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## Some (relatively) new conceptual 'frames' supplementing the study of human capital in rural sociology\*

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Abstract. The article continues the authors' thoughts about the necessary conceptual frameworks that would help rural sociology provide more reliable insights and data in the study of such a relatively new (in the conceptual-analytical perspective) social phenomenon as rural human capital. In the previous article, we presented a brief overview of such half-forgotten but still relevant theoretical foundations of rural sociology as agricultural economics, theories of peasant agrarianism, and theory of rural-urban continuum, which to a greater or lesser extent can be applied in the analysis of rural development and rural social and human capital. In this article, we provide a brief overview of some more recent agrarian ideas that seem to have sufficient but questionable heuristic potential for rural sociology. First, the idea and repeatedly tested projects of the Green Revolution, or the Third Agricultural Revolution, which implied technology transfer initiatives to greatly increase crop yields, opposed the concept of "Red Revolution" (comprehensive agrotechnological transformations instead of radical political ones), despite some skeptical assessments, in the last decades of the 20th century contributed to the reduction in global hunger, and, especially in its Soviet interpretations, seemed to be consonant with the more recent intellectual direction — development studies. Second, Peasant Studies defending the position that the very question about the need for a special theory of the peasantry and peasant societies is untenable, and presenting an attempt to develop a middlerange theory within historical sociology, which is based on the four most important characteristics of the peasantry in the past and present: family economy, work on land in interaction with nature, local culture of self-organization (rural community), and marginal role in relation to the state. Today's disputes about the peasantry in the contemporary world are complemented by two macroconcepts — theory of international food regimes and theory of global rural development. Thus, we still miss unambiguous theoretical generalizations regarding rural development due to the

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extreme diversity of both rural areas (and their social/human capital) and interpretations/definitions of rural/agricultural development (for instance, deagrarianization and extractivism or rural-urban glocalization and optimistic "unorthodox" social-ecological model).

**Key words:** rural sociology; social/human capital; rural development; rural-urban globalization/glocalization; peasantry and peasant societies; Green Revolution; Peasant Studies; food regimes; global rural development model

When speaking about rural sociology as a long scientific tradition providing conceptual frameworks for the study of such a relatively new social phenomenon as rural human capital, one cannot but notice that agrarian issues have always been somewhat marginal in Russian social sciences. Certainly, today the situation is changing mainly due to the urgent issues of ensuring national food security and preserving rural areas, and in our previous article [43], we focused on some half-forgotten but still relevant theoretical foundations of rural sociology, such as agricultural economics (from the initial German economic-philosophical agrarian approach to the American pragmatic agricultural approach and applied farm management), theories of peasant agrarianism (its utopian, politicaleconomic, populist ideas and its criticism for too eclectic pragmatic ideology, contradictions between left and right wings, negative conservative potential, etc.), and theory of rural-urban continuum (forgotten in its rural half and widely used to explain suburbanization trends). To a greater or lesser extent all three theoretical foundations (In their own way) can be applied in the analysis of the development trends of contemporary rural areas and their social and human capital; however, there are some more recent agrarian ideas that seem to have sufficient heuristic potential for rural sociology but are perceived quite controversially in terms of their results achieved to date.

First, this is the idea and the repeatedly tested projects of the *Green Revolution* that for more than half a century has largely determined, albeit in the most contradictory way, the work of hundreds of specialized interdisciplinary scientific agricultural organizations, national ministries of agriculture and international food security foundations, the careers of political leaders representing different ideological directions, the mass media discourses, the daily existence of several billion people, especially in the Global South, and the agrarian question in its classic political-economic interpretation [1; 2]. In the most general sense, the Green Revolution, or the Third Agricultural Revolution, implied technology transfer initiatives (from developed countries globally) that were to greatly increase crop yields with high-yielding varieties of cereals, the widespread use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and controlled irrigation, new methods of cultivation, including mechanization, to replace traditional agricultural technology, and additional loans conditional on such policy changes as privatization of fertilizers production and distribution [7; 13; 16; 17; 24; 27; 31; 38; 49].

The very term "Green Revolution" was introduced by W.S. Gaud from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) at the World Conference of the Society for International Development in 1968. He described the essence of the Green Revolution as a combination of the integrated American philanthropic financing of fertilizers and hybrid seeds, irrigation and land reclamation, extended government support and affordable loans: "These and other developments in the field of agriculture contain the makings of a new revolution. It is not a violent Red Revolution like that of the Soviets, nor is it a White Revolution like that of the Shah of Iran. I call it the Green Revolution" [27]. To confirm this idea, Gaud provided impressive figures of agricultural growth: in the late 1960s, some key third-world countries, having used new agricultural technologies, got record high yields [11. P. 352]. As a result, at the end of the 20th century, food production was consistently outpacing the population growth: from 1950 to 1990, the world population increased by 110%, and global grain production — by 174% [45]; in 2000, world food supplies per capita were 20 % higher than in 1961; the number of people suffering from hunger decreased by 16 % from 1970 to 1990 — from 942 to 786 million [8].

