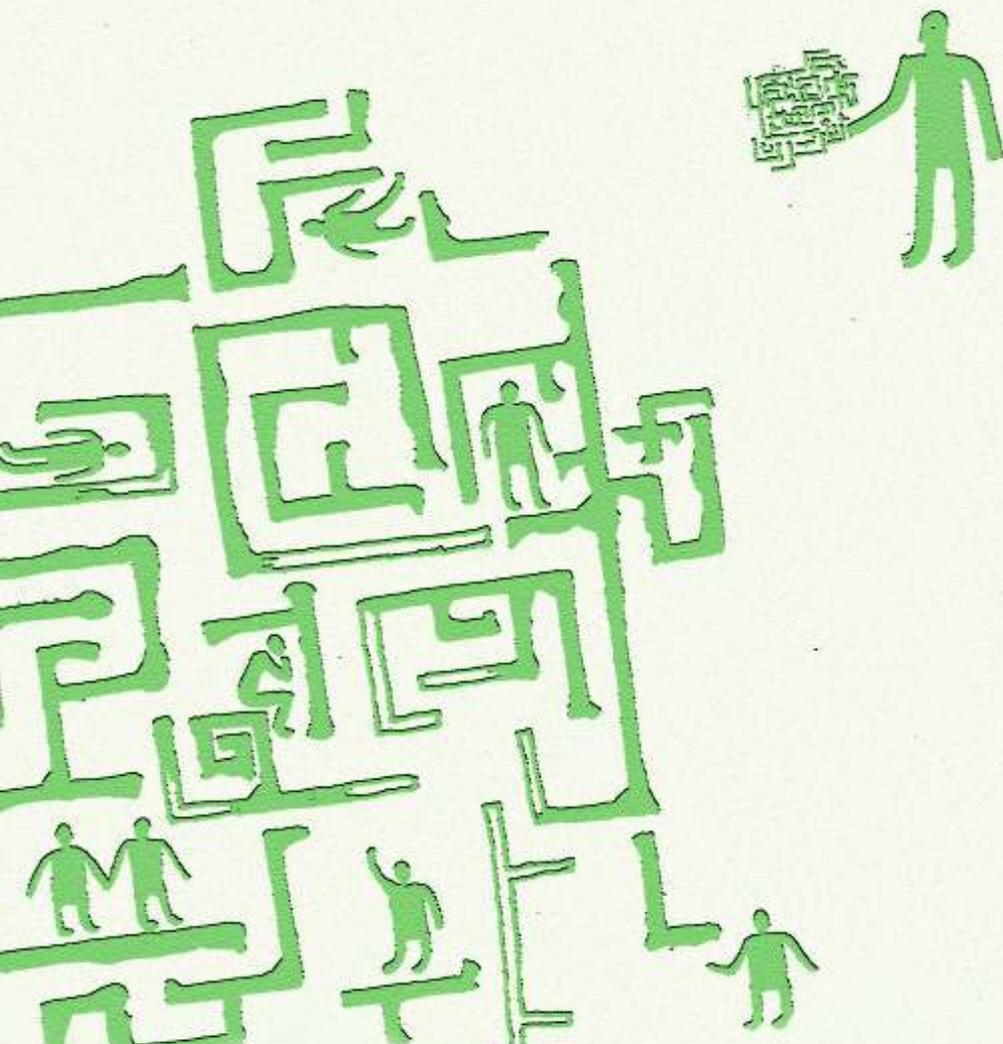


**BELARUS
FOR
BEGINNERS**

ORGANIZING ACTIVITY GAMES

Popular introduction



Andrei Yahorau

Tatiana Vadalazhskaya

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From the authors

Today's Belarus can be considered a challenge, a highly difficult complex of tasks and problems for all who see themselves in an active, deedful position in respect of the socio-historical situation. Our time and our situation are characterized, on the one hand, by the scale and diversity of changes and, on the other hand, by the novelty of problems faced by an individual, Belarusian society and even mankind as a whole. This novelty of tasks necessitates adequate means, ways, instruments and methods of work.

Among such means and methods, the Humanitarian Techniques Agency (HTA) and the Center for Social Innovations (CSI) apply more and more the organizing activity games (OAGs). The OAGs have already been used in Belarus to study local communities' problems, to script and program civil education, to pinpoint problems of European integration of Belarus and to strategize political actions. This method is not the HTA's own invention. It has been created and developed since 1979 in the Moscow Methodological Circle (MMC) headed by Georgiy Shchedrovitsky. However, it is the HTA headed by Vladimir Matskevich (a pupil of G. Shchedrovitsky) where this method has found its active application in analyzing and settling Belarusian matters and where it has even been developed a bit further (small games). Still, despite the OAGs' more than 30-year history, this method remains to be rather new and little-known not only in Belarus, but also in global practice. Therefore, there is a necessity of clearing the basic moments concerning the OAGs,

i.e. history of its appearance, tasks it solves, organizational means, game's inner structure, basic differences from other methods, etc.

This text is not meant to be a complete and comprehensive explanation; it is neither professional manual, nor instruction for the OAGs' organization and implementation. It is more likely addressed to people who settle difficult matters, have difficulties in their own activity and seek for new means of solving them. The authors hope that the book will provide them with some information concerning one of such methods, i.e. the OAGs, which makes it possible not only to study problems, but also to build new ways of settling them. A desire to familiarize deeper and closely with the OAGs demands both absorption in special literature and obligatory practical participation in games. In fact, the basic difficulty is that it is practically impossible to easily describe the games; in order to understand this method, one needs to play the OAGs. This fact explains why there is a lack of literature (especially popular one) about the OAGs and why it is so specific. More often than not, these are records of games or short-hand notes of their discussion, or special methodological texts, or even often just emotional stories of participants of the games. Nevertheless, the more the OAG method spreads, the more questions caused by myths and rumors about the games there are. Therefore, we shall try to present the main principles of the OAGs' organization in a simple form and to provide references to other works which reveal deeper and professionally the essence of this method. For a more complete understanding of the OAGs, we would like to offer the reader not only our text, but also a text by Vyacheslav Bobrovich who was a participant of one of the games carried out by the Humanitarian Techniques Agency.

We also hope that this book will be interesting in its own way to methodologists and game-practitioners as another attempt to describe popularly the OAGs. Taking into account this task's complexity, we would be thankful for colleagues' remarks, comments and proposals.

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I. «Methodology can do anything!», or the OAGs' origin

The organizing activity games (OAGs) appeared and began to develop as a special method in the Moscow Methodological Circle (MMC)¹. Like everything in the history of the MMC, it was natural for the games to appear, even though it happened by chance². It means they appeared at a certain stage of the MMC's development and became the answer to the challenges brought up by time before thinking and thinking people.

¹ It is possible to get acquainted with a more detailed history of the MMC in the books: Khromchenko. Diostancours, Shchedrovitsky G. P., I have always been an idealist. – M., 2001, Shchedrovitsky G. P., On Boards.

² M. Mamardashvili says about the origin of the MMC's historical predecessor, the Moscow Logics Circle, «you should take into account that the beginning is always historical – it means it happens by chance and is fraught with ambiguity of its contents, generating aberrations of what actually happened».

The MMC was an original philosophical and methodological school which existed during 1957-1994 and united colleagues and pupils of the group's leader, Georgiy P. Shchedrovitsky³. The MMC laid foundation of a wide intellectual movement and a new theoretical and practical approach, i.e. System Conscious Activity Methodology (SCA-methodology, methodology)⁴.

The MMC's sphere of interest and the object of study were thinking and man's activity. The history of the MMC had several stages, replacing each other as new tasks appeared and research means and methods developed. Thus, since the late 1950's, the MMC studied thinking as activity⁵, while since 1979 the basic interest was focused on research and scripting of interprofessional and interdisciplinary collectives' joint activity to solve especially difficult (problem-like) tasks⁶. Such tasks needed to be co-organized, uniting various forms of

³ Biographic articles about G. P. Shchedrovitsky: A. A. Piskoppel., To G. P. Shchedrovitsky's creative biography // <http://v2.circle.ru/archive/front_fold/gp/piskoppel1>, Pinsky A., Remembering Shchedrovitsky // Paideia collection, M., 1996, <http://v2.circle.ru/archive/front_fold/gp/pinsky>, G. P. Shchedrovitsky's CV, I have always been an idealist. - M., 2001

⁴ About SCA-methodology: V. V. Matskevich., SCA-Methodology // World Encyclopedia: Philosophy. - Minsk, 2001.

⁵ The program to study thinking as activity was to research the formed forms of refined thinking (philosophical, scientific, engineering, etc.), to research the forming forms of professional thinking (design-programming, development of automated control systems, educational training, etc.), to research and design interdisciplinary collectives, etc. // more details here Shchedrovitsky G. P., Alekseev N. G., About possible ways of studying thinking as activity (1957) // Reports of APN of RSFSR. — 1957 №3 (published again in: G. P. Shchedrovitsky, Selected works. M., 1995.)

⁶ See in particular: *Shchedrovitsky G. P., Principles and a general scheme of a methodological organization of system-structural researches and developments / / System researches. Methodological problems. A year-book - 1981. M., Science, 1981. (published again in: G. P. Shchedrovitsky, Selected works. M., 1995.)*

professional thinking and knowledge - scientific, engineering, administrative, humanitarian, etc. It is within the framework of these tasks' solution that the OAG method appeared.

Till 1979 methodology had developed as a mainly theoretical scientific direction of thinking, though focused on questions of activity, including professional (administrative, engineering, designing, etc.) one. It is through the OAGs that methodology addressed to practical tasks. Among methodologists, the story of how the first OAG was planned and carried out became almost a legend. In 1979, the Ural Branch of the AUSRIIE (All-Union Scientific Research Institute of Industrial Esthetics) faced a task it could not solve, i.e. to develop a program to study the consumer goods' assortment for the Ural region. Meanwhile, all neither knew what an assortment of goods for a certain region was, nor understood how to make it. As it turned out later, this task had no solution at all because the very appearance of such a task could only be possible within the framework of the USSR's planned economy, but then nobody knew it either. At the same time, the MMC worked actively on questions concerning methodology of scripting, and the MMC leader Shchedrovitsky once declared in a polemic passion, «Methodology can do anything!» Hopelessness of the situation of the head of the AUSRIIE's Ural Branch made him risk, and he decided to test this thesis in practice. Methodologists started to work. Later, they described their understanding of the task as follows, «Go somewhere — nobody knows where; bring something — nobody knows what.» As a result, the first game was carried out. Still, then it was not called the organizing activity game yet. Only later, through the reflection and analysis of the game's course and its results, the very concept of organizing activity games appeared, and its main principles were formulated.

At that historic moment, there met readiness of methodologists provided with the means and instruments and the real practical task, i.e. to organize activity of a whole branch, which solution had no

examples or samples. The situation demanded not to simply solve a specific target, but also to create a method of settling similar tasks. Actually, the main result of the first OAG was not the development of the goods' assortment and even not the understanding of its impossibility, but the appearance of the method aimed at working with insoluble tasks⁷.

⁷ There is a verbatim report of the first game's preparation, course and analysis of its results by methodologists, see: OAG-1 // The organizing activity games. - M.: MMC Heritage, 2006

2. Concentrated life, or What are the OAGs at a first approximation?

As we have already said, it is quite difficult, if possible at all, to describe the OAGs. Sometimes, methodologists say that «an OAG is life itself, only in its extremely concentrated kind», while it is known that life cannot be described easily. However, this principle of «concentration», «packing» of many years of life and activity in the OAGs' limited space and time underlies the method.

