

Youth in Former Soviet Republics in Conditions of Value Transformation of Society (Case Study of Russia and Armenia)



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Abstract. Value orientations of the older generation (over 55 years of age) are well-established, and, as a rule, they are influenced by the worldview that developed in the Soviet time. As for young people, their life ideas relating to various manifestations of social reality are still actively forming. In this regard, the two generations have certain differences in their sets of values. It is interesting and important to study them because young people perceive their current status and opportunities as being completely natural, while for their parents much of what looks normal and routine now was completely inaccessible in the years of their youth. The article considers value orientations of young people from former Soviet countries by highlighting their similarities and differences in comparison to those of the older generation. We are particularly interested in the views on the life and mindset of young people who represent a generation oriented toward modernization changes in society. Using research data, the paper attempts to find

For citation: Golovchin M.A., Mkoyan G.S. Youth in former Soviet republics in conditions of value transformation of society (case study of Russia and Armenia). *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2018, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 215–229. DOI: 10.15838/esc.2018.3.57.14

a determining vector of spiritual development of young people. The study is based on the analysis of secondary data of sociological surveys conducted in the Russian Federation and in the Republic of Armenia. Youth and the older generation are the objects of comparison in the surveys. The study not only identifies common features in the value consciousness of two generations in Russia and Armenia, but also substantiates the nature and importance of the impact of socio-cultural factors on the vital values of young people. It is established that intergenerational differences in socio-cultural determinants affect the attitude toward personal prospects in life and family, income, education, etc. The results of the study allow us to determine the direction of changes in young people's value orientations. Trends in the cultural and spiritual development of youth in both countries reflect an intergenerational shift from the focus on economic and physical security to the increasing role of self-expression, subjective well-being and the quality of life, which ambiguously affects social well-being. In particular, the correlation analysis has established the inverse relationship between people's Internet activity and their confidence in the future. This suggests that the behavior of young people who "immerse" deeply in the Internet space is fraught with manifestations of social apathy. In conclusion, we present our own reflections on the need to intensify intercultural dialogue between former Soviet republics and participate jointly in addressing youth policy issues.

Key words: life values, generation, youth, education, digital retreatism, modernization, survey, correlation.

Introduction. Former Soviet countries are undergoing profound structural transformation on the background of economic and social problems and contradictions that are essentially similar [1, pp. 15-24]. The processes are directly linked to the implementation of a model of modernization as the foundation of a competitive economy [2, pp. 14-26]. Scientists (for example, P. Sztompka, N.I. Lapin) note that, as the pace of modernization slows down, the human factor plays a significant role besides economic "barriers" [3; 4].

For many years, modernization ideas were the property of "elites". Due to the complexity and inconsistency of these ideas they did not find understanding among common people. In this regard, at present, modernization lacks support "from below" [3]. It will be possible only if wide social strata are engaged in the process and "all forces are mobilized" to achieve the goals of transformation of the economic and sociocultural environment [5, pp. 181-191].

In this regard, major attention should be focused on young people, because the younger generation has a special mission as a mobile and creative socio-demographic group that is most susceptible to innovation [6, pp.156-158]. While society is continuously changing, young people (due to age-related properties of an individual) tend to construct social reality on their own so that it could fit their demands and needs [7, pp. 112-122].

However, the issue of young people being a "driving force" of modernization has a contradiction between their "status" role (i.e. what young people ought to be) and reality [8, pp. 52-63]. Economic and social instability emerging in the former Soviet countries is felt acutely in youth environment: political and social passivity is manifested in it, which in some cases makes it difficult for young people to respond efficiently, timely and effectively to modernization challenges [9, pp. 31-40].

Young people are not always successfully adapting to a rapidly changing social reality. In

practice, they often face certain difficulties that impede the implementation of their potential, up to social exclusion. In most cases, it is due to a lack of social experience, dependence on the opinions of other people, imitation, lack or shortage of opportunities for self-actualization, etc. [10, pp. 25-31].

In addition, young people's life in society is characterized by a number of negative manifestations, such as unemployment, the spread of self-destructive behavior (including that which leads to suicidal activity), involvement in extremist and terrorist Internet communities, etc.