Despite some skeptical assessments, in the last decades of the 20th century, the Green Revolution did contribute to the reduction in global hunger in terms of access to food; however, harsh critics of the Green Revolution were right in that the total number of starving people increased by more than 11 % [50]. In other words, despite the claims about how successfully the world was fed during and thanks to the Green Revolution, hunger statistics showed a different picture — of about 800 million people still malnourished and even starving [30; 60]. Supporters of the Green Revolution call for overcoming the ongoing malnutrition accompanied by rising food prices, threats of climate change and growing global population with the means of the Green Revolution II [5]. Moreover, for some developing countries, the term "Green Revolution" was considered a counterpoint to the concept of "Red Revolution", implying that developing countries would undergo far-reaching changes under comprehensive agricultural technological transformations rather than radical political ones, i.e., developed countries, represented by financial institutions paying for reforms in developing countries (international agricultural development programs), put forward political-economic arguments (In the spirit of the early Soviet state) to justify the promotion of agrotechnological modernization — the fight for democracy against the expansion of communism through the support of the anti-colonial peasant movement, population growth and food security. This ideological hostility to communism together with the unconditional faith in American capitalism spread through personalized networks of philanthropic and government elites; moreover, the US government aimed at managing regional and international crises by exporting its agricultural surpluses to the Global South and by strengthening agricultural independence and food security of the post-colonial developing countries. Thereby, the Green Revolution is often perceived as primarily

the politically-economically determined external interference in the production of rice and wheat, including through training agronomists [33; 47].

The state support and international funding for the Green Revolution initiatives partly explain their success; however, the efficiency of the wheat program was determined not only by economic measures and political decisions but also by merits of crops and environmental conditions. For instance, in India climate fluctuations were complemented by downward pressure on prices resulting from the US food aid in Southeast Asia: Indian severe famine, climate change, economic impact of food aid, and its rapid economic recovery created the US "success story" in feeding the world, while the production of barley, tobacco, jute, chickpeas, tea and cotton in India increased by 20 %–30 % without any American investment in the Green Revolution [46]. In India, the new national agricultural strategy aimed at solving food problem without breaking the existing land relations in order to prevent negative social consequences of the most radical land reform [12. P. 408] during the country's transition from socialist economy to an import-oriented one: the externally imposed strategy of industrialization pushed Indian elites to make political decisions in line with the free market capitalism [64. P. 214].

The success of the Green Revolution required not only investment in the development of agricultural technologies but also large and constant subsidies to create food surplus. Such huge resources were available only to strong political regimes (including of the leading third-world countries) that could introduce agrotechnological recipes of the Green Revolution with authoritarian methods. This does not mean that the Green Revolution led to the rise of authoritarianism in some parts of the Global South; however, authoritarian penetration of the state machine into the countryside would hardly have been possible without technological solutions of the Green Revolution as ideal types of democratic and authoritarian social systems rely on the corresponding types of technologies [37]. In other words, states with authoritarian success stories created an infrastructure of market institutions corresponding to the Green Revolution's technologies and subsequently used local and international resources to spread their price and marketing recommendations on national markets to stimulate the needed level of farmers' agricultural production (it is no coincidence that such states temporarily turned into dictatorships during the Green Revolution).

Thus, states make green revolutions, but green revolutions fundamentally change states and societies, which explains why the Green Revolution remains at the epicenter of food contradictions and conflicts largely due to the confrontation between two political systems — capitalism and socialism — in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, in addition to the critical political-economic concept of the controversial victory of the American Green Revolution, there is also the opposite Soviet experience of making green revolutions in the USSR and third-world countries. Certainly, the Soviet Union was defeated in its pursuit of the Green Revolution' achievements, but the works of Soviet scientists (mainly

selection breeders and economists [34; 58]) during that historical period present breakthrough research and convincing ideas which definitely contributed to the global Green Revolution as a set of technologies for increasing productivity and ensuring food security.

