Main Ideas and Methods of Social Agronomy (Part 1)[1]

A.V. Chayanov

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The book by Alexander Chayanov *Main Ideas and Methods of Social Agronomy* is one of his key interdisciplinary works written and published at the beginning of the October Revolution and the Civil War. In this work, the economist Chayanov is a social philosopher considering the rural evolution as determined not only by the market and the state but mainly by the will and knowledge of rural households that can be led to the sustainable rural development by the organized public mind (a kind of a synonymous for civil society). Its most important social institution in the rural sphere is social agronomy. Chayanov emphasizes that social agronomy is one of the youngest social institutions. It appeared in the late 19th century in Europe and North America and in three decades turned into an influential movement uniting agrarian scientists, agrarian activists and a huge number of peasants striving for agricultural knowledge for more productive and cultural development of their households.

In this book, Chayanov is not only a social philosopher but also a social activist and organizer, teacher and psychologist. The book is based on his seminar, 'Social Agronomy and Agricultural Cooperation', which incorporated many years of personal communication with peasants, agronomists and agrarian scientists about dissemination and application of agrarian knowledge by peasants.

We publish the first five chapters of the book about the tasks and methods of social-agronomic work, its program and organization. For the contemporary reader, this publication is not only of historical interest. Chayanov's ideas are still relevant for the effective interaction of professional agrarians with the rural population, peasants and farmers in the organization of agricultural knowledge, agricultural cooperatives and agricultural consulting.

Keywords: social agronomy, agricultural evolution, peasants, state, agrarian reforms, agrarian knowledge, agricultural cooperation

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Foreword

Today our homeland faces an agrarian reform exceptional in its scale and depth. According to the unanimous opinion of Russian agrarian thought, this reform cannot be limited to the new foundations of land relations in our villages and should aim instead toward the development of the productive forces of our agriculture.

Social agronomy is one of the most important ways to solve this task, which, despite great difficulties, hastens the publication of this book. It is based on the author's notes compiled for the seminar, 'Social Agronomy and Agricultural Cooperation', held at the Peter's Academy since 1913. Despite using extensive literature, the author considers it necessary to mention that he obtained most data from personal conversations with direct participants of social-agronomic work — V.A. Vladimirsky, K.A. Matseevich, A.N. Minin, A.P. Levitsky, V.I. Teitel, M.E. Shaternikov, M.N. Vonzblein, N.I. Kostrov, K.K. Dyssky, A.V. Shalin, I.V. Matveev, E.M. Sharygin and other fellow workers to whom he expresses his deep gratitude.

The author considers it his duty to express special thanks to his dear teacher, Aleksei Fedorovich Fortunatov, who directed his work for many years.

The publishing partnership's difficult conditions forced us to shorten the text significantly, omit the descriptive-illustrative part, and remove two chapters — 'Social Measures for Cattle Breeding' and 'Training the Agronomist'.

Gorbovo village, summer of 1917

Chapter 1. The tasks of social-agronomic work

Within economic policy, social agronomy is perhaps the youngest institution not yet fully developed. Although customs policy, land policy, transport policy, taxation, and other areas have extensive experience because of many-centuries of development, (which has been summarized and analyzed by a number of prominent researchers), our sector of economic policy has been nearly unaffected by theoretical analysis. Only in the last decade has it begun to systematize its experience.

Social agronomy was born in the last decade of the 19th century. In a short time it managed to become the largest social phenomenon and attracted thousands of agronomists in all countries of the cultural world. Three decades of their social-agronomic work have already created an extensive experience, which unfortunately remains scattered across local agronomic organizations. It has been collected and discussed to a very limited extent at various agronomic congresses and in articles.

In the early 20th century, there were first attempts at theoretical generalization, and the works of A.I. Chuprov, A.F. Fortunatov, D.N. Pryanishnikov, V.A. Vladimirsky, K.A. Matseevich, Paul de Wuyst, A. Bizzozzero and some others laid the first theoretical foundations of social-agronomic work. The first attempts to generalize and systematize local experience allow the identification, at least in general terms, of the main tasks and methods of social agronomy.

First, we have to define the very term 'social agronomy' and its place within other institutions of economic policy. In the most general form, social agronomy can be defined as a system of social measures aimed at the evolution of the country's agriculture towards most rational forms (in terms of time and place).

However, this definition is too general and cannot satisfy us with regard to the measures of customs policy, land policy, taxation and other forms of economic policy, which affect the evolution of agriculture and, thus, also correspond to this general definition. To narrow and deepen it, we need to define the very evolution of agriculture, at least in the most general terms.

We know that the agricultural production of all countries consists of many individual enterprises run by their owners' will. Peasants combine elements of production into a particular production system according to their own understanding and desire. Simple observations and numerous statistical studies show that for the areas with similar historical, natural, and economic conditions, these methods of combining production factors are quite the same and therefore present several similar types.

A deeper analysis shows that the historically evolving, average, type of production system emerges and becomes sustainable because it is the most adapted to the conditions of the given place and time. However, such production systems do not remain unchanged; they undergo radical transformations and restructuring as the general conditions of their existence change.

The most powerful factor affecting production systems is the increase in population density. However, changes in market conditions and technological rationalization are of great importance too. Certainly, there is nothing in agriculture like the industrial revolution that was determined by the steam engine. Nevertheless, separators, chemical fertilizers, tractors, and harvesters significantly restructured agricultural production.

Unfortunately, the question of the forms and mechanisms of the agricultural evolution have not been sufficiently studied theoretically. This book aims to answer the questions about the evolutionary process, at least in the most general terms. What is the mechanism of the agricultural evolution, i.e., how does one average type of production system turn into another average type under changing conditions? To what extent is this spontaneous restructuring of agricultural production controlled by the public, and what is the quantitative

effect of this impact? Both questions have been poorly studied, and we can outline only the direction of their study.

According to the typical answer to the first question, the transition from one production system to another under changing conditions is spontaneous. Let us try to define the term in this case. As we have already mentioned, agricultural production in all countries consists of individual enterprises. Their heads combine elements of production into a system, which they consider the most profitable and which, due to the same conditions, brings all economies to one organizational type.

