

Organization of the rural population's leisure activities as a factor of preservation and development of the rural human capital

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Abstract. The article describes the role of leisure activities in the effective development of human capital in rural areas. The article is based on the results of the monitoring study conducted by the survey method to examine the cultural-leisure activities of villagers in the Belgorod district of the Belgorod Region. The culture of leisure in the rural society was assessed according to the three main indicators — institutional, information and sociological. The authors identified the following rural groups depending on cultural-leisure preferences and activities: consumer (50%), spontaneous (18%), limited (17%) and active (15%). According to the features of leisure, seven types of cultural-leisure activities were identified: entertaining (28%), imitative (20%), consumer (19%), conservative (10%), contemplative (9%), cultural-creative (9%) and non-traditional (5%). Despite the declared desire to take an active part in cultural events (83%), only 10% of villagers do participate in them. One of the reasons is the discrepancy between cultural needs and the ability of cultural institutions to satisfy them. The authors note that the effective organization of cultural-leisure activities influences both formation and reproduction of human capital in rural areas. Thus, indicators of the improving quality of life in rural areas are not only modernized production and high wages but also the development of educational and cultural-leisure institutions.

Key words: leisure culture, cultural-leisure activities, human capital, rural population, rural territories, rural development, economic efficiency, agrarian policy

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The efficiency of the human capital development in rural areas depends on the simultaneous introduction of innovations in the agricultural and industrial-processing sectors and of new approaches in the social-service sector — to ensure a comfortable life for rural population. Organization of leisure culture in rural areas is one of the strategic tasks for the constant improvement of life quality on the basis of the state modernization-oriented social-economic policy which helps to improve human capital, increase the economic potential of rural areas and the efficiency of rural social policies according to the goals of the agricultural policy (in the Federal Law “On the Development of Agriculture”). The relationship between components of the social-economic and political development of rural areas in the context of organizing leisure culture is presented in Figure 1.

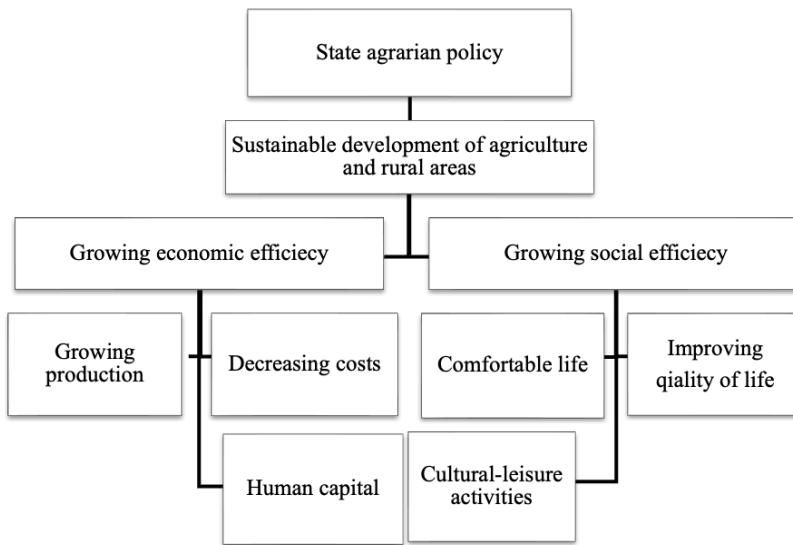


Fig. 1. The role of rural leisure culture in the effective development of human capital

The development of cultural institutions as a part of the state program for the sustainable, integrated rural development, leading to the growth of rural population, is the most important target of contemporary rural transformations as ensuring both the further growth of the quality of life in rural areas and the competitiveness of the agro-industrial complex in rural regions. The characteristic features of effective cultural-leisure institutions are the active participation of rural population in cultural life and the regional scale of cultural-leisure activities.

