

# Conceptualizations of the notion “citizen” in contemporary Belarus

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## *Abstract*

An analysis of the contemporary state of political and civil consciousness in Belarus discovers a number of contradictions. The high level of electoral participation goes with low motivation of voters «to influence the trend of developments in the country». Another aspect of the existing contradictions is the perception by state residents of their citizenship: the identification with the citizens of the Republic of Belarus and significance of citizenship and while on the other hand, the neglect of political and legal status of citizen as a resource for solving social problems. On the basis of empirical sociological data the author determines in the article the correlation between the ideas about the concept «a citizen» and the peculiarity of perception of the country and of themselves as its citizens in conditions of contemporary Belarus.

*Keywords:* identity, identification, civil consciousness, public opinion, political behaviour

An important place among Belarussian nation's social and cultural changes is occupied by transformations of the role and a place of a citizen in it. The analysis of the modern condition of political and civil consciousness reveals a number of contradictions. A sociological research data shows a high level of electoral participation, which is one of basic parameters of the civil activity (about 80% of the population participate in the elections). Still, only 14,1% of voters say that their motive for participation is “a desire to influence the course of events in the country”. In the majority of cases, their electoral activity

has more “formal” motives: “I think it is a citizen's duty” - 66,4%, “I do it by habit” - 11,4%. There is also a very low level of respondents who think that they can actually influence the country's life.<sup>1</sup>

Another aspect of the existing contradictions is connected to the character of the Belarussian inhabitants' comprehension of their citizenship. On the one hand, a significant part of the population steadily identifies themselves as citizens of the Republic of Belarus and thinks that their citizenship is very important. On the other hand, they ignore a citizen's political and legal status as a means of solving social problems.

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<sup>1</sup> According to a research of the Sociology Institute of the Belarussian Academy of Sciences (July 2003), a national poll sample of 2,308 people.

Therefore 33,5% of the respondents say that while settling their every day matters, they can "sometimes" rely on "the law", and only 11,2% on "participation in the political life".<sup>2</sup>

These contradictions can be caused by a complex of factors of social, political, cultural and psychological character, such as civil society immaturity, transformation of system of values, concentration on solving local and daily problems, etc. We think that among the factors which render a motivating influence on the subjective estimation of a possibility and efficiency of participation in public life, on practice of implementation of one's rights and duties, as well as on electoral activity, the important place belongs to the system of conceptualizations by inhabitants of the essence of the notion "citizen".

## I. Description of the methods

The character of mutual relations between a person and the state has a wide spectrum of interpretations - from the "liberal" one where the ability of being a citizen is an ability to actualize the rights and to defend them from the state's machinery, to the "republican" one where citizenship is a person's belonging to the self-determinative community and his/her integration in it. Prevalence in public consciousness of this or other kind of interpretations is historically, socially and culturally caused and fixed in mentality. Concep-

tualizations of the essence of the notion "citizen" are components of mentality of one or other society because they are bases on which the concrete content of civil consciousness is formed. It is the basis which sets frameworks for the development of certain practices of a civil behavior, for a person's comprehension of his/her place in a society, for a formation of his/her attitudes and relations with/to the country and citizenship. An essential circumstance which actualizes this factor in modern conditions is the "availability" of development and adoption of different variants of a substantial and valuable filling of the notion "citizen" and corresponding motives, norms and models of behavior. At the same time, it is necessary to mark a need in special researches devoted to the analysis of subjective interpretations of the notion "citizen", i.e. inhabitants' conceptualizations of what it means to be a citizen of a country for them. This article presents one of possible ways to analyze the correlation between the "theoretical knowledge" about citizenship and the various aspects of comprehension by the Belarusian inhabitants and their estimations from their country and citizenship.

The article aims to define the interrelation between the conceptualizations of the notion "citizen" and specificity of the perception of the country and oneself as its citizen in the conditions of modern Belarus.<sup>3</sup> For this purpose, we introduced the concepts "space" and "position". We understand the space,

<sup>2</sup> According to a sociological monitoring of the Sociology Institute of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences (December 2004), a national poll sample of 1,984 people.

<sup>3</sup> This article's empiric data is based on a research of the Sociology Institute of the Belaru-

first of all, as a space of meanings and senses (the semantic space, Petrenko, 1988) as both interpretations of the notion “citizen” and features of perception of a country and citizenship are phenomena of consciousness. The second important point is that this is a space of relations between ones or the other positions (“subjects” of a certain space). The place they occupy in this space, and relations between them depend on carriers of what meanings and senses they (subjects) are. The positions are these or those conceptualizations of the notion “citizen”. The relation between these positions (neighborhood, affinity, remoteness) is defined through their arrangement in the semantic space.<sup>4</sup> It is also important to mark that distinctions between positions have a relative character, i.e. they make sense not in general however only concerning a certain semantic space. Therefore in terms of purpose of our study, we regard two spaces of meanings with the help of which we shall analyze arrangement of the positions: 1) the space of Belarusian inhabitants’ perception of themselves as citizens; 2) the space of Belarusian inhabitants’ perception of their country.