As a result, such phenomena as retreatism (escaping from reality), social pessimism, and even escapism (intentional disregard for the norms and laws of society) emerge in youth environment [11, pp. 192-201]. The potential of the younger generation ceases to be used to the fullest extent, as evidenced by the emergence of the term "NEETs" which describes a category of young persons who are "Not in Education, Employment, or Training" [12, pp. 31-39]. Thus, young people gradually cease to be a "driving force" of social transformations; and modernization, in turn, loses its support "from below".

This combination of circumstances leads to the risk of emergence of a "destructive model of society" that is focused on regress and demodernization rather than on modernization-based values [13, pp. 91-97]. This once again emphasizes the importance of studying the value and worldview foundation which the socialization of youth is based on.

Theoretical foundations of the analysis. The tradition of studying life values in the world science was established long ago. For instance, prominent Armenian philosopher of the 6th century David Anahgt (David the Invincible)

raises issues of development of culture and diverse forms of its manifestation [14, pp. 110-118]. Special attention is paid to the evolution of those cultural values that depend on the results of cognition, and also rational, aesthetic and moral activities of people [14, pp. 110-118].

First generalizing studies of the cultural aspects of life in Western Europe appeared in sociology in the second half of the 19th century. M. Rokeach allocated two classes of values – terminal (desirable end-states of existence) and instrumental (means of achieving the terminal values). He also proposed a method of studying value orientations based on direct ranking of the list of values (36 values: 18 terminal and 18 instrumental) [15; 16].

In accordance with the classification developed by S. Schwartz and W. Bilsky, values represent three universal requirements of human life: 1) biological needs; 2) interactional requirements for interpersonal coordination; 3) societal demands for group welfare and survival [17; 18].

N.I. Lapin groups basic values of civilization into three types (universal, traditional, modern) and into two functional layers (terminal and instrumental) that develop in the public mind beyond any laws [19, pp. 173-179].

The above-mentioned scientific concepts have one drawback, but it is significant. They consider the study of values from the viewpoint of their universality, without taking into account the level of economic development of the population and the role of traditions and innovations in certain societies. Therefore, it is difficult to use them as guide when making cross-country comparisons.

In the second half of the 20th century R. Inglehart, having studied the surveys conducted regularly in Europe, came to the conclusion about gradual displacement of life

attitudes of materialism by the values of post-materialism [20; 21]. R. Inglehart's theory is based on the difference between characteristics of three generations of people who grew up in traditional and industrial societies [20; 21]. The essence of his theory is that any development is primarily the strengthening of the human nature, because "pursuit of freedom is, by definition, inherent in man" [22, p. 21]. According to Inglehart, values undergo transformation, which is caused primarily by economic development [22, p. 21]. Based on this, two classes of values are considered:

a) survival values: faith in God, family, obedience, national pride, absolute standards, negative attitude toward divorce and abortion, etc.;

b) self-expression values: their carriers have opposite feelings toward the traditional values [20].

Along with the progress in economic development, survival values in industrial countries become weaker and self-expression values grow stronger there [22, pp. 38-39].

According to R. Inglehart, modern youth is at the "transition point" from materialistic values (preference for physical and psychological safety and well-being) to the priority of postmodern values (self-expression and quality of life) [20].

Within the framework of this approach, R. Inglehart put forward a scientific hypothesis about the value significance of the missing, which explains the inter-generational change of the value series by the state of socio-economic environment. Under this hypothesis, the greatest subjective value is given to what the person is relatively lacking [20].

Based on Inglehart's methodology, which is often used for cross-cultural studies of values, a number of international studies are conducted,

such as the World Value Survey¹ and the European Values Study².

We take R. Inglehart's idea concerning the inevitable transformation of population values in the process of generation change from priority of survival to supremacy of self-expression and on its basis we develop a hypothesis for our study, which considers life priorities of young people in the two former Soviet states and we determine the nature of intergenerational transformation of values.

Our analysis uses materials of public opinion polls conducted in the Russian Federation and in the Republic of Armenia. The object of study was not chosen randomly. Despite the absence of common territorial borders, Russia and Armenia have a common historical past as former republics within the USSR, a common religion, close ties at the level of international politics; all this taken together allows us to talk about the basis for cultural proximity of the peoples of these countries who, at the same time, maintain their own national traditions. The Armenian diaspora is quite extensive in Russia: according to the Union of Armenians of Russia, it includes more than 2.5 million people (173 people per 10 thousand Russians)³.

