

DOWNSHIFTING AS ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE PRACTICES AND RESULT OF INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTARY LIFE STRATEGIES: CASE OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY

Abstract. This article presents case-study results of downshifting lifestyle practices in Ukraine (based on materials of in-depth interviews). Author interprets downshifting in coordinates of rational choice theory as lifestyle practices, resulting in individual voluntary life strategies. Author distinguishes two basic types – “partial” and “full” downshifting. Author analyzes downshifting practices, based on reconsideration (revision) of values, which expressed in terms of income reduction, ratio between working and free time, change of consumption patterns and social contacts, etc. Finally, it is shown (results of the case-study show) that downshifting is caused by change of values and main individual reasons for it involve life / job dissatisfaction, lack of free time and desire to be more independent.

Keywords: alternative lifestyle practices, lifestyle practices, voluntary mobility, downshifting, life strategies, case study, change of values, individual rationality

Introduction

Contemporary society is characterized by deep differentiation and formation of new value-normative order that promotes the emergence of innovative social practices. In particular, during last few decades, the emergence of practices took place owing to specific life strategies which are voluntary life changes resulting in people who consciously refuse from high income, responsibility, social status and radically change structure of their consumption. Instead, they choose quiet low-paid work, flexible schedule or refusal from employment at all, devoting themselves to self-development, communication with their close people and nature. In sociological literature these lifestyle practices are designated by the term “downshifting”, also other terms are used, such as “voluntary simplicity”, “simple living”, “sea change” and “slow life”. Western countries have already mentioned that trends and

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spread of such lifestyles are also topical for Eastern European societies, including Ukrainian.

A number of people, involved in such practices, increase; a number of mentions of this phenomenon in mass media also increase – this tendency becomes noticeable, widespread and has a lot of social consequences. Results of numerous sociological studies that have been conducted in different countries, show up the impact of alternative lifestyles, and in particular of downshifting, on the structure of employment, education and family institutions, etc. It is pointed to a possible labor force outflow from the working population; specific “brain drain” of people with diplomas who do not have a professional job; transformation of family institution – in particular, changes in reproduction and education of new generation. The UN Human Development Report 2013 emphasized the importance of inquiry the latest social manifestations and their consideration in the improvement of social policy to increase the quality of life and enhance social cohesion. It actualizes studying of downshifting and its forms.

Theoretical background

Such social manifestations have already come in view of Western scientific thought. Specifically, theoretical and empirical experience of downshifting research is represented by Western European, American, Australian and New Zealand researchers: A. Etzioni (1998); P. Tan (2000); C. Hamilton (2003); M. Nelson (2003); N. Levy (2005); J. Schor (2007); R. S. Hampton (2008); M. Zeestraten (2008); J. Schreurs (2010) and others. However, this perspective of the sociology remains underdeveloped in Eastern Europe, though very important.

Social science interprets downshifting with the help of different theoretical approaches. For example, the theory of social mobility considers downshifting as a voluntary downward social mobility; sociology of social movements, as an alternative social movement within the paradigm of identity; concept of lifestyles, as alternative lifestyle practices, etc. However, in view of novelty and diversity of current conceptualizations of downshifting social manifestations haven't given a complete picture of the phenomenon yet. The most promising, in our opinion, is the interpretation of downshifting as individual lifestyle practices, which are alternative to lifestyles, formed within the dominant values of society. This interpretation takes into account the overall cultural context of the phenomenon, its values and status displays, voluntary and individual character of these practices.

The study of lifestyles has a long history beginning with classic sociology to P. Bourdieu (1987); H.- P. Muller (1992); Z. Bauman (2000); J. Baudrillard (2006). Important aspects related to the emergence of alternative lifestyles,

such as component of values, are represented in the works of R. Inglehart (2005); E. Noelle-Neumann (2001); H. Klages (2006). Change of values provokes the emergence of new lifestyles and corresponding practices, and a conscious choice of values encourages individuals to transform their lifestyle. General problems of lifestyles and their certain aspects have a long tradition in sociology, but analysis of the specialized scientific literature demonstrates that the issue of alternative lifestyles and downshifting has not been sufficiently studied.

