

SELF-IDENTIFICATION IN THE SOCIETY OF CRISIS: A CASE OF CROSS-BORDER TRADERS

This paper is focused on the problem of social self-identification in Ukraine of the transformation period. The problem is considered on the example of people engaged in the reselling of the consumer goods, which were brought or smuggled from abroad. These people are colloquially called «challengers». The article is based on the five in-depth interviews, which were conducted by the authors, when they work in migration project, supervised by Claire Wallace from the Institute for Advanced Social Studies sponsored by Jubilee Fund of the Austrian National Bank in 1995. The main finding of this analysis is a empirical documentation of the differentiation, which emerge in self-identification and business strategies of «challengers» that according to the opinion of the authors can spill over into differentiation of the today's «challengers» into professional traders and those, who find themselves in re-selling business occasionally, mainly using it as survival strategies, and soon will be driven out from this are of activity by more successful competitors.

Introduction

Systemic social transformation undergoing in countries of the former USSR brought about a profound crisis of identity construction practices. The well-established and socially endorsed patterns of self-identification are substantially undermined, and, at the same time, new ones have yet to be crystallised. Currently, as compared with the recent past, one can observe a radical shift in the legitimate basis and patterns of self-identification. Under socialism the drastic contraction of private sphere and the excessive expansion of public sphere led to the widespread cynicism, profanation of the values of private life, as well as to the domination of ideological, sanctioned by the Party-state determinants of social identification. What is occurring in last several years is the unique proliferation and diversification of lifestyles, moral standards, beliefs, and patterns of behaviour.

Certain social groups of the population, mainly those socialised at socialist times and who internalised the corresponding set of value feel for the most part uneasy about all changes in post-soviet society. They tend to perceive all reforms almost exclusively in negative terms. They neither make any effort to find their place in this new life nor perceive themselves as having any prospects for the future. It can be safely postulated that their crisis of identification aggravates and tends to turn into complete identification vacuum. We introduce this concept to refer to such a stage of identification crisis where objective conditions for the positive re-construction of self-identity are perceived by individuals as insufficient. Such perception can adequately reflect the lack of

necessary objective prerequisites for the successful re-creation of self-identity, particularly the deficit of some personal qualities, skills, conflict of interests, and so on. Either the negative self-definition can be based on an inadequate picture of the surrounding world and one's own perspectives, and can lead further astray from the re-creation of their self-identity.

We advance the hypothesis that being in the state of identification vacuum people are mainly preoccupied with a search of some tenable, secure, and predictable strategies of survival, they put an emphasis on some narrow pragmatic goals and reflect upon their own life and social relationships in terms of instrumental rationality. In the meantime, people going through identification crisis feel a deep necessity to establish their own model of self-identification, a certain «identification syndrome» [1], aspiration for belonging to one or another social group or community. The former are rigid in their opinions and patterns of behaviour, deprived of a positive constructive image of possible identity, and isolated from social networks. The latter have a higher self-esteem and positive view of the future, and demonstrate a propensity for adaptation, higher flexibility, and tolerance.

In the given paper we intend to demonstrate the way different segments of the Ukrainian population strive to re-define themselves and re-construct their personal and social identity by using different strategies. The presented paper is dealing with the issues of the «shifting» self-identity and the recovery of personal and social identity among cross-border, or, as they are often called, shuttle traders (or colloquially speaking, *chovnyky*), coming from Ukraine to

Poland for a short span of time. Cross-border traders in post-socialist societies represent a very recent and wide-spread phenomenon of an ambiguous nature. On the one hand, they appeared as a mass response to the hardships of the transformation period¹. On the other hand, this business became possible due to this social change, the adoption of Law on Entry and Exit in 1990, and the general liberalisation of the soviet regime. The ambiguity of the initial conditions under which cross-border traders came into being determined the complicated and internally contradictory process of the formation and consolidation of their personal and social identity.