If greatly simplified, an OAG is **a game imitation** of a certain field of **activity**. Still, even such definition causes many questions right away, What is a «game»? What is a «game imitation»? What do «activity» and the «field of activity» mean? What is it exactly and how exactly is it simulated? Now, we shall narrowly touch the two last questions only.

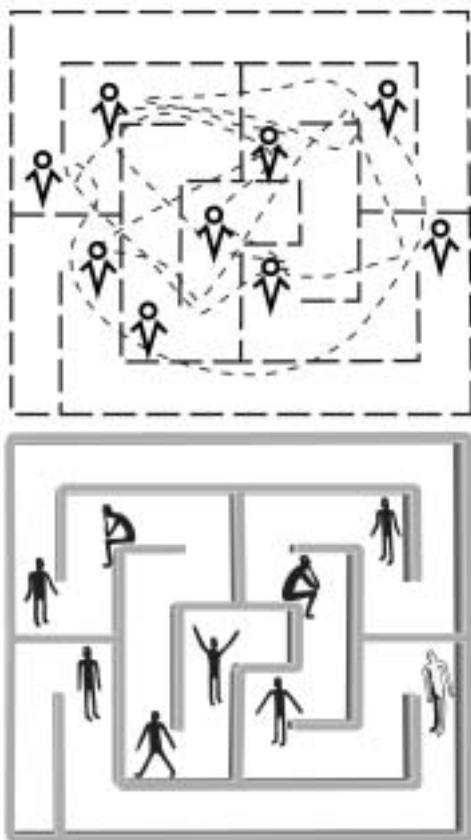
From SCA-methodologists' point of view, practically any purposeful human action is activity, therefore any task or problem can be considered a problem within the framework of certain activity⁸. Speaking about a field of activity, we do not talk about actions only,



but examine a whole set of **positions** and **processes** which provides its fullness, completeness and productivity. For example, speaking about education as a field of activity, we include there not only the pupil's and the teacher's positions, but also those of a methodologist, a manager, a curriculum developer, etc. Besides the basic process of training, we examine processes of communication, management of education, its scientific maintenance and so on. It must be stressed that in any complete field of activity we face a variety and a difficult mutual organization of professional positions and a complex of various processes. Actually, these professional positions and activity processes are the subject of a game imitation. The better and more complete they are presented in a game, the more effectively the problems of this field of activity will be solved.

Thus, the OAG is an imitation of some **real activity situations**, limited in time and space of a game. It is natural that imitation of real situations happens not only during the games. The simplest examples of it can be found in the field of arts - theatre, cinema. Still, unlike theatre where there is an imitation as well, nobody plays roles during an OAG. Real people from a real situation (field of activity) are invited to participate in an OAG. They come with their knowledge, experience and thoughts and have in an OAG the same positions they have in real life. During a game, they have the same relations with other people that they would have in a real situation. The game's only difference is that the players can reject conventionalities, features of a concrete situation and play other scenarios of development of interactions between positions they could not allow themselves in reality. For

⁸ Due to the primary attention to the questions of activity (thinking), SCA-methodology (SCA-approach) is also called the activity approach. More detailed information about activity and activity approach: Matskevich V. V., Activity // World Encyclopedia: Philosophy. - Minsk, 2001, and Matskevich V. V., Thinking // World Encyclopedia: Philosophy. - Minsk, 2001.

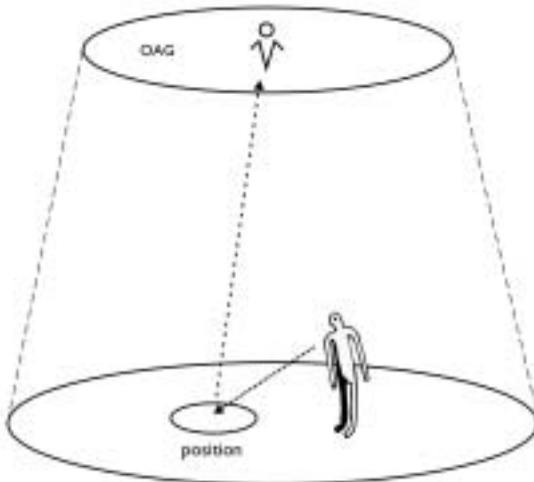


example, a student and a rector of university who do not see each other very often in real life, can meet during a game. In reality, even if they meet, their relations are burdened with the weight of situational restrictions. During a game, there is an interaction of the positions of a student and a rector played by the real student and rector. Such separation of a real person and a position he/she has (e.g. a job title, a special place in the organization's structure, etc.) also creates a game situation. An opportunity to enter a game, remaining in the same position, but without one's «shoulder boards», allows one to talk

seriously about the problems which exist in real life, but which cannot be discussed because of the weight of circumstances.

Note that an imitation is not needed to «play» once again one's own actions or to practice them one more time (then it would just be a game form of study). The OAGs' purpose is **to settle matters** which exist in the field of activity we simulate.

Due to a very difficult technical and intellectual organization, the OAGs demand big expenses of time for preparation, organizers' and participants' high qualification, special conditions for a place and time to carry the OAGs out, and accordingly - high costs. It is natural that such toilful and expensive organization of a game is only required when there are **certain sorts of problems**. First, when the problems **have no known solutions** (available both from experiences of the past and the best achievements of the present) or when none of solutions can bring any positive result. Second, when the professional positions included in complexly organized activity, have no rights to seek for problems' solution. A solution can only be found in the conditions of a specially organized interaction between these



professional positions, i.e. **organization of collective thinking and activity is required**⁹. If a problem can be solved within the framework of the known possibilities, known approaches, then an OAG is not necessary, and other methods, e.g. business games, administrative consultation methods, etc., can be used. The OAGs were invented and are carried out within the framework of strategies and techniques of difficult tasks' solutions **when there is a want of information and collective action, when there is a problem of organizing an action, but it is not clear with what material and resources**¹⁰.

During a game interaction, the participants «refuse» temporarily their narrowly professional point of view and way of thinking in order to see entirely a whole field of activity, to study it together, to identify precisely problems and difficulties in this activity, to develop the ways of problems' solutions and to overcome difficulties, as well as to master the necessary ways of thinking and action in order to implement their solutions. Still, the main thing is that a game is built so that it turns the attention of a game collective from the objects of activity, i.e. from what everyone usually works with, at activity itself and thinking, i.e. at the very way everybody does something. This very «turn» allows to solve problems which have no solutions.

Of course, such a representation of the OAGs is the very first and rather rough approximation. Step by step, we shall gradually deepen and work out in detail the understanding of what the OAGs are, examining it from different sides.

⁹ About problems and problematization, see: Matskevich V. V., Problem // World Encyclopedia: Philosophy. - Minsk, 2001.

¹⁰ Sometimes, problems and tasks can have known solutions, but these solutions were obtained in other socio-economic, cultural and political conditions and cannot be transferred directly. The practice of a direct introduction of the Western technologies became popular after the Soviet system's disintegration. However, now its inefficiency is already obvious. The OAGs can be used to look for effective solutions in concrete historical and cultural conditions.

3. What an OAG can do, or The sphere of tasks an OAG can solve

As a special method, an OAG has a very wide spectrum of possibilities, tasks it can solve, results it can achieve, and effects accompanying a game. Only one page will not be enough for a list of topics the OAGs have been devoted to¹¹. One way or another, we shall have to generalize and group all this variety according to these or those principles, and thus, we shall have to refuse completeness of our presentment. Here, we shall only consider the sphere of the most important tasks the OAGs solve:

¹¹ At the late 1980's, there were a great number of OAGs, and it was possible to talk about a wide game movement. The OAGs were used to settle the matters in management, designing, education, energetics, construction, science, arts and many other vital spheres. In the changed conditions of market economy and the difficult transition period, there were a crisis and a subsequent decline of the game movement. Nowadays, it is possible to talk about the OAGs' revival in Belarus.

1. *An OAG is a form of organizing collective thinking and activity, aimed at solving diversified problems, socio-political, economic, scientific, administrative and technical ones.* There are no practical tasks which can solve themselves — it is one or more people, their conscious efforts, which can do it. The more difficult a task or a problem is, the more difficult organization of thinking and collective activity is needed to solve it. The game, first, creates on purpose artificial conditions for collective thinking which is such a difficult and toilsome activity that it demands a special organization in order it can appear and exist. Second, it creates such conditions when the game participants can study and test their joint activity (to experiment, to build new relations and collectives) until the problem's solution is found. Such experiments are practically impossible in a real situation as they would demand a stop of activity, which frequently can just be dangerous and unpredictable. For example, if there are problems in the organization of collective activity at an atomic power station, then experimentalism in reality is not allowable here, while a game creates a special space where it is possible to play various variants of changes in the organization of activity and their consequences.

An OAG is built on an indissoluble connection between thinking and activity. The arising problem-like situations (which have no solutions) in activity need to be turned into the problems of thinking (contradictions in knowledge, knowledge of nescience) — the only place where their solution is possible. Still, the trouble is that in reality people face not problems themselves, but their consequences, obstacles in activity and difficulties. To formulate the problem itself, it is necessary to do a certain cogitative work which is specially organized during a game. During an analysis of existing difficulties in activity, which are usually on the surface and obvious, the game participants reveal the real problems. The game creates purposefully the conditions which challenge and problematize all components of activity and all

knowledge of all concerned down to the bases, which is impossible in «reality».

2. *An OAG is a means and method of identification and solution of problems, arising at the junction and between different professional areas.* In the modern world, the most difficult and insoluble tasks occur within the framework of activity, which is meant to have an interprofessional interaction. Actually, problem-like situations happen as a contradiction between various professional approaches and different professional knowledge. Thus, it appears that they cannot be solved within the framework of just one profession or a scientific subject. Then, all participants of joint activity must leave the limits of their professional competence and come to a specially organized space of collective thinking. In this space free of subjects and professionalism, the problem is actually formulated, and there is a search for its solution. Then, there is a return transfer of the found solutions into separate professional fields of activity, but already as «packages» of professional and concrete tasks. Within the framework of a game, this transfer is not done into each separate concrete (isolated) activity, but into complexly organized and coordinated activity.

3. *An OAG is a means and method of programming, scripting and planning of activity.* It is such a form which enables a collective not only to understand their existing problems in activity, but also to organize their future work, cogitative and practical. Such work can be presented as projects, programs, scenarios and plans. The OAGs can be used as means and methods of introducing all kinds of innovations.

The OAGs resort to an orientation on a conscious, artificial and transforming attitude to our present and future. This attitude means and demands awareness of purposes, values and responsibility, according to which changes are planned and implemented. Therefore, the OAGs directed on programming or scripting of activity, organize purposefully serious work with self-determination and definition of objectives of separate people and whole collectives.

