Expansion of subcultural movements as a result of social disunity among the young population

This article deals with the problem concerning the estrangement of Russian and Ukrainian society from the fundamental institutions of socialization. The acute issue of subcultural movements among the post-Soviet youth population is discussed as one of the negative consequences of this process. The article presents the main reasons for the spread of informal youth associations, as well as the mechanisms of subcultural attitudes' influence on the younger generation. The basic directions of preventing the negative impact of subcultures are determined.

Subculture, youth, mental health, socialisation, social anomy.

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Modern post-Soviet transitional society is undergoing a complex and contradictory process of socio-political, socio-economic, and cultural transformations, accompanied by a clash of established norms and values, regulating people's behavior, with the new, conflicting standards, which are being implemented in the society through mass media.

Rapid devaluation and destruction of traditional norms and values led to a change in behavioural strategies of different social groups in post-Soviet society, first of all, it concerns the youth. Cultural anomy, typical of modern society, is accompanied by the lack of integration in stable social institutions of a significant number of young people, which affects their own personal stability and success, as well as the functioning of social system as a whole.

Due to the relevance of the problem, ISEDT RAS scientific staff (Russia) in collaboration with Cherkassy State Business College (Ukraine) conducted a study aimed at analyzing the moral and psychological condition of the youth as a factor contributing to the alienation of its representatives from the main social institutions and the spread of such social phenomenon as subcultural movement. It should be noted that the study wasn't aimed at characterizing the political orientation of the young generation.

Choosing Russia and Ukraine for studying the psychological climate in the youth environment is not random. Of all the post-Soviet countries, these states have common features and problems, connected with the crisis of spiritual and moral values after the USSR collapse. The common difficulties for Ukraine and Russia lie in the fact that the society exists separately from the authorities, the society possesses paternalism[1] as its characteristic feature.

According to the sociological centers (Yuri Levada in Russia and Razumkov in Ukraine), "Ukrainians and Russians are equally not confident about the future of their countries... the public mood is so similar that it's time to talk about common challenges[2]."

Similar features can be found in the spiritual and moral state of the population in both countries[3]:

1. Firstly, 85% of Russians are not aware of their country's development trends and whether its future is positive. Ukrainians have similar views, and the number of those who believe that the country is sliding towards dictatorship, has grown twice for 2010.

2. The second peculiarity consists in a rapid estrangement of citizens from the state. Only 57% of Ukrainians and 58% of Russians consider themselves part of the state. They prefer more and more often to identify themselves according to the social roles (husband, father, son), nationality or profession.
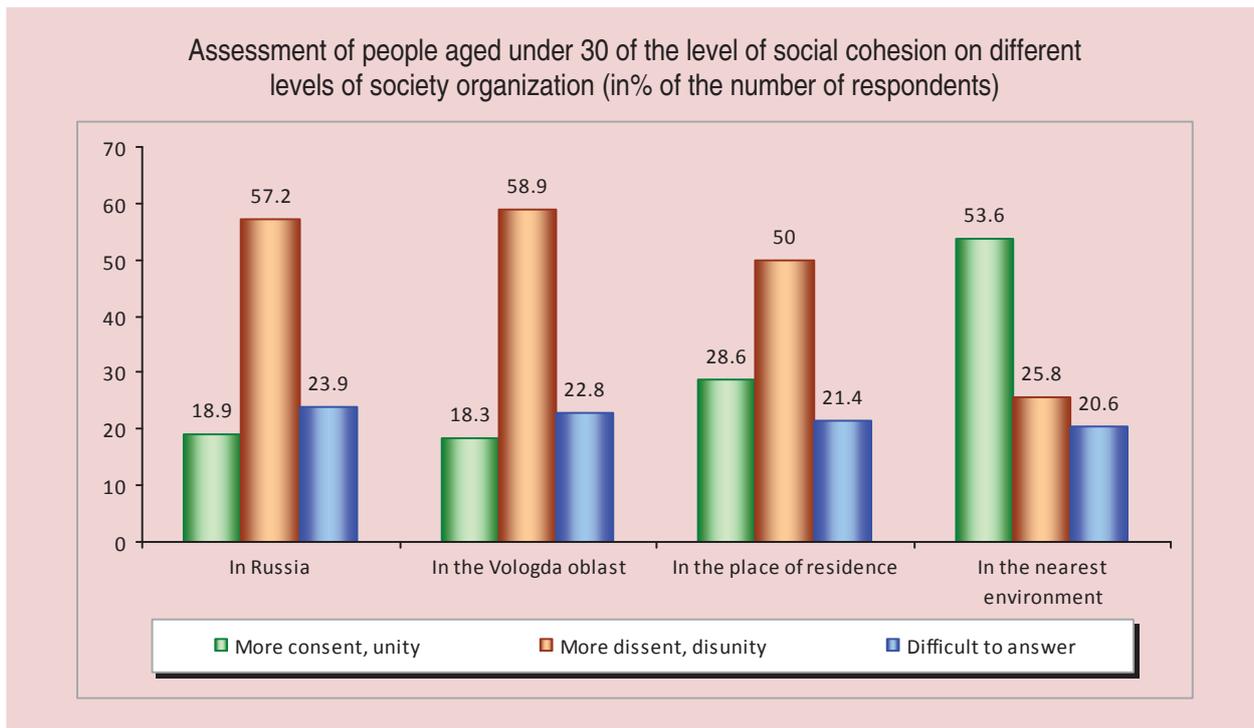
3. The third common feature is the citizens' distrust of the state's ability and willingness to protect them. 58% of Russians don't feel secure. In Ukraine 50.6% of citizens do not trust the police.