Change of values is a prerequisite for designing alternative lifestyle practices. Previous value-normative system is destroying and a new order is creating, new lifestyle practices are forming on the basis of mentioned changes. This change is implemented by reducing of dominant values importance and shifting to alternative values which highlight personal achievement, free time, independence and autonomy. Dominant lifestyle practices are supplemented or replaced by alternative lifestyle practices. It allows setting priorities between career, professional implementation and high-income, on the one hand, and personal comfort, values of relationships and communication, on the other. Alternativeness of these practices is defined by alternative values.

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We analyse downshifting as alternative lifestyle practices, resulting in voluntary individual life strategy in terms of rational choice theory, represented by J. Elster (1986); J. Coleman (1992); T. Fararo (1992) and others. Using this approach, attention is focused on social determinants, which define the strategy of individual as an active actor. The main aim for individuals is their own conscious preferences implementation. According to a new value-normative order an actor voluntarily chooses the most appropriate individual life strategy, which is an individual rationality manifestation. Voluntary strategies explanation of life change within rational choice theory connects individual behaviour with subjective preferences, but not with objective conditions and opportunities. Rationality of life strategies is not always one-sided in the context of regular lifestyle practices. Extending of the concept of rationality allows giving more flexible interpretation of social practices. Life strategy choice is a response to social challenges and individual rationalizes it with regard to subjective and flexible rationality. Such individual strategies at the level of lifestyles are objectified to real alternative practices.

In this context, downshifting helps to find an optimal balance between work and leisure, to focus on life goals, self-realization and building relationships instead of overwhelming desire of economic success (Juniu, 2000). One of the most important aspect of downshifting is a position of conscious consumer and active practice of alternative forms of consumption. Downshifting consumption involves buying only necessary goods instead of

buying for personal pleasure, it is a way to focus on quality of consumption rather than quantity (Nelson et al., 2003). These lifestyle practices and –associated with them loss of prestige, career, power and income – are characterized by the transition to consumer models distinguishing from the dominant in contemporary society. Adherence to such practices is the result of a long personal reflection and values system transformation, which occurs in the direction from materialist to post-materialist values (in accordance with the terminology of R. Inglehart). Changes in value orientations determine shifts in relation to social institutions, individual achievements, views on effectiveness and independence of the individual (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Lifestyles, formed on the basis of materialist values, are replaced by alternative lifestyle practices that focus on redefining of consumption patterns. Alternative lifestyles allow individuals to set new priorities between work, professional development and high-income, on the one hand, and personal comfort, values of kinship and communication, on the other.

New lifestyle practices, based on refusal from economic benefits and from materialist values (Etzioni, 1998) lead to changes in culture of consumption. Significant changes in consumption patterns of individuals have taken place since their incomes not only change its source or conditions of obtaining, but also reduce. Values, on which alternative lifestyles are based, differ from values that consumer society imposes on a human. Self-realization, full and conscious life, value of family and friendship, healthy lifestyle, environmental care come out on top.

A transition to alternative lifestyles is due to voluntary mobility. We are considering conscious changes of daily practices, which based on values rethinking. Such changes were formed during last few decades and continue forming in the variety of its manifestations. Downshifting is voluntary long-term lifestyle changes, which are based on income reducing. It is determined by the “work – life” ratio and can be implemented in several ways (Hamilton, 2003). Changes in lifestyle are primarily associated with significant changes in employment sphere, consequently types of changes in lifestyle structure practices closely connect with transformations in professional and employment activity. We distinguish two main forms of such lifestyle practices.

