

theoretical assumptions of empirical research of specific ways of everyday life (styles of life)

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1. the definition of the term «style of life»

The term «style of life» can refer both to social populations and to individuals. It denotes a repertory of everyday forms of behaviour—«conduct», «activeness»—specific for a given population or an individual distinguishing it from other populations or individuals.

The entity constituting the «style of life», comprises according to our concept, human behaviour differentiated both in form and scope,¹ the motivation of this behaviour, including the «meaning» attributed to it, and, furthermore, the objects which are the aim or result or else the instrument of these forms of behaviour and hence, have been assigned certain «meanings».

The concept of «style of life» is connected with at least a minimum possibility of choice, for behaviour is fully determined/forced. For instance, it is groundless to speak about the «style» of the subject, deprived of any alternative.²

A student of the style of life is primarily interested in that what is selected from the repertory of possible types of behaviour in a given culture.³ He attempts to grasp the rules and causes underlying the differentiation of choice from that repertory, to discover their connection and hence, to establish a certain style characteristic of a population or an individual.

2. general assumptions

We have already mentioned one of these assumptions, namely, the possibility of choice implied by the concept of the style of life itself. We would like to emphasize, however, that this should not suggest

1. Actually, sequences of these acts of behaviour, often labelled «conduct», includes also forms of behaviour consciously oriented to definite aims, thus the called «actions» or «activities». In any case, we disassociate ourselves from the behaviouristic interpretation of forms of the style of life.

2. Writing about «the minimal possibility of choice», we think, first of all, about the objective conditions of alternative forms of behaviour and, secondly, about a certain awareness of the very existence of such alternative. In our opinion, that problem deserves a more profound reflection. At this point, however, we would like to warn against a possible misunderstanding. Thus, from our point of view, it would be groundless to study the style of life of a sailor on a war-ship, as the forms of behaviour of the former are nearly fully determined by appropriate regulations. It is worthy, however, to study life styles of crews of war-ships of various countries, as in this case, differentiations result from the differences within the regulations themselves—the possibility of choice exists on the level of the navy of a particular country, although it is non-existent on the level of an individual sailor.

3. The repertory of a given culture is, in itself, the manifestation of a certain selection from «an inventory including all possible types of human behaviour which is too large and full of contradictions for one culture to be able to make use of even its considerable part», as Ruth Benedict wrote («Patterns of Culture»).

an alleged lack of determination of behaviour comprising life style.

Moreover, it is noteworthy to pay attention to the fact that while characterising life style, we do not aim at an exhaustive description of behaviour, motivations, objects, but merely at grasping such entities which are *relevant* for a particular object and thus, differentiate the latter from other analogous objects. The significance of the what *distinguishes* a certain object from others, and not so much of that what assimilates it, is the next peculiarity of the point of view on the «style of life» as we see it.

From our standpoint, nonetheless, life styles constitute, to a certain extent, the researcher's construction. Thus, it is not reducible the what people themselves think of their own and «other people's» behaviour and its underlying motives, how they imagine these forms of behaviour and their motives, moreover, we can say something about the life style of an individual or a population only when it is presented against a certain «background», i.e., when we have compared definite forms of behaviour and motives with those of other individuals or populations. As a result of this, the specific nature of behaviour labelled here as the «style of life» reveals a certain dependence with this «background».

Certain methodological assumptions of life style research are also the outcome of these theoretical assumptions. The most significant of these is, primarily, the interest in qualitative characteristics, i.e., taking into account not only these aspects which can be grasped in a quantitative way.

In this connection a student of the «style of life» has to pay particular attention to «natural», i.e., to the really functioning social groups and communities, being not samples of individuals. Thus, *monographic* research intended to discover life styles themselves and the mechanisms of both their rise and change will play a significant role. The next problem will be to find suitable *indicators* enabling us to state the degree of the dissemination of the styles so discovered.

Another consequence of our assumptions will be the extremely important role of systematic and codified *observation*, beside other research techniques neglected in modern sociology.

