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THE "WORLD OF LABOR" OF WORKING RETIREES: DILEMMAS AND MEANINGS

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Abstract. Based on the principles of the cognitive-value approach, the article deals with the study of the 'world of labor' of working retirees. Using the content analysis of messages presented in the Russian segment of the Internet on one of the most frequently visited forums of retirees, and the method of multidimensional scaling, it was possible to identify the main semantic units that form the image of labor activity of this category of employees, and its structure. It is shown that it is well described by the above model, which includes four scales. Their content is also substantiated in the article. Based on the identified features of the "world of labor" of working retirees, the measures aimed at improving the activities and social well-being of those who are at the stage of 'late career development' as well as possible directions of future research are discussed.

'Sociology is itself a story – but the message of this particular story is that there are more ways of telling a story than are dreamt of in our daily storytelling…' [Bauman, 2005: 41]

Concept and research methods. According to the cognitive paradigm that is becoming widespread, socio-humanitarian knowledge has the task to reconstruct and analyze those aspects of reality that a concrete individual or a collective subject recognizes as the most essential and significant [Lectorsky, 2008]. Such a 'subject-oriented' point of view is also fully valid for the labor sphere. This determines the formation of cognitive-value approach to labor activity, the subject of which becomes the study of the 'world of labor'.

F. Znaniecki was one of the first sociologists to address the problem of values. He wrote: 'Values are more important than things, because they influence a person's life, his activity and the content of his aspirations much more than things do' [Znaniecki, 1971: 11]. In experiments conducted in the 1960s by J. Deese, and later by other researchers, it was shown that any concept can be represented through a frequency series of associative reactions to it. The construction of 'nests of words' with similar associative meanings made it possible to discover that in their everyday thinking people often rely on other bases of classification than those accepted in scientific knowledge. This phenomenon was explained by the fact that human knowledge is 'value-laden'. On the basis of critical understanding of the results of this and other similar experiments, a cognitive concept was formed, according to which a person acts according to

what he sees, and therefore a study of the issues of 'cognition' (cognitionis, *Latin*) of the object by the subject acquires special importance.

Let us reference to studies of the labor sphere. They often present subject-object interaction (S-O) as mediated by instruments of labor, while subject-subject relations (S-S) are mediated by sign means. It is obvious, however, that the interaction between the subject and the object also cannot do without sign interactions, and hence without the S-SO (subjectivation of the object) and S-OS (objectivation of the subject[1]) bonds. Using this approach, it is possible to record that the representations formed in the consciousness of a employee are not identical with the external world. Owing to the presence of the value component they have a 'partial character' or, accordinhg to F. Znaniecki, they contain a 'humanistic coefficient.'

The role of value knowledge in the formation of the individual's purely personal perceptions by M. Heidegger was enshrined in the concept of 'world picture'. He wrote that this expression now means 'the construct of an objectifying representation' [Heidegger, 1993: 52]. This allows us to attach to the phenomenon in question the notion of the 'world of labor'. Refering to the role of values in human activity, F. Znaniecki notes that the 'humanistic coefficient' forms the 'cultural data'. Similar reasoning is present in the works of M. Heidegger. Therefore, paraphrasing F. Znaniecki's famous statement concerning social knowledge [Thomas, Znaniecki, 1918: 36], it can be stated that the concept 'world of labor' fixes attention to the priority of analyzing the labor sphere (technical and organizational side of labor) from the sociocultural point of view [Kaz, 2005; 2009].

Let us narrow the field of our analysis to one special, but extremely important and at the same time little-studied group of employees – those who retire, but continue to work.

How do we penetrate the world of the working retiree? Without downplaying the role of interviews in socio-humanitarian cognition, we should agree that the Internet provides an impressive flow of social information that requires study and reflection. Let us also note that improving the technique of working with this data set is an important task in its own right.

