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TOWARDS A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

The political changes that took place in Lithuania in the post soviet years caused significant changes in social sciences and theoretical paradigms. The new structures and features of society demanded new sociological research methodology and the rethinking of the subject matter of sociological investigations.

Now we can notice theoretical eclecticism, pluralism and competition. This situation increased pluralism of discipline; it did not lead to disintegration, however, the problem of understanding each other became important. The maintenance of disciplinary coherence is related to the recognition and integration of diverse and contested models of understanding and intellectual approaches.

Sociology in post-socialist Lithuania as society's self-knowledge and a possibility of deeper reflection on society's changes plays a role of an agent struggling against civilizational and cultural backwardness. The power of the vocabulary and social concepts are becoming the ways we use to perceive, describe and analyze the world around us. The development of sociology is related to diagnosing the quality of life, social transformation and social structure, and involvement in the investigations of new problems. Now modern social science has more possibilities to represent various points: sociology, e.g., can be based on patriarchal or feministic, central or marginal, macro or micro, positivistic or post-modernistic approaches. The power of contradicting theoretical positions or different methods constructs a permanent intellectual discourse in sociology. Social and human disciplines are important factors which keep under control some groups of society. The possibility of sociologists to choose the field of research became more extensive. At the same time one could feel the internal "brain drain" which enables to change academic work into a career of a politician or businessman.

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Post-socialist Lithuania is connected with the process of democratization, national freedom, economic, social and cultural reforms and new reality. The system of public opinion is characterized by pluralism of political views, difference in attitudes to state and private property (emerged new institutions of the market economy), new concepts of everyday life styles. New social movements (those of landowners, women, businessmen, peasants) give a potential for new needs and interests. Social scientists became like “keepers” of those categories which reflected new people’s activity practices, the importance of theoretical discussions on citizenship and democracy, or new social mobilization in the country. Such concepts as ‘change’, ‘modernization’, ‘pluralism’, ‘democracy’, ‘national state’, ‘civil society’, ‘new identity’, ‘social change’ were used frequently in common usage and in the analyses of sociologists. The importance of a market system with dominating private ownership and civil society (which is impossible in totalitarian political system) is emphasized in a public discourse as the social ideal of society; the interests of state and civil society coincide in the definition of a welfare state. Such terms as ‘social initiatives’, ‘welfare state’, ‘global ecological problems’, ‘voluntary associations and movements’, ‘openness’, reflected new features of social scientists debates and produced new research materials. In this sense sociologists were expanding their knowledge into entirely new fields; it was their collective attempt to refine and change the identity of this science (Vosyliūtė, 1990-2002).

National science may become mature by integrating knowledge of national attitudes, the character of social relations of localities, and the heritage of international sociology. Individual initiatives and responsibility of sociologists are related to their demand for social practice and administrative institutions in future; society will need the expertise and scientific authority of sociologists. In sociological works the power of people’s self-reflectivity is integrated; sociologists will be useful in modern society as experts in various spheres and as social leaders, critics and magi. The prestige of a sociologist will increase and his/her writings will be regarded as a significant form of society’s social and symbolic capital.

The extension of scientific relations was passing in two ways: 1) as traditional meetings with foreign sociologists, 2) as increasing anonymous acquaintance through their books and works, and the Internet information.

Now sociology is searching for new orientations and identities (the proliferation of eclecticism is characteristic), and identities are experiencing an increase in fragmentation; it is always 'under construction'. Despite the efforts of Lithuanian social scholarship to develop sociological research and teaching sociology, new financial limitations have appeared.

The motives of sociologists themselves to work are different: the search for their personal identity and social status, or the wish to participate in the construction of a world order, in the renewal and portraying of social worlds of people.

Consumption as the index of life quality

Globalization is impacting economic and social subsystem; this factor affects the interpretation of organization, social actions and the situation of other spheres. Sociologists are responsible for involving in their research the problems analyzing the reaction of social and political institutions, and human behavior to globalization; in the opinion of sociologists, it could represent a rich field of interest which might increase knowledge and improve both interpretation and methodologies used in the analyses and research of social phenomena.