According to the designated approach, in this article we shall try: to allocate positions on the basis of various interpretations of the notion “citizen”

and “to build” correspondent semantic spaces, as well as to define an arrangement of the allocated positions in semantic spaces, to estimate their relation (affinity, remoteness) and to reveal the interrelation of conceptualizations of the notion “citizen” with relation to the one’s perception of a country and oneself as a “citizen”.

The four following parameters are used as empiric indicators which help to reveal the specificity of comprehension of civil belonging, – a degree of identification with citizens of Belarus, a degree of importance of civil belonging, an attitude towards citizenship (“positive”, “neutral”, “negative”) and preferred citizenship (“citizenship of Belarus”, “citizenship of another country”, “dual citizenship”).<sup>5</sup>

In order to analyze features of the perception of a country, we use a technique of semantic differential<sup>6</sup> where respondents were offered to estimate some characteristics of Belarusian social, economic, political and spiritual development (Sikevich, 1999; Osgood and all, 1972), as well as a technique of revealing the feelings towards Belarus.<sup>7</sup>

The construction of semantic spaces was carried out with the help of a method of a factorial analysis (Tolstova, 1998). It allowed us, being based on a complex of parameters, to reveal hid-

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sian Academy of Sciences (2003-2004), a national poll sample of 1,000 people.. Conceptualizations of the notion “citizenship” are rather conservative; therefore this data quite adequately reflects the present day situation.

<sup>4</sup> It is similar to allocation of positions in P. Bourdieu’s social space (Bourdieu, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> We use here the tools designed to reveal a degree of civil identification and importance of civil belonging developed by L. I. Naumenko, a psychological sciences candidate (Naumenko, 2003; Naumenko, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Z. V. Sikevich’s modified semantic differentialis used here (Sikevich, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Some of the applied parameters were based on nominal scales (one’s attitude towards

den (latent) factors, which determine meanings of separate parameters. The received contents of factors were considered to be semantic coordinate axes of corresponding semantic spaces. The analyzed positions were set as points inside this space of coordinates, while the size of a projection of positions on coordinate (semantic) axes shows a degree in which the sense of a given factor characterized the position.

Therefore the received factors represent key categories and through their prism the respondents perceive, estimate and interpret the country and their citizenship. They form a space of meanings the respondents use. The arrangement of the positions in the spaces formed by the factors, allows us to describe the given positions, to express their mutual correlation and to present it graphically, i.e. to estimate a degree of affinity of positions to one another (Petrenko&Mitin, 1994).

## II. Conceptualizations of the notion "citizenship" (definition of a position)

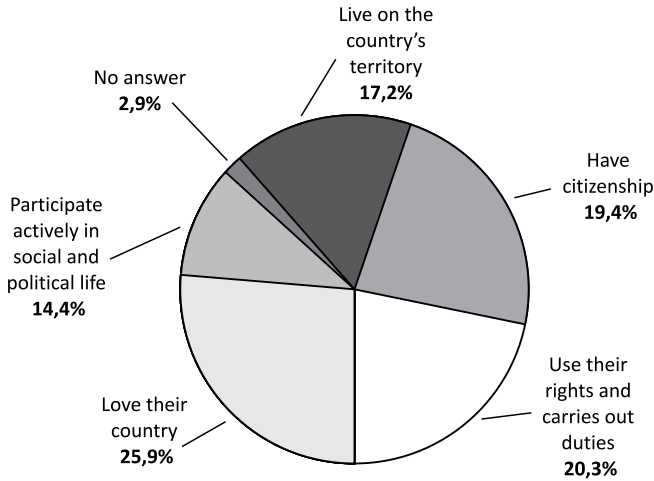
To reveal conceptualizations of the notion "citizenship", we used respondents' answers to the question, "Which of these statements describe the most precisely your understanding of the notion "citizen of the country"?" The variants of the proposed answers had a number of bases to define the essence of citizenship: territorial belonging ("a

citizen is a person who lives in the territory of a country"); a formal status ("a citizen is a person who has citizenship"); implementation of the status ("a citizen is a person who uses his/her rights and carries out his/her duties"); feelings toward a country ('a citizen is a person who loves his country"); socio-political activity ("a citizen is a person who actively participates in the social and political life").

The proposed variants of the answers are not mutually exclusive, and the alternativeness of a question requirement, in this case, aimed to reveal the priority of choice. On the basis of their choice, respondents were thought to be in one or another group, their belonging to which would, first of all, be a sign of distinctions between their understanding of the notion "citizen". According to their answers, the groups of respondents, i.e. carriers of various conceptualizations of citizenship, were further considered to be positions in the semantic spaces.