Furthermore, another consequence of our assumptions, is that life style studies should not be pursued in a way typical of other numerous sociological studies, which begin with detailed data, with the presently fashionable «social indicators», for example, and are further developed in order to aggregate this data. It seems more reasonable to outline right at the very beginning, hypothetical «entities» which were defined as life style itself and, subsequently to verify these empirically, to describe them in greater detail and, finally, to search for appropriate indicators.

We have previously pointed out that the concept of the «style of life» can be referred both to individuals and social groups categories.⁴ It seems to be especially interesting, in our opinion, to distinguish four levels of the analysis of life style differentiation, together with the mechanisms of its transformation and change.

We mean at this point the following levels:

- the individual,
- a small social group (the family, groups of school and work mates, neighbours, friends, etc.),
- the social class or stratum,
- the nation.

On the first level, we will consider personality and somatic life style determinants, and on the second level microsocial and psychosocial mechanisms of life style formation and change. Thus, the differentiation of life style throughout an individual's lifecycle will be one of a particularly important issue on these first two levels. The third level, however, is connected with macrosocial mechanisms functioning in the various countries, ultimately leading to differentiations within the various societies. Whereas, on the fourth level, we will aim at grasping the dependence of the style of life on the variables distinguishing the given countries and nations, together with the spreading of life styles from one society to another.

3. tasks of life style research

Life style studies can be made at least in a two-fold perspective.

First of all, the style of life which we consider particularly attractive, is interesting in *itself* as the subject of research. Thus, life style, i.e., the «everyday life of contemporary societies», in particular, the «everyday life» of contemporary Poles, or Finns, or Frenchmen could be the main subject of our inquiry.

For a long time even the best sociological research has been blamed for conveying less information about social life than a well-written novel of manners or a reliable and penetrating reportage. While undertaking life style studies in this way, we hope to penetrate the social reality more deeply than it is otherwise possible in the case of a differently outlined subject-matter.

The second perspective of the style of life is based on treating the latter as an element or aspect of certain other important social phenomena, such as, the social differentiation, etc. Although, as we have already pointed out, life style per se constitutes the main objective of the planned research, yet the re-

4. We believe such a limitation refers to all sorts of considerations dealing with «style» — although this fact is not always recognised by those who deal with the problems of the style of life.

sults of the latter should prove to be of avail also in the second perspective.

In our conception, life style research refers to an integrated interpretation of the possibly widest sphere of social phenomena, characteristic of the approach and methods of social anthropology. Their purpose is to grasp the reality of the contemporary developed societies, in its complexity through the integration of points of view represented by various disciplines and a priori, by their specialized branches, such as sociology, economy, psychology and others.

We expect the adoption of an integrating research perspective as outlined and suggested here to enable us not only to develop a theoretical reflection of social phenomena, but also to prove useful from the standpoint of social policy. This is because life style is to be not merely a category of the description of social reality, but also that of its evaluation. We would like to develop an axiological «problematic» of life style, e.g. making use of the concept of the «quality of life».⁵

Further below, we will present some initial hypotheses which we will try to verify or falsify in the framework of the planned research. We think they will concern many issues interesting for theoretical reasons. Some of these hypotheses also have close connections with the social practice.

4. initial hypotheses

We have no general theory of the style of life in the present stage of research. In this connection, the hypotheses given below will not produce a coherent system, but will merely reflect what has been achieved so far and, furthermore, what we want to develop. Moreover, not all hypotheses presented here can be confirmed or refuted in the course of the studies planned for the nearest future.

We will, however, include hypotheses which go beyond the prepared research, as they may be of assistance in the subsequent stages of life style studies. On the other hand, naturally, when carrying out the presently prepared research into life and working out its preliminary results, we shall be faced with some additional new hypotheses. Furthermore, we hope the inventory of hypotheses to be supplemented with more general and coherent theoretical conceptions in the course of our examination.