However, this does not mean that all economies of a homogeneous region are identical in their organizational structure and stay in constant organizational rest. The personality of the peasant, his creative energy, the features of the location of individual economies, and the quality of the land make individual economies constantly move away from the average type. We can find that such massive deviations are determined by the inquisitiveness of the human mind and that all households in an organizational perspective are a kinetic state of constant attempts, searches, and creativity.

The worst economic stagnation has not stopped such searches. This has been proven by numerous manifestations of the peasant economic creativity as collected by V.V. in his book *Progressive Trends in Peasant Economy*. The book describes the Russian village of sad memory in the 1870s and 1880s.

Quite often, deviations are unsuccessful and make peasants return to the average historical type. However, there are lucky seekers who introduce and keep new production forms that attract followers. This is a kind of natural selection of economic forms, which only partly resembles natural selection in the animal kingdom. The most successful forms that are most suitable for the existing conditions survive, whereas the rest are carried away into oblivion.

These constant organizational revivals and quick deaths of unsuccessful forms are a spontaneous, creative principle. Without participation of the organized public mind, this principle inevitably leads the individual economy to the average organizational type as the most rational under the given conditions. A great example of this social power is the production system of migrants on virgin territories.

Sometimes in Siberia, there are new settlers from the Volyn Province, Kharkov steppes, Kostroma forests, and the black earth of the Kursk province. The resettled families keep the production skills of their homeland and, in the first years, try to apply them in the new place. A long series of failures and creative attempts eventually brings the natives of Volyn, Kharkiv, Kostroma, and Kursk to a new average type of production organization as the most appropriate for new conditions. After one or two decades, only minor details of the former production system remind them of the abandoned homeland.

If economic conditions do not change, the average type of enterprise and farm creatively fluctuates without fundamental changes around the objectively best forms. The situation changes when some condition of economic life undergoes a major modification and the previous, average, organizational type ceases to be the best possible one. The economies that are creatively deviating towards better forms secure these forms for themselves. Their success fosters imitations and slowly but surely makes other economies give up the old organizational forms in favor of the new ones. Thus, in a few decades, masters of the country will spontaneously find a new, average, organizational type that is the most appropriate to the new conditions around which their creative searches fluctuate.

This is the most general scheme of agricultural evolution. In this process, there is no socially organized will, no public consciousness, no commander, and no plan. It is almost as spontaneous as the natural selection of species in the animal kingdom.

Now we can consider the second questions: how can the organized public mind influence the described spontaneous process of agricultural evolution, and what are the forms of this influence? The public mind has two ways to influence the spontaneous evolution of agriculture. 1) It can change the economic conditions and allow the dark, spontaneous process to adapt organizational forms of the economy to the new, economic system. This mode of action has been consecrated by centuries of state practices. The state took control of agricultural evolution many times by changing the price system with customs rates, by destroying the power of space with improved means of transportation, by encouraging some production groups with tax rates, credit and tariff policies, and by authoritatively interfering in agricultural development with new land laws. Nobody doubts the power of this form of influence; it was and will always be a powerful instrument in the hands of the public mind.

2) On the other hand, it can influence agricultural evolution by affecting the will and mind of peasants, by directing their creative searches towards forms they consider rational, by preventing them from false paths of creative searching, by supporting successful undertakings by its authority, and by accelerating and rationalizing the process of evolution. Such an introduction of rationality into a spontaneous process is the essence of social agronomy.

Thus, the public mind faces two tasks: (a) A most in-depth analysis of the natural and economic conditions to identify technical and organizational forms that are most rationally adapted to them. Agronomic science, experimental institutions, and economic research are to solve this task. (b) Because agronomic thought can identify the required technical methods and organizational forms, it has to influence agricultural evolution and direct it towards the identified forms.

We can specify these tasks in the following three points. Social agronomy has to (1) introduce improved methods of farming and cat-

tle breeding; (2) change the economies' organizational plan towards greater compliance with the current conditions of the country's economic reality; and (3) organize the local population into unions and groups which, on the one hand, provide the smallest economy with all the advantages of the largest economy by cooperative generalization of individual aspects, and, on the other hand, take on consolidation and further deepening of new economic principles.

Thus, having identified the tasks of social-agronomic work, we should emphasize that they are not as important for social agronomy as methods for solving them.

Chapter 2. Methods of the social-agronomic work

If we admit that the task of social agronomy is to accelerate and rationalize the spontaneous evolution of agriculture towards greater compliance with changing conditions, then representatives of social agronomy can be called organizers of the ongoing agricultural reform. However, the word 'organizer' is not quite applicable to the term 'spontaneous process' and, thus, has an unusual meaning.

Let us consider a private economy with thousands of *desiatinas* of land, which unites hundreds of agricultural workers, uses outdated methods, and needs radical reorganization and organizational reform. The agronomist-organizer assigned to implement this reform studies both the economy and local conditions to develop new rational plans for organizing the economy and the transition from the old production system to the new one according to both the economy and local conditions. Then, by force of his will, the agronomist-organizer sets in motion capital from the economy and numerous land workers without taking their desires into consideration or even asking their opinions. By the force of his will and without considering the understanding and will of the reform participants, the agronomist-organizer implements a reform plan by combining production elements of the economy into a new system. The term 'agronomist-organizer' is usually associated with the type of activities described above.

The organizational activities of social agronomy consist of this type of action. Social agronomy considers the reform participants not as dumb beasts but as independent peasants who organize and run their economies by their own will and mind. Only they can manage their economies, and nobody has the right to order them anything.

Therefore, we have to admit that social agronomy does not run any economies, and it cannot implement any programs by its own will and desire. Its methods are limited to reviving the creative initiative of working people by influencing their minds and will and making this initiative the most rational one. In other words, the representative of social agronomy is more a social worker than a technical one. His activities are focused on people, their minds, will, conscious-

ness, and relationships rather than on fields, livestock, and household equipment.

If social agronomy wants to create a new agriculture, it has to create a new human culture and a new people's consciousness, so that this new human culture will create a new agriculture. Social agronomy as an institution is aimed at social activities, and this social nature of activities is the most important and essential distinguishing feature of social agronomy.

One may ask whether such an influence on evolving economies is the only right and possible one. Perhaps the public mind would be more successful if the organizational reform of agriculture were similar to the organizational work in the private economy. There it consists of adopting special laws that foster the restructuring of farms and training special agronomic administrators with ample strong powers. The Empress Catherine, Frederick the Great, and other representatives of enlightened absolutism introduced potatoes with cannons and executions. However, we believe that such a task is beyond the powers of the public mind, even with the full power of the state.