4. An OAG is a means, form and method of specially technically organized development of everything there is in a game: thinking, activity, collectives and separate people. Every game can be specially focused on the development of one or several of these elements. As for thinking and activity, the development is carried out by defining problems and reaching the borders of knowledge, i.e. the sphere of something unknown and not implemented before. For participants, an OAG is an enriching technology as it is a school of a certain way of life where people do not just live, but aim, think and reflect. Besides, during a game, people and collectives can learn some new for them and new in general kinds of activity. This moment of learning something new through a game makes the OAGs look like children's games. Like kids, game participants absorb the world of joint activity with the help of a game. An OAG is a children's game dedicated to challenging topics and problems, as well as questions of human activity, which are not solved yet. For collectives and groups, an OAG can also be used as an integration tool at the level of purposes, ideas, tasks and methods.

Besides, the OAGs are used to research, analyze and describe collective activity, to reveal and formulate the purposes of development of various systems of activity, to self-determinate and self-organize people in new conditions, etc. One more sort of tasks, which are extremely seldom understood as the main ones, but always carried out during the OAGs as accompanying ones, is education, training, preparation and improvement of professional skills of experts and especially managers. By the way, such secondariness of training is one of the OAGs' distinctive characteristics. For example, during trainings or business games, educational tasks, on the contrary, are basic. During a game, education is only needed when the tasks the participants face, are obviously higher than the intellectual means the participants have. And it concerns all, from the headmaster of the game and methodologists to simple participants of an OAG, and everything participants do is done together with accompanying education.

The wideness of tasks solved by the OAGs makes it possible to use them in settling very difficult and complexly interconnected problems. Still, this also limits the sphere of their usage, making it very difficult and expensive («cutting blocks with a razor») to apply the OAGs for less significant questions.

4. All our life is an OAG, or What differs an OAG from other games

Considering an OAG a method, it is necessary to stress the two most important points. First, an OAG is a game (and this differs it from other methods of collective work, seminars, conferences, trainings, such methods of problems' solution as brainstorm, consultations, expert techniques, etc.), and second, an OAG is a game focused on activity, and therefore it differs from other games, business-like and imitating ones. We shall examine these differences in succession.

The game form corresponds directly to the SCA-approach, which is the OAGs' basis. It is thought that thanks to the «parameters of freedom», the game is one of the highest forms of the development of thinking and activity. By the way, after the first OAG, methodologists could not find an appropriate name for the new method. It was very difficult for them to define what it was. The name «game» was chosen by an «ex contrario» method as it is not a seminar, not a training, not a symposium, etc. The most suitable definition, revealing the essence of the method, was the word «game». You may ask, why a game?

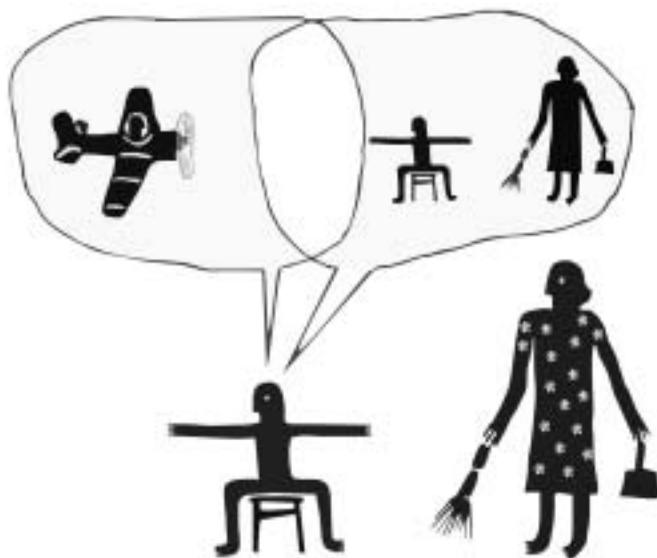
First, it is during a game that a person can learn new, sometimes not existing in reality roles and kinds of activity. Sometimes, these kinds of activity are created during a game, that is not possible to achieve during other forms of work (trainings, seminars, etc.), during which people can also learn new kinds of activity, but only such kinds which already have known norms and formed rules, and they should only be learnt and mastered, but not created. However, if during such forms of work, completely new ways of activity are found or created, they (trainings and seminars) become (or are absorbed by) a game.

During the OAGs, nobody, not even the organizers, knows the right answers to the questions the participants have to solve. There are only rules of how it is possible to play, looking for solutions of complicated questions and problems. This circumstance has a special value, when problems' solution demands such professional positions, for which there are no precise norms, or when among participants (or society in general), there are no necessary experts. Thanks to playing out such nonexistent or foreign roles, both person and activity develop.

Second, any game always demands preservation and retention in consciousness of two plans, two realities, i.e. the game's reality itself and the reality of «real» life. On the one hand, we are entirely in a game where the game's subjects are very real, - and this is the first, game's reality. However, on a background of consciousness, there is always an understanding that this is still a game, not «real» life. Nonetheless, real life does not disappear from the game as it is represented by real people, their relations, the real time dedicated to the game, audience, etc. The two realities' combination creates the OAG's body and space.

Game-practicians' favorite example illustrates evidently the two realities' combination during a game. It is an example of a children's game: here is a child, sitting on a chair, who is playing a pilot in a plane. He is completely absorbed by his game - for him it is not a chair

any more, but a real plane, and he is not sitting, but flying. However, at the same time, when his mother with a tray of cups is approaching him, asking him to move the chair, what does he do? He «moves the plane», i.e. the chair, making way for the mother. At this time, he is simultaneously in two realities, in the game's reality and in the «real» reality of a corridor where his chair is an obstacle on the mother's way. In his actions, he does not ignore either of realities, he neither stops playing, nor drops out of life, he manages to combine them in one space, keeping completeness. Growing up, people frequently lose this unique ability; therefore an adult needs time and special conditions in order to enter a game.



The retention of two plans, combination of two realities is only typical for game-like methods, in all other cases it is not necessary and sometimes undesirable.

Third, as we have already mentioned above, a game is life, but only in its concentrated kind, and that's why during a game it is possible to

represent all completeness of human activity. Pure thinking, working processes (e.g. research, scripting), communication and human relations simultaneously coexist in it. Unlike trainings and seminars (where, of course, all these are present as well, but there is always something purposefully ignored), each of these processes is necessary for a game, is drawn consciously in it and becomes an important part of the game reality.

At last, a game form allows «serious» people to view differently their activity and to experiment, to ask questions and to challenge something which is thought to be absolute and unshakable. During a game, they can get away from the narrow-professional tasks and views, see entirely the whole field of activity, understand other participants of the common activity, which existence and whose problems did not bother them before. It is possible to see one's own professional position in completeness of all connections and relations, to regard it from the point of view of other positions. The game form, in a sense, is protective for a person. In the game conditions, everyone can say anything they want, criticize something which in reality cannot be criticized. Still, if a person crosses the borders and feels disapproval or fear of his/her own boldness, he/she can always say, «I'm playing, nothing else». It is especially important for status people, e.g. top-ranked experts, civil servants and officials, for whom the feeling of security means a lot.

Now, we shall pay attention to the differences between the OAGs and other game methods, in particular business games. The main difference is in **what exactly** is played, **what** is the topic of a game. The basis of a game's topic in both cases is a real situation which has difficulties in activity. However, the way the situation is worked out differs much, depending on the type of a game. For business games, experts investigate a situation and model it. The model allows to predict the consequences of participants' these or those actions in a given situation. In this modeled situation, there is always the correct decision, the correct way of actions. During a game, participants try

certain courses in a situation and observe their modeled consequences, thus learning to make correct decisions to solve problems and difficulties. But only familiar, known or typical situations can be modeled.

During the OAGs, we know nothing about a situation, i.e. we cannot determine its type or build an adequate model, though, of course, we know basic processes and a set of positions. To study a situation is part of a game, where the role of researchers is played by players themselves, and without their participation such study would be impossible. As a result, nobody knows the right solutions, and the situation develops right during a game, the consequences of these or those actions are known neither to players, nor to organizers of a game. The meaning of such a game «in the context of indefinitude» is not to teach correct actions, but to develop a field of activity. Therefore, the OAGs are not used during typical situations which have solutions, as more appropriate business games can be used here.

Thus, an OAG is not a new alternative to business games; each of the methods has its special sphere of application. The OAGs' major principle, the principle of development, differs the OAGs from all other games focused on solving concrete subject tasks or situations. The OAGs' participants do not obtain new knowledge, but participate in the process of collective thinking and activity aimed at solving problems, i.e. they themselves find and master new knowledge.

5. The OAGs' usage in the context of transforming societies

The OAGs as a method and a form of development of thinking and activity are especially actual and relevant in such public situations when a system transformation is required, i.e. a transfiguration or a reorganization of a big number of difficult and complex fields of activity. All post-Soviet societies need at least to revise the purposes and tasks of activity, and to restore and reword them in such areas as education, science, culture, political organization, management, social self-organization, etc. At the same time, for people in the post-Soviet countries and, in particular, in Belarus, the problem of absence of practice of such formulation of purposes and tasks, as well as experience of self-organization, is actual. It demands not only high intellectual equipment, but also, first of all, readiness to take responsibility for such difficult tasks to be solved. One more prominent aspect is the scale of the view, when the field of activity and responsibility covers the whole country.

Belarusian society needs the OAGs at once for a number of reasons. First, the reorganization of the areas named above, even though it can

be based on somebody else's experience, nevertheless needs to allot purposes and look for forms which will be adequate to its own situation and aspirations. The experience of samples' irreflexive use every time makes problems only more aggravated. The majority of the present tasks are the tasks which have no known solutions, i.e. they need to be solved by thinking and scripting the corresponding types of activity. Such tasks can only be solved in specially organized conditions of collective thinking and activity.

At the same time, the implementation of the created programs and projects demands the presence of the collective subject which would be quite competent and qualified. It is obvious that there are no such competences and qualifications for these new kinds of activity. Only within the framework of the OAGs, there can simultaneously be both activity's scripting and formation of the collective subject who struggles for its implementation, mastering new positions during a game. Thus, within the framework of the games, people learn the scale of thinking and create the professional positions missing in the country - and it is in the second place.

Third, the OAGs are a **school of democracy** in this word's direct and exact sense as the ideas they are built on are the ideas of **co-organization** and **self-organization**. Democratic life demands from each person considerably bigger efforts, thinking abilities, self-discipline and responsibility. The game is one of the means to develop **activity** and **responsibility** in the collectivity conditions; it is a means of development of people and collectives who are able themselves to allot purposes and achieve them. In fact, unlike other game forms, during the OAGs, nobody, neither participants, nor organizers, knows the «right answer», i.e. the contents of the result (program, project, plan, etc.) which will be achieved. The organizers' task is to correctly organize the basic working process and provide it with all the necessary things. The game's result is to put the game's collective into an unknown area where it would be able to develop the kinds of activity it did not know before.

6. The game's structure and the organization (qualification) requirements

Understanding the OAGs' mechanism, we shall have to consider some important points such as the game-collective's positional structure (who exactly and what roles are present in the OAGs), game-organizers' and game-participants' competences and requirements, game's basic stages and course.

The game-collective's structure

As it was already said above, the OAGs are built as an imitation of a real activity situation or a field of activity. It means game-participants should represent all necessary professional positions which can be found in this real situation. Such participants represent the basic structure of players. Besides, game-organizers can add to «a game-field» such positions which can help to solve a problem (e.g. positions missing in the real situation) or the positions helping to develop game-processes (professional researchers, experts, developers, etc.).