The answers were the following (see Figure 1): respondents' most popular variant was "to love the country" (25,9%), then "to use the rights and to carry out duties" (20,3%) and "to have citizenship" (19,4%). The variant "to live on the country's territory" was chosen by 17,2% of respondents. The least popular answer was "to participate actively in the social and political life" (14,4%). The received results showed the presence of a whole spectrum of interpre-

citizenship, preferred citizenship and the country). In order to use them in the procedure of a factorial analysis, they were dichotomized, i.e. each variant of an answer was considered to be a separate variable, in relation to which a respondent expressed his/her consent or disagreement.



**Figure 1. Prevalence among respondents of conceptualizations of the notion «citizen»**

tations of citizenship in the public consciousness. Besides, it is necessary to note that all variants of conceptualizations of the notion “citizen” are rather wide-spread. It allows us to compare them and to analyze their positional relationship within semantic fields.

For brevity and convenience of our further analysis, we shall consider the allocated positions according to what their attributive characteristic of the notion “citizen” is:

– “*Territory*” – “a citizen is a person who lives on the territory of a country”;

– “*Status*” – “a citizen is a person who has citizenship”;

– “*Rights and duties*” – “a citizen is a person who uses his/her rights and carries out duties”;

– “*Love*” – “a citizen is a person who loves the country”;

– “*Activity*” – “a citizen is a person who actively participates in the social and political life”.

### III. Perception and comprehension of citizenship (actuality, value, choice)

Let's first analyze the semantic space of “perception and comprehension of civil belonging”. It is based on a complex of parameters which aimed to reveal a degree of civil identification, importance of civil belonging, attitude to citizenship and preferred citizenship. As a result of the factorial analysis<sup>8</sup>, there were four factors explained by accordingly 34, 14, 13 and 11% of the general dispersion. Because of the complexity of the representation of the four-dimensional space formed by these factors, we shall resort to two-dimensional spaces. The positional relationship of these factors allows us to build six two-dimensional spaces. Among those there will be two of them, in our opinion, the

<sup>8</sup> The method of main components with the use of the axes' rotation of the Varimax method.

most informative and interesting ones, which are formed in pairs by the first-second and the third-fourth factors.

Further analysis (with methodological features omitted) allows us to build a space formed by the first and the second factors, and to define it as a space of the "relevance of citizenship and its perception as a value".

In the space of these two factors, the positions of "status" and "love" are farthest from each other, they make an opposition to one another (see Figure 2). Their arrangement proves that the first one is characterized by the most formal attitude towards citizenship, which is revealed in the indifference to civil be-

longing (a low degree of comprehension and importance of Belarusian citizenship) and in a weak interest in the choice of a citizenship. It is possible to say that for this position the questions of citizenship are neither actual, nor important.

Au contraire, the position of "love" is characterized by a high actuality and positive importance of Belarusian citizenship, essentially differing from all the other positions. The high results of both factors allow us to say that for the respondents who chose this position, the contents of these factors reflect important categories through which they perceive and estimate their citizenship.