4. The fourth similar feature is the population's discontent over a high level of social inequality: 40% of Ukrainians and 42% of Russians believe that their living standards have decreased.

Therefore, Russia, and Ukraine show similar negative trends, with all the signs of social anomy and consisting in the crisis of the main social institutions, the estrangement of society from the state, the growth of social tension. In these conditions, the young are among the most vulnerable population layers; representatives of the youth, due to their age and lack of life experience, don't possess a sustainable concept of world view and an established structure of spiritual and moral values.

Sociological surveys data prove that today's young people are in a state of social anomy, and so they are an "easy prey" for any forces, ready to offer them life goals and confidence in the future.

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[1] The Center for Social-Conservative Policy. Records of the session on the topic "Russia and Ukraine: common problems and solutions" 17 August,.2011. Available at: http://cskp.info/17-августа-в-киеве-состоялось-заседание/

[2] Russia and Ukraine: common results of "zero". Available at: http://emigrant-ussr.ru/blog/rossija_i_ukraina_obshhie_itogi_nulevykh/2011-01-20-110

[3] Ibidem.

Assessment of people aged under 30 of the level of social cohesion on different levels of society organization (in% of the number of respondents)

So, according to the research carried out in the Vologda Oblast in 2011, approximately one person in three (31%) aged under 30 displays symptoms of anxiety, depression, or neurosis; 32% are not satisfied with their lives; 33% experience the feeling of loneliness; every fourth gives a negative evaluation of their day-to-day emotional state (21%) and notes the lack of confidence in their future (25%). Most young people do not trust institutions such as the court (29%), trade unions (34%), Prosecutor's office (30%), the police (40%), mass media (33%)[4].

Young people point out a feeling of social cohesion only at the level of immediate environment, which also shows the prevalence of individualism in the worldview attitudes and opinions of young people on the structure of

Russian society *(figure)*[5]. More than half (58%) of people aged under 30 characterize the social relations in the country as a "disagreement" and "estrangement".

The situation is not less tense in Ukraine: 72% of school graduates admit that they drink alcohol; 60% say that they are proud of their motherland, but only 3% are ready to sacrifice something or make concessions in its favour; 36% of Ukrainian university graduates are sure that to succeed in life you need sometimes to be capable of evading the law; 44% of respondents believe that in order to achieve a high position in society, one needs influential relatives first of all (for comparison: the high intelligence and capabilities to achieve this goal were pointed out only by 35% of respondents); 30% of the students are worried about their future, 35% have the feeling of confusion in this connection[6].