The activities of the peasant are so local in nature and so much determined by the features of the cultivated patch of land that no external will can run this economy more or less intensively. We can say that the art of the peasant is his ability to use particulars. Only the peasant who has studied his economy for many years in practice can successfully run it and especially reform it. Therefore, the idea of replacing the creative work and intuition of the peasant with the organized public mind is hardly realizable, even by Laplace's 'universal mind'.

Even if this idea were feasible and the society had enough creative organizing forces to completely replace the will and thoughts of the peasant, such an unconsciously adopted reform would not be deep and sustainable. Moreover, wishing to take the place of all local peasants and manage production, the existing public-state bodies would not have sufficient financial means to solve this task. The reform would be too expensive compared to the usual methods of social-agronomic work.

Thus, we can argue that social agronomy should not replace national economic forces but rather should play the role of an enzyme that boosts them and directs their work. Social agronomy deals with a large number of 'managing people' who have skills and ideas about agriculture, to whom nothing can be ordered and who do everything based on their own free will and their own initiative.

We need to somehow draw the attention of peasants to the possibility of changing their usual working methods. We need to replace the old ideas of the local population with new ones, awaken this population to activity, and give it an emotional impulse by verbal and written persuasion. We need to do so by examples and visual evidence to convince them of the advantages and greater profitability of the new

techniques over the previously practiced ones. Without such an impulse, no evidence would be proof, all propaganda would turn into a curious story, and social agronomy would lose its meaning.

Agronomic workers have numerous means of influencing the mind and will of the population. Places for oral propaganda include conversations at peasant gatherings, in taverns, on market squares, at lectures with visual demonstrations, and short courses for the most active peasants. Wall posters vividly promoting the basic agronomic truths, popular brochures, leaflets, and local popular agricultural journals-newspapers use the power of the printed word. Agricultural exhibitions and demonstrations of the improved machinery at work, experiments on the peasants' fields, demonstrative feeding of livestock, machine rental offices, machines promoted for testing and the whole demonstration economies provide social agronomy with the persuasiveness of good examples.

Selecting the most active and conscious peasants from the local population — 'Sidorovs and Karpovs who want to improve their economy', organizing independent peasant groups from them, awakening local public life in the very depths of the village and teaching peasants the universal skills of social work — this is the field for the organizational art of social agronomy. If we add to this the organization of agricultural warehouses that supply the population with agricultural machinery, seeds, and fertilizers, the opening of breeding and seed-cleaning stations, consultations for individual economies, and other similar measures that play a special role in the social-agronomic work, we will outline its scope of activities. This scope is extensive in form and possible content. Therefore, agronomic thought has developed some guiding ideas that help find one's bearing in this scope and systematically organize social-agronomic work.

Chapter 3. The program of social-agronomic work

Social agronomy aims to influence the mass, spontaneous process of the agricultural evolution. Therefore it should use mass means, e.g., all rural population should be the object of its influence, and all its measures should affect all peasants and not only individual Sidors and Ivans.

Certainly, agronomic workers always deal with individuals, but social agronomy should consider individual economies not in their specificity but as representatives of the national economy. Therefore, when identifying the initial goals of its propaganda, social agronomy should focus on those aspects of the economy that are common to all peasants in the region. As a rule, the social-agronomic program identifies two or three pressing economic needs that are easy to meet with a deep, visual effort to solve the problems.

Such a focus and certainty of the program are of particular importance considering the low cultural level of the rural population in the countries with widely developed, social-agricultural work. Almost everywhere, before promoting agrarian reform, social agronomy had to promote itself and often conduct general cultural work. Therefore, the social-agronomic work has to be organized in such a way that it makes the brightest, most sensible, and strongest impression possible on individual minds and has a strong, mass impact on peasant psychology.

The pioneers of social agronomy were destined to stir up the sluggish minds of the inert peasantry and inspire peasants with the very possibility of new ideas. This is why in Russia, Italy, and Belgium these pioneers started with common and clear issues that affect and interest everyone. The success of one such case in the village of Elizavetino quickly became known, interesting, and understandable in the village of Sudislovo and many other villages.

According to this intensive model, first social-agronomic programs consisted of elementary, almost obvious, technical reforms. If the wooden plough rules in the *uyezd*, then the program contains a paragraph about the widespread use of plows; if the *uyezd* suffers from insect-pests, then the program introduces measures to fight them; if in the *uyezd* there is an extremely abnormal ratio of grain and forage areas, then the focus is on grass growing. In the same way, programs introduce bare fallow, fall-plowing, and so on.

According to the program, for years the pioneer agronomist destroys winter cutworm, introduces grass growing, and promotes bare fallow. His practice is limited to this; he is not interested in other details of the economy. Moreover, he cannot be interested in them in order not to disrupt the implementation of his main program. It is hardly worth mentioning how important and responsible the proper implementation of the main program is.

There can be neither general provisions nor standards, because in each region we must proceed from hundreds of particulars that cannot be foreseen by general considerations. Therefore, we will not be mistaken if we say that the most important task of social agronomy is the correct diagnosis of local needs and defects in the agricultural system. Certainly, methods and promoted techniques of the social-agronomic work are so elementary that their implementation does not cause great difficulties. However, it is important to direct this work correctly and to plan all measures according to the results of the scientific analysis of local conditions.

Another equally important task is to compare the forces and means of social agronomy with the tasks set in its program. As a rule, material and human resources are so limited that we have to ensure that the work gives the maximum social effect per unit of effort and means, i.e., the work is the most socially profitable.

These are the first steps in the general scheme of the social-agronomic work. We should note that its inherent limitation — a focus on

two or three paragraphs of the main program — does not mean a refusal to reform other aspects of the peasant economy, which is a single whole. In other words, if the reform affects its foundations, the reform determined by the creative initiative will easily affect other aspects of the economy.

Because of social-agronomic work development, the elementary tasks of the main program are gradually solved. After a few years of hard work in the thickness of village life, agronomy will become a part of the peasant economy. The practice raises a number of often unpredicted questions, and the population becomes accustomed to the activities of agronomic assistance. There are new tasks, which make us deepen our agronomy, and life itself often provides us with new fields of work.

