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**ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS FOR VILLAGE:  
SOCIOCULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS**

Shalaeva Nadejda Vladimirovna (a)\*, Dudnikova Elena Borisovna (b),  
Vasilieva Elena Vasilevna (c), Kalinichenko Elina Borisovna (d)

\*Corresponding author

- (a) Saratov State Vavilov Agrarian University, 1 Theatre Square, Saratov, Russia,
- (b) Saratov State Vavilov Agrarian University, 1 Theatre Square, Saratov, Russia,
- (c) Saratov State Vavilov Agrarian University, 1 Theatre Square, Saratov, Russia,
- (d) Saratov State Vavilov Agrarian University, 1 Theatre Square, Saratov, Russia,

***Abstract***

The study contains the analysis of Russian village development in two aspects: sociocultural and economic. This demonstrates the multidisciplinary approach to addressing the issue as the special sociocultural cluster of Russian society. There are historical, sociocultural reasons of decrease of village population (urbanization, spread of urban lifestyle in everyday need, destruction of traditional peasant farming) and the number of able-bodied citizens employed in the agricultural sector of the economy.

The problems of village development are identified and classified: there are sociocultural issues (unpleasantness of rural labor and lifestyle; desire of young specialists to settle in cities and megapolises because of its developed structure) and economic issues (low earnings in rural area, lack of a career path), which influenced attractiveness of employment in the agricultural sector of the economy. Macro-, meso- and micro-economic and social reasons of decrease in village attractiveness in Russian regions have been defined. The vectors of rural areas development in order to increase attractiveness of villages and attract young professionals into villages were formed in the study. Those include diversification of agricultural enterprises activity for income improvement; rebirth and development of handicrafts in villages, agrotourism promotion in order to increase a financial profitability and attractiveness of rural territories.

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## 1. Introduction

The tendency to multi-disciplinary integration in study and theoretical synthesis in analyse became the characteristic of current social and humanitarian sciences. Sociocultural analysis was implemented to this study, as it was defined by the authors as the base of theoretical study, which allows incorporating into the methodology the categorical apparatus and economic researches and also social and cultural anthropology. This enables to identify development patterns of village sociocultural and economic situation, and to analyze not only its problems but the reasons of decrease in Agrarian Institutions graduates commitment to work in agricultural sector of the economy. The evolution of this issues study can be divided into several stages:

1. Study and analysis of village during the revolutionary period (from the first Russian revolution to 1917 inclusive). (Moon, 1999; Robinson, 1969; Pipes, 2004-2005).
2. Russian village analysis in I. Stalin era – “Russian village tragedy”. Stalin modernization from the top contributed to undermining of Soviet village, and formed the basis of its crisis.
3. The second half of XX c. – the contradictions of N. Chrushev leadership (McCauley, 1976) and A. Kosygin economic reforms, Gorbachev perestroika.
4. Changes and transformations of Russian village over the period from 1990 to 2000 draws attention of historians, sociologist, economists (Semenova & Fichtner, 2014; Nekrasov, Nekrasova & Ostanin, 2015; Vasilieva, 2014; Vorotnikov, 2015).

## 2. Problem Statement

1. The consideration from a historical perspective of sociocultural transformation of rural area in XX century; identification of the causes and stages of Russian village transformation.
2. Identification of Saratov State Agrarian University graduates attitude towards agricultural economy issues and rural work and life perspectives.
3. Russian village attractiveness factors definition.

## 3. Research Questions

- Could it be said that lifestyle of the agriculture is destroyed?
- Where do the specific problems of changing the appearance of rural areas lay?
- Why do Agrarian University graduates refuse to go to work in village?
- What measures should be taken to improve the attractiveness of work in the rural area for Agrarian University graduates?

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze Russian village as the sociocultural phenomenon and its development issues on the example of Saratov region; recommend the rural area development vector to increase the efficiency of the agricultural sector of the economy and formulate effective forms of international cooperation in agricultural sphere.