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[4] Public opinion monitoring. Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories of RAS. Vologda: ISEDT RAS, 2011 – 2012. Monitoring is conducted by questionnaire polls at the place of residence. 6 times a year among 1500 people in 10 municipal entities of the Vologda oblast (Kirrilovsky, Vozhegodsky, Sheksninsky, Gryazovetsky, Nikolsky, Babayevsky, Tarnogsky, Velikoustyugsky districts, as well as the cities of Vologda and Cherepovets). The sample is purposeful, quota. Sample error doesn't exceed 5%. The information is processed using SPSS and Excel.

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[5] Ibidem.

[6] A nationwide study of secondary school graduates was carried out by the scientists at the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Pedagogy of NAPS in September – October 2011. Altogether 10134 students and 1066 teachers were interviewed. The sample is representative, sample error doesn't exceed 3,2%.

Thus, as the researchers note, the majority of adolescents are pragmatic and demonstrate the consumer's approach to their homeland, considering that it is the state that should take care of its citizens[7].

Social anomy of the young generation in the former USSR countries is manifested most openly in their views on the political situation. At the same time, the heightened emotionalism, lack of political, professional and life experience, psychological instability of the youth can be used by representatives of political elites in the various scenarios of race for power.

The data of sociological research, carried out in the Vologda Oblast, proves the apolitical nature of the views of the people aged under 30, which is connected with the lack of trust in the basic institutions of civil society and understanding their own inability to influence the political situation in the country or region. In 2011 36% of people aged under 30 estimated the political situation in the country as being "tense", "critical", "explosive", while only 12% believed that they could somehow in-fluence this state of affairs.

Almost every second (46%) youth representative characterizes his/her participation in public and political life as "passive". While describing the motives of this passivity, they give such answers as "lack of benefit" (37%), "risk of being involved in dirty business" (11%), "lack of information about the methods of participation in public organizations and forms of local self-government" (15%)[8].

According to young people's opinion, "the indifference towards common causes, individualism", and "disbelief in the possibility to influence the authorities' decision" are the most common reasons that impede social activity and prevent people from displaying their civil position (25 and 22%, respectively[9]).

The scientists at the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy made similar conclusions on the basis of a comparative analysis of the psychological climate and social well-being conducted among the youth of three post-Soviet states — Russia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan. The study shows that the population of Russia and Ukraine experiences its isolation from the state, which is evidenced by the low level of trust to basic social and political institutions on the part of the society[10].

Young people living in the surveyed countries have more trust in their families and friends than in state and public institutions. As the researchers note, "it is quite an expected result; however, such a depth of differences in trust is caused, along with other factors, by a low developmental level of institutions, which the society could rely on"[11].

According to the data for 2010, the level of trust among Russian and Ukrainian population concerning the main political institutions, as well as law and order enforcement institutions was significantly lower than in many European countries *(table 1)*[12]. In these circumstances, the traditional system of informal relations remains the only reliable structure, in the framework of which the formation of subcultural associations takes place.

In the absence of firm and strong relationship between the society, the state and its institutions, the youth starts to long for the associations that reflect various ideologies, different from traditional cultural notions. One of the negative effects of those conditions, when the traditional culture fails to meet the spiritual demands of

[7] Shkatov O. Ukrainian youth wants to learn how to evade the law. Information-analytical portal "Comments". Available at: http://life.comments.ua/way/2012/01/23/316572/ukrainskaya-molodezh-hochet.html

[8] Public opinion monitoring. Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories of RAS. Vologda: ISEDT RAS, 2011 – 2012.

[9] Ibidem.

[10] The single questionnaire survey was conducted on a representative sample of the population aged 15 – 34.

[11] Duyk N.M. The first free generation: the young, policy and identity in Russia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan. Public Opinion Bulletin. Data. Analysis. Discussions. 2003. No. 1. P. 53-62.

[12] Andreyenkova A.V. Political behavior of Russians. Public opinion monitoring. 2010. No. 3 (97). P. 47-61. No. 4 (98). P. 4-21.

