



Lifestyle in Siberia and the Russian North

Edited by
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I. Introduction

Studying Lifestyle in Russia

Joachim Otto Habeck

This book is about lifestyle. More exactly, it is about the dynamics behind people's choices and needs, according to which they seek to live their lives practically and to furnish them with meaning. The authors of this volume — a research team of anthropologists and sociologists — have investigated this subject in Russia, predominantly in Siberia, where it has not been given scholarly attention until now. There are reasons for that, notably Siberia's reputation as a region in crisis, an area of environmental decay and rapid economic change that has detrimentally affected indigenous groups. In addition, anthropological research in the region was, until recently, generally limited to indigenous groups' traditional culture. In this book, however, we argue that these categories hardly suffice to explore the current realities of everyday life in this part of Russia. In order to explain how political, economic and technological changes create new possibilities for, and/or constraints on people's existence and self-perception, we found it most expedient to focus on lifestyle, a concept that has been widely applied and debated in sociology but not yet in anthropology, for the reasons sketched out below.

This brings us to the title of the research project, "Conditions and Limitations of Lifestyle Plurality in Siberia" (CLLP) (2008–2013), the main phase of which entailed ethnographic field work during the period 2010–2012 in ten different locations across Siberia and the Far

North of Russia. Our hypothesis was that the range of options given to an individual or group to pursue different ways of life has been changing over the recent past, and we want to understand the factors that influence that range. We do not claim that these options are always consciously *reflected* by the individual, nor that they are necessarily “good” for him or her. Nor do we assume that the range of possible ways of life was by necessity more limited in the Soviet period than in post-Soviet or present times. These assumptions, which are often made by social-scientific studies of modernity, need to be carefully examined; by presenting our research findings here we aim to contribute to such empirical examination.

The study of “modernity” (the constitution of modern society) or rather “modernities” (competing views of what defines modern life) is a key topic to which we seek to contribute, but it is not the only one. We also intend to explore (im)mobility, visuality, aesthetics, expression and displays of ethnic belonging, play, creativity, and self-presentation as aspects of sociability in this part of the world. The particular combination of topics is based to some extent on previous research undertaken by individual team members in Siberia; more importantly, however, it stems from certain subtle yet wide-ranging shifts in how people in Siberia frame their existence — shifts that researchers observed collectively and which came to occupy the centre of our intensive discussions.¹

Outline of the book

The structure of the book reflects this attempt to demonstrate how the notion of lifestyle plays out in the context of, and in combination with, other concepts. Mobility and immobility are the main keywords of Chapters 2 to 5. Chapter 2, by Dennis Zuev and Joachim Otto Habeck, paints a portrait of the technological and infrastructural changes that have taken place in our field research sites over the past forty years,

1 As part of the discussion process, team members decided to look at the relationship between (1) changes in lifestyles, on the one hand, and (2) changes in the availability and actual use of technical devices and networks of communication, on the other, as revealed by two sets of practices: (a) habits of travel and (b) visual forms of self-presentation. In other words, (im)mobility and photography are the two lenses through which we study how the appearance of new technologies articulates with changes in lifestyles. See the Appendix for a more detailed description of the research design and instruments.

and we highlight how these changes have had a bearing on individual perceptions of, and strategies for, travelling, communication, and photographic displays. In Chapter 3, Masha Shaw takes readers to a remote village on the Kola Peninsula in northwest Russia. Inhabitants there have developed specific skills and strategies for overcoming the lack of predictable transport into and out of the village. The resulting isolation fosters creativity and enables individuals to pursue certain life projects that divert from or complement urban ones. Arguably more so than in urban areas, lifestyles in remote villages closely reflect collective practices of place-making. Chapter 4, by Luděk Brož and Habeck, compares late-Soviet versus present-day expectations of holiday-making and the use of tourism infrastructure, with the aim of assessing the shifting norms of what is desired when one is away from home. Partly, these shifts involve new interpretations of ethnic difference as a resource in tourism, as the display of ethnic symbols gradually underwent a process of commodification. Additionally, tourism and travel are now motivated by ideas of self-fulfilment that markedly differ from those in earlier decades. Joseph Long continues this line of inquiry in Chapter 5 on the basis of travel biography interviews conducted by himself and other research team members, examining the ways in which “home”, travel destinations, and collectively-held spatial imaginaries come to be woven together in personal topographies. Photo albums and travelogues highlight the value of personal topographies and trajectories in the expression of a specific identity and style.

In Chapter 6, Jaroslava Panáková discusses how aesthetic conventions and their visual expression are subject to sudden change inasmuch as notions of the self and the collective have undergone modification in the post-socialist period. In addition, she explicates the methodological benefits and challenges of photo elicitation, a method employed by all the contributors in their field researches. Chapter 7 continues the investigation of aesthetics: Eleanor Peers focuses on performance in a particular group of events, notably public celebrations, aesthetic expressions, and artwork. She analyses the development of lifestyles in late Soviet times with reference to Yurchak’s concept of *svoi* (communities of “ours”) and provides a careful description of ethnicity and *kultur’nost’* (which we translate as “culturedness” or cultivated behaviour) in Soviet and post-Soviet times. While Chapter 7 discusses

the practice and meaning of aesthetic displays of ethnic identities, Chapter 8, by Artem Rabogoshvili, elucidates to what extent attendance at such events, either as a performer on the stage or “just” as a member of the audience, is itself an indicator of a lifestyle that draws explicitly on ethnic affiliation and ethnic symbols. Rabogoshvili investigates the workings of national-cultural organisations in the Baikal region, contrasting old and new diaspora groups, and analyses the different degrees of involvement of individual actors.

In Chapters 9 and 10, we look at the significance of play for many people in their desire to create a sense of life that transcends their everyday existence, which they often associate with a lack of control and coherence. In Chapter 9, Ina Schröder investigates the importance of youth camps in the foothills of the Urals for the enactment and transmission of indigenous culture; these camps aim to enable young people in remote villages to embrace traditional indigenous lifestyles in a positive way and to gain a higher level of self-confidence. The protagonists of Chapter 10 (by Tatiana Barchunova and Habeck) are people who participate in live-action role-playing (LARP). Stylisation here is of great importance, in that attire and comportment are highly reflexive and intended to be taken as signifiers. Interestingly, the shift between the two modes of life — play versus ordinary life — usually requires some movement in space, and switching between these two modes is a form of mobility in its own right. The volume closes with an update on current social trends in Russia and a summary of research findings (Chapter 11) along with a description of the research design and methods (Appendix).

Having sketched out the content of this volume in general terms, the remainder of this introduction contains a literature review of how lifestyle has developed as a concept in European and US sociology and anthropology.² On this basis, the next section asks how lifestyle as a concept can and should be applied to non-western settings. A brief introduction to Siberia as a setting for social science research³ and a comment on the Soviet modernisation project constitute the middle part of the introduction. Further, I will discuss the remarkable (albeit

2 The section comparing the positions of Bourdieu and Giddens is a revised version of the pertinent section in Habeck (2008).