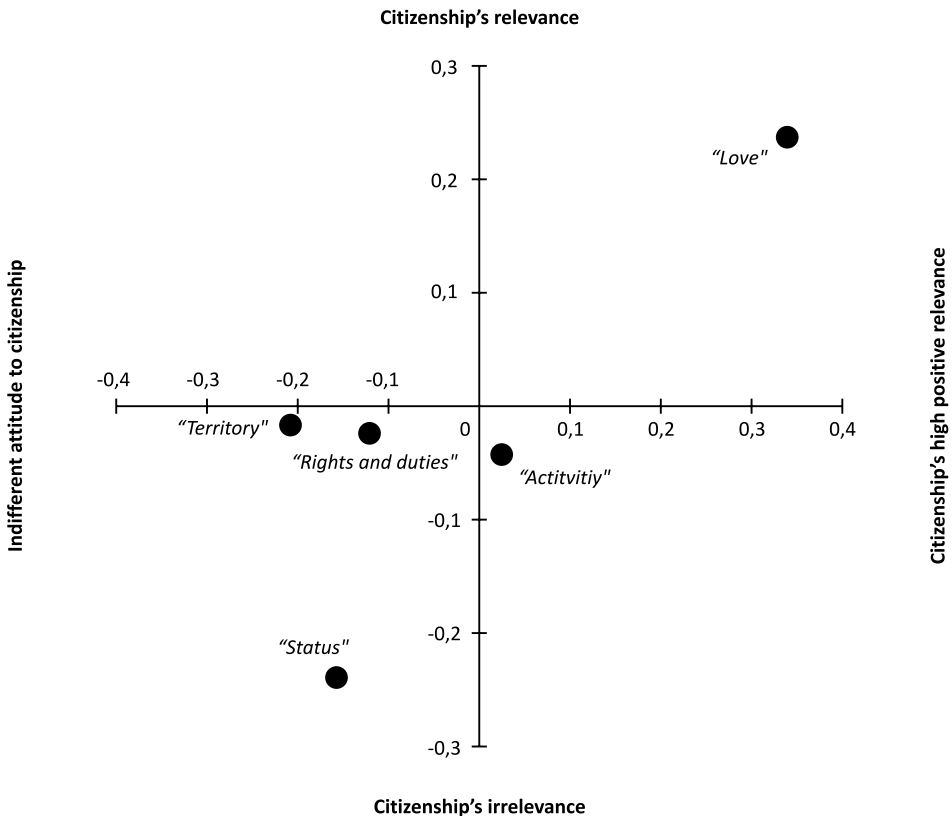


Figure 2. Semantic space of the relevance of citizenship and its perception as a value

It means the questions of civil belonging have a high degree of importance for them.

In its turn, the positions of “territory” and “rights and duties” are located in the immediate proximity to each other, forming an original cluster. It is also necessary to note that they are characterized by the lack of the importance with regard to the Belarusian citizenship and an interest with regard to the change of citizenship, which is larger than that of the position of “status”.

The position of “activity” is placed right on the crossing of the coordinate axes which means the meanings’ space set by these two factors, does not show its originality.

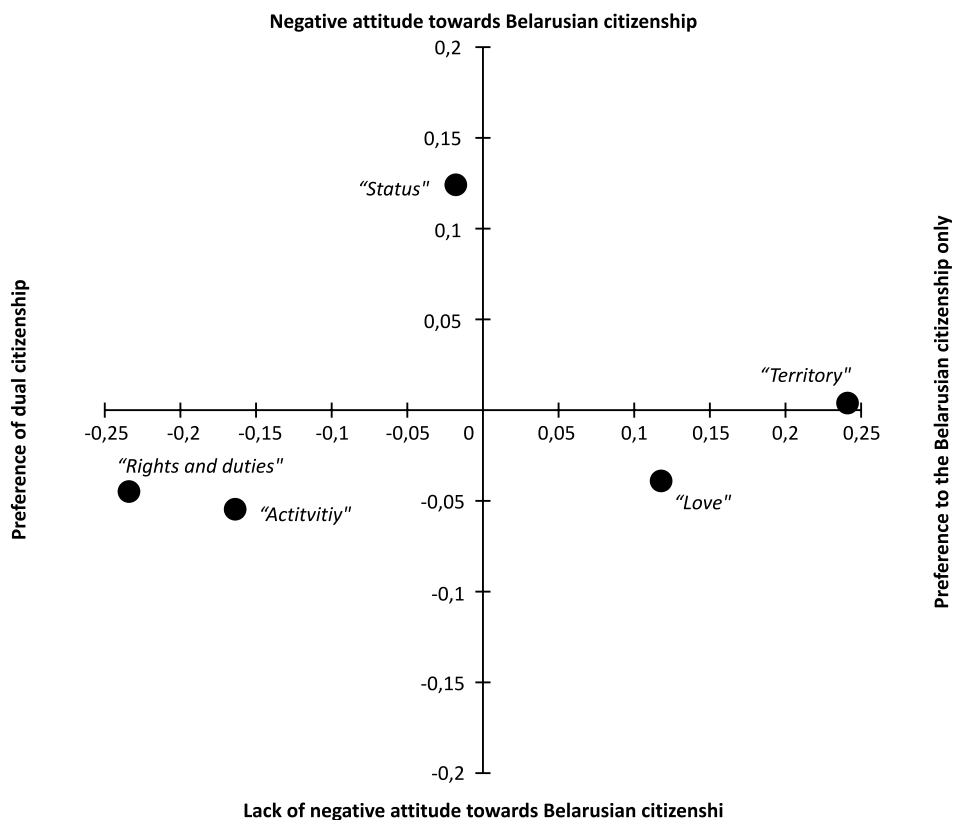
From the point of view of perception of citizenship as a value and relevance of problems of citizenship as a whole, the arrangement of positions in this semantic space reveals the contrast between the respondents who chose the positions of “love” and “status”. At the same time, there is affinity of positions of “territory” and “rights and duties”.

Factors 3 and 4 create a semantic space of “a choice of citizenship”. The third factor reflects an intelligent choice between Belarusian and “expanded” Belarusian citizenship. As Figure 3 proves, the allocated positions are distributed evenly between the axis’ poles, showing essential distinctions in this parameter. Thus, this semantic axis can be considered as a factor that differentiates the studied positions, i.e. it specifies distinctions between them and reflects their originality. The fourth factor can be interpreted as non-acceptance of Belarusian citizenship and a negative attitude to it which is revealed in the

choice between Belarusian citizenship and a citizenship of another country. The negative pole is characterized by the lack of negative attitude towards Belarusian citizenship or a desire to replace it by a citizenship of another country. It is represented by a variable. It is necessary to note that this factor is only highlighted by the position of “status”. The other four positions have approximately equal results.