The initial hypotheses are concerned with the four points of view which we wish to include in our studies. First of all, they refer to the phenomena of life style

5. It is comprehended in the most general way as a complex evaluation of two aspects of the human existence: comprising the objective possibilities of the development of a human being and the subjective life satisfaction.

itself and the functions of the latter (we have labelled this standpoint as «analytical»). Secondly, although life style research is assumed to deal with certain entities yet, for practical reasons, it will be indispensable to differentiate and to study the elements of which these entities consist. These problems have been accounted for by the second group of hypotheses (this is the «descriptive» point of view). Thirdly, we present hypotheses informing about life style differentiation and conditionings (this is the «explanatory» point of view). The fourth group of hypotheses will be connected with the problems of the evaluation of the life styles (this is the «evaluative» standpoint).

A. Analytical Standpoint

In connection with this point of view, we will initially formulate only several hypotheses though, obviously, they are of fundamental significance for the whole issue of life style.

A.1. Everyday human life constitutes a reasonable entity⁶ of the experience, thus being perceived and created as the manifestation of a certain order. The outcome of this is, namely, the repetition and the structuring of human behaviour which is labelled the style of life.

A.2. The style of life is both the sign and evidence of the affiliation with that group as a result of which it contributes to the feeling of social bonds, thus ensuring a certain degree of cohesion of the group, and an opportunity of self-identification and security of individuals.

A.3. The style of life of group distinguishes it from others belonging to the same society, thus contributing to preserve its distinctive character and continuity despite the fact that its members change the group being determined by the lapse of time.

A.4. An individual's life style grants him the feelings of identity and sense of his own activities.

A.5. An individual's life style circumscribes the framework of personality expression in a manner acceptable to a given group of reference.

A.6. The importance of each of the already listed basic functions of life style depends on certain attributes and situations, on the following:

- the maintenance of the cohesion of a group (i.e., hypothesis A.2) is particularly important in «modern», open societies and groups with complex organization;
- the maintenance of the distinctive features of a group (i.e., hypothesis A.3) is particularly im-

6. As we have previously pointed out, this entity consists of motivations, ideas, images, human desires, and forms of behaviour in various situations and, finally, the things people use, produce and accumulate.

portant when the interests represented by that group differ widely from those of the others with which it coexists both, when threatened by domination and in the case of attempting to dominate others and, furthermore, when competition prevails over co-operation in inter-group contacts; — the greater the possibilities of choice of the forms of behaviour, the greater is the role of the style of life as the framework of personality expression (hypothesis A. 5).

A.7. Life style is bound by the type of orientation prevailing in a given group. The following distinctions of these orientations seem valid:

- a. orientation on «to be» versus «to have» (E. Fromm),
- b. orientation on the individual, or on a small group, or on the whole society,
- c. the prevailing type of adaption: conformism, innovation, ritualism, withdrawal, rebellion (R. Merton),
- d. the prevailing points of reference: traditional, obliging, principled flexible (H. Zetterberg).

B. *Descriptive Standpoint*

We have already drawn attention to the fact that the description of an entity which the life style of an individual or a community constitutes, has to refer to the *elements* of that entity. In this connection, we will present certain hypotheses concerning these elements.

B.1. The lesser the chances of some forms of behaviour in a given field, the greater is the contribution of that particular field to life style differentiation.

B.2. The lesser is the range of options of a given individual or a group, e.g., because of lower economic level, education, etc., the more is life style affected by elements (forms of behaviour and things) easily accessible in these conditions.

B.3. The more differentiated are the forms of behaviour in a given field as far as prestige is concerned, the greater is the importance of a particular sphere of life from the point of view of the style.

B.4. The more coherent and clearly formulated a system of values of a particular group—society—the more consistent and of broader scope is its life style, and, moreover, the wider is the range of forms of behaviour controlled by cultural patterns.

B.5. The greater the number of the accepted scales—hierarchies—of values and the more divergent they are, the more eclectic a life style is and the more discordant its elements are.