The study of the 'world of labor' of working retirees, the results of which are presented in this article, was conducted on the basis of the materials of one of the rubrics ('Working retirees') of the site 'Young Retirees Forum', which is among the most visited in the Russian segment of the Internet on this topic. For the study we selected those messages in which the site visitors discussed the problems of their labor activity and personal attitude to its completion (183 messages).

More and more researchers agree with the fact that retirement should be considered as a continuing process over time, rather than as a discrete event with a legal date [Wang, Shultz, 2010], so it was decided not to exclude the statements of persons of preretirement age from the data set. Thus, the above array was formed from the messages of forum visitors who are in a similar life situation: in the process of transition from work to retirement with complete cessation of work.

When conducting the study, we acted from a perception that the information on this topic contained in the users' messages certainly gives an idea of the 'world of the working retiree', but it is a very approximate idea. All the more so, it cannot satisfy the research interest if there is a complex task: analysis of the problems that dominate in the minds of the specified group of people.

Indeed, from the standpoint of the cognitive-values approach, each individual constructs his or her own system of ideas about the work sphere, acting just like a researcher (formulating hypotheses about external environment, checking them and discarding erroneous ones). Therefore, the methodology that will allow 'to look at the world through the eyes of another'

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[1] The subject's objectivation is the embodiment of the subject's activity in both tangible and spiritual results (the latter, in particular, includes myths of the organization, its heroes, as well as other elements of corporate culture).

should be 'unobtrusive'; 'unstructured'; 'sensitive to the context' [Krippendorff, 2013]. These reasons prompted us to use the tools of content analysis and multidimensional scaling.

The study relied on an inductive strategy and included the following phases: text reduction; reconstruction of semantic systems; formation of hypotheses.

The results obtained at all stages of the study (from highlighting the necessary fragments in the text and producing codes – to the formation of the results of content analysis and multidimensional scaling), were checked by independent experts.

In the process of content analysis all the relevant judgments (units of analysis) were reduced to the following key phrases (the code of each category is given in brackets): 'they want to send me to retirement' (WSR); 'it's hard to work' (HW); 'my poor financial situation' (PFS); 'a meager salary at the new place of work' (MSNW); 'my health condition' (HC); 'I am afraid of being left without a collective (ABLC); 'it's difficult to find a common language with the collective' (DCLC); 'free time (FT); 'downsizing' (DS); 'it is difficult to adapt to the changes at work' (ACW); 'I like working' (LW); 'thoughts come that I have to retire' (HR); 'we and they' (W&T); 'I am not alone' (NA).

The assessment of the distance between these categories allowed us to quantitatively present the relations between the main aspects of the 'world of labor' of working retirees in the form of a matrix. To do this, we first calculated the joint occurrence of each pair of codes (counting unit) within one message on the forum (WSR and HW, PFS and HC, etc.), and then the relative frequency of their joint occurrence in the entire analyzed array of messages.

So, according to the principles of cognitive research, the data obtained as a result of the above processing, characterize the structure and the strength of relationship in the minds of respondents between the phenomena recorded in the process of content analysis and reduced to codes [Davison, 1988: 56, 59–60]. At the same time, it is obvious that different strength of relationship between the semantic units in question can be represented as distance (by analogy with the approach to the assessment of social distance in a community as inverse to the assessment of the strength of relationship between its members) [Davison, 1988: 13]. Therefore, in order to determine the distance between the studied categories in all possible pairs, the calculated values of relative frequencies were subtracted from one. The formed distance matrix thus was processed by multidimensional scaling according to the ALSCAL program implemented in the SPSS package, using the Euclidean metric.

The method of multidimensional scaling, as it is known, is a mathematical toolkit designed to process data on <…> relations between the analyzed objects in order to represent these objects in the form of points of some coordinate space [Davison, 1988: 5]. The axes of this space are those latent features, on the basis of which 'the respondent thinks the objects he compares' [Tolstova, 2015: 13].

