MODERN ECONOMIC STRUCTURES IN THE AGRARIAN SPHERE AND RISKS OF THEIR TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

Basing on the results of sociological research conducted in a uniform manner in rural areas of Russia – Siberia, the Urals and the Volga region, this study provides an expertise of the processes of transformation of economic structures in the agrarian sphere from the viewpoint of their innovative potential and significance in the sustainable development of the rural society. Comparative analysis of the impact of various organizational forms of agricultural production on the social situation in rural communities makes it possible to assess the degree of efficiency of the existing economic structures in terms of the risks of their formation.

Key words: *economic structures, rural areas, social risks, innovations*

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of new social and economic realities in the life of the Russian countryside, resulting from the transformation processes in the Russian society, foregrounds the development of new theoretical and methodological approaches to studying the innovative changes. The multi-structural nature of the rural economy, formed as a result of the agrarian reform, is based on the interaction of several leading forms of agricultural production, which include large agricultural enterprises, independent farms and personal subsidiary farms of the population. Acting as innovative mechanisms to ensure the balance of the social and economic components of transformation, the existing economic structures fulfill the social function of ensuring sustainable development of rural areas, which makes it relevant to compare their effectiveness and the risks of formation in the context of preserving and developing the social capital of the rural society.

The present-day trends in the restructuring of the agrarian economy in Russia are accompanied, on the one hand, by the growth of agricultural production and an increase in the country's level of self-sufficiency in food, and on the other, by the emergence of new social problems and risks caused by:

– peculiarities of innovative development of the agrarian economy, such as the washing out of small economic forms and excessive concentration of agricultural production (which increases the risks of disrupting the food supply of the regions in case of bankruptcy);

– the formation of latifundia and the transfer of large land estates under the control of foreigners;

– the incompleteness of the process of land demarcation (which creates conditions for mass shadow turnover of the land).

Innovations in the development of rural areas, which include a wide range of transformations from technological re-equipment of the agrarian sector and increasing the efficiency of its organizational and production structure to changes in the socio-economic practices of rural residents and the system of social interrelations of rural societies are reflected in the transformation of rural lifestyles and the dynamics of the human and social capital.

The theoretical foundations of studying the social development of the agrarian sphere were formed in the first half of the 20th century and were constituted in the studies of W. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, P. A. Sorokin, C. C. Zimmerman and C. J. Galpin, G.A. Hillery and others (Hillery G. 1955; Sorokin,

Zimmerman & Galpin 1930; Thomas & Znaniecki 1918). The modern research that develops the concept of Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development is based on an integrated socio-ecological-economic approach to developing the agro-industrial complex and rural areas, and the goal of rural development is the improvement of the well-being of the rural population, increase in the production of ecologically safe products and environmental improvement. A significant part of modern foreign researchers study rural communities as social systems, analyzing the ways in which the communities adapt to changes caused by external economic and social shifts caused by globalization and other large-scale transformations (Robertson 1992; Wellman 1999). Increased attention to this issue is due to the fact that rural communities are the most vulnerable elements in the face of the impact of globalization on the economy, social policy and culture. The socio-economic consequences of agrarian reforms in Russia have become an object of close attention of many researchers. The main attention was paid to the economic efficiency of the reorganized agricultural enterprises, land relations, development scenarios and models of agricultural management in the new environment (Glazovsky 2005; Krylatykh 1999; O'Brien & Patsiorkovsky 2006; Petrikov 2013; Serova 2001; Uzun & Shagaida 2015 and others). A number of studies addressed the issues of employment, unemployment, economic behavior of the rural population, adaptation strategies of agricultural enterprises and the population (Kalugina & Fadeyeva 2009; Nechiporenko 2010; Nechiporenko & Samsonov 2012; Rodionova 2007; Veliky 2012; Veliky & Morekhanova 2004 and others). The most interesting recent findings of Russian researchers suggest that the overwhelming majority of the rural areas are experiencing the formation of a new type of social and economic relations, which combine the features of subsistence farming and the informal economy, essentially depending on the redistributive policy of the government and regional and local actors of the social policy.