For the imitation's completeness, all basic substantial or valuable oppositions should be presented. For example, in reality the representatives of the same position can have different, sometimes completely opposite, views concerning their activity. The game's development is often built on finding-out the essence of these contradictions. Therefore, among the OAGs' participants, there should be carriers of the key ideas, values, points of views, which determine the real situation in this field of activity.

All these participants are divided into groups, each of which has its own purpose and, depending on this purpose, is included into the joint working process. For example, during a game dedicated to a project of civil education, all participants were divided into groups according to the basic processes which **are necessary** for a normal work of this field of activity. «**Necessary**» because some of such processes like standardization and technologization of civil education were absent in the real Belarusian practice. Thus, the following groups were created during the game:

1. Implementation of basic processes of civil education
2. Organization, governance and management of processes of civil education
3. Technologization and standardization of civil education
4. Organization and launch of projects and programs in the sphere of civil education
5. Organization and launch of communication and PR processes in the sphere of civil education
6. Scientific and conceptual maintenance of civil education.

Though the list of participants' groups is set by the game's program, the formed groups themselves can determine and analyze the situation in order to formulate the game's purposes for their groups, i.e. they decide what and what for they will do during the game. The purposes allotted by the groups, are often directly connected to the contents of their own activity and the group's name. For example, the group called

«Organization and launch of communication and PR processes in the sphere of civil education» decided to carry out the task of organizing communication between all professional positions in civil education presented during the game. The group's effectiveness depends on whether or not and to what degree the group succeeded in reaching the task they allotted.

Besides the basic structure of players, the game has «service» positions (the headmaster of the game, a methodologist, a researcher, a game-facilitator) who are all together called the game-organizers. These positions are as if built above the imitated activity situation and have their own special functions during a game. They are not connected directly to the game's contents and topic, i.e. to the field of activity which is being played. These functions are needed to provide the players with all the necessary means and to create such conditions so that the game's basic players would achieve their tasks. Control over the game's rules, organization of work according to the program and provision with special knowledge are included here. For example, if the present program's task is «to research something», then they watch and direct the game so that this very task would be achieved and, if the players need to know *how exactly* to research it, then they provide them with the necessary knowledge.

These functions are specially divided into various «focuses of management».

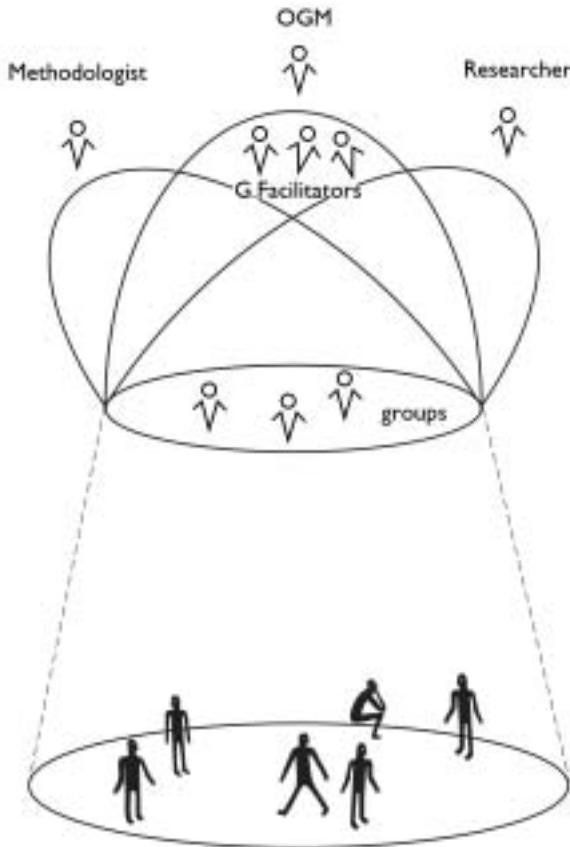
The first focus, «the game's organization, governance and management», is first of all the headmaster of the game who organizes and rules the implementation of the game's program, i.e. the stage-by-stage course of the basic working process. It is actually the most important person for the game's organization. His/her task is to control **all** processes during the game, from pure thinking to development of interpersonal relations. As a rule, he/she presents the orientation report, defines the game's frames, designates the basic topics and problems, actualizes the game's purposes and tasks and

marks the game's basic steps and stages, as well as appoints sessions, lets somebody speak, corrects the game's program if necessary, etc.

The headmaster of the game has not only to carry out a game, but also to organize, manage and rule the whole complex of previous and subsequent works, from talks with the orderer, development of the plan and the program, selection of participants and preparation of the game's teams, to the analysis of the game's results.

The headmaster of the game rules the team of game-facilitators who represent him/her when the groups work. Their task is to organize the groups' work based on the current topic worked out by the group. A game-facilitator's work is similar to that of a moderator, i.e. he/she rules the group's communications, fixes the limits of a debate, records the work's results, etc. However, unlike a moderator, he/she also has a number of special functions such as organization of players' self-determination and thinking, which he/she has to support with the necessary means (concepts, schemes, etc.) His/her implementation of these special functions assumes that, unlike a moderator, a game-facilitator can and must demand logic severity and sequence of assertions, test their gravity and validity and supervise the assertions' conformity with the position a player has. Still, a game-facilitator's function in a group does not presuppose his/her direct work on the topic's contents. In general, he/she can have very few knowledge in the field of activity which is being discussed. Therefore, implementation of the functions described above is only possible thanks to certain methodological knowledge and special techniques (actually, this is the game-technique itself).

The second focus of management, «methodological», is to provide the game's collective with cogitative means and tools in order to perform the necessary works. Such means are methodological schemes which do not give substantial answers, but act as instruments of organizing thinking. During a game, every group, and sometimes a whole collective, has such a moment when they reach an impasse in their thinking. In



order to move further, it is necessary to transfer the players' knowledge to another form which will allow them to leave the substantial impasse. The methodological schemes help it. A methodologist «packs» everything the game's collective has worked out into these schemes, then works with them and develops them. Then, together with the game's participants, he/she fills them with contents and transforms them into new knowledge required for the solution of the game's tasks.

The methodological focus rules the game not by direct levers (allotting tasks, working out an order of speeches, etc.), but by

pinpointing problems, defects and discrepancies in the players' knowledge and suggesting the ways of overcoming them.

The task of providing the game with cogitative means, i.e. schemes, concepts, ideas, also demands methodologists' participation from the game's plot to its final analysis. Besides, methodologists can also have additional tasks, such as to study the forms of thinking, e.g. professional one, implemented during a game.

The third focus, «researching», is to study the game's processes, the basic working one and others. As a result of their work, researchers can reflectively rule the game. It means they can show the participants the changes of the game's situation and the results the game's collective has achieved in its way to its goal. The researching focus presents «pictures» of a condition of the game's processes, i.e. their course, dynamics and productivity. For this purpose, he/she constantly monitors everything that happens during a game. During the games, where there are many processes and many groups, a researcher can collect and systematize the results of work every day. This information helps the game's collective to see the OAG's picture entirely, with all its imperfection and defects. Besides, both methodologist and a researcher can have their special tasks not connected directly with the game's topic and contents. For example, during one of the first games, the researching group studied a reflection based on the OAG's materials. As a result, a general methodological scheme of reflective work stages was worked out.

Game-participants' qualifications and competences

The game's administrative tasks are very difficult and need corresponding qualification and preparation. For each of the focuses of management, these qualification requirements are different.

Game-facilitators. The minimal competences the game-facilitators must have are the following:

- possession of basic methodological knowledge and the skill in working with schemes. The schemes are the game's basic tool, and the game-facilitator helps the players to learn it. Also, the methodological schemes are needed by the game-facilitator in order to work himself/herself with the topic and contents discussed by a group. As we already said, the game-facilitator is often not an expert in the game's topic, and he/she needs the methodological schemes in order to cope with the work in a group. With the help of the schemes, the game-facilitator can correctly work with the contents, i.e. to group, develop, find defects and contradictions, etc., irrespective of the topic.

- knowledge of the basic working processes. It is necessary for the game-facilitator to correctly organize the work in a group. In fact, without knowing what «research», «scripting» or «analysis of a situation» mean, he/she can neither distinguish them, nor correctly organize the work.

- possession of some special techniques. Besides, the «scheme technique» (the technique of working with schemes), the game-facilitator has to know the technique of reflective work and work with groups, basic communicative techniques, etc.

Such qualification demands from potential game-facilitators higher education, i.e. possession of basic knowledge of logics, philosophy, skills in analyzing, theorizing and abstract thinking. The special game-technique qualification can be achieved as a result of additional courses within several months during a preparation to the OAGs on the basis of previous knowledge and skills.

Researchers and methodologists should have a higher methodological qualification than game-facilitators. It is also desirable that they have previous experience of participation in games as participants or game-facilitators, which allows them to orientate themselves quicker and better during a game. It is difficult to describe simple qualification characteristics for the game positions as their description inevitably demands a deepening in the area of

methodological knowledge. We shall only note that neither methodologist, nor researcher can be prepared during a couple of months before the game, even if they are highly educated experts. These qualifications need a constant methodological work outside the OAGs, too.

The headmaster of the game. It is even more difficult to describe in a standardized form the qualification requirements and necessary competences of the **OAGs' headmaster**. Till the mid 1990's, it had been considered that no one, except for the founder of the OAG method Georgiy P. Shchedrovitsky, can rule the games. During the first games, not headed by G. P. Shchedrovitsky, this role was carried out by two people at once because one person could not cope with control and management of all processes during a game. Actually, the headmaster of the game should have qualifications of methodologists, researchers and game-facilitators, using these knowledge and skills in the scale of a whole game. Today, there are already quite a lot of people who can rule the OAGs, but the qualification of the headmaster of the game is not standardized yet and transferred directly from the teacher to the pupil.

Game-participants. Not only game-organizers need special competences. There are requirements, but of some other sort, for the OAGs' participants, too. On the one hand, it may seem that a serious substantial work needs highly-qualified professionals in their field of activity, and of course such experts are welcomed. However, the OAGs' task is to allot and solve problems, therefore participants' qualification is determined not only by his/her knowledge of the subject, — here, it is more important to critically revise one's knowledge, to seriously perceive and understand somebody else's knowledge and assumptions, to learn and master new methods of work, as well as to be really interested in problems' solution and able to play. Of course, nobody tests participants invited to a game, but such competences' presence allows them to participate more effectively in the game and helps «to win» an OAG.

A game's basic stages and course

A course of an OAG in time can be presented as a change of stages with different meanings and tasks they solve:

Preliminary stage: reception of an order and formulation of a game's plan. It includes allocation of a problem area in activity, definition of basic purposes, tasks and topics of a game. This stage is very important, but as it does not touch the essence of the OAG method, we shall not describe it.

Preparatory stage. This stage is often the longest. Sometimes, it takes two or three months of hard work to prepare a one-week game. What does this stage of preparation include? Preliminary studies and a substantial study of a game's topic, development of an organization project (org-project) and an OAG program, a cogitative modeling and scripting of a game's basic moments, selection of participants and preparation of the game-facilitators' team, solution of organizational and technical questions. We shall not describe each of the specified kinds of work, except for the most important ones - the game's program and org-project. They are the OAGs' main organizing documents used by the game's organizers and participants.

A game's **org-project** is a list of groups, with the help of which a certain field of activity is simulated. It is compiled so that all basic problems and difficulties in the imitating activity situation can be revealed during a group's work and interaction. A set of the OAGs' groups can be formed as a complex of professional positions and processes in activity, or it can imitate the basic substantial oppositions.