Traders' Dilemma

It is well-known that in the recent past the socialist and capitalist societies were politically, economically, and culturally separated from each other. However, this situation has radically changed shortly after the collapse of communist regime. One of the most important roles in converging these worlds was played by traders and other businessmen, the first agents of market economy in the former Soviet Union. Though being pioneers of social changes, they occupy still a marginal and controversial position in the society. This position is partially caused by the communitive-distributive ethic, to use the Evers' [2] term². Other reasons of ultimate importance are a specific economic and political situation. The former can be characterised as a sharp decrease in production that caused the non-productive character of new business and speculative character of trade. The latter is double oppression by the government with its unfair tax policy and by criminal elements (racket). Therefore the traders' position in this particular case is under the influence of the ambiguous situation of society that is on its half way of transition to market economy.

For migrating traders this ambiguity is overlapped with cross-cultural factor. Traders were the first ordinary people who gained an opportunity to compare their life with the reality abroad and to bring this knowledge to their local communities. It should be noticed that observed distinctions were of social rather than national character. The long-lasting totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union turned all the nationalities into one big socialist camp that differs essentially in life standards, values and dispositions even from the closest neighbouring countries of Eastern Europe that have found themselves soon on the road to capitalism and in fact were not so far from it. Therefore despite the ethnic divergence people from the Soviet Union feel themselves as special type of community, «Soviets», as opposed to «capitalists»,

«civilised» Europeans, be it Poles, Germans or Hungarians. Hereby we intend to speak mostly about social rather than national identities.

On the one hand, traders acquired a sort of material and psychological superiority in comparison with their compatriots not only as prosperous businessmen, but people who have been abroad and seen «another life» that is still an exceptional event for very many people in the former Soviet Union. On the other hand, observing everyday life abroad, the traders discovered a wide gap between their own life standards and life chances and their foreign colleagues'. This is the second point of the traders' dilemma, notably: being felt and perceived as prosperous at home and disadvantaged abroad.

To sum up, the position of migrating traders can be specified as that effected by factors lying in the field of the domestic economy and cross-cultural comparisons. However different people have different responses to similar circumstances. According to the hypothesis of Volovych and Makeev [4] it is psychological abilities to enjoy new opportunities in economic field what differentiate people in society of crisis, not only the education and occupational skills. Those of them who are able to adjust to new situation experienced upward mobility while the other endured deprivation. The same factor seems to be working in the area of trading business. People involved in it build different strategies of self-definition and self-direction based on their psychological abilities and elaborate different business practices, which, in turn, promote the further development of the identity. Different business practices are psychologically conditioned and mediated through different strategies of self-identification. In the meantime, business activities contribute to the elaboration and crystallisation of different identification strategies. To conclude, psychological qualities, identity, and professional practices are closely interrelated and reciprocate. Change in one element of the system induces a certain alteration of the other mutually dependent components. The differentiation of strategies of the construction of identity and business practices contribute to the social differentiation of traders: some of them become professionals and, probably, will provide the basis for middle-class, while the other will probably leave this area soon.

The conducted interviews permit to outline tentatively several strategies of self-identification that can be located in the continuum between two poles: on the one hand, dissolved, socially marginalised, «socialist» model, directed to the past (referred later as SP); on the other to a better-structured and

¹ In 1996 only in Russia there were more than 10 million people worked as chelnoki. See [3].