We would like to draw your attention to the fact that sociological studies, the materials of which which will be presented later, were carried out in Russia and Armenia using different methods and tools. In Russia, the sample included both urban and rural population, in Armenia – only urban (this predetermined the difference in the sizes of the samples).

¹ World Value Survey. Available at: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp> (accessed: 29.04.2016).

² European Values Study. Available at: <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/> (accessed: 24.02.2018).

³ More than 2.5 million Armenians live in Russia. Available at: <https://ria.ru/society/20021216/282886.html> (accessed: 07.04.2018).

Therefore, in the article we do not make direct comparisons of the data obtained in different countries and try to avoid speculating about what is “more or less”, “weaker or stronger”, which would be methodologically incorrect. Thus, the object of our analysis is **secondary** research materials indicating the scale and nature of the spread of certain cultural phenomena in the Russian and Armenian societies, rather than **primary** data of population surveys. This approach allowed us to compare, first of all, trends that characterize the intergenerational transmission of values in the two countries, the “general picture”, rather than specific indicators.

A working hypothesis of our research suggests that the evolution of value orientations as a result of the change of generations in the two former Soviet states does not fully reflect natural transition from traditional norms to key priorities of postmodern society, because this process is hampered by incompleteness of modernization. People’s priorities in both

countries, first of all, are determined by the lack of opportunities to live a decent life. As mentioned earlier, we formulated and substantiated our hypothesis with the use of R. Inglehart’s approach.

To prove the hypothesis, we selected indicators, the analysis of which helped identify the nature of influence of the intergenerational change of values on young people’s lifestyle. It was not an end in itself to search for indicators in full compliance with Inglehart’s typology of values. First of all, it cannot be done because of the set of tools that aims to obtain information on similar issues, but is not initially reduced to unified formulations. It was essential for us that the secondary analysis clearly show the commitment of respondents in Russia and Armenia either to the values of survival or to the values of self-expression. In the framework of the study, the following concepts were operationalized: life value, attitude toward the future, attitude toward social institutions and benefits (*Tab. 1*).

Table 1. Operationalization of concepts in our study

Concept	Survey in Russia		Survey in Armenia	
	Variable	Indicator	Variable	Indicator
1. Survival values	To what extent are certain aspects of life important to you?	Importance of health, material security, happy family life, friendship, work, knowledge for the population (in points from 1 to 5)	What is the purpose of your life? In your opinion, what does a person need to feel happy?	Importance of health, financial success, reliable environment, family, education, faith for the population (% of respondents)
2. Self-expression values		Importance of active life, freedom, self-expression, and public recognition for the population (in points from 1 to 5)		Importance of career success, opportunities to travel around the world for the population (% of respondents)
3. Attitude toward the future	How confident are you in your future?	Proportion of people confident / not confident in their future (confident / not confident)	How would you describe yourself?	Proportion of people who consider themselves to be optimists / pessimists (% of respondents)
4. Attitudes to social institutions and goods	Your work is first and foremost a way...	Important aspects of employment for the population (I agree / I disagree)	Do you agree with the statement “Money talks”?	Distribution of the population in relation to the importance of money in the life of society (% of respondents)
	Education for you is first of all...	Important aspects of educational activities for the population (% of respondents)	Do you agree with the following statements regarding higher education?	Proportion of people who agree with the statements about the importance of education (% of respondents)

In the course of our research, the answers of the younger generation (up to 30 years of age) were compared with those of the older generation (over 55 years old). It helped analyze the commitment of young people to certain groups of values and determine in which direction the “intergenerational value shift” takes place. The following groups of life values were considered: a) **survival values**: economic security (financial security, prosperity, work as a guarantor of economic profit, etc.) and physical safety (health, law, family, support of relatives and friends, etc.); b) **self-expression values**: individual self-expression (independence, active life, professionalism, qualification, public recognition, etc.) and the quality of life (subjective well-being, confidence in the future, etc.).

Research technique. In the *Republic of Armenia*, where the sociological survey was carried out in 2016, its participants were urban residents. The total sample of the survey was 250 residents of Yerevan 18–66 years of age (33.5% of the total population) [21]. A random, quota, and proportional sample was used [21]. Quotas were distributed by gender and age. Among the respondents from 18 to 30 years of age (57.2% of the total number of respondents) 45.3% were men and 54.7% women; from 55 to 66 years of age (42.7% of the total number of respondents) – 57.5 and 42.5%, respectively. The age groups for the survey were determined by the method of stratification selection. Sampling error did not exceed 5%.

