anniversary of the great Russian Revolution of 1917.

Estimates-diagnoses of Russian researchers based on the results of mass and expert surveys

- First of all, let us turn to the most large-scale project in the history of the Russian sociology, supported by the Russian Science Foundation (RSF) and continued since 2014 by the RAS Institute of Sociology “Performance of social transformation in modern Russia in socio-economic, political, socio-cultural and ethno-religious context” (coordinator – academician M.K. Gorshkov). The results of its five waves are published in five volumes [14]. Using a broad context approach, sociologists came to balanced conclusions and assessment-diagnoses of the evolution of the Russian society in the context of new major challenges – internal and aggravated external ones. Summing up the results of five waves of the mega-project, the coordinator concluded: “In general, the analysis of the project results gives grounds to claim that amid crisis, *Russia is dominated by a stable value-standard system characteristic of neo-etacratic societies*. The core of such a system is the special role of the state. However, this does not express a mass need for an authoritarian regime, let alone totalitarianism. On the contrary, we are talking about perceiving the society as an incarnation of “an empire” so typical for Russia. With such mass perception, the state and the society are inseparable and the society itself gives the government a mandate to carry out the functions of taking care of its people” [15].

- I must note the results of the research initiated by the Center for Socio-Cultural Changes at the RAS Institute carried out under my leadership: the all-Russian monitoring “Values and interests of the Russian population” (1990 up to present) and the research on the inter-regional program “Problems of the

socio-cultural evolution and modernization of regions” conducted since 2006 in one third of Russia’s constituent entities. They are summarized in a number of collective monographs and the “Atlas of modernization of Russia and its regions: socio-economic and socio-cultural trends and problems”. In the context of the objectives of the present paper article, there are two diagnostic conclusions. First: “for 10 years, the list and algorithm of priority population’s measures to improve their living conditions have not changed. Among them, the need to create new jobs is always a priority. Therefore, *the relevant problem are not solved, but reproduced*” [16]. The second conclusion: Russia needs a modernization strategy that integrates its two stages (industrial and information) and is carried out “top-bottom”, coordinating federal and regional needs and initiatives, and in the long term focusing on the ideal of real humanism.

- The sociological public opinion monitoring survey on the state of the Russian society and public administration efficiency conducted for more than 20 years by the RAS Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories (now part of the RAS Vologda Research Center) and its results are summarized in regular articles of the editor-in-chief of the journal “Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast”, RAS corresponding member V.A. Ilyin. The generalized description of these results is presented in his article (co-authored), which opens the first issue of the journal in 2018. The article emphasizes the conclusion made at the end of 2017: “**Thus, no positive changes in the most important issues of people’s concern took place over the past 17 years: the issues of social justice, property, social stratification, and poverty have become even more acute**” [17].

- Another method of studying the state and prospects of the Russian society is expert survey. One of the most important was the survey conducted by the editorial board of the

international public research journal “World of Changes” in 2017 (editor-in-chief – RAS corresponding member R.S. Grinberg). The editors asked the experts “to answer three questions related to the great Russian Revolution:

1. Do you assess the Revolution of October 1917 the entire Soviet period in the Russian history as positive or negative, and why? Was it a great revolution or a criminal coup d’Etat?

2. What lessons should our contemporary, an independent-minded Russian intellectual, learn from October 1917 and the experience of the Soviet period in order not to repeat past mistakes?

3. Do you see any similarity between the Russian situation today, in 2017, and Russia in 1917?”

The editorial board received answers to these questions from more than 60 authoritative researchers, politicians, public figures, politicians, and journalists. Their answers made up the content of the entire final issue of the journal for 2017 and the journal got the cover name “Emotions run high around October 2017”. These are independent and different estimates and forecasts. According to the editor-in-chief, “the lesson following is obvious: the extremes of liberalism, nationalism, and administrative regulation should be avoided. However, the most important thing is to solve the emerged problem of a widening gap between a handful of the rich and a mass of the poor, which, of course, has created a frightening parallel since 1917. However, we know exactly what can happen if we ignore socially unacceptable inequality” [18].