² Communitive-distributive ethic refers to the rules which prescribe to distribute all the profit gained by traders among the members of local community. Although being coined by Evers to concern countries of the Third World this concept, in our opinion, can be applied to socialist and post-socialist society.

market-oriented model of advanced traders (referred later MO). We advance the hypothesis that these two types of traders will differ in the motives for undertaking business, business practices and disposition to business, level of income, and life aspirations. Those traders belonging to the first model are expected to demonstrate qualities typical of the marginal man pictured by Park as someone who «leaves one group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another, and finds himself on the margin of each and a member of neither» [5]. Being in the state of marginality, these traders are supposed to demonstrate little adjustment to a completely new situation of market competition, serious doubt about their place in new social structure, frustration and uneasiness about their prospects for the future. They are also characterised by strong attachment to routine, inflexible, inherited from the past patterns of behaviour, which often may well prove to be inefficient in conditions of rapid and profound social change. Those traders representing the second model are expected to be more adaptive to ever-changing environment, achievement-oriented, flexible, more certain about their social position, able to enjoy new opportunities and to create new, better-adjusted to external demands patterns of behaviour.

Data Description

Our analysis is based on five biographic interviews with Ukrainian cross-border traders conducted by the authors in Poland within the framework of the Migration Project, supervised by C. Wallace, Institute of Advanced Studies (Vienna). The aim of the project was to study the migration from East to the countries of «buffer zone» that is countries of Eastern and Central Europe: Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Cross-border traders were among the other migrants interviewed.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-standardised way: free conversation with a given list of questions. Respondents were asked to give detailed answers to the following questions: why did they migrate, where did they take money for initial expenses, how did they get to Poland, what is the subject of the trade and its turnover, what kind of relations do they have with natives and what are their future plans. Interviews lasted more than an hour and contained a substantial information about the various aspects of business and daily life of respondents.

It should be noted that no interview included direct questions about the identity of respondents, though some information about its construction can be elicited from this material. One respondent defined her identity explicitly, referring herself to the social group of businessmen; the other touched upon this problem indirectly, while some interviews did not provide any self-definitions at all. We suppose that the respondents started to talk about it if the eter-

nal necessity and objective preconditions for self-identification have already been formed. Therefore, those, who did not raise this topic, still have nothing to be identified. As Chalasinski [6] emphasised, if peasant does not identify himself as such in his consciousness, peasantry does not exist as a separate stratum of the population.

The small number of studied cases (5) permits to apply them only as a pilot study and to draw only preliminary conclusions and to propose hypotheses about the formation of new identity. However, one should keep in mind that, as Fuchs-Highnritz [7] stressed, typicality in a biographical research is not the same as representativeness in a survey. Biographical method is aimed to draw from biography those elements which constitute types of processes, strategies of behaviour or cultural patterns. It should be acknowledged that none of the observed cases is by any means a «pure type», but the collected data contain the elements that allow to construct at least two models. As it has already been said these two are the model of Soviet Past and that of Market Orientations.

Data Interpretation

The social composition of the group of traders is mixed: workers dismissed from large state-owned plants and those of them on unpaid leave, women on pensions or having missed job after giving birth to the child, single mothers, young people who failed to find any kind of job and retired military. Unfortunately no statistic is available in order to compare social origins of respondents who belong to both models. It can only be hypothesised that age, education and occupational experience play a minimal role in differentiation between the two strategies of identification.

As regards those respondents, who can be situated closer to the SP pole (respondents R. and E.), it should be said that they produced no self-definitions at all. In fact they demonstrated what Stefan Nowak [8] called «sociological vacuum»: the lack of authentic identification. This is the outcome of marginalisation of these respondents. Fresh made traders no longer identify themselves with their previous positions (workers, office employees, intelligentsia), but did not find a new point of reference yet. As a result, embarrassment and depression were observed as the main characteristics of their mood.

This state of mind could be easily felt in the answers of the respondents to the question about the motives for undertaking trading business. Namely their responses made the impressions that they were trying to justify themselves: «What should I do? My husband does not work, pension is too small... I have to live somehow» (R.), «I'm living with my child alone, no alimonies... Life forced me to start it» (E.), «Earlier I was also laughing at them (traders): they are selling, bringing these huge bags. I could never

guess that I would, be selling myself» (X). It can be held that negative attitudes toward traders as rich speculators in Ukraine contributed to the formation of negative self-image of these respondents. As Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre [9] maintains «unfavourable interactions and stigmatisation play a key role in the construction of negative identity».