Previously the program of social agronomy considered only those needs that were to be torn out of the context of regional economies. But today we return to this context and individualize our work so that it focuses on smaller areas and even groups of economies. According to such intensification of social-agronomic work, the very structure of social agronomy changes — the amount of work per unit of area significantly increases, the number of agronomic workers and amount of funds spent also increase, and there is a significant differentiation of work.

Russia passed this turning point in the first decade of this century, which resulted in the transition from the *uyezd* type of agronomy to the district one. In *uyezd* agronomy, one agronomist served the territory of the whole *uyezd*, whereas in district agronomy, the *uyezd* was divided into several small districts (two to three *volosts*), and their small area permitted the quite intensive use of the agronomist's efforts. Intensification of work significantly changed its character. The *uyezd*-agronomy work was not difficult and consisted of two to three usually clear and well developed paragraphs of the program.

This does not apply to the work of the local agronomist. When the program increased its content, it lost its general character. When the agronomist became district and plunged into the real economic life of specific economies, for the first time he faced a production organism in all its specificity. For the first time he not only could but also had to understand a private-economy position. He began to evaluate net and gross profitability and their importance for the general organizational plan of the economy; he began to consider economization, use of the labor of people and animals, and the ordering of the money economy. For the first time he carefully analyzed the organizational plan of the peasant economy and began to think about its radical reorganization.

District agronomy keeps elements of the program in the interest of regularity. However, the new district program generalized a smaller set of economies, which made it much more complex and diverse. As the social-agronomic work deepened, it lost more and more elements

of the program's nature. A typical example of this is the Belgian social agronomy before the German invasion.

Today, as a result of twenty-five years of agronomic organization efforts, Belgian farmers use rational methods in their fields and stables. The whole country is covered by a network of local communities that emerged from the thickness of the rural population. They aim to further improve the country's agriculture. The agronomist's role lost its initial features described above and gradually became quite different. Today the Belgian agronomist is no longer a propagandist of new ideas who strives to gain people's trust and convince them of the need to improve technologies. Trust was gained long ago; agronomy as a science was recognized long ago; the agronomist does not need to go to the people, but the people come to him.

Thus, we see that not only was the goal of the primary period achieved, but all three tasks set in the first chapter were solved. The social agronomist has increasingly turning into a case advisor, organizer of social agricultural life, observer and researcher of new ways.

In general, this is the peculiar nature of the new institution of economic policy, the main features of which are its temporariness and constant changes.

To conclude, it is necessary to consider one social question that is still of concern to agronomic workers: which layers of our peasantry is social agronomy to serve? Should it advocate to the whole peasantry or should it serve only a group of peasant economies in the most conducive position for agronomic progress? In other words, the question is what is the ultimate social goal of social agronomy — to help the local economy or to help the local population?

The most extreme supporters of the former, South-Russian agronomists, argue that, for the agronomist 'there is no population, there is only agriculture'. Their opponents, agronomists of the north, object that this is fair for individual members of the agronomic organization. But, as a whole, first comes the population and only then agriculture as one of the most important aspects of this population life. This contradiction has determined differences in social-agronomic work.

In recent years, the idea of a 'differential program' has become widespread. It claims that each group of the socially stratified peasantry has its own path to economic progress. This idea poses very difficult organizational questions about the fate of poor economies. It does not allow leaving to their own devices those economies that still do not understand the form of their economic progress.

Chapter 4. Developing an agronomic program

No branch of the national economy is more dependent on local time-space conditions in its techniques and organizational basis than agriculture. Sometimes, a barely noticeable topography or a railway

station fundamentally changes the organizational foundations of agricultural enterprises.

Therefore, general considerations and standards cannot determine the programs for the activities of social agronomy that aim to heal the ills of this branch of the national economy and organize agricultural production on a new basis. When developing an agronomic plan for the Voronezh or Chernihiv Province, one cannot rely on the social-agronomic program developed for the Moscow Province. Local workers need to consider local conditions creatively in their agronomic consciousness. They need to develop a program of activities each of which is determined by a deep and detailed analysis of the local economy.

In this creative work, careful studies are the most important element for the correct diagnosis of agricultural needs and a prerequisite for success. Social agronomy can work confidently only when based on such research results. Otherwise its activities would be misguided, and its success would be random.

On which elements of local life should social-agronomic research focus to gain necessary awareness? Let us identify them in a number of points.

I. First, social agronomy should study in detail the activities of the local area, as well as the borders of this area, the location of rivers, hills, and settlements to easily navigate in the spatial dimension of any observed phenomena.

II. To localize the object of our study in space, we need to localize it in time. To do so, we need to identify the main lines of the historical development of the region and its settlements and the most important stages of its economic development. Only after creating this historical perspective will we fully understand the phenomena of current life and the temporal stages of its agricultural evolution.

III. After localizing the object of our study in space and time, we can start a more detailed analysis. We have to begin with a natural-historical study of the region: its geological past, rock outcroppings, soils, topography, and orography, climatological and geo-botanical data and, finally, pests common in the area. The natural-historical study results in a museum that consists of an herbarium of local flora, mineralogical and soil collections, summary tables, diagrams, cartograms, etc., which we will consider in more detail in the chapter on agronomic equipment.

IV. After a study of the natural conditions of the region, we can proceed to a study of the local, agricultural technologies. We should surely start with experimental fields and plots and different collective experiments in the area of an agronomist's activities and surrounding territories. Despite the young age of Russian experimental work, it has managed to accumulate extensive, agricultural-cultural experience. However, it exceeds all reports. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for every worker of social agronomy to study the work of these observatories of agricultural life through personal and repeated visits.

V. Even a comprehensive study of experimental fields and their results will not provide a complete picture of the local agricultural technologies, which makes us pay special attention to the experience of local peasants. The easiest way to study this experience is to visit local, large economies — state, *zemstvo,* or private — because their agricultural experience is the most systematized and studied. However, social agronomy working in the thick of peasant economies should focus on their centuries-old experience. It is very difficult to study because it is often insufficiently considered by the population. It has the form of custom or uncritically accepted tradition, but it is very valuable for agronomy because of its local origin.