The choice of Yerevan population for the survey is due to the fact that this city is the largest political, economic and cultural center of the country, on the territory of which almost all layers of Armenian society are concentrated⁴.

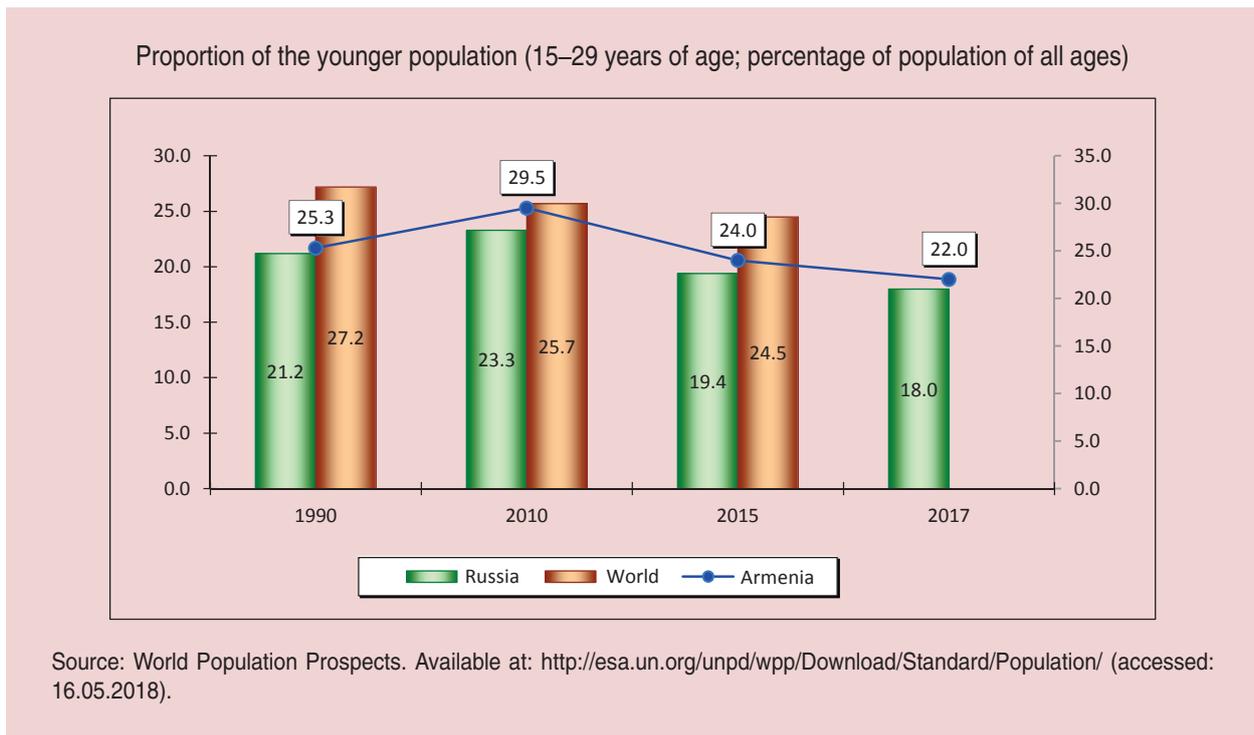
⁴ According to the Statistics Committee of the Republic of Armenia, the population of Yerevan is 1 074, 100 people (35.8% of the total population of the country).

The door-to-door questionnaire survey was based on the authors’ set of tools developed with the use of the approaches of R. Inglehart, S. Schwartz, M. Rokeach, G. Hofstede, etc., taking into account national specifics of Armenian society [23]. The questionnaire included 68 questions, the answers to which formed the basis for analyzing people’s value orientations [23].

The sociological research in the *Russian Federation* was also carried out in 2016. Its participants were economically active Vologda Oblast residents (living in both urban and rural areas and aged 15–72). The total sample of the survey is 1,500 people (0.2% of the total population). A quota and proportional sample was used. The sample quotas were distributed according to sex, age, place of residence. The distribution of quotas by sex is as follows: men – 51.9%; women – 48.1%; by age: aged 15–17 years – 3.2%; aged 18–24 – 12.8%; aged 25–29 – 14.7%; aged 30–49 – 49.3%; aged over 50 – 19.9%; by place of residence: Vologda – 27.2%; Cherepovets – 28.1%; municipal districts – 44.7%. Sampling error does not exceed 3%.

