

For citation: *Ekonomika regiona* [Economy of Region]. — 2016. — Vol. 12, Issue 2. — pp. 451-462
 doi 10.17059/2016-2-11
 UDC 364.25

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SEARCHING FOR A NEW WAY OF THINKING SOCIETY FOR TODAY – NOOSPHERIC SOCIAL QUALITY¹

Obviously, we face an economic crisis that dominates the headlines of daily newspapers, academic journals and features as the title of TV-and-radio casts alike. And, not withstanding political differences, there is widespread consensus that the economic crisis is only the tip of an iceberg. However, there is little readiness to go beyond the inherited fundamental assumptions of a “modern industrial capitalist market society”. The article argues that all the categories are increasingly under threat. The social quality, the quality of life and the noosphere paradigm of global social development offer space for considerations that question societal developments not only on the phenomenological level. Instead, the authors ventilate gnoseological, ontological and axiological prerequisites of sustainable global social development. The noosphere paradigm is enriched with the theories of social quality and the quality of life, thus contributing to the wider and diverse debates on what can be called people’s humanistic socialism. In view of the complexity of the impending transition from the present to a future global society with people’s humanistic socialism, it is necessary to plan it thoroughly, beginning with the support of the processes and institutions that currently provide a seedbed; developing new transformational forms of the future features of global society has to go hand in hand with this. It makes sense to carry on with the conceptualization of questions bearing on the formation of noospheric social quality and its design.

Keywords: social quality, quality of life, the noospheric paradigm of global social development, state-monopoly capitalism, state socialism, people's humanistic socialism, global sustainable development

1. Social Quality instead of Post-Modernisation

Globally, experts have broadly examined the matter of social quality and organize their work in the European Foundation on Social Quality (EFSQ), the Asian Consortium for Social Quality (ACSQ) and since recently the International Association of Social Quality (IASQ). Four topics stand at the heart of the work: 1) general (global) sustainability of development; 2) human security; 3) the general well-being of stable societies; 4) democracy and justice in contemporary life; and others. Between 1999 to 2006, these topics were widely discussed in the *European Journal of Social Quality*². One of the first projects was the book *Social Quality: A Vision for Europe* published in 2001 [1]. But it had been not more than a point of departure for a wide debate and development of new theoretical considerations. The concept of social quality is based on the crucially critical point that the process of modernisation and sub-

sequent capitalization of the economy went hand in hand with the “loss of the social”, subordinating and strangulating it by a mindset that redefined the social itself—the infamous words by Margret Thatcher, denying that there is anything like society, became actually analytical true: the capitalist system was strictly and inherently reducing the social on the interaction of competing individuals, at most “helping each other” within this utilitarian-individualist mindset. Although this culminated in the recent decades, it is a pattern that finds its origins in the 19th century. Assessing the quality of the social and societal integrity in the perspective of people’s daily life stood against this “de-socialization of everything” at the core of the social quality approach. This concept determines the contours of the realm in which people can enhance their well-being and more fully discover their personal potential in being active, creative part in society. The first revision of the concept came out in 2001 [2], defining social quality now as the extent to which people are empowered to participate in their communities in ways that contribute to their well-being and individual opportunities [3; 4]. In short, the “social” is seen as a result of a dialectical interaction between the development of personalities in society and the self-real-

¹ Bobkov N. V., Bobkov V. N., Herrmann P. Text. 2016.

² Retrieved from: www.socialquality.org. (date of access: 27.03.2016) and www.Berghahnbooks.com. (date of access: 27.03.2016).

Table 1

Parameters for Evaluating Social Quality [6]

	Conditional factors	Constitutional factors	Normative factors
EMERGENCE	Opportunities and unforeseen circumstances	Processes	Orientation
FACTORS	Socio-economic security Social cohesion Social inclusion Social empowerment	Personal (human) security Social recognition Social responsiveness Personal (human) capacity	Social justice (equity) Solidarity Equal valuation Human dignity
EVALUATION	Application of indicators of social quality	Professional qualifications	Justified sound judgment

ization of individuals. The principle architectures of social quality can be outlined as follows. The attainment of a reasonable degree of social quality requires that certain conditions are met:

- socio-economic security;
- social inclusion;
- social inclusion (as possibility to live in an inclusive community);
- collective participation (as opportunity to be active and achieve personal self-realisation).