Russia's difficult economic situation in the 1990s negatively affected the development of leisure culture for both urban and rural pop-

ulation. In cities, cultural-leisure activities were commercialized but the quality of services was low. In rural areas, clubs were closed, and the number of free services decreased. For instance, only in 1992–1993, 767 club institutions of the Ministry of Culture ceased to exist (Annual report, 2016). The revival of cultural-leisure activities began in the first decade of the 21st century. Thus, in 2016 in the Belgorod Region, there were already 704 cultural-leisure institutions — 632 clubs worked in rural areas (Development of Cultural-Leisure Activities, 2018).

The development of rural social infrastructure and the use of new information technologies determined new content and structure of rural leisure, which explains the changing attitude of rural population, especially the youth, towards the social significance of cultural leisure. The article presents the results of the monitoring study of the activities of villagers in the field of culture and leisure in the Belgorod district of the Belgorod Region. These results show some ways to increase the efficiency of cultural-leisure institutions in terms of involving villagers in the cultural-leisure life of rural areas, which can lead to a decrease in rural migration sentiments (outflow to the cities) and to an increase in the reproduction of human capital in the agricultural sector.

The article is based on the research focusing on the forms and types of leisure, cultural interests and preferences, changes in Russians' cultural needs in changing conditions, and on the main provisions of the state social-cultural policy at the regional level (see, e.g.: Astafieva 2010; Lukov 2012; Stebbins 2014; Toshchenko 2016). R. A. Stebbins identified 'casual leisure' and 'serious leisure' and explored the meaning of the latter in the structure of free time and the optimal style of leisure: 'serious leisure' includes volunteering and hobbies, while 'casual leisure' — all other forms of free time (playing, reading books, relaxing, walking, watching TV, etc.) (Stebbins 2014). Most Russian researchers refer to this classification when analyzing leisure activities, for instance, the formation of leisure culture of the contemporary youth in urban and rural environments (Astafieva 2010); value orientations of villagers, focusing on their cultural interests and preferences in leisure activities (Toshchenko 2016); the relationship between communicative and cultural-leisure activities of the student youth and rural population (see, e.g.: Belozeroва 2022a; Korosteleva, Davityan 2018; Nikulina, Davityan 2016; Belozeroва et al. 2021); features and principles of the successful human capital formation in the agricultural sector as impossible without decent living conditions for rural workers (see, e.g.: Abankina et al. 2021; Cultural Policy 2020; Dorofeev 2010; 2018; Dorofeev, Alekseeva, 2022).

At the regional level, there are cycles of independent studies of the social-sector institutions, assessing the quality of services provided by organizations of culture, health care, education and social support. One of the distinctive features of such studies is a combination

of expert assessments with the direct participation of local residents (“People’s Expertise”) in the evaluation of such important social-cultural indicators as awareness, accessibility, comfort, friendliness and politeness of employees of cultural institutions, etc. In our study of the leisure culture in rural society, we used three main indicators: institutional, information, and sociological. The institutional indicator implies the analysis of conditions and relationships within and between cultural institutions; the information indicator shows the accessibility and openness of information in the field of cultural-leisure activities; the sociological indicator implies the analysis of the cultural-leisure participation of rural population (Belozerova, Krikun 2020c; Belozerova 2022b).

To monitor the cultural-leisure activities of rural population in the Belgorod Region, we developed a non-standardized questionnaire for the survey of villagers in the Belgorod district and of full- and part-time students of the Belgorod State Agrarian University named after V.Ya. Gorin, most of whom live in rural areas (N=240; 2022–2023); then methods of mathematical statistics based on cluster and correlation analysis were applied. It should be noted that similar studies were conducted in other Russian regions, and there is available statistical data on the development of the cultural sector in Russia and in the Belgorod Region (Cultural Policy 2020; Development of Cultural-Leisure Activities 2018; Stebbins 2014).