Today, the situation is getting more exacerbated because of the emergence of new economic entities on the agro-food market that purport to control and use the already limited land, labor and material and technical resources. In the conditions of macroeconomic stabilization, a new round of transformations is taking place, the essence of which is the gradual displacement of the social-adaptive forms and structures (usually economically inefficient) formed in the 1990's, the introduction of private (often urban) capital into the rural economy, the gradual change in the volume and scale of social support of the population from local business structures. The emergence of innovative entrepreneurial structures entails a large number of problems, primarily related to the opportunities for sustainable rural development. The need to reduce the social costs of innovative processes and the equitable distribution of the burden of organizational and economic transformation requires developing an economic strategy and social policies that would balance the interests of all stakeholders, and the need to take into account the regional and local features while drawing up effective agrarian development programs requires substantiating new approaches to studying the multidirectionality of the socio-economic development of rural areas and the rural society. This formulation of the issue raises new theoretical and substantive scientific tasks.

The need for a drastic change in the state of affairs in the agrarian sector of Russia in order to ensure food security of the country necessitates a new paradigm of rural development based on the concept of multifunctionality in the agricultural sector, which gives priority to maintaining the social functions of rural areas with taking into account the natural patterns of their spatial development, complexity and systemic essence of the rural society, and the place of government paternalism should be taken by self-development policies relying on internal resources and equal partnership between the government, businesses and households.

The novelty and originality of this study is that it examines the practices of management and self-organization of rural communities in the conditions of multipolarity, multi-vectority and time differentiation of the development of the economic space. The economic, social and cultural processes and phenomena under the study are addressed at macro-, meso- and micro-levels. The proposed approach to studying the transformational processes in the agrarian sphere of the Russian society presumes that the focus is made not only on immediate changes in the economic sphere, but also on the social consequences of these changes. A special feature of this approach is the accentuation of the interests of key actors in the transformational processes, formal and informal practices of their harmonization. The scale, nature and socio-economic consequences of the ongoing changes are viewed

through the prism of emerging contradictions. The existing multi-structural nature of the Russian countryside is viewed not as an independent phenomenon, but in interrelation with a complex of socio-economic and political issues, that is, as a result of global, regional and local socio-economic, socio-political and cultural interactions. The multi-structural nature of the rural economy, formed as a result of the agrarian reform, is based on the interaction of several leading forms of agricultural production, which include large agricultural enterprises, independent farms and personal subsidiary farms of the population. Acting as innovative mechanisms to ensure the balance of the social and economic components of transformation, the existing economic structures fulfill the social function of ensuring sustainable development of rural areas, making comparative analysis of their effectiveness relevant in the context of maintaining and developing the social capital of the rural society. The objective of the study is to identify the effectiveness of the regional models of the agrarian policy in their interrelationship with the practices of management and self-organization of rural communities in the conditions of multipolarity, multi-vectority and time differentiation of the development of the rural social space. The interweaving, interdependence and importance of social, economic and natural factors in the development of rural areas determine, on the one hand, the need for an integrated approach to solving the strategic tasks of rural development, and on the other hand, determine the subject of strategic developments in relation to rural areas. This should be rural development in general, which includes three main elements: the development of the rural economy, the development of rural areas and human development. Thus, a comprehensive study of the dynamics of development of rural territorial communities that implement various models of socio-economic behavior requires allocation of at least three blocks of issues: a socio-economic block covering the issues associated with the income level of the rural population, property relations, labor market conditions and forms of employment of the population, the prevailing types of economic activity, etc.; a socio-demographic block; a socio-structural block, which includes issues of social organization and social relations in the rural community.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

To achieve the research task, the results of a study conducted on a unified program in three regions of the Russian Federation - the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Novosibirsk and Saratov regions, were used. The specificity of the regions taken for comparative analysis is determined by the diversification of the models of social adaptation of the population and forms of management. The agrarian policy of Bashkortostan is featured by equal support of different economic forms, both large and small. The agrarian sector of the Novosibirsk region is dominated by large enterprises (reformed collective farms and state farms, innovative structures of the agro-holding type), and in the Saratov region - the sector of independent farms and personal subsidiary farms.