3 The section on Siberia’s image is a revised version of the pertinent section in Habeck (2008).

not well-known) strand of scholarship on lifestyle in late Soviet and post-Soviet social sciences; this focus on lifestyle (*stil' zhizni*) has occurred in parallel with — and sometimes complemented — research on everyday life (*byt*) and way of life (*obraz zhizni*). The final section of this introductory chapter offers some general insights gained in the course of the research, which will be elaborated in more detail in the conclusions given in Chapter 11.

The concept of lifestyle in sociological and anthropological literature

This section gives an overview of the (ramified) genealogy of the concept of lifestyle, from early and implicit usages such as those by Thorstein Veblen, Georg Simmel and Max Weber, to American contributions from the 1970s and 1980s by Benjamin D. Zablocki, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, and Michael Sobel. Many of the current conceptualisations of lifestyle build on the works of French and British authors, notably Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, and David Chaney, with whose ideas I will complete this section. The selection of authors portrayed here captures only part of the range of relevant studies, but nonetheless it highlights key aspects of how the concept has been framed and reframed over time.

Early treatises on conspicuous consumption and lifestyle

The term lifestyle entered scientific usage around the beginning of the twentieth century. American economist Thorstein Veblen wrote what can be seen as a prelude to research into lifestyle in his book, *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). Already in this work, consumption is characterised as a major mechanism in capitalist societies by which boundaries between classes are created and maintained. It is through conspicuous consumption of expensive goods and services that members of the leisure class reassure themselves of their social status and present themselves to others as a distinct, privileged group. Moreover, Veblen argues that individuals of each class or group aspire to increase their status by emulating the tastes and preferences of those who are one step further up the social ladder, and their main motivation is to be recognised by others: “members of each stratum accept as their ideal

of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal" (1899: 84; cf. Brown 1998). This idea bears a striking resemblance to later expositions of social distinction, such as that by Bourdieu (see below).

German sociologist Georg Simmel employed the term lifestyle in his book *The Philosophy of Money* ([1900] 2004) in a twofold sense: he used the singular "style of life" (2004: 433ff.) to indicate a modern, contemporary form of existence in contrast to earlier periods, the modern form being increasingly impersonal, civic and mediated (notably, by money), and emotionally less colourful. This loss of character in modern times "may be designated as the objectivity of life-style" (ibid: 439). However, in the same context, Simmel applies the term in the plural form to point out the multitude of styles whereby "we are confronted with a world of expressive possibilities each developed according to their own norms, with a host of forms within which to express life as a whole" (ibid: 468). "The Problem of Style" is further discussed in a later essay ([1908] 1991), and Simmel's essay "On Fashion" (1904) offers relevant insights into the complex interaction of fashion and lifestyle: here he reveals the seemingly contradictory relationship between the effect of proudly emphasising individuality on the one hand, and the effect of opportunistically subjugating oneself to the latest fad, on the other.

An early occurrence of the notion of lifestyle can also be found in the work of Max Weber, notably in his treatise on class, status and political interest groups. Weber juxtaposes the expression of social order by status groups (e.g. the aristocracy) with that of the class system, arguing that the latter operates quite visibly through money, whereas the former hinges on the ascription of honour, the importance of conventions, and a tendency of stylisation that comes with these: "The decisive role of a 'style of life' in status 'honor' means that status groups are the specific bearers of all 'conventions.' In whatever way it may be manifest, all 'stylization' of life either originates in status groups or is at least conserved by them" (Weber [1922] 1946: 191). H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, who translated this passage,⁴ have been

4 The German original runs: "Denn die maßgebende Rolle der 'Lebensführung' für die ständische 'Ehre' bringt es mit sich, daß die Stände die spezifischen Träger aller 'Konventionen' sind: alle 'Stilisierung des Lebens', in welchen Aeußerungen es auch sei, ist entweder ständischen Ursprungs oder wird doch ständisch konserviert" (Weber [1922] 1980: 537).

criticised for their imprecise rendering — indeed, mistranslation — of *Lebensführung* as “style of life” rather than “conduct of life” here and on many other occasions in Weber’s text (Abel & Cockerham 1993; cf. Hartmann 1999: 15–20; Voß 1991). While this has led to considerable confusion, it is clear that Weber characterises the “stylisation of life” as an older, more traditional mechanism of expressing hierarchy. This is remarkable inasmuch as it contradicts many later authors who connect lifestyle with modernity, individualisation, and multiple processes of detraditionalisation, as will become clear from what follows.

Lifestyle as a topic of US sociology in the 1970s and 1980s

Drawing on Veblen and Weber, several US sociologists and psychologists employed the notion of lifestyle in their writings, and in very divergent ways. Zablocki and Kanter (1976) provided an early systematic overview of the concept, and their synthesis is still frequently quoted. Their central concern in that article was to complement the analysis of “classic forms of life-style differentiation” according to the categories of socio-economic status (1976: 272) with a conceptual framework to explain the proliferation of alternative lifestyles, which they claim to be independent of socio-economic status (*ibid*: 280 ff.). The classic forms are arranged into three categories: property-dominated lifestyles, comprising the landed rich as well as petty farmers; occupation-dominated lifestyles, with some occupations absorbing more time and individual loyalty than others; and poverty-dominated lifestyles, where the range of possible choices is severely limited (which calls into question the voluntary nature of lifestyle). Zablocki and Kanter argue that the emergence of alternative lifestyles is due to the loss of value coherence, as observed in US society in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They indicate a large number of alternative lifestyles — esoteric, green, revolutionary, isolationist, hedonistic, ascetic, tradition-oriented, ethnically defined communities and communes — and sketch out possibilities for grouping these. Mere description of lifestyles is not the ultimate goal: “not specific life-styles themselves but their range and diversity constitute the most interesting sociological problem for investigation” (1976: 293). Moreover, lifestyle research can help illuminate more general social phenomena, namely “the transmission of tastes and values, the nature of the collective

experience [...], the correlates of commitment and social cohesion [...], or the transformation of social institutions as consumers shift their preferences" (ibid.).

As sociologists, working in a period when numerous counter-culture and liberation movements were emerging, Zablocki and Kanter (1976) pursued the express aim of disconnecting alternative lifestyles from widespread connotations of deviance and delinquency, and preparing the ground for social-scientific analysis. Michael Sobel, to whose work I will now turn, discarded this and similar attempts as one-sided: "Despite a great deal of undue attention, the relative frequency of these 'alternative' lifestyles is not great [...]. In other words, sociologists have written a great deal about an imperceptible fraction of the population, thereby failing to discuss lifestyle differentiation within the majority population" (Sobel 1981: 56).