Unfortunately, our agronomists are often mesmerized by "school" agronomy and sometimes fail to consider this peasant experience with due respect. This is a big mistake, because, for ages, technologies of the peasant economy have been selected purely spontaneously for the local conditions and have often turned out to be ideal for them. We can confidently say that any new technology can be mastered successfully only if social agronomy considers it through the local, peasant experience.

Therefore, no matter how difficult the study of the peasant agronomic experience is, it must be studied by observing individual techniques and how they are combined and by analyzing their agronomic essence. It must be studied by logically linking actions that are traditionally connected in the peasant mind, so that the peasant economy provides us with a whole system of extremely valuable agronomic knowledge. The study of the evolution of peasant, technical methods and the analysis of the causal dependence of this evolution on economic and technological factors are particularly instructive.

VI. Thus, we can summarize the results of natural-historical and agronomic studies of a region in a normal, agricultural calendar that would provide us with a picture of a usual agricultural year.

VII. After a study of farming and cattle-breeding technologies and their natural-historical basis, we should proceed to a study of managing peasants. This requires, first of all, an analysis of the ethnographic-demographic composition of the population. A study of the people living in the region, their beliefs, customs, legal and family traditions, and folklore gradually opens the everyday environment of the agricultural production process that interests us and inevitably affects the organization of the economy. The study of the age and gender composition and migrations together with labor forces and consumer units, and, finally, the study of the sanitary conditions and cultural level of the population provide us with a general basic understanding of the object of the future agronomic impact.

VIII. We have to consider in much more detail the economic mode of life in the region. We have to identify the need for material goods, study the nature of the consumer budget, and explain its sources in general terms. It seems absolutely necessary to study in detail the

existing types of the organization of the economy to learn the combination of production elements in all types of labor and capitalist economies, to calculate the costs of various goods production, the composition of the economies' capitals and forms of their turnover, depreciation rates, profitability, and so on. In other words, we have to describe clearly the existing agricultural enterprises in a private-economic perspective.

IX. After the study of the agricultural production in the region in a private-economic perspective, we have to consider those social-economic relations that are based on the production process. When studying land relations, we have to consider the statistics and evolution of land ownership and land use to identify the foundations of the existing forms of community and household ownership, the economic nature of land rent, types of land mobilization, strip holdings of land, etc.

We should conduct the same detailed analysis of labor relations in the region, its seasonal and local crafts, the processes of differentiation in peasant economies or their leveling-off, capitalization and other evolutionary processes. It is unnecessary to emphasize that the social-economic relations mentioned above should be considered in an evolutionary perspective. We have to pay special attention to the trends that the economic evolution currently implies and to its factors.

X. It is especially important to focus on a detailed analysis of market relations. We have to study the development of monetary elements in the peasant budget in the region of social-agronomic work; we must consider the local market organization and trace how agricultural products alienated by local economies get to a wider market and how local economies get the purchased products that they consume. The study of all market conditions is absolutely necessary for organizing agricultural progress, because its opportunities and paths are determined primarily by the market.

XI. Within market research, it is important to study the local cooperative movement by focusing on the organization and internal order of cooperative life. At the same time, it is necessary to pay particular attention to the importance of cooperation in the economic life of the region. This requires, on the one hand, studying the relationships of the cooperative economy with member households and, on the other hand, the role of cooperation in local commodity and monetary markets.

XII. Other forms of local-community work should not be ignored: public education, public sanitation, all activities of the state, and *zemstvo* and public organizations in economic life. It goes without saying that exceptional attention should be paid to social agronomy and its history.

XIII. Finally, we should make an inventory and study the composition of all cultural strata of the rural population in the region. Like any social work, social agronomy relies on people and can influence agriculture only through people. Therefore, social agronomy has to

register and establish close ties with all those living forces in the region who can become pioneers of a new culture. Outstanding peasants, students of agricultural and cooperative courses, leaders of local cooperatives, and rural intellectuals are the first and most important actors of the agronomic influence and major allies of social agronomy. They should be registered, and their possibilities should be used fully. The organization of social ties in the area of the agronomic work is one of its most complex and crucial tasks.

This organization is an outline of the elements that have to be considered when developing the agronomic work programs. One might say that a detailed and comprehensive study of them requires many years of hard work, numerous scientific institutions, and completely back-breaking social agronomy. Although this is true, we do not propose to put all research work on the shoulders of the agronomic organization. In many cases, it can use the work of statistical offices, soil and geo-botanical expeditions, and the reports of meteorological stations and experimental fields. However, a considerable part of the research is to be conducted only by the agronomic organization. All or nearly all social-agronomic organizations do perform all the tasks mentioned above, because otherwise social-agronomic activities are unthinkable.

Although some data can be found in literature about the above-discussed issues, the remaining data must to be collected through the personal research and observations of social-agronomic workers, especially data to diagnose the local agricultural needs and find ways to meet them.

Unfortunately, our social agronomy has not yet developed a methodology of this diagnostic, and the very nature of agronomic work does not suggest any prescriptions or standards. The only thing that we can describe here is a general outline of the stages through which agronomic thought must pass to develop a program of activities.

The first task of this analytical work is to reveal the discrepancies between the local conditions of economic life and the existing organizational forms of peasant economies. Then, by studying the existing market conditions, taking into account the available and possible productive forces of economies, and analyzing the forms and trends of their development, we have been able to identify both the content and direction of the progressive evolution of the local economy.

Without such a projection, any agricultural production is unthinkable; moreover, without predicting a further course for the natural evolution of agriculture, we cannot develop its reform. This work is to provide at least a schematic definition of those organizational forms that represent a kind of economic ideal. After creating such ‘ideal’ organizational plans, we have to develop forms for their technical implementation in the given soil and climatic conditions.

Having set a goal, we have to develop forms very carefully for the transition from the existing system to the intended ideal. The neces-

sary organic, gradual, and painless restructuring of economies and funding have to be thought out especially carefully and deeply.

Thus, we have fully outlined the reform that economies of the region under study should implement. Let us consider an illustrative example — one of the Moscow-region *uyezds* in a three-field, flax area. The gradually expanding density of the population has made the three-field economy expand cultivated land by plowing forage land. At the same time, the excess labor force and budget have gradually developed a monetary and labor-intensive flax crop on spring-sown fields at the expense of oats and barley. The reduction of the forage reserve and destruction of the spring straw stocks have undermined the basis of the peasant fodder production and forced peasants to significantly reduce cattle breeding, which has harmed field crop cultivation because it lost the necessary manure fertilizer. All this resulted in economic collapse, and flax that exhausted the soil is gradually reducing its yields.