As one of the ways to assess social quality the following has been suggested [5]:

- socio-economic security—a range of adequate means (standards) related to financial resources, housing and the environment, health, education, and employment;
- social inclusion—the opportunity to participate in social, cultural, and economic life;
- social cohesion—the degree to which social relations, norms, and values are shared in a domain of trust, integrative norms and values, and social networks and identities; social empowerment—the extent to which social structures enhance the capability to interact in daily life

This is very much a summarising reflection of large-scale indicator research that had been undertaken under the aegis of the European Foundation of Social Quality between 2001 and 2005¹.

More recent publications have presented parameters for evaluating social quality that are shown in Table .

In this discussion, the theory of social quality emphasises that the human can only be understood if it is quintessentially seen under the premises of the social as burning lens, condensing and at the same time, dispersing the relational action. There is a great deal of emphasis on the meaning of social quality and on its proper indicators in contrast to the prevailing indicators associated with the concepts of social development (ESCAP),

human development (UN), human security (Japan, Thailand), quality of life (European Union), social capital (World Bank), and social harmony (China). It is increasingly made clear that the concept of social quality needs to be strongly integrated with an integrated concept of global sustainable development. Widespread sustainable development in their view results from the integration of at least four aspects: the economic, the socio-political (which differs from the vague “social aspect” considerations that are dominating in UN-debates), the cultural (cognitively and emotionally underlying positions in life), and the environmental. In this context, the theory of social quality brings up the issue of a “society with sustainable well-being”. The position stating that economic relations and social processes must necessarily be measured as dependent on the production and reproduction of life as an overall socio-economic process is well justified. The theory of social quality holds not only that economic growth that does not always bring social well-being, but also take a critical view of the indicators of social progress proposed by the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission [7; 8]. The assertion that there should be an alternative to GDP indicators is paired with a critique of the individualistic conception of quality of life that the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission took as the foundation of their indicators to measure social progress and is accompanied by an argument for different indicators for social quality. High priority is attached to the elucidations of the theory of social quality that deal with advancing social stability, social cohesion, and social integration, i.e. how to justify solutions to social problems. In this context, it is also important to emphasise that indicators are conceptualised differently. Herrmann emphasises that indicators “are not measurement instruments sui generis. Rather they are instruments for developing an understanding of complex issues and their trends. As such they need to be guided by a sound conceptual reflection of what they are looking for. For instance, we need work on securing the basic means for existence

¹ Retrieved from: <http://www.socialquality.org/projects/social-quality-indicators/> (date of access: 27.03.2016).

for human society by indicator studies, and to make actions on both aspects of reserving natural resources and self-restriction on our consumptional behaviours [9].

In a socio-philosophical sense, the theory of social quality is an antipositivist, though positive social theory. It affirms that society and not the individual is of primary meaning. This is in strict opposition to neo-liberalism, which is a normative social theory. The theory of social quality is an alternative to the neo-liberal approaches that are based on individualism and are established on alienation as driving forces of the development of society. The main thrust of the theory of social quality is to propose for current conditions new collective alternatives for development of global, national, and local societies that will make them sustainable.

Russian specialists have also contributed to the ongoing formulation of the theory of social quality and to specifying indicators for it [10, pp. 62–68; 11]. They have proposed analyzing this complex of problems in terms of a duality of components for social quality, which means considering the positive along with the negative opportunities for development of the individual and the social. This led to the concept of the “square of social quality” and investigation of a series of other issues related to this category.

In Russian publications, there has been an emphasis on the necessity for making a great many theoretical and empirical studies so that the indicators of social quality serve not only as diagnostic tools for the social realm to determine its condition, but also as analytical tools for social problems that impede the goals set forth in governmental social policy [10]. However, studies of social quality are peripheral to Russian studies of society and seem more a reaction to the emergence of this academic approach in the foreign literature.

In the ‘50s of the past century, working out the theoretical and practical aspects of quality of life took precedence abroad over studies of social quality. Nevertheless, even then this category seemed advantageous for handling the individual and subjective aspect of quality of life, i.e. through the individualistic and subject paradigm of the quality of life concept. Quite possibly, that very one-sided treatment of quality of life became the impetus to put forth a new paradigm for examining society that crystallized as “social quality”.

As opposed to the one-sided individualistic and subjective portrayal of the quality of individual and social life, “social quality” took into consideration objective and subjective portrayals

of development social processes and structures rather than individualistic ones. In this paradigm objective social conditions in daily life are considered in conjunction with the agency of personal and social structures; however, the emphasis is not on the individual but instead on social (communal) interaction.

In Russian studies, another approach was responsible for the transformation in studies of the development of social processes and structures. This approach was aimed not at demoting “quality of life” from scientific consideration, but rather at supplementing it with fresh content that would overcome the inadequacies of individualistic and subjective attributes of social and personal agency.