Four dimensions of the 'world of labor' of working retirees. If we look from a formal point of view, good results were obtained by placing the collected data already in three-dimensional space. However, with mathematical point of view, the model obtained by four-dimensional scaling, adequately reflects their structure as well. This is evidenced by Kruskal's 'stress' scores (0.08) and R^2 (0.958). The former captures the difference in distances between studied categories according to the results of model calculations, on the one hand, and in the original data set, on the other hand[2]. The second one shows the proportion of the variance of the original data, explained by the obtained model (in our case more than 95%).

At the same time, the results of four-dimensional scaling (Fig. 1, 2), as the subsequent analysis showed, lend themselves to a better meaningful interpretation.

The multidimensional scaling in the four-coordinate system revealed the following main groups of problems dominating in the minds of working retirees.

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[2] The index of 'stress' can take values in the range from 0 to 1. The greater the 'stress' value, the worse the obtained solution agrees with the initial data.
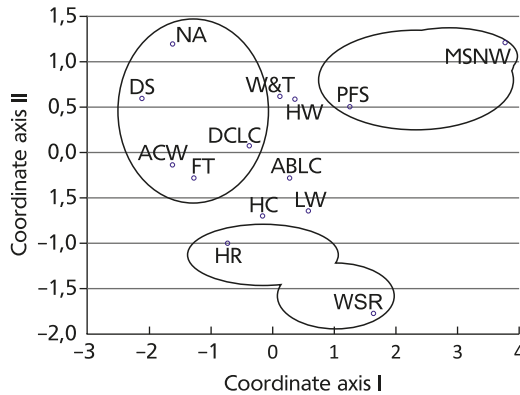
Fig. 1. "World of labor" of working retirees (projection
on the first and second coordinate axis)

The first group includes the categories that, according to the results of multidimensional scaling, have the highest or lowest values on the first axis (Fig. 1, circled with a gray line[3]): *meager salary at the new place of work* (+3.75); *poor financial situation* (+1.243); *it's difficult to find a common language with the collective* (–0.381); *free time* (–1.28); *rapid changes at work* (–1.628); *downsizing* (–2.12); *I am not alone* (–1.63).

The role of these semantic units in the structure of the 'world of labor' of working retirees is well conveyed by the statements of regular forum visitors. 'I 'leave' every year,– writes the respondent with the nickname 'Ludmila' – but the director is two years away from retirement, and he would like me to work until he retires. Still, the chief accountant means a lot to the director's peace of mind… It also kind of scares me that retirees have to work as part-time cleaners, janitors and transport conductors. Every day I see it and think – well, is it really bad for me to sit in my cozy office? Not because these people want to, but because they have to get up at dawn and work in these low-paying and not at all prestigious jobs'. Another working retiree confirms her fears: 'The salary is humiliating for a person!!! Just imagine they give you 1000 rubles in advance! You twirl them in your hands in bewilderment and think: is this a mockery or a hint that you're nothing?'

'There is another point, I think, that is important in the life of a working retiree and a person of preretirement age, writes a visitor with the nickname 'Marina'.– Sometimes it is not always easy to find a common language with the collective'. 'Lidsana' agrees: 'Communication is difficult. I spent many years in the civil service, and the collective behaved very differently: full confidence, goodwill, the ability to behave with people. But here – the obscene language in the conversation (women), the constant gossip, intrigue, up to showdown and ultimatums. And I'm like a black sheep. It is very difficult to hear all this, but at least some money to earn for communal services. I wish I could endure it until spring. The other things that upset me are: the anger, the rudeness and the lack of desire to change. It is depressing and frightening'.