A new impetus for understanding ways to reduce the severity of vital and unfairly persistent problems was the May 2018 decrees of Vladimir Putin, who began his new presidential term. One of the evidences was

the discussion of the report of academician A.G. Aganbegyan “On the goals and objectives of Russia’s development up to 2024” at the meeting of the Economics section of the Department of Social Sciences in June 2018.

Most experts studying the realia of their interest offer their own ways of changing them for the better – from separate to complex, including overcoming “crony capitalism” and establishing the social state enshrined in the Russian Constitution and focused on forming the society of real humanism. However, this is not done by everyone; there are experts who are convinced that changes for the better in Russia are impossible. So far, their position is confirmed by the fact that Russian society continues its “hybrid transition to the socio-cultural nowhere” – on the track of “crony capitalism”. A transit corrected by the President’s decrees on the need to gradually address the vital objectives. The decrees are partially implemented, but many objectives remain unsolved. Positive changes are welcomed by the majority of Russians who, however, are gradually losing their traditional patience with long-standing problems and form a desire to make life more fair and significantly better here and now. Nevertheless, the preferences of different population groups about the direction and methods of necessary changes remain unknown.

Of course, not all common people have clear preferences on such complex issues. Yet, in my opinion, it is possible to construct an algorithm for studying the preferences of a large part of common, yet sufficiently educated respondents, as well as experts. It is necessary to identify a small set of issues and formulate them in the form of understandable questions for respondents, which will help get reliable answers in an interview.

The upcoming seventh wave of the Russian Social Research (RSI) in the framework of the

international comparative European Social Survey (ESS) program provides such an opportunity as it implies, along with the standard blocks of questions on topical issues of the economic and social policy, the development of questions on two specialized topics: (1) the study of the views of the population of European countries on justice; (2) the study of the life cycle of a modern man and value-standard regulators determining the nature of changes in the calendar of events in human life.

Below, I offer a variant of *an algorithm* to empirically study *the ways to change life for the better* (the WCLB algorithm) – more precisely, the algorithm for operationalizing the objectives of studying the population’s preferences about ways to achieve substantial fair life changes for the better.

Algorithm of studying ways to change life for the better, preferred by the population

On the meanings and terminology of the algorithm

I will clarify the meanings and terms of the proposed methodology. Its content corresponds to the attention taken in scientific research to the state of *social issues* vital for the population. The peculiarity of the proposed methodology lies in the fact that it is focused on social problems whose state is estimated by the population as unfair and which are reproduced for a long time, become old, even aggravated despite the repeated statements of the authorities about their intentions to solve them. In population surveys on such issues, the sociologists usually focus their attention on the respondents’ reacting behavior— their adaptation, readiness for protests, etc.; the researchers consider identifying specific ways to overcome/reduce the severity of problems as such only “their own business” performed during data analysis. I suggest that we also obtain data on the very ways of solving problems preferred by the population, i.e. chosen by

respondents from a hypothetical set of problems proposed by the researcher and, possibly, by the respondents themselves (in open sets of answers).

I use the term “**social issue**” or simply “issue” in its substantive, main for the population, meaning, rather than epistemological – this, according to the definition of V.A. Yadov, is a social contradiction affecting the interests of large social communities and requiring target action to eliminate it [19].

Justice as a moral assessment of social relations in this case is applied not to the vital problem as such, but to its state perceived by many or the majority of citizens either as acceptable, tolerable, or, on the contrary – as unacceptable, *unfair*, as a *personal misfortune coming from the society and as a result of authorities’ activities*. If, for example, income inequality is considered, it will not be just or unjust itself as the early utopian communists believed, but the range of inequality measured by the income ratio of the upper decile groups to the income of the lower decile groups, by the value of the R/P 10% ratio and other ratios. The range of inequality estimated as unfair varies depending on traditions, values of the population in the country (society), other cultural and historical factors and can be measured by representative surveys. Surveys within the framework of the WCLB algorithm will reveal a range of social problems the population considers unfair. This also applies to problems that can be assessed as unfair themselves – for example, legal inequality: the law requires absolute equality yet law enforcement, including judicial practice, is not able to fully meet this requirement; therefore, the gap between legal requirements and the degree of their implementation is important. Therefore, it is advisable to use the term “*unfair social issues*”, determine the composition of such problems at each stage of social development, and analyze the

evolution of their composition as a significant characteristic of justice-injustice of the whole society.