The door-to-door questionnaire survey was carried out with the help of a questionnaire compiled and used by the Russian-Belarusian team in the framework of the work on the scientific project “Professional vocation: human potential of innovation development in Russia and Belarus” (under grant 15-22-01013 of the Russian Foundation for the Humanities). The questionnaire contains 65 questions.

Sociological research was carried out in different areas, according to different techniques and pursued different goals (in Armenia – a survey of the population of a large metropolis, in Russia – a survey of the population of the region with different representation of urban and rural residents). The research tools (in both cases it was the



questionnaire) were not formed using similar wording of the questions. Therefore, in our paper, we do not directly compare the primary data of these projects, but generalize the conclusions from the secondary data (separately for each country), so that at the theoretical level we could talk about the presence of similar and distinctive trends in socio-cultural development of the younger generation of the two countries.

Research findings. Russia and Armenia are currently characterized by a similar declining trend with regard to the population under the age of 30 (*Figure*). However, a similar trend is observed in European countries. The main reason for the transformation of the age structure was the transition to “narrowed reproduction” (which began in the 1960s). In the West, such a demographic transition occurred several decades earlier [24; 25; 26]. In 2000, this figure reached its historical minimum: 8.7 % in Russia and 10.6 % in Armenia.

In addition to the above-mentioned reason, population migration has a strong impact on demographic processes in Armenia. As a result, the problem of “brain drain” has come to the fore. According to the participants of an unstructured in-depth interview⁵ conducted in the course of the research in Armenia, “... *The high rate of migration was and still is the most important problem caused by the economic crisis. “Brain drain” is the very reason why Armenia continues to lose highly qualified young specialists... The impact of all this on the education system is catastrophic: there are fewer schools, fewer students, fewer future specialists*” [23]; “...*senior students of higher education institutions, knowing that there are no desirable prospects for them in Armenia, leave the country. It turns out that universities educate and train specialists for foreign markets*” [23].

⁵ Here and below we present the materials related to an unstructured in-depth interview conducted in Yerevan in May 2015. This study covered 56 experts (specialists from the social and cultural sphere: artists, politicians, writers, scientists, teachers, etc.).

Table 2. Russians' assessment of the importance of different aspects of life, broken down by age groups (points on a five-point scale, where 1 means "has no value at all", 5 means "very important")

Answer	Age group			
	Under 30		Over 55	
	Score	Position	Score	Position
Health (physical and mental)	4.5	1	4.3	1
Material security	4.5	1	4.2	2
Happy family life	4.5	1	4.2	2
Love	4.4	2	3.9	3
Having good and loyal friends	4.4	2	3.8	4
Freedom, independence	4.3	3	4.1	1
Interesting job	4.3	3	3.9	3
...				
Active life	4.2	4	3.6	6
...				
Knowledge	4.0	6	3.5	7
Entertainment	4.0	6	3.1	9
Public recognition, authority	3.8	7	3.5	8
Approval of others	3.7	8	3.6	6
Creativity, art	3.5	9	3.0	10

Source: Sociological survey of the Vologda Oblast residents (N=1,500 people).

The value orientations of young people relating to different spheres of social life (economic, political, social, spiritual and moral) are in the active phase of formation [23]. In order to determine the nature of the value shift, we compare the answers of two age groups: "young people" (up to 30 years of age) and "older generation" (aged 55–66). Value orientations of the second group, as a rule, stem from their worldview formed back in the Soviet period when they were 18–30 years old (the current age of representatives of the first group).

As an object of research, young people can be considered as an independent group, which is oriented, on the one hand, toward status-based achievements, on the other – toward obtaining the benefits of life [23]. Having analyzed the results of the study we see that young people in Russia and Armenia perceive their current status and potential as a completely natural state, while much of what seems now normal and familiar was completely inaccessible to their parents in their young

years [23]. The older generation perceives young people as carriers of modernization ideas and new liberal-democratic attitudes and as supporters of the Western model of political and economic system. At the same time, the way young people perceive their own generation differs from the image established in the minds of the older population, since the value and worldview orientations of "fathers" and "children" do not coincide sometimes [23].

What are these value orientations? How different or how similar are they among people of the two countries?

