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Not far from Moscow: Phenomenology of suburban farming*

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Abstract. The article presents an example of case study of practices of agricultural producers working not in the rural hinterland with the statistical majority of such producers but near Moscow. The authors conducted field studies with the method of participant observation, which allowed them to see and record the overall picture of economic practices of farmers working near the megalopolis. The study showed that, as a rule, such practices are based on the specific motivation and activity of suburban farmers, who strive to create a special ‘architecture’ from their self-organization initiatives. Based on the traditions of phenomenological sociology, the authors show the reader “phenomenology of suburban farming”. The suggested analytical perspective is somewhat different from those popular in today’s research projects focusing on farming and social-economic trends and analyzing primarily organization-economic parameters of farms, the impact of state support and investment policy on increasing their competitiveness and ensuring opportunities for further development. In the field study, the authors focused on both economic and social-cultural practices of farmers working in the immediate vicinity of Moscow. This approach and step-by-step tracking of productive efforts of such farmers revealed the construction of rural-urban worlds on the example of the Moscow Region, in which suburban farmers produce not only various environmentally friendly agricultural products in demand by metropolitan residents but also a variety of recreational services. The originality of the study is determined by the fact that such cases are quite few in contemporary sociological research. In the field study of the activities of suburban farmers, the authors observed a daily regime of real involvement in economic practices, which contributed to establishing trusting contacts with respondents.

Key words: phenomenology of farming; self-organization practices of suburban farmers; economic practices of farmers; suburban and urban agriculture; rural communities; rural everyday life; lifestyle

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Economic-sociological issues related to the evolution of suburban farming have attracted interest in various fields: economists [6; 22; 23], geographers [12], planners [16; 21], land managers [19; 20; 31], agricultural production processors, retailers, and many others. Such ramified cognitive efforts indicate an understanding of the importance and prospects of processes that ensure the strengthening of food security and the growing significance of suburban agricultural institutions. However, farming is not only a certain production-technological *modus operandi* of the farmer but also a gradually updated way of human existence, i.e., a specific *modus vivendi*. The field study conducted by the authors aimed at revealing some important details and circumstances of the latter: while admitting the importance of solving problems of food security, the authors focused on the “works and days” of farmers near large urban settlements. This type of rural producers is presented by people who are aware of and consciously cultivate their atypicality in life experiences. It is not enough for them to realize only a pragmatic focus in their production efforts. Therefore, the suburban farmer has in mind and cares not only about the high quality of agricultural products (milk, cheese, marbled meat, eggs) but also about creating a wider range of services and entertainment, almost certainly in demand by city dwellers who systematically visit rural areas for a change of scenery and to satisfy their children’s recreational needs. This polyfunctionality of farming practices suggests the need for rethinking standard research focused mainly on economic and technological parameters and factors of farmers’ work. It is useful to shift the attention of researchers of agricultural sphere to the subject field that in the first approximation can be defined as “phenomenology of farming”, which implies observations and interpretations of the content, meaning and value of life experiences of people engaged in agricultural work. In this case, it is possible to understand and evaluate the prospects and social significance of the work of suburban and urban farmers and the optimal ways to develop their positive qualities. The authors tried to show possible forms of future urban and suburban farming as an important factor in the development of the food production industry, creating opportunities for active recreation for city dwellers and promoting professional orientation of the younger generation.

Unlike most today’s studies considering suburban farming as an aspect of agricultural production within the agro-industrial complex, the authors focus on phenomenology of suburban farming practices in the near Moscow Region to understand the suburban farmers’ motivation of organizational activities, responsible for modeling the development projects of their farms.

A few preliminary remarks

In the phenomenological perspective of interpreting the essence of being, E. Husserl established the “first methodical principle”: “I... cannot express or consider significant any judgment that I would not draw from the obvious,

from the experience in which the corresponding things and states of affairs are present to me as themselves” [11. P. 26]. What does this principle mean for our research project defined as “phenomenology of farming”? The most detailed sensory-organoleptic ‘biomechanics’ of the phenomenological vision was described by V.V. Bibikhin: “We want to deal simply with the thing itself, with energy, since it has already affected us. Not with a concept, not with a name, not with a definition. One of the ways of dealing with the thing itself is not to miss the so-called first impression, ‘first approach’, first glance — when we looked at the thing and the thing looked at us: an encounter with the face of the thing before we have done anything with it, before we have manipulated it, before we have begun to ‘process’ impressions, data, perceptions... The essence of phenomenology is trust in this first face of things, to what is revealed suddenly, what captivates us or rather has already caught us by surprise, before we have time to figure it out” [3. P. 16–17].