2. From Subjective to Objective Theories of Quality of Life

The dramatic transformations in Russia during the 1990s were to a large extent conducive to this and to a fresh conceptualization undertaken by academic research groups, among them the All-Russian Centre of Living Standards (which started operating in 1991). From the 1990s, through the first decade of this century, a great many practical and theoretical elucidations were applied to studies of the “quality of life” concept [12–15].

Quality of life portrays the maturity of the individual and of social groups and society in relation to the degree of satisfaction of their needs as determined by the conditions of daily living. The structural overview of quality of life includes: 1) the sum total of individuals and their groupings according to similar levels of development of their capacities, the conditions for their fulfillment, preferred activities and similar interests, and also 2) the sum total of social institutions supporting the daily living of individuals, different groups, and society as well as protection of their interests. The interaction of processes and structures leads to the following basic factors for the maintenance of the quality of individual and social life: 1) preservation of health and safety in daily living; 2) ideological values; 3) intellectual education; 4) culture; 5) the professional; 6) the familial and personal; 7) citizenship and society; 8) the anthropological and natural; and 9) resources and the economy. This approach describes the social aspect of “quality of life” and not an individual one.

In the most comprehensive view the quality of life is defined as the content of constructive activities of individuals, social groups, and society underlying the degree of development in their capacities and the conditions for their realization. It is the active nature of people and social groups and institutions that express their needs and interests

and also adapt the human environment to their daily living. People and their associations viewed qualitatively are the architects of social life. In any society, there are many separate individuals and groups that differ in their quality of life. Therefore, we should distinguish between individual, group, and societal quality of life. An important feature of society is the representation within it of major social groups of households that share a social structure with a uniform quality of life: either low, average, or high.

The quality of life has two sides—the objective (independent of evaluation by society) and subjective (determined by social and self-evaluation). The quality of life cannot be evaluated solely on the basis of quantitative statistical data. Evaluation of it through sociological surveys and the findings of specialists is equally necessary. In this way, the quality of life is fleshed out not only with the functional characteristics of people, their social groups, and society as a whole, but also with the characteristics of the conditions for the development and actualization of their capacities. Based on this approach, the structure of the extremely complex category of quality of life consists of the following categories: 1) quality of society (individuals, populations, separate social groups and civil society organizations, and society as a super-organism); 2) quality of working and entrepreneurial life; 3) quality of the social infrastructure; 4) quality of the environment; 5) safety in daily living; 6) level of satisfaction of society, social groups, and individuals with their lives.

The quality of society together with the quality of the external environment for its daily living is one of two fundamental components of quality of life. Quality of society encompasses what is essential for separate individuals (health, education, ideology and more), for the population (birth rate, mortality, size of the workforce and more), for families (creating, maintaining and strengthening the family as an institution; protection of rights and rearing children, etc.), and for separate social groups. The latter would include groups at risk (those afflicted with alcoholism, substance abuse and addiction, psychiatric disorders and other social illnesses), groups with restricted capacity to work (reduced employability due to age, special needs and the like), and more. What is essential is turned into an extract of general characteristics that are absent in separate parts of society, although such absence does not exclude them from the structures of which society consists.

To characterize society as a whole, one needs to structure it as a civil society as represented by its organizations (trade unions, social movements

and political parties, and also the state at various levels of its activity, and more) that are in a position to protect its diverse interests and to choose among the means for daily living and development. The individual is part of society—in this light, society is on the one hand environment to the individual, and on the other hand a relational approach requires overcoming an understanding of the relationship as a dichotomy between individual and society.

The quality of working life must be treated as an independent component of the quality of life. In many classifications, this is not done even though the outcomes and consequences of this component of the quality of life directly impact all its aspects in society.

The quality of working life is, in the first place, adequately delineated by the quality of labor—the hired laborer or the employer and their associations as they interact with the governmental regulatory system and local administration and involving their capacities, manner of manufacturing goods or producing and delivering knowledge and services. The quality of labor is expressed by the nature of employment which is a social relationship, the degree of qualification of workers, their professional, regional and national associations, the productivity of their labor, the size and social divisions among workers with respect to their employment and entrepreneurial income as compared to the cost of living, and also the amount of insurance payments that they and the institutions representing them contribute.

The quality of the work environment includes the creation of social conditions for decent work: the kinds of work (mainly physical or intellectual); opportunities in the course of work to incorporate elements of independence and creativity; opportunities to switch to a different type of work or to advance; consideration of the interests of workers, and also the safety and protection of labor. The quality of work is expressed via the characteristics that prevail in work places of different kinds of activities.