Leisure culture is a set of material and spiritual values for satisfying personal leisure needs and interests in free time, i.e., leisure culture performs functions of rest, relaxation, entertainment, pleasure, restoration and learning. Recently, the cultural-leisure sphere has undergone changes due to the growing leisure opportunities and the improving quality of services in the cultural sector. Rural population reacts relatively quickly to this trend: depending on cultural and leisure preferences and activities, there are consumers (50%), spontaneous (18%), limited (17%) and active (15%) groups. Consumers show a passive-contemplative attitude towards cultural-leisure activities: watch television programs, use Internet channels, visit cultural and entertainment events, restaurants, bars, cafes, etc., i.e., these are passive cultural consumers without active forms of leisure. The spontaneous group tends to a chaotic-spontaneous cultural leisure — its representatives do not know how to rationally use their free time. The limited group prefers to use free time as an extension of working time by limiting communication to a circle of educational or professional activities and by solving work issues in free time. The active group shows creative thinking, a desire for personal spiritual development, clear selectivity, differentiated interests and preferences and directly participates in cultural-leisure activities.

When analyzing the leisure culture of respondents, we identified the following types of cultural-leisure activities: entertaining (28%),

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imitative (20%), consumer (19%), conservative (10%), contemplative (9%), cultural-creative (9%), and non-traditional (5%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Types of cultural-leisure activities

Activities	Features of social behavior
Entertaining	Sociability
Imitative	Thriftiness, commercialism, 'Westernization' of values
Consumer	Consumerism, material values
Conservative	Stereotypes, rejection of 'other' values
Contemplative	Passivity
Cultural-creative	Creativity, self-improvement
Non-traditional	Denial of traditions and national identification

The entertaining type seems 'pervasive' since its subject perceives everything with pleasure, and this process is accompanied by aesthetic and/or intellectual development. Today there are enormous resources for this approach due to universal accessibility of the Internet and other means of mass communication; this focus on communication (as a basis for all other functions) leads to insufficient implementation of such functions as heuristic, cognitive, etc.

The imitative type aims at the complete or partial reorientation, following the model of other countries, usually Western ones, or borrowing some elements of other cultures in a non-violent form. This type's features are as follows: displacement or substitution of ethnic values and national identity; a desire for the Western or American way of life, which contributes to the development of primitiveness, thriftiness, commercialism, and 'materialization' of even spiritual values; the most accepted ideals are formed by images and behavior of film actors, which explains a certain resistance of a traditionally minded part of population.

The consumer type implies a set of certain actions accompanied by the acquisition, consumption and release of various goods and services, which is more typical for the youth as more socially mobile, with new values (either rejected or accepted by the society) and striving for changes the most. The youth's innovative views directly influence the consumer market as the younger generation is not afraid of experiments, which can also determine marginal behavior, since growing needs cannot always be satisfied by socially approved and accepted means. Cognitive and heuristic functions are poorly performed in this type.

The conservative type is characterized by the dominance of collective stereotypes and certain value systems (although depending on gender, education, region, national identity, etc.). Value guidelines that are not accepted in a narrow circle are rejected, and those who disagree are named 'dissidents', which can cause misunderstanding and rigidity even in informal communication of peers.

The contemplative type is characterized mainly by limited financial resources, which leads to passive entertainment (watching TV, reading, walking, etc.) and antisocial behavior (hooliganism, gambling, drug and alcohol use, etc.).

The cultural-creative type shows perfect performance of heuristic, cognitive, creative, amateur and value-oriented functions. Social problems are solved by folklore events (like dances), rituals, national and religious holidays, etc., which makes this type developmental, humanistic and cultural.

The non-traditional type ignores/neglects the history of one's family or ethnic group, accepts a critical attitude or denial of one's national traditions.

We also identified some innovative forms of leisure among the rural youth — battles, selfies, street art (graffiti, posters) and computer gaming competitions. “As a rule, an average villager visits less than one cultural institution per month: on average, there are two visits to concerts, exhibitions and cinemas in three-five months” (Krikun, Belozerova 2018). Only 10% of rural population are active participants of different events (at least once every few months) despite the widespread desire to take an active part in cultural events (83%). This can be explained by the low quality of cultural life, which is internationally called ‘livability’ — satisfaction of social, cultural, economic and other needs.