B.6. The more the existence of a particular group is threatened, in reality, or in the subjective sense, the broader is the range of forms of behaviour of the life style of that group, and the more rigorously is the life

style enforced and observed, as a result of which, it becomes less changeable.

B.7. Various elements of life style, derived from all sorts of fields of life, may both compensate and complement one another. Compensation, therefore, occurs in the case of such forms of behaviour which are felt necessary and inevitable, whereas, complementation, primarily, in the case of these forms of behaviour which are desired most of all.

B.8. The less important are consequences of a change on the organization of a group, the easier does any element of life style undergo that change.

B.9. In a stabilized society, life style elements (and, possibly, life styles treated as entities) spread according to the more general hypothesis «C-P» by J. Galtung, from the «centre» of a given society of its «peripheral» parts. In the days of rapid social changes the direction of life style spreading is opposite to that mentioned above.

C. *Explanatory Point of View*

The majority of our hypotheses concerns tentative explanations of reasons and mechanisms of the forms of behaviour determined by life style. Some of them are of trivial nature, while others may arouse serious doubts. They take up so much space in the inventory of initial hypotheses, because we would like to formulate here, at least one hypothesis for each type of data which we intend to gather as a result of field studies.

The main drawback of the set of these hypotheses is the fact that, in spite of our initial assumptions, they primarily concern some «external», i.e., behavioural, aspects of life style. Nonetheless, we hope to be able to achieve an «indepth» analysis of changes of life style in the course of research.

We have ordered the hypotheses in accordance with the previously mentioned differentiation of levels of analysis, i.e., the individual, the social microstructure, the social macrostructure, crossnational differentiations, etc.⁷ These hypotheses, however, have been supplemented by more general ones which can concern various levels of analysis.

Hypotheses on the individual level

C. 1. An individual's life style undergoes changes, primarily, following his life-cycle, though, under certain conditions, this is also possible within a given

7. When referring to the level of cross-national differentiations, we present, at this point, only hypotheses of a general character. Certain hypotheses concerning the differentiation of life styles between concrete societies, e.g., the Polish and the Finnish have been presented in the «Outline of a cross-national comparative study on specific ways of everyday life (styles of life)».

section of his life-cycle. These changes depend mainly on the following factors:

- a. changes in the repertory of life styles functioning in a certain society,
- b. the degree of freedom in the choice of life style by an individual in a given society,
- c. changes in an individual's social role,
- d. changes in an individual's social status,
- e. changes in personality and consciousness of an individual.

C.2. An individual's life style, when he is free to shape it, depends, primarily, on three «dimensions» of personality, namely:

- the prevailing system of reference, i.e., ipso-centric, allo-centric, socio-centric,
- the dominating orientation in life—passive attitude. play-oriented activity, work-oriented activity.
- the dominant time perspective: the past, the present, the future and, furthermore,
- an individual's ability of self-control.

C.3. The higher the level, the quality and the broader the scope of education, the greater the possibility of shaping one's own individual or group life style.

C.4. A rapid change in one's own position within the social structure entails a tendency to change life style. In the initial stage, this is revealed by «style-lessness» or «transient» styles, i.e., an eclectic mixture of previous life style elements with the new ones, derived from various other life styles.

C.5. The following factors favour the individualization of life style: the dispensable money surplus, the level of education, technological means; whereas, the mass media and the «mass» market on the contrary, work in the opposite direction.

C.6. An individual strives to form his own life style according to the pattern of the style valid in that group which serves as point of reference.

Hypotheses on the small groups—the family—level

C.7. Greater intensity—frequency and durability—of human contacts entails the occurrence of either a. or b. namely:

- a. lesser life style differentiation accompanied by a far greater tolerance of the distinctions existing among the styles—in the case of groups (or individuals) equal in the hierarchy of prestige and friendly towards one another; or else
- b. a stronger tendency to preserve and emphasize life style differences by groups hostile towards each other, and by groups located higher up in the hierarchy of prestige.