A game's **program** is a stage-by-stage description of a working process, split into days and forms of works. It means that the basic game process (e.g. scripting or programming) is presented as a stage sequence. Each of them has its own day (or several days) and its own name during a game. The name reflects the game's basic task of the day.

Every day in the game's program has some forms of works. *The work in groups* is to solve the task assigned by this day's topic, depending on the purposes and tasks of this or that group. Based on the groups' work, reports are prepared. Then, they are discussed at plenary sessions. During *plenary sessions*, which include the game's whole collective, the groups' reports are read and discussed. Every working day is finished by *the game technique reflection*, during which the game's course is analyzed, and the tasks of the next day are corrected. This form of the OAGs' work is obligatory for the organizers (focuses of management and game-facilitators), the other players can participate in the reflections if they would like to. Usually, those who have joined the game consider the game technique reflections to be an important part of the work and therefore attend them. A game's program does have time for *an individual work* and *a club dialogue*, and of course breaks for dinner and rest.

A game's program only sets the organization of the working process, general contours, but not a detailed description. It is because of the main principles which say that the game's most important part is to get into the sphere of the unknown, which cannot be planned, but can be organized.

Basic stage. It is the organizing activity game itself, where there is a direct implementation of the prepared programs and org-project. Such implementation is always partial because during a game the purposes, basic representations, groups' structure and even the program itself can be rethought and changed. Nevertheless, during the OAGs, there are always several key phases.

The game's first phase is when the game's collective enters the problem situation. This phase's primary goal is the participants' self-determination, i.e. their comprehension of their purposes and tasks of activity both in game and real life. According to self-determination, the participants formulate the group's purposes. Based on the chosen purposes and tasks, the players analyze the activity situation. The

collective tests available knowledge, representations and regimes of work, then reveals difficulties, formulates problems and defines the necessary means, methods and knowledge in order to settle problems. It is also important to compare **all** which is **necessary** (knowledge, means) to what **actually** the players **have**. After the first phase ends, the collective must precisely know divergences between the available possibilities and the allotted tasks. It is called the *problematization*. It is the OAGs' turning point, when the former understanding of activity, as well as the habitual schemes and norms, are challenged and sometimes destroyed. The problematization stage forces participants to look at their activity in a new fashion and to move to the solution of the tasks which have no solutions within the framework of the former understanding. The problematization's important point is to define a problem correctly. This definition should not just be a fixation of an «impasse» - it must show what exactly hinders the goal's achievement. If it is possible to formulate a problem in this way, then we will have bases for development of the basic ideas of its solution.

After the problematization, there comes the second phase, which differs the OAGs from other methods most of all. This phase's essence is in transition from subject-related and professional ways of thinking and activity to a different way of thinking. Now, the search for the solution of the revealed problems turns from an analysis of the situation and objects in activity into an analysis of the very ways of activity. Such work is called the methodological work, and there are special means, the methodological schemes, for it. During the second phase, they become the OAGs' most important «toys». Thus, the very «game» is placed, first of all, on a «board», where these schemes are created, developed and tested.

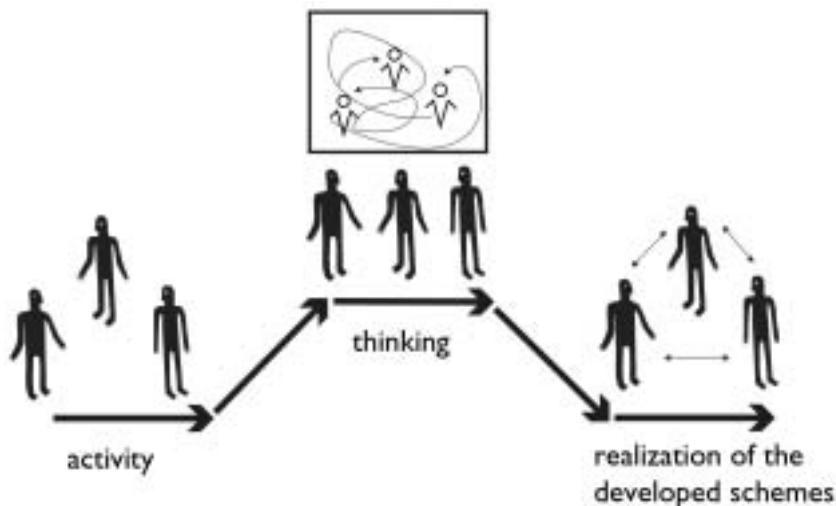
It is necessary to apply these schemes because it is only possible to really solve the problems at a cogitative level, abstracting from momentary circumstances, human emotions, etc. For example, in order to solve the problem of co-organization of activity of a director and a

subordinate, it is necessary «to forget» about the real doers of the roles of the director and the subordinate and to solve this problem at a theoretical level, using the positions of a «director» and a «subordinate». It allows to work further, not considering situational circumstances any more. This is the only way the OAGs can really move to the solution. The OAGs' specificity is that they, first of all, solve the problems of the organization of activity. While the problems of an interpersonal interaction, even though they are an important part of the OAG, nevertheless are secondary if compared to cogitative and activity tasks.

Basically, any schemes, not necessarily methodological ones, allow to separate oneself from a concrete situation and to solve a task in purely cogitative forms. Still, it is the methodological schemes that are the schemes where activity is fixed, and therefore they are the best for the OAGs' further work. However, as a rule, people are not ready to work at once at the level of pure thinking (with schemes, concepts, notions). That's why at this stage, the role of the methodological consultations is essential.

During this phase, the game's collective finds new steps (presented in the schemes) in the organization of joint activity when the problems can be solved. For example, some missing positions, or even whole production processes not taken into account before, can be found out.

The following, third phase co-organizes the game's collective so that to play the developed schemes. The players try on themselves the new positions or new functions in the old positions, playing new relations. Thus, the understanding of the ways of solving the problem, achieved as a result of teamwork, is tested and corrected. Actually, the third phase is an original return to the reality, but it does not mean the game's end, - it is just a transition to a special working regime. In a regime of scripting (programming, planning, acceptance of joint obligations, etc.), the players start rebuilding their own activity, being oriented on reality. Being still in the game regime, they master the newly-found ways of solving problems, try them not only on themselves, but also on other



professional positions in the joint organization of activity. During this phase, the participants adjust the results (knowledge, ways of activity, other ways of thinking) to a real situation.

This phase is completed by «*an exit from the game*» - a special procedure of transition from the game regime to the regime of real activity. Usually, it is the general and obligatory for all participants final reflection of the game. Here, all participants of an OAG, both players and organizers' team, have the right and even must express their feeling concerning the game, as well as say everything they did not say during the game.

Final stage is for the headmaster of the game, methodologists and game-facilitators' team, it takes place after the game. Here, they sum up the results and discuss the special tasks allotted for the researchers and methodologists. As a rule, the headmaster of the game prepares a substantial report based on the OAG's results. However, the OAG's main result is not presented in a text form. This result is the problem's solution directly in the organization of activity the players found out during the OAG.

7. Conclusion

It happens to be quite difficult to describe briefly and simply the OAGs and not to lose the method's essence in this simplification. Trying to be clear, we have purposefully omitted a lot of things in this text. However, one thing must be stressed, despite its complexity and difficulty for understanding. The question of the main and prime care of all methodologists, their daily work and study, is the question of thinking (or in methodologists' slang, the question of the «ideal plan», a «board»). It is thinking organized and initiated by game-facilitators and methodologists that allows during the OAGs to achieve all the unique effects we have been talking about here. Only thanks to pure thinking, it becomes possible to preserve and organize all the elements of the extremely difficult complex of the game's processes as a single whole. It is thinking that makes it possible to understand the contents and to organize activity.

Playing the unique situations of alive «here and now» thinking and creating something new and unknown before during the OAGs and methodological seminars allow the participants of these situations to enter the world of thinking. Perhaps, the greatest miracle the game creates is the miracle of collective thinking. People start to think, i.e. they start to be and exist as people (*cogito ergo sum*). It seems obvious for us that the country can only be of full value and its people can

only be free when there is a place for thinking and there are thinking people in it.

Is there a place for thinking in Belarus? What is the way the significant decisions are made, the directions of development are defined and the essential problems are solved in our country? Does anyone resort to thinking, or is it done conventionally and habitually, on the basis of feelings and private opinions? It is enough to look at intellectuals' participation in the country's life and understand that today there is no place for thinking in Belarus. It means it needs to be created. In fact, according to the formula of neo-Kantian Conrad Lotze, something that should be is the basis of what is. By playing, we are learning the world of thinking and activity we did not know before and creating something that should be (sometimes even contrary to obviousness) so that our future would really belong to us. We are sure that the OAGs are the means of development of thinking in our country.

To begin a deeper acquaintance with the OAG method, please see the following sources:

1. **Shchedrovitsky G. P., Kotelnikov S. I.**, The OAG as a new form of organizing collective conscious thinking // Methods of research, diagnostics and development of international labor collectives. M., 1983.
2. **Zinchenko A. P.**, The game. In Kharkov, an expert seminar themed «A teaching and educational process in high schools» is carried out. // Architecture. Appendix to the Stroitel'naya Newspaper, April 25, 1982.
3. **Zinchenko A. P.**, A game form of an interprofessional discussion of town-planning problems // Stroitelstvo i Arkhitektura, 1983, № 8.
4. **Naumov S. V.**, The organizing activity games // Priroda, 1987, № 4.
5. **OAG-1 // The organizing activity games.** — M.: Nasledie MMK, 2006.

Vyacheslav Bobrovich

Serious games on the field of civil education

(an OAG participant's notes)

At the end of March, this article's author participated in one of the organizing activity games (OAGs) carried out by the Humanitarian Techniques Agency (HTA) at Mariaspring People's School in the vicinity of Gottingen, one of quiet and picturesque German towns. Apart from other reasons, being far from home was a necessary condition due to the game's reasons, too. It was how the experiment's «purity», i.e. full immersion into a problem, was achieved. It was almost impossible to leave the game. Nothing could distract.

The participants (except for two foreign visitors) were Belarusians, representatives of various public organizations dealing with informal

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education, employees of the formal education system and experts of Belarusian scientific community. The selection of the participants was conditioned by the game's topic «Civil education in Belarus: continuation or beginning». The organizers tried to unite those who willy-nilly, voluntarily or not realizing it, deal (or should deal) with education of Belarusian citizens. The game's purpose was to obtain a definite result in the form of a social project aimed at spurring creation of the system of civil education adequate to modern requirements. According the plan of the game's organizers, the concept of civil education in Belarus should unite isolated efforts of representatives of the state and public sectors of education in order to teach democratic civicism to Belarusian society.

The OAG's officially declared purpose was to create a quite definite project. It was a really expensive event, considering travel, residence, meal and elaborate organization, to arrange it for the players' personal growth only. Well, any organizing activity game solves one more very important task – it provides quite real changes in the participants' consciousness and behavior. Methodologists admit that, after all, the games' influence on the «players» can be more important than the product created during the games. Sometimes they even say that the whole country must be “OAG-ed”. The offer, so to say, makes sense, taking into account illiteracy and irresponsibility when it comes to any sort of activity of the majority of the population (common people, politicians, intellectuals).