The first form is “partial” downshifting that suggests incomplete shift of habitual lifestyle. It is presented by reduction of working hours, more flexible work schedule, transition to freelance, etc. Freelance is becoming increasingly popular strategy of transition to alternative lifestyle practices of downshifting in contemporary society. However, it becomes above-mentioned strategy only in case of transition from full time work to freelance with consequent reduction of incomes and corresponding increase of free time and work schedule flexibility. This enables to form new lifestyle, where the ratio of working and free time matches downshifting values, without

significant loss of prior incomes. The second form is “full” downshifting that implies radical changes of lifestyle and consumption patterns: end of career, changing of employment and residence. The following variations lead to moving on from city to countryside or to country with lower living costs.

Research methodology and data analysis

The objective of this article is empirical identification of alternative lifestyle practices of downshifting as voluntary life strategies changes in Ukrainian society. The article presents case-study results of Ukrainian “partial” and “full” downshifters: 1) freelancers, who have switched from full-time over to freelance; and 2) resettlers, who have radically changed their lifestyle by moving on from city to village. Both of these groups implemented voluntary strategies of changes in connection with value revision.

Research on alternative lifestyle practices of downshifting was done by using qualitative methods. This is due to the specific of empirical observations. We studied individual aspects of social practices and real life experiences (life stories) under specific circumstances. It actualizes feasibility of application of qualitative research methods. Case-study was used as a research strategy. It is study of individual communities and traditional strategy of qualitative research to explore unique object.

Fieldworks were conducted in two stages. The first stage was implemented over a period of September–November 2013. There were 24 in-depth interviews conducted with “partial” downshifters (18 in Kyiv, 2 in Lviv, 2 in Odesa, 2 in Kharkiv). The second stage was implemented during April–May 2014. There were 16 in-depth interviews conducted with “full” downshifters, who moved from cities to villages in Kyiv, Cherkasy, Odesa, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk, Poltava, Chernihiv, Zakarpattia and Ivano-Frankivsk regions.

We conducted 40 semi-structured keynote interviews, which were dedicated to lifestyle change of respondents. We selected respondents, who implemented above-described transition resulting in conscious decision, but not in external objective reasons (such as their own illness or illness of relatives, dismissal from work, lack of professional implementation, maternity leave, etc.). Such transition had to be connected with reduce of incomes, changes of working and free time ratio, consumption patterns, social environment, etc.

Values were measured using alternatives, proposed in the monitoring of Institute of Sociology NAS of Ukraine in 2010. A typology of multiple worlds by L. Boltanski and L. Thévenot (1999) was used as basis for operationalization of values. Respondents were asked to choose the most relevant to them values “before” and “after” the change of lifestyle from the list below:

- family welfare, children;
- peace of mind, unity with nature;
- opportunity to live for their own pleasure;
- public acknowledgment of achievements;
- reaching career heights;
- material wealth;
- implementation of creative ideas;
- great love;
- to be modern, to use new technologies;
- democratic development of society;
- social justice, civil consensus.

Regarding to sample size, it should be noted, that qualitative research is goal-oriented and therefore the size of the sample depends primarily on purpose of research and resources. "Snowball" method was used for respondents recruiting, the first respondent with the specified criteria recommended following respondents and so on. The number of interviews was due to the principle of "theoretical saturation".

The empirical data was recorded into transcripts, and the procedure of analytical text description was made. This procedure included several stages: the initial reading of the text, the second reading of the text, and the final reading of the text. During the initial reading, we formed general understanding of the text and designed the initial codes. Also at this stage, we made analytical memo(s), which contained research comment on coding, on text content, etc. Memo(s) were used and supplemented during the work with each transcript, and were special tools for further data analysis. During the second reading, we made "thick description" of the text (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). This procedure involved the text dividing into the semantic units and its detailed description in the "language of the respondents". This description didn't contain research comments and it was very specific. At the stage of final text reading we designed the final codes, wrote comments on the text (analytical memo(s)) and rejected all unnecessary parts of the text. Analytical description of the text enabled to organize encoded text and to prepare it for further analysis.