The analysis of the arrangement of the positions in these two space factors allows us to allocate two clusters. The first one includes the positions of “territory” and “love”, the second one - “activity” and “rights and duties”. The position of “status” is equally spaced from these two clusters. According to the content of the factors, it is possible to say that the first cluster (“territory” and “love”) is characterized by the fact that for the respondents who chose these positions, the question of their attitude towards citizenship is not actual (i.e. it is not a significant basis of their perception as citizens). Probably, the answer to this question is obvious to them. Still, both positions, in particular “territory”, are characterized by the maximal values on the axis of “a choice between Belarusian and dual citizenship”, which means the unequivocal preference for Belarusian citizenship only.

The second cluster (“activity” and “rights and duties”) makes an opposition to the first cluster on the axis of “a choice between Belarusian and dual citizenship”. The respondents, who chose these positions, are characterized by the absence of a negative attitude towards Belarusian citizenship and the preference for dual citizenship.



**Figure 3. Semantic space of a choice of citizenship**

If the two clusters mentioned above, occupy the polar positions in the choice between Belarusian and dual citizenships, then the position of “status” has no certain characteristics in this regard. In its turn, this originality of the position is revealed by high results concerning the factor of the negative attitude towards citizenship, which naturally removes importance of the choice between the Belarusian and dual citizenships.

The positional relationship between these positions in two spaces revealing the specificity of perception of citizenship is characterized by the lack of steady (self-generating) correlations between the positions. In the first case,

the position of “love” is the most remote from the others. In the second space, it is closer to the position of “territory”, while the position of “status” is the most remote. The positions of “activity” and “rights and duties” keep their more or less mutual, rather close arrangement in both spaces. It might mean that there is a certain similarity in perception and comprehension of citizenship among the respondents who chose these two positions.

Various interpretations of the notion “citizen” presented as the positions represent some originality in the meanings’ space revealing specificity of respondents’ perception of themselves as citizens. Conceptualization of citizen-



ship as an emotional affection towards a country is interconnected to a complete positive attitude towards “civil belonging” which is revealed by a high degree of identification with the citizens of a country and importance of citizenship, as well as a positive attitude to it and the unequivocal preference for no other (dual or other country’s) citizenships.

Perception of citizenship by the respondents, who chose the position of “status”, is characterized by the most formal attitude to it. It is revealed in the irrelevance of the issue of “civil belonging” as a whole, and in the negative attitude towards Belarusian citizenship in particular. The respondents who defined “citizenship” by inhabitation (the position of “territory”), demonstrate their indifferent attitude to the problems of citizenship, however still characterized by the unequivocal preference for the Belarusian citizenship.

Respondents’ conceptualizations of the notion “citizen”, appealing to the political and legal aspects of citizenship (the position of “rights and duties” and “activity”), are linked together, on the one hand, to the absence of adherence to the Belarusian citizenship and a rather critical attitude towards it and, on the other hand, to relevance (though also low) of civil belonging.

#### IV. Perception of the country (appreciations and feelings towards Belarus)

Now we shall analyze the arrangement of the allocated positions in the semantic space of the “perception of the country”. It was based on appreciation of Belarus with the assistance of scales of a semantic differential and their answers concerning feelings towards Belarus.

As a result of data processing with the help of the factorial analysis, there were four factors explained accordingly 32, 9, 8 and 7% of the common dispersion.<sup>9</sup>

The first factor (32%), having the greatest explaining ability, represents the most subjectively significant for respondents criterion of perception of the country. It can be called the factor of one’s appreciation of Belarus and attitude towards it.

The fourth factor (7%), forming another axis of space, reflects a degree and depth of an emotional attachment to the country. Thus, the positive pole here reflects high appreciation of Belarus (the criterion of “native”, “mine”); the negative one reflects the indifference to the country. It allows us to call this factor “a factor of feelings of affection towards Belarus”.

The space formed by the first and fourth factors, characterizes a correlation between the “objective” (somehow rational, supraliminal, reasoned) and “subjective” (irrational, emotional) bas-

<sup>9</sup> Here are two of six possible two-dimensional spaces, in our opinion, the most informative and interesting ones which are formed in pairs by the first-fourth and the second-third factors. See a more detailed analysis here (Vodolazhskaya, 2005).

es for perception of the country and an attitude towards it (see Figure 4). It was called the "space of appreciation of Belarus and attitude towards it". The most unequivocal position in this space is occupied by the position of "love" which is characterized by the positive perception of Belarus with the help of a number of political and economic criteria, and by the feeling of belonging. Judging by the arrangement in this space, the positions of "rights and duties" and "activity" create a cluster characterized by the replacement of estimations of Belarus with the help of a number of criteria by the negative feeling to it. The respondents who chose these positions, show high ("rights and duties")

and moderate ("activity") degrees of belonging to the country. The positions of "territory" and "status", on the contrary, are characterized by a high degree of indifference and dispassionateness, providing high ("territory") and moderate ("status") estimations of the country's social and economic development.