It is no accident that “quality of working life” appears most commonly in the literature in the context of managing human resources, studying social groupings of workers according to the degree and quality of their well-being, and their participation in social alliances in order to handle health issues, capacity building, and methods of improving work and job satisfaction!

The quality of social infrastructure deals with the characteristics of social services for the population. A large part of this is what is called the public sector which provides the overall conditions for

daily living. In contrast to labor, the service realm handles not material and intellectual output, but rather the organization of social processes for distribution, exchange, and consumption, including the public. In this realm quality of life describes the quality of goods and information (knowledge) already produced and the social relations governing their path to consumers.

The material base and intangible assets of the social infrastructure must offer people a variety of goods and services and access to housing, facilitate development of their capacities and inner mental resources, of employment and decent living conditions, health care and social security, of opportunities to change location or migrate and to organizing their leisure and free time.

At least four aspects of the impact of social infrastructure on quality of life must be considered: the technical aspect of the quality of social infrastructure facilities; the quality of goods and services; accessibility of these to people as determined by underlying social distribution and exchange; and the coverage of relevant groups of the population by social infrastructure benefits.

The quality of the environment includes natural and climactic conditions and ecological stability. They are linked by their influence on the quality of life via the natural and climactic components: climactic changes, flora and fauna, the atmosphere, water, soil and other components of the ecosystem. This forms the basic methodological rationale for studying them as a single component of the quality of life externally set for society, the social structure, and individuals.

Safety in daily living is one of the essential constituents of the quality of life that is set by the social environment rather than by the natural one. These problems subside if society lacks antagonistic conflicts of interest. Unquestionably, violence and crimes against persons and property that arise from social relations occur and will continue to occur. However, in a healthy society, they are at an insignificant level. Under those conditions, the security of life may be considered in the context of the quality of life of the society at large.

The level of satisfaction of society, social groups and individuals with their lives is a subjective evaluation of their situation. In this respect, this component differs from all the others and therefore, takes on an independent meaning. In the authors' view, it is necessary to keep in mind that people with a low quality of life base their self-evaluation more on the satisfaction of physical needs that are concretely measurable and do not assign great significance to the degree to which higher order needs are met. For people with a high quality of life,

self-evaluation is based primarily on the satisfaction of intellectual and particular mental (cultural) needs that are far more individual, and their environment is generally less adapted to those needs. This is the source of the incommensurable scales of self-evaluation. Rating as "good" for one person may indicate conservative demands for the quality of life, while for another, it indicates satisfaction of their loftiest expectations. For this reason, subjective individual and group self-evaluations must be used to identify exactly those specific groups of people in society and distinguish various "clusters" of quality of life.

A fully developed theory of the quality of life is based on the comparison between, first, the actual results in daily living (creativity) and in consumption and, then, the social standards promulgated for all the areas where human capabilities are used in combination with the prevailing conditions for daily living and consumption. Analogously, this territory is described in the theory of social quality as the socio-economic security of daily life. Social indicators of the quality of life come about as the result of comparisons of the actual significance of one or another indicator of the quality or level of life with the system of social standards for the lower, middle, and upper levels in order to situate that indicator on a scale of well-being that is measured in relative terms.

The authors' theory of the quality of life is centered on the exploration of social structures that have an overall quality of life and ratings of it based on the elucidation and combination of social standards [16, pp.120–146]. The examination and evaluation of social differentiation is another distinctive feature of this theory. Therefore, the theory of the quality of life just like the theory of social quality may be understood as part of the group of positive social theories that give high priority to social rather than individual driving forces for development.

In finding the interrelations between these two groups of theories, careful attention should be paid to the emphasis accorded to studying society. Studies of social quality stress the breadth of such system-wide social qualities as social justice and solidarity. Studies of the quality of life, in contrast, stress exploration of social structures and their identification and differentiation. These two ways of regarding society are intimately connected with each other. In Russia's circumstances at the early stages of the capitalist transformation, identifying qualitatively new social situations of social groups was absolutely necessary. That would be a prerequisite for setting the basic measures for strengthening social justice and cohesion.

3. The Theory of Noospheric Development of Society

The noospheric theory of the global development of society holds the ontological, gnoseological, and axiological bases that are common to both the theories of social quality and of the quality of life. Among the things held in common, we should undertake a vigorous analysis of the problems associated with enhancing the quality of life and attaining global sustainable development.