The direct data analysis was made by categorization of already pre-structured text. The study was conducted by semi-structured interview method, accordingly categories were determined with the help of thematic blocks guide. And subcategories were formulated on the basis of categories. The next step of the analysis was provided by association of subcategories to clusters – it helped to identify the existing links between categories.

In this study, we used an illustrative method of qualitative data analyzing (Bonnell, 1980; Skocpol, 1984). The basis of this method is to use empirical

data to illustrate and reinforce theoretical model of interpretation of a particular social object. In addition to illustrative method the researcher uses theory to explain specific historical or social situation; and to organize data according to the previous theory. The theoretical model provides so-called “open boxes” and empirical data is gathered to complete these “boxes” and to confirm or disprove the theory. There are two types of illustrative method: the first shows how the theoretical model explains (or doesn’t explain) special cases; the second is a model of parallel demonstration of special cases which can be explained by this theory. We have used the first type of illustrative analysis. Results of our study were empirical illustration of downshifting in Ukrainian society. For evaluation of the qualitative data, we used the criteria proposed by W. Trochim (1999). These criteria are confirmability, dependability, credibility and transferability.

Research results

Based on results of this research, the following social determinants and characteristics of “partial” and “full” downshifting as alternative lifestyle practices can be distinguished.

Social portrait

Social portrait of “partial” and “full” downshifters differs for several socio-demographic indicators. “Partial” downshifters are usually younger – 24–35 years old and usually they are not married; sometimes they have partners, but have no children. At the same time “full” downshifters are more mature – they are 29–44 years old, they are married and usually have at least one child. As a rule, level of education for “partial” and “full” is high – all downshifters, who participated in our study were people with higher education. The majority of respondents were educated at universities in Kyiv (or other big cities in Ukraine, for example, Kharkiv, Lviv, Odesa, etc.) and had work experience from 4 to 15 years occupying average and relatively high positions in various commercial companies. *“I graduated from Institute of Journalism at Shevchenko University. And I started working at my second year of studying I had occupational work approximately during eight years – a bit on the radio, on TV a little”* (female, 31 years old, journalist, Kyiv, freelancer). *“I graduated from Kharkiv National University, and then moved on to Kiev and worked as a journalist”* (female, 32 years old, journalist, Chernigiv region, resettler). Referring to the research data of C. Hamilton (2003; 2004) in Australia and UK, M. Zeestraten (2008) in New Zealand, J. Schreurs (2010) in Netherlands, it can be concluded that the level of education and other indicators of social profile for Ukrainian downshifters are generally similar to such indicators in other countries.

Life before lifestyle change

Evaluating their financial situation “before” and “after” lifestyle change, respondents noted a decrease of incomes and consequently worsening of financial situation both in case of transition to freelancing and moving on from the city to the village. “I really have less money, but still I spend less time working” (male, 26 years old, translator, Lviv, freelancer). *“Generally speaking, now I have less. Now our incomes are a half of that we had earlier”* (female, 29 years, copywriter, Odesa region, resettler).

At the same time the level of overall satisfaction with life since both the transition to freelance and having moved on to the village has increased significantly. *“It is even incomparable, I guess. Now I’m much more satisfied with everything, I feel like a different person”* (female, 27 years old, designer, Kharkiv, freelancer). *“Now I’m more than happy ... Well, I’m happy that I really spend much time with my husband and children and I see him at home”* (female, 35 years old, bank clerk, Dnipropetrovsk region, resettler).

Comparison of the most urgent values “before” and “after” lifestyle change shows up declining of values importance, associated with professional and career growth, material wealth and prestige, namely values of “public acknowledgment of achievements”, “opportunity to live for their own pleasure”, “reaching career heights” and “material wealth”. At the same time, “after” lifestyle change more updated declaration of family values, personal relationships and peace of mind values is observed, namely – “family welfare, children”, “great love” and “peace of mind, unity with nature”.