Sobel described lifestyle as "set of observable behavioral choices that individuals make" (1981: 3 and 1983: 521) and defined it — with reference to conceptualisations of style in Art History — as "any distinctive, and therefore recognizable, mode of living" (1981: 28). He added that "To this definition the condition of expressiveness (alternative choice) is attached" (ibid.). In his as well as most other works on lifestyle, what comes to the fore is the idea of preference, or choice, within a limited range of options along with the obligation to choose: "it is through this creative participation in the normative order that individuals may generate status, meaning and self-esteem" (1983: 521). Sobel's emphasis on style and lifestyle as something "observable or deducible from observation" (1981: 28) led him to exclude values, attitudes and norms from the concept. Further, he argued that consumption (rather than work, and methodologically better than leisure) is the domain where lifestyles can be discerned; particularly so in American society, where, in the course of the twentieth century, consumption has become the prime sphere within which to build self-esteem and social recognition (1981: 31–48). Sobel thus initially built his empirical study around the criterion of household disposable income, and asked how it is spent for purchasing a range of goods. In a further step, he took specific categories of items as representative of four "factors", namely: visible status, maintenance, high life, and home life (1981: 157–64). They differ in level of expenditure (from necessary items to luxuries) and direction

(with “visible status” and “high life” or party life being directed socially outward rather than home-bound).

Sobel’s emphasis on consumption has two ramifications, one in terms of the region under study in this volume — Russia — and the other in terms of continuity and change. As to the first, he contrasted America’s post-1945 consumer society with that in the Soviet Union, where, according to him, material conditions led to fewer options being available in the sphere of consumption; moreover, consumption “is not an officially recognized goal. Consumption is secondary to many other things, and at the individual level, consumption is not expressive, but severely constrained” (Sobel 1981: 41).⁵

As to the second, Sobel drew a clear conceptual line between lifestyle and stylistic unity (*ibid*: 118–20). The latter expresses the observation that certain items frequently co-occur with others, whereas other combinations are highly unlikely, to the degree of looking odd or “inconsistent”. Patterns of consistency are subject to change, but also establish the condition of continuity and the recognizability of lifestyles: “The items that index a lifestyle are culturally arbitrary; however, the manner in which a sample of items hangs together, as revealed by the factor pattern, may not be so arbitrary. [...] there is a good deal of historical evidence that lifestyle forms have displayed considerable continuity over time” (Sobel 1983: 526). Implicitly, his argument suggests that patterns may be perpetuated through generations, with individuals displaying preferences they acquired in the household in which they grew up. Explicitly, Sobel contends that the household’s income level and the occupational status belonging to the head of that household (i.e. the prestige conferred by the occupation) are more decisive in terms of lifestyle than is the level of an individual’s formal education, the influence of which is more subtle (1981: 167–68).

Sobel’s emphasis on consumption as key indicator of lifestyle may be too limited and biased; it comes over as rather conservative if compared

5 This leads us to ask if lifestyle in the Soviet Union may be retrospectively discerned more suitably in the sphere of work rather than consumption, or perhaps in people’s positions in networks of allocation of goods, access to resources, and informal redistribution (see Chapter 7 in this volume; see Chapter 2A in Nielsen 1986 for a lively illustration of such networks in late socialist Leningrad). For a discussion of the concept of consumption and its relevance to the current constitution of a Russian middle class, see Gurova (2012).

to Zablocki and Kanter's (1976) attempt to make alternative lifestyles (including ascetic ones) accessible for sociological analysis, as discussed above. Nonetheless, Sobel has set some standards for further empirical research. By interpreting lifestyle as a link between social position (and, notably, class) and patterns in the symbolic use of material goods, his approach roughly corresponds with that of Bourdieu, the next scholar whose work I shall explore.

French, British, and German scholarship on the concept of lifestyle (1979–early 2000s)

Of central importance for research on lifestyle is the legacy of French sociologist and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu, notably his comprehensive empirical study on social stratification in France in the 1960s, published under the title *Distinction* ([1979] 1984). He exposes lifestyles as concomitant — in fact, homologous — to different positions in social space. Both the social space (in the French original: *espace social*) and the space of lifestyles (*espace des styles de vie*) are defined by the criteria of economic capital and cultural capital. He thus promotes the idea that any analysis of social differentiation requires more than just the criterion of economic capital. Under the influence of Bourdieu, scientific models of social differentiation ultimately attained multidimensional shape. Bourdieu interprets the particular symbolic meanings of a wide range of goods, leisure activities, personal predilections and value judgements and the ways in which they express the individual's belonging to a certain class and milieu. Such localisation of social status can be illustrated by two brief examples: individual preference for high-carbohydrate and high-fat foods, rugby, and film star Brigitte Bardot indicate an individual's affiliation to the less affluent milieu of farm workers and employees in rural communities; whereas a person who shows sustained interest in Bach's musical oeuvre and bicycle tourism may be identified, with some probability, as a secondary-school teacher (Bourdieu 1984: 128–29).

Bourdieu argues that the elites seek to distinguish themselves from the middle class by means of taste. The members of the latter continually and breathlessly try to emulate elite taste. Here Bourdieu's argument strongly resembles that of Veblen, but it differs when it comes

to the poorest strata of society: according to Bourdieu, the groups with lowest incomes do not participate in the hunt to develop ever more refined tastes; instead, by necessity they come to value the “practical” advantage — and hence, neatness — of those things affordable to them (ibid: 372ff.).

Taste, seemingly a domain of individual decision-making, follows socially established patterns. The individual does not usually reflect on his or her disposition, which conditions such choices. “Distinction” of social groups is perpetuated by the enactment of taste. The principle that, according to Bourdieu, creates the conditions for the existence of lifestyles is rooted in the *habitus*. *Habitus* is the mechanism that generates certain patterns of valorisation through taste, along with certain practices and works, which are liable to classification and simultaneously serve the purpose of classifying. These practices, productions and taste judgements engender a specific lifestyle (Bourdieu 1984: 173).⁶ The *habitus* in turn results from the individual’s position within the framework of “objectively inscribed” conditions of existence (ibid: 170). Individual dispositions are habitualised, routinised, embodied and usually not questioned; and yet, they can be transmitted from one actor to another.

The analysis provided by Bourdieu points to the high levels of congruence between aesthetic judgements and affiliation with a social stratum or milieu; it also explains how taste is continually reproduced. However, Bourdieu has little to say about the potential of certain actors to disengage wilfully from the struggle for symbolic recognition and “legitimate culture”. Likewise, the possibility of creative, ironic, and subversive utilisation of symbols is not sufficiently captured in Bourdieu’s analysis (cf. Chaney 1996: 66). If we follow Bourdieu, whatever it is that an actor perceives as an option just *seems* to be a matter of choice — in fact, however, a socially preconditioned, usually unconscious process stands behind the decision-making. In that sense, Bourdieu’s take differs from that of Giddens, whose view shall be briefly sketched out in what follows.