Among the reasons for their decision to retire many active forum participants point out that they find it increasingly difficult to adjust to changes at work. 'You can't teach an old dog new tricks. I realized it when the requirements for my position had risen unreasonably, and each new instruction, I executed, started eliminating the previous one at the rate of five new instructions per second', writes one of them. Another agrees: 'The demands now are simply

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[3] The others are not included, even though, judging by Fig. 1, they are located next to those circled with a gray line. This is explained by the fact that they actually have a larger quantitative estimation in absolute terms not on this scale. This comment also applies to the codes not assigned to the second scale in Fig. 1, and to the codes not assigned to the third or fourth scale in Fig. 2.
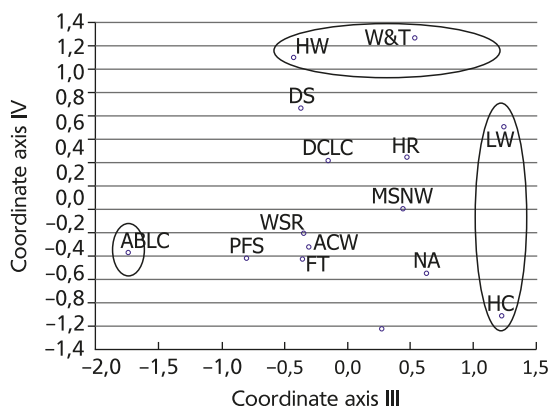
Fig. 2. 'World of labor' of working retirees (projection on
the third and fourth coordinate axis)

unbelievable. The instructions are changing without end. Sometimes you just don't understand what they want from you'.

Turning to the arguments in favor of terminating employment after retirement, a forum participant ('Valya') notes: 'Everyone has to live some part of their life just for himself or herself and step away from the hustle and bustle'. Another agrees: 'After I retired, I quit my job right away… I dreamed of freedom!'

Shared her reason for making the decision to retire, a visitor to the forum with the nickname 'Yolka': 'I resigned on my own… The company was systematically headed for bankruptcy… I quit and I don't regret it. And the company was bankrupt'.

Thus, the positive area of the first scale combines semantic units describing a number of elements of the external environment, the satisfactory state of which, according to forum participants, forces (or has already forced) the decision to continue working in retirement (denoted by the term 'motivation at work'). The negative domain mainly combines semantic units describing environmental factors forcing to make an alternative decision ('motivation to retire'). Therefore, the first scale is named 'Motivation to continue working or retiring'.

The second scale is labeled 'existential anxiety'. Its content is formed by the following meaning complexes (Fig. 2, circled with a black line): *they want to send me to retirement* (–1.78); *the idea that I have to leave in time* (–0.997).

The role of these semantic units in the system of perceptions of the forum participants is well illustrated by the statements of its regular visitors. A forum participant who introduced herself as 'Tatiana' wrote: 'We've got terminations at work, and they don't keep retirees. I'm terribly worried, but for a long time I've been mentally preparing to quit in advance. In the summer, I worked hard on my garden plot in the country and waited anxiously for winter…' Another notes: "If all the working retirees retire, the school will have to close, because there's no one to work. But I must be worn out. There's only one thought running through my head: it's time to retire'. 'Sveta', a forum visitor, agrees with her: 'Habit is a terrible thing! I keep telling myself all kinds of positive things about the new stage of life… It helps, and then you think that everything seems fine, and then you move on. However you've got to make up your mind sometime… Yes, you've got to'.

'I'm on vacation right now,' – 'Lioness' shares her thoughts. – 'I'm staying at home with my grandchildren. On Friday they called me from work and asked me to come… I went this morning. When walking down the corridor I saw a working retiree older than me by 5 years going at a snail's pace in front of me. I saw her bent over, limping, her legs barely moving. And she used to be slender and tall. An hour later, as I walked back, I saw two people the same age as me. But their legs were swollen, their gait slow, and their eyes were not worth a curse. Farther on,

I met people much older than me – slouchy, flabby… I got scared. What did I look like from the outside?… In those moments when I'm not feeling well, I'm probably shuffling my feet too, with a pained face, hardly move… I have to quit my job altogether', I thought. I want to be remembered as slender, cheerful, graceful, always well-dressed, and not old and decrepit'.