For example, freelancers emphasize on the reduction of the financial incentive priority. Money reward recedes to the last place, giving the top place to work and life enjoyment in general. One of trends is the willingness to “sacrifice” profitable projects to interest / curiosity / pleasure. “It is very important – work has to be interesting. If it is interesting, I can work for less money” (female, 31 years old, researcher, Kyiv, freelancer). “Partial” downshifters become involved in charitable or volunteer activities after change of lifestyle. *“Blagofest is a charity festival, where sweets and pastries are sold, and everything goes to charity, to children. And I’m involved, and I will sell my pastries”* (female, 26 years old, journalist, Kyiv, freelancer).

Reasons for lifestyle practices change

Main reasons for implementation voluntary strategies of changes are associated with general dissatisfaction with life, work, etc. Key social determinants are lack of free time for their selves, for family and desire for being more independent. “Partial” downshifters also don’t want to work under the supervision. *“I did not like the format of the work. Because I could not*

manage my time ... In the evening I came home tired, in a terrible mood, cursed with my husband, cursed with parents. In general, everything was sad" (female, 25 years old, PR-manager, Kyiv, freelancer). "I earned a lot, but I was at work all the time. I simply had no time to spend money" (female, 25 years old, programmer, Odesa, freelancer). "Full" downshifters noted a desire for healthier and more environmentally friendly lifestyle. "It is completely different tempo, completely different life. Being in Kiev for 15 minutes I got a headache, and now I come from the village to Uzhgorod and it is so noise, we still have a very noisy city" (male, 44 years old, artist, Zakarpattia region, resettler). In general we can say that independence of actions is one of the most important values for downshifters.

Change of lifestyle practices for "partial" and "full" downshifters are accompanied by fear of change. It is fear of losing stability in general and, in particular, fear of losing income stability. One strategy aims to neutralize these fears, associated with loss of stability and insecurity, is the strategy of "reassurance". "Instability of the financial flow. Insecurity. What will I do if one wants to "buy" my services?" (female, 27 years old, photographer, Kyiv, freelancer). "Before we paid for our house, we were disturbed by a thought: Can we do it or not?. And then calmed down" (male, 41 years old, private businessman, Cherkasy region, resettler). This strategy is intended for a certain way to protect from risks, which are actualized by lifestyle change. So called "airbag" is created as a result of this strategy, which aims to defend a person in case of any unexpected situations. Examples could be the following as voluntary health insurance (in Ukraine medical insurance is not obligatory), or presence of "money for rainy day" etc.

Mechanisms of lifestyle change and adaptation

One of the main aspects of the transition to downshifting lifestyle practices in this study is consciousness of decision. This decision making is usually preceded by long preparation and complete lack of spontaneity, it is along and careful process. "It was a conscious decision. I thought about this act, I was going to commit it" (male, 24 years old, programmer, Kyiv, freelancer). "It was a conscious decision; my wife told me she would consciously move on to the cottage in the countryside" (male, 41 years old, private businessman, Kyiv region, resettler).

In this case "partial" downshifting is proceeded in respect of change of professional activity regime. Main preparatory practice is an advanced search of clients or employers for activity in working area of freelancing. In this context it is possible to change only the work format (from full-time to freelance), or to make radical change of work sphere (from copywriter to designer). Visiting trainings/seminars is one of useful practices, which

optimizes the transition to freelancing. *"I thought that my career and life was over. I was in panic, but I came to training in web design and freelancing"* (female, 29 years old, web-designer, Kyiv, freelancer).

In situation of transition to "full" downshifting (which primarily consists of moving from the city to the countryside) the main preparatory practice is to find a new place of residence, its initial preparing, and also activities of transition preparing, etc. *"We were looking for houses in this area, we were visiting different villages ... We even went to the settlements"* (female, 34 years old, journalist, Kherson region, resettler).