6 “Taste, the propensity and capacity to appropriate (materially or symbolically) a given class of classified, classifying objects and practices, is the generative formula of life-style, a unitary set of distinctive preferences which express the same expressive intention in the specific logic of each of the symbolic sub-spaces, furniture, clothing, language or body hexis” (Bourdieu 1984: 173).

British sociologist Anthony Giddens discussed the term lifestyle as a key phenomenon of the late modern and post-modern era. In *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991), Giddens defines lifestyle as “a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity” (1991: 83). Particularly incisive is the statement that precedes the above definition: “we all not only follow lifestyles, but in an important sense are forced to do so – we have no choice but to choose” (ibid.).

In contrast to Bourdieu, Giddens puts strong emphasis on the individuals’ need to select consciously from many existing options: he conceptualises the self as a reflexive project. Taking this into account, our investigation of lifestyles should explicitly address the norms, predilections, orientations, and convictions according to which a person takes decisions about how to get on in life, whom to bond with, and how to present him- or herself in public. His notion of lifestyle carries generally positive connotations in the sense that people are satisfied with (or at least, have arranged themselves according to) the goals and activities that shape their everyday lives. This aspect of assenting emotions is complementary to the aspect of negative emotions, represented by such terms as “crisis” and “survival”, which thus far appear to be the dominant rationale for anthropological and ethnographic research in Siberia. Not only suffering but also affirmative emotions and expressions are needed to sustain a sense of collective identity.

In view of the theoretical frame of our research project in Siberia, it is necessary to address the crucial difference between Giddens’s notion of lifestyle as expression of individual self-reflection, and Bourdieu’s emphasis on the mostly unreflective character of consumption practices and social distinction. Respondents’ occasional assertions that important changes and turning points in the course of their lives “just happened” (*prosto poluchilos’ tak*) cast doubt upon Giddens’s idea of the self as a reflexive project. On the other hand, the rapid economic and symbolic shifts in post-Soviet society prevented most people from simply “carrying on” and induced them to compare the present with the past, to “rethink” their situation and aspirations. Giddens may well over-emphasise the individual’s capacity to induce change, whereas

Bourdieu tends to underestimate this potential. His work depicts individuals as unavoidably inserted in a social hierarchy, leading a lifestyle they have not chosen but instead appropriated and learned to like. What emerges from Bourdieu's writings is the idea that lifestyles reproduce themselves through the people that enact and re-enact them. Changes in lifestyle are tied to class affiliation and hence they are a question of the individual or family ascending or descending on the social ladder. For Bourdieu it is not a question of choice by necessity, as Giddens would have it, or of choice as eclectic combination, as is claimed by postmodern sociologists. The aspect of (non-)choice and (non-)reflexivity will come up again in the remainder of this overview of theoretical works on lifestyle.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the different national traditions (US, French and British) in the debate on lifestyle gradually converged again, also incorporating contributions from West German sociologists,⁷ whose engagement with the concept had been comparatively active throughout the 1980s (for example, Beck, Giddens & Lash 1994). Similar to Giddens, the German sociologists Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim treated the increasing diversity of lifestyles (*Lebensstil*) and life conduct (*Lebensführung*) as part of a more general social process: individualisation (cf. Zablocki & Kanter's "loss of value coherence" described above). "Standard biography transmutes [...] into a chosen biography, reflexive biography, bricolage biography. This does not have to be intended, nor does it have to be successful" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1994: 13, my translation). Written some 25 years ago, this appraisal, as much as Giddens's position, referred to so-called western societies, that is, societies in western Europe and North America. In subsequent years, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2010: xv) stated that "we cannot simply assume that the process of individualization exhibits the same basic pattern in all regions of the world [...] On the contrary, it must be shown at the theoretical level that the specificity of the European path towards individualization becomes visible only when it is juxtaposed with extra-European paths [...]". The research pursued

7 Useful overviews of German-language publications on lifestyle have been given by Hradil (1992); Otte & Rössel (2011); and Spellerberg (1996). These publications themselves are in German. I am not aware of any comprehensive synthesis of this strand of scholarship in English.

by the authors of this book is rooted in a similar line of inquiry and asks about the specificities of self-expression in the context of Russia in late Soviet and post-Soviet decades. Along with Beck-Gernsheim and Beck, we may ask: To what extent has individualisation in Russia (and in Russia's remote regions) taken a *specific* trajectory? Is it specific at all? What may be specific about it?

David Chaney's treatise on lifestyle

Comprehensive and particularly informative, from our point of view, is British sociologist David Chaney's monograph with the straightforward title *Lifestyles* (1996). Chaney's position is quite close to that of Giddens, notably in his emphasis on reflexivity and a certain room for manoeuvre, or ambit of choice. Chaney offers more than one — in fact many different — definitions of lifestyle, and here I present one that may not be the most elegant, but is the most productive from our research team's point of view, because it combines practice with intentionality, display, and resources at hand: "Lifestyles are reflexive projects: we (and relevant others) can see (however dimly) who we want to be seen to be through how we use the resources of who we are" (Chaney 1996: 37). The concatenation of verbs summarises well, in our opinion, the various processes at work at the intersection of normative and unconscious practice paired with reflexivity, willful display, and a desire for self-expression: "Lifestyles are reflexive projects: we (and relevant others) can see [*perception*] who we want [*intention*] to be seen [*recognisability*] to be [*aspired status*] through how we use [*practice*] the resources [*capital*] of who we are [*status quo*]".

Elsewhere in his book (ibid: 114) Chaney (again, in agreement with Giddens) states that lifestyle offers the symbolic means to express a narration of *self*. He argues *against* limiting the lifestyle concept to patterns of consumption and material aspects only. To be sure, the latter do have strong significance inasmuch as they make up a vast part of the inventory for self-stylisation; yet in many cases, consumer practices and decisions do not automatically follow the conventions and intentions that come with an item. Rather, we can often detect that individuals pursue their *mise-en-scène* in a consciously weird, sometimes ironic manner. By taking things out of their original context and intended

meaning, people occasionally manage to create new symbols of lasting currency (1996: 99; see also Miller 1995; Moore 2011).

Apart from *self*, two more keywords in Chaney's book deserve to be explained here: *surfaces* and *sensibilities*. *Surfaces* is a shorthand for the phenomenon, already observed by Simmel, that attire, accessories and other attributes worn by a person make that person "recognisable" or legible for others immediately on first sight. It is this phenomenon that enables a rapid, albeit preliminary, appraisal of passers-by in an increasingly urban and thus anonymous social environment (Chaney 1996: 94, 99–111). The notion and relevance of *surfaces* is further discussed in Chapters 8 and 10 of this volume.