Market conditions allow the development of flax cultivation and require its economic efficiency. On the other hand, the proximity of Moscow allows the development of dairy production and other forms of productive cattle breeding unknown to the local population in its commercial form. Even the shallowest analysis of the situation proves the need for grass cultivation, which, on the one hand, would compensate for the exhausting effect of flax and strengthen its position in crop rotation. On the other hand, it would provide the necessary forage basis for productive cattle breeding, which requires an improved breed of livestock and the introduction of dairy *artels* and control unions. Dairy factories would provide the economy with skim milk just as the local production of linseed oil provides it with cake. Together, skim milk and linseed cake allow the fattening of calves or pigs.

This is how an organizational ideal is created: flax cultivation is based on proper fodder grass cultivation; grass cultivation is the basis for linseed-oil production; skim milk and linseed cake determine the development of swine breeding; sales of flax and linseed-oil production can be combined with some other aspects of production. It goes without saying that this 'ideal' can be achieved gradually by the peasant economy by developing grass cultivation and, on this basis, implementing the rest of the reform.

When striving to achieve what is desired, it is necessary to not be carried away by technical effects. This is quite understandable for the agronomist who is passionate about his art, because results that are technically effective often turn out to be of low-profit. For instance, it would be a mistake for northern Russia to strive to increase meat-dairy breeds in order to evolve towards breeding dairy cattle.

After developing a plan of economic reform in detail, we have to begin taking those agronomic measures that support the reform, accelerate, and guide it. The first step is to develop an agronomic propaganda program. Based on the data about the peasant economy and

the directions we set for its progressive evolution, we have to identify those elements in the organizational plan of the peasant economy from which its reorganization would start and also the crucial elements for applying the power of agronomic influence.

From the previous chapters, we know that this program has to be laconic. It has to consist of only those elements that, first, allow the meeting of the general needs of the entire region, and, second, ensure the quickest and most powerful economic-social effect.

Paragraphs of the program are to be completely technically specified. We should not only promote grass cultivation but also set the recommended crop rotation, the composition of grass mixtures, and the methods of tillage and sowing. In the paragraph about plows, we have to name the promoted companies and brands according to the soil and other features of the economy and take into account the type of propulsive force. To improve the livestock production, we have to develop a detailed program for crossbreeding or breeding depending on the local livestock and economic tasks, etc.

Having set the content of the social-agronomic program, we have to develop forms of its educational implementation, i.e., to identify by what methods its paragraphs can be implemented. We need to determine in which cases we should use oral propaganda, in which cases we should use demonstrations and experiments, when training courses can be very useful, and where the help of cooperatives is especially needed. Such specification determines the whole set of necessary social-agronomic actions; without such specification we cannot proceed to designing a social-agronomic organization capable of solving all the tasks.

Chapter 5. Agronomic organization

In the previous chapters, we intentionally did not mention the words 'social agronomist' and used the term 'social agronomy' to emphasize that we talk not about individual agronomic workers of the *zemstvo*, state, or cooperative offices, but about the whole public-state institution formed by the unity of actions and the guiding will. This unity of social-agronomic actions is primarily determined by the unity of the organizational plan of the agricultural enterprise. Because it is impossible to consider any branch of agriculture separately from all others, measures for changing any branch of the economy should not be implemented without careful coordination with measures affecting other branches of this economy. Therefore, the whole institution of social agronomy rather than individual specialists has to diagnose local agricultural needs, develop programs of social-agronomic work, and control their implementation.

As we already know, forms of social-agronomic work are extremely diverse. They range from oral presentations, visual presentations

that vary from wall posters to demonstrations of machinery, to a model experiment or a whole model plot. They also include popular literature and agricultural periodicals, organizations of all kinds of *zemstvo* enterprises, participation in cooperatives, special technical consultations for peasants, and other forms. If we admit that social agronomy constantly needs tireless research as the only basis for its productive activities, then the scope of the social-agronomic actions becomes extremely large and diverse and requires a great variety of knowledge and practical skills. It is obvious that to implement all the above-mentioned measures, we need a large staff of different specialists who would organize their work on the principle of complex cooperation and more or less follow the principle of the division of labor. In other words, gathering staff for social agronomy is a serious and complex organizational challenge.

The art of the organizer of large-scale activities implies the successful achievement of three main goals.

I. It is necessary to divide a complex action into a series of elementary processes — simple to perform and accessible to the average performer.

II. It is necessary to coordinate the whole mass of individual elementary processes in time and space to ensure an overall result of their coordinated action.

III. When setting goals and dividing complex actions, it is necessary to rely strictly on the means at the disposal of the organizer and to pay special attention to the correct account of forces and abilities. On the one hand, it is unacceptable to put difficult and hard work on the shoulders of people who cannot cope because of personal qualities; on the other hand, it is economically and socially not profitable to involve qualified employees in the tasks that can be solved by less gifted and trained people.

A good illustration are usual statistical censuses; their technique has been perfectly developed in recent decades. According to the statistical tasks, one day the census institution is to talk with millions of the country's residents and ask them personally about the gender and age composition of their families, employment, literacy, etc. These data are to be calculated and studied in detail in different perspectives in the shortest possible time, which is an extremely difficult and hard task.

However, a well-developed method makes it easy to solve. The country is divided into census areas and smaller regions that are divided into census divisions — small territories administered by experienced statisticians; the census division is divided into a few dozen enumeration districts to which census takers are assigned.

Before the census day, the special staff prepares lists of villages and, for cities, lists of householders based on old data and preliminary surveys. In each enumeration district, a sufficient number of questionnaires is prepared (one per resident), in which the census ques-

tions are specified and printed together with columns for answers. The questionnaires are given to every census taker.

A few days before the census, the census taker goes around his district, informs the population about the future census, collects preliminary data and sometimes distributes census forms for self-reporting. On the census day, the census taker visits all residents, collects the completed forms or fills them in himself. All this work is monitored by the head of the enumeration district and his assistant. The collected data are checked and criticized by inspectors who pass the data to the special staff preparing questionnaires for counting. Workers in the statistical office group the questionnaires according to various criteria and then count them. The results are grouped in special tables and counted by other workers. The final results are analyzed by scientists who write and publish the census report.