In this article, I will not amply report on the game's substantial aspects. They are worth to be a topic of a separate conversation. I shall consider the game as a method, trying to understand why it causes so contradictory reviews. Like many participants, prior to our trip to Mariaspring People's School, Gottingen, I knew almost nothing about it. Somebody would say that not everyone could cope with its temperature and that the head of the game (Vladimir Matskevich) could literally «crush» any of participants by proving his/her

intellectual and professional uselessness. There are legends that during one of the games, a certain participant tried to leap through a window, while another one was simply expelled from a game for his «bad» behavior. Recalling Confucius¹, we decided not to make any hasty judgements, and it was a good decision because it is only possible to understand a game when one is inside it.

Based on the fact of my participation in the game, I shall try dwell on the game's attractive and unappealing sides. Having seen both and having talked to its supporters and opponents, I shall try to explain the reasons of such duality.

Thus, the game is, of course, **attractive** because:

- First of all, it is exceptionally **careful with the word**. We all know very well that the word is an action, too. Since childhood, we have been told that the word works wonders, that the word can cure and kill, humiliate and ennoble. However in life, as a rule, we treat words heedlessly and improvidently. In Belarusan society, every day communication is quite often turned into a procedure where everyone uses an interlocutor as a free-of-charge «psychoanalyst». We turn any conversation into our own self-expression and self-realization. In such a «dialogue», everyone waits for their turn to express themselves, not listening to what is said.

The System Conscious Activity Approach (SCA approach) considers the word to be not just an action, but a display of human activity. At least, when the word is meant to be perceived by the public. Everything presented to the public cannot and should not be left without attention. A public discussion is not simply a pleasant pastime, but activity aimed at getting a positive result such as consent in important questions, cooperation in implementing obligations, etc. Here, the

¹ The master said, "Something hated or loved by everybody must be tested."

words of the game's participants are thought to be everyone's contribution to the «common cause». Even if they just express their doubt or disagreement. Constructive criticism can be not less useful than constructive ideas.

Thanks to the joint efforts of the game's organizers and participants, there is an atmosphere which differs much from what we usually notice in public and private spaces. During the OAGs, your words are perceived quite seriously. Someone will see here excessive fault-finding or even warped judgment. Well, somebody has said something without thinking, somebody is mistaken, - it can happen to anyone, not a big deal! It is impossible to control your every word, and even President often says God knows what... Still, it is possible to look differently at this situation. An attentive attitude to your word means that you are trusted. You are believed to be an independent and responsible subject of «talking», who does not drivel, but understands what he/she does by “talking”. Actually, it is what real freedom of speech and opinion means, i.e. respect of a person as a subject of activity.

Unfortunately, Belarusan “talanantnasc” (tolerance) is not just a tolerant attitude to somebody else, but mainly ignorance. This “somebody else” is simply neither noticed, nor heard. We ignore what is said and written around us. In the country, not many good texts are written, and even they are only known to a limited number of people. We do not argue when we should. We just disregard. In a sense, such “tolerance” is even worse than intolerance. In fact, the latter is the result of unindifference at least. In order to reach real tolerance, we should learn to be unindifferent and interested in society and its problems, and in each other.

As a tutor, I would apply with pleasure some game techniques methods during my classes. It is no secret that today high school's classes are tedious. The question-answer system has become outdated, and students present their precis articles only to get their grades. The low level of objective knowledge and students' (pupils') low interest in

classes can complicate even the most talented teachers' work. There is another outrage as well, when the use of active training methods turns classes into a stream of noncommittal games. The truth is somewhere in the middle, when there is a special atmosphere in a class (audience) which makes everyone treat attentively every statement. Then, even the simplest discussion can become an interesting verbal game and involve even the weakest. Methodologists need to pay a special attention to their techniques' adaptation to the needs of modern school, and to think of how to arm a usual tutor with them.

- **Responsibility** for the words.

Since the times of antiquity, democracy is connected with a public discussion of public problems. A dispute used to be won not by somebody who could convince the public, but the one who could bear responsibility for his words and could actualize them in real life. It was the times when public "talking" became an important and serious action. Citizens understood the value of logics and rhetoric and (thanks to philosophers) started to perceive the danger of demagogy. In Belarusan society, responsibility for the words is substantially lost. For a long time now, many words mean nothing, while some words are filled with another, deformed sense. There is no responsibility for public statements either. It is possible to talk a deal of nonsense from the high tribune of Parliament, a conference or an international forum. Nobody will deny it as nobody cares. It would be very useful for all of us to return to the words' true sense (here, methodologists headed by Vladimir Matskevich recall the Confucian «correction of names») and to the true value of public statements.

At large, the game's «work» is carried out with an increased degree of attentiveness of both speaker and listeners. Such an "increase" happens thanks to a lot of things, including competence of the game's participants, their consent to accept its rules and joint efforts to create

a corresponding atmosphere, as well as V. Matskevich's talent as a trainer. Not allowing idle talks and not disregarding any expressed idea, quite good results can be achieved during communication.

A spectator *ab extra* can sometimes observe rather interesting scenes. For instance, someone has expressed a special opinion or asked a question which is not simple to be answered. «What shall we do?» - asks the head of the game. A hasty reaction is not allowable as it will be strictly weighed and estimated. The clever, thinking people are sitting in silence for a long time. In another situation, while discussing similar questions, they would speak a lot, interrupting and not listening to each other. Here, everyone will be heard. Still, it is not easier because no casual people are invited to the game - thus, considered and competent thoughts are expected from them. If a person speaks without thinking and is not able to talk responsibly, then everything he/she does at home, i.e. outside the game situation, is questioned. At once, there is a question, "Does he/she understand what he/she does or deal with? Maybe, he/she is a casual person at his/her work?»²

The OAGs increase responsibility for ideas and words by a step-by-step formation of reports. First, they are discussed and formulated in groups where people have the same position (sometimes, a different one, but then there is an opportunity to consider a question from different points of view). Then, at a plenary session, one of the group's members presents the collectively produced point of view to all

² G. P. Shchedrovitsky has an interesting piece concerning our common predisposition to "talking" without thinking, «We speak not because we want to act, but simply because being silent is considered inconvenient and indecent. E.g. if a person meets somebody and is silent, we think that he/she is in a bad mood. In Japan, all is different - if you start blabbing, you will be considered one of these ill-bred people who just chatter, not knowing what for. This is how rigidly their laws of understanding are structured.

participants. There, it is exposed to a rigid estimation from the point of view of its methodological and substantial validity. The atmosphere can be heated up to the limit. At least, the game's organizers do their best to achieve it. Long before the game, they are thoroughly immersed in the problem during their methodological seminars. During the game itself, they estimate the participants' thinking with the help of logics means which allow them to find out the participants' unsteadiness and weak arguments.

The impudent, sometimes malicious attitude of the public (first of all, game-practitioners and game-facilitators) makes lecturers extremely alert. (Such a hotfoot, by the way, spurs you to further examine and discuss the problems in the so-called "individual work" and «club space»). Sometimes, the pre-planned lecturers prefer not to risk and to cancel the pre-planned speeches. Nobody is obliged in this respect during the games. On the contrary, in order to increase the level, the head of the game resorts to simple ways of fomenting tensions. «Will anyone say anything new?», «Who'll tell us something more significant than the things which are said yet?» Quite often is this intensity increased by Matskevich himself. He meaningfully creates an opposition to the stated point of view, expressing it in a sharp, grotesquely ironic form. He uses the participants' speeches to illustrate the typical weak places of this or that position.

- **Discipline** of thinking and statement.

The SCA approach has many various means, allowing the OAGs' participants to discipline the process of thinking and talking, which are applied both in conscious activity process of the game's participants and separate participants' speeches and dialogues. For the uninitiated, some of these means may seem rather strange, sometimes even comical. E.g. a talking person is interrupted by the question, «What are you doing right now?» Usually the person answers right away, «I'm speaking». Then the following question is asked, «What for and whom are you talking?», «Is it necessary to say it right now?», «What d'you

wanna say by your talking?», etc. Thus, the participant of communication is returned from his/her stream of consciousness and talking to comprehension of the present situation, making him/her realize what he/she does by his/her talking. Is he/she asking a question, expressing a special opinion or just abusing everybody's time by recalling some trifles.

All players practice such a “return to the present” when a game happens to be in an impasse, and it is necessary to understand what to do next. Here, the method of “reflexion” is applied. (Methodologists pronounce it like the French “reflexion”, the last syllable is stressed, in order to mark its scientific meaning) In the SCA approach, reflexion is like a bobber which allows «to come up» from the conscious activity process and to look around, to look in the past and the future. Reflexion practically helps to understand a difficult situation and untangle it step by step. «I said this, he said that, then there was the following...» In a wider context, reflexion helps the players to realize the purpose and stages of conscious activity, to understand the sense of what is done and what for it is done during the game and by the game.

The OAGs' important means to discipline thinking is its usage of special language of schemes where, as a rule, there are a subject and an object of activity, its norms and means of implementation. It is necessary to say that such practice is not deprived of sense. Due to my experience of communicating with students, I know that the emptiest form of activity for them is “talking”. During exams, they do realize that the Humanities can be passed easily by just “saying” something. It is not easy at all to persuade them that they do not know what they talk about. Having only a superficial acquaintance with a subject, a person does not realize the scales of the unknown. Another thing, when an answer in writing is required. It is much more difficult to write something and not to reveal one's ignorance. Creation of a text considerably narrows the idle talk chances. A student becomes much more modest and responsible for the words.

An even more effective means of ideas' expression is a scheme. Here, even a tutor does not always pass a content-richness test. The schematization helps those who have something to say. An empty, confused and illogical speech cannot be presented as a scheme. And even if a person tries to make it, students will easily reveal his/her errors.

- **Activity** approach.

Besides awakening of the participants' creative potential, one of the OAGs' advantages is the search for those who are ready and able to carry out the planned actions. The OAG is therefore called the organizing **activity** game because it teaches and spurs the participants' cogitative and practical activities. That's why the game's result is not to find «**what**» is to be done, but «**who**» will do it.

The major requirement which fosters the participants' activity approach is their «self-determination». Everyone should take up some active position, based on which he/she will analyze and solve problems. This point, perhaps, causes most disagreements between the participants and organizers.

Methodologists think that it is impossible to make competent statements without taking up some position (3). Its absence often results in chaffy reasoning based on an uncertain point of view. Such person talks easily about everything he/she sees, not considering conditionality of knowledge by one's interests, professional competence, political and historical context. A vivid example of that are children or adults with children's consciousness for whom a lot of «attractive», in their opinion, trades and kinds of works are «easy» and noncommittal. «Being a boss is no big deal! Give orders, summon all to do 'em». «What actually does a scientist do? Reads books and writes nonsense.»

It must be said that it is scientists who dislike the requirement to take up some certain activity position most of all. And it is clear as they

are used to consider a problem «entirely» and to analyze it impartially. To take up some hard line would mean for them the loss of «objectivity» and the restraint of their thinking horizon. The SCA approach does not recognize absolutely objective thinking in the sphere of socio-humanitarian researches. Methodologists believe that nobody can consider a problem from different positions (the position of an expert, in this sense, is not an exception). Therefore, there is a need in a game where different points of view, using all available knowledge, could be united. Basically, a separate person can also do something similar, but not during every separate moment of time.