If we talk about adaptation and related difficulties, it should be mentioned, that the main problem for freelancers is self-organization, which is the reverse side of the desire to be more independent. Difficulties in forming their own work schedule, difficulties of workplace organization, etc. are grouped around the problem of self-organization. *"My workplace was not equipped very well, it was inconvenient to work. I had no office chair, and I sat on a stool with my laptop"* (female, 26 years old, journalist, Kyiv, freelancer).

One of solutions, applied by "partial" downshifters in their everyday practices, is an individual use of public workplace or participation in co-working. *"It is very stimulating when people work near you. I went to coworking space "Start-up Ukraine". I spent a good time there and I worked, and worked, and realized that tomorrow I will come back again"* (male, 27 years old, market manager, Kyiv, freelancer). These strategies are mechanisms for social inclusion and they often are dictated by lack of permanent (and earlier habitual) contact with colleagues – lack of "working" communication and consultation, isolation from the workflow.

The hardest adaptation difficulties for "full" downshifters are associated primarily with improvement of new residence. Also they have to overcome unusual for urban resident household difficulties. *"It was improvement of my plot. During the first year I cut trees and collected rubbish. I had such work here"* (female, 35 years old, economist, Kyiv region, resettler). It is usual for "new" people in rural areas to have a desire to build life in the village almost in the same way as it was arranged in the city – with all "urban" conveniences. *"We immediately set boiler, washing machine, I was not ready to live without modern conveniences"* (female, 32 years old, doctor, Kyiv region, resettler).

Social relations

Social relations and circle of communication after transition to alternative lifestyle practices remained unchanged for freelancers – we observe stability of social contacts. In case of "partial" downshifting, such lifestyle

modification are perceived with complete acceptance and approval by close friends and partners. At the same time parents commonly demonstrate conviction, associated with loss of stability and social status. *"In fact, in many ways, I was supported by my boyfriend. If not his support, especially moral..."* (female, 27 years old, visagist, Kyiv, freelancer). *"It took a year for parents to have begun perceiving normally, and stopped asking questions – when would you find a job? They perceived it as some frivolity for a very long time"* (female, 27 years old, photographer, Kyiv, freelancer). It is quite popular strategy to conceal the fact of transition to "partial" downshifting by parents and older relatives.

"Full" downshifters have more complicated situation – old social relations are only partially supported (often it is communication with parents and very close relatives/friends). *"Parents were against our leaving so far away, we just lived in the same neighbourhood"* (female, 35 years old, bank clerk, Dnipropetrovsk region, resettler). It is typical situation of disapproval and misunderstanding of such lifestyle changes in social environment. Often this leads to complete termination of social relations. However, the reverse side is an emergence of new contacts and acquaintances based on downshifting lifestyle practices. *"There are a circle of friends I have purposefully chosen and it is mostly people who live like me"* (female, 42 years old, accountant, Kyiv region, resettler). Such communication can be both real and virtual.

Another important moment for "full" downshifters in the context of social relations is the development of interaction with local population. Attitude of local population to "resettlers" is usually neutral, rarely it is hostile, and generally communication is based on mutual tolerance. *"4 years having passed, they have begun considering me as "not a stranger". Now some people from this village help me, but firstly, they looked very hostile"* (female, 32 years old, journalist, Chernigiv region, resettler).

Lifestyle practices

The basis of lifestyle characteristics are indicators of lifestyle sphere proposed by Bourdieu (1987).

Working time and schedule

The "partial" downshifters reduce quantity of working hours and simultaneously increase efficiency of their work. *"Productivity increases. You did your work, and then you can actually see how many hours you spent for work and for social network, entertainment, whatever. The quality of work has improved"* (male, 27 years old, architect, Kyiv, freelancer). The value of free time increases and it stimulates a person to work more efficiently,

because amount of their own free time and time for close people depends on the ability of self-organization. Mixture of work and free time is fundamentally changing the structure of the day.