Certainly, such a cognitive orientation presupposes the choice of a special research approach — qualitative sociological methodology and, more specifically, its signature method of participant observation. This is a qualitative method of sociological and ethnographic research that allows for field studies of life activities of individuals in their ‘natural’ environment and everyday life circumstances, i.e., it is a study of social matter “from inside”. For the authors, trust in the “first face of things” is a habitual, long-mastered position, a skill they began to master a quarter of a century ago in the team of Teodor Shanin, who organized two peasant-studies expeditions in seven rural regions of Russia in the early 1990s. It was then that the authors arrived in remote villages to live for years — to record family histories of villagers and create pictures of the social-spatial rural evolution. For many months, we focused on “things” — genuine “voices from below” [27] recorded on a dictaphone. The results of this extensive work are presented in the book [18] and numerous articles published by expedition participants. The phenomenological picture of the reconstructed everyday Russian rural life turned out to be impressive, since the things of village existence were observed, as they say, “point-blank”: “the advantages of participant observation are associated with the possibility of clarifying and improving theoretical concepts in the course of direct interaction of the researcher with the reality described, which is especially significant when the researcher does not initially belong to the culture or community under study” [5. P. 16; 2; 24].

When considering the study of phenomenology of suburban farming and during our fieldwork we felt the need to clarify the theoretical concept of participant observation, since in this project we were not so much observers as direct participants in everyday farming activities. The most accurate description of our role is provided by the verbal noun ‘involvement’ which became our main working term. We lived in houses built on farm lands, which allowed us to be engaged

from morning to evening not so much in outside observation as in peasant work agreed upon with the farmer, mainly in daily care of land — on the pasture with sharpened spade blades we cut weeds, chopped down and cut with pruning shears unnecessary thorny bushes near the fence, dragged baskets with apples that had fallen from branches to the barn to feed cows and sheep (such baskets were daily brought to the farm by neighboring summer residents who bought milk and cheese from the farmer). During work breaks (usually at lunchtime and in the evening) we turned on dictaphones and asked farmers questions about their daily economic and social practices. We saw such practices with our own eyes and, due to our involvement in farm work, could assess them in our own way. We were also interested in farmers' reflections on their work and days and various event-phenomenological 'condensations'.

What is the meaning of farmer's work, including suburban ones? They realize the natural resource potential of agriculture in their own way. It is agriculture that solves basic problems of primary life support (mainly food supply). Well-known Russian proverbs "We live well — well-fed, well-shod, well-clothed", "Wherever you live, just be well-fed" succinctly indicate those foundations of the fullness of human existence that are provided by agricultural practices. Thus, in Hesiod's poem (8th century BC) *Works and Days* the multi-faceted depiction of the agrarian technological process in antiquity proves that the very essence of productive rural activities has not changed over the past three thousand years except for technologies that have been improved and new implements previously unheard of. However, there is another obvious novelty: a certain part of rural "works and days" and even bizarre nature (production of organic fruits and vegetables, flowers, semi-finished food products, freeze-dried foods, etc.) begins to move little by little and already "on an industrial scale" from fields traditionally intended for agriculture to compact suburban spaces and even to city blocks. Thereby, the question is whether the ancient life-supporting task of rural "works and days" remain reliably feasible in this situation.

It is no coincidence that the most typical and frequent issues at the center of the current research discourse on this subject area are associated with opportunities and prospects for the development of both suburban and urban agriculture. Many researchers realize the need to consider the interdependence of food strategies of cities and local communities surrounding them to achieve sustainable and high-quality nutrition [7; 13], and sustainability of such complex food systems is determined by external dynamic factors (weather or market conditions) too. Such approaches are important because they form the initial pragmatic aspect of the analysis of suburban and urban agricultural practices, since at the level of people's pressing vital interests the real, empirically observable movement towards a new type of "works and days" begins as a gradual combination of routine food technologies with new forms of production (primarily organic).