However, the range of such problems which are unfair, but nevertheless persist for a long time, become long-standing, lifelong personal troubles will be identified (as was the waiting list for improving housing conditions in the Soviet period). They bring people fatigue, gradually replace patience with bitterness and turn into a source of “sudden” explosive protests of the general population, “the Russian revolt”. Accordingly, the term “*unjust state of social issues*” deserves special attention of researchers and politicians.

All this makes it possible to reveal a new meaning of the term “significant life changes for the better” – to see the nature of this change in a significant reduction in the range of social problems, the state of which most people consider rather unfair, and their overcoming will be perceived as getting rid of personal troubles, increasing satisfaction with life in general, especially at this stage, as a positive event affecting the existential experience of a person. This will definitely increase people’s identification with the society, state, their civil and business activity. This will mean a life change for the better for the whole society.

Finally, let us turn to the term “*way to substantially change life for the better*”. It is difficult to expect from ordinary respondents the proposals and assessments of ways to change in the form of options for specific management decisions; however, such proposals are not excluded, they should be provided in the form of possible open responses. More expected are the estimates of the generalized methods of changes of a strategic nature. The hypothetical options of such proposals in the form of answers offered to respondents will have to be prepared by the researchers themselves. Since we are talking about reducing injustice, the means of achieving such goals cannot be unfair to anyone

in a given society. This is the most difficult part of the proposed methodology – not to consider simplified methods of action neither “from above”, nor “from below”, nor from the suffering party, nor from the party bringing suffering. Therefore, it is necessary to know the preferences of the suffering “common people”. And the oligarchic “elite” will have, given these preferences, to compromise with “common people” and agree to overcome the old unjust conditions of social problems to avoid possible “riots” no longer wanted by anyone or almost anyone, but that does not mean that they are impossible. For many members of this society, the preservation of personal misfortunes caused by the society (and its authorities) is equal to the increase and aggravation of these misfortunes as the collective unconscious which finds its way out in the anti-social actions of the crowd. Therefore, the best way to make significant life changes is a compromise solution to unjust conditions of social problems, especially long – standing ones, rather than a preventive blockade of any changes. And this should be done as soon as possible.

Five steps of the WCLB algorithm

As a research strategy, the methodology of the WCLB algorithm can be characterized as a combination of intelligence and descriptive strategies (for more information on these strategies, see the subsection in V.A. Yadov’s book “Sociological research” [20]). The intelligence nature of the proposed methodology is determined by lack of information on possible respondents’ positions. At the same time, the researchers should have sufficient information about the real state of the studied problems; in this regard, the algorithm methodology becomes partially descriptive. The combination of the two strategies requires high qualifications from those who prepare the questionnaires. It is also obvious that the survey should be conducted in the form of interviews at home with respondents, which implies high

qualification of interviewers. All this makes the following steps necessary to implement the proposed algorithm.

Step No. 1.

First of all, it is necessary to determine the list of vital problems, the state of which the population considers unfair, including questions that will determine the severity of respondents’ perception of injustice of each problem and the duration, the persistence of their existence. This should be a limited list, scientifically reviewed by the criterion of hypothetical fairness of their elimination/mitigation. Being aware of the inevitable openness of the list, I will name about 10 such problems.

Vital problems whose severity must be overcome or reduced:

1. Low crime protection.
2. Vulnerability to poverty and misery.
3. Underdeveloped competition, clans and corruption in business and management structures.
4. Equal taxes on excessively unequal income.
5. Unstable pension system.
6. Inequality of common people before the law in courts.
7. Connivance of property developers’ deceit for equity construction investors.
8. Uncontrolled actions of housing and communal services.
9. Population’s unawareness of progress of target programs (federal and regional) and other important decisions of the management bodies.
10. Voters’ unawareness of deputies’ activities.
11. Vulnerability of common citizens from red tape.