The opposition of the «activity» and «critical» approaches is not an obstacle for an attempt to play «self-determination», even if one does not do it in life. Like any game, the OAG presupposes some rules. However, in the context of Belarusian society, the requirement to take up some activity position is meaningful not only because of the «game» reasons. Not casually, when the game-facilitators demanded to specify the participants' positions, many people were shocked. «You say it from what point of you?» - this straight question brings to a nonplus. A person tries in every possible way to avoid self-identification, considering it a limitation of «free thinking».

Still, there is also another, more potent reason of such behavior. We do not want to be responsible for any situation in all senses of this word. One of misfortunes of Belarusian society is that nobody associates themselves with anything that actually happens here. «I don't take part in it; it has nothing to do with me.» Trying to separate themselves from reality, Belarusian intellectuals position themselves as metaphysical subjects with «a critical position» towards everything around them, i.e. the authorities, opposition and nation.

The OAGs allow to look differently at the traditional state of affairs in society. Usually, it includes the **authorities**, the **nation** (common people) and the constantly thinking **intelligentzia**, suffering «for the nation». If simplified, society is divided into those who think and those

who do not think (but fuddle and/or obey orders from above). The «thinking» beginning (Plato) is concentrated in the intelligentsia who are supposed to carry out the role which belonged to “philosophers” in Plato’s ideal state. Since its inception in the 19th century, the intelligentsia is thought to have the qualities of high civicism and patriotism, as well as an ability to care of the country’s fate. As never before, among the today’s intelligentsia, the «critical» spirit prevails over the strong-willed activity beginning. The intelligentsia constantly complain of the Machiavellian authorities, the nation who “need nothing”, and the situation in which «nothing can be done».

The SCA approach allows to draw another differentiation. Modern Belarusian society consists of those who do something (i.e. for the benefit of society) and those who do nothing for this purpose, even if they say the opposite. The «non-activity» position includes both authorities who do not want to carry out any reforms, and inhabitants who do not think of their future, who are inactive and who see no sense in intellectuals’ social activity. During the game, it was proved by unwillingness to compromise and change something in the usual forms of work, as well as by disbelief in the necessity and possibility of joint work to transform the future. Refusing the routine educational campaigns, Belarusian intellectuals are too deep in postmodernism (where all «is gone», i.e. the author, history, nation, productive activity, etc.) The Project of Enlightenment «has come to an end» in one separate country.

In his closing speech, Vladimir Matskevich noticed that during the game it is especially difficult for those whose words and actions do not correspond in real life, and for those who do not understand what and what for they do by doing their work. If a person knows what he/she does, his/her chances to get lost in the game are minimal. If he/she does not know, then he/she has an opportunity to think about it.

- Increased **responsibility**.

In the democracy teaching system, there is a commonplace about

freedom which has sense only if combined with responsibility. The sense of responsibility for everything that happens in society and a desire to participate in solving public problems actually mean civicism which we need most. In Belarusian society, everyone (authorities, business people, officials, Army, inhabitants) thinks of themselves only, and nobody cares of the common. Intellectuals are no different in this sense, though their irresponsibility can be of some other kind. They do think, but somehow in the old manner. Besides, it is believed that people of mental labor are already predisposed to an unorganized and nonbinding behavior just because of specificity of their activity. They are characterized by irresponsibility, e.g. they do not live up to their own promises, they borrow something and do not bring it back, they make an appointment and do not come or are one-hour late, etc.

Belarusian society inherits the old Soviet tradition of a discrepancy between words, actions and ideas, which is the cause of everybody's total irresponsibility. In order to reform such society, «correction of names» is needed. Methodologists use this expression by Confucius as they think that today the names are deformed or have lost their initial sense at all, e.g. President is president no longer, citizens are no citizens at all, scientists are far from being real scientists, etc. Nobody understands and performs their true role (destination).

The Belarusians are not spoiled by freedom; they do not know the responsibility for its use. Due to my tutoring experience, I know and see how yesterday's pupils can get drunk with the air of university's «freedom» and forget the elementary rules of etiquette. They believe they are allowed to do anything, e.g. not to attend classes, to use cell phones during lectures, to smoke everywhere, to laugh loudly and defiantly, etc.

As a matter of fact, the game makes you remember for a while *comme il faut*. It is necessary to say that not everybody can do it at once. E.g. the majority of the participants neither listened attentively to the orientational report, nor discussed it in groups. Everybody is used to the fact that such speeches have nothing important to say, and therefore

there is no need in listening to them. But later, during the game, when there were substantial disputes concerning the report, many participants had to review the report's text in order to study its details.

The same thing happened to the game's program. A few days had elapsed, before the participants understood that the program's points are not stray and that every word of it means something. Our experience tells us that not all pre-planned points are carried out in reality. I must admit that prior to our trip, after my preliminary acquaintance with the game's program, I did think that the majority of the program's points would remain on paper. You can imagine the degree of my surprise when I saw that all the written points did correspond to the real state of things. Breakfast - 7.30 a.m. The beginning of work - 8.00 a.m. Final game techniques reflexion - 10.00-11.00 p.m. Sometimes, the latter could end at one o'clock in the morning. For more than a one-week stay in Germany, there was only one excursion to Gottingen which lasted three - four hours. Before and after it, we had our work only.

Now, we shall try to look differently at the game and to note the things we might **not like**:

- The game has no "**introduction**" during which its key rules and subtleties are explained to the participants (especially those who participate in it for the first time). Without it, many of them feel in the wrong box. Especially when they are demanded to do something they are obviously not used to, e.g. to take up some activity position, to mean what they say, etc. Maybe, it is the organizers' plan, i.e. to achieve a bigger psychological effect with the help of a sudden immersion, an inconsistent estimation of the event and independent self-determination concerning the game. Or probably, they are just sure that there is a lot of literature about the game and that its details are already known to all.

Anyhow, many participants were damped by the way the game was carried out; it was obvious they were not ready for it. Someone

said that if he had known the game's details beforehand, he would hardly go. «That's above me», one of my colleagues said. Experience of my own participation proves that the majority of questions disappear during the game. I do not think that someone could help me with it before the game. Apparently, answers to similar questions need to be received independently.

- One of the most widespread blames to the game's organizers is the reproach for the **Procrustean methods** of its implementation. I must admit that during one of the plenary sessions I myself demurred Matskevich at his «pressing» one of the participants for his «irresponsible» speech. I just said that non-democratic means cannot be used to teach democracy. The German representative, the principal of the school where the game took place, expressed similar thoughts in his speech to the participants. He was also concerned that during the game there was a lack of tolerance and respect for somebody else's opinions, and other democratic “recherche” stuff like that.

According to Matskevich, the unmerciful attitude to the game's participants is caused by their high responsibility. Everyone has the right to answer or not to answer the questions. Still, not «everyone» was invited to take part in the game. Thus, the participants' high status is acknowledged, hence they must mean what they say. It is difficult to say what one has to do - to be proud or take offence in such situation. It usually depends on one's general attitude to the game. Those who approve of the game, approve of its methods. As a matter of fact, any game's atmosphere is defined by its participants' consent to take up these or those rules of “haut” or “mauvais” ton. Quite often are the players themselves interested in toughening the game's conditions. Ultimately, if you do not like this game, you may play another one.

For the sake of justice, it is necessary to say that Matskevich's attitude to the participants was not so rigid. He was the first to stop the game-facilitators who tried too much to intensify emotions at the plenary sessions, club and individual discussions. Irreconcilability, if there was

any, was applied, first of all, to the organizers, methodologists and game-facilitators. I remember I once heard some indignant remarks concerning the «brutal» attitude. As it was found out, they concerned Matskevich's attacks on methodologists. «I can't see other people being humiliated,» - an interlocutor complained. It is true that Matskevich was ruthless with his subordinates. You have to hand it to these young guys who showed miracles of self-control and conducted a rigid intellectual struggle in such difficult conditions. It is necessary to have a good psychological training to agree to be exposed publicly in a «foolish» light, keeping the ability to think. Obviously, they initially had another, much more serious preparation for the game in order to overcome its difficulties.

From a psychological point of view, the question about the game's methods is to be solved by defining “a border” between those who belong to us and those who don't. In everyday life, we usually demand more from those who “belong” to our “circle”, i.e. a group of people who understand us without extra words, who do not take offence, etc. I recall Osho's ideas concerning the words of gratitude which are invented for the «external» circle, i.e. for those who do not understand you. These words' aim is not to provoke a conflict. Among “our” circle, among our really close people, all these “I-beg- your-pardon's” are redundant. Apparently, methodologists are the affinity group where words cannot offend as there is a mutual understanding. Usually, the closer this circle is, the wider the borders of what is accepted here are, i.e. criticism, jokes, obscene vocabulary, etc.

- Usurpation of truth.

Participating in the game, it is difficult not to be tempted to see some sort of a manipulation with consciousness in it. Constant pressure, rigid criticism and the rules formulated prior to the game make you think that the game has a pre-planned result. It may seem that it is not you who play it, but someone else plays you. Especially if taking into account the work coordination of the game-facilitators' team, their careful organizational and substantial preparation. It must be admitted

that there is a certain contradiction between their aspiration to play “honestly”, i.e. not to interfere with the game’s substance and their desire to influence its results by carrying out secretly their own ideas. This contradiction is hidden somewhere in the bases of the methodological methods. On the one hand, methodologists believe that the OAGs cannot be substituted by preliminary actions, even if they were done by highly prepared team. (Life is richer than theory; real situations can be unknown to theorists. Despite good preliminary studies of the material, during the game methodologists can learn something. Thanks to the OAGs, they study the situation as it is). On the other hand, by working out a plan and a program, they have wide opportunities (and the temptation) to affect radically its result. Especially, if the topic deals with the very organizers’ self-determination. The team’s unity and substantial preparation only strengthen such suspicions of other participants. It is also difficult to believe that in this situation they do not know where the game will go and how it will end. Basically, it is possible to believe it if you trust, but do the organizers themselves believe in it?...

- Disregard for individuality.

At some stage of the game, you may feel insulted that you are used as a means. You only represent a position, and nobody is interested in your individuality, while you are a person who is richer and more various than any function. Where are all your merits, respect of colleagues and readers’ recognition gone? Being immersed in the OAGs, it is necessary to adapt for a new role and to win your authority during the game. It is impossible to say that you have to do it from scratch, but glitches and discrepancies are inevitable.

In Belarusan society, there is a situation when the ranks and degrees, ratings and images do not always correspond to the real merits of their owners. Everyone knows that a rank can be obtained as a result of affinal or simply good relations with the boss, etc. Therefore, in scientific environment, there are different systems of recognition and

authoritativeness. On the one side, there are those who have doctor's degrees, professorial ranks and high posts. On the other - those who do not have PhDs, but who work constantly and fruitfully in the forefront of science. The market economy and a healthy competition could help find out who is who, but meanwhile it is impossible. That's why the state distributes the ranks, being based on regalia, but when it is really necessary to produce something worth (new, creative, non-standard), it addresses to informal leaders. The OAGs are one of places where the value of formal attributes is reduced to a minimum. Here, it is necessary to show what you are capable of without your «epaulettes» and «trouser stripes», no matter what ministry or department (state-run or non-governmental) gave them to you.

- Raising the bar too high.