Thus, it is important to focus on the most acceptable and rational forms of suburban and urban agriculture. The products of both — conventional land-linked and innovative, built on the principles of zero farming, ‘landless’ agricultural production, located in closed premises of a horizontal or vertical type and using intensive hydro-, aero- or aquaponic ‘closed-loop’ production — are relatively ‘low-tonnage’ compared with traditional technologies of large-scale agricultural production. That is, at the final stage we see comparatively small batches of ‘outputs’ (mainly vegetables, fruits and flowers) and processed products (jams, vegetable pickles, freeze-dried berries, fruit powders, packaged honey, etc.). Judging by our field observations, such technologies are inventively and intensively developed by people committed to the ideals of organic farming and “saving nature management”. And the most typical zones for such farms are city outskirts and the nearest suburban areas from 15 to 30 km from city centers.

There are two main factors determining the choice of organic production: the opportunity to become an owner of a land plot of several hectares for housing and processing products; convenient transport links with urban consumers (as a rule, well-known regular clients) and publicly accessible urban sales locations (markets, tents, pavilions, shopping arcades, etc.). In the near Moscow Region, farmers are often well-educated city dwellers with solid work experience either in large agricultural institutions (often foreign) or in other business sectors (transport, trade, etc.). They have knowledge of economics, management and relevant legal mechanisms. For these people, the transition to the suburban agricultural sphere dramatically reshapes their life project, allowing to start from scratch and independently build their promising business [4; 15].

Case study: Works and days of the Moscow Region farmer

Vladimir, founder of the dairy farm in the village near Moscow, began the story of his transition to suburban agriculture with self-reflection about his atypicality: *“I am most likely not quite the right representative of suburban farmers that interests you, since I am a newcomer in this promising business. Everything you see — house, cowshed, chicken coop, cheese-aging chamber, pens for cows, goats, sheep and marals, milking parlor — is recent, new, not inherited, as usually happens, from the collapsed collective farms. I have only been running my farm for a short time — four years. And before that, there was an empty field here — weeds, hummocks. How did I come to this? I just wanted to become my own boss! Now I am 39 years old. And I made up my mind — bought land and built a farm. All this in four years. Now I am engaged in what can be called by the beautiful phrase ‘organic food’. Most likely so but not quite. I have developed a certain format. Look, there is a family doctor, and I am, you could say, a family milkman. I do not deliver milk to stores; I sell it to my clients in Moscow and in our village — about forty people”*.

Our farmer has serious reasons to produce and sell milk and dairy products: proximity to a megalopolis like Moscow, with “millions of hungry mouths”, saves

suburban farmers from an economic point of view (sales of finished products). And the closer to Moscow, the better the situation for farmers who produce and process milk. Vladimir started with five dairy cows, now he has ten. In addition, there is an *“immeasurable herd of goats that live on their own”*: Vladimir finds out the size of his herd when veterinarians come to vaccinate goats. During the interview, a certain general image of economic practices of this suburban farmer gradually formed: his productive actions are rational, and their internal impulses, determined by his passion for working with living beings, are associated with a revision of activity interests.

In the interview, we asked questions about prospects for the development of this type of suburban farm, for instance, how profitable and sustainable such meat and dairy businesses designed for solvent consumers are. Vladimir admitted that *“with a fairly large income, there are significant expenses”* to provide for his family, pay for his Moscow apartment and wages to hired workers (and for their patents, housing and food), and small current expenses. Therefore, he believes that the ‘nature’ of his business does not allow him to ‘really’ expand it: for instance, he cannot afford a loan, because in animal husbandry money is very long, unlike crop production, when you can take it for a new harvest and return it after the sale. Vladimir believes that the specifics of his business are stability and constancy of both income and expenses.

