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DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET LAND MANAGEMENT

Elena Provalova (a)*, Nikolay Khvostov (b), Olga Tsapovskaya (c), Yuri Ermoshkin (d),
Oksana Khamzina (e), Victor Provalov (f)

*Corresponding author

- (a) P.A. Stolypin Ulyanovsk State Agrarian University, Boulevard Novy Venets, 1, Ulyanovsk, Russian Federation, provalova2013@yandex.ru
(b) P.A. Stolypin Ulyanovsk State Agrarian University, Boulevard Novy Venets, 1, Ulyanovsk, Russian Federation, nvchvostov@mail.ru
(c) P.A. Stolypin Ulyanovsk State Agrarian University, Boulevard Novy Venets, 1, Ulyanovsk, Russian Federation, tsapovskaja@mail.ru
(d) P.A. Stolypin Ulyanovsk State Agrarian University, Boulevard Novy Venets, 1, Ulyanovsk, Russian Federation, epmoskin@yandex.ru
(e) P.A. Stolypin Ulyanovsk State Agrarian University, Boulevard Novy Venets, 1, Ulyanovsk, Russian Federation, okh2007@mail.ru
(f) P.A. Stolypin Ulyanovsk State Agrarian University, Boulevard Novy Venets, 1, Ulyanovsk, Russian Federation, vitya.provalov@mail.ru

Abstract

Soviet land management was established being accompanied by a struggle against various bourgeois conceptions aimed at ‘confusing’ land relations, distracting land management from economic and political goals. The paper analyzes several bourgeois conceptions about land management. One of them, called the ‘legal’ theory, considered land management as a public consolidation of a title to land confirmed by a land act (now a cadastral passport). In 1917, there was a conception of one-time land management, put forward by Prof. Martynov. In his opinion, land management is a one-time act, i.e. carried out for a particular land use just once, without being subsequently reused. Socio-economic development showed that the organization of land use did not and could not remain in an unchanged, frozen state. Once criticized, the theory of one-time land management started again disguised as a ‘theory of universal land management’ that implied a constant (unchanging) form of territorial organization, i.e. land management was carried out only once in the form of a network of meridional (geometric) cells. In contrast to various theories about land management, Soviet scholars developed a scientific basis for organizing the territory of large socialist farms.

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Keywords: Land management, state-run farm, collectivization, crop rotation, collective farm



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1. Introduction

Socialist construction, scientists and the legislative framework of Russia in the 20s of the last century determined land management as a state tool to improve and legally ensure the reconstruction of existing capitalist-oriented territorial forms of land use and strengthen the nascent new forms.

2. Problem Statement

In the 1920s, scientists including B.S. Martynov, O.A. Hauke, N.P. Rudin believed that land management is an activity initiated by the state to transform land titles owned by landlords and land users; therefore, it regulates land relations alone and does not affect economic processes. The same opinion was held by other scientists like V.I. Kirkor, F.G. Nekrasov, K.N. Sazonov (as cited in Volkov, 2020).

In 1925, Professor P.N. Pershin put forward a socio-economic theory of land management. He wrote "... The concept of land management, in its essence, inevitably acquires an organizational and economic content" (as cited in Provalova et al., 2019, p.7).

3. Research Questions

In its early days, land management was closely related to a transition from political tasks implemented to construct a new socialist land system to specific territorial, organizational and economic measures to ensure efficient production. The same conditions promoted a new educational discipline Land Management and Soviet land management science as such. Some scientists attributed land management in the second half of the 30s to a technical and socio-economic event.

In 1938, the Research Institute of Territorial Organization (RITO) published some research papers that started the educational discipline Land Management and Soviet land management science in general.

Academician S.A. Udachin, the theorist of socialist land management, wrote, that land management is an integral part of social production, and its content embraces in an inseparable unity the organization of the land as a means of production, social relations (as cited in Volkov, 2020, p. 5).

4. Purpose of the Study

Socio-economic development showed that land use did not and could not remain in an unchanged, frozen state. Once criticized, the theory of one-time land management started again disguised as a 'theory of universal land management' that implied a constant (unchanging) form of territorial organization, i.e. land management is carried out only once in the form of a network of meridional (geometric) cells.

With this in view, the entire territory of the country was divided into regular square hundred-hectare meridional cells. It was proposed to form land uses from the cells, i.e. any form of organization of the territory. Unlike multiple theories about land management, Soviet scientists P.N. Pershin, S.G. Kolesnev, I.D. Shuleikin, N.V. Krasavin, N.V. Bochkov, S.A. Udachin, N.N. Burikhin, N.I. Prokuronov and others developed scientific foundations for organizing the territory of large socialist farms.