## 5. Research Methods

To study the outlined purposes qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. First of all it was the method including focus groups (Merton, 1990; Goldman, 1962; Krueger, 1994). This article authors define the group of 3<sup>d</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> –year students (150 people) of Saratov State Vavilov Agrarian University faculties, there were the survey conducted among them and interview about the attractiveness of work in the rural area and the lack of interest in rural employment. The results are shown in Table 03 and 3.1. Sociocultural and economic causes of poor attractiveness of rural employment for specialists, including University graduates, were defined on the basis of method of Expert Estimations. Representativeness of the University and the respondents explains by the fact that Saratov region is typical agricultural cluster for Mid- and Bottom Volga region, influenced by problems, which are specific to the whole Russian agricultural sector of economy. Nowadays agricultural industry of both small and large forms is the core of Saratov region economy.

Also, methods of econometrics, static analysis, comparative method, structural and historical approaches were implemented in this study.

## 6. Findings

The analysis of Russian village transformation dynamics allows to identify its development problems and prospective. In 1990 A.S. Akhizer defined Russia as the civilization caught up in an intermediate position due to the specific of its development and peculiarities of historical path and mentality (Akhizer, 1995). Russia was the mixture of traditional civilization, tended to reproduction and maintaining the established ties and mores. This had been reflected in social structure of Soviet society. Every modernization process, that took place in the USSR, were not aimed the destruction of this structure, but influenced on its transformation.

For modern Russia, as for the civilization with liberal economy, an intensive reproduction and its deeper content, active development of an innovative and informational component, high efficiency and functioning are common. That have influenced on all spheres of Russian society life (Medvedev, 2018).

In the XX century Russia had travelled a tortuous path from a traditional society to a modern liberal development model, which began with the transformation and gradual dissolution of the former, common for centuries, peasant pattern, as the most widespread and typical for Russia. Two stages of the dissolution process can be distinguished – P.A. Stolypin reforms in the beginning of XX century and G. Malenkova and A. Kosygina in the mid-1950's – early 1970's.

The first complex of reforms had laid the traditional village and peasant lifestyle crisis foundation. The Soviet period reforms of the second half of XX century had contributed to the spread of urban standards, lifestyle and system of values into rural life, so by the end of XX century peasant mind had slowly changed on the mental level.

Cultural Revolution of 1920-1930 and the Great Patriotic War had specially affected peasants. Urban type intelligentsia – teachers, doctors, agronomists, zootechnicians – began to emerge in villages in the beginning of 1920 – 1930, before 1917 they were exclusively urban intelligentsia, who temporarily visited villages. The reforms of 1950-1970 had resulted in a steep rise of urbanization process in the USSR. Over this period the process of Soviet rural holdings development had took place and “peasants” transferred onto

“agricultural workers”. The urbanization process had intensively penetrated the rural life. City-like settlements with two-four-story buildings and apartments, which envisaged the urban style instead of peasants' holdings with the land nearby, had appeared. The circulation of home appliances – TVsets, fridges, washing machine, microwave ovens, and etc. – had helped to create the perception of the urban life (beautiful and not requiring heavy physical work) in peasant mind. The routine, which remains to be rural, combined to urban elements in life, which had, consequently, aroused civilizational conflict between long-established social relations and new cultural tendencies. The conflict of values eruption become inevitable and had led to a rapid decline in rural population, out-migration to cities, and to the development of urbanization in the whole country.

In 1990’s the transition to market relations had been considered as mechanical process, as economic mechanism and technical device, while in Western civilizations it was regarded as “the way of life, a certain mindset, mentality, mass understanding of this process as something natural and comfort. Market relations – is a historic category...”. During the liberal reforms in villages had been introduced a new type of individual peasant holdings – farms. There had been an intensive destruction of traditional for the Soviet era large peasants holdings (state and collective farms), and joint-stock companies had actually become an alternative to them. Today peasant farm enterprises (PFE) and private ancillary holdings (PAH) had taken more and more farm functions.