In our conversation with this suburban farmer, typical for the capital region, we discovered such interesting circumstances of his life as homogeneous economic structures that contribute, first, to the economic strengthening of relatively autonomous production institutions (similar to the one created by Vladimir), and, second, to the emergence of a new network of social-economic ties that allow not only to recognize such farming as a complementary, mutually reinforcing community but also to build a rural-recreational and partly tourist-gastronomic world. Certainly, this specificity is typical for regions with dense populations due to the gravitational field of the capital, since consumer desires of its residents are wide and diverse: *“I have an established circle of clients and don’t really need any help. But we, farmers and especially breeders, communicate with each other all the time. There are some interesting guys here, they keep a herd of beautiful horses and have a stud farm. They feel the needs of city dwellers and breed purebred horses to organize the rental of pony horses for the Moscow public with children. They also have a cozy wooden café and often organize holidays, weddings, corporate events, etc. These guys buy a lot of my rare cheeses and meat delicacies (we successfully make sausages, prepare various large-piece semi-finished products for grills and barbecues). We communicate with them and are friends. I really like working with them in terms of demand: they come once a week, buy goods for forty thousand rubles, and thank God for that. They are not far from me, about a kilometer. How did we meet? They came, tried cheese, sausage, and now I can’t imagine my farm without them”*.

Vladimir's farming initiatives are varied: he sells hay for horses to his neighboring farmers, two brothers, who also "work with potatoes"; their vegetable stores are located 500 meters from his farm and in the district center, and in the winter, Vladimir cleans snow around these storage facilities with his tractor. *"In return, these farmers give us potatoes from the sorting — defective and wrong ones — to feed my cows. They are happy that they don't have to load, take and throw all this away, and I am happy to have something to feed my cattle with"*. Vladimir believes that in farming, nothing will work out without mutual assistance.

This network exchange and sales story had an important development in terms of trade and economy. For productive suburban farms located in the zone of influence of large cities, organization-technological schemes and conditions for delivering large batches of products to chain stores are of particular concern. Vladimir's neighbors usually delivered large batches of common variety of potato to chain stores at 10 rubles per kg. But he suggested that they start growing purple potatoes, which could be delivered at 100 rubles per kg. The brothers objected: *"How much of this potato will you sell? Well, God willing, a hundred tons. But we have seven thousand tons of potatoes in storage"*. At the same time, the idea of improving the commercial quality of products stuck with the brothers. They decided that their sorters were expensive, so if they hired cheaper ones — rural women — they could grow baby potatoes that are more expensive than regular ones but cheaper than purple ones. *"Local women are literally ready to hang themselves when they sort baby potatoes, because they are a little bigger than a quail egg, but restaurants buy them well. The problem is that the brothers don't sell potatoes directly — intermediaries deliver them to restaurants, so the brothers get not 10 but only 30 rubles per kg"*. Vladimir believes that growing potatoes is an "interesting and good business" for the farmer, but selling the finished product is very problematic: once the brothers ordered 40 tons of baby potatoes, *"sorted them out and sent to Moscow. But restaurants refused to take them due to being not orange-yellow enough when deep-fried. The brothers couldn't find anything else to do but give me these potatoes for next to nothing. Well, my cows were happy — they ate 40 tons of small high-quality potatoes with pleasure. But for the brothers, it was a real tragic night! Let's count: 40 tons multiplied by 30 rubles — a million. I think the problem wasn't that potato wasn't attractive enough when fried. Restaurateurs most likely found the same potatoes but for 25 rubles. And that's all!"*.

During the interview, Vladimir mentioned the most acute problem of interaction between farmers and the capital's trade system; his professional opinions and assessments of the situation can become a basis for taking important management measures. He believes that *"Moscow chain markets can be capricious... They come, look and see as if ideal potatoes, but they start touching and cutting them to find defects. They say that the temperature is wrong, etc. As a result — a return.*

When the chains do not want to buy, they find a reason, and the supplier, when he cannot send quality products, sends all sorts of cheap rubbish. Trade follows the path of this idiocy. I am very glad that I am in no way interacting with the chains. I am not interested in their volumes, inconsistency and all sorts of antics. My path is 'family milkman', but this very milkman should be promoted much more widely to be known and familiar not only to my 40–50 regular customers but to many people”.