The third term, *sensibilities*, serves as a metaphor for collective concerns, moral judgements, "big issues", and perhaps one might also add the term *social imaginaries*. Chaney speaks of "a way of responding to certain events [...] that has a certain pattern" and is imbued "with ethical and aesthetic significance" (ibid: 8). One example provided by Chaney are collective concerns and debates about animal rights, hunting and meat consumption, which have undergone diverse modifications over several centuries; another is the emergence of the cultural practice of attending public concerts and the emergence of "distinct taste publics" (ibid: 10). To give another illustration, the purposes and practices of holiday-making (in the mountains, at the sea) are based, to a large extent, on health-related sensibilities that emerged during a specific period in history. Sensibilities also comprise individual and collective reflections about morality, as is exemplified by the raising importance of religion in the everyday lives of many of Russia's inhabitants (see first section of Chapter 11). Sensibilities have a clear temporal dimension, and they reflect what some people find tolerable, but others think of as less acceptable or unacceptable. Individuals with shared sensibilities tend to cluster in some way; they constitute milieus, that is, groups of individuals that may assume each other to have similar opinions on moral and political issues. *Sensibilities* as a key concept is further elaborated in more detail in Chapter 7, it is also discussed in Chapters 2, 4, 8, 9, and 10 of this volume.

Towards a definition of lifestyle to be used in a post-Soviet context

For the team of contributors to this book, Chaney's analysis has provided inspiration in manifold ways. We connected it with the endeavour of formulating a general theoretical framework for the study of identity and identification at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, the outcome of which is captured in Donahoe et al. (2009). Further, Chaney's work helped us to revise and sharpen our working definition of lifestyle.⁸ I argue that lifestyle can be seen as a particular *mode* of identification. Lifestyle is an expressive, routinised, and stylised mode of identification: (i) it is expressive, insofar as individuals connect choices and practices with statements about themselves to be recognised by others; they invest them with some sense of *importance* that they also seek to convey to others. (ii) It is routinised (and habitualised) insofar as such practices and choices are performed repeatedly, and predilections can be predicted with some probability. (iii) It is stylised insofar as this mode of identification combines a seemingly contradictory mixture of subjecting the self to social conventions and yet emphasising one's own difference and distinction. This mixture is one of the basic properties of fashion, as Simmel has pointed out.

All three elements of our definition — lifestyle as an expressive, habitualised and stylised mode of identification — will be of significance in this book. Is the concept of lifestyle applicable to non-western societies? As mentioned, there is a certain challenge in the way lifestyle is embedded in a particular discourse on modernisation, urbanisation and individualisation, all part of a grand scheme called Modernisation Theory. Take the following statement by Giddens as an example: "Lifestyle is not a term which has much applicability to traditional cultures, because it implies choice within a plurality of possible options, and is 'adopted' rather than 'handed down'" (Giddens 1991: 83).

In a similar manner, Stefan Hradil, a German sociologist, states: "The analytical power of the lifestyle concept has narrow limits when

8 In 2008, research team members formulated a working definition: *Lifestyle is what one does in order to be what one thinks one should be*. We soon came to realise that this definition of ours had some resemblance with that provided by Chaney (1996: 37), presented in the main text (p. 14). On the process of formulating the working definition and on other aspects of research design, see the Appendix.

applied in societal settings with low freedom of choice, such as prisons, among primitive peoples (*Naturvölker*) or at the level of the livelihood of a single parent with three children who depends on social support payments. Empirical evidence indicates that a relatively large plurality of lifestyles for many people exists in modern societies only, and within these, it is larger in higher social strata than in lower ones" (Hradil 2001: 275, my translation).⁹

However, very few sociological or anthropological studies have thus far seriously approached the question of the analytical power of the lifestyle concept in non-urban settings outside Europe and North America. Hence the question: what can we say about lifestyle plurality in Siberia, notably among erstwhile *Naturvölker*, and how traditional is Siberia today? A first approximation of an answer to this question is pursued in the next section, on Siberia and the Soviet quest for modernity.

Towards research on lifestyle in Siberia: some remarks on the regional context

The Soviet modernisation project

Let us take a brief look at how a peculiar Soviet modernisation project sought to propel social change among the indigenous peoples of Siberia (and more generally, not only in that part of the Soviet Union, but throughout the country — and ultimately regardless of ethnic particularities). As a reminder, the Soviet Union aspired to pursue a path of economic and social development in marked contrast to that of the capitalist world. In a way, the intention was to become even more modern than the rest of the world. This alternative path of development was connected with an emancipatory project from above, enacted in a more explicit and forceful way than what we know from many other historical settings.

9 Many authors seem to share the understanding that "style of life" (or "lifestyles") is *not* an attribute of traditional society, even though Weber quite explicitly spoke about it as a traditional phenomenon (see footnote 4), and Ulrich Beck followed Weber's interpretation to some extent. Weber remarked that style of life is often "corporatively conserved" ("*ständisch konserviert*", Weber [1922] 1980: 537); Beck extended this point when portraying lifestyles as "a relic of pre-capitalist, pre-industrial traditions" (Beck 1983: 49, my translation).

Siberia is inhabited by many different indigenous peoples, and according to Marxist-Leninist logic, these were supposed to be on different stages of the evolutionary ladder.¹⁰ The task was to have these peoples “leap forward”, to integrate them into socialist society. Generally speaking, we can characterise the Soviet modernisation project as one of the many attempts of social engineering in the twentieth century. Particular to the Soviet version, however, was the speed and geographic scope with which social change was induced, plus the accompanying promise of a bright future, narrated as a unilinear evolutionist process. The main components of modernisation within the entire country — collectivisation, industrialisation, forceful replacement of political and functional élites, literacy and education — had their correlates in the far-flung areas of the country, including large swathes of Siberia: there, the Soviet government sought to make nomadic groups sedentary, invested in large-scale extraction of mineral resources, introduced “industrial methods” and mechanical equipment in all branches of agriculture, persecuted *kulaki* (wealthy people) and shamans as the most influential representatives of traditional social order, created new indigenous élites, established alphabets and textbooks in indigenous languages, obliged indigenous parents to send their children to Soviet schools, etc. The more or less orchestrated implementation of these strategies and their ambivalent effects have been discussed in detail elsewhere (e.g. Slezkine 1994; Ssorin-Chaikov 2003; Ulturgasheva 2012; Vitebsky 2005).