The 'existential anxiety' abundant in these reflections is a clear signal that their authors are experiencing a critical situation in their lives. It is possible to overcome it if only they are able 'to independently express and formulate the problem, to discover the structures of semantic formation that help him (her) (the person.– M.K.) and turn them into action'. [Orlova, 2015]. This is exactly the 'recipe' for overcoming it as a forum member with the nickname 'Skier' writes: 'I don't even know how to explain it to you. Here I have always had responsibilities in my life, and I can't imagine how I could do without them… If you take it away from me, there will be emptiness'. A visitor with the nick 'Vladimir' working for an agrarian company agrees with him: 'My work is unpredictable in terms of current results. This requires me to generate new ideas, and sometimes new unexpected meanings. My success, if it exists at all, is hidden somewhere far away, at the end of a winding, unpredictably branching path that gallops over hills. When I leave my job and leave forever for a city on the Volga, there will be one straight and level road in front of me: I will quietly grow old and die of illness, boredom, or worthlessness. Well, so, more or less'.

A joint study by a team from the Universities of Florida (US) and Leuphana in Lüneburg, Germany, failed to confirm the hypothesis that the financial situation of retirees is closely related to their decision to continue working after retirement age [Fasbender et al., 2016]. The results we obtained testify in favor of the important role that 'existential anxiety' and other meaning complexes identified in the research process play in answering the question 'to stay or leave'.

As our previous research has shown, the role of the value component in the structure of the 'world of labor' of employees who are yet to retire, is great. In their perception almost all elements that belong to the anthropic group are endowed with value characteristics, and the elements related to the material environment are endowed with value characteristics in more than 40% of cases [Kaz, 2011: 43; Kaz, 2003]. This confirms the idea that 'the very boundary between the organism and the external environment is conditional… the external environment entering this 'extended subject' contains both natural objects and cultural artifacts' [Lektorsky, 2008: 13]. At the same time, the analysis of the 'world of labor' of working retirees reveals the special role that 'existential anxiety' plays in its structure. Literally 'ensphereing' other elements of the system of subjective perceptions of this group of employees, which belong to almost each of the dimensions of the four-dimensional space we have identified, it gives them a special semantic connotation.

U.L. Orlova draws attention to the important role of the 'problematization' factor in overcoming existential anxiety by nonworking retirees whose 'resources of independence and help from relatives have been exhausted or are insufficient' (in case they live in a residential care facility). Their 'problematization' is expressed in a 'reconsideration of their life' and 'comprehension of their significance for something or someone' [Orlova, 2015: 103–105].

For those of retirement age who are not part of this circle of pensioners, values such as career and social status, which give meaningful activity to most employees, are also gradually receding into the background, and their place is taken by 'problematization of meaning'. However, the fundamental difference is that for many able-bodied retirees 'problematization' manifests itself in the transformation of the meaning of work: it becomes, among other things, an action to overcome the 'existential vacuum'. This largely explains, in our opinion, the content of the third axis, designated as 'motivation to work' (it refers mainly to the personal and social meaning of work). Its content is formed by the following elements of the 'conceptual grid' of forum participants (Fig. 2, circled by black lines): *I like to work* (+1.24); *My health condition* (+1.22); *I am afraid of being left without a collective* (−1.74).

Thus, a visitor with the nickname 'Lydia' notes in response to one forum member's assertion that retiring without continuing to work allows more time to devote to oneself, remarks:

'I don't agree. What if I don't want to retire? If I can't find myself in retirement like you do? If one is used to working and can't go the rest of her life without it?' 'Tatiana' agrees with her: 'There is an opportunity and desire, my health allows me to work, which means that there should be no doubt – I'll WORK!'[4]

The author with the nickname 'Lidsana' reports, 'I read and decided to write my reason for going to work: 1 – more money, 2 – additional communication'. Another forum member is unanimous with her, stating that we continue to work in retirement because 'we are afraid of becoming unnecessary'.