Although the term “noosphere” was introduced by Édouard Le Roy (1927) and was developed as a theological concept by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, it has a historical root in the “noology” of Plato as “science of knowledge” (about which he merely asked a question). However, the real credit for developing systematic studies of the noosphere belongs to a world-class genius, the polymath Vladimir Vernadsky (1863–1945). In the second half of the 20s century, the studies of the noosphere were further developed in the USSR, and then in Russia where an Academy of Noospheric Studies was established [17]. Noosphere (from the Greek nous for reason and shpaira for sphere or globe) is a concept denoting a new condition (or quality) in the biosphere of the earth (“the membrane of life” or the “system of life” on earth) in which collective human consciousness—the social intellect—begins to operate as the mediator of social and natural relationships and direct their evolution according to the laws and limitations of homeostatic mechanisms such as the law of harmony of the biosphere and planet Earth as superorganisms (organic mega-systems) [18].

In the mid-1990s, the third (modern) cycle of the Russian noospheric academic studies began, and they continue right up to the present day. Its core objective is the systematic elaboration of the work of Vernadsky and his followers. We will highlight just two important avenues of thought in the current course of development of noospheric studies in Russia. The first is connected with the establishment of the multidisciplinary theoretical school of noospherism [20. Subetto, 2001] based on the imperative for future noospheric genesis in a form directed by socio-natural evolution based on the social intellect and educational society embodied in the Manifesto of Noospheric Socialism [19]. The second is connected with articulating the organizational and legal bases for regulating the movement of humanity to a society of noospheric harmony embodied in the Noospheric constitution for Mankind [20].

The key ideas of the noospheric paradigm of the global development of society are: 1) integrating the human collective and the social intellect

into the homeostatic mechanism for nature and for managing the development of humanity according to the laws of the universe; 2) managing human activity according to the rules of cooperation directed toward the realization of humanistic goals in global society on our planet; 3) anticipatory development of mankind and the formation of a global social intellect and educational society aimed at the social and natural evolution of earth that will multiply the creative powers of humanity and escort it out of its confines and into the universe [21; 22].

In the noospheric paradigm of development, the scientific idea of mankind has a biological base. It is intelligence that has an origin that is neither divine nor of any sort that is unknown to mankind. The roots of human intelligence are in the biosphere, in its living substance. In the noosphere, intelligence is nothing mysterious. There is no “invisible hand” or “invisible soul”. The noospheric paradigm of global development leads us to consider how intelligent mankind and the intelligences of the cosmos will join forces to reform the guidance of the global society of the universe in accordance with the demands of the laws governing the function and development of the biosphere, the planet Earth, and the entire universe; this will be possible because of the anticipatory development of noospheric consciousness and the resource and informational base that it requires.

However, noospheric intelligence is not just any sort of intelligence belonging to mankind. It is a special type of human intelligence as a result of mankind’s awareness of its unity, its oneness with nature, the planet Earth and the cosmos, and it will bring about spiritual intelligence, enlightened human goals, and ecological intelligence, i.e. intelligence aimed at the preservation of nature. Only this sort of intelligence is noospheric and capable of perfecting itself in the name of saving the life of the biosphere on earth and intelligence in the cosmos. It develops in anticipation of the growing complexity of society and of the habitable environment of the earth’s residents, and this means that it has the capability to govern these. Noospheric intelligence creates a suitable environment for its daily living with suitable technological, informational, ecological, and resource potential along with other kinds. This intelligence augments the trend toward unity of the social mind of earth’s residents with the goal of creating noospheric humanistic socialism in global society [19].

Alongside, noospheric intelligence in any society, there is unenlightened intelligence and also intelligence that consciously strives to direct so-

cial development toward false goals. In contemporary Russia, there has been a marked degradation of mass consciousness because of the disruption of culture, education, and science. This is manifested as deterioration of the spiritual and ethical foundations that bind our society and as a weakening of general education and professional competence, and also as a rushed expansion of religious consciousness based on blind faith. The destructive consciousness of the more enlightened portion of society relies on market fundamentalism and neo-liberalism and consciously tears down Russian statehood and social self-governance in order to construct an environment suitable for realizing the egoistic interests of the social group of financiers and oligarchs.

Noospheric Intelligence on Earth is developing in a struggle against primitive intelligence (the unenlightened and blindly religious) and against the perverse intelligence of individualism (the “elite intelligence” of society with its market fundamentalism) that is based on soullessness and the supremacy of private property and egoistic interests. These kinds of intelligence currently dominate on our planet, and in Russia, they are animated by indifference, competitiveness, and violence.

The evolution of the noospheric social intelligence is proceeding gradually in the process of becoming aware of problems in the sustainability of global society on earth and then solving them. All processes of development in local societies and nation states and of nature and climate on planet Earth in their interactions with the universe contribute objectively to broadening the reach of noospheric intelligence. The evolution of the noospheric intelligence of future global society is now accelerating due to the marked increase in the complexity of social communications and the mutually supporting development of mankind, planet Earth, and the cosmos.