The opportunity to compare their life with life standards abroad only enhanced these respondents' of their position as humiliate. Their attitudes toward Poland and Poles display their awareness about the social and economic backwardness of ex-Soviet republics even in comparison with their closest neighbours. Their naive excitement about Poland and Poles indicates it clearly. Respondents with elements of the SP model like everything abroad. For example, R. regard Poles as so far more polite, honest and hospitable people than Ukrainians that the latter are hardly deserved to be talked about. The perceived gap is so wide that E. describes it like a difference between two worlds: «When you cross the Ukrainian border you find yourself in a different world, which is as permanent holiday in comparison with our grey week-days».

No perception of ill-willing treatment of traders by Poles could be found in the aforementioned cases. However this negative self-image and excitement about life abroad reveal the awareness of respondents about it and their silent acceptance of it. Therefore traders find themselves under the double pressure of negative perception: as agents of capitalism in their home country, and as migrants from non-prestigious countries. Both these factors are conducive to the formation of the negative identification of the respondents displaying the SP model.

The contrasting case is respondent L., who fits the best to the MR model. The opportunity to compare her own position with her Polish colleagues appeared to foster the ongoing formation of the positive self-image of L., the development of her occupational honour and human dignity despite her personal complicated circumstances (two small children). Protesting against the humiliating treatment of traders in Ukraine as speculators, L. declares her belonging to the social group of businessmen in an unequivocal way: «In Poland they call the traders businessmen. We are also businessmen, not speculators... I don't buy in our shops... I go, I bring, I invest my money, my labour, I pay taxes. Why am I a speculator?»

On the other hand L. recognises and actively protests against the fact of scornful treatment of trading migrants abroad. Being in Turkey she observed

that Turks treat equally both Poles and «ex-Soviets» as their customers, not in respect to historical past. Being aware of this L. tries not only to defend traders but to conceptualise the social role of the social group, she believes she belongs to, both in the domestic economy and abroad that signifies the high level of self-identity formation: «We provide country with goods while the shops are empty» (about Ukraine), «We bring dollars in the country (Poland), helping to rise their economy... What would they do without us? We buy up all the stuff on the market... They would be buried under these odds and sods if they didn't have us».

The observed male traders, X and Y, display the process of formation of positive identity in a different way, trying to keep symbolical distance between them and traders of the «lower hand», with small turnover and non-prestigious goods for trade. For example, X stresses that he does not want to be confused with simple sellers of cheap leather stuff, but regards himself as a provider of high fashion and good taste by bringing only very expensive leather coats from Turkey. Y tries to do the same putting a special emphasis the accent on his higher education, high turnover and more sophisticated goods his firm's sells (used auto-details). He is rather sceptical about people who buy second-hand cloth by kilos in Western countries and bring it to their home country.

Trading by second-hand clothes may be not so much different from trading by second-hand auto-details. However, it is more important that both these respondents were trying to do the same thing, namely, to expand their «symbolical capital» referring themselves to the broader nomination of businessmen, not to mere traders. According to Bourdeau [10] each social group does it with perspective goal to exercise pressure on the authorities.

Business Practices

Now we arrived to the central point of this article that is interplay between self-definition strategies and business practices employed by traders, their «know-how». It is plausible to assume that the two outlined models of self-definition are conducive to the development of diverse business practices, which, in turn, cause the formation of self-identification of traders.

It can be suggested that those respondents, who are closer to the SP model use passive, routinized, inflexible trading practices, which they inherited from their closest colleagues. These respondents reported that they were invited to the trip by their acquaintances, whom they called «friends»³ that

³ These «friends» also lend money to newcomers for initial expenses, that often turns into long-lasting interdependency. As it was, for example, R., who said that she never could pay her debts, and have to borrow money for each trip. It may be presumed that these so called «friends», «cool» girls and guys, belong to «older» generation of traders and exploit in this way their «younger friends» employing them as assistants in return for providing security and supervising in a case of their activity.

started this business earlier. These respondents used to go to Poland by commercial buses, followed by racket as a shadow. They usually go along with a company of 3-5 colleagues, with only one in it who can speak Polish, lodge a flat for one night, do shopping on the closest market place and get back home. This rigid pattern of their business activity cannot withstand any innovations during their trips.