Consequently, the paper aims to analyze literary sources on the target issue and to identify strengths and weaknesses of land management being developed in the Soviet period.

5. Research Methods

The material for the paper was provided by such sources as:

- Decree On Land (2005);
- Decree On Socialization of Land of February 19, 1919;
- Statute On Socialist Land Management and Measures for Transition to Socialist Farming dated February 14, 1919;
- Land Code of the RSFSR;
- Constitution of the USSR;
- General Principles of Land Use and Land Management, approved by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the USSR in December 1928;
- Resolution of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (CPC USSR) of September 3, 1932 On Establishment of Sustainable Land Use on Collective Farms (All-Russian Central Executive Committee, 1932);
- Resolution of the CPC USSR On Issuing State Certificates for Unlimited (Perpetual) Use of Land to Agricultural Cooperatives.

6. Findings

Starting with the decree On Land, a land classification began to take shape, i.e. agricultural land (individually, collectively used or used by state enterprises and institutions, agricultural schools, etc.) and non-agricultural land (occupied by industrial enterprises, communications, cities, resorts, etc.) was allocated. All land transformations, including accounting, seizure and redistribution of agricultural land were carried out by the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, local authorities and land committees.

Peasant farms could come in household, individual, communal or cooperative types. The Statute of February 14, 1919 outlined that the peasantry had to move to large Soviet farms, communes and other forms of public land use (All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the USSR, 1919; Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, 1917).

In 1921-1922, the issues of land management and regulation of land relations were discussed at the All-Russian level:

* in December 1921 – 1st All-Russian Congress of Soviets of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, which recommended revising land legislation and establishing a code of land laws accessible to every farmer;

* in February 1922 – All-Russian Congress of Land Surveyors and Ameliorators;

* in March 1922 – All-Russian Congress of Agronomists;

* in May 1922 – 3rd session of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee adopted the Law on Labor Land Use;

* on October 30, 1922 – 4th session of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, the RSFSR Land Code, enacted on December 1, 1922, was adopted.

The RSFSR Land Code was made up of three parts.

The first part of the Code contained provisions governing labor land use and labor lease of land. It appointed land authorities, laid down the rights and obligations of peasants – land users, established the types of labor land use and procedures for land redistribution in land societies, as well as the conditions for the use of meadow and manor lands, etc.

The second part of the Code was about the legal regime of urban lands and ‘state-owned land property’ (land of state farms and state reserves).

The third part of the Code determined the content of land management, the procedure for state registration of land use, consideration of land disputes and resettlement issues.

During the formation of the new state system, the content of the Land Code of the RSFSR corresponded to the challenges facing the country: the restoration and development of agriculture through the land-economic arrangement of agricultural producers practicing a cooperative type of land use, as well as the organization of state farms and state land estates. Addressing these challenges, land management was tasked to: “streamline the current land uses and establish new ones, according to the land titles and the requirements of economic and technical feasibility.” Besides, the documents specified that all land management activities should be carried out on the sole basis and in accordance with land management projects. (Note: the exact opposite of the 1992-1993 land reform.)

The Land Code of the RSFSR applied to the entire territory of the RSFSR, including the republics of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan that were then part of the RSFSR. The code was in effect in the republics following the national-state demarcation and adoption of their land and water codes in 1929. On the territory of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the Land Code of the RSFSR was in effect until they adopted their own land codes in the 70s.

The general principles of land use and land management, adopted by the Central Executive Committee of the USSR on December 15, 1928, specified the rights of agricultural workers to land, resettlement issues in connection with the development of agriculture, the conditions for land lease, the creation of land use by state farms, the procedure for resolving land disputes, as well as measures to encourage the transition to collective forms of land use, etc.

The general principles established legal regimes for each category of land that corresponded to the economic and political significance of various methods and forms of land use. The principles fixed the legal regime of the unified state land fund and individual categories, especially agricultural land. (Constitution of the USSR, 1977).

Creating prerequisites for collectivization and encouraging collective forms of land use, the general principles primarily regulated relations for individual forms of management, allowing hired labor, land lease, etc. However, they quickly became obsolete, as soon as the collectivization of agriculture began.