The slow-down in post-socialist transition in Eastern European societies is described by the Polish sociologist P. Sztompka with the help of the concept of "civilizational incompetence", comprising deficiencies in: 1) entrepreneurial culture, 2) civil or political culture, 3) culture of discourse, 4) everyday culture, indispensable for daily existence in advanced, urbanized, technologically saturated and consumer oriented society. Some of the components of everyday culture include: personal neatness and cleanness, punctuality, body care, fitness, healthy eating, skills in handling household appliances and the like. Decades of socialism not only hindered the formation of civilizational competence, but in many ways helped to shape quite an opposite cultural syndrome – civilizational incompetence (Sztompka, 1993: 89).

The modernizing processes in post socialistic Lithuania have not led to a higher degree of social equality, but the determinative power of social structure is operating as a reproductive mechanism of inequality. New social chances and social positions, and the number of individualized orientations in society increase. New impressions and possibilities for participation are contributing to a new image of modern society in the country as more open and pluralistic.

The significant reason for consumption growth is the increase of privacy in the country (Rossler, 2005).

After 1990 restoring civil society started as mass-organizations (re-establishment of societies that functioned before 1940), by desovietization of large quasi-voluntary organizations by partly closing or splitting them into smaller units. New societies (of cultural or social character) were established, many of which stressed national, political and cultural values. The voluntary field in the country helped with restitution and desovietization processes, and the construction of democratic and pluralistic society

Consumption is a significant process (Bogunia-Borowska, 2003) related to the reproduction of the way of life of people; it is a system of organized relations among the society and environment. Not only production or free time activity, but the consumption level also is the basis for the differences in society. The attitudes and patterns of behavior in the consumption sphere are important recourses of new life strategies, especially in the independent country. The system of public opinion is characterized by pluralism of political views, difference in attitudes to state and private property, new consumption forms and a new concept of everyday life comfort (Vosyliūtė, 1998).

The Lithuanian society moves away from post-socialist state of lawlessness by gaining experience in different activities connected with newly purchased ownership and private property. Social actions are becoming more oriented towards such achievements as acquisition of material goods and property. The necessity of new choices in the society leads to confusion. More and more different interest groups emerge which want their material, political and cultural rights to be represented in different power fields. National independence of Lithuania also manifests itself in the orientation at European culture, a way of life, and social and political norms of civilization. In public consciousness this phenomenon is reflected as the search for cultural pluralism, involvement in diversity of choices, transition to the world “without frontiers”, turning to new directions, toward the confusing order of post-modern. People of the post-soviet countries are preparing to live in a social space in which the distribution of wealth and risk overlap. According to Luhmann, liberal ideology contains a “hidden program for adjusting society to risks”.

Foreign goods were important for the society not only with regard to their function, but as symbols of availability, marking the end of constant shortages of different consumer goods in the Soviet period. These goods also made it

possible to get familiar with the European, Asian, American consumer culture and a way of life.

Consumption and everyday experience tend to standardize tastes and values. Many middle-class families have replaced Russian-made cars (which are out of fashion now) by Western cars (Audi, BMW, Volvo, Opel, Mercedes and others). This process reflects the social and cultural change, the orientation of people at Western goods and culture. The display of material goods is part of a system of people's reputation and the mark of struggle for taste. People are using today the consumption behavior to signify who they are to other people, from whom they hope to gain approval.

After Independence we have had many discussions focused on the production and dissemination of various goods and services to other places in society. Advertising various (material and spiritual) goods of local places can invite a potential consumer or visitor to be a member of this imaginable community, to form his or her identity according to its features. These events express differences and similarities between various places of the country and form their particular images in the social and cultural consciousness. Thus Lithuania is constructed from invented, historical and cultural versions of the identity. Despite difficulties in economic life, the population has preserved a relatively high purchasing power, which it can now use in Lithuanian shopping centers sized and structured according to Western standards. Earlier, people had to travel long distances to shops in other cities or even in other republics of the USSR to satisfy their consumer needs.