Agricultural household had been transformed during the liberal reforms; their social purpose had been completely changed. They became an “economic structure, where the economic function realization is the requirement of survival of the individual” (Filimonova, 2008). Under the social and economic transformation there was the mixture of commercial production, Urbanism and subsistence consumption traditional economic in the agricultural sector.

Statistical analysis proved that during XX century there was the intense process of urbanization.

**Table 01.** The rate of urban and rural population according to the population census (%) (Federal State Statistics Service, 2017a)

Indexes	1959	1989	2002	2010	2017
Urban population	52.4	73.4	73.3	73.7	74.3
Rural population	47.6	26.6	26.7	26.3	25.7

The population census of 2002 had detailed the recent indicators, by adding the population of urban-type settlements and small towns (population 50-100 thousands people) to rural population. These categories of populations had had an external signs of urban citizens, but indeed were peasant. The number of rural population decreases every year on 8-9 thousands of people through normal attrition, fertility decline and migration to urban areas.

Similar trends can be observed in Saratov region during the period from 1990 to 2000.

**Table 02.** Trends in the numbers of Saratov region social composition (thousand people) (Federal State Statistics Service, 2016; Federal State Statistics Service, 2017b)

<b>Years Indexes</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2018</b>
Urban population	74.1	73.5	74.4	75.7
Rural population	25.9	26.5	25.6	24.3

One of the sociocultural peculiarities of demographic situation in Russia and the Saratov region is the remaining the strong interconnection between urban population and village. "... Russia – urban country, ¾ of its population live in cities, but in fact the significant part, if not the majority, of population has agricultural mindset" (Alekseev & Simagin, 1996). Most researchers accented the close relationship between city and village by descent and family ties of these conglomerates population.

According to the data from Table 01 and Table 02, the popularity of Saratov region and of Russian Federation in general is maintained at 25-26%. Change tendencies in the ratio of urban and rural population were reflected in the demographic situation in Russian villages (Table 03).

**Table 03.** Age composition of the population (by the end of 2017, % from total population) (calculation based on the indexes of Rosssdata of Saratov region and of Russia)

<b>Russian Federation, territorial unit, region</b>	<b>Population younger than working age</b>			<b>Population of working age</b>			<b>Population older than working age</b>		
	2005	2010	2017	2005	2010	2017	2005	2010	2017
Russian Federation	16.5	16.2	17.9	63	61.5	57.5	20.5	22.3	24.5
Volga Federal Area	16.6	16.2	17.9	62.6	61.2	61.1	20.8	22.6	23.4
Saratov region	15.8	15.1	16.6	61.7	60.4	56.2	22.5	24.5	27.2

According to the Table 02 data, over the period under study there had been the same tendency: the rate of working age population had been decreased in total population and the rate of younger and older than working age population had increased. We believe, this fact is connected with the decrease of rural area attractiveness for the population. The recent year situation proves that resulting from rural enterprises amount reduction (including failure of the enterprises during the reforms) outflow of population increased because of lack of work and earnings. Young people had left to cities to get the education and were not strive to come back. Large agricultural enterprises ceased their activities, were no longer the foundation of rural areas. During the 1990's production and social infrastructure was destroyed, small agricultural enterprises can not to be the foundation, as formerly State farms were. The rehabilitation of infrastructure requires substantial sums of money; small enterprises don't have such funds. Absence of the basic requirements for life in village has caused the decline and degradation.

One of territory development indicators, including rural population, is the dependency ratios (Table 04)

**Table 04.** The dependency ratios (by the end of the year)

Russian Federation, region	On a 1000 working age population persons in the non-productive ages								
	Sum			Population younger than working age			Population older than working age		
	2005	2010	2016	2005	2010	2016	2005	2010	2016
Russian Federation	589	626	764	263	264	323	326	362	441
Volga Federal Area	597	634	787	265	264	327	332	370	460
Saratov region	621	655	779	256	250	295	365	405	484

Data from the Table 4 indicate that the dependency ratios over the period under study have increased. The main reason – reducing fertility.