In case of “full” downshifters we can talk about part-time work or freelancing, which combines with housekeeping at the new place of residence. The involvement in agricultural activities may have varying degrees, depending on individual preferences. *“I work on my vegetable garden, I like this organic farming. I am still learning, so I read something on the Internet about gardening”* (female, 31 years old, programmer, Ivano-Frankivsk region, resettler). The number of “classical” working hours reduces; it also can be mentioned mixture of working and free time.

Free time

For “partial” downshifters the content of leisure practices remains unchanged after the change of lifestyle, but the number of trips increases (around Ukraine and abroad). *“I have been traveling a lot last four years. And I spent about one hundred days in my trips”* (male, 33 years old, yoga trainer, Kyiv, freelancer). An opportunity to capture greater mobility is provided by lack of reference to the place of residence and the workplace.

In situation of “full” downshifting, leisure practices change their character in connection with the change of residence and environment – “city” leisure is replaced by “rural”. It should be noted that the “full” downshifters did not use the concept of “free time”. After lifestyle change they consider all their time as free one. *“I do not have special time for my work and special time for leisure. All depends on me and my mood, and my needs and so on”* (male, 41 years old, private business, Cherkasy region, resettler).

Consumption

Consumption structure changes during transition to downshifting practices. It is connected with more meaningful organization of expenses, which is based on a decrease of incomes. Frequency of trips and other leisure practices are growing in case of “partial” downshifting. *“I take now more trips and I spend less on food. Because when you work in the office, you spend a lot on food – you go to some cafes or restaurants for dinners”* (female, 26 years old, designer, Kyiv, freelancer). Simultaneously consumption and expenses associated with the work in the “full” employment reduce: expenses for commute to/from work, for meals at work, etc. Expenses, which accompanied the “urban” lifestyle (utility bills, clothes “for work”, “urban” leisure, food, etc.), disappear in case of “full” downshifting. *“In the city I spent money on public transport, taxi, petrol. You have to pay rent, utility bills; food, furniture, clothes, gadgets, etc. You can’t live without all these things”* (male, 41 years old, private business, Kyiv region, resettler).

After the lifestyle change financial resources are mainly spent on household arrangement, agriculture. *"Now we spend on our household, the garden, backyard"* (female, 36 years old, architect, Kyiv region, resettler).

Religious views

It is observed lack of religious activity and only "formal" belonging to any religion for "partial" and "full" downshifting. *"I can get to know a lot about people through religion, but I do not belong to any. I was baptized, I know. But I'm not a religious person"* (male, 26 years old, programmer, Kyiv, freelancer). *"I visit our village church only at Easter like others"* (female, 42 years old, accountant, Kyiv region, resettler).

Health

After the change of lifestyle freelancers and resettlers mainly talk about positive changes as health improvement, improvement of everyday well-being and mood, feeling of calm and balance.

"Partial" downshifters emphasize on availability of time and opportunity for a healthy diet, particularly for home-made food as positive factors. *"More time for yourself, more time to take care of your health. I started going to the gym actively"* (female, 33 years old, writer, Lviv, freelancer). There is a tendency to become more active and to exercise regularly (both at home and in the gym). *"Sport has become more normal for me; it is possible to do everything I want. I go to the gym. I do stretching, different gymnastics"* (male, 27 years old, architect, Kyiv, freelancer). They often practice yoga and vegetarianism.

"Full" downshifters associate positive health changes with life on "fresh air", positive psychological environment and healthy diet. *"My well-being becomes better; I am all the time on 'fresh air'. I sleep better"* (male, 38 years old, programmer, Kyiv region, resettler).

In general, described lifestyle changes reflect value shifts. In the context of these shifts downshifters consider changing practices as positive ones, primarily because their choice was conscious and they were ready for possible difficulties associated with it.

Main Findings

Rational choice theory as theoretical and methodological background of the research made it possible to determine downshifting as alternative lifestyle practices, which are based on the change of values resulting in individually rational life strategies. Transformation of values is a prerequisite for the emergence of such alternative practices. The significance of dominant values is observed with simultaneous increasing of the significance of

alternative values. There is a new value-normative order, in which it is registered the situation of permanent choice between alternatives. As a result, a conscious individually rational choice of alternative values leads to transition to alternative lifestyle practices. It is meant voluntary life strategies, which are gradual movements to the formation of alternative lifestyle practices. Voluntariness of the following life strategies is defined by freedom of choice, lack of external coercion and ability to refuse from implementation of such changes. To choose downshifting as alternative lifestyle practices was identified as individually rational. It aims to get more benefits and to achieve individual goals due to new values. An individual strategy is interpreted as rational from person's point of view, but it is perceived as irrational by social environment.

Alternative lifestyle practices, which are implemented through long-term status changes (reduction of incomes, increase of satisfaction with life, and redistribution of free and work time, restructuring of consumption and change of social environment) and are characterized by conscious decision about above changes, were identified as lifestyle practice of downshifting. Downshiftingers commit voluntary downward mobility, consciously reducing their income level, changing or completely stopping professional career and abandoning from achieved social status. The essence of such mobility is determined through individual freedom of social position choice (in this case, the choice of a lower social position). Voluntary mobility is the main mechanism for implementing strategies of life change and transition to downshifting practices.

This article presents the results of case-study, which was aimed at studying lifestyle practices of "partial" and "full" downshifting. "Partial" downshifting is presented by freelancing – the transition from full-time employment to the work with a flexible schedule and the ensuing concomitant reduction of incomes, changes in the ratio of working and free time, and changes of consumption patterns, etc. "Full" downshifting is implemented in lifestyle practices of resettlers, who radically changed their lifestyle by moving on from city to village. Downshiftingers transform their lifestyle through voluntary stretched in time changes that arise due to transition to freelancing or moving on to the countryside. As a result their incomes are reduced, and they note the general decrease of their financial position. However, at the same time, the life satisfaction increases after changing lifestyle.

Based on these findings, it can be stated that these changes are caused by decreasing of significance of professional and career growth values, material wealth and prestige, on the one hand, and by increasing of significance of family and personal relationships and peace of mind values, on the other hand. Alternative lifestyle practices of downshifting are characterized by a "mixing" of working and free time, a change in day structure and an

overall reduction in the amount of working time. Changes in consumption structure are associated primarily with a more meaningful organization of expenses, based on an incomes reduction. After lifestyle change downshifters have noted the improvement of their health. Social determinants of lifestyle change are caused by dissatisfaction with life in general / work / work sphere, lack of free time and time for family, a desire for a healthier and more environmental lifestyle and, as well as a desire for being more independent. Decision to transit to downshifting is preceded by a long preparation and complete lack of spontaneity.

Referring to the experience of downshifting empirical identification and its lifestyle practices in other countries, in particular to researches of C. Hamilton in Australia and UK (2003; 2004); M. Zeestraten in New Zealand (2008); J. Schreurs in Netherlands (2010) and others, it can be detected the presence of common trends for countries in Eastern Europe (on Ukrainian example). Despite the fact that the focus of our study aimed at studying of "full" and "partial" downshifting, these both forms are based on value changes: rejection of materialistic values in favour of alternative values. Transition mechanism is voluntary mobility, and social determinants, that contribute to lifestyle changes, are in the same semantic field. However, it should be noted that "partial" downshifting is based on less deep changes and, consequently, is a "lighter" version of life strategy changes. Although downshifting is an innovative social phenomenon, and its problems only begin to enter into the circle of scientific interests of social researchers. Such alternative lifestyle practices have already been spread in Western societies, and today it is seen the trend of their growth in Ukraine and other countries of Eastern Europe. This actualizes further study of this phenomenon.

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