The positions of "rights and duties" and "territory" create an original opposition to each other. In the first case, there is a high criticism with regard to Belarus, as well as a high degree of belonging to it. In the second case, on the contrary, there is a weak feeling of belonging and full loyalty.

The second and third factors' positional relationship create the "space of

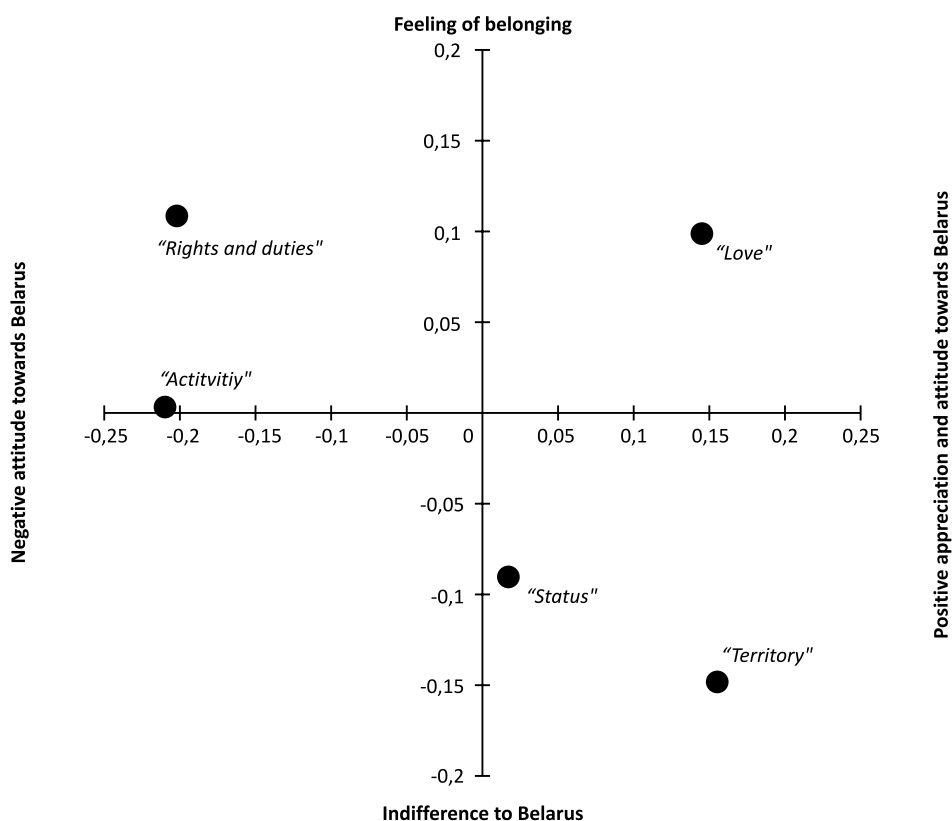


Figure 4. Semantic space of appreciation of Belarus and attitude towards it

feelings towards Belarus" (see Figure 5). It is important to say that these factors are substantially inversely opposite.

The second factor (9%) reveals the presence or absence of the positive feelings towards Belarus. Judging by the variables of the second factor, it can be called the factor of positive feelings towards Belarus. The third factor (8%) is a semantic antithesis. Thus, the third factor is the factor of the negative feelings towards Belarus.

It is important that positive and negative feelings are not the opposite poles of one factor. For respondents, they are independent bases for a description and explanation of their attitudes towards the country. This indicates ambivalence

of perception and emotional attitude to such an "object" as Belarus which assumes the simultaneous presence (or simultaneous absence) of both feelings. Therefore, the opposite poles of positive and negative feelings are the absence of both feelings.

The arrangement of the positions in the space formed by these factors proves that the strongest and the most positive attitude is shown by the respondents who chose the position of "love". Although this position has weak signs of negative feelings, too, i.e. it is characterized by the greatest emotional - valuable saturation of feelings towards Belarus. The same saturation, however with an opposite modality, character-