The results of sociological survey among the rural population, getting through the questionnaires, are of particular interest. These results were compared to the same indexes of Saratov region and students of SSAG on the base of available data.

**Table 05.** Russia and Saratov region self-esteem, according to their economic status (%)

Indexes Questions	Russia	Saratov Region	Students SSAG
An income bracket is below expectation	47.1	57.7	65
An income bracket meets the demands	35.7	32.3	28.7
An income bracket is above expectation	1	1.5	1.3
Have difficulty in answering	16.1	8.5	5

As we can see, the indexes of Saratov region are lower, than in Russia in general. The self-esteem according to the economic status of students is even lower. Merely this is due to the gap between expectations of students to the work conditions and residence and reality. Answering the question about the desired wage more than 80% said about 20-25 thousands of RUR and no less. Meanwhile the average salary in agricultural sector is about 17 thousands RUR.

In order to refine the indexes among the students of SSAU, it was proposed to specify the reasons for rejection (or the low commitment) to work in agricultural sector of the economy. The results of the questionnaires and interviewing among the students of SSAU were calculated by the article authors. 150 students and university graduates were interviewed over 2016 – 2018.

**Table 06.** The reasons for the outflow of young people from village to city

Index Year	2013	2015	2017
Lack of work	17	14	15
Low wages	35	32	33
Impaired social conditions	7	10	9
Lack of accommodation	21	24	23
Poor roads	12	11	13
Difficulties in running own (farm) holdings	8	9	7

Thus empirically we have testified the major sense of social injustice and economic situation discontent among young people. All the respondents as the reasons of discontent emphasize low wages, lack of accommodation and work. In general, the respondents' answers coincide with different researches data. Thus, for example, the low rate of social structured of village, existence of "extinct villages", destruction of the infrastructure (poor transport accessibility to cities), and low rate of social welfare and access to the benefits (schools and kinder gardens, hospitals), low social support (insufficient investment into agriculture) were called as the underlying factors. Reforms and different experiments have been critical inputs in difficulties of rural developments. Other factors of agricultural sector undermining and rural depopulation are hard physical labour, seasonality of work and narrow scope of work.

Issues connecting the low wage in villages, pointing out by the respondents during the interviewing, are proved by the job-placement by the employer, which are posted on the website of SSAU (<http://www.sgau.ru/files/pages/36327/15249020900.pdf> – data of 2018 are only available, as irrelevant vacancies are being deleted)

**Table 07.** Vacancies for the SSAU graduates

Year	Number of areas (Saratov Region), offered vacancies (%)	The number of vacancies (кол-во)	Average wage (RUR)	Contract wage (%)	Accommodation (%)	Social benefits (%)
01.06.2014	50	64	10 000	65.6	40	100
19. 01.2016	26	164	15 000	–	45	100
01. 04. 2018	17	82	12 000	4.9	22	93.9

Analysis of the recent data, posted on the website in 2018 shows that the university graduates cannot apply for all available vacancies. In the range of vacancies there are posts of Technical Manager, zootechnics, agronomists, which requires for a certain experience in the field, so university graduates don't meet the requirements, so they are uncompetitive. The vacancies, which graduates can apply for – zootechnics, vet, agronomists (work experience are not required) have the spread of wages from 7 thousands RUR to 17 thousands RUR, which doesn't coincide with the expectations of the graduates.