According to the data of the research, the most important values of Russian youth include health, material wealth and family (4.5 points out of 5 possible). These life attitudes can be called traditional, as they are also shared by the older generation (over 55 years of age; *Tab. 2*).

However, a whole layer of traditional values that are important for the "generation of fathers" is fading away from the worldview of the younger generation in Russia. This is

Table 3. Distribution of answers of Armenian population to the question: “In your opinion, what does an individual need to feel happy?”, broken down by age groups (percentage of respondents)

Answer	Age group			
	Under 30		Over 55	
	In %	Position	In %	Position
Love	34.0	1	22.4	3
Good health	18.9	2	24.0	2
Good education	15.1	3	10.3	7
Comprehensive knowledge	15.1	3	19.5	4
Secured life	11.3	4	15.5	5
Faith	5.1	5	12.1	6
Being famous and having a good reputation	0.0	-	94.8	1
Romantic and (or) adventurous experiences	0.0	-	0.0	-
Prosperous and secure country	0.0	-	0.0	-
Journeys	0.0	-	5.2	8

Source: sociological survey of Yerevan residents (N=250 people).

especially true of the desire for independence (3rd place among the life priorities of young people and 1st place among the population over 55 years of age) and the approval of actions by others (8th and 6th places, respectively). Life attitudes toward recognizing the opinion of authorities are replaced by a new set of values, including the realization of oneself in active forms of life (sports, tourism, entertainment, social projects, etc.) and having a company of friends. At the same time, in the era of the spread of social networks on the Internet, the meaning of friendship among young people is often transformed into the phenomenon of “friendism”, which levels spiritual affection of friends, turning them into “sympathetic interlocutors” [27, pp.72-78].

A similar picture is observed in Armenian society. Here both generations have differences between the hierarchies of values in terms of personal priorities and normative ideals [28, pp. 31-35].

Preserving traditional values is clearly manifested in Armenian society, which can be seen in the distribution of answers to the question “What do you need as an individual to feel happy?” Thus, good health is considered

a necessary condition for a prosperous life both by the younger (19%) and older generations (24%). Healthy lifestyle is ranked second on the list of values by both age groups (*Tab. 3*). In part, this suggests a close relationship between the terminal goals (a prosperous family, financial security, love, knowledge, etc.) and the tools to achieve them amid the dominance of values like physical health, education, etc. [23].

Life goal for Armenian youth is mainly to implement their potential in society and economy and to experience the joy and pleasure of life. These young people are somewhat different from the older generation whose opinions are more altruistic (“live together with my children”, “do everything for the prosperous future of my children”) [21].

Young people also tend to consider prosperity as the main goal in their life: 26% against 19% among the older generation (*Tab. 4*). It is shown that professionalism at the workplace is not highly estimated by young people – 15% (26% among the older generation). At the same time, young Armenians are more ambitious in terms of career prospects than the older generation (8% versus 4%, respectively). It may mean that

Table 4. Life goals of Armenian population in the context of age groups (percentage of respondents)

Answer	Under 30		Over 55	
	In %	Position	In %	Position
Achieve financial success	26.4	1	19.0	2
Become a qualified specialist	15.1	2	25.9	1
Have a reliable social circle	13.2	3	15.5	4
Be wise	13.2	3	17.2	3
Have a happy family	11.3	4	5.2	5
Achieve a high position at work	7.5	5	3.6	4
Enjoy the support of colleagues	7.5	5	6.9	6
Travel around the world	5.6	6	6.7	5

Source: sociological survey of Yerevan residents (N=250 people).

Table 5. Distribution of answers of Russians to the question: "What is important to you in your work?", broken down by age groups (percentage of respondents)

Answer	Under 30	Over 55
Making good money	63.3	64.8
Helping people, being of use to them	36.8	37.5
Having enough freedom in my work	26.8	13.6
Having a good professional reputation, good name	25.0	31.8
Having an opportunity to make a career, to take a managerial post	24.8	12.5
Having an opportunity to develop and improve my skills	24.8	12.5
Using my knowledge, experience, qualification to the fullest extent	22.0	19.3
Implementing my personal abilities to the fullest extent	20.3	19.3
Working in a prestigious institution	14.8	5.7
Working with highly qualified colleagues	14.5	4.5
Having an opportunity to engage in scientific (research) work	3.0	4.5
Other	0.8	2.3

Source: Sociological survey of the Vologda Oblast residents (N=1,500 people).

young men and women not always associate material benefits with their performance in profession; and they not always consider qualification to be a prerequisite for the implementation of career plans.