The Russian noospheric school of thought regards the quality of life as both a cosmic and a planetary phenomenon, as a systematic unification of the spiritual, intellectual, material, socio-cultural, ecological and demographic components of human life on planet Earth.¹ It encompasses the individual as well as the collective (social) quality of life, and it also deals with the multiplicity of mankind’s needs and its potential for multi-faceted, harmonious, creative development.

Today, sociologists, political analysts, economists, and philosophers are becoming more and more aware that the quality of life as a goal rather

than the productivity of labor in society (although that had, has, and will have significance for historical development) will determine the viability of socialism as a socio-economic configuration that will replace the capitalistic one.

The quality of life and its ramifications—the quality of the competing systems at hand for managing human resources becomes a key element of the in the competition between economic systems and businesses. The noospheric-socialistic imperative—a law that anticipates a growth in the quality of mankind, the quality of pedagogic systems in society and of social intellect—illuminates even more the meaning of ascending replication of quality of life [21, pp. 46–58; 22].

Processes in the evolution of future global society arise from the contradictory interactions of supra-national and national components in global society. On the one hand, the formation of noospheric society on Earth inevitably requires the unification of the peoples on our planet and their direct interaction in supra-national governance. On the other hand, in order to avoid catastrophes for mankind, its self-destruction, and the consequences of domination of the earth by unenlightened and egoistic intelligence, the creation of conditions that hasten the development of noospheric intelligence takes on great significance. Progressive mankind must rally around the education of national governments in order to nurture the formation of noospheric intelligence and speed the process of its evolution across our whole planet.

Russia—with its rich history, its great communal traditions, its collectivism, spirituality, and unique experience in building socialism in the 20th century—definitely has a large role to play in consolidating noospheric planetary intelligence. The formation of noospheric consciousness in our country now has great significance. Otherwise, we may pass the point of no return. Unenlightened and egoistic human intelligence has the power to “blow up” Russian society, and its unsustainability may in certain circumstances have catastrophic manifestations.

Those with scientific awareness of noospheric intelligence and the noospheric academies are called on to help Russians make out the way to move from a capitalistic Russia to a society with a higher social quality based on the noospheric paradigm of development—the communal humanistic socialist global society of the future. Despite all of its contradictory, mostly tragic transformations from the 1990s through the first decade of this century that facilitated the unsuccessful transformations to market capitalism and brought about

¹ Human beings at present know very little about the more highly organized life beyond Earth.

oligarchic capitalism, Russia retains the potential to overcome them and may yet become one of the driving forces for that better society.

The Russian noospheric school of thought is firmly dedicated to a future social structure with a cosmic-planetary embodiment. This is its revolutionary significance, which far outstrips the status of any current society. The noospheric paradigm of global development should be regarded as indicating the definitive strategic compass points for social transformations and the means for overcoming social contradictions as yet unresolved.

In this context, we would like to call to mind the well-known idea that there is nothing more practical than a good theory. The overall conclusion is that the noospheric paradigm of global development is well-suited to combine the theory of social quality and the theory of quality life, enrich their content, and bring about the radical transformation and sustainable development of social systems.

It is from this perspective that we will examine the sustainability of social systems without claiming to provide an exhaustive or full description of their properties or the characteristics of social quality.

4. From Concepts – to a Global Sustainable Social System

State monopolistic capitalism and socialism are based on diametrically opposite criteria of social quality and quality of life. The above criteria are considered in detail in this section of the work.

State – Monopolistic Capitalism

The basic components of state-monopolistic capitalism are material and financial progress, individualistic consumption and material egoism facilitated by the dominance of false values. Absolute priority of monetary over human considerations, the primacy of personal enrichment and manipulation of consciousness on a monetary basis are characteristic for the society of state-monopolistic capitalism.

The social model of state-monopolistic capitalism proclaims egoistic nature of a human being and individualistic conception of the quality of life. Ever-increasing social stratification resulting from global capitalisation and expropriation of basic resources by countries of the “golden billion” and inequality in the quality of life are inherent to capitalism today.

The concept of the so-called personal freedom has been widely spread to the detriment of social justice in the present-day capitalist countries. The destruction of the environment caused by capitalist corporations striving for the maxi-

mum profits in the spheres of investment of capital is inevitably leading to the ecological catastrophe of humanity. Excessive faith in market forces in the economy and asymmetrical distributing resources in favour of capital and bureaucracy are dominant in the countries of the present – day capitalism.

