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## Motivation of Participants of Student Labor Groups: A Comparative Historical Analysis (On the Materials of the Arkhangelsk Oblast)

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**Abstract.** Student labor groups are one of the few forms of social activity of young people, which, having emerged in Soviet times, not only managed to revive again, but also has a tendency of steady growth. The activities of the student groups attracted attention both in historical and social aspects. However, most of the authors addressed only a certain stage in the history of the SCB-RSG and very rarely tried to conduct a comparative analysis of the development of the student movement in the Soviet and modern periods. The works of historians and sociologists and published studies reflect different ideas about the motives of students' participation in the third labor semester. Some authors believe that the motives have not changed, while others think that they are completely different for modern students. The results of the conducted research, based on interviews, questionnaires, and analysis of the memories of veterans of the movement, show that the motives of the participants have changed slightly, since they depend primarily on the psychological characteristics of youth as a social group. At the same time, the peculiarities of society and state development in different historical periods put an imprint on the priorities and life values of youth, which is reflected in the motivation for participation in the student labor groups.

**Keywords:** *student labor groups, youth, motivation, socialization, social activity*

### Introduction

Student labor groups are one of the few forms of social activity of young people, which, having emerged in Soviet times, not only managed to revive again, but also has a tendency of steady growth. The activities of the student groups attracted attention both in historical [1, Pristupko V.A.; 2; 3; 4, Kapshuk A.Yu.; 5; 6, Shcheglova T.K.] and in social aspects [7, Semchenko A.Ya.; 8, Babaeva E.V., Ganshina G.V.; 9, Ananyeva V.A., Ereemeeva T.S.; 10, Akhmedova A.R., Koda E.A., Sterlyadeva N.A. et al.]. However, most of the authors addressed only a certain stage in the history of the SCB-RSG and very rarely tried to conduct a comparative analysis of the development of the student movement in the Soviet and modern periods [11, Khovrin A.Yu.; 12, Nikiforenko A.M., Neborsky E.V.]. This is due to the fact that for such an analysis it is necessary to preliminarily organize a search for veterans of student construction brigades (SCB), meetings and interviews with them, as well as to conduct a survey of modern participants of the student labor groups (RSG). The scientific novelty of the study conducted by the author consists in determining the motives for the participation of young people in student labor groups in different historical periods.

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The purpose of the work is to identify the common motives for the participation of young people in the student brigades in the Soviet and modern periods. The relevance of the work is determined by the importance of student brigades in the process of involving young people in the active life of the country. The sources of the research were the author's interviews with the SCB and RSG participants from the universities of Arkhangelsk, Severodvinsk and Moscow, who worked in the Arkhangelsk Oblast, as well as articles in the periodical press, published memoirs of the participants and reports of the Public Opinion Study Center based on the results of a comprehensive study conducted by the order of the regional headquarters of the Arkhangelsk Oblast youth labor groups in 2020. The research was based on the historical-comparative method and sociological concepts about the peculiarities of youth as a social group. The author considers youth as a "socio-demographic group identified on the basis of age characteristics, peculiarities of social status and socio-psychological properties determined by the above" [13, Bibik U.D., Khairullina N.G., p. 13], which are also influenced by the socio-political system and the level of culture. The social status of youth remains unchanged in all historical periods: youth is both an object and a subject of socialization. Representatives of youth as a social group strive for self-organization, formation of their own social status, and self-determination [14, Sokhadze K.G., pp. 358–359], [15, Barash R.E., Tyurina I.O., pp. 434–440].

### ***Motivation of students in the 1960s–1980s***

During interviews with veterans of the construction brigades and analysis of published memoirs, it became clear that the reasons that motivated students to join a brigade varied primarily depending on the focus of the brigade's work and the time of its existence. For example, the majority of construction brigade members of the 1960s–1970s indicated a desire to help the country, to work as a Komsomol member should, to do what was necessary for the city and the countryside, to leave a memory of themselves. M.V. Popov, a member of the construction brigade of the Arkhangelsk State Medical Institute (hereinafter — ASMI) in 1968–1969, wrote: "And we were eager to "Give the cities as keepsakes to the people"... We were young, we believed in ourselves. We were supported by ringing slogans and songs, and we tried to be sincere presenters of cities. In Savinsk we had a slogan: "Today — a bathhouse, tomorrow — communism!" [3, vol. 1, p. 77]. Another veteran of the 1972 ASMI student brigade, S.P. Glyantsev, also noted what was typical for many participants of the 1960s–1970s: "I don't remember how much I earned then. Honestly. It was just so unimportant that I forgot." [3, vol. 1, p. 282]. Many students of the Arkhangelsk Forestry Engineering Institute (hereinafter — AFEI) and the Moscow D. Mendeleev Institute of Chemical Technology (hereinafter — MCTI), who were engaged in restoration work on Solovki and Kiy Island, answered the question about their earnings in almost the same way: "We didn't go there for that."<sup>1</sup> They joined the brigades not expecting to earn money, but wishing to visit places connect-

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase is taken from a collective interview with veterans of the AFEI Solovki-69 brigade, conducted by the author on 20 May 2022.

ed with the history of the country, to take part in the restoration of historical monuments. As A.M. Sarsenov, a MCTI student, who first joined the brigade in 1968, pointed out: “I was attracted by the romanticism and the desire to get acquainted with Russian history.”<sup>2</sup> The members of the Kommunar volunteer labor brigade of the AFEI, which worked from 1979 to 1988, had a special motivation. As a rule, they transferred the money earned by the brigade at various construction sites in the Arkhangelsk Oblast to the sponsored orphanage. The members were united by pure and high aspirations: to be useful to society, to bring a bright future closer; some of them were sure that this is what student construction brigades would be like in the future<sup>3</sup>.

An important motive for joining the SCB in the 1960s and 1970s was the desire to assert oneself and perform responsible work. I.M. Vorobyov, a veteran of the AFEI student brigades of the 1960s, recalled: “I also joined the student brigade, I wanted, like many students of that time, to participate in a new, previously unknown affair, to work in my chosen specialty, to strengthen my construction skills, and to earn money” [3, vol. 1, p. 89]. S.A. Albitskiy, who worked in the AFEI Zodchiy-74 brigade, noted in his memoirs: “I had only one desire — to test myself, to pass the test of life endurance, to grow up a little earlier” [3, vol. 1, p. 339]. About 20% of SCB veterans explained their joining the brigades by the desire to spend the summer usefully and to do something interesting. In addition, Moscow students travelling to the Arkhangelsk Oblast were attracted by the opportunity to see new exotic places, as were the members from Arkhangelsk who went to the Nenets Autonomous Okrug: “It is impossible to describe the beauty of those places in summer, and we tried to see as much as possible” [3, vol. 1, p. 313].

Not the most significant at that time, but important for some students, component of brigade life was the feeling of comradesly support, a sense of brotherhood; they went to brigade in order to make new acquaintances and usefully spend time with friends. According to the memories of AFEI SCB veteran A.T. Samodov, “there were new acquaintances, new impressions, new friends” [3, vol. 1, p. 73]. S.G. Otryvanov, commander of the Stroitel-76 SCB, wrote: “And will you forget the friends with whom you learned the joy of hard work, the proud sense of camaraderie, great responsibility and wages earned by your own?” [3, v. 1, p. 289]. The members of student brigades also had financial motivation, but only the construction ones. 14% of the SCB participants noted the desire to earn money among the reasons for joining the detachment, about 2% singled out this reason as the main one. In the 1960s and 1970s, a