The study employs an integrated approach. In its center there are several research paradigms, each of which allows studying various aspects of the phenomenon being examined. We are talking about: - clustering and problem zoning of the economic space of rural Russia, - the sociological concept of local rural space, - the monographic method of studying the specificity of social adaptation of typologically similar rural settlements; - factor analysis of the studied social objects depending on the combination of internal resources and external factors of rural population adaptation, models of socio-economic behavior of economic entities. The information base for the study was formed based on combining a number of methods. The basis of statistical analysis of the polarization of socio-economic development of rural areas is scientifically substantiated selection of indicators that most accurately and objectively reflect the current state and development trends of rural regions. In order to determine the priorities for the development of rural regions, their qualitative clusterization was carried out according to the following criteria: the level of socio-economic development; specialization of the economy; degree of economic diversification; investment activeness of economic entities; social attractiveness. To study the variability of the social development of rural areas, the "Case study" methodology, informal in-depth interviews with representatives of the agrarian business, authorities, as well as a mass survey of the population were used. The indicators, recorded in the course of the study of regional and local specifics of the development of the rural society, allow evaluate the rural socio-territorial communities in terms of the following parameters: the degree of involvement in modernization processes; the level of

adaptation to change; the natural, economic and social resources available to the community. For the analysis of sociological information, typological, factorial, regression and other methods of statistical data analysis, including their cartographic representation, were used. In parallel, an analysis was carried out of normative documents regulating rural employment, forms of protection and support for the unemployed rural population, and the activities of rural self-government institutions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The social development of the present-day Russian countryside is determined by the influence of the emerging market relations that cause a radical transformation of the existing image and way of life of the population. The specific "response" of rural communities to the transformation processes manifested in the formation of new behavioral practices is formed under the influence of three main factors, including: 1) the globalization of the economic and social life of the society; 2) the established social order and traditional behavioral patterns that determine the "initial" type of nature use, the socio-cultural and demographic dynamics of the rural communities; 3) the external conditions for the existence of communities that determine the "limits of the possible" and the nature of their reactions to changes in the environment. The geographical factor is manifested in the profiling of the types of economic activity, in the degree of urbanization and the specifics of the development of territories and the sphere of employment.

Among the new problems of development of rural areas and the rural society in Russia, related to the modern processes of restructuring the rural economy and organizational and technological re-equipment of the agricultural sector, are the following:

First, the polarization of rural worlds (which is manifested in the segmentation of the socio-economic space into clusters of innovative changes that form "archipelago" structures and degrading territories);

Second, the phenomenon of "squeezing" of the countryside, which manifests itself both directly as a suburbanization of a number of rural areas and a decrease in the number of permanent residents in remote rural settlements, and in the change of socio-economic practices of rural residents, transformation of the rural way of life itself, crisis of the labor ethos of the peasantry, peasant culture, and mentality (Nechiporenko & Samsonov 2012).

These problem situations are functionally interrelated with the processes of innovative development of the Russian economy, improvement of its effectiveness in the course of increasing the role of large corporate business structures successfully operating in the market environment and reducing the importance of ineffective socio-economic institutions and practices formed as a result of the implementation of passive adaptation strategies in the rural society. These trends of structural reconstruction lead to regional and subregional superconcentration of agricultural production, as well as the emergence of hotbeds of mass unemployment, localized by geographic and economic factors. Ultimately, such changes also have consequences in the social sphere, which produce negative effects on the development of rural areas: an increasing amount of agricultural land comes out of economic circulation, and the reduction in economic activeness of inefficient forms of organization of production (the most important of which is the segment of subsidiary farms of the population) undermines the stability of agricultural production (Morekhanova & Rubtsova 2013).

The emerging trends of innovative development leading to increased efficiency of the rural economy, growth of agricultural production and optimization of the country's food security situation (in terms of increasing self-sufficiency) also determine the emergence of new social risks. These risks are multidimensional - from the geopolitical dimension (the risks of losing social control over a number of "depressed" territories) to the socio-cultural sphere (crisis of the systemic elements of traditional culture).