Nowadays consumption is an element that can structure (isolate or integrate) people in a new way. Based on the content and level of consumption, we can distinguish several specific subcultures: those of rich people, commercial circles, of the poor, of young people, of pensioners, of town-dwellers and people living in the countryside, of people who are oriented towards foreign goods and those who prefer domestic products. The level and structure of consumption and social attitudes to consumption depend on some variables, namely: social class, age, sex, as well as the situation (every day activities or festive occasion). For P. Bourdieu, lifestyle is an expression of class position which is identifiable to composition of types of capital – economic, cultural, social and symbolic. According to him, the styles of consumption are the means not just of deploying economic resources but also especially of exhibiting 'cultural capital'; social distinction is marked by tastes which are formed as part of class habitus (Bourdieu, 1992).

Our study (about 100 people interviewed) about the consumption behavior and strategies of life of old people in one of Vilnius old-city districts reveals differences in living conditions and consumption that depend on income, family structure and health. Many interviewed people did not like the questions about the quality of their life since it was not pleasant for them to admit their poverty. Most of them felt hurt because they had been deprived of their savings. Their consumption has a domestic character. Women are acquiring more responsibility and power than men in the process of distribution of means of subsistence. The role of women is very significant in preparation of traditional meals for holidays and celebrations. Such meals are a cultural symbol, an element of historical memory.

The identity of pensioners is usually connected with the image of outsiders who need assistance and compensation to be able to pay for public utilities. Some of them are feeling fear and have no strength to fight for better life. Unlike elite or middle class (that are constantly looking for new fashions, new styles of consumption, new sensations and experience), pensioners have a model of consumption that is determined by their poverty and living conditions. The city space of these inhabitants is very narrow, limited by shops, and occasionally, the church and the market. In summer they spend their time in a public park near Vilnius. The spiritual experience of old people is often related to suffering that can be explained by small income and poor health. Some poor people, the unemployed and socially neglected persons get charity food in special dining rooms.

At the same time, officials, politicians, top managers and owners of companies buy expensive, high-quality clothes in special shops with foreign goods. Well-off people, who have cars, often visit wholesale depots. However, rich people have their own problems. They worry about their property, about their families and their own physical safety. Psychiatrists maintain that personal affluence often changes a psychological state of the very rich.

Self-expression through consumption (especially clothes) is characteristic of the young, especially women. Young people are frequenters of large market places where they are looking for cheap fashionable goods. The needy and the artistic clients like second-hand shops. Dresses are the factor expressing female subjectivity, they give women a possibility to construct their identity. A woman dress has continued for a long time to be imaginative, playful and aesthetic: with female decorativeness we associate the expressiveness of beauty (Vosyliūtė, 1998).

In new times the formation of many women's identities is closely related to the process and experience of consumption. Young girls especially participate actively in the process of aestheticization of everyday life through the perception of a rapid flow of signs and images which saturate the fabric of life. The postmodern thinking emphasizes a new role – and a central one – of images in the consumer society (Featherstone, 1987). Young people are oriented at new professions, such as cultural intermediaries, managers, or artists. They become more open to visual forms of art. The old distinction between high and mass culture is gradually disappearing. The number of picture galleries, studios and exhibitions is increasing, which testifies again to aestheticization of life. Artists, new taste-makers, are perceived as heroes in the subculture of the young whose lifestyles are influenced by their art. The subculture of young people has some features characteristic of postmodernism – a transformation of reality into images, living in the simulated world, in an aesthetic hallucination of reality, in hyper-space. Understanding consumption as an indispensable matter for existence (“the proper end of taking food is the preservation of the body by nutrition” as noted, e.g., Thomas Aquinas) is discussed in social opinions with thinking about the actual status of consumption in modern and postmodern society. Consumption has become a central mode of people's existence. The movement towards mass consumption is accompanied by a general reorganization of everyday life and experience. We see tension between self-discipline and pleasurable consumption. The generation of needs does not stop after one of them has been satisfied, new needs “come up all the time” without being necessary.