The most popular and frequently visited places are parks, theaters and cinemas (63%). Respondents noted that in small rural settlements cultural events are very rare, and in some villages, there are no cultural events at all. Half of respondents (51%) prefers to visit cultural institutions with (close) friends, 6% — alone (mainly museums, theaters and exhibitions and mainly women) (Table 2).

Table 2

With whom villagers of the Belgorod district visit cultural institutions

With whom Institution	With spouse or boy/girlfriend	With friends	With children	Alone
Theatres	38	48	9	5
Concerts	28	53	9	8
Museums	31	50	10	9
Exhibitions	32	50	10	8
Parks	30	53	12	5
Cinemas	33	52	13	2
Sports	11	48	15	26

We identified four types of cultural-leisure forms: single, romantic, party and family. The single/individual type consists of various hobbies: dancing, reading, collecting, music, sports, etc. Such cultural

interests are not differentiated except for cinemas that are most often visited with someone. The romantic type consists of visits to concert halls, museums, theaters, zoos — to spend free time with a partner. The party type implies visits to sports grounds, battles, parks and entertainment centers with friends. The family type (zoo, circus, exhibitions) implies leisure time with family, children, parents or other close relatives.

Considering the livability indicator, we assessed the satisfaction of the Belgorod agglomeration residents with the quality of cultural services, and this quality largely depends on the place of residence. In the survey, respondents in regional centers made up 16% of the sample, residents of other settlements — 84%; men — 34%, women — 66%; by age, there were three groups — youth (under 35), adults (35–50 years old), and elderly (over 50). Respondents were asked to select the five most important criteria for visiting cultural institutions. For 87% these are: accessibility; technical equipment; price and quality of services; availability of information about services; safety for life and health.

Different age groups assess these criteria differently. The youth believe that satisfaction with the quality of services depends on technical equipment of cultural institutions (36%), since the younger generation is interested in the Internet, neural networks and computer technologies. The second place is taken by availability of information (27%), the third place — by price and quality of services (21%), while accessibility (location of cultural institutions) is not an equally important criterion, because many young respondents have a car and are quite mobile. The adult group ranked the selection criteria as follows: first, price and quality of services (31%), then safety for life and health (21%, which was expected as this group prefers family holidays), and technical equipment of cultural institutions (19%), while accessibility is also not that important since this group is mobile and gets information about services of cultural institutions from relatives, neighbors and children. The number of visits to cultural institutions in the elderly group depends mainly on accessibility (36%), information (29%), price and quality of services (28%), while technical equipment has the least influence in this group.

Thus, the following factors determine cultural-leisure activities in Russian rural areas:

1. Integration of rural cultural institutions into the local life, which allows to achieve joint aims of creating a comfortable social-cultural environment.
2. Villagers' active participation in the local economic-social life, their stable income and multilateral social connections, which makes them active participants in the local cultural life.
3. A differentiated approach to the popularization of regional cultural institutions since generational choices differ: the youth prefer institutions with good technical equipment, while the

elderly value accessibility the most. If there is only one cultural institution in rural locality, it should provide different services/activities to different age groups, which would increase popularity of this cultural institution.

4. The influence of social connections — usually the choice of leisure depends not so much on free time as on collective preferences of relatives or friends (one's social circle). Different age groups have different types of social connections: the youth spend free time with friends; students (53%) value communication with friends in free time the most (Andreeva et al. 2022) and prefer sports events, parks and cinemas. Two older groups also spend some free time with friends, but value their free time with family the most, i.e., prefer family events.
5. Location of the cultural institution determines its competitiveness: cultural institutions in the center of settlements or near large shopping centers have more opportunities to attract different groups. If two cultural institutions are located nearby, to win the competition for visitors they need to focus on the interests of different age groups. If there is only one cultural institution, the situation affects mainly the elderly, since younger groups are mobile and can choose cultural institutions that satisfy their interests in other locations.
6. Multi-field cultural institutions that combine various types of leisure (clubs, exhibitions, lectures and other activities): this implies a variety of services provided by the same institution and, as a result, a growing target audience. The multi-field work allows to provide leisure activities for different age groups in settlements with monopolist cultural institutions.
7. Cooperation of cultural organizations with other social institutions — to optimally distribute human resources with minimal material costs and to compensate for the lack of premises. Cooperation of cultural-leisure, social and educational institutions largely solves the problem of public awareness and of target audience as a carrier of information about the local cultural life. An example of such cooperation is barter relations of cultural institutions and municipal organizations (an exchange of events and territories) or sponsorship (cultural institutions place advertisements and information about their sponsors).