It is obvious that the analysis of the evolution of social risks of innovative development of rural areas (negative trends in welfare, employment, dynamics of social and human capital of the rural society) should be combined with a subsequent expertise of the effectiveness of the adaptive strategies aimed at minimizing the vulnerabilities of the rural society (both spontaneously emerging adaptation strategies

and the system of external control actions). So, it becomes necessary to describe the changes in the system of social relations of the main subjects of the rural society, the socio-economic practices of the population, and to study the directions for transforming the rural way of life. Given the multi-vectority and variability of the changes, it is necessary to present and analyze the local and regional differentiation of innovative transformations and the formation of new social risks. Since the most important changes in the Russian countryside are related to the formation and evolution of structural forms, studying these processes makes it possible to identify the general trends in the socio-economic development of the rural society, factors that determine the local and regional specificity of the models of adaptation of the population to changes.

In conditions of restructuring the economy of the agrarian sphere in the modern rural society, there appear stable models of adaptation to changes, which function on the basis of two main groups of economic entities, the analysis of the features of which allows us to say that they represent specific economic structures of modern rural Russia:

1) The segment of small economic forms, which are the primary element of the social structures of the rural society, and which play the main role in the process of minimum reproduction of the rural society (through self-sufficiency and partial "integration" into market relations). The importance of small economic forms is especially noticeable in sparsely populated villages that do not have any other channels for the application of economic (labor) activity of residents (43% of rural settlements do not have more than 50 people).
2) Large agricultural enterprises, at first they are almost exclusively reformed collective farms and state farms ("krupkhozes"), which play an important role not only as a local center around which a network of local social interactions is built, but also act as redistributive structures and subjects mediating the relations of small economic forms with the external environment.

At the same time, the diversity and multi-vectority of local variants of the social dynamics of the Russian rural society is manifested in a combination of typologically different modified economic structures of the past, the evolving structures of the present, the transitional forms in the simultaneous coexistence within the general social structure of the rural society of the structures as special parts, individual subsystems participating in a single process of formation and reproduction of the living conditions of the society.

Modern ways of development of the Russian countryside are connected with several leading economic structures that have arisen in the process of adapting the rural society to the process of agrarian reform, which led to a drastic reduction in the public sector (the amount of its production fell by 3-4 times), and now the most important role is played by large agricultural enterprises (former collective farms reformed in different JSCs) and farms of the population, which, considering their economic and social importance, can no longer be called "subsidiary" by researchers. Independent farms, for which there was great hope, in the absence of proper government support, could not develop normally and could only to a small extent contribute to the production of agricultural products and development of the social and economic sphere of the countryside. Compared to large producers, independent farmers face more difficulties in terms of obtaining access to loans and selling their products, besides, the labor productivity in such farms is not high, since their technical equipment is insufficient. Compared to subsidiary farms of the population, independent farmers are in a less advantageous position since they lose a permanent link with the former collective farm and can no longer use its resources, and they also have to pay taxes.

New trends in the development of the Russian agrarian sector are characterized by institutional and socio-structural transformations caused by the introduction of the innovative economic structure in the rural economy, represented by vertically integrated market structures (agricultural holdings), as well as by changes in the strategies of socio-economic behavior of rural residents. The new social phenomena that have emerged to meet the challenges of immediate life support (including those related to the practices of diversifying the economy of rural areas - informal employment, non-agricultural production, seasonal work, etc.), in a routine action of the social state, by its very nature oriented towards supporting the passive part of the society, can become a breeding ground for the rise of social tension and nurture

the sprouts of new relationships, splitting the traditional stability of the rural society (Nechiporenko 2010).

Since, being a qualitatively new innovation-capitalist structure, agricultural holdings cease to perform a number of functions on informal support of the rural society in line with the symbiosis model of the 1990's, further evolution of the situation in this direction inevitably leads to a new stage in the transformation of the production, social and even settlement structures of the rural society, the most anticipated variant of the social and economic dynamics of the rural society being progressive decline in the role and stabilizing potential of the economic structure represented by the sector of household farms.

Proceeding from their relationship with the adaptation mechanisms, the development of the typology of economic structures was based on a process-oriented understanding of the phenomenon of social adaptation. Using this approach allowed, in addition to reactive-adaptive practices (aimed at reproducing passive forms of adaptation to changes caused by reforms), highlight progressive-innovative strategies of adaptation of the rural society (associated primarily with the activities of large formal market structures and informal practices of improving the marketability of households).