Table 1. Level of population trust in the institutes of politics, order and law enforcement
(2010, in % to the number of respondents)

Institutions	Russia*	Ukraine*	For comparison**		
			Denmark	Finland	Norway
Political parties	7 (24)	14 (16)	54	45	47
Parliament	22 (17)	27 (16)	67	64	53
Legal system	26 (20)	27 (18)	83	78	61
Police	45 (16)	41 (19)	89	92	72
* Figure in brackets shows the state's rank (total number of the states chosen – 25 European states). ** Data on the states with the greatest level of trust are represented.					

society, is the emergence and expansion of subcultural movements, which mean the system of values, attitudes, patterns of behaviour and life styles, that is typical of a smaller social community, spatially and socially isolated, to a greater or lesser extent[13].

Similar to the way the pseudo-religious movements begin its rapid development when the influence of traditional religion is weakened, subcultures fill a niche that is not occupied by other social institutions. Society, family, state – crisis of these subjects of socialization urges the population (and first of all the youth, as the most active category "seeking" its place in society) to turn to alternative sources of values, norms of behavior and attitudes.

Youth subcultures are a phenomenon of the Western type urban culture, reflecting a variety of processes occurring in the religious, ideological, political and economic spheres, in the sphere of fashion, etc.[14] Therefore, the level of expansion and nature of young people's subcultural preferences can be regarded as an indicator of social health and psychological climate in the society as a whole.

In 2010, ISEDT RAS scientists carried out a research, aimed at assessing subcultural preferences of young people in Vologda[15].

The survey results showed that mostly young people say they belong to a subculture of punks (21%), emos (15%), goths (14%) and alternatives (13%; *table 2*). However, upon closer examination, it becomes clear that the most common subcultures in the city are skinheads (60%), goths (47%), role players (43%) and emos (41%), as the participants of these subcultures share not only their external attributes or music, but also their ideology, lifestyle and behavior patterns.

The results of the Yaroslavl region youth information centre survey[16] can be used to confirm the data on the city of Vologda. The authors note, "Among the well-known subcultures ranking first, the Yaroslavl Oblast youth name the same ones, as in the 2009 – 2010 surveys: the first place belongs to "emo" (64% of all respondents); the second place – "goths" (41%), the third place was divided between "punks" (36%) and "skinheads" (35%)"[17].

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[13] Bayeva I.A. Psychology of youth subculture (the socio-psychological aspect of youth policy). *Bulletin of practical psychology of education*. 2007. No. 1. P. 84.

[14] Levikova S.I. Phenomenon of youth subculture (socio-philosophical aspect).Published summary of Doctor of Philosophy thesis. Moscow, 2002.

[15] 498 people aged 15 – 21 were interviewed from 22 education establishments of all levels (universities, training colleges, schools) with the use of questionnaire survey.

[16] The questionnaire survey was carried out in 2011 among 623 young citizens of 20 municipal units of the Yaroslavl Oblast. Respondents aged 14 – 16 equaled 24% of the total number; aged 17 – 19 – 20%; aged 20 – 22 – 20%; aged 23 and older – 35%. Among the people interviewed, young men equaled 50% and girls – 50%. According to their social status: schoolchildren – 27% of the total number, students of specialised secondary educational establishments – 16%; university students – 14%; working youth – 32%; 4% – said they didn't study or work.

[17] The results of the sociological research "Youth subcultures of the region – 2011". Youth subcultures and dealing with them: a practical handbook. Ed. by Ye.V. Koneva. Yaroslavl, 2011. P. 117-125.

Table 2. Characteristics of most widespread subcultures in Vologda (in % to the number of respondents)

Most widespread subcultures	In % to the number of respondents who belong to subcultures or have friends belonging to subcultures	Share of respondents fully accepting subcultural rules among those who belong to subcultures or have friends belonging to subcultures
Skinheads	2.3	60.0
Goths	13.6	46.7
Role players	3.2	42.9
Emos	14.5	40.6
Punks	20.9	26.1
Alternatives	12.7	25.0
Rappers	8.2	16.7
Anime	3.6	12.5
* Ranked according to the level of representation of people, fully accepting subcultural rules. Source: a survey of subcultural attitudes of Vologda city youth (ISEDT RAS).		