Some of the many ramifications of the modernisation project should be emphasised here: as part of this strategy, different groups within the indigenous population of Siberia were co-opted more directly than others, with women being seen as potentially the most reliable allies of the Soviet modernisation project (Povoroznyuk et al. 2010). New professions came into existence, notably in the sphere of administration, education, infrastructure, transportation, and trade. Through media and school education the inhabitants of even the remotest areas of the country came to embrace new items of

10 For a recent treatment of pre-Soviet and Soviet traditions of evolutionary thought in ethnography, see Sokolovskiy (2017). A volume published by Open Book Publishers and edited by Anderson, Arzyutov & Alymov (2019) traces the long history of *ethnos*, a concept that gained popularity in Soviet ethnography in the 1960s, partly in response to earlier orthodox views on evolution.

consumption and “cultivated” life — either in the form of desire or in actual appropriation (see Volkov 2000). Moreover, the Soviet ideal of “cultivated” life also implied new genres of self-improvement, self-expression, and aesthetic self-formation (cf. Foucault 2000; Rabinow & Dreyfus 2000) that were generally in line with the idea of the development of a socialist personality (Habeck 2011). To use Chaney’s terminology, the Soviet period established new sensibilities; it also obliged individuals “to surface”, show their commitment to the overall social project, and to express themselves in public (cf. Kharkhordin 1999). Finally, in the sphere of identity-building, ethnicity was made a legitimate register of personal identity, to be expressed through certain genres of display — whereas other, politically incorrect and “backward” aspects of ethnic difference were separated, relegated to museums and banned from everyday life (Vitebsky 1995).

While the Soviet period is often linked with the loss of traditional culture, the post-Soviet period *also* saw serious impoverishment: the promise of development, of a bright future, was abandoned. And simultaneously, that which was supposed to replace the Soviet world order after 1991, namely a transition towards a free-market economy and democracy, seems to have got “stuck”; or at least, it has generally lost its appeal. For many of our Siberian interlocutors, progress, modernity, conservatism, tradition, and neo-tradition appeared to be jumbled, they did not make sense anymore even though they were still widely in use; and there was no clear trajectory of “development” anymore. However, over the last two decades, a new state ideology has been emerging; it becomes visible in the emphasis on good citizenship, law and order, and patriotism, as portrayed in Chapter 11.

Having claimed that lifestyle is usually discussed within the framework of Modernisation Theory, and having claimed that Soviet modernisation was strong, but *is no more*, what can we say about the explanatory power of lifestyle in a non-western setting such as present-day Russia? Are notions of modernity and progress relevant in the contemporary context of Siberia (and in extension, provincial Russia)? If yes, for what vision of progress do people strive?

The image of Siberia

Siberia is commonly perceived and described by outsiders as a desolate, cheerless and uncultured part of the world. As one fellow social scientist aptly formulated: "Russia in particular continues to evoke overwhelmingly negative reporting and imagery in much of the mass media which informs popular understanding in the west. [...] There is, it seems, no good news to come out of Russia and less still to come out of Siberia" (Kay 2006: 213). Notwithstanding occasional accounts that are more complex in their judgement, connotations of icy confines, unpopulated expanses, forced labour camps, unsustainable resource extraction, and environmental degradation dominate the discourse about Siberia among the publics of western Europe and North America. To be sure, climatic conditions in Siberia are difficult, the technical infrastructure is insufficient in many regions, and for this and other reasons one may conclude that the conditions of everyday life are harder here than elsewhere. This does not necessarily mean, however, that people in Siberia suffer more privation and misery than in other parts of the world.

Many inhabitants of the Russian Federation do live under precarious circumstances, and the description and analysis of their life conditions are among the most relevant tasks that fall to social science research. However, this commitment can easily distort the realities of everyday life in Siberia in all their manifestations. Since the early 2000s, Russia has witnessed considerable economic growth, for the most part on the basis of oil and gas exports (although the economic crisis of 2008 caused a temporary decrease in incomes and security). It is unclear (and deserves to be studied) whether and to what extent rural inhabitants and urban lower-income groups have benefited from the oil and gas revenues. One may assume that overall economic growth has generally led to higher and more stable monetary income, but the effect is probably experienced very differentially by the various population segments. Thus, on the one hand, spending power and possibilities for consumption have increased noticeably in some Siberian communities; for many people the economic situation is no longer as grave as it was some twenty years ago. On the other hand, new patterns of social inequality are manifest in the non-participation and exclusion of less affluent groups from public

spaces and facilities. On these grounds, research on consumer practices, lifestyles, and forms of representation of individual and collective identity is of growing topicality and deserves more attention in social science scholarship on Siberia.

Most inhabitants of Siberia (and of Russia, in general) usually associate the 1990s with chaos and wildness, whereas the subsequent two decades can be generally characterised as a period of economic, cultural, and societal consolidation, with a marked tendency towards conservatism and a resurgence of religious organisations, notably the Orthodox Church. We are witnessing, on the one hand, many signs of growing diversity of lifestyles in this region; on the other hand, the state's current emphasis on patriotism, family values, and proper moral education indicates a normative, mainstreaming tendency, with the possible result that spaces for alternative lifestyles and projects will be limited (see Chapter 11).

The concept of lifestyle in Russian social science literature

The question arises if and how the concept of lifestyle has weight and currency in Russian social sciences, and, with a view to past decades, if and how it was used in Soviet social science. In search of an answer, we first need to turn to concepts that complement, compete with or precede the concept of lifestyle: for the socialist and post-socialist period, these are *byt* (roughly corresponding to the notion of “everyday life”) and *obraz zhizni* (roughly equivalent to “way of life”). These terms were and continue to be espoused by some scientific disciplines more than by others.

Byt (everyday life), *obraz zhizni* (way of life)
and *stil' zhizni* (lifestyle)

With regard to the first of these three terms, Natal'ia Pushkareva (2005) offers a complex history of the scientific usage of *byt*, which gained currency in pre-revolutionary Russian historiography and ethnography, but underwent a conceptual redefinition in early Soviet

times. It came to stand for material culture and livelihood, for household reproduction and leisure (i.e. for the things people habitually do when they are not engaged in production). However, she notes that even “the most meticulous description of *byt* [...] was unable to represent any man or a woman of the past [as a being] endowed with plans that came true, or dreams that failed to be realised” (Pushkareva 2005: 25). Further, she argues that, thanks to paradigmatic shifts in (western) historiography and social sciences in general, the study of *byt* regained explanatory power in the late twentieth century, but this time under the label “history of everyday life” (*istoriia povsednevnosti*). She holds that such an approach — unlike the conventional ethnography of *byt* — can account for the ways in which individuals and groups do not just follow rules and habits, but also how they divert from them (ibid: 30–31). From my point of view, it would be unfair to claim that ethnography in the post-Soviet decades has been entirely ignorant of people’s aspirations and ambitions, and yet it seems that the notion of *byt* is still much more strongly geared to the material aspects of *habitus*, and in that sense is reminiscent of Bourdieu’s understanding of lifestyle as a largely unreflective pattern of behaviour; at any rate, it lacks the sense of *self*, sensibility and reflexivity that we find in Chaney’s characterisation of lifestyle.

