Peasant's experience of responsible farm management

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Abstract. This article presents the specific experience of farm management by a peasant acting independently. It is common for a peasant managing a farm to exercise both control and execution. Since management of a farm is influenced by external factors – natural, geographical, social ones, a peasant is required to constantly implement adaptive changes in management. These changes are brought about by the level of personal (spiritual) development of a peasant. The changes should be moderate but, at the same time, sufficient for effective management. All this is associated with responsible management as a characteristic of an activity. Such management is described as a science and an art of adapting to the natural and social conditions of economic activity. The specifics of responsible management of a farm is determined through the analysis of a peasant’s abilities to analyze, forecast, plan their activities. The experience of managing a peasant farm indicates that once found was fixed in the human mind, then it was only repeated, there was no increment of information, knowledge (information).

1. Introduction
In modern literature, discussions continue on the problem of the peasantry as an obsolete social group. However, practice shows that it is not the peasantry in general that disappears but the peasantry with its traditional ties as a relevant public formation. Considering the existence of a peasant in a dynamic aspect reveals their role and possibilities in the development of a modern society. A brief review of the literature of the last years suggests that the authors turn their attention to the importance of a special study of individual aspects of the existence of a peasant, in particular, in the process of farm management. Among them, researchers single out the problems of the importance of peasant farming (the majority of farmers and farms are associated with it) in the modern world [1,2]; the human factor in farm management [3-8]; ways of development of family farms, the contradictions between peasant and entrepreneurial enterprises and unequal treatment of a farm by the state [5]; further development...
of family farming [6,9]. Based on these and other sources, we pay attention to the peasant experience of responsible farm management.

In recent decades, the interest in various aspects of the problem of responsibility is on the rise. Scholars have traditionally considered it in the context of industrial development, scientific and technological progress. In modern conditions, there is a tendency to consider it in the context of transition from the information economy to the digital economy. As for the responsibility of a peasant as a business entity, it has not yet been adequately reflected in the literature. This hinders the cognition of the spiritual and economic capacity of a society and social groups.

The purpose of the paper is to identify the features of responsible farm management as one of the specific forms of social management and economic self-organization through the analysis of a peasant’s abilities to analyze, forecast, plan their activities.

2. Materials and research methods

2.1. Theoretical and methodological prerequisites for the study of the problems of peasant experience in responsible management of the economy

Management is one of the practical activities of a human. In scientific and philosophical literature, there is no universally accepted definition of the concept of management. Without going into discussions on this issue, we join the literature definitions given by the following authors. V. S. Diev understands management as “the process of the subject's influence on the object aimed at streamlining, maintaining, destroying or changing the system of the object in accordance with the goal” [10]. According to A I Pirogov and I Yu Privalova, “control “in general,” that is with reference to any system, there is a generalized targeted effect on an object (system) carried out in a variety of ways – by transforming relationships, introducing new elements, correcting algorithms, diversifying parameters, etc., which provide the given object (system) with new properties or states” [11]. In our opinion, the above definitions have a common feature that is the indication of the impact of the subject on the object. This impact is aimed at streamlining, preserving, destroying or changing the system of the object, as a result of which the object (system) acquires new properties or states. The difference between the two definitions is that the second refers to the methods of management. It is also important for our study that all the above authors express their opinion on the relationship between the concepts of government and management. If the former author believes that the Russian version of the notion of government is “significantly wider” than the notion of management [10], but at the same time admits “both terms as equivalent” in his work, which indicates a more cautious view, then the latter resolutely bring them apart. So, in their opinion, “... the reduction of the entire government system to management cannot be considered justified” [11]. Moreover, they refer to P. F. Drucker, in whose opinion, management means “management of a commercial enterprise that exists in order to produce products and provide services” [12]. Understanding government more than management, Drucker reasonably separates them: a) all human activity cannot be reduced only to industrial and commercial activities; b) the phenomenon of government takes place both in living nature and in technical systems [11]. Based on the foregoing, we share the point of view of the researchers who do not consider the concepts of government and management identical. In our opinion, A. I. Berg is right when pointing to three main areas of government: 1) the management of machine systems, technical processes and processes in general associated with the purposeful impact of a human on nature; 2) management of the activities of human groups that solve a particular problem; 3) management of processes occurring in living organisms [13]. In this statement, it is important for our study to highlight the management of the activities of human groups that solve a particular problem – social management. How does this management happen? Any social system sends requests for certain actions of the leader. The leader must perceive these orders from the social system in order to contribute to the further development of society, economy, enterprises, etc. The impact of the leader on the subordinate “has a specific goal that is working out a certain ideal aimed at the prosperity of the state, the development of the personality” [14]. Here the leader acts as a manager.
An integral part of social management, one of its forms, is the management of a farm. Related to this is the need to consider farm management as a holistic system. Any holistic system exists and develops in some environment, not in isolation from others. Hence, taking into account the internal processes in the management of a farm as an integrated system, it is necessary to take into account the interdependence of a farm as a holistic system and the environmental conditions in which it functions.