Another reason – lack of accommodation provided. It was found that over 2016 45 of vacancies were not supplemented with an accommodation (28% from total amount). In 2018 this rate decreased (15,9%), but the number of vacancies has been halved. A number of employers are willing to provide rented apartments (23 vacancies – 17% d 2016 and 14 vacancies – 17% in 2018), 24 vacancies are supplemented with the offer of dormitory space (15% in 2016 and 6% in 2018). In total, an independent housing (house or an apartment) are willing to provide only 39% in 2016 and 12% in 2018. For graduates, who can pretend only for a salary at the lower end of the pay scale in region, the rent even with the following right to purchase, is not attractive, as results in real loss of income.

The government, nowadays, including Saratov Region authorities, cares for the support of young specialists in villages. Thus, on the website of SSAU there is information about the support provided for young people fewer than 35 in case of their employment in rural area (Retrieved from: <http://www.sgau.ru/files/pages/33195/15249024220.pdf>). There is the centre of the career development in

the University, where the relevant vacancies in terms of the project “Your first workplace” are placed (Retrieved from: <http://www.sgau.ru/ucheba/trudoustroistvo-vypusnikov/novosti>).

**Table 08.** Problems description

<b>Problem rate</b>	<b>Issue</b>
Macro-economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition towards liberalism</li> <li>• Rural lifestyle destruction (urbanization of the village)</li> <li>• Lack of governmental support to rural areas development and agricultural enterprises</li> <li>• Insufficient governmental support of rural area and agricultural enterprises development</li> </ul>
Meso-economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Productive and social infrastructure destruction, absence of an enabling quality of life in rural area</li> <li>• Lack of work in village and poverty of rural population</li> <li>• The major part of villages are remote from district or regional centers, poor communications between them (the horrible road condition is among the reasons)</li> </ul>
Micro-economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard physical labour</li> <li>• Seasonality of the labor-market, lack of alternative activities in rural area</li> <li>• Lack of qualified personnel due to по причине lower attractiveness of agricultural work</li> <li>• Low cost-effectiveness of agricultural enterprises (and in some cases unprofitableness of certain types of agricultural industry)</li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the result of exodus of working age population, rural area populated mainly by retirement age about retirement age people</li> <li>• Low earnings and, as the result, poverty of rural population</li> <li>• Growth in the number of persons affected by alcoholism (mainly people who hadn't adapt to new life conditions)</li> </ul>

However, in spite of negative reforms effect on the rural area, there are some prospective for successful development, as we believe. Moreover, the need for import substitution in the short term could contribute it. Great expectations are entrusted with rural area and agricultural goods producers.

To develop Russian village the government of RF has adopted several programs:

- 2000-2005 – the program “Social development of rural area”
- 2012 framework plan for the federal program “ "Stable Development of Rural Territories for 2014-2017 and the Period up to 2020"

Under the last program first stage (2014-2017) contains significant cross-regional variation in level and quality of rural population life. Target goals and indicators of this program are:

- Providing accommodation for rural area population, including for young families and young specialists;
- Launch of general education establishments;
- Decrease the rate of general education establishments in unsafe condition;
- Launch of midwifery units or offices for a general practitioners and etc.



## 7. Conclusion

The rural area development, as we believe, requires the following conditions.

First of all, the development is possibly only in the presence of large agricultural enterprises, as city-forming. That doesn't mean that medium and small enterprises are not prospective. They provide job opportunities, and sufficient employment is a prerequisite for the establishment of enabling environment in rural area. Small and medium-sized agro-enterprises are needed.

Second, government support for agricultural enterprises are required (including for reconstruction and development of industrial and social infrastructure and the agro-food markets infrastructure); affordable loans; developed and affordable agricultural activity insurance system; inland road infrastructure to communicate with district and regional centers.

Third, to improve the attractiveness of rural areas it is important to develop alternative activities (for example, agro-tourism or handicrafts) that would provide the flow of financial resources in rural area and create the condition for reconstruction and development of industrial and social infrastructure.

Therefore, decent social and economic living would provide the development of Russian village. This will enhance its appeal and contribute to the population influx in the agricultural sector of the economy.

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