Vladimir as a producer of meat and dairy products has a keen sense of the suburban organic food market situation and understands the vital need to build an appropriate information and media space. Suburban farmers have tried three times to create an online service (mobile app) with advertising. They even managed to create a good mobile app “To the Market”, but, unfortunately, failed to promote it. Vladimir believes that such promotion turned out to be a difficult matter for farmers. Today he promotes his products only on social network Odnoklassniki, but in the future plans to use other apps, for instance, to post “*all sorts of factual little things*”. To do this, it is enough to take a camera and walk around the farm, filming “*everything in a row: here are cows, here are goats, here are rams, here is a pig eating, here are guinea fowl grazing, here is cheese ripening... People are crazy about this. I filmed all this and posted it online. And I even posted it on Odnoklassniki, which, as my son tells me, was created especially for old people*”. Each such video got tens of thousands of likes immediately, which became decisive for the choice of such a media resource that would combine simplicity and efficiency and continue the positive experience of “To the Market” app in terms of informing consumers about his products (quality, price, geolocation), but this information should be supplemented with videos demonstrating production cycles, so that “*a person takes his phone, looks, — oh, cool! — puts a like, and all this instantly flies to other consumers; thus, word of mouth advertising works for you*”. Then all this begins to work automatically: if a person is interested in farming stories, then, driving past such locations, he thinks: “*Yes, it would be interesting to look and, perhaps, buy cottage cheese or potatoes*”; he searches in this network resource where to buy potatoes in this region and is immediately given several possible locations on his way.

Vladimir believes that one of the most important tasks for suburban farmers is advertising, for which it is necessary to use all opportunities to the maximum, even post videos advertising farm products on social networks, since people often communicate there to exchange interesting information. In addition, such an information resource would be free for producers and “*will help to exclude the notorious reseller*”. Vladimir’s experience of working at a large city business company in a management position allows him to creatively develop a network app and realistically assess its pros and cons. When considering the direct delivery of farm products to the consumer, he argues that “*it is important to assess how convenient the delivery is for the producer. Let’s say it is convenient*

for me, because I don't live on the farm all the time, I live in the city, and I can deliver a few orders on the way... But if the person lives in the village, how convenient is it for him? We need another app that would allow the farmer collect orders and write to all customers the convenient time for delivery". According to Vladimir, people spend a lot of time on social networks, so it makes sense for farmers to create websites to promote their farms and products. He gave the following example: his nephew visited his farm last year, walked around it and filmed everything in sight, then posted short stories on social networks; as a result, buyers began to come to the farm based on this "video tip", and sales increased sharply. But then this effect somewhat faded away, and now he wants to promote his products in a similar way.

When considering phenomenology of suburban farming practices, one cannot miss the business consciousness based on the rich production experience of this Moscow Region farmer. His stories about the scale and details of his entrepreneurial practices together with his advice on possibilities of developing agribusiness can be useful for beginning producers in areas not far from Moscow. In general, Vladimir evaluates his agricultural experience positively, since he had startup capital — 1.5 million rubles as a grant for a beginning farmer, which allowed him to "promote his activities". At the same time, he believes that without initial capital, it is difficult to start a farming project but possible. Vladimir admits that it is *"somewhat easier and more profitable for farmers to work near the capital than on its distant approaches, for example, in Orenburg, Saratov, Volgograd, Samara and other localities"*. But even there, despite all difficulties, farmers find opportunities and run successful farms, because their main goal is not primitive earning of money but search for their interest and creative, non-trivial approaches based on the regional natural resources. The above-mentioned localities have magnificent natural lands, developed city markets, stores and restaurants and high demand for farm products. Vladimir believes that to promote suburban farms in other regions, a large startup capital is not needed, since you can start practically for nothing, and the main thing is to start but not to rush. Vladimir once started transport business and even earned "some money", but this business did not work out for him, and he decided to go into dairy farming: *"At first, I thought that with milk and cheese, it would probably be more difficult for me, I would have to quit. But now I don't want to quit anymore, because everything suits me here. However strange it may sound, today I do not focus on profitability but expand the range of finished products. Muscovites need various high-quality products, they come for milk and cheese and ask if I have chicken eggs — I get chickens, ask about quail eggs — I get quails"*.