State-monopolistic capitalism is based on cosmopolitan ideals ignoring national identity. Capitalism today is carrying out a policy of solving all problems by military force in its own interests.

State Socialism

Real socialism in the countries of the Socialist commonwealth before the 1990s was state socialism with the centrally – planned economy. Central planning provided the highest results in most sectors of the national economy of the socialist countries. However, underestimating the potential reserves of market regulating in different spheres of national economy caused the shortage of consumer goods and services.

Knowledge, labour and creation were the most important values of real socialism. However, the real socialism in question, due to the internal and outer reasons, did not manage to reach a higher rate of productivity than that of the still existing state monopolistic capitalism. Proper economic incentives had not been provided. Moreover, there had been levelling distribution of income. The living standards of the majority of the population were insufficient.

Utilizing backward technologies in a number of branches of the national economy as well as the state policy proclaiming dominance over nature had been inflicting great damage to the environment. Real socialism did not secure the harmonic progress of national economy without doing damage to the environment too.

The dominance of one party in the country's political life, as well as its attitude to religion, lack of “openness” of socialist society to a great extent limited the opportunities of realizing potential advantages of the society over the capitalist one.

The political confrontation of the socio-economic system, corrosion of public consciousness under the influence of the inner problems and the higher standards of living in the developed capitalist countries, as well as betrayal of the political leaders in the socialist countries, had led to the collapse of the world socialist system.

People's Humanistic Socialism

We suppose that it is possible to imagine people's human socialism as a hypothetical socio-economic system in the foretold future. The antagonistic contradictions of the present stage of state – monopolistic capitalism will inevita-

bly lead to the people's humanistic socialism in question.

People's humanistic socialism presumes the leading role of cultural progress compared to the material one, self-limitation of material overconsumption, priority of knowledge, labour and creativity as the basis of life in particular. This is a society with such immanent qualities as dominant public interests, and real people's democracy, social responsibility, unity and solidarity of the citizens in realizing progressive public development are characteristic for the people's humanistic socialism. This is a society of high prosperity and just distributing of public welfare. The development of the key sector of the national economy is under public control in such a society.

People's humanistic socialism provides sustainable socioeconomic development, sociocultural harmony and security of humanity. That is a society of controlled socio-natural evolution. The mutual cooperation of the states of people's humanistic socialism is based on non-using military forces in solving problems.

We think that people's humanistic socialism could be represented as a global sustainable social stem.

The ways of evolutionary transforming the present-day state-monopolistic capitalism into people's humanistic socialism are considered in the next section of this work.

5. One World allowing for the Difference of Life

The transition from capitalism in Russia to people's humanistic socialist must have an evolutionary character, which is possible in accordance with the following postulates.

The transition to a people's humanistic socialism must be the result of introducing reforms, i.e. the sequential relaxation of restrictions and the cultivation of new institutions [23]. Because Russia is firmly in the grip of state-monopolistic capitalism, reforms may occupy a lengthy period.

People's humanistic socialism, understood as developmental process, will actualize the noospheric paradigm of global development supported by a Vernadsky-style revolution in the scientific ideology which is a source for the prerequisites of higher social quality. Processuality and relationality are core moments of this movement, and it is crucial to see this in the context of traditional borders (as those defining national states, maintaining classes, etc.) becoming obsolete and moreover counterproductive. The future society will have a high social quality that will promote an ever-advancing development of human intellect

and a well-managed social and natural evolution as the only model of sustainable development in a noospheric format. The elaboration of this ambition is offered in the ideas of the Russian Cosmists and the noospheric school of thought in Russia, in the theory of social quality, and in other progressive theories of social development.

The formation of people's humanistic socialism will make use of: the experience of installing socialism in the USSR and other countries in the socialist camp in the 20th century with due recognition of their mistakes and deviations; the experience of socialist China in the 20th and 21st centuries; the experience from Cuba and also the more recent far-reaching changes in several Latin-American countries; and the reforms carried out in countries where the ruling powers included or still include social-democratic, socialist, or workers' parties.

A main condition for the formation and consolidation of the noospheric precursors of future society is the comparison of the strategies explored in different countries, a subsequent vetting and modification of transplants (adoption of proven social institutions), and formulation of new constructs (new social institutions), along with transplanting and construction of new international institutions. The choice of the sequence in which to introduce transitional institutions and methods for controlling their transformation, the vetting of effective technologies for transplantation and construction, and also the reconciliation of the intrinsic benefits with the intrinsic costs will be one of the most difficult tasks in managing the transition via reforms from capitalism to the people's humanistic socialistic global society.