Perhaps, due to their ambitiousness, young people have quite clear notions about their own prospects. According to the sociological data obtained, only less than 17% of Russian youth have not decided on their plans for the near future (the figure is 26% among the older generation); in Armenia – 19% (14% among the older generation).

The younger generation considers work, as well as health, to be an important tool for achieving the desired quality of life. For example, for Russian youth, receiving money income is an unconditional priority when getting a job (63%; *Tab. 5*). Even the social benefits of working life (for example, professional reputation, which the older generation finds more important) are not so important to young people. However, similar values determine the older generation's attitude toward labor; this indicates the strengthening of the action of personal and environmental

coping resources in the youth group, rather than the change of value orientations in the course of intergenerational mobility. According to the terminology introduced into scientific use by A. Maslow, coping includes life strategies that help cope with the situation of uncertainty in various ways, including through the identification of oneself with representatives of older ages [29]. In some cases, it explains the “borrowing” of the value system in the generational aspect, the desire “to be like everyone else”, the rejection of everything new.

The situation is somewhat similar in Armenian society. Respondents were asked to continue the phrase that begins with “Today it would be best to become...” It is interesting to note that 89% of young respondents said that today it is best to become “rich” (in the group of respondents over 55 years of age, the figure was 35%) [23]. This, in particular, confirms Inglehart’s hypothesis of the “value significance of the missing”. The greatest subjective value is really given to what is relatively lacking for personal development in the current socio-economic situation. Money plays a fundamental role of such a “scarce good” and at the same time a condition for achieving a high quality of life and independence for young people.

At the same time, the difficulties experienced by the younger population of Armenia with regard to the possibility of starting a business (only 25% of respondents under 30 years of age determine the conditions prevailing in this sphere as favorable) and purchasing housing (only 48% of respondents under 30 years of age consider mortgages affordable for young families), often lead to the fact that survival strategies rather than modernization tactics start to prevail in young people’s behavior [23].

As a proof, we provide an excerpt from the interview with one of Armenian experts:

“Adherence to principles in defending one’s own beliefs is not in demand, since society favors adaptive attitudes aimed at possessing material values” [21].

From our point of view, it would be wrong to reduce this mass desire for wealth only to “passive hedonism” [23]. In the minds of young people, the guarantee of a secure existence is associated almost exclusively with material security and monetary savings, since today social guarantees (free medical care, education) do not function in full force and in expected amount [23].

However, the gap between their own expectations (often unreasonably high) and awareness of their own capabilities (usually very modest) leads to persistent negative attitudes in the perception of reality, which can be expressed in discrediting some social values [23]. A telling example of such phenomena can be found in the transformation of the value of education. Armenian and Russian societies have formed different ideas of the purpose of education. So, the legislation of the Russian Federation contains (since 2013) an idea concerning the marketization of the education system in terms of its gradual transformation into the sphere, the functioning of which is aimed, among other things, at satisfying the needs of the population [30, pp. 26-34]. It should be noted that the Armenian legislation does not contain such an approach; on the contrary, it supports the traditional attitude toward education as a purely social good.

A side effect of the change in the status of education in Russia is expressed in the transformation of public perception of this sphere, in particular in the phenomenon of overqualification of labor force (according to experts, in the Russian Federation, the share of people working in professions below their qualification is 60%) [31, p. 9].

We consider it necessary to note that marketization is also evident in the sphere of higher education in Armenia. According to Armenian experts, today the country's universities are *"focused on business"*, and *"the level of education is proportional to the system of value orientations of modern youth"* [32, pp. 6-11].

It seems that Russia's experience could help Armenia to avoid future mistakes that are directly related to the devaluation of the value of education, and above all to the overqualification of labor force.

Discussion of the results. The results of the study allowed us to find a methodological approach to finding an answer to the question "What is the determining vector of spiritual development of modern youth in former Soviet countries: socio-cultural modernization or the establishment and dominance of traditional values?" [23]. The answer to this question is not simple.

On the one hand, young people of the two countries that share common historical past experience an impact of the phenomenon of "cultural memory" [33, pp. 80-94]. The bearer of this memory is the older generation and its example in the minds of the younger population forms a significant layer of values of materialism (according to the terminology of R. Inglehart) [21].