In our opinion, it is no coincidence that a component of this factor is the category 'I am afraid of being left without a collective'. It captures the place that 'social meaning of work' occupies in the 'world of labor' of working retirees, covering recognition and evaluation, communication with others, fulfillment of their expectations – in short, describing the sense of belonging to a particular group [Fasbender et al., 2016: 13]. A person, getting older, usually experiences more loneliness as he or she loses his or her social resources and loses social activity. An employee is quite likely to decide to continue working after retirement age if he/she perceives work as a need for social interaction [Fasbender et al., 2014].

Finally, we should highlight another group of problems that occupy an important place in the 'world of labor' of working retirees. It includes the categories that have the highest or lowest values on the fourth axis according to the results of multidimensional scaling (they are circled with a gray line in Figure 2): 'it is hard to work' (+1.102); 'we and they' (+1.27).

Denoting this axis as 'hard work', or, for example, 'the condition of retirees and morality', or 'job fatigue and group pressure', unfortunately does not sufficiently reveal the wealth of meanings behind the brief terms 'it is hard to work' and 'we and they', introduced in the interest of content analysis. Therefore, first of all, let us turn to the relevant statements of the forum participants.

'I'm tired of working, exhausted physically and mentally,' – declares a forum member with the nickname 'January'. 'But what to do if… it is impossible to survive on a pension?' 'Zoya' enters into the discussion.– 'And if you also treat a family person? That's why I have to do almost by force to keep in shape, to walk in high heels with my head held high and my back straight and, of course, professionally carry out my duties… but if you only knew… how much I 'd like to retire…'

The aspects of the 'we – they' opposition, which the forum participants consider important, are illustrated by the following statements: 'After the 2008 crisis, we had a very large reduction. More than half of the employees were fired, this also affected the engineering staff. Wages of those who stayed were cut by 50%. Bonuses, meals, payment for travel and cell phones were cancelled. In general, they created such conditions that many of those who stayed left themself … We survived those sad times, the volume of work increased, there was a need to fill some vacancies. They started to search for new personnel according to a very strange principle: women were chosen according to the tastes of the managing director, and young people according to the sympathies of the Head of Personnel Department.' As a result, the administrative building of our plant looks like a branch of a modeling agency, no more, no less… Oh well, God help them, if only they would want to work. But out of five people, only one is interested in the work and understands what he is being told… And as soon as a serious problem arises, the boss immediately shows up with his question: 'Where are our luminary, those who are over 50…? Let's load them up, and let them teach the young people… ' For God's sake… Load us up, we'll handle it… but the young people aren't in such a hurry to learn. Not all of them, of course, but many… ' ('Marina' by nickname). 'And you're right, young people don't want to learn, and most importantly: they don't really want to take responsibility,' another forum participant with the nickname 'Svetlana' agrees with her.

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[4] Hereinafter it is highlighted in capital letters by the authors of the statements.

The visitor with the nickname 'Marina' continues, 'but I am surprised by the attitude of the MAJORITY of them to work… Indifference and the lack of initiative… Maybe I am reacting to it in this way because for me such an attitude to work is simply UNACCEPTABLE. There are retired and preretirement age employees at our company, and they say the same thing about our plant's youth. There are also young employees who cannot wait for the older generation to give way to them and leave leadership positions. And sometimes they behave very unkindly. That's how we live.' She is supported by 'Maya': 'We have young people at work who are also indifferent. They get together and talk about their news, or pretend to work. The only trouble is that they are not experts.'