The future is born in the present. This means that seeds of future society exist here and now. We simply have to know how to recognize them and support their growth—institutionally, we may look at the UN and their institutions (the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, regional economic commissions [for example, the UN Economic Commission for Europe], the UN Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], the United Nations Industrial Development Organization [UNIDO], the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN [FAO], UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], the World Health Organization [WHO], the World Meteorological Organization [WMO], the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development [IBRD], the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA], the UN Environmental

Programme [UNEP], and others); international advisory panels (the Group of Twenty, the European Economic Commission, and others); international agreements and organizations for preservation of the environment (the Kyoto Protocol, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources [IUCN], and others); collective forms of ownership (cooperatives, partnerships, joint stock companies, business associations, collective people's enterprises, etc.); public property; "green" economy; international universities; state and independent scientific academies, networks of scientific organizations, etc. However, at the very core of the development stands the development of the productive forces, reaching a stage that allows and asks for an entirely new accumulation regime.

Questions about the design of a future society with people's humanistic socialism are becoming extremely serious. It is vital to outline the contours of concrete processes and institutions whose formation and development will serve to transform modern societies, Russia's among them, toward a well-managed social and natural evolution of future society on Earth.

Importantly, further thinking needs also take into account the global issue and within this context, it has to look deeper into the issues of the real and possible meaning of globalisation in the presented perspectives

6. Conclusions

1. Theories of sustainable development using state-capitalistic and oligarchic-elitist paradigms cannot be theoretically justified. The challenge does not emerge (only) from moral sentiments but has to be recognised as one that reflects the fact that development is according to the given standards potentially hazardous, undermining its own existence, but also ignoring the huge but dormant (or destructively used) potential for a fundamentally different accumulation regime. Importantly, the new development of the productive gives not least raise to a plethora of "non-material potentials of socio-human development and consolidation.

2. The formulation and development in the 1990s of the theories of social quality, the quality of life and the noospheric paradigms of the global development of society, though (in very different ways) fundamentally critical about the current state of developments (from the local to the global, and their interactions) are at the very same time geared to developing a "real-utopian vision" that enables a more complete and deeper characterization of potentials for the future.

3. The theories of social quality, the quality of life and noospherism have developed and continue to develop with a considerable degree of independence in their respective theoretical and methodological bases, even though they study one and the same object—the individual and society interacting under the conditions of daily living—and have in common a range of primary gnosological, ontological and axiological prerequisites. This lack of coordination in the theoretical conceptualisation of the path to the transformation of contemporary societies is hindering the complex characterisation of the development processes and structures using a uniform theoretical and methodological foundation.

4. The integration and convergence of the theoretical and methodological foundations of the theories of social quality, the quality of life and noospherism are essential to permit a deeper and fully articulated analysis of future social systems and, in light of this, to cultivate their sustainable development. The crucial point in this respect will be the establishment of an epistemological understanding of the actual link between local and global. Previously this had been given by the reference to the human being as generalised existence, in abstract ways considered to be a social being—this was sufficient to the extent to which the abstraction could be captured by the limited scope in terms of space and time. However, with the increasing reach we are not only dealing with an increasing "complexity"; instead, we face the need of a fundamental change of the frame of reference. Social science had been (and still is) to heavily coined by the notion of scarcity and the need of overcoming it. Though scarcity is, of course, still a major problem in large parts of the world and for many groups, we find at the very same time an overaccumulation of potentials that can give raise to new utopias.

5. In view of the complexity of the impending transition from the present to a future global society with people's humanistic socialism, it is necessary to plan it thoroughly, beginning with the support of the processes and institutions that currently provide a seedbed; developing new transformational forms of the future features of global society has to go hand in hand with this.

Will human intelligence be able to take advantage of the theories considered here to the benefit of human civilization? Or will the tsunami of greed and egoism visit more hardships upon us before the earthly vessel, with great losses in consequence of the unalterable laws of nature, can put us on a course toward global sustainable development in a society with communal humanis-

tic socialism—a society of noospheric harmony? Awareness and acceptance of the basic points of reckoning and priorities of noospheric social quality, in the long run, are one of the fundamental ideological conditions that underlie the national security and well-being of Russians. Of course, in the present, we may only make our statements about the future in a hypothetical mode. A full understanding of it will arrive only by degrees in the process of development.

The authors have put only forth some reflections and understand that they are part of a dialog about extremely difficult tasks and that there are points in their analysis that are speculative, some that are not completely worked through, and perhaps some that go astray. It makes sense to carry on with the conceptualization of questions bearing on the formation of noospheric social quality and its design.

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