The contrasting example is business practices employed by respondent L., who is the closest to the model. First, L. individually decided to start cross-border trading when she discovered that all goods on Ukrainian market is imported from Poland or Turkey. Second, instead of the dangerous, complicated and expensive practice of riding by commercial buses L. is used to going to Poland by shop-tours, proposed by Polish travel agencies that provide staying at hotels and participation in «cultural programs». Besides Przemyśl she visited a dozen Polish small towns and learnt the Polish language quite good.

After exploring Polish market of goods pretty well L. refused from shopping at the market places. She used to purchase goods at small whole-sale shops («hurtownia» in Polish) or directly at producing factories which is economically much more profitable. L. also provides something that conditionally may be called marketing policy, namely: she buys goods only according to seasonal demand or coming holiday. Phrase «Each ride is for specific purpose» became her slogan. All these features allow to mark her practices as more civilised.

Another case, which can be described as closer to MO than to SP model, respondent X, after surveying Polish market decided to start his business outside of Poland, selling expensive leather jackets from Turkey in Kamchatka, the region of great demand and the lack of supply.

However the most advantageous practise employed by both these respondents is the involvement of the spouse in trading. For example, L. invited her husband to business trips that ensured her with unpaid assistant and guard; while X invited her wife, who lodges the hotel in Moscow for storing goods, when her husband is trying to transfer them from Sтамбул to Kamchatka. It can be argued that such family-business units, based on essential mutual trust, are much more mobile and effective than small groups of traders, which are accidentally formed by the external circumstances. Additionally such units may ensure the function of stabilisation for the family, which can be threatened, if one of the spouses works out of home country.

Profits and Life Styles

Routinised and inflexible practices used by SP models resulted in low turnover and profits that only allow them to cover urgent expenses. For example R., a typical case of SP, reported that her profit is

sufficient to cover very urgent expenses such as denture, the acquisition of coats for her granddaughters and the funeral of mother. Therefore no substantial changes in her life style occurred in connection with the undertaken business.

By contrast, MO model entails the gaining of relatively high profits that caused the improvement of living conditions and erected aspirations toward better life standards. Thus L. stated that she voluntarily left her job and started business in order to lead a «genuine» life not a vegetative. She declared that her actual income enabled her to gain the main elements of it: possibility to buy whatever she wants, to invite guests whenever she wants and to dress her children better than other parents. Respondent Y reported that after four years of his trading firm activity he became capable to build a house in Kiev, which is tremendously difficult task.

A substantial share of the interviews with MR-modelled respondents was devoted to their thinking about desirable or expected events that can be classified as elements of prestigious life style or «conspicuous consumption» [11]. Respondents L., X and Y, while giving rather modest explanation about the subject of their business, were willingly and extensively speaking about vacations abroad, purchasing the car or proper education for children. L. claimed that she is going to visit Warsaw with her children with no merchant goals, but «to see the country»; X was thinking about a summer vacation in Italy. L. was talking a lot about gaining a proper education for her children that was rather declarative reasoning, because her children are rather small: 4 and 7 years old.

It can be inferred that these declarations witness about the strong willingness to improve their living conditions, be it conscious or not, desire to belong to higher stratum of population, be it called middle-class or businessmen. As Domański [12] stressed the concept of middle-class not only implies certain level of income, but also the life style, which is the subject of inheritance and envy, the way to prove everybody that you find yourself among people who succeed.