In our opinion, the above indicates that the problems that make up the categories located according to the results of multidimensional scaling along the fourth coordinate allows us to designate this axis with the term 'vitality and morality.' As N.N. Kozlova notes, 'Vitality is associated with the ability to survive, to balance… The problem of vitality arises when it comes to staying in a borderline situation 'between life and death' on the 'side of life'.' [Kozlova, 1998: 95, 96]. Exactly this (to stay on the 'side of life) but not at any cost and not violating the principles of moral behavior unites the statements of the authors, relating to the fourth factor.

Moreover, the category 'we and they,' as is evident from the posts of regular contributors to the forum, captures not only moral confrontation, but also the desire of older employees to satisfy a generative need. A. Templer defines it as need to share their knowledge and experience with the next generation and emphasizes that it increases as people get older (Templer et al., 2010). Thus, the category 'we and they' in this understanding, as well as the category 'it's hard to work' carries a powerful charge of vitality.

Conclusion. The conducted research represents: the production environment in the minds of employees is filled with semantic structures, developed in the process of labor interaction. The notion of 'the world of labor' fixes the idea of it as 'a construction created by man out of available… material' [Ortega y Gasset, 1997: 237], as well as the fact that the mentioned semantic structures appear not so much in the form of notions, as in the form of concepts. The latter, unlike notions, "are not only thought… They are the subject of emotions, sympathies and antipathies, and sometimes of collisions" [Stepanov, 2004: 43].

M.F. Steger et al. [Steger et al., 2012] identified three factors in the structure of work that increase the propensity of a retirementage employee to decide to continue working: the presence of positive meaning in work, identification of work as the main way to find the meaning of life, the perception of work as useful for the common good. Certain components of these factors are also present in the system of perceptions of this category of employees that we have reconstructed. However, it also partially agrees with some aspects of the position held by M.E. Mor-Barak [Mor-Barak, 1995], who distinguished four factors (social, personal, financial and generative).

According to many researchers, the activities of social institutions that provide long-term care for the elderly (nursing homes, boarding houses, etc.), have dual features. On the one hand, they help to maintain the well-being of the elderly in a stage of life when assistance from relatives is insufficient and the resources of independence have been exhausted. On the other hand, they limit the personal freedom of the elderly, contribute to their social isolation [Orlova, 2015: 103]. Our study shows that the notion of 'duality', but in the context of feelings ('dual feelings'), is applicable to the social category 'working retirees' that we studied. In searching for a solution to the dilemma: to continue working in retirement or not, or reflecting on a previously made decision, they are trying to reconcile the hard to reconcile (the need for communication and group pressure; tiredness from work and the financial need to continue the desire to transfer the accumulated experience and the reluctance of employees to use it; the willingness to continue work that brings satisfaction, and the intention of management to free the position for a new employee, etc.). This means, following Lévi-Strauss' conception, that a considerable part of them is in search of a trickster – that real and sometimes mythological

essence that will make their lives more definite and more meaningful. For many of them, this trickster becomes the work itself.

The world of working retirees is a special sphere of life, requiring specific research tools and management methods. We agree that post-retirement employment should not be viewed as the termination of a career, but as a late career stage [Hirschi, Froidevaux, 2019]. It may include part-time and self-employment [Beehr, Bennett, 2015], special workplace organization and the provision of other benefits. It requires the formation of 'late career plans' and the development of specific recruitment strategies for preretirement and retirement age groups. They should be based, as the analysis shows, on the study of personal values and career experiences of employees who have embarked on a path of transit from employment to retirement with complete cessation of employment. The corresponding toolkit has recently begun to be actively developed within the framework of the 'Life Design' research project [Froidevaux, 2018].

'At every step we try to produce certain social values without taking into account the values which are already there and upon which the result of our efforts will depend as much as upon our intention and persistence.' [Thomas, Znaniecki, 1918: 52]. More than a century has passed, but these words of the famous sociologist fully apply to the contemporary situation in the labor sphere. Let us begin to move toward overcoming it by paying special attention in our socio-humanitarian studies to people of preretirement and retirement age. They deserve it.

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