One of the questions in our research was about prospects for developing farms in areas located near megalopolises, which are neither purely rural nor purely urban. Vladimir admitted: *"I thought about it a lot. After all, if you think about the long term, it is obvious that farmers are not quite ready to provide for daily needs*

of all Moscow. We simply cannot do it physically. Therefore, I see the prospects for my farm in the development of a related area such as agritourism... To be honest, I do not want to enlarge my current production". The farmer sees possible options for future business strategies in related industries, while maintaining farming as a basic activity. However, Vladimir argues that it is practically impossible to simultaneously develop both production and agritourism, since the latter would constantly distract him from farming. Therefore, Vladimir considers transferring the agritourism management functions to a special person: *"I want to find such a person now, but so that he is not a stranger to this farm... My daughter is ten years old now, she is still small, but soon she will grow up, maybe she will take up agritourism... where you need to talk to people, show them and explain... I can do this, but if I do it myself, production will stop. And tourists always want not only to look at animals or production but also to buy fresh produce. And its quality depends on how lovingly you produce it... These are my prospects".*

These are our main impressions in the mode of participant observation of the economic practices of a suburban farmer, currently focused on dairy and poultry production. When studying different regional cases of suburban agriculture in the areas near megalopolises, two not quite ordinary moments attract attention and encourage further analysis. First, a rather exotic "menu" of agricultural actions that suburban farmers perform and plan for the near future, being "very inventive". This quality is largely determined by such farmers' non-standard (in relation to their current occupations) education. Thus, Vladimir studied to be an electric power engineer for industrial enterprises and only later received a zootechnical education. These unexpected and very significant circumstances most likely determine that additional broader worldview which enables suburban farmers to react quickly and accurately to transforming fabric of events, including the dynamically changing demands of urban consumers. The peculiar, obviously incomplete parallelism of their basic education with their current farming and nature management activities helps them to 'fantasize', when implementing original projects within their current and future occupations.

Second, the very tone and semantic mood of interviews with this mature, independent entrepreneur creates a persistent impression that literally before our eyes a new narrative is formed and goes through the stage of persuasiveness — its focus and manner differs from the well-known stories from sociological publications [28; 29; 30], i.e., from narratives of the "first call/wave" farmers, who started on the ruins of Soviet collective farms and were concerned only with standard indicators of field productivity and yields. This, at first glance, ephemeral 'stylistic' circumstances were noted by our informants from the Moscow Region, which proves their keen observation and heightened social-cultural intuition. Thus, Vladimir *"divides farmers into two groups. The first are farmers from the*

1990s — they do not want and do not know how to talk, do not let anyone in, always complain and are unhappy with everything. They do not really want to develop. And the second are city dwellers, various office workers or someone like them, who moved from the city or somewhere else to the village and took up farming. They are more active, strive to advance everywhere, talk and write on the Internet the most, creative inventors. I am probably one of those”.

What are features of such a new (or, more precisely, updated in terms of the oral peasant stories recorded during Shanin’s field expeditions in the early 1990s [9]) farmers’ narrative? What kind of life world can be seen in the detailed stories of today’s suburban farmers? The shortest answer will be ‘a discourse of passionarity’. Farmers’ interviews are filled with excitement and inspiration proving their passionarity which, according to L.N. Gumilev, “is a characterological dominant; an irresistible internal desire (conscious or, more often, unconscious) for activity aimed at achieving some goal” [10. P. 48]. During the interviews, Vladimir several times returned to the description of his production-farming mood: *“I find it interesting to keep cows. I always say that animals are more grateful creatures than people... Now I can get in my car and go, do some business on the side or rest... My brother stays on the farm... If he is not there, I know that my two assistants will take care of my business. But who will direct them? Who will teach them? Who will pay them? That’s the problem! That’s why I can’t leave for a long time. Can I go on vacation? Of course, I can! But I am not free. This is not serfdom — my legs and hands are tied by business, but I am free inside due to doing what I love. And there is nothing better than when your hobby brings you some money, let it be small. And not so much money as a meaning to existence”.*