We understand management as a form of practice in the course of which a change in the object occurs, which implies a transformation to achieve objectives of the peasant's economic activity. The peasant is to predict the possible results of the efforts made by themselves and take responsibility for them. This is impossible without responsible management, understood as a characteristic of a peasant’s activity, “expressed in their ability to reasonably direct, control their activity in a given context” [15]. The context here is peasant farming, which we see as a dynamic system. Since such a system functions under the conditions of continuous changes inside and outside it, in the environment external to the peasant economy – society, government – the task of responsible management is to rationally, “appropriately respond to these changes” [11]. Thus, the timely, effective restructuring of the management system in accordance with the changed conditions is required. In other words, the process of responsible management is seen as the streamlining of a system of a peasant farm.

It is known that any human activity consists of two phases – management and execution. However, in industry, in urban economy, the social division of labor turns management and execution into independent professions, opposed to each other. In agricultural labor, in peasant farming, the unity of management and execution in individual activity is preserved, that is, executive and administrative functions are integrated in the workers themselves. Due to the fragmentation and originality of individual production sites, each farmer when managing is forced to think independently, make decisions, act, and manage themselves. In these conditions, management acts as self-government.

This paper takes as a basis the following principles and approaches: the principles of the specificity of truth and the ascent from the abstract to the concrete, the principle of systematicity, as well as the activity approach. With their help, the following was determined in the paper. Firstly, the peasant experience of responsible farm management can be adequately recognized only when taking into account specific natural conditions, specific historical features of the region and considering this as a relationship between the peasant and their farm. Secondly, in the paper, the principle of ascent from the abstract to the concrete is realized through the construction of an idealized object. Such object is the management of a peasant farm. At the first stage, their knowledge is presented as sensitive-concrete knowledge of an object in which only external connections and relationships are given. In the future, at the second stage, the concrete is presented as knowledge of the essential properties and relationships of the object, its inherent internal contradictions as a source of development; regular trends of its development. Thirdly, the responsible management of a farm as a certain integrity is determined by the level of personal development of a peasant. Fourthly, responsible management of a peasant farm is seen as an activity. Here, activity is understood as the projection of a peasant as a subject into the sphere of practice. In turn, the essence of analytical, predictive, planned work in the process of responsible management of a farm by a peasant is an activity.