Ralf Rytlewski (1990: 16, 22) draws interesting parallels between the Soviet concept *obraz zhizni* and the German equivalent *Lebensweise*, which in the 1970s became a central category in social science research on citizens’ everyday lives in the German Democratic Republic. *Lebensweise* in turn stands in a complex juxtaposition with *Lebensstil*, which was more widely employed by West German sociologists during the same period. Against the backdrop of Pushkareva’s argument (see above), it would be apposite to explore how strongly GDR scholarship on *Lebensweise* interacted with Soviet academic conceptualisations not just of *obraz zhizni*, but also of *byt*, since in both the Soviet Union and the GDR the study of “everyday life”, peasant and workers’ culture attained popularity among historians during the late socialist period.

Stil’ zhizni, by contrast, emerged within the discipline of sociology. When perusing the relevant literature, it appears that by the early 1980s the concept of lifestyle (*stil’ zhizni*) became methodologically established by a group of sociologists in Kiev, Ukrainian SSR, under

the aegis of Lidiia Vasil'evna Sokhan'¹¹ (Sokhan' & Tikhonovich 1982). In order to carry out this task, the authors first had to delineate *stil' zhizni* (lifestyle) from the much more common term *obraz zhizni*, usually translated as "way of life". The latter term will be explored in more detail here. It recurred frequently in late Soviet and then post-Soviet social science research to describe the combination of material, technological, and cultural aspects of how people live their lives. To point out the difference between the two concepts, Sokhan', Tikhonovich and colleagues argued, "Lifestyle, from such an approach, emerges as the reflection of the individual in the social, [whereas] way of life is the reflection of the social in the individual" (ibid: 9). Repeatedly, the authors emphasised the importance of the "agentive, creative role of the human being as designer of his/her life conditions and him/herself" (*deiatel'naia, sozidatel'naia rol' cheloveka kak tvortsa uslovii svoei zhizni i samogo sebia*) (ibid: 9–10).

Remarkably, sociological scholarship on lifestyle continued in Kiev after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, with Liubov' Dmitrievna Bevzenko being among the senior scholars (Bevzenko 2007, 2008) and Anna Domaranskaia (2014) among the younger generation of colleagues working in this field. These authors also explicitly draw a line between lifestyle (*stil' zhizni*) and way of life (*obraz zhizni*), the latter being related to the "physical parameters" of existence, such as rural versus urban residence or healthy versus unhealthy ways of life; whereas the former is attributed to the culturally and socially defined necessities, such as maintenance of social status (Bevzenko 2007: 148). A definition of lifestyle offered by Bevzenko is thus: "Lifestyle is [a] system of practices which are closely linked with and continually repeat themselves in the everyday expressions of the individual. It [comprises] practices that correspond with different social fields: leisure and consumption, work, politics, religion, health, education and so forth. All this in its totality is signified as practices of lifestyle" (ibid: 134). All of the authors quoted offer ways to use the concept in empirical research. For example, Domaranskaia (2014: 470) investigates

11 Lidiia Vasil'evna Sokhan' was born and grew up in a remote village of Novosibirsk Oblast, thus she has an immediate understanding of everyday life in rural Siberia. Later she moved to Kiev and worked as a senior scientist in the Department of Social Psychology, Institute of Sociology, Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, until 1994 (source: ru.wikipedia.org).

the correlation of leisure activities and social position as defined by income, type of work, and prestige of profession; the resulting graphs resemble those presented by Bourdieu (see above). One of the results concerning contemporary Ukrainian society (and I would argue, post-Soviet societies more generally) is the finding that the “classic” élite pursuits of theatre and fine arts are not so much in demand from the most affluent and influential social layers, but rather by middle-class intellectuals (*ibid*: 477).

In Russia too, several social scientists have been employing lifestyle as a conceptual basis for their theoretical and empirical writings (Burtonova 2017; Gurova 2012, 2014; Ionin 1996; Omel’chenko 2003; Osadchaia 2002; Ostroukh 2006; Roshchina 2007; Viktorova 2017; Voz’mitel’ 2002).¹² It is difficult, though, to identify a particular academic centre or school with long-term, sustained interest in this line of research. While some authors — among them Ionin — drew their conceptual inspiration from Weber, Simmel, and Bourdieu, others have developed definitions that are very pronouncedly based on classic Marxist readings, e.g. Voz’mitel’ & Osadchaia (2009: 62). Of theoretical relevance is their differentiation between way of life (*obraz zhizni*), lifestyle (*stil’ zhizni*) and mode of life (*sposob zhizni*). “Mode of life” is defined as indicator of the individual’s approach to turning social potentialities (opportunities, options) into reality. “Lifestyles” are characterised as manifold and more strongly related to personality, perhaps also more volatile. Lifestyles blend into “way of life” to create a more encompassing reality, namely that of larger collectives or parts of society, and, according to the authors, they denote the objective situation within society, or even society at large. The authors conclude with a rather categorical reassertion of binaries: “And exactly in this sense we have talked, and [continue to] talk, about

12 A recent application of the concept of lifestyle to a Siberian urban setting (Ulan-Ude) has been presented by Burtonova (2017). To a considerable extent, research on the conditions and limitations of lifestyle plurality can draw conceptually on the seminal work of the erstwhile Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham, with its focus on the development of youth cultures and “subcultures”. Urban lifestyles, youth cultures and “subcultures” in Russia have been explored in the 1990s and 2000s by sociologists (notably, Omel’chenko 2003; Pilkington et al. 2002); these studies are usually confined to the European part of Russia; for one of the rare examples of a study on subculture in the Far North, see Pilkington (2014). Studies on youth cultures were occasionally interpreted as closely related and partly compatible with research on lifestyle (Dittrich & Hölscher 2001: 153, 164).

socialist and bourgeois, Christian and Muslim, American and Soviet ways of life" (Voz'mitel' & Osadchaia 2009: 62).¹³

To summarise, the term *obraz zhizni* is favoured by a larger number of social scientists in Russia over *stil' zhizni*. Furthermore, it has also found wide application in studies on public health, recently endorsed by the nationwide, policy-driven quest for a healthy way of life (*zdorovyi obraz zhizni*) (e.g. Silin & Koval'zhina 2017, based on research in West Siberia). However, the concept of *obraz zhizni* is somewhat problematic for our purposes because of its implicit focus on macro processes (long-term social change, large-scale phenomena, e.g. transition from a nomadic to a settled way of life), with the result that micro processes, i.e. personal choices and behaviour in small groups, remain out of sight. In other words, research on *obraz zhizni* does not yield a satisfactory answer as to why somebody might want to live a certain kind of life or want to pursue certain activities. *Obraz zhizni* may continue to be a fruitful concept, yet it can benefit from a closer analysis of how people come to accept and assert certain way(s) of life or reject and substitute them with others.