These are some vivid examples showing the life mood of near-capital farmers. When reading/listening attentively to stories of suburban farmers recorded in the immediate vicinity of Moscow, one can see that most characteristics of their routine works and days were not designed in advance but somehow appeared — arbitrarily, organically and most often suddenly. The forms and circumstances of this type of management arise in the endless, active and passionate movement for “capturing things, spaces and times”. These are the features of suburban agricultural production located in the “gravitational field” of the capital and focused on the consumer needs of its residents. The very emergence of such farming institutions is determined not so much by considerations of vital/economic necessity (as in economic practices of ‘peripheral’ farmers who appeared in the economic space on the ruins of collective and state farms) as by awareness/feeling of an exciting opportunity to realize one’s existential project, the principles of which had been internally maturing in the interweaving of life’s changes and suddenly acquired real spatial and material form. This conclusion is proven by the fact that representatives of this farming group, as a rule, have specialized knowledge that allows them to build a worthy and profitable urban career. However, *statu nascendi* of their farming aspirations and economic practices are

not ambitions, career pragmatism or a desire to earn money but rather “a vague attraction of a soul thirsting for something” (A. Pushkin).

Moreover, such farming institutions are predominantly located in the suburbs, which is not accidental — the neighboring city ensures that the system of social-economic relations is maintained in a functionally uninterrupted mode for vital (financial, economic, social-cultural, educational, technological, etc.) impulses and connections, which allows actors of this system not to leave the field of innovation for a minute, to quickly respond to market conditions and to predict the dynamics of consumer demands. This is why suburban farmers’ narratives are so impressive (full of passionarity) that literally captivate and emotionally seduce both professional researchers and random situational interlocutors (buyers, visitors, agritourists). Perhaps, this attitude is the main thing instrumentally-practically inherited by today’s suburban farmers from difficult but truly life-giving and self-sufficient life experiences of the root Russian peasantry [27]. It turns out that social time as a “space of human development” (K. Marx) has its own cyclic way: features of the genuine peasant world are seen through the current farming concerns to ensure the self-organizing renewal of rural living space. Therefore, the “metaphysics of suburban farming” can become a fruitful subject field for rural sociology.

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Недалеко от Москвы: феноменология пригородного фермерства*

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Аннотация. Статья содержит попытку анализа и осмысления практик сельскохозяйственных производителей, работающих не в сельской российской глубинке, где размещено их статистическое большинство, а вблизи Москвы. Полевое исследование в режиме включенного наблюдения позволило авторам увидеть и зафиксировать совокупную картину хозяйственных практик фермеров, работающих неподалеку от мегаполиса. Исследование показало, что, как правило, такие практики основаны на специфической мотивационно-деятельностной энергетике пригородных фермеров, позволяющей выстраивать из своих самоорганизационных инициатив особую «архитектуру». Опиралось на традиции феноменологической социологии, авторы предприняли попытку увидеть и осмыслить то, что можно назвать «феноменологией пригородных фермерства». Этот ракурс рассмотрения несколько отличается от популярных в современных научно-исследовательских акциях, посвященных изучению фермерства, социально-экономических трендов, нацеленных, в первую очередь, на анализ организационно-экономических параметров таких хозяйств, влияния государственной поддержки и инвестиционной политики на повышение их конкурентоспособности, обеспечивающей возможности дальнейшего развития. В процессе исследования авторы сфокусировали свое внимание прежде всего на хозяйственных, а также социокультурных практиках фермеров, работающих в ближайших окрестностях Москвы. Такой подход к изучению и поэтапному отслеживанию производительных усилий таких фермеров, позволил исследователям зафиксировать глубинные процессы создания и конструирования сельско-городских миров на примере Подмосковья, в которых пригородные фермеры производят не только различную востребованную столичными жителями экологичную сельскохозяйственную продукцию, но и разнообразные услуги рекреационного характера. Оригинальность исследования обусловлена тем, что подобного рода социологические кейсы довольно немногочисленны в современных социологических практиках. В ходе изучения деятельности пригородных фермеров в полевых условиях исследователями ежедневно соблюдался режим реальной включенности в хозяйственные практики респондентов, что способствовало возникновению обстоятельных и вполне доверительных контактов с ними.

Ключевые слова: феноменология фермерства; практики самоорганизации пригородных фермеров; хозяйственные практики фермеров; пригородное и городское сельское хозяйство; сельские сообщества; сельская повседневность; образ жизни

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