Thus, preservation and development of rural human capital depend on the social-economic situation in rural areas, including the organization of cultural-leisure activities as directly affecting the quality and comfort of rural life. Human capital is an internal factor of economic activities, and its sustainability ensures a long-term growth of economic efficiency in the agricultural sector. The reproduction of human capital in rural areas depends on new generations of villagers, i.e., on the decreasing emigration sentiments of rural residents, especially the youth, and on the increasing influx of young specialists.

Our monitoring study of the cultural-leisure activities of villagers showed that, despite their desire to take part in cultural events, only every tenth respondent directly participates in them. One of the reasons is the discrepancy between cultural needs of rural population and the ability of cultural institutions to satisfy these needs. The survey results prove the dependence of the efficiency of cultural-leisure activities in rural areas on their purposes, targeting, focus on awareness and multi-field work, accessibility, safety for life and health, aesthetics and comfort for consumers. One of the key principles for organizing cultural-leisure activities for rural population is a differentiated approach (gender, age, religious, regional, local and other differences) that contributes to the popularization of cultural events. For instance, gender-differentiated approach leads to the most optimal organization of activities for rural men and women as their cultural needs differ dramatically: men prefer fishing, hunting, sports, construction and robotics; women are more interested in museums, theaters and exhibitions. The most difficult task is organization of cultural-leisure activities for adults — this age group is in a period of self-realization and prefers both sports and creative activities, provided the acceptable price and quality of services. The religious aspect also affects organization of free time by adding visits to religious institutions and joint celebrations of religious holidays (Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, etc.). No less important is the regional approach stressing the importance of local (national, ethnic) customs and traditions for the organization of cultural-leisure activities.

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Организация досуга сельского населения как фактор сохранения и развития человеческого капитала сельских территорий

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Аннотация. В статье охарактеризована роль организации досуга в эффективном развитии человеческого капитала сельских территорий. Статья основана на результатах мониторингового исследования (проведенного методом опроса) активности сельских жителей Белгородского района Белгородской области в сфере культурно-досуговой деятельности. Культура досуга в сельском социуме оценивалась по трем основным показателям — институциональному, информационному и социологическому. В зависимости от культурно-досуговых предпочтений и деятельности в сельском обществе были выделены следующие группы: потребительская (50%), стихийная (18%), ограниченная (17%) и деятельностная (15%). По особенностям досуга респондентов были обозначены семь видов культурно-досуговой деятельности: развлекательный (28%), подражательный (20%), потребительский (19%), консервативный (10%), созерцательный (9%), культурно-творческий (9%) и внетрадиционный (5%). Несмотря на заявленное желание принимать активное участие в культурно-массовых мероприятиях (83%), непосредственно участвуют в них порядка 10% сельских жителей. Одна из причин — несоответствие между их культурными запросами и возможностями учреждений культуры их удовлетворить. Авторы отмечают, что эффективная организация культурно-досуговой деятельности оказывает влияние как на формирование, так и на воспроизводство человеческого капитала сельских территорий. Индикаторами повышения качества жизни на селе выступают не только современное производство и высокая заработная плата, но и развитие образовательных и культурно-досуговых учреждений.

Ключевые слова: культура досуга, культурно-досуговая деятельность, человеческий капитал, сельское население, сельские территории, сельское развитие, экономическая эффективность, аграрная политика