Cultural and technological changes and the norms of civilization have made a woman's body a significant topic of public opinion. The process of aestheticization of life and the growth of mass sport and leisure have identified personal worth with the beauty of the body. In some spheres of social life the ‘quality’ of woman's body is very important, its presentation is connected with her and her family's worth and social prestige. In public debates the views are expressed according to which a woman's body is a social construction produced by social practices. Now we can see a lot of eroticism in Lithuanian press and especially in magazines; we can speak about a new image of sexually engaged women (and sexually aggressive who wish to be beautiful and rich). As M. Foucault noted (Foucault, 1999), the body has become in modern societies the target of endless, minute and detailed forms of surveillance, discipline and control. The analysis of the features of women's image in the Lithu-

anian mass media (in women's journals) has revealed dominant images of a woman: a mature woman and a dependent woman (*Moterys...*, 1999: 95-100). A diversity of different conversations, discussions, articles and interviews with women helped to reveal a general characteristics and distinguishing features of these two images of a woman: 1) a mature woman: who feels safe in the surrounding world, is brave and strict to herself, who knows how to take care of herself and the others, whose main principle is to remain herself, be modern, free and independent from old stereotypes; 2) a dependent woman: who is unable to act for herself, is irresolute to make her own decisions in a critical situation, and who seeks for a shelter in a man's shadow.

The Lithuanian sociologists represent in their writings the problems related to the different issues of the society's social structure (*Lietuvos...*, 2005) and the life of the poor. E.g. , the authors of the sociological monograph "The poor: the mode of living and values" (Vosyliūtė, 2004) reveal the features of vagabond subculture, the situation of beggars and the poor in the traditional Lithuanian culture and in modern social structure, and their relations with more successful strata of society. In the research some scientific approaches are outlined: interpretational, phenomenological, existential, and the concept of subjectivity.

In the sociological monograph some features of the poor's social status, their life conditions (food, shelter) and their identification with different places are investigated. The space is always socially reconstructed; as D. Massey noted (Massey, 1993), places have multiple identities. Poor people are connected with places physically or in memory and imagination. Places are constructed out of a particular constellation of relations articulated together at a particular locus, particular interactions and mutual articulations of social relations, social processes, experiences and understandings. Many poor people are homeless; the home as a site of everyday, 'magical' and tactile resource for making identity does not exist for them .

Their small communities construct some social networks, which help to cope with their troublesome social practices. The consumption of the poor is very bad; they speak of being hungry, weak, sick, exhausted, in pain or mentally distressed. Many women's life stories are related to consumption events, especially consumption of alcohol of their husbands and sons. Mental health problems – stress, anxiety, depression, or lack of self-esteem – are among the most commonly identified effects of poverty and ill-being by the poor. Because they are as "others", they are feeling distinct from the normal society;

their self-definition is grounded on their conduct, individual experience as '*bomža*', unlucky, miserable and unfortunate victim.

Sometimes they are associated with aggressiveness and violence. On the other hand, in the mode of life of marginal people our society can see their endeavor to be free and the will to live self-sustainingly. Marginal people keep themselves at some distance from society; most of them are in conflict with society and their family members. After the social and economic changes of post socialistic society they are in social exclusion, unable to adapt to new social situation. In the book their social world and individual self-images are submitted for consideration; they are missing material resources for subsistence, are unemployed, dossers or homeless. In the consciousness of marginal people such feeling as learned helplessness is settled; their communication is not intensive, their life is similar to isolation. They are living on charity, which (e.g. poorhouses) is the characteristic tradition in the country since the year dot. The poor are as collectors of food and things from the rubbish heap and dustbins in the town. So the marginals are participating in the creation of second-hand things and clothing for the market. The process of marginalization experienced by the poor is connected mostly with negative self-evaluation and negative feelings, with meanings of anxiety and shame before other members of the community.

As the research shows, it is substantial to involve the poor in different social activities and social contacts. The possession of more social capital (measured by social participation, interpersonal trust, close personal ties and happiness) can make their life more successful.

Highlighting the space

According to H. Lefebvre, space is the primary element: space "decides" what activity may occur, but even this "decision" has limits placed upon it. Space lays down the law because it implies a certain order – and hence also a certain disorder. Interpretation comes later, almost as an afterthought. Space commands bodies, prescribing or proscribing gestures, routes and distances to be covered. The 'reading' of space is thus merely a secondary and practically irrelevant upshot, a rather superfluous reward to the individual for blind, spontaneous and lived obedience" (Lefebvre, 1994: 143).