Step No. 2.

It is necessary to set questions as to whether respondents are able to satisfactorily address the unfair states of each problem on their own, or whether little depends on them and changes at

the regional or federal level are required. In is also necessary to clarify the patience in relation to the state of these problems, etc.

Step No. 3.

Based on preliminary conceptual analysis of the selected list of problems, it is important to include in the questionnaire a hypothetical list of complex ways (strategies) to overcome/mitigate those problems whose unfair nature does not depend on respondents' actions. In the questionnaire, they are going to be the response options offered to the respondents as research hypotheses, but the list of responses should be open to additional options offered by the respondents themselves. The preparation of a correlated set of complex ways (strategies) to overcome/mitigate the injustice of the existing problems is perhaps the most constructive and responsible step in the implementation of the WCLB algorithm. Its content is the result of the researcher's work. Below, in a free form I offer my vision of the state of problems and ways (strategies) the attitude to which should be studied among the respondents.

Most Russians are tired of persistent exacerbating, socially unjust, excessive, and in many respects ineffective material inequality, especially income inequality, which increased again after the elimination of the Soviet power. It is not the first year that they expect from the authorities *significant changes* in the Russian society, state, business which would help eliminate/mitigate problems whose conditions are significant for the population's quality of life and are perceived as unfair, *rather than minor improvements*.

Many Russians believe that it is time for Russia to start a new historical era – to build Russia that is different that during the Soviet and pre-Soviet period, capable of giving decent answers to new challenges – external (civilizational, global) and internal (regional and national). The answers that would ensure Russia's national security and a high quality

of life of the entire population, with fair differentiation corresponding to the multi-religious culture of its multiethnic population.

This does not require revolutionary changes (their destructiveness has become obvious in our time), but a stable and purposeful evolution towards the welfare state, a society (civilization) of real humanism [21]. A historically tested way of successful evolution is “a top-bottom modernization” based on coordination of actions at the federal level and initiatives at the regional and municipal level.

Sustainable evolution implies a reasonable compromise between the power elite and various population groups and structures of the civil society representing the middle class and lower socio-cultural strata. A strategic compromise can be a legal social state guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, based on the principles of social market economy, tested in post-war Germany and other European countries, and corresponding to the basic values, the entire Russian culture, and the Russian population as a whole.

Compromises are more reasonable and useful if they are prepared with regard to independent scientific investigation and free discussion of projects in the scientific community, the media, the Parliament or more widely – through electronic ranking among the population.

Decisions will be more successful if they are accompanied by independent monitoring of effectiveness among population groups interested in implementing decisions.

It may be necessary to elaborate on the set of these topics regarding complementary options that express the specific features of the federal and regional level. The subject matter of the regional level, closer to the respondents of the mass survey, may precede the federal subject matters in the questionnaire, preparing the respondents for its perception. However, one can argue the reverse order of these options.

Step No. 4.

It is also important to use a common question: “How satisfied are you with life in general?” and then elaborate on dates of events in person’s life: when and why did you experience greatest (and, alternatively – least) satisfaction with life as a whole? A set of questions on the value-standard regulators of changes in the individual’s calendar of events should be added. Then we measure the correlation between the answers to these questions and the questions of the previous steps of the algorithm.

Of course, the preparation of surveys on such topics requires high qualification from program and questionnaire developers, as well as from interviewers. It is necessary to develop a special sample to take into account the necessary educational level of respondents.

Step No. 5.

Finally, the researcher proceeds to assessing the quality of interview sheets containing the respondents’ answers. If the quality is satisfactory, they assess the results of statistical analysis of three data circles: 1) answers to the questions on the WCLB algorithm; 2) their correlation with the answers obtained in the standard blocks of survey; 3) the relations of the two data circles – with comparable data for other countries involved in this wave of the European Social Survey (to the extent that they will be comparable).

I am sure that this approach will improve the quality of sociological research and make their conclusions more reasonable and relevant for both population and government. I will be glad if there are better proposals on the subject of public surveys on how to make significant life changes for the better. I suggest that it be an **open competition**.

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