For instance, V.G. Venzher [41; 65; 67] was a consistent supporter of the development of commodity-money/market relations and agricultural cooperation under socialism; therefore, his interpretation of the collective-farm system differed from the prevailing ideas of his time. He insisted on solving "the most important sociological (!) problem — the peasant question" [66] in the Soviet Union which was at that time (at least officially) the country of victorious socialism with no real sociological research. Venzher considered issues of peasant cooperation on a global scale, arguing that under and after the collapse of colonialism and creation of newly independent countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, the majority of their population were rural residents engaged in agricultural work, i.e., peasants. The global peasantry of former colonies had to solve the most difficult problems — eliminate the archaic feudal structures of everyday existence and overcome the low level of labor productivity, general poverty and illiteracy, agricultural overpopulation, and lack of capital for the sustainable development of peasant economy. Venzher believed that the peasantry of developing countries (and of the USSR) needed to focus on the development of agricultural cooperation but emphasized that peasant cooperation had a huge variety of cultural, national and social-economic features to be taken into account when pursuing a policy of rural transformations.

On the one hand, Venzher's social-philosophical and political-economic ideas seem to be consonant with the more recent intellectual direction of development studies, when he considers the situation in the first, second and third worlds, paradoxes of the economies of developed countries in the rich north and of developing countries in the poor south, and the enormous economic and political potential of the peasantry on the path of cooperative development; thus, presenting the Soviet collective-farm system of the 1960s not as a backward and obsolete form of labor organization (as many orthodox Soviet dogmatists argued) but, on the contrary, as a laboratory of social-economic forms for the world rural development. The subsequent decades of international rural development generally confirmed Venzher's forecasts about the importance of cooperation for the sustainable economic growth in peasant (and not only peasant) countries. Agrotechnological innovations of the Green Revolution were the most successful and produced lasting results mainly in developing countries with the strong cooperative peasant movement [6], while without the serious social impact of cooperation all technological efforts of the Green Revolution were in vain, including in socialist countries [57]. Unfortunately, in the USSR, Venzher's ideas of the market-cooperative development of the Soviet collective-farm peasantry were criticized and rejected by agrarian theorists, who relied on the exclusive superiority of the state-farm system and bureaucratic economy.

The second important direction contributing to the conceptual and empirical development of rural sociology is *Peasant Studies*, which in their contemporary form emerged by the mid-1950s, when the ideological-theoretical dispute between the two world superpowers (USA and USSR) boiled down to the choice of the social-economic progress path. Soviet scientific communism took the following position: the agrarian system of Tsarist Russia was basically capitalist; the Soviet system of collective and state farms is a more progressive economic model, like the entire Soviet planned economy, compared to the Western economy of the market, private capital and anarchy of production. This position was supported by references to V.I. Lenin's works which T. Shanin considered agrarian programs, although Soviet historiography and historical sociology would certainly reject such a strange idea of considering Lenin a peasant scientist. Thereby, it is no coincidence that one of the most famous ideological-political scandals in the Soviet historical science at the turn of the 1950s — 1960s was determined by the conclusion of some respected agrarian historians that the material-technical and social-economic prerequisites for collectivization were pre-capitalist [10; 55].

World historiography, economics and sociology still question the need for a special theory of the peasantry and peasant societies despite its deep roots in the history of social sciences. Shanin divided social scientists into three 'types' based on the general theoretical approach to the analysis of the peasantry' evolution in the complex social-historical reality. Adherents of the first approach deeply believe that peasants are simply agricultural workers, whose historical stage of development is the family subsistence-consumer type of agricultural production insufficiently affected by technical progress, i.e., there is no need for a special theory of the peasantry. Adherents of the second approach carefully study the huge number of details that determine the peasantry's social "peculiarity" but argue that the existing theories of social progress adequately explain this "peculiarity". Adherents of the third approach believe that the peasantry is not only the past but to a large extent the present and future of humanity; therefore, we need a special theory of the peasantry and peasant societies [53; 59]. Moreover, Shanin reconsidered the works and activities of Lenin and his party in the peasant-studies' perspective, focusing on the logic of political events in the agrarian-peasant country as determined by the Bolsheviks' understanding of the great peasant movement.

Peasant Studies is an attempt to develop a middle-range theory within historical sociology as based on the four most important characteristics of the peasantry: family economy, work on land in interaction with nature, local culture of self-organization (rural community), marginal role in relation to the state. Today Russian rural sociologists study the remaining traditional human and social potential in rural areas in search of an answer to the question of whether it makes sense to revive, preserve and develop the peasant heritage in the contemporary world as capitalist agriculture ceased to develop primarily due to internal factors of a particular country/society and has become global, which changes its dynamics and "laws" of development and questions

the classic thesis that pre-capitalist economies repeat the path of countries with the developed agrarian capitalism [4. P. 168]. Today the system of global agricultural markets and related industries (agrochemistry, biotechnology, agroengineering, etc.) is being structured and institutionalized; the principles and rules of this international agri-food system are changed in the interests of certain "players"; therefore, the theory of *international food regimes* [21; 22; 36] aims at identifying the logic, factors and consequences of these regimes' historical transformations and sequential replacement. In the 1870s, the first food regime emerged under colonialism, second industrial revolution, and developing American agriculture: new technologies ensured both the agricultural development of virgin American lands and the transportation of products from these remote regions, which made the US the leading exporter of grain and meat to Europe, providing the world with an example of industrial agriculture (agribusiness model) and intercontinental agricultural trade.