The urban landscape (and such sites as governmental, historical, business and market, sacred and profane places) is a scene of people's expression, ex-

periences and discourses. The inhabitants as the users of space are the participants of flow of social and cultural signs and images. The streets of a city, places of commerce and representation, parks and squares have comprised a large part of any city; streets are daily routines for people walking and driving, they are as places of sociability. Different old buildings – churches, halls, banks, residences, hospitals, factories and railway stations have their functions and meanings, their history. They are needed for people not only in practical but in the symbolic aspect too. Places and their objects give the society a lot of experience, a possibility to act and emotions.

Including investigation of emotions in the analysis of social processes takes a new direction for sociology. Sociologists can reveal new perspectives and key aspects of social structures, social actions, or social changes by using fresh understanding of categories of emotions. In the investigation of a city life we can analyze such aspects as fear (security or insecurity), resentment, vengeance, shame (e.g. at environmental conditions), or confidence of people in each other. The importance of research on emotions of social processes becomes very significant because it can witness the quality of the level (satisfaction with life conditions, the needs of different classes) of the inhabitants. Social relationships are defined as regulated by the meaning, ideas and values shared by social actors; they have common understanding of their common situation.

As D. Massey noted, “the terms space and place have long histories and bear with them a multiplicity of meanings and connotations which reverberate with other debates and many aspects of life. ‘Space’ may call to mind the realm of the dead or the chaos of simultaneity and multiplicity” (Massey, 1993: 1).

Religious space. According to the concept of Mircea Eliade (Eliade, 1997), space is not equal; in space there can be sacred places which are important and other places that are without such meanings. Sacred space is a magical space. The landscape of every old nation is saturated with representation of sacrality, there are centers of religious practice; landscapes are saturated with places and routes to sacred places. A place is understood as a necessary context for religious actions; through such places people are related to milieu and to the self. The relation to the self extends the meaning of a place, which includes religious, aesthetic, moral and transcendental aspects. The experience of sacred is related with the sacred space; people represented there their basic aesthetic needs: they are, despite cultural and individual differences and historical variability, among the most basic and universal needs of man. A 40 years old wom-

an respondent says: "When I was a child I was going with my grandmother to a small wooden village church. I took a look at a priest (his clothes); it was interesting to see strange rituals which I didn't understand . The environment of the church was beautiful, with colors and smell. I remember Saint Mary (a painting) and Saint Anthony (a sculpture). The second wonderful impression from my childhood was a girl singing a religious chant near miracle springlet".

Since the institutionalization of Catholicism in Lithuania religious practice and the traditions of society's spiritual life were related with sacred art (of a professional and folk character). Church architecture and interior, paintings, sacral music, such events as Church processions (their artistic decoration) in the space of towns and villages were unchanged since old times. Although many churches suffered much during the wars, folk memorial monuments – crosses and roadside poles with statuettes of saints, have survived in small towns, villages or in cities. E.g. , the churches of Vilkaviškis deanery located at the West Lithuanian border were destructed much during the World Wars I and II. Some churches are being rebuilt, and some function in other buildings adapted to church purposes. As it is noted, "many valuable works of art and liturgical articles were destroyed or scattered over other places by the wars and robberies that took place in the churches closed during the soviet years" (*Lietuvos...*, 1997: 15). The researchers of art are gathering data on the destroyed sacred objects.

The relicts of the old Lithuanian faith (paganism) survived in various spheres of folk culture. In the 18th-20th centuries wayside shrines and crests existed roadside in the country. It shows authentic and centuries-lasting sacral art; there was more folk art than ornamentation or color. All sacred places have their interpretations and meanings.

Lithuanian religious art has firm foundation in ethnic folk culture and the Indo-Europeans and Balts ancient culture. It is known that necrocult was highly developed in old Lithuania. The road of the Roman cross to our country was very contradictory because it was related to the offensive of crusaders of the West, which brought much physical and spiritual suffering to the people. Ancient Lithuanian ornamental forms are related to Christian symbols into one whole.

