Agrarian establishment social position under conditions of the rural qualitative transformation

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Abstract. The article analyzes theoretical approaches to the modern understanding of the category of “social position” regarding the agricultural establishment and its role in the period of qualitative transformations of the agricultural sector. Studying the publications of the world scientific community allows highlighting a number of areas of discussion about the social position of the professional establishment; it is also relevant for the agricultural sector. On the basis of empirical data from a well-developed agrarian region in the south of Russia we studied the opinions of representatives of the professional agrarian establishment (specialists from successful agricultural enterprises and future specialists – students). It has been established that leading specialists of agricultural enterprises occupy a high social status both in the production team and in the local community. Future specialists (with higher professional agricultural education) associate their expectations with a high social status in the professional and local community. Thus they claim all the attributes associated with a high status: a high salary, a real estate ownership, an intellectual labor lifestyle, and leadership in the production team and the local community.

1. Introduction

A number of objective factors determine the relevance of our studying the social position of the agrarian establishment in the context of the qualitative transformations of the Russian village.

In the first place, the agrarian establishment as a social group of society, by their role and status, is assigned a leading role in implementing large-scale projects for transforming the Russian village, sustainable development of territories, ensuring food and territorial security of Russia. The agrarian establishment is a representative of mental labor at agricultural enterprises; they participate in the development and implementation of management decisions regarding the current and strategic activities of the enterprise, industry and socio-economic development of the territory. Therefore, it is important to discuss the issue of describing the social portrait of the agrarian establishment, analyzing their social status in the institutional structure of the local (regional) community and the relevance of their role in socio-economic transformations in the village to the expectations of society.

In the second place, there is a decrease in the demographic and labor potential of rural areas in
Russia. Therefore, agrarian establishment has an educational and motivating function in production teams. They set lifestyle trends, traditionally occupying a leading position in the social structure of the rural community. In this regard, it is important to know their value guidelines, the level of their unity or disunity, the attitude to their own life and modern social reality, the assessment of their impact on others.

In the third place, agrarian specialists are opinion leaders in the local and regional community. From there it is important to determine and analyze the attitude of the agrarian establishment towards the ongoing reforms, innovative processes in the professional and social spheres that determine the qualitative changes in the life of the Russian village. The material and technical re-equipment of agricultural production, the promotion of digital technologies, new technologies in crop production and livestock require updating not only professional knowledge, skills, but also the willingness to motivate other members of production teams, the local community to participate in innovative processes. There is a need to study the level of preparedness of the agrarian establishment for innovative processes in the professional and social spheres, which determines the qualitative changes in the life of the Russian village.

2. Materials and methods
To study the social position of the agricultural establishment we studied the responses of professional community representatives from among specialists (successful agricultural enterprises – 856 people and 623 future workers). Surveys were conducted in southern Russia in 2018. Statistical analysis was performed in the SPSS program (version 22).

We determined the significance of studying the category of “social position” in the publications of foreign authors (including a certain social group during the period of a social reality transformation).

In “Feeling entitled to rules: Entitled individuals prevent norm violators from rising up the ranks” [1], scientists Stamkou E., van Kleef G.A., Homan A.C. found that the formal leaders of the social group seek to prevent an increase in the social status of a group member who violates established social norms. Thus social control is maintained in the field of maintaining normative behavior and the position of the formal leaders of the group is strengthened. These include representatives of the agrarian establishment as opinion leaders in social groups of agricultural production collectives and the local rural community. [2, 3, 4] Thereby the assumption about the importance of studying the social position of the agrarian establishment to ensure high-quality transformations of the Russian village is logically confirmed, as well as determining the vectors of influence on it of social institutions.

In the article “Empirical moral rationalism and the social constitution of normativity” [5] Jebari J. offers approaches to the development of the concept of “normativity”. In his opinion, it is based on the idea that regulatory requirements in social groups are formed in the process of implementing social practices carried out in the social structures into which they are embedded. This approach is important from the point of view that normative standards are generated by empirically observable social structures. In our case, they are agrarian production teams and the local rural community. [6, 7]

The important aspect of our study is that without the active participation of opinion leaders in the transformation of the village we cannot achieve rapid positive results. Interesting conclusions in this regard were presented by the authors Goodyear V.A., Parker M., Casey A. [8]. Using the example of a professional training community on Twitter, they came to the following conclusions:

• discussion of professional practices expands the experience of participants in the network community and initiates new practices;
• discussion moderators play a key role in the productivity of the professional network community and in order to increase the effectiveness of educational interactions;
• it is necessary to train moderators – leaders who hold a discussion. [9, 10, 11, 12]

Thus opinion leaders or moderators holding a discussion play a more important role in determining the direction and content of social practices than ordinary members of a social group.