The intergenerational transmission of values is more evident in the Armenian society: it supports the original national features of everyday life and traditional culture of recreation and celebrations [23]. Youth and adults appreciate their religious and ethnic community that was formed over the centuries, preserve their national language, and maintain ties with compatriots all over the world [34, pp. 28-30].

A positive role in this process is played by the Armenian Apostolic Church, the values of which are spreading rapidly among young people and connect different generations [34, pp. 28-30]. Young people support the importance of respect for elders and mutual support in the family [23]. The commitment of all generations of Armenians to traditional values both in Armenia and abroad ensures successful intergenerational transmission of socio-cultural values and cultural stability in society as a whole [34, pp. 28-30].

However, the range of socio-cultural dominants under consideration is reflected in the increasing value of instrumental rationality [35, pp. 80-94]. On the materials of inter-generational comparisons we see how in the youth environment the importance of material well-being increases, and the importance of culture decreases. Such patterns emerging against the background of unstable economic development of the two countries cause the rooting of survival strategies among young people, rather than the strategies of their self-realization in society [23].

Economic differentiation of society leads to the fact that the bottom" of society (low-income groups) is dominated by focusing on survival and obtaining the means livelihood, and the "top" (wealthy population) expresses a desire for the realization of personality and the achievement of spiritual goals [23].

On the other hand, we observe a transition to post-modernist values among young people of the two countries (in R. Inglehart's terminology) [21]. The shift toward post-materialist priorities entails reducing the role of obligations to society and taking social mobility for granted. The younger population places a stronger emphasis on the quality of life [23].

At the bottom of the hierarchy of young people's values there are interpersonal relations, as well as other priorities somehow connected not with personal life, but with the interests of society [23].

The antithesis of materialist and post-materialist values reflects an intergenerational shift from physical and economic security to an increasing importance of subjective well-being and self-expression [23]. If the "generation of fathers" focused on obtaining education, achieving long-term goals, social justice and equality, then today's young people growing up in market conditions favor hedonism and utilitarianism and perceive competition as a social norm [23].

Such ambiguity in the perception of values by young people raises questions about the prospects for the development of former Soviet republics. The question arises whether young people will support the idea of modernization and whether the specifics of their lifestyle will not cause a slowdown in the modern processes of economic development. For example, the previously noted trend of increasing importance of hi-tech values among people under 30 is not related to social optimism and to the desire to update the society; on the contrary, it leads to Internet addictions, escape from objective reality, apathy, and indifference toward the surrounding reality.

Thus, according to the correlation analysis (Pearson's correlation), the use of the Internet among young people has an inverse correlation with the variable "confidence in the future". This pattern is confirmed by the data obtained in Russia ($p \geq -0.192$) and in Armenia ($p \geq -0.201$)⁶. As a result, we can talk about "digital reitritism" ("escaping" from the lifestyle, which is considered "normal" in

society, in virtual reality) as a characteristic feature resulting from penetration of ideals of the society of consumption in the minds of young people, which can lead to a rupture of social relations and the growth of a critical mass of related problems (youth crime, vandalism, cyberterrorism, gambling, etc.). Young people may find themselves unprepared for them [11, pp. 192-201].

In this regard, the issues of transformation of socio-cultural values should form the agenda for former Soviet countries. They should focus on the preservation of traditional institutions of socialization (religion, family, education, labor market) and on the nature of the impact of "new" agents of the process of socialization (business and the Internet) on young people.

Due to the similarity of the issues highlighted in our paper, youth problems could become a subject of intercultural dialogue of countries. However, it is currently significantly limited by the lack of a proper regulatory framework. First of all, neither Russia nor Armenia has a framework law stipulating the status of young people as such. Countries of the former Soviet Union still do not have an international structure (similar to that of Junior Chamber International⁷), within the framework of which it would be possible to hold joint discussions on youth policy.

In addition, it is important for research organizations to take an active part in the formation of a single set of tools for regular monitoring of the changes taking place in the areas related to the quality of life and social well-being of the younger generation, and to the value background of development of youth in former Soviet countries.

⁶ The correlation is significant at the level of 0.01.

⁷ Junior Chamber International. Available at: <https://www.jci.cc/> (accessed: 11.05.2018).

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Received March 7, 2018.