A newcomer to the methodological seminars carried out by the Humanitarian Techniques Agency (HTA) may understand nothing. This movement justifies its image of being rather odd and strange. The Philosophy Dictionary says the following about the SCA approach, «Archaism and marginality of the social form of SCA methodology's existence combined with the system researches' modern methods and its language's refined style, make this approach and the whole movement a unique phenomenon in post-Soviet culture.» (3). Methodologists bring this language, or at least its basic elements, to the OAGs. First, those who do not know this language feel not so comfortable. Then, some of them try to understand and master it; the others become isolated and get lost. A typical explanation is, «Nobody understands me here», «I'm used to speak another language.»

Of course, the question of the language used by a group is its own business. In fact, there are lots of various professional argots which are not understood by the uninitiated. Methodologists have their own jargon; they like it; it helps them to work. (It seems that it is easier for them to speak their slang than to use the usual, simple language).

Another question is whether it is really necessary to resort to it during the game played not by methodologists. Here, it is already a matter of principle. The organizers pinpoint that this language is the best for such kinds of work and the purposes of social scripting as a whole. Basically, the game does not prohibit anyone from using another language and showing its advantages. However, in reality, there is a little hope for it to happen during the game as the methodologists' language is really very functional. In general, during the game, you may use any language you like, but your logic and pithiness will be tested with the help of the methodological means. In my opinion, it does not matter what language you speak. The main thing is that concepts are used correctly and that you have something to say.

Aside from the special language, the discussions' substantial filling and inclusion of way too many sources and citations of scientific literature and fiction, are also raising the bar too high. According to Matskevich, the "circle" is actually formed due to reading the same books and using familiar examples and jokes. Those who do not know them are willy-nilly excluded from the conversation. A similar style is applied during «the big game» conducted by Matskevich and his team in public life. Many people consider such behavior a display of snobbery, blaming the leader's bad temper. Matskevich calls his game "to gamble on a rise" which is his answer to the game, "to gamble on a fall", introduced actively by the state authorities which efforts supported by a significant part of the population are aimed at decreasing constantly the bar in all spheres of public life. The government of the state has been reduced to simple methods and formulae pronounced by President, which are easily understood by common people. The national economy works without any "difficult words" such as bank ratings, stock exchange quotations, bankruptcy procedures, etc. Somebody's work is no longer valued for its quality. The main thing is that the state-introduced plans are carried out and the reports are written in due time. The understatement of the bar is the result of the meaningfully applied policy. In such conditions, the

authorities are not afraid of pressure of civil society, strong opposition and/or thinking intellectuals.

To my mind, we should not be afraid of snobbery. Au contraire, it is what our society obviously lacks. I remember reading an article about the Informal Education Festival; the article's author wrote, "It was noticed that the discussion was carried out on such a high philosophical level that it was neither clear what it had to do with real life, nor what its essence and purpose were. Moreover, there was an opinion that such difficult discussions are not the "European way" any longer.» (4). It is true that the foreigners do not complicate. On the contrary, the need in being constantly in touch with the «public» forces them to simplify and popularize. In Belarus, the situation is different. We have existed in the conditions of extreme «simplicity» for so long that now it is no sin to think about «complexity». The situation can only be changed by "gambling on a rise". It is necessary to introduce a fashion for «complexity» and quality in everything - science, arts, education, etc. There must be many clever and talented people who can think and compete with each other.

- The role of the **personality** factor during the game.

It has to do with Vladimir Matskevich again. In fact, Belarusian intellectuals' and politicians' attitude to the game is often caused by their personal attitude to him³. It is he who sets the game's tone and heat, differing it from all other scientific and educational actions. At the same time, it is Matskevich who is the originator of this ambiguous, frequently negative attitude to the game. Someone failed «to blend in» with the game, somebody was offended by Matskevich in the

³ Thereupon, we recall Confucius again, "The Master was asked, "What if somebody is loved by all home-folks?" The Master answered, "It is bad." "Then, what if somebody is hated by all home-folks?" The Master said, "It is no good either. It would be better if he were loved by good home-folks and hated by malicious ones." (5)

Internet. At least for the sake of the description of the OAGs' genesis, one can imagine what the OAGs would be without Matskevich. Clearly, the game would lose much of its brightness and intensity. However, quite probably, it would become more similar to collective creativity where all are approximately equal. Maybe, it would be a return to the OAGs' sources, such «methodological fundamentalism». Do the Belarusian methodologists need it? I do not know. One thing is clear – with the help of the game, Matskevich is now separating those who are with him from those who are not. In the future, when the tasks are changed, there will be others, more tolerant and appeasable.

In conclusion of my reasoning concerning the OAGs, I would like to draw some **deductions**:

1. Before you decide to participate in the game, you have to ask yourself if you **trust** its organizers. As it has already been marked before, the game's specificity provides them with wide opportunities to affect the game's process. The period of a substantial and methodical preparation prior to the game gives methodologists and game-facilitators all the trumps in their hands. If you do not trust them, it is easy to believe that all these are just artful manipulations with the purpose of achieving their «self-interested» goals. Depending on the degree of trust to the game's organizers, the participants' very first impressions differ much. Somebody compares it to a totalitarian sect headed by an all-knowing and authoritative guru who skillfully recruits new adherents. Someone recalls the psychological trainings of a personal growth which are very popular in the West. A comparison of these activities to the OAGs is not groundless. In both cases, you are, so to say, «beaten with a stick» and then told that it is done for your own benefit. Clearly, not everyone likes such methods of «personal development». In our sybaritic times, not everybody is ready to suffer «blows», even if they are only intellectual.

Your trust eliminates one more problem – a negative attitude to V. Matskevich. It is well-known that his pushing manner of conducting

discussions, his deliberately rude speech and juicy definitions cannot appeal to everybody. They especially irritate those who are used to another, refined language and a much more respectful attitude. Here we notice a phenomenon which takes place in daily communication, too. Depending on our attitude to a person (we like him/her or not), a rude joke and a strong word can be perceived as either rudeness, or a teller.

2. To participate in the game, you need to be **ready** for it. I do not mean a detailed acquaintance with the game's rules or essence of the SCA approach. First of all, your readiness means your ability and desire **to study**. To study in the widest sense of this word, i.e. despite your knowledge and experience, you must still understand your personal *insufficiency*, something like Socrates' condition of «nescience». Your desire and ability to study are revealed in your ability of considering critically the established beliefs, your ability and desire to change the obsolete ideas, and your ability of refusing, at least for a while, your personal ambitions. Otherwise there is a situation characterized by the orient sages as «the pupil is not ready». At times, it is banal unwillingness to recognize any authorities. «Who the hell is he, this teacher?», «I ain't no child no more!», or «Basically, I agree with **what** you say, but why is it **you** who says it?», or «We've already been working this way for a long time, and we need no changes», or a person agrees with quantitative (more, better, faster), but not qualitative changes.

The ability and desire to study allow a person not to be afraid of open discussions, to accept without hysterics his/her own defeat and to recognize somebody else's intellectual and professional merits. The trouble of modern Belarusian society is in its inability to **voluntarily** recognize informal authorities. The absence of democratic practice has not allowed society to generate culture of «submission». Back in his times, Aristotle marked that only a person who has both abilities, i.e. to obey and to rule, can be considered a citizen. In the system of modern civil education, the ability to recognize somebody's leadership is appreciated not less than that of being a leader.

Unwillingness to study can also mean unwillingness to discipline one's **thinking**. Quite often, especially in the beginning of the game, do participant perceive painfully the «rigid» behavior of the game-facilitators who «discipline» the groups' work. Even though, by and large, these people do not interfere (or, at least, should not interfere) with the conversation's substantial part. Their role is to create the optimum conditions for a birth of new, collective knowledge. Everything they do is done for this purpose.

The game-facilitators' actions, especially if they are provocative («You aren't thinking», «You don't realize what you do», «You don't know what you've come to the game for», etc.) cause a psychologically natural reaction of resistance which stimulates cognitive activity. Therefore, everybody wants to raise objections. Besides, if a person is so exacting and mistrustful, it means he/she knows «the way it should be». Involuntarily you want to argue. Still, you do not have to do it with the game-facilitators because, according the game's rules, they do not have their own position. They are to watch the formal sides of the communication process, its logicity, informativity and accuracy of statements, so that the discussions were justified and intelligent. Of course, not all game-facilitators manage to keep their «cleanliness» and non-participation in the discussion's topic. Some of them try to participate as a player (i.e. to have their own personal position), and they are punished for that during game techniques reflexions (carried out at the end of each day of the game) by the organizers.

3. To participate in the game, you need to have a **desire** and an **ability** to play. Many of those who have come to the game have not thought about the game itself and what it will demand from them. Not everyone was ready to play «seriously». Partly because they are not used to perceive the word «seriously», partly because of their own experience of carrying out business games in which they were the heads, i.e. they could always preserve their special status and leave the game at any moment. Certainly, there are also people who are not

inclined to any games, including intellectual ones. Not everyone is ready to experiment (even voluntarily) with their own consciousness and mentality. Not everyone is so gamblesome to forget, at least for a while, about their ranks, degrees and posts.

4. To participate in the game, you have to be highly **interested** in the discussed topic and, as a result, to be highly committed to the game, which becomes twice as fascinating if it discusses **your** problems. You do not have to be an expert. It is enough to have a direct relation to these problems, as well as to be interested and take active part in their solution. The Germans were surprised to watch the «fanatical» Belarusians who were restlessly devoted to disputes and reflexion concerning civil education which is «nonexistent» in their country.

As it has been said before, no one is obliged to participate in all forms of the game. You can theoretically take part in what you would like to. Still, there is just nothing else to do here. A silent, lonely place far from home, deprived of a TV-set, makes you do nothing, but think. Besides, the game really draws you in. You cannot stop and not to participate any more. Being interested in the discussed problems, you do not want to miss the sessions, to lag behind and to lose its logics.

5. To fruitfully participate in the game, a player has to believe in the sense of social **scripting**. Not everyone understands all the details of it, but it is not necessary to have a special preparation to believe in its necessity and possibilities, as well as to participate in it. Unfortunately, a lot of professionals who think fruitfully enough (everyone in their own «niche») do not always realize that our future can be scripted; they neither know, nor believe that it can and must be done. To understand these questions, it is futile to resort to the Soviet past (when there was only one, Utopian project and lots of other, also Utopian programs) or our «brilliant» present (when all projects and programs are born in one «light» head). Still, it has nothing to do with the worthless politicians. Scientists themselves realize neither social studies' practical benefits, nor what they should do for society. Projects-

writing is now a way of receiving grants and earning extra money. By the way, it is one of the reasons for the mistrustful attitude to V. Matskevich and the HTA.

As an OAG participant who is interested in the problems of civil education in Belarus, I think that the first big game on the field of civil education can be considered quite successful. Apart from creation of a joint project and the participants' desire to work together on its implementation, it has shown the possibilities of the game techniques methods' application in settling civil education's major problems, i.e. to discipline thinking, to acquire the effective communication skills, to define and solve public problems, etc. This time it has been tested on those who «think» of and “do” something for civil education. In the long term, it will have to be adapted to the practice of basic educational processes.

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3. OAG «From common grounds to solidary actions: the Belarus participation programme in European integration processes» (March 2006, Goettingen, Saxen Anhalt, Germany).
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5. Short OAG «Constructing the technologies for the community building and development» (June, 2006, Mariupol, Ukraine).
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