Deuchar A. [13] in a study of the social mobility of youth (who have received professional
education but are temporarily unemployed) shows how the reproduction of territorial identity helps to position themselves as worthy youth with meaningful prospects. Young people with professional education use the strategy of mobilizing urban and rural identities to achieve the social mobility they are striving for (a certain social and professional position in the regional community and production team). In the context of our study the level of professional education shows the possible claims of a person to a social position in local, regional and professional communities. These claims are higher among young people with professional education than young people without education.

Studying the publications of the world scientific community allows highlighting a number of areas of discussion about the social position of the professional establishment:

- important role of the organization’s specialists as formal leaders in the implementation of social control over the normative behavior of group members;
- regulatory requirements in social groups are formed in the process of implementing social practices carried out in the social structures into which they are embedded;
- dominant role in determining the direction and content of social practices is played by opinion leaders or moderators than ordinary members of a social group, therefore their training gives higher productivity;
- level of professional education is used in strategies for positioning possible claims of a person to a higher social position in local, regional and professional communities. [14, 15, 16]

Thus a review of scientific publications shows the relevance of the research topic. Due attention is paid to the issues of the social position of the agrarian establishment in the context of the qualitative transformations of everyday life. [17, 18, 19, 20]

3. Results

Future agricultural specialists, making their choice in favor of higher education in agriculture, noted that:

- opinion of parents, friends and acquaintances had a significant influence on their choice (39.9%);
- prospects of agricultural education and future professional activities (22.1%);
- calling (12.0%).

Thus about 75% of the answers are related to the prestige of future professional activities and the high social status of the professional agrarian establishment in the region. The data is presented in the diagram below.

![Figure 1. What influenced your choice of agricultural education?](image-url)

At the same time, the problems that remain unresolved (the agricultural sector itself and the specifics of living in rural areas, their infrastructure) reduce the motivation to work in the agricultural sector: low salary, unwillingness to live in the village, lack of social and engineering infrastructure, lack of vacancies. The data is presented in the table below.

| Factor                             | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Fortuitousness                    | 10         |
| Close geographical location       | 20         |
| Attractive study conditions       | 40         |
| Low exam score                    | 50         |
| The prospects of agricultural     | 50         |
| education                         |            |
| Vocation                          | 70         |
| The advice of parents, friends,   | 80         |
| acquaintances                      |            |
Table 1. Future agricultural specialists’ ideas on the main reasons that reduce the motivation to work in the agricultural sector

| Possible answers | %  |
|------------------|----|
| Lack of vacancies | 29,8 |
| Reluctance to live in the countryside | 38,9 |
| Low salary | 60,6 |
| Lack of comfortable living conditions | 24,5 |
| Lack of social and engineering infrastructure in the countryside (medicine, leisure, roads) | 34,6 |
| Outdated technologies used in agricultural production | 9,6 |
| The low prestige of agricultural professions | 6,3 |
| Lack of career prospects and personal development | 18,8 |
| Disappointment in the specialty | 2,9 |

One of the important indicators of social status is an income. Future specialists in the agricultural sector note that the key measure that will ensure high-quality reproduction of the professional agricultural establishment is salary at a level not lower than the average one in the region (two-thirds of the survey participants noted). The data is presented in the table below.

Table 2. Future agricultural specialists’ ideas on measures that can increase motivation to work in rural areas

| Possible answers | %  |
|------------------|----|
| Providing comfortable office accommodation | 38,9 |
| Creating a favorable social environment in the village | 33,7 |
| Salary at the level not lower than the average one for the region of the Russian Federation | 66,8 |
| Increasing the prestige of agricultural professions and rural lifestyle | 37,5 |
| Tax and other benefits | 17,3 |
| Other answers | 1,0 |

The measures that will also help to increase the motivation of future specialists to work: providing comfortable office housing; increasing the prestige of agricultural professions and rural lifestyles; creating a favorable social environment in the village.

According to the results of the survey of the agricultural establishment, the salaries of 31.1% of the respondents significantly exceed the average monthly salary in the region. 51.1% of the respondents indicated that their salary corresponds to the average level. Thus the agricultural establishment in the south of Russia corresponds to a high level of claims (according to one of the main status criteria that determine the position of a social group in the social structures into which they are embedded).

While occupying their positions in production teams, specialists receive, in addition to the main income, payment for overtime work, work on weekends and holidays (41.8%) and regular bonuses based on the results of the enterprise or department (48.4%). In general, these facts confirm the social and professional responsibility not only for their labor results, but also the results of the production team, which is evidence of the social significance of their professions.

For the reproduction of the agricultural establishment, important competencies, according to the survey participants, are sociability, communication skills (58.2%); ability to plan working hours
(39.6%); ability to set a task independently, make decisions independently (28.6%); leadership skills, ability to lead others (26.4%).

4. Conclusion
Future specialists associate their expectations with high social status in the professional and local community. And, accordingly, they claim all the attributes associated with a high status: a high salary, a real estate ownership, an intellectual work lifestyle, and leadership in the production team and the local community.

The claims of graduates of agricultural universities, justified from the point of view of high social status, should be accompanied by a meaningful context: professional competence and universal social skills that provide leadership in the production team.

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