Nevertheless, they nurtured land legislation and clearly expressed the principle of breaking down lands into categories, which was then fully developed in the Fundamentals of Land Legislation of the USSR and Union Republics (All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the USSR, 1928).

Subsequently, group intra-village land management became a kind of inter-farm land management, and individual intra-village land management was united under one name ‘intra-farm land management.’

A need for intra-village group land management was caused by two reasons. Firstly, a large number of peasant farms that leaned towards villages remained within villages. Secondly, villages retained

significant areas of common lands that had to be divided in order to accelerate the transition to collective forms. In addition to these reasons, there was still a need to eliminate intra-village deficiencies in land use by consolidating inter-striped land plots into large tracts.

In February 1935, the Charter of Agricultural Cooperatives approved by the CPC USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (b) cemented the use of land, both for collective farm and personal use of collective farmers. The section On Land noted that land was a public state property, assigned to cooperatives for unlimited use, i.e. was limited only to the right of use and ownership.

As stipulated by the Charter ... “All boundaries that previously divided the land plots owned by the members of the cooperative are destroyed, and all field plots are transferred into a single land mass that is in the collective use of the cooperative.” Each cooperative received from the regional executive committee a state act for perpetual use of land, which established the size and exact boundaries of the land used by the cooperative. Moreover, this land could not be reduced, but only increased – either with the free land in the state fund, or with surplus land occupied by individual farmers, so that no strip farming was allowed.

The land owned by the cooperative is divided into fields in accordance with the approved crop rotation. In the fields with crop rotation, a permanent plot was assigned to each field-crop team for the entire period of crop rotation.

On collective farms with a lot of livestock, provided that there was enough land, certain plots of nearby land could be allocated for sowing fodder crops for livestock.

Inter-village and intra-village land management were gradually replaced by inter-farm and on-farm land management. Inter-farm land management was understood as projects for forming new and improving existing land uses together with establishing boundaries on the ground, which promoted projects for on-farm land management on collective and state farms for a period equal to the period of full crop rotation.

On-farm land management projects were filled with engineering and technical content, agro-economic calculations and land management solutions requiring special knowledge and high-level land management skills.

In the early 30s, the legal regime of all categories of land was improved, except for agricultural land. In 1933, the CEC and the CPC of the USSR established that in areas where groups of interconnected industrial enterprises, cities and towns were located, construction should be based on the District Planning Schemes approved by the CPC of the USSR, while cities should be constructed and reconstructed based on planning projects approved by regional executive committees or CPCs of ASSR, union republics. This was the first time district planning had been mentioned, where land management was still to be a ‘participant’ in the projected growth of productive forces.

In 1935-1938, relying on the CPC USSR Decree On Issuing State Certificates for Unlimited (Perpetual) Use of Land to Agricultural Cooperatives, land surveyors prepared and issued state certificates for 236 thousand collective and state farms, which provided them with over 500 million hectares of land. By 1937, 93% of peasant farms were involved in collective and state farm production.

In 1936, the formation of pre-war socialist land management resulted in the provisions of the Constitution of the USSR, which enshrined land rights of state ownership. With this, the state was solving two interrelated tasks:

- * development and strengthening of state and cooperative forms of agricultural production based on productive use of all means of production;
- * assistance to agents entitled to use land in organizing rational territorial and intra-farm production, in selecting crops for crop rotations and production infrastructure to ensure productive use of the latest equipment, technologies and processes of agricultural production (Land Code of the RSFSR, 1991; USSR CPC, 1935).

By 1937, architectural and construction projects, as well as projects for the creation of suburban, sanitary protection and other zones were initiated for technical and legal actions to secure land to land users. This fostered the integration of land management, in addition to agricultural design, in the processes of sectoral design: urban planning, transport, industrial, mining, etc. In these related industries, digital and spatial metrics of land management served as initial data for making decisions on the main characteristics of objects to be established.

From that moment, land management began, which was later transformed into a comprehensive land management, an additional function of solving territorial, construction and organizational and economic measures that ensure rational and integrated development and placement of productive forces (district planning and long-term forecasts).

7. Conclusion

Generally speaking, in the pre-war period, socialist land management was successfully ‘used’ by the state as a tool for solving the following tasks:

- creation of large-scale agricultural enterprises, promoting the provisions of an objectively valid economic law: productive forces were inextricably linked with production relations;
- registration of land users as holders of rights to state property;
- land registration (land cadastre) as an element of state oversight of state property and a database for planning the national economic development (Provalova et al., 2019; Volkov, 2020).

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