The first food regime ended with two world wars, Great Depression and protectionism in international trade; it was replaced by the second international food regime under the Cold War between the capitalist and socialist camps for the influence on the third world. In general, the second food regime is characterized by agricultural protectionism and subsidies in the Global North and by the growing resource dependence of the Global South (including food dependence). In economic policy, this was a period of developmentalism — states began to take on the role of key modernization actors (extensive food aid programs pursued political goals, and giant agricultural corporations became transnational). The collapse of the second food regime is associated with the US embargo on grain supplies to the USSR, which manifested the start of neoliberal globalization (transnational corporations' leading role in global agriculture, "financialization" of the world economic system). There is still no academic consensus on the third food regime's institutionalization but strong criticism of the food regimes theory as unable to explain national agricultural dynamics: in many countries, for instance in Brazil and Russia, agriculture combines multiple social structures that do not fit into the unified periodization proposed by the theory of international food regimes [39; 40].

Agrarian scientists, sociologists and economists, focusing on the issues of *global rural development* (for instance, members of the international network of rural organizations "Critical Agrarian Studies"), to a certain extent follow the ideas of agrarians of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with their critical attitude to the industrial-urban and financial capitalism for such extreme manifestations of the market liberal capitalism as privatization, financialization and globalization, appropriation and concentration of (land) property in rural areas, risks of uneven economic development due to the agroholdings' corporate control over land and other natural resources — these are the most important issues in the research program of the theory of global rural development. In addition to the critical anti-capitalist part, this agrarian concept has a positive part related to the issues of a sustainable agricultural economy [35. P. 256]: for instance, agriculture and food production have become the

key dynamically developing sectors of the world economy, in which globalization often encounters resistance from rural regions and localities with their special cultural and natural conditions and land use patterns.

Another fundamental question for the theory of global rural development is whether (under the absent or fragmented government regulation) private agents or other interested parties would be able to create a system of effective management (new distribution of power and new forms of governance at the international, national and local levels) to ensure diverse forms of sustainable development in rural and forest areas [15]. Moreover, these forms should take into account regional features of rural areas, their polycentricity and dispersion [18, 29, 44] and the growing risks of uneven development [26] under "new extractivism" determined mainly by the impact of China and India and by the extended migration and demographic changes, which requires a much less dichotomous (compared to Soviet-American) and a much more nuanced, detailed and multipolar approach to the study of gaps and differences between (and within) cities and villages, at interregional and international levels [18]. Quite often, rural grassroots initiatives can be explained by the fact that nationstates abandon their functions of control and surveillance under various populist slogans, and rural sociologists and social geographers make important contributions to the study of new forms of rural communities as the main arena for innovative forms of contextualized and democratized social action. However, rural areas face contradictory changes in interpersonal and intergroup relations, which makes issues of power increasingly relevant, especially in the context of agrarian mobilization and political actions associated with it [9. P. 317]. Thus, "relations of power and subordination" become increasingly mosaic and blurred, which indicates new changes of rural life in the near future. One of such changes is the so-called "rural renaissance" [25. P. 320] in some regions of Western Europe and Russia after the decades of mass exodus and depopulation of rural areas, which contributes to the survival and revival of some rural areas, especially suburban ones.

In general researchers admit that rural areas remain extremely diverse: on the one hand, at the grassroots level, we see new types of leaders and innovative technologies; on the other hand, rural areas still lack collective initiatives and social/human capital, which makes sociologists focus on the issues of inequality and injustice rather than on the successful paths of rural development. Some scientists believe that the reduction in the number of rural population engaged in agricultural activities will result in rural spaces losing their agricultural significance but becoming attractive for other purposes (tourism, renewable energy production, traditional gastronomy and other non-agricultural activities) [27. P. 228]. Anyway, new rural revival depends on the combination of new technological and cultural rural-urban projects with the preservation and revitalization of traditional rural areas [63]. Certainly, the supposed rural renaissance can be strengthened not only by innovative development of productive agricultural activities but also by cultural, symbolic transformation of the rural landscape [28. P. 228], perhaps, into

experimental sites for environmentally sustainable production and consumption, promoting the "reunification" of people and nature. Whether this trend will slow down the current rapid deagrarianization is the most important question of scientific debates [9. P. 317], which requires a thorough comprehensive analysis of diverse rural transformations (from autarkic self-sufficiency to interregional interdependencies) in the comparative perspective [20; 32; 48].

