

Introduction

Special Issue — Differentiation in contemporary rural societies

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This issue, published in English for the first time in the journal's history, focuses on the continuing influence of the 20th-century industrialization, urbanization and marketization on rural regions, which has become a central topic for interdisciplinary research of rural development and is considered in three main sections of the journal: "Theory", "History", and "The Present Time".

The "Theory" section begins with the text of the outstanding agrarian economist Alexander Chayanov, providing a review of the most important agrarian research universities and institutes in various regions of the world in the mid-1920s. Chayanov reconstructs the main fields, branches and ideas of the world agrarian-economic science a century ago as to a large extent associated with the issues of rural regional social-economic differentiation. Vladislav Afanasev's archaeological preface describes the fate of Chayanov and his institute and the historical transformation of Chayanov's key concept "agricultural economy" in the context of the development of Russian and world science in the 20th century.

The next article presents a comparative analysis of two impressive rural-urban utopias created by the contemporaries and active participants of the great Russian Revolution — Marxist Alexander Bogdanov and populist Alexander Chayanov. Alexander Nikulin and Irina Trotsuk argue that both utopias are largely ideologically opposed futuristic forecasts — of the progressive industrial-proletarian civilization on Mars and of the peasant-cooperative civilization around Moscow. Both utopias predict some features of the future development of (rural) human capital, providing different answers to the questions of contradictions between the city and the village, the peasantry and the working class.

The third article of the theoretical section by Alexey Ershov is a review of the contemporary international, mainly European, approaches to typologization of rural areas. The author explains the reasons for the need for complex typologies that combine different bases such as transport accessibility of territories, trajectories of their transformations and influence of macro-regional features. The references reflect both the methodological focus of today's typologies and scientific innovations typical for such research work.

The objective of the articles that constitute the section “History” is to reflect on the study of differentiation in contemporary rural societies and to draw links with the debate about the transition from feudalism to capitalism and further. Thus, the processes of class differentiation should be studied as a part of the construction of the capitalist system of social relations. Certainly, such a task cannot but question the analytical tools used. The very understanding of the rural-urban duality has affected different aspects of capitalist development and its effects. As Raymond Williams indicated in *The Country and the City* (1973), the ideas of the rural and the urban have historically had different but interrelated meanings shaped by different historical relationships and the general development of capitalism.

Three articles of this section place the problem addressed in the context of historiographic debates around the agrarian question and the peasantry by considering the discussions within the classical Marxist thought and the dialogue of different national historiographies, starting from the classics. The three studies — by Maria Marcelo Crovetto, Alba Díaz-Geada and Hessam Khorasani Zadeh — focus on the specific agrarian and territorial realities in the context of a larger state. The studies of Díaz-Geada and Khorasani Zadeh explore the period from the mid-19th to the mid-20th centuries, during which rural communities experienced effects of the transition from the *Ancien Régime* to capitalist social relations and liberal states.

For agrarian historiographies, the peasantry’s access to private land property was a central object of study. As Khorasani Zadeh argues, an increase in the peasant private property in agrarian societies was understood as a symptom of mitigating social inequalities. However, his analysis of different cadastral sources shows that this relationship cannot be established directly or unambiguously. His study agrees with others in that the impacts of peasant ownership on social differentiation can vary depending on the context, as observed in Northern France and Veneto. This is also mentioned by Díaz-Geada when speaking of the contributions of agrarian historiography for the Galizian case. Both works agree in emphasizing that to study class differentiation, it is necessary to incorporate other elements in addition to the access to private property by a part of the peasantry, which cannot be understood separately from the impacts on peasant economies of industrialization or deindustrialization and different migratory processes. It is also necessary to consider the way in which different reproductive strategies of peasant families were readjusted to the pressures of the liberal capitalist state under construction and subsequent consolidation.

Crovetto’s study presents a different spatial-temporal context, inviting to rethink the concepts we use for the study of historical issues. The author argues that the agrarian question persists, and the extension and intensification of capitalist production relations, in their

8 most recent globalized forms, create new forms of exploitation and social differentiation that need to be studied. New forms of agroindustry determine new forms of exploitation, which are difficult to include into the traditional rural-urban dichotomy. On the other hand, the interviews show that analytical labels are not equivalent to subjective self-identifications.

“The Present Time” section begins with Tatyana Nefedova’s study of rural-urban development in the Republic of Tatarstan in recent decades in the context of the general trends of the Russian spatial development. The author explains the specifics of rural areas by their ethnic composition, distance from cities and economic transformations in agriculture, and pays special attention to agroholdings which play an important role in the social-economic development of Tatarstan, providing illustrative examples from the history of large agricultural enterprises, showing their impact on the economic development of rural areas, and also mentioning the features of small rural businesses.

Yulia Andreeva considers the very special phenomenon of kin’s domain settlements that have become a new trend in the Russian rural development and were inspired by the series of books *The Ringing Cedars of Russia* by Vladimir Megre. Today about 500 rural settlements in different Russian regions strive to bring to life the ideals described in these books. The author shows that the typical kin’s domain is created on agricultural land and requires the construction of the entire social and engineering infrastructure anew; therefore, practical skills, technical knowledge and creativity are highly valued by residents of such rural settlements. In many ways, kin’s domain settlements follow the global trend of building eco-villages as laboratories for sustainable rural development and autonomous rural communities.

Ksenia Averkieva considers another recent phenomenon of the Russian rural-urban development — the so-called rural gentrification in the Non-Black-Earth Region, focusing on the increasing influx of city dwellers to the village, who usually have social capital and other resources for transforming rural areas. The article presents some cases from the Verkhovazhsky district of the Vologda Region, which show how former townspeople participate in various spheres of rural life, filling them with new skills and practices and successfully combining urban innovations with rural traditions.

The article by Kirill Korolev is a case study of the Karelian village of Pyalma, which shows how former townspeople construct the image of the traditional Northern village, relying on their ideas about rural authenticity and presenting their interpretation of rural traditions to urban tourists. The author argues that such urban projections of rurality can be analytically divided into general and specific, commemorative-tourist and personal-economic and constitute a post-productivist “new rurality” of historical villages in the Russian North.

The special issue ends with Alexander Kurakin's review of J. C. Oi's book about initial stages of the miraculous Chinese agrarian reforms, Irina Trotsuk's review of the collection of articles about the relationship between pastoralism, uncertainty and development in today's turbulent world, and Stephan Merl's review of the 7th International Conference of the European Rural History Organization in the Romanian city Cluj-Napoca. These three texts constitute the final intellectual chord in the symphony of historical and futuristic, social and economic representations of diverse differentiation trends in rural regions that experience the extremely contradictory influence of urbanization and marketization.

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