Transferring the concept of lifestyle to Russia: an early attempt

In closing this section, it should be noted that, to many experts and lay people alike, *stil' zhizni* may have the ring of a term imported to Russia from "the west". We cannot quite discard such apprehensions. In fact,

13 In 1990, Krisztina Mánicke-Gyöngyösi (1990) provided a study of early-Soviet changes in urban lifestyles, based on secondary sources from the 1920s onwards. Her methodologically interesting attempt starts with an explanation of why lifestyle is chosen over way of life (*obraz zhizni*). She questioned if a consistent "normative status" of the term *obraz zhizni* has ever been found. She argued it is used ambivalently, to denote on the one hand the connection between material conditions and the activities of certain social groups and classes, which can be empirically investigated; and to describe on the other hand a general principle of everyday conduct. In this latter sense, the term is often used to characterise the socialist mode of production in everyday life. The term therefore serves to "idealise the real conditions of life and asserts the standardisation of these in the sense of a *socialist way of life*" (Mánicke-Gyöngyösi 1990: 161, her emphasis, my translation). Further she held that for a study of social processes in the 1920s (as hers is) the term *obraz zhizni* is not applicable, since sociological scholarship was based, back then, on "different traditions, and its development was interrupted at the beginning of the thirties" (1990: 162).

there has been a sociological study that analysed exactly if and how the concept of lifestyle could be transferred to studying post-Soviet Russian society. The authors, Dittrich & Hölscher (2001) were motivated by the rapid transformation of post-socialist societies in the east of Europe and in Russia, and they chose Russia for an assessment of how lifestyle can be employed theoretically and methodologically. However, they found this to be a challenge because some of the tenets usually associated with high-modern or post-modern societies — most importantly, the tenet of growing individualisation — seemed to be inappropriate for, or not applicable to, Russian society. Likewise, some of the indicators utilised in lifestyle research seemed not to work, possibly because of a fundamentally different approach to consumption (Dittrich & Hölscher 2001: 88; see Gurova 2012 for an overview of research on consumption in late Soviet and post-Soviet Russia).

Influenced by the developments of the comparatively chaotic and boisterous 1990s, and taking an approach that was admittedly very general, Dittrich and Hölscher listed key characteristics of Russia's historical otherness as compared to societies in the west of Europe (2001: 82–83). Their diagnosis includes: historically strongly hierarchical relations between those ruling and those ruled, and thence a particular, apprehensive relationship between state and individual; a preference for collectivity over individuality — not the least because of the necessity to obtain access to vitally important resources — and the persistence of rather traditional gender roles despite changes in women's status and roles in Soviet times. To be sure, these generalised tenets have been explored repeatedly (among many others, by Kharkhordin 1999; Ledeneva 1998 and Nielsen 1986; Zdravomyslova & Temkina 2004) and deserve further exploration in detail (Chapters 3–11 of this book contribute to these long-standing debates).

Nonetheless, from our point of view and for our purpose here, we concur with Dittrich and Hölscher on at least two methodological points: firstly, that data collection has thus far been focused only on the largest cities and it has been insufficiently pursued in the smaller cities and the rural (and more remote) regions of Russia; and secondly, that the collection of quantitative data on consumer behaviour etc. needs to be corroborated by exploratory approaches that shed light on the ways interview partners perceive and reflect their own situation (2001: 40, 134).

When designing our research project on the conditions and limitations of lifestyle plurality in Russia, we had very similar goals in mind.

First insights obtained in the course of the research project

Against the backdrop of theoretical writings and earlier research on lifestyle in Russia, and on the basis of a collectively developed research design (see Appendix), research-team members made themselves acquainted with a range of different communities. Here I present some general insights from the collective research.

Firstly, the theoretical tenet that lifestyles are best studied through patterns of consumption (maintained by Sobel, see above) does not fully suffice to identify and explain the breadth and complexity of existing lifestyles. Many of the lifestyles portrayed in this volume do not necessarily hinge upon such patterns of consumption. It is true that attitudes to consumption (e.g. the valorisation of self-made objects or home-grown food, and ironic play with the meaning of objects) differ in relation to specific lifestyles, and these differences have a distinctive quality. In that sense, Chaney's notion of *sensibilities* comes to include the sphere of consumption.

Second, it is this very notion of *sensibilities* that lies at the core of lifestyles, for lifestyles — from our empirical observation — constitute practical responses to certain sensibilities, questions of morality, and reflections on one's opportunities and ambitions to follow a certain path, or style, in one's life.

Third, the stronger the degree of involvement and the intensity of commitment to a certain activity (be it in the domains of leisure or work or both), the more likely an individual is to develop a certain style, along with the skills and knowledge connected to that activity.

Fourth, and resulting from the previous point, with regard to the question of reflexivity, we side with Chaney and other authors who treat lifestyles as self-formative (and in many cases, creative) projects that have a self-reflexive quality, and again the degree seems to vary with different degrees of involvement. Having said that, we consider Bourdieu's point of habitualised forms of taste and practice as highly relevant, because our study does reveal a strong dependence of habits

and choices on social background (including the criterion of class). It also supports the idea that *sensibilities*, inasmuch as they emerge and are promoted at a social rather than an individual level, may often be taken for granted, with individuals practically responding to them but not necessarily opting for divergent or alternative sensibilities.

Fifth, the current trend towards conservative and traditional values in Russian politics and also in everyday life (portrayed in Chapter 11) is an example of changing sensibilities, promoting new or renewed practical responses and lifestyles in some fields while simultaneously potentially sidelining other modes of living, and part of this mechanism is the devaluation and ridiculing of certain sensibilities.¹⁴

Sixth, and with reference to the first point, the allegedly close connection of lifestyle with consumption, in tandem with an ambivalent attitude in Russian society towards consumerism, may explain why the concept of lifestyle has limited theoretical clout in Russian-language sociological and other scientific literature; admittedly, this is not so much a research finding as a hypothesis that derives from the insights summarised above.

Finally, we argue against the idea that lifestyle is intrinsic only to high-modern or post-modern settings and also against the tenet that lifestyle is characteristic of urban parts of society. Instead, we argue that the Soviet modernisation project, and also current social trends (broadly conservative, but geared towards technological and infrastructural modernisation) offer rich opportunities for empirical research on how certain sensibilities emerge and come to eclipse others; how self-formation is connected with collective goals; and how individual predilections and tastes develop around, and feed back into, social imaginaries and public debates on morality.

Beyond the theoretical approach that guided the design and content of this collaborative research project, we hope that the subsequent chapters of this volume will illustratively and respectfully account for our interlocutors' own understandings of everyday life and life projects in Russia — in large cities as well as remote places of Siberia and the Far North.

14 To give but one example: the devaluation of feminism and gender-related emancipation projects, the latter being sidelined by concerns about reproduction, upbringing, and a healthy nation (see Chapter 11).

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