Interestingly, as much time MO were talking about their life aspiration, SP models devoted to gossips about accidentence with rackets. In our opinion this difference reflects perfectly the two strategies of self-identification: if the first one (MO) displays an optimistic outlook to the future that is the indispensable element of an actively forming positive identity, the second can be characterised by the absence of perspectives that indicates a marginalized, negative identity.

Future Perspectives

Concerning life perspectives respondents were asked at the end of the interview about their future

plans. It should be noticed that in the answers of those, who demonstrated the SP model, a certain contradiction can be observed. On the one hand they declare that their business becomes unprofitable because of the growing competition and low purchasing power of the population. On the other hand, they claimed that they are going to continue their shop trips until they will have money for it (R.) and there will no be legal prohibition (E.).

Obviously, under such circumstances it seems more reasonable to stop unprofitable business or to change its character. However, these respondents can not do it, and this is but one more evidence of their marginalized identity: they just see no other perspectives except going for trading.

MO models also concern their future with shop tours that is more understandable in the case of advanced business. However, L., for example, also figured out the clear limits up to which she is going to provide cross-border trade. She told that she will be trading until there is no order in Ukraine. L. also gave the cohesive concept of the «order», which is, in her opinion, the propriety and proprietors in Poland and legal opportunities to earn money. Finally she concluded that it is life chances and opportunities that are better in Poland, not the people.

Up to now we were writing about individual self-identity about which we could make some assumption basing on the interviews with migrants. Unfortunately data concerned with group identification are rather scarce in this study, therefore only some speculations can be done.

Traders tend to identify themselves not only with primary social groups, mainly their own or parental family, but also with those who managed to achieve a certain success in life. It should be noted that this sense of belonging to this imaginary social entity can hardly be overestimated. Though it does not create any specific group identity, in strict sense of the word, it provides them with positive experience and certain guidelines along which their prospects and aspirations for the future are clearly located. In a sense, their current business is a sketch or draft of their future efforts to re-create their positive identity. The positive impetus of such practices consists in that they help to mould the achievement-oriented values which are deficient in post-socialist, collectivist-oriented and paternalist societies, to increase self-esteem of MO to broaden their world-outlook and develop social imagination and tolerance towards otherness. This shifting, or transitory a-group identity manifests itself in respondents' emphasis on their personal achievements and qualities which proved conducive to their life-success. By and large, they do not display any kind of strong group solidarity with the people of the similar trade but rather avoid any kind of contacts with professional counterparts. It

can be tentatively argued that MO demonstrate tendency towards the active formation and crystallisation of the constituting elements of personal rather than social identity. Interestingly enough, this emphasis on personal identity corresponds with the latest trends in value orientations expressed in an increasing anti-statism and stress on more privatised and family-centred values.

As far as identity construction of SP is concerned, it can be characterised as a specific type of survival strategy in which the marginal position of bearers is not eliminated or, at least, alleviated, but even escalated by the duplication of their social exclusion not only from their native socio-cultural environment but from the different, strange one as well. Describing themselves FT use pronoun «we» in order to distinguish themselves from different «them»: «public», the purchasers, the powerful people and Poles. Apart from that they use the only word «girls» in order to designate to their own group. However, FT are rather aware of their inner differentiation: they use slang nominations of «cool» girls and boys that they apply to traders with a bigger income and higher turnover, presumably, those «friends», who lend them money in return for assistance. FT tend to describe themselves in terms of collective identification: «we go», «we buy» and so on. Nevertheless, even for them this self-definition in terms of «we» seems to be of secondary rather than primary importance, it is a kind of semantic background which forms a setting for unfolding the chief elements in the construction of self-identity. These chief elements are mainly associated with traders' *personal* achievements and qualities which in their own estimates predetermined the change in their life situation and afforded them to experience a certain positive emotional well-being. The notion «we» comes to the fore only in cases respondents want to stress their feeling of non-belonging to either «large-scale» social establishments, like the Ukrainian state and Western public, or a markedly pronounced differentiation within trader circles. Thus, this we-dimension remains rather subordinate in the structure of differentiated identities organised in the form of a salience hierarchy. In this case, the group commitment inevitably has a symbolic rather than substantial meaning.