Reference

Skinheads represent a subculture, united by a set of image ("zero" haircut, combat boots, khaki army trousers, braces, collarless jackets) and behavioural (extreme aggressiveness) features. The ideologies of various skinhead groups are diametrically opposite. Skinheads are mostly viewed as the extreme right-wing, fascist-oriented stratum.

Goths are representatives of the youth subculture originated in the late 1970-s. Gothic subculture is very diverse and heterogeneous, however, it has such common features as dark image, interest in mysticism and esotericism, decadence, the love of gothic music, literature and horror movies.

Role players are an informal association of people involved in various role-playing games, first of all live action role-playing games. This movement is defined both as a hobby and as a subculture, which is characterized by its own jargon, its own music (minstrels), its own literature (mostly fantasy), and other distinctive elements of a single culture.

Emo is a subculture, created by the fans of a music style of the same name. The main rule for emos is expressing emotions. They are distinguished by their self-expression, confrontation of injustice, sensual perception of the world. They are often vulnerable and melancholic people. The style of emo consists in wearing two-toned clothing, usually black and pink. Representatives of this subculture often wear makeup.

Punks form a subculture, based on social protest, manifesting in ostentatious rejection of the social norms of behaviour, in aggression and denial of bourgeois values. Punks are characterized by anarchic style in their behavior, clothes and music.

Alternatives are a subculture that doesn't have a clear structure and principles, as it was initially based on the musical preferences, rather than philosophic ideas. Popular topics are, on the one hand, non-conformism, calls on the population's political literacy and anti-fascism; on the other hand – love, drugs, parties, etc. Alternatives often share punk anarchist views. Their appearance depends largely on the age and social environment.

Rappers are a subculture emerged in the mid 1970-s in the African-American and Latin American community. It is characterized by its own music (hip-hop, rap), its slang, hip-hop fashion, dance styles (break-dance, etc.), graphic art (graffiti) and cinema. To the beginning of the 1990-s, hip-hop in many countries has become a part of youth culture.

Anime is a subculture, based on the interest towards the animation genre of the same name that appeared in Japan in the beginning of the 20 century. The anime subculture emerged at the end of the 20 and the beginning of the 21 century. Its representatives make up the majority of the children and adolescents belonging to the role-playing community. This subculture is characterized by widespread interest in contemporary Japanese culture. Critics talk about the detachment of the views from the world and outflow of talents into a different culture. However, the anime representatives don't organize public protests and political disturbances. They simply live in a world of their own, which unites them with the subculture of role-players.

The studies of the structure and expansion of informal youth associations in Ukraine are sketchy and scarce. There is some information that, for example, in Odessa and the Odessa region, about 105 subcultures were officially registered in 2011. The most common of them are goths, emos, skinheads[18]. It is also known that Ukraine belongs to the countries, where the issue of curbing the Ukrainian nationalists' activities is the most acute. This movement is especially developed in the city of Lviv, where congresses of Association members are regularly held, and not only from Ukraine but also from other states (particularly, Russia). According to St. Petersburg skinheads, that took part in one of such congresses in 2012, "the situation in Ukraine is far better than in our country"[19].

[18] Lanko A.S. Subcultures at the present time. Available at: http://obozrenie-plus.com/subkultury-v-nashe-vremya.html

[19] Komsomolskaya Pravda. 13 June, 2012. Available at: http://kp.ru/online/news/893700

This is partly connected with anti-Soviet attitudes of the city authorities. In 2012 Lviv City Council banned the celebration of the Victory Day on 9 May, and the use of Soviet symbols on the territory of the city. This resulted in massive clashes between supporters of the right-wing and left-wing movements. The nationalist youth wearing masks marched along the city tore off St. George's Ribbons from passers-by near the "eternal flame", insulted veterans and trampled the wreath, which the Russian consul was going to lay on the military cemetery[20].

Thus, the given data show that the nature of subcultures expansion in Russia and Ukraine has common features, which consist in the prevalence of the most dangerous, anti-social, informal associations; the data also prove that in modern subcultural movements the tendency towards the consolidation of forces at the international level is manifested sharply.

The significant influence of the culture on young people, is conditioned by the community of their life style, behavior, group norms, values and behavior stereotypes. This simplifies socialization process; however, subcultures actively produce norms, behavior patterns and values that contradict the official culture, its content and forms. The ideologies of subcultures have one common feature – a subjective "blur", uncertainty, alienation from the main normative values, approved by an overwhelming majority of representatives of a particular society.