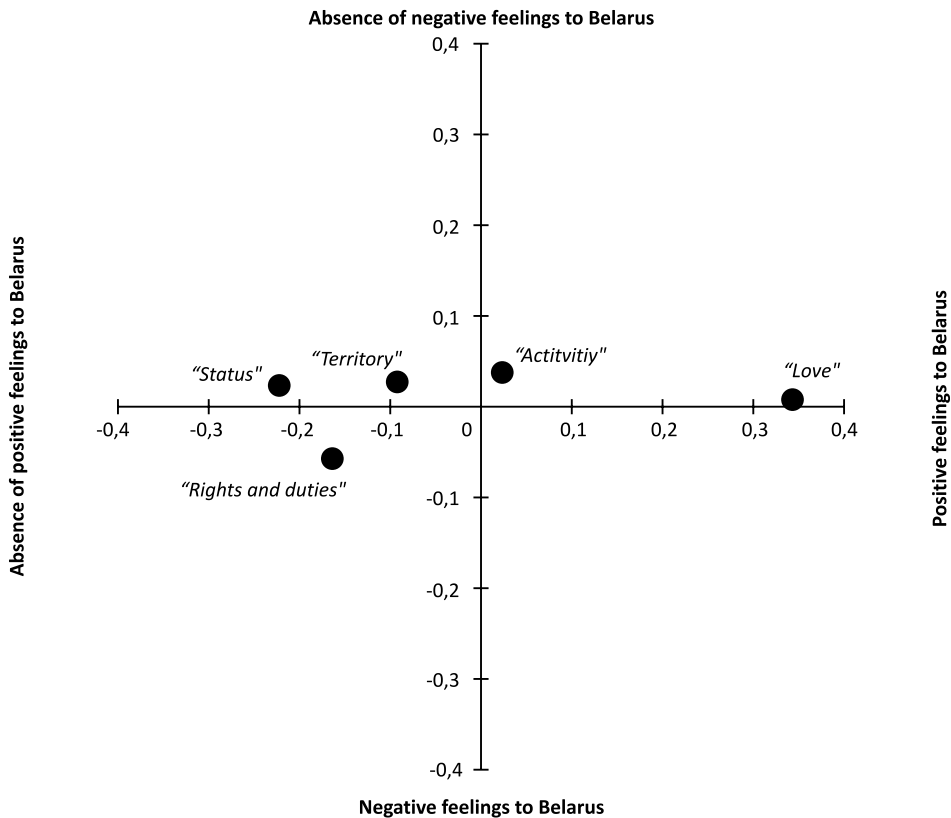


Figure 5. Semantic space of feelings towards Belarus

izes the position of “rights and duties”. Its arrangement in this space reveals the biggest degree of negativism towards the country. Besides, the unambiguity of this attitude is obvious. It demonstrates both absence of positive feelings and strongly expressed negative feelings, which cohere with its position in the semantic space of “appreciations of Belarus and attitude towards it”.

The other three positions are characterized by a rather indifferent attitude to the country. The arrangement of the positions of “status” and “territory” means both feelings are expressed weakly. The position of “activity” has rather positive feelings, though not strongly expressed. It proves a low emotional – valuable saturation of “Belarus” of the respondents who chose these positions.

Comparing the arrangement of the positions in two spaces revealing the peculiarity of the perception of the respondents with regard to Belarus it is necessary to note the following. The most essential distinctions between the positions are observed in the space of estimations of Belarus and attitude

towards it rather than in the space of feelings towards the country. It is the feeling of belonging to Belarus that differentiates respondents who have different conceptualizations of the notion “citizen”. Besides, it is necessary to say that the definition of a citizenship as love to the country is connected to a strongly expressed positive feelings towards Belarus.

Summing up the received results, it is possible to give a brief common characteristic of each of the examined positions. We shall also mark the demographic groups in which they are located (see Figure 6).

The most expressive and substantially complete is the perception of the country and oneself as its citizen among the respondents who chose the position of “love”. They have a high degree of comprehension of Belarusian citizenship and a similar degree of its importance. Perception and estimation of Belarus are unequivocally positive. They correspond to the definition of a citizenship through an emotional and value-based attitude towards the coun-

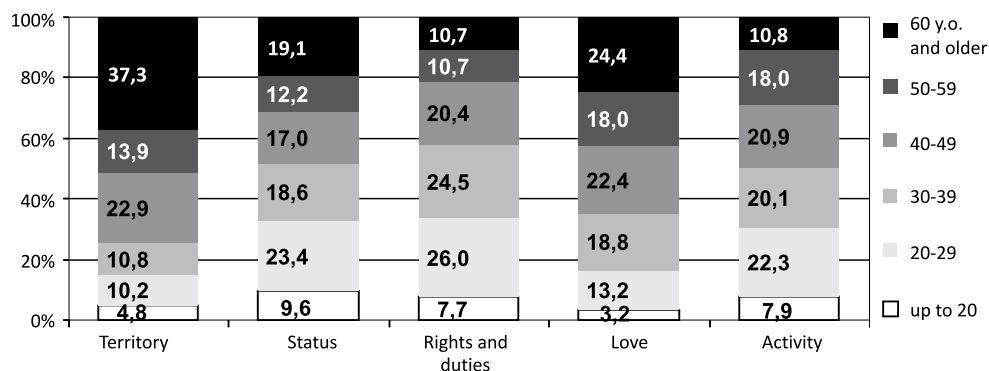


Figure 6. Respondents age and conceptualizations of the notion «citizen»<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Distinctions between the ages of the respondents, who chose different positions, are on the level of 0,001, by Kruskal-Wallis criteria.

try. As a rule, it is a choice of a senior generation.