Conclusions

Cross-border trade had a strong effect on the organisation of everyday life of many people involved in this new enterprise, unknown before in societies of «real socialism». This activity helped many of them to re-create their sense of self-esteem and to find a way out of identification vacuum, to re-discover the very idea of the autonomous self, and to actively and successfully re-define themselves.

As has been demonstrated above, cross-border

traders become more and more strongly differentiated in respect to business practices, income, disposition to business and life aspirations. According to the aforementioned criteria, we have divided them into two distinct categories. We explained how closely personal qualities, strategies of identity, and everyday practices are interrelated with each other.

The increasing social differentiation of cross-border traders leads to the extraction of professional traders from the general mass of migrating trading public. This group of «professionals» is about to invest their wealth in symbolic capital that should «stabilise their positions on the level of institutionalisation» [13].

It is most likely that unorganised trade is coming to an end, and forced traders are gradually yielding to better organised, more thriving and having better prospects for the future voluntary traders. Cross-border trade is becoming increasingly institutionalised and controlled by trade companies run by experienced, having broad social connections, and a developed entrepreneurial spirit MO. Being unable to compete with these firms, SP are constantly expelled from the market and often turn from «free lance» traders into commercial representatives of larger firms often established and run by former colleagues. This process of institutionalisation is addi-

tionally reinforced by several structural factors, such as the saturation of home market by consumer goods, the low purchasing power of the majority of the population, and tax pressure by the state, to mention only a few major reasons. Concerning their self-identity it can be hypothesised that it will withstand the further marginalisation unless the present economic situation in Ukraine is not improved.

The above social differentiation of traders and growing institutionalisation of trade is accompanied by favourable changes in mass perception of this phenomenon. The absence of regular data does not allow postulating it convincingly. However, empirical observations and scattered findings from public opinion polls altogether produce the evidence that people in the post-socialist societies start to hold more favourable opinions about CBTs and their activity.⁴ It means that their social position finds more public approval and legitimate basis, and if previously they had a very deprived and marginalised status, nowadays they are becoming more accepted and recognised in the society of crisis. This allows us to predict that in the near future this group can come to the fore as a viable social source of the nascent middle class. It should be added that this situation became possible thanks to the efforts invested by the MO into the construction of their self-identity.

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⁴ The 1996 opinion poll among Muscovites shows that 79,0 % of them regard CBT's activity as useful for the society, 9,6 % as useless, whereas only 11,4 % as harmful. In correspondance with the above opinion, the vast majority of the inhabitants of Moscow negatively assess the restrictive government policy towards cheln zki, while only 18,4 % express their support for such actions of the authorities.

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**САМОІДЕНТИФІКАЦІЯ У СУСПІЛЬСТВІ КРИЗИ:
ВИПАДОК «ЧОВНИКІВ»**

Статтю присвячено проблемі соціальної самоідентифікації в Україні в період трансформації. Проблема розглянуто на прикладі людей, що були зайняті у бізнесі купівлі-перепродажу товарів, ввезених з-за кордону найчастіше нелегально або напівлегально, так званих «човників». Стаття базується на п'яти поглиблених інтерв'ю з «човниками», що їх проводили автори під час праці у проекті про міграцію, яким керувала Клер Волес з Institute for Advanced Social Studies, спонсорованого Ювілейним фондом австрійського банку у 1995 році. Головним висновком статті є твердження про виникнення диференціації у самоідентичності та стратегій ведення бізнесу «човників», яка, на думку авторів, вказує на можливий поділ «човників» на професійних торговельних працівників і тих, хто опинився в цій сфері за специфічних умов (потреба виживання) і буде найближчим часом змушений залишити цю ділянку ринку під тиском конкуренції.