As A. Stravinskas noted, "Lithuania has retained quite a rich heritage of roofed pillars, pillars and chapels above which suns radiate in the form of crosses as their iron pinnacles". They had and have the great aesthetic value; "unusually bent and sometimes twisted edged iron forms not only graceful,

light and delicate tracery shapes, but also retains a play of light and shadow, has lively, rhythmically vibrating lines. The iron top of the monument set in delicate tracery, its tortuous lines are especially impressive against the blue of the sky” (*Lietuvių...*, 1992: 21). The old architecture of the country – churches and belfries, chapels and pillars have harmoniously grown into the landscape. Many iron tops (their prototypes were from wood) are now in museums, other are embedded in the Lithuanian landscape – above churches and chapels, in churchyard gates and cemeteries. Almost in every churchyard there is a belfry which completes the sacral ensemble. The architecture of the belfries and other wooden sacral buildings can be characterized by the functionality, distinctness of proportions and silhouettes and the simplicity of forms (Jankevičiene, 1998: 14). The invention and creation of sacred places in Lithuania are now related to building of crosses as holy objects by people in communities. In the soviet time building of crosses was a process in the affirmation of a symbolic center which was real but not under the soviet command. Building of new crosses was unofficial people’s activity in a religious and national sphere, it was a national ritual. Those centers were and are very important sacred and symbolic centers in Lithuania and in the whole world.

Symbols refer to ideas, thoughts, beliefs, feelings and needs shared by the members of a collectivity. They are socially created and communicated to form a part of common consciousness or social reality.

A meeting of people with such beautiful sacred objects develop religious feelings, aesthetic sensibility and taste. A respondent (a woman, 50 year-old) says: “In the church, its art helps me concentrate, it heightens my religious heart. Religious music is very exciting for me. I have at home sanctified imagery (it is my family heritage), some books and stamps on religious themes”.

In Vilnius, first buildings for religious purposes appeared in the 14th century. At first Gothic churches were predominant, they were one- or three-nave edifices, with or without towers by the corners of the façade; they were austere and simple, only the unique and elegant St Ann’s Church of late Gothic is distinguished for its exceptional splendor. Churches of Renaissance style were rectangular or cruciform with a tower in the main façade; they were decorated with pilaster strips, pilasters and arched niches. For some religious buildings in the city the early – since the 17th century (*Vilniaus...*, 1985: 377), and late Baroque is characteristic. Church processions were very emotional in the city. According to written sources of the 17th and 18th century religious celebrations in Vilnius, it is possible to reconstruct a sequence and size of processions

and the distance which was walked, but also the classes of society (Griciūtė, 2003: 157). In our days the Church is organizing such ceremonies too.

The existing sacred art in Church practice reveals interrelations between text and image and demonstrates how expressions in plasticity transform the pictorial into narrative and the narrative into pictorial. A woman says: "I always evaluate a church from the aesthetic side; imagery is rousing my thinking. I'm retiring, I like a thin small church because then I can see all pictures, enjoy myself and be transcendental". Believers are affected by sacred music or paintings, they further understand and outlive the religious matter. The narratives and thoughts of the Church, such as suffering and pain, God's love and mercy (and other), were reflected in Church art themes. Images of saints in reproductions were spread out and remained popular at all times. Paintings of Angels, Holy Mother and Saints are influencing the sacred and cultural identity of Lithuanian people. A respondent (a woman, 54 years old) says: "It is very beautiful and fine that churches are decorated and garnished. I like and understand the old style, pictures and sculptures. It helps me to think about suffering of Christ and where the border to which a human being can stick out is. The nicest pictures for me is Madonna with the Child because they are alight and jolly". A young man thinks in another way: "Decoration of a church must be moderate: tinsel has no influence on faith".