C.8. A small (nuclear) family favours the individual-

ization of life style more than an extended family does.

C.9. The larger is the family in which children are brought up, the better do children adopt the life style approved of by their parents.

C.10. Professional work of women decreases the degree of the transfer of parents' life style to the children.

C.11. The less time do parents devote to family life, the lesser is the extent of adopting their life style by the children, as a result of which, the role of school-mates and extra-school institutions increases in this field.

C.12. Children brought up in incomplete families, i.e., without one parent, adopt their parents' life style to a lesser extent than those in complete families.

C.13. The formation of life style of a family, or of an individual, depends on the housing situation, since housing conditions can either facilitate the fulfillment of the requirements of a certain life style, or else complicate, or even prevent them. Moreover, the housing situation can either facilitate or complicate the choice of a life style, its adjustment to one's personal requirements, or conversely, enforce the adoption of a certain life style.

Hypotheses on the macrosocial level

C.14. The life style of a social group changes mainly under the following factors:

- a. changes in the objective living—conditions in which a given group lives—changes in the environment, resources, new technology, the process of production,
- b. changes of the number of members of the group, and transformations of its social organization /structure,
- c. changes in the consciousness—knowledge, ideology—of people.
- d. pressure of life styles exerted by other groups.

C.15. The greater the amount of resources and the greater the diversification of resources at the disposal of a group (natural resources, technological level), the larger is the repertory of possible types of behaviour and, consequently, the smaller the range of forms of behaviour characteristic for the life style of a group—on increase of individualization.

C.16. In modern developed societies the linking of the life style to the class—strata—structure weakens the life style differentiation among classes decreases. While, at the same time, the diversification of life styles within the framework of the classes and strata increases.

C.17. The more centralized the social organization is, the less differentiated are the variants of separate life styles.

C.18. Life style differentiation is linked to the division of labour in the society.

C.19. The more differentiated is the character of labour the greater is the differentiation of life styles of groups and individuals.

C.20. Life styles are distinguished in connection with the sectors of employment in which an individual—or people from whom the latter depends—works. Sector II, e.g., differs from sector I primarily by a certain independence from «natural» life conditioning factors, while sector III from sector II by the intensity of personal contacts.

C.21. The more leisure time do members of a given group have at their disposal, the greater is the differentiation of the variants of separate styles in that group.

C.22. A change in the position of the class—or strata—in the society results in the tendency to change the life style.

C.23. A rapid change of the social position of a particular group in the social structure results in a tendency to change the life style. In the first period, this favours the amalgamation of the elements of the previous life style with those of the other existing styles.

C.24. Economic growth (primarily, the rise of standard of living) is accompanied by the decrease of the differentiation of styles of life between inhabitants of towns and of rural areas.

C.25. In contemporary developed societies, the connection between life style and occupation is becoming closer.

C.26. The modernization of the process of work (primarily the development of automation) is accompanied by the decrease of life style differentiation between blue-collar workers and white-collars.

C.27. An increase of possibilities in choosing the style of life, due to standard of living advancements, the development of infrastructure, etc., results in the following:

- a. in the initial stage, on increase in differences in life style among generations apparently, children find it easier to adopt a style different from that represented by their parents,
- b. subsequently, the decrease in inter-generation differences, life style is more closely connected with personality features, which are less changeable.

C.28. The change of economic, social, cultural infrastructure is followed by life style changes—which, however, concern its separate elements to varying degrees. Especially prone to change are those elements which have been perceived as a burden, whereas, those of particular prestige seem to be least prone.

C.29. Advancements in standard of living account for the increase in time-budget differences, the latter become dependent on choice to a greater extent,

which favours the differentiation of life styles.

C.30. The less physical effort does a performed occupation demand, the more differentiated are the elements of the remaining fields of life style.

C.31. «Style-lessness» of life, the syncretism of everyday behaviour, can be both the manifestation and one of the reasons for social anomie.