Certainly, the contemporary countryside has changed radically in recent decades. On the one hand, there are increasing risks of deagrarianization and extractivism; on the other hand, there are reasons for new hopes such as the impressive potential of agroecological movements, new socially and environmentally oriented markets or rural tourism, which promises a different rural-urban globalization with an emphasis on a more optimistic social-ecological model [32]. It is assumed that new rural relations would destroy the traditional aggressive policy of taming nature and enclosing rural areas to ensure a shift towards "empowerment through rural-urban associations", implying the participation of city dwellers in the life of rural communities. In many rural regions, we see an ever-increasing number of new residents, who were born and/or raised in the city but prefer to live and work in the countryside. For many of these "agro-newbies", the village and the city are not complete opposites — on the contrary, they consider rural-urban interactions as dynamic and organic complementarity rather than antagonism or dichotomy. Such opposing trends in rural-urban development determine the need for its rethinking. First, it is necessary to critically reconsider approaches to the politicization of nature and food security issues. Second, comparative international studies of rural policies need to focus on the contradictory dynamics of nationalist and populist movements and on the new initiatives for integrating the rural poor and migrants [51]. Third, we need to ensure the interaction of all rural/agrarian scientific disciplines to study various processes of environmental transformations and sustainable rural development. Thus, the 20th-centiry modernist euphoria about globalization seems to be replaced by the warnings of most agrarian scientists that high modernism under the unstable and uneven global rural development may be dangerous for the collective well-being of today's and future generations [52. P. 464].

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# Несколько (относительно) новых концептуальных «фреймов», дополняющих исследование человеческого капитала в сельской социологии\*

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**Аннотация.** Статья продолжает опубликованные ранее на страницах журнала размышления авторов о том, какие концептуальные основания необходимы сельской социологии для получения более надежных эмпирических данных и теоретических обобщений в изучении такого относительно нового социального феномена, как сельский человеческий капитал.

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В предшествующей статье авторы представили краткий обзор таких несколько подзабытых, но все еще релевантных концептуальных оснований сельской социологии, как наука сельскохозяйственная экономия, теории крестьянского аграризма и концепция сельско-городского континуума, которые в большей или меньшей степени могут быть применены сегодня в изучении сельского развития и сельского социального и человеческого капитала. Данная статья предлагает читателю краткий обзор ряда более современных аграрных подходов, обладающих достаточным, но неоднозначным эвристическим потенциалом для сельско-социологических исследований. Во-первых, это идея и неоднократно апробированные проекты зеленой революции, или третьей сельскохозяйственной революции, которая подразумевала трансфер технологий для значительного увеличения урожайности сельскохозяйственных культур, выступала в качестве противовеса «красной революции» (предлагая комплексное агротехнологическое развитие вместо радикальных политических трансформаций), несмотря на скептические оценки, в последние десятилетия XX века внесла значительный вклад в сокращение мирового голода и, особенно в своей советской версии, соответствовала нынешним девелопменталистским исследованиям. Во-вторых, это крестьяноведение, утверждающее несостоятельность вопроса о необходимости специальной теории крестьянства и крестьянских обществ и представляющее собой попытку разработать теорию среднего уровня в рамках исторической социологии, опираясь на четыре главные характеристики крестьянства в прошлом и настоящем: семейное хозяйство, работа на земле в гармонии с природой, локальные практики самоорганизации (сельское сообщество) и маргинальная роль в отношениях с государством. Продолжающиеся споры о крестьянстве в современном мире сегодня дополняются двумя макро-теориями — международных продовольственных режимов и глобального сельского развития. Таким образом, сельской социологии все еще не хватает однозначных теоретических обобщений вследствие чрезвычайного разнообразия как самих сельских территорий (и их человеческого капитала), так и трактовок сельского развития (скажем, деаграризация и экстрактивизм или же сельско-городская глокализация и оптимистичная «неклассическая» социально-экологическая модель).

**Ключевые слова:** сельская социология; социальный/человеческий капитал; сельское развитие; сельско-городская глобализация/глокализация; крестьянство и крестьянские общества; зеленая революция; крестьяноведение; продовольственные режимы; модель глобального сельского развития

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