2.2. Factors of peasant farm management

Management of a peasant farm exists and develops in an environment external to it. Here, the external environment is understood as the environment which has a forming effect on the management of a farm. With this approach, the environment can be understood as a factor – an active force. The formation and development (improvement) of the management of a peasant farm as a system is influenced by system-forming factors external to it. In essence, they can be both objective and subjective. The system-forming factors genetically and functionally determining the management of a peasant farm include natural-geographical and social factors. The spatial structure and the limits of economic management are associated with the natural-geographical factor. Here in the farm management system, there is a stable element – the “core”. Although the named element is formed during the “protracted period of time” [16], various forms of adaptation to natural and geographical
conditions may occur in farm management. It is important to take into account the preservation of “the core” of farm management even under the relatively rapidly changing social life of the peasantry. “The core” is the farmer’s focus on the adaptive attitude to the environment, using certain methods, mechanisms for caring for the growth and desirable development of a living object – animals, plants, soil. Such a focus testifies to the peasant's awareness of themselves as a converter and a person responsible for what is happening in the natural environment. At “the core” of the subject of research is a contradiction as the source of its (“core”) development. The parties to the contradiction are the creativity and routine of the peasant's labor in managing the farm. “The core” determines how farm management responds to innovation.

The following factors are associated with society: technical and technological, specific manifestations of power and the state, peculiarities of sociocultural situation. They affect changes in farm management and determine its temporal structure. Here we are talking about “peripheral” elements of the system of management subordinate to “the core”. Since the life of a peasant in the village is subordinate to the natural principle, and since the laws of the existence of nature are simultaneously the laws of human existence, we refer to the “peripheral” elements of the farm management system such parts (signs) as: a) the usage of the experience of specific farm management accumulated in the rural local community; b) protection from the negative influence of power and the state and its focus on the possible adaptation of the public administration system to the management of a peasant farm. These factors must be considered as the most important since they determine the genesis and modification of adaptive changes in management. External (system-forming) factors affect the formation and development of a peasant’s subjectivity in the management of a farm. Adaptive changes in managing a farm are caused by changes in the subjective world of a human and the objective products of the activity of the human spirit (previous, current generations of people). The foregoing means that farm management requires certain conditions and preserving “core” processes – in the “core” of the farm and in the “core” of its management.

On the one hand, continuous changes in the level of personal development of a peasant are required (internal condition). These changes are impossible without their intense spiritual life. Personal development indicators include personal skills, increasing managerial abilities [4], “farming style”, “farmer’s cultural repertoire” [2], creativity, innovation and the ability to collaborate, responsiveness to new social requirements and expectations regarding rural economy and food, the desire to leave their mark in rural life – all this is characteristic of young farmers (part of the vanguard of the “new peasantry”), who require perseverance, stubbornness, faith in their strength and abilities [6]. In Russian and international literature, this is called the human (personal) factor in farm management. On the other hand, farm management requires accounting, the use of objective products of the activity of the human spirit (external condition). These objective products as phenomena of social life, being large systems of values, are outside the personality – knowledge, morality, beauty. Being outside the personality, they are not distracted from it, being inextricably linked with the existence of a human. The recognition of their significance is connected with the fact that they are available to a peasant for use in farm management.

2.3. Characteristics of responsible management of a peasant farm

Peasant farming as a self-governing socio-economic, socio-cultural system can maintain its qualitative certainty and integrity “only in conditions of limited impacts, both from the inside and the outside. This influence should not be excessively strong because, otherwise, it can destroy the system. At the same time, this influence should be sufficient so that management can be freely carried out” [11]. By “not excessively strong” influence we understand the measure of impact on the natural component of farming. Wildlife does not tolerate violence, which determines the focus of the production process in a peasant farm on creation of appropriate favorable conditions for cultivating plants and animals in constantly changing natural environment. In the context of the foregoing, we are talking about the phenomenon of (responsible) management of a peasant farm as a science. It requires knowledge of biology, technology, ecology, as well as socio-economic, organizational, humanitarian sciences. Being
a science, management must take into account the objectivity, which is what exists in reality, in everything that happens in a farm and in the external environment. It is also important to identify the specifics of the existing reality, to analyze it. At the same time, responsible management of a farm takes a peasant beyond the scope of science. Since unpredictability is an integral part of relations between a peasant and nature, and these relations in the process of agricultural labor represent a peculiar, complex game of the essential forces of man and nature, the art of adapting to natural and social conditions to achieve effective economic goals in practice is vitally essential (This is conveyed by the concept of “benefit”). This is impossible without the continuous work of the human spirit and mind. Putting their spirit, mind, feelings and desires, their personality into their farm in the course of practical activity, which is constantly tested, the peasant creates, processes, adapts and transforms the nature into what they consider necessary, useful, reasonable. So imaginative ideas emerge. This requires experience that cannot be replaced by “book” knowledge. Thus, the rational as well as the whole complex of the irrational – intuition, forebodings, insight, etc. are aimed at implementing the systemic efforts of a peasant in order to responsibly manage the farm.