The integration of Lithuania to the European Union and pilgrimage offer a possibility to see different types of churches; a 40 years old woman says: "The church of a new style in Cracow – Nowa Huta made a very great impression on me. It presented the relation between God and the whole world, between God and the universe. For the first time I saw Christ rising to the heights, to heaven from the cross; the chancel was like a palm. Another cathedral – of Koeln, was very large and impressive; the Cathedral of Mainz I sensed through the organ music".

The features of women intellectual nomadism. The problems of women education and their scientific activity and gender differences in this sphere have been topical since the end of the 19th century. Scientific trips can be evaluated as mobility in space, as leaving home, as a way of searching for a new identity. It is a pleasure for women, a compensation for everyday routine efforts. The mobility and travelling constitute the most typical features of modernity; it is especially characteristic of modern social theorizing. According to Z. Bauman, "strangerhood" and "homelessness" are as core emblems of post-modern times. Modern man (especially intellectual), as noted J. Shotter,

is suffering from a deepened condition of homelessness, from a 'metaphysical loss of home', which correlates to the 'migratory' character of modern experiences of society and self.

Participation of women in scientific conferences gives them more reflexive and objective view about the world reality; it enables women intellectuals to develop a synthetic view of totality of a given historical situation. This process is connected with deeper individualization of women. It means the creation of responsibility and self-reflexivity in women intellectual's consciousness and the impression that everything can be formed. A positive aspect of this development is a formal liberation of women personality, a negative – pressures and demands. The results of the research reveal that the representation of women in international scientific conferences is sometimes understood in their native institutions as competition and outrage to men (Vosyliute, 2009). Successful women now also experience feelings of envy from their male colleagues in their environment. Women also remain under-represented among higher school and scientific institutes authorities. Participation in scientific events means creating of new forms of solidarity and community of women from various countries. For them as for representatives of their local cultures cognitive innovation, deeper reflexivity, increased objectivity and access to larger truths are characteristic. New information constantly gives women an unstable identity. As potential travelers marked by their mobility they become members of the international knowledge society; their participation in scientific events is the background of their emotional relationships. Sentiments and human contacts are grounded in being for togetherness. As a result of great professionalization, rationalization of their roles as members of the knowledge society sometimes becomes as a closed elite group in their native, parochial society. Using their criteria of evaluation as more general and more objective, women intellectuals are 'strangers', – first of all, distanced persons who are capable of wider contemplation than members of their nearest group. Women participating in international conferences as 'nomadic subjects' are capable of meeting the 'others' and opening up to the other culture and in this way manifesting togetherness.

The places of risk society. Revealing the importance of some places is related to the public opinion about modern dangers. Informational whiffs often show many world forces (earthquakes, floods, the acts of terrorism, social maladies and others) which are devastating different places of the world. People are sometimes incapable of counteracting such great power, they are

not controlling their situation. In the risk society (U. Beck) the reflection about different dangers (whose character is constantly changing) is revealing their different aspects and their evaluation according to the degree of trouble or disasters. In the sociological investigation in the Institute for Social Research (Jankevičiene, 1998) eleven social maladies and trouble of society were named: alcoholism, drug consumption, crash, delinquency, terrorism, poverty, unemployment, corruption, suicides, decreasing of birthrate and bribes. As the most dangerous for members of Lithuanian society were recognized: delinquency, drug consumption and alcoholism; other threats are appreciable as less precarious. Women and less educated persons (in comparison to men and agents of more educated groups) evaluate many dangers as having more threat; the respondents from the upper groups – as having less threat. The investigation shows that the members of society are able to penetrate many threats and disasters in the social space; it means that they are ready to reflect on dangerous situations and, maybe, act to remove them (*The Integration...*, 2005).

In the investigation of cities sociologists reveal different meanings of places: e.g. the risk of Ignalina nuclear power station. On the one hand, it represents scientific progress and technological achievement, on the other hand, its functioning poses threat for the population and environment. In the opinion expressed by the young generation attachment to the native town and the belief in its excellent future, are reflected, but danger and catastrophic feelings about possible accidents are voiced too. The Nuclear Power Station is a social symbol which represents the technological and ideological power of the former Soviet Union. This symbol embodies the economic and military domination in that period and reveals the change of earth meanings in the consciousness of people in relation to the threat (Vosyliūtė, 1998a).