Thus, we see how a complex task is divided into a number of elementary ones, how elementary actions aimed at solving elementary tasks are coordinated in time and space, and how coordination of elementary actions ensures a general complex result. Something similar should be done with any complex task, including the social-agronomic work.

When solving separate tasks given to him, every agronomic worker can devote all his attention and energy to only the technical aspects of solving tasks. However, the will of the entire social agronomy institution that guides him has to combine the individual actions of agronomic workers to ensure a unified impact on agriculture as a whole, taking into account its social-economic complexity.

When describing specific forms that allow solutions to organizational problems, first we have to emphasize that the existing types of agronomic organizations are determined not so much by the logical development of some organizational idea as by the historical evolution that depends on and adapts to a variety of temporal-spatial conditions. Therefore, in different countries and even different regions of the same country, we see various organizational types of social-agronomic work that are determined by differences in the structure of the state and society. They are also determined by the struggle of social groups and classes and, finally, by the structure of those organizations that were founders and developers of social agronomy.

Often we see pathological forms and even competing agronomic organizations that are hostile to each other. Moreover, forms of agronomic organizations are never ossified. They constantly move from one phase of evolutionary development to another and change under the pressure of changes in the content of agronomic work and even under the influence of the social-political conditions of the time.

In Russia, this evolution has already completed three stages in the development of the organizational forms of social agronomy. Those

stages are: 1) when there was one agronomist per *uyezd* — the extensive stage; 2) the district agronomy development — when intensification of agronomic work determined an increase in the number of agronomic workers in proportion to the territory and limited the area of each agronomist's activities to a relatively small one; and 3) the current period, which combines the work of district agronomists with the work of specialists in different sectors of the economy. This marks the further intensification of agronomic work. Each stage produced its own relevant organizational forms.

Our tasks do not include an ideographic description of the history of agronomic organizations. Therefore, we will focus on the study of the main organizational issues. To understand clearly the organizational features of any agronomic organization, we have to answer the following questions:

1) Of what people and bodies does the agronomic organization consist?

2) Which bodies set tasks and questions of the social-agronomic work?

3) Which bodies make decisions and, according to them, develop programs of the social-agronomic actions?

4) Which departments authorize these decisions and approve the developed measures?

5) How is the executive apparatus organized?

6) How is the unity of the social-agronomic will ensured?

7) How are accounting and control over the social-agronomic work ensured?

8) How is the system of the social-agronomic measures funded?

When using these questions to consider the existing agronomic organizations of Russia, Western Europe, and America, we first have to admit that agronomic organizations are very rarely established as free enterprises of people who unite in education societies, labor *artels* of agronomists, or special consulting agronomic bureaus for ideas or earnings. In most cases, agronomic organizations are created by the rural population, represented by the state, local self-governments, or cooperatives to meet their agricultural needs.

This fact affects the nature of agronomic organizations by creating them from two elements: first, elected representatives of the local population (*zemstvo* administrations or boards of cooperatives); and second, invited specialists-agronomists doing the work. This dualism in the organizational structure extremely complicates the issues of the governing will, initiative, control, and so on.

On the one hand, certainly, representatives of the most organized population have to play a guiding role, because this population will 'acquire' an agronomic organization to serve its needs. Therefore, it has to set tasks, lead in their development and solution according to local needs and conditions, control all works, and request reports. On the other hand, it is equally certain that the social agronomist

should not be a soulless executor of someone's orders. Slave psychology is unacceptable in the creative work of the agronomist, where sometimes enthusiastic inspiration means much more than methodological diligence.

Because of its importance, the work of social agronomy goes beyond *uyezds* and provinces. The rise of the country's agricultural life is a common civil concern, and the agronomist who dedicates his life to this great concern is the same public figure as an elected representative of the population. He certainly serves not so much the population of a certain patch of land as the task of the general, agricultural revival of his homeland.

Therefore, because councils and boards of cooperatives represent the local population, agronomists of agronomic organizations represent social agronomy. Some social agronomists even argue that the population representatives are only to set tasks and the general direction of work and to approve reports, whereas the rest — specification of tasks, development of relevant measures, their implementation and control — should be provided only by practical workers, i.e., the third element.

We do not agree with this extreme point of view and believe instead that the whole scope of work should be performed by a board consisting of representatives of both local population and the agronomic community. On issues of a general and fundamental nature, representatives of the local population should have some dominance, and on technical-organizational issues, representatives of the agronomic work should.

According to this rule, the Russian *zemstvo* agronomy developed two types of collegiate bodies governing the work of social agronomy: the economic council and the agronomic council. The former consists mainly of elected representatives of the population, is in charge of all fundamental issues of the region's economic life, and is responsible to the *zemstvo* assembly of heads of social-agronomic work and other economic activities. In contrast, the agronomic council consists mainly of representatives of the agronomic community, i.e., the third element. The agronomic council directs the work of agronomists within the domains set by the economic council and has to pre-develop all issues submitted to the economic council.

These are the bodies that represent the organized social-agronomic mind and will, directing and governing agronomic work under the supreme supervision and sanction of the population represented by the *zemstvo* assembly.

Let us now proceed to the analysis of the executive staff. When comparing Italian and Russian social agronomies, we can distinguish two types of executive staff: in Italy, the area served by the agronomic organization (*cattedra ambulanta*) is not divided, and all members of the organization serve it together, sometimes specializing in a particular sector of the economy, i.e., the division of labor is ob-

ject-oriented. In Russia, after the introduction of district agronomy, the agronomic organization is based on the principle of the territorial division of labor, and the majority of work is performed by district agronomists serving a certain small territory in all sectors of agriculture. This organizational type is based on the unity of the organizational plan of the peasant economy and on the fact that all its sectors are so closely connected that any separation is undesirable.

However, this principle does not contradict the availability of specialists who serve certain sectors of the economy: they specialize in animal husbandry, dairy husbandry, gardening and horticulture, beekeeping, flax cultivation, and cooperation. They all collaborate with district agronomists in the technical consulting of the population in different sectors of the economy and do not influence the work of district agronomists on changing the organization of economies in general. Thus, even with the assistance of technical specialists, agronomic reform and its management are entirely the duty and responsibility of district agronomists.