Thus, our comparative analysis of the influence of different structures on the dynamics of the problem field of rural communities made it possible to distinguish:

– socially oriented structures contributing to preserving the social interrelationships (personal subsidiary farms and large farms of symbiotic nature);

– economically oriented ones leading to decreasing the importance of informal forms of interaction and diminishing the social capital of rural communities (independent farms and agricultural holdings) (Nechiporenko & Samsonov 2012).

Using the developed methodological scheme, we characterized the regional specifics of forming the economic structures in the agrarian sphere depending on the natural-geographic and socio-cultural conditions and on the factor of regional agricultural policy (on the example of rural communities in Siberia, the Volga region and the Urals). The results of the comparative analysis vividly indicate the existence of considerable differences in terms of the volume and scope of social support to the rural population from the local business structures and the parameters of interaction between businesses and authorities.

The expertise of the social efficiency of the economic structures (2011-2016) suggests that the results of development of the structural forms formed in the process of passive-reactive adaptation of the population to the reforms are unsatisfactory. The results of the study also suggest that the socio-economic mechanisms of stabilizing and maintaining the social equilibrium in the rural society based on reactive-passive adaptation strategies are to a certain extent exhausted and fail to meet the challenges of the changed socio-economic environment today. Despite the socio-economic difficulties of recent years associated with the global financial crisis, the Russian society massively rejects the passive "kitchen-garden" adaptation strategy. In the changing institutional environment, the reactive-adaptive models formed during the crisis appear ineffective: they fail to stimulate the population, to fully utilize the available resources and implement successful adaptation strategies. The reactive-passive mechanisms of adaptation are being gradually replaced by innovative forms, which, in the field of individual socio-economic orientations, are represented by the orientation towards formal employment.

In the institutional sphere, these processes are accompanied by the development of organizational-production structures of a new type, the change in the dominant model of social interactions: the importance of informal social ties (various kinds of social networks) is weakening, the interdependence of large economic units and the economy of personal subsidiary farms is weakening (because of the growing orientation towards formal employment the importance of this small-scale commodity structure falls). As a counterbalance to the policy aimed at supporting the adaptive and naturalized rural economy (personal subsidiary farms), there can be distinguished a property concentration strategy, which is based on the economic success / failure of agricultural producers and was formed at the newest stage of rural development and is accompanied by the displacement of reactive-passive forms of socio-economic

behavior of the population. This process is not due to the development of internal resources or evolution of the leading subjects of socio-economic interactions, but is a result of the introduction of the economy of large agricultural holding-type structures in the rural society. These enterprises, which are actively developing in recent years, are in a more advantageous position compared to large farms as they can attract external capital, investment resources and use modern management technologies enabling them to be flexible in changing their strategy, tactics and forms of activity.

At the same time, representing a qualitatively new innovation-capitalist structure, agricultural holdings cease to perform a number of functions related to informal support of the countryside that are characteristic of large-scale farms (for example, they do not provide fodder at preferential price, which directly affects the efficiency and economic volumes of production of personal subsidiary farms). In view of this, the most anticipated variant of socio-economic dynamics is the progressive decline in the role and stabilizing potential of the traditional structure represented by the household sector (personal subsidiary farms) and the subsequent pauperization of a large part of the able-bodied population, self-employed in their subsidiary farms.

The most important aspect of the interaction between the adaptive and innovative elements of the structure of the rural society is the incompatibility of the structural forms formed within the framework of different economic adaptation strategies. The existing structures are heteropolar in their internal socio-economic nature. This can be explained by the fact that a part of them rather reflects public-collective interests, and the other – private ones. For instance, independent farming received the greatest impetus in those regions of Russia, where the number of unprofitable large-scale farms has significantly decreased due to the policy pursued by the regional authorities to "recover" the agricultural sector. The results of monitoring the socio-economic development of rural communities show that the introduction of truly innovative economic structures represented by vertically integrated market structures in the rural society leads to a disruption of the existing mechanisms of adaptation.