3. Implications and discussion

It was established that a peasant forced to act independently, to manage themselves in the process of responsible farm management realizes their abilities to analyze, predict, and plan practical activities.

The peasant carries out expedient activities for the sake of a specific goal. A consciously set goal is an internal motive of human activity. The purpose of the peasant's activity is connected with an ideal image of the desired result – obtaining a high sustainable agricultural product. It is a goal that is not imposed from the outside but immanently owned by the peasant themselves. Achieving a deliberately set goal, which must be consistent with obtaining a specific result, requires the peasant to have the strength and ability to analyze, forecast, plan everything connected with their business. The ability to analyze the situation allows the peasant to think over the most appropriate ways of achieving them under the given conditions and to purposefully influence the course of events, processes, and things. The analysis covers the disclosure of not directly observable causal relationships, their significant components. The ability of a peasant to bind and generalize empirically given information uncovers their mental abilities, expanding the boundaries and capabilities of activity. So, timely detection of deviations in the development of a young sprouting of a plant, a newborn animal, of the need to improve the feed base to reduce the cost of a particular type of animal products is important for the peasant to take additional measures in order to correct the matter as soon as possible. For this purpose, a peasant often has to inspect the farm, often more than once, to make certain that the observations are reliable and to perform the analysis. “... not to spare labor for inspection and not to consider it sufficient to go around it (the farm – R. M. et al.) once,” the ancient Roman (agronomic) thinker M P Katon wrote [17].

This is confirmed by the recall of the publicist, Russian scientist of the second half of the XIXth century A N Engelhardt, who wrote about his trust in the peasant experience – the subtleties “about livestock” that he observed with the “old woman” (a peasant woman who helped him manage the household). He wrote: “The cattle will get sick – now it is up to “the old woman”. After only a week or two, it gets better. Just amazing. And the old woman does not use any medicine ... The old woman ... knows the nature of it (cattle – R. M. et al.), loves cattle, has tremendous experience, because she has been living among cows, sheep, pigs, and chickens for fifty years. The “old woman” treats cattle with clean air, sunlight, suitable food, soft bedding, attentive care and affection; studies the individuality of each cattle and accordingly puts it in one or another hygienic conditions, feeds it with appropriate food” [18].

As you can see, the old woman was quite oriented in the external conditions of keeping animals – feeding, care. Monitoring the health (and productivity) of animals is impossible without an analysis of the conditions of their feeding and keeping. The ability to search and find a solution for each individual task, to anticipate the results of one’s activity, to predict the future state of an object, process, thing is associated with conscious, purposeful, flexible human behavior. This includes issues
related to preplanting cultivation, peculiarities of processing light and medium soils, heavy soils, as well as features of the zonal structure of feed production and the specifics of adaptability of an animal’s organism to environmental conditions, etc.

The prognosis may vary. A choice that requires thinking, free will, determination is manifested in the selectivity of a person to the conditions of their existence in the environment, in correlation of the desired with the possible and real. The purposeful activity of a peasant is associated with the quality of these “prognoses”, the degree of their meaningfulness. The measure of meaningfulness, reflexivity of informational impulses of behavior paves the way for innovation (the problem of the correlation of archaics and innovations in public life, production and peasant labor is a separate issue for consideration [19]). Thus, target thinking, the power of imagination and reflection allow a peasant to rise above the circumstances of real life by changing, introducing new or improved varieties of agricultural plants, by creating more effective fertility of the soil, breeds of farm animals, etc.