Research on adults' memories suggests that special places in childhood and adolescence play a role in the development and sustenance of mental health and in the evolution and shaping of self. In the opinion of the young Visaginas generation a desire to approximate in their ways of life to larger intellectual, cultural and economic centers is emphasized. They propose to found new institutions in their city, such as a university. In the culture of Visaginas inhabitants we can feel the influence of Russian, Lithuanian and global culture. In the years of transition to democracy the question of a national issue became a significant theme in this town, as a desire to express identity and conscience. The process of democratization enables the voices of all national groups and

provides them with the possibility to maintain the right to their heritage culture. The non-Lithuanian people have trouble with understanding the state language.

The examination of the features of the environment and the attitudes of the residents is the way of exploring the underlying social and cultural values that these perceptions reflect. The NPS as a landscape feature is very expressive and has many contradictory meanings. On the one hand, it represents scientific progress and technological achievement, on the other hand, its functioning poses threat for the population and environment. In the young generation's opinion, attachment to the native town and the belief in its excellent future are reflected, but danger and catastrophic feelings about possible accidents are voiced too. The Nuclear Power Station is a social symbol – it represents the technological and ideological power of the former Soviet Union. This symbol embodies the economic and military domination in that period and reveals the change of earth meanings in the consciousness of people in relation to the threat of the NPS in Lithuanian territory.

As the results of sociological research in Visaginas show, the boys and girls could easily identify the places they enjoyed. For many of them it is the town surrounding forest, river, park – the places in nature related with leisure. It is very important for the young people to have more developed social and cultural infrastructure for intensive participation in the process of the creation of their future. The centre of the town is attractive because of its commercial area, but the youth think critically about disorderliness of not working factories. They identify negligence in the physical environment with a miserable situation of the adult society and unemployment of their fathers and relatives. Young people show through the images of the global fiction culture that they are oriented to more intensive models of lifestyles, new cultural preferences, more aesthetical landscapes, and living in richer (in the economic and cultural sense) environment. The thinking of youths about the native environment reflects their seeking for harmony in society, for spiritual and social advancement (Vosyliūtė, 1998a).

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*Anelė Vosyliūtė***Towards a democratic society****Abstract**

In the paper the social changes of post soviet years are analysed. As the author noticed, the new structures and features of the society demanded new sociological research methodology and the rethinking of the subject matter of sociological investigations (quality of life, social transformation). Now modern social science has more possibilities to represent various points: sociology, e.g., can be based on patriarchal or feministic, central or marginal, macro or micro, positivistic or post-modernistic approaches. Post-socialist Lithuania is connected with the process of democratization, national freedom, economic, social and cultural reforms and new reality. The system of public opinion is characterized by pluralism of political views, difference in attitudes to state and private property (new institutions of the market economy emerged), new concepts of everyday life styles.

New social movements (those of landowners, women, businessmen, students, pensioners, peasants) give a potential for new needs and interests. The article deals with the analysis of modern social order. The author is analysing new movements of political, economic and cultural situation, modern individualization, and a changing identity of people.

The actuality of the researched problem is related to the research of private life characteristics, which is very significant for modern people – it is similar to new identity formation. Consumption is now a part of the formation of civilizational competence. The development of consumption means the orientation towards European culture and a way of life. Conspicuous consumption is a category of intentional actions in which the goal is to bring about an improvement in the opinions which others have of oneself. The author accents the features of vagabond subculture, the situation of beggars and the poor in the traditional Lithuanian culture and in modern social structure, and their relations to more successful strata of the society. In the research some scientific approaches are outlined: the interpretative, phenomenological and existential concept of subjectivity.

The significant features of civilization is the abundance of both choices and temptations people face as consumers. In the behaviour of women the

feeling of tension between self-discipline and pleasurable consumption is noted.

In the paper some aspects of the use of space are researched.

The author analyses the situation of the way of life of non-traditional religious groups in today's Lithuania, the motives of some people to change their religious faith (namely to leave the Roman Catholic Church for various protestant denominations) after the regaining of Independence, as well as the opinions of traditional believers about this phenomenon.