The position of “rights and duties” is characterized by the lowest appreciation of Belarus, based on a number of “objective” criteria, and at the same time by comprehension of belonging to it, i.e. a strong perception of the country and realization of one’s place in it. Taking it into account, a low value of Belarusian citizenship and a desire to replace it with a double one, however not with another country citizenship, are natural. This position is a choice of a young generation. The definition of the notion “citizen”, describing this position, is not semantically connected to one’s attitude towards the country however first of all has status-related, political and legal meaning. Judging by assessments of the country’s socio-political development, a possibility of the extrapolation of these meanings into the political behavior is extremely low.

The position of “status” is an antithesis to these emotionally filled positions. There is the largest degree of indifference towards the country and its citizenship. This position has the most formal perception of a citizenship, and as a rule, it is chosen more often by the youngest and the most senior generations. The first ones, probably, have not found any value in it; the latter, probably, have lost it already.

The position of “territory”, first of all, is chosen by the senior generation respondents. This position is characterized by the lowest degree of comprehension of one’s citizenship and its importance, as well as a weak expressiveness of an emotional attitude towards the country. At the same time, there is a

high positive appreciation of Belarus by the “objective” criteria, which is in line with the conceptualizations of a citizenship as a habitation in the territory of a country, where the living conditions have the greatest value.

At last, the position of “activity” is characterized by a critical outlook on the country’s social, economic and political development. Besides, the respondents who chose it are characterized by low importance of Belarusian citizenship and by a lack of the desire to keep it. This position’s arrangement in the examined semantic spaces corresponds the least to the chosen formulation of answers. Taking into account that this answer was chosen by mainly young people, it is possible to assume that social and political activity as the essence of citizenship is most likely considered by them as a duty (an acquired, declared norm), which has no relation to the one’s civic stand.

Interpretations of the notion “citizen”, connected with the socio-political status, are chosen mostly by young people, thus being combined with the low appreciation of the country and indifference to it. It does not help to really implement such conceptualizations of citizenship in the country’s real socio-political life. The senior generation’s understanding of the citizenship is based, first of all, on their value-based and emotional attitude towards the country or their attachment to a certain territory however there are almost no political and legal aspects here. There is not only a variety of contents of the notion “citizen”, but also qualitative differences which can be considered to be a parameter of transformation of con-

ceptualizations of this notion in public consciousness of the inhabitants of Belarus.

## V. Brief conclusions

The conceptualizations of the Belarusian inhabitants of the notion "citizen" as a sign of mentality set certain frameworks of perception and assessment of various aspects of "mutual relations" between a citizen and the state. It is expressed by a close interrelation of these conceptualizations with one's perception of the citizenship and a country. For example, the status meaning's actualization in the given conceptualizations (to have a citizen's passport) is connected to formal perception of a citizenship and indifference in their attitude to it and to the country. When the notion "citizen" is filled with emotional contents (feelings towards the country), it means high importance of the citizenship and prevalence of the positive assessment of the country. Conceptualizations of the notion "citizen", connected with signs of social activity or exercising citizen's rights and duties, are reflected in a critical view on the country and the Belarusian citizenship. The understanding of citizenship as an attachment to a certain territory is connected to the high importance and emotional filling of appreciation of Belarus, attitude and feelings towards it, and indifference to the civil status.

Therefore the specifics of the mentality of the Belarusian inhabitants is in the fact that the status of a citizen as a self-value connected to the opportunities of self-realization in the social and political space and a set of values

called democratic (freedom, human rights, etc.), is actually not presented in the public consciousness. The emotional and valuable filling of the notion "citizen" is connected to the feelings and one's attitude towards the country rather than to the citizenship. A wide prevalence of interpretations of citizenship as a formal status and territorial belonging (with the corresponding attitude to the citizenship) reveals the reasons for discrepancy between "quantitative" parameters of one's participation in the country's political life and the real participation in it, between comprehension of civil belonging and an active use of this political and legal status in the social activity.

A variety of conceptualizations of the notion "citizen" in the consciousness of the Belarusian inhabitants reveals the transformation of these conceptualizations, using the generational change as its major mechanism. Conceptualizations of citizenship, based on emotional and value-based attitudes towards the country, attachment to the territory, expressed by the senior generation, are being replaced by conceptualizations with a political and legal content of citizenship, characterized by a weak value-based filling, which makes it formal and declarative depriving these conceptualizations of the motivating potential.

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