It is the basis of a reverse process of subcultures influence on the younger generation. Their values provide young people with the role of "outside observers" of social processes, which leads to social estrangement, reveals itself in a state of apathy, indifference to the life of the society, minimizes any manifestation of specific social attitudes.

Thus, the data on the various studies confirm the fact that not only Russia, but also other post-Soviet states experience a crisis of traditional social institutions – state, family, religion, school. This creates fertile ground for the spreading of subcultural ideologies, the role of which (as a social institute) lies in the fact that in the process of personality socialization they provide the basic value orientations and social standards that deviate from those generally accepted in a given society. Subculture is an option for everyone, who is concerned about the search for identity, who seeks to find a new complete image of the world in which one can clearly determine his/her own place. When the question concerns the life and cultural style, there is always a choice. The weaker institutional norms and regulators, the faster and more obvious the place of traditional role models is occupied by life styles, competing with each other for an individual who has a free choice[21].

Participation in the subculture gradually leads to abandonment of social and political interests, the substitution of moral values by external rules of behaviour and ways of life, reduction of the level of critical assessment in the perception of new information. Ultimately, it results in the increasing risk of social isolation, drug abuse, deviant or suicidal behavior among young people.

The more acute is a question of purposeful, integrated and systemic impact on informal youth associations. It should be noted that the prevention of subcultural movements expansion in the youth environment may not be forced, because their official banning will violate human rights and freedoms. Besides, given the modern conditions of high technologies, it is almost impossible to establish control over the subcultures development dynamics.

20   Ibidem.

21   Lyasnikov N., Lyasnikova Yu. Socio-economic conditions of forming the spiritual culture of the student youth. Available at: http://www.gumer.info/bibliotek_Buks/Sociolog/Ljasnikov/_DuhKult_zakl.php

The main purpose of preventive measures should include the search and activation of the subcultures' socializing capacity, while counteracting the negative effects of youth associations of anti-social nature. At present, it is also necessary to strengthen the status of such social institutions, as family, education, church. However, taking into account the strong influence of mass media on modern youth, the use of the elements of subcultural attributes and ideology on the air should be placed under control.

Prevention of negative influence of subcultures cannot be reduced to a simple prohibition of their activities. A comprehensive approach to the problem of the younger generation's socialization is required. In our opinion, to achieve this goal, the following directions of activity should be observed:

1. *Wide-scale involvement of the youth in management processes at the level of public associations, political parties, etc.* The solution of this problem will promote strengthening of the institution of power due to the youth representatives' awareness of the real possibility of their participation in the society's political life.

2. *Consolidation of the efforts of various organisations (which include regional and municipal authorities, institutions of education, health care, social security and internal affairs, non-governmental organizations, public associations, religious denominations and mass media) with a purpose of general improvement of the young people's socio-economic condition.* The implementation of complex of measures on employment, promotion of socially acceptable forms of leisure activities, monetary income increase, housing problems solving, and assisting in obtaining education will contribute to the strengthening of young people's spiritual and moral values and their direction towards pro-social course.

3. *Identification of negative conditions of youth socialization, as well as search for forms and methods of consolidating the subjects of preventive activities.* Observance of this principle will allow to implement more extensively the ideas of preventing social ill-being (which is not reduced to only one such manifestation as a subculture) in the youth environment. As for the example of informal youth associations, it will result in the fact that activities aimed at reducing their negative impact will be directed toward eliminating the reasons and not the consequences of young people's involvement in subcultures.

Thus, preventing the expansion of informal youth associations, and other negative aspects of socialization should be based on the improvement of young people's socio-economic position, ensuring the conditions for their professional and creative self-realization in the framework of traditional culture, which will promote the development of young people's interest to its various manifestations. At present, it is also necessary to strengthen the status of the main institutions of socialization that are the bearers of traditional cultural rules and norms. The implementation of these directions requires developing targeted strategies of young people's social adaptation, which can be realized by cooperation with the most important social institutions − family, school and peer groups.

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