The object-oriented division of labor in agronomic organizations is not limited to the division of the staff into district agronomists and specialists. It goes further and introduces the position of the *uyezd* agronomist. His duties include representing the agronomic organization, bookkeeping and reports, counselling *zemstvo* administrations on agricultural issues, and supervising all-*uyezd* agronomic institutions and undertakings, such as agricultural warehouses, courses for peasants, exhibitions, etc. The duties of the district agronomist are sometimes performed in turn by all district agronomists. They are performed more often by the district agronomist of a suburban area and are significantly reduced to make his work easier. However, as a rule, the all-*uyezd* special duties are so numerous that a special person with a special assistant clerk is needed to perform them,

The special *uyezd* agronomist sometimes does not have a special position on the agronomic board. Because of his personal authority, he becomes a spiritual leader for the entire agronomic family. Sometimes he becomes the formal head of the agronomic organization and personifies its will, ensures its unity, and possesses the right to control and inspect the work of other members of the board.

Besides the already mentioned positions, the agronomic staff includes 'support personnel' who are not a part of the agronomic board and perform only executive functions. They include all kinds of agricultural headmen, master-hands, junior instructors, and so on. 'Trainees' hold an intermediate position between agronomists and support personnel. These future agronomists are mainly students who do their practical training as agronomic support staff.

This is, in short, the system of the *uyezd* social-agronomic organization practically developed by the Russian *zemstvo* agronomy <...> The *uyezd* social-agronomic organization is a complete, working organism and a part of the provincial agronomic organization. The re-

lationships of the *uyezd* organization with the provincial organization are still to be established by agronomic practice.

Uyezd zemstvos and provincial *zemstvos* are not subordinate, and the division of their work in most branches is based on cooperation that should not limit the independence, equality, and freedom of *zemstvos'* initiatives. According to the Russian agronomic congresses, the local practical work is to be done by *uyezd* agronomic organizations, whereas the provincial *zemstvo* is to unite the activities of *uyezd zemstvos*, to develop common provincial activities initiated by provincial or *uyezd zemstvos*, and to support financially the weakest *uyezd zemstvos*. Moreover, the provincial *zemstvo* can take independent social-agronomic measures that are of general importance or impossible for individual *uyezd zemstvos*: research, courses, experiments, zoo-technical measures, etc.

In its structure, the provincial agronomic organization is similar to the collegiate bodies of the *uyezd* organization. Its distinctive feature is that a significant part of the provincial agronomic council or congress and almost the entire executive staff are representatives of *uyezds* and are not in the service of the provincial *zemstvo*. Therefore, the unity of the agronomic will and its working discipline are maintained only by the authority of the provincial organization and indirectly by the financial dependence of some *uyezd zemstvos* on the provincial *zemstvo*.

This is the scheme of the extremely complex Russian agronomic organization. Because of the introduction of the *volost zemstvo*, this scheme will change significantly, but this is a matter for the future, which we have no data to predict.

To conclude our essay, we will consider one extremely important and pressing issue of agronomic development. As we have already shown, the governing will in social-agronomic work belongs to collegiate bodies, but the practical work remains individual. It is very important to find out for what cases the collegiality of decisions is absolutely necessary and for what cases the right to decide can be granted to executors.

A lack of collegiality destroys the unity of agronomic work and weakens its unanimity and strength. On the other hand, the application of a collegial form of discussions and solutions to a very wide range of everyday agronomic issues leads to 'collegiality hypertrophy', which makes us spend more time on endless meetings than on work. There are cases in which agronomists have spent more than a hundred days at meetings in a year. Certainly, this situation is undesirable. We believe that only issues of fundamental importance, guiding activities of local workers, or of a general nature are subject to collegial decisions. The unity of the agronomic will can be ensured by cooperation of *uyezd* and provincial agronomists responsible in every action to the collegiate bodies and acting on their behalf and by their authority.

Основные идеи и методы работы общественной агрономии (Часть 1)[2]

А.В. Чаянов

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Книга Александра Чаянова «Основные идеи и методы работы Общественной Агрономии», написанная и опубликованная в начале Русской революции и Гражданской войны является одним из его главных междисциплинарных социальных трудов. Здесь экономист Чаянов проявляет себя прежде всего как социальный философ, размышляющий о влиянии на стихию сельской эволюции не только рынка и государства, но прежде всего воли и знаний отдельных сельских домохозяйств, которых по пути устойчивого сельского развития может повести организованный Общественный Разум. Общественный Разум, в интерпретации Чаянова, является своеобразным синонимом гражданского общества. А важнейшим ключевым социальным институтом такого гражданского общества в сельской сфере, по мысли Чаянова, является институт Общественной Агрономии. Чаянов подчеркивает, что это один из самых молодых социальных институтов, возникший в конце XIX века в Европе и Северной Америке, который за три десятилетия своего существования во всем мире превратился во влиятельное социальное движение, объединяющее в своих рядах ученых-аграрников и агроном-активистов с огромным количеством крестьян, все больше стремящихся к усвоению аграрных знаний для более производительного и культурного развития своих домохозяйств.

В своей книге Чаянов проявляет себя не только как социальный философ, но также как социальный активист и организатор, педагог и психолог. Ведь в основу книги он положил свой учебный курс «Общественная Агрономия и Сельскохозяйственная Кооперация», вобравший в себя его многолетний личный опыт общения с крестьянами, агрономами, учеными-аграрниками по поводу распространения, усвоения, применения аграрного знания среди крестьян.

В этой публикации мы приводим первые пять глав чаяновской книги, посвященные задачам и методам общественно-агрономической работы, созданию программы общественно агрономических работ и собственно самой агрономической организации.

Для современного читателя эта публикация представляет собой не только исторический интерес, чаяновские идеи и в наше время по-прежнему остаются чрезвычайно актуальными для эффективного взаимодействия профессиональных

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аграрников с сельским населением, крестьянами и фермерами в организации школ аграрного знания, сельскохозяйственных кооперативов, институтов агроконсалтинга.

Ключевые слова: общественная агрономия, сельскохозяйственная эволюция, крестьяне, государство, аграрные реформы, аграрное знание, сельскохозяйственная кооперация