The issues of forecasting an object may be associated with risk, when the results of transformations and changes may not coincide with the original project (in Western literature, the study of the effect on the health of dairy cattle wealth, productivity and management of relationships and personalities of farmers as a risk factor are paid much attention to [7]). Based on the available knowledge and experience, reflecting the unique zonal features associated with specific local environmental conditions, a peasant tries to find optimal options for implementing universal patterns and methods of farming, animal husbandry, horticulture, vegetable growing, etc. In general, it can be said that a peasant, being within a certain ecosystem, naturally “embeds” its life in the processes occurring in it (and this fully complies with the requirements of information ecology [20]).

It has been established that responsible farm management requires a peasant to be able to plan, which is impossible without comprehensive consideration of the combination of factors related to him (the farm). It is essential to take into account planning opportunities when they are limited by a number of objective and subjective reasons. Agriculture is a risky industry. Planning is designed to help a peasant reduce the degree of risk and uncertainty. It requires being prudent. The peasant is always concerned with the need to create insurance stocks. Strengthening control over the external environment creates conditions for expanding the limits of planning. So, if the managing peasant focuses in their activity on short-term tasks, interests, then we are talking about a subjective obstacle to effective planning. Urgent (short-term) cannot replace long-term. The latter determines the general direction of actions, the main goals in the functioning and development of a farm. Here, the ability to combine daily proceedings with perspective ones is important. So, let us imagine the story of Beta Wilson, a family member of an American farmer: “In January and February, men begin to plan for next year’s harvest – they order seeds, fertilizers, chemicals. In addition, in winter, as I said, there is farrowing, which requires care, since men are busy, despite the fact that the fields rest under the snow” [21]. The above judgment testifies to the importance of the ability and skill of a peasant to timely and consistently plan all stages of economic activity.

The ability of a person to build preliminary plans of their actions does not guarantee the infallibility of actions based on them. So, in their daily life, a peasant often encounters a situation where the results of the efforts undertaken do not meet their expectations and the connection with reality is lost. Of course, the reasons for the discrepancy can be found in the person themselves, since they cannot fully capture the ongoing changes in agricultural production, reflect them in their mind, but also in external circumstances which may destruct even the most thoughtful calculations.

Features of practical life directly related to the economy affect the character of the peasant’s inherent thinking and feeling in the process of managing. We refer to the information about the positive aspects of the historical type of rationality, presented in “morality based on the ruble” (the expression used in the Narodnik literature for the accounting of expenses in peasant management). The following Russian proverbs and sayings confirm the foregoing. They reflect the importance of the peasants’ accuracy in the management of their costs: “The word is faith, the bread is the measure, the money is the account”, “He lives without need, who saves money”, “Money loves account” [22].
The analysis of what has been said helps to reveal the specific peasant experience in managing a farm. The results of the study indicate that even today, the economy of a farm predetermines the requirements for the ability of a peasant to analyze, forecast, plan economic activity, and, first of all, manage themselves. The last-mentioned was, is and will remain a key factor or attribute of the peasant existence of life.

4. Conclusion
Management of a farm as part of social management is considered as a holistic system. External factors (natural-geographical and social ones) influence the internal processes occurring in it. At the same time, the whole (farm management) has an opposite effect on external conditions. The prime element of the management system is the core. Using certain methods and mechanisms of caring for a living object, a peasant is aimed at an adaptive attitude to the surrounding natural environment and awareness of themselves as a converter and responsible for what is happening in it. Responsible management of a farm, being a science and an art, requires a certain level of personal development from the peasant.

Everything considered above can be perceived by individual researchers as managerial truism – universally recognized, well-known, obvious phenomena in modern management. However, the capabilities of a peasant to be an analyst, forecaster and planner as a reflection of their mental abilities allow us to speak not that much about the human mind, experiences. They allow us to dwell upon the capabilities of a peasant to be an analyst, forecaster and planner as a reflection of their mental abilities to be a converter and responsible for what is happening in it. Responsible management of a farm, being a science and an art, requires a certain level of personal development from the peasant.

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