C.32. The rapidly and easily changing fashion constitutes a phenomenon characteristic, primarily, of those life styles in which the criteria of prestige are mainly associated with consumption.

C.33. The division of life into separated parts isolated from one another, i.e., working-hours and leisure time, is primarily connected with the type of technology, as a result of which, nowadays, it appears most vividly in the case of those employed in sector II (mechanization of work).

C.34. The greater life style differences exist, the more vividly are social inequalities (economic status, access to power, etc.) and the class structure being perceived.

C.35. The greater is the degree of social condemnation of pathological behaviour in a given society, the more clearly shaped are particular life of socially pathological groups.

C.36. The more stabilized a society is, i.e., it undergoes lesser changes both itself and in its environment, the lesser are the divergencies between the acknowledged values and those realized in the framework of a given life style.

Hypotheses on the cross-national level

C.37. Changes of sources—i.e., criteria—of prestige followed one another in modern European culture. Thus, the sequence was the following: *descent*, prevailing in the feudal formation, *property*, dominant during classical capitalism, subsequently, the *disposal* of things acquiring an increase of prestige nowadays, especially in the form of consumption. As a result of this, the factors differentiating life styles were distinct from one another during separate periods, for life style is to reflect, in particular, the differentiation appearing due to this prevailing criterion.

Maybe in the future, in the socialist society creativity will constitute the basic criterion.

C.38. In modern European societies, the degree of urbanization is the main factor which differentiates life styles.

C.39. The quicker is the rise of the national income—the other factors remaining constant—the more rapid are the transformations of life style.

C.40. The more numerous a certain population is, the greater are the life style differentiating elements

in its structure—the other factors remaining identical.

C.41. The greater the spatial condensation of a given population is, the less differentiated, individualized, its life style is, all the other factors remaining constant.

C.42. The longer an individual's life span is, the greater the number of transformations of his life style—the other factors being constant. In this connection, therefore, populations with a longer life expectancy have a greater differentiation of life styles.

C.43. The greater the social mobility and/or the spatial mobility, the lesser the life style differences in a particular society.

C.44. As a result of a considerable spatial mobility, traditional life styles tend to differ less and less from one another among the various regions. In the future, however, regional differentiations of styles resulting from free option, could become significant, e.g., in connection with specific living conditions in definite regions, as for instance, the mountains, the coastal areas, etc.

C.45. The better developed the means of transportation and communication are, the greater the unification of life style.

C.46. The factors conducive to changes in life style are the following: wars and various upheavals, which usually affect both the objective living conditions and the systems of values accepted.

C.47. The more the existing social structure is differentiated by functional criteria and less by hierarchical ones, the easier it is to change one's life style.

C.48. Differences among various economic systems occur in the hierarchy of life styles, and in the degree of «attributing» a life style to an individual.

C.49. The more democratic a society is, the greater the differentiation of life styles (and of various variants of those styles) and the easier it is to change the life style.

C.50. The more egalitarian a society is, the less rigorously are life style rules observed.

C.51. Economic, or socio-economic planning contributes to a unification of life styles, primarily, by decreasing the differences among the variants in separate life styles.

General hypotheses

C.52. Primary groups, i.e., of the *Gemeinschaft* type, are characterized by a broader scope of forms of behaviour included in life style, though at the same time, by a less rigorous enforcement of all these types of behaviour in comparison with the «secondary» groups, i.e., of the *Gesellschaft* type.

C.53. Life style is more important for the existence and stability of informal groups than of formal ones.

C.54. The greater the social and spatial mobility within a group, the smaller the scope of forms of behaviour included in the life style of that group.

C.55. The larger the number of social roles within a group, the greater are the life style modifications acceptable by this group.

C.56. The more complex the organization of a group is, the greater are modifications of life style accepted by this group.

C.57. The broader the scope and the greater the frequency of contacts of the members of a group with those of the other, and, furthermore, the more diversified life styles a group represents, the greater are the modifications admissible in the life of that group.