Both opponents and supporters of the structure represented by the economy of personal subsidiary farms and the symbiotic connection “personal subsidiary farm – large-scale farm” consider this phenomenon an element of rather social than economic policy. Among the social functions performed by the structures formed in the process of adaptation of the rural society to the reform, we should mention the increase in the level of self-sufficiency of the rural population with food, the self-employment of the population released during the reform of the agro-industrial complex, the prevention of pauperization of the rural population, the preservation of the population of rural areas and ensuring social control over them, etc.

Remaining one of the leading forms of socio-economic activity of the rural population, personal subsidiary farms are gradually losing their positions (Table 1).

Table 1. Change in the economic activity of personal subsidiary farms in the last 5 years, %

	Novosibirsk region	Bashkortostan Republic	Saratov region
Increased	16	16	20
Decreased	75	46	52
Unchanged	9	24	28

It should be stated that assessing the significance of this or that form of management in maintaining the living standard of the countryside, in the Novosibirsk and Saratov regions, rural residents appreciate the role of large-scale farms in maintaining the living standard of the countryside, while in the Republic of Bashkortostan the importance of personal subsidiary farms remains high (Table 2), which is due not only to the peculiarities of implementation of the regional agrarian, personnel and municipal strategies, but also to the features of territorial location of the villages and non-agricultural enterprises in the Republic of Bashkortostan.

Table 2. Expert assessment of participation of different forms of farms in maintaining the living standard of the countryside (the share of experts who noted the importance of this or that economic forms), %

	Novosibirsk region	Bashkortostan Republic	Saratov region
Personal subsidiary farms	16	54	21
Independent farms	11	28	37
Large-scale enterprises	89	38	59

Studying the socio-economic aspects of the process of formation of the innovative entrepreneurial structure made it possible to identify a number of risks, primarily related to the opportunities for sustainable rural development that arise in rural areas with operating agricultural holdings that take place in all of the surveyed regions ("Krasnoyaruzhskaya Grain Company", "Prodimex Holding", "Siberian Agrarian Group", "Russian Grain", "Agroholding Berezovsky" and some other). The breakdown of the existing system of stable socio-economic relations that ensure the reproduction of resources, social and human capital of the countryside leads to the destruction of the existing mechanisms of adaptation of the rural population.

It should be noted that economic entities of the new type do not provide even any local solution to the most acute problems of the reformed society (poverty and unemployment), at least with regard to the part of the population directly employed by the enterprise, since the study shows that almost always the employment of agricultural holding workers is seasonal, which generates a new kind of structural (seasonal) unemployment.

The situation in such settlements is characterized not only by a sharp decline in the public livestock population and labor activity of the population in personal subsidiary farms (due to the reduction of the forms of support), but also by a reduction in the material and technical resources available to the community. Measures taken by the new leadership on "optimizing" the logistics chain of production, including the sale of machinery and equipment of former large-scale farms, transition to shift work, entail the marginalization of the dismissed workers and the pauperization of the population who lost not only their work, but also the ability to run their subsidiary farms (because of the lack of necessary resources).

Obviously, further development of the situation in this direction inevitably leads to a new stage in the transformation of the production, social and even settlement structures of the rural society, the most anticipated variant of the socio-economic dynamics of the rural society being a progressive decline in the role and stabilizing potential of the sector represented by the households of the population.

4. CONCLUSION

Summarizing the foregoing, it can be said that the current trends in the restructuring of the agrarian economy in Russia are accompanied by contradictory phenomena and processes. On the one hand, we are witnessing an increase in the production of agricultural products and in the level of national self-sufficiency in food. On the other hand, we have to face a number of new social challenges and risks caused by the peculiarities of innovative development of the agrarian economy, such as the washing out of small economic forms and excessive concentration of agricultural production (which increases the risks of disrupting the food supply of the regions in case of bankruptcy); the formation of latifundia and the transfer of large land estates under the control of foreigners; the incompleteness of the process of land demarcation (which creates conditions for mass shadow turnover of the land). This predetermines the need to provide government support not only to innovative structures, but to adaptive economic forms as well, especially in "problematic" territories, like the border ones. This, in turn, requires integrating the efforts of the government, municipalities, business community and the population.

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