C.58. The higher the position of a group in the hierarchy in a certain system of groups, the greater the margin of freedom in the sphere of life style—greater modifications are admissible.

C.59. The longer does a social group exist, the larger the number of forms of behaviour comprising life style has the character of certain standards, i.e., there are no normative counterparts, while at the same time, the fewer number of them has the character of culture patterns, i.e., the patterns observed, regulated in a normative way, and a greater ritualism of life style.

C.60. The higher social prestige of a certain group, or an individual, the greater is the extent to which its life style is imitated by other groups as far as it is possible for them.

C.61. Life style depends on the type of aspirations of the group. Thus, when a group aspires to create new values it attempts to bring out the distinctive features of its life style; when, on the other hand, a group aspires to «express» or «represent» the society, then it avoids to emphasize its life style distinctive features.

C.62. The more advantageous is an image of a group as envisaged by its members, the more stable its life style is.

C.63. The less advantageous is an image of a group in the eyes of its members, the more susceptible it is to the influence of alien life style patterns.

C.64. The higher the evaluation of an alien group, the greater is a given group's susceptibility to those alien patterns.

C.65. The higher is the level of knowledge member of a given group, e.g., its level of education instance, the greater are the permissible deviations from the dominant life style.

C.66. The discrepancy between the accepted values and those observed, by a group or an individual, in the style of life has an effect which depends on self-evaluation. The low self-evaluation is accompanied by a sense of insecurity, inconsistency of action, a tendency to adopt life style patterns which mark pres-

tigious groups. This state of things can be labelled a «negative disintegration». Conversely, high self-evaluation is connected with attitudes of innovativeness and expansiveness of a group adopting K. Dabrowski's term, we could speak about a «positive disintegration» at this point.

C.67. Life styles are differentiated according to the type or way of participation in culture, e.g., if it is active or passive, spontaneous or prestigious, therefore, they both condition such participation and are conditioned by it.

D. *Evaluating Standpoint*

As we have already pointed out, «life style» problems are connected with axiological issues, in particular, with the «quality of life». At this point, we can only mention a need of covering by our research the point of view which evaluates the existing and postulated, or else planned, life styles.

D.1. Life styles are unequally functional from the point of view of the very existence and development of both social groups and individuals.

It is worthwhile to distinguish at least four levels of estimation of this functionality, namely:

- a. the individual,
- b. a certain population,
- c. mankind.

D.2. Life styles are distinguished from the point of view of ensuring health to an individual both in the somatic aspect for example, the rationality of life style due to physiological processes, and in the mental one—including the degree of exposure to stress and mental disorders.

D.3. Life styles are differentiated by the opportunities for personality development they provide.

D.4. Life styles differ from one another by the de-

grees in which they assure the feeling of meaningfulness of life to individuals.

D.5. The divergence between the life style imposed by a group and the individual's personal dispositions may result in his mental disorders.

D.6. Life style differences can render communication among both individuals themselves and among groups difficult or even impossible.

D.7. Life style differences can support or produce social inequality.

D.8. Life style variations can create or deepen social barriers, for instance social contacts, marriages, etc.

D.9. Separate life styles are differentiated on the basis of the rationality of using the natural environment and of taking advantage of its resources. Such rationality can be evaluated at three levels: of mankind, of a particular population, of an individual.

D.10. Individuals follow separate life styles with various degrees of satisfaction. The degree of this satisfaction depends on the convergence (divergence) of: i) forms of behaviour and of accepted and felt values, ii) one's actual life style and aspirations in the sphere of life style.

5. **concluding remarks**

The assumptions presented here are the outcome of deliberations on «life style» issues in the present stage of study. We do not treat our present suggestions as final. We wish, however, to combine precisely a theoretical reflection with empirical life style research work. At the same time, we expect that the results of empirical data together with the experience gained during their realization will suggest what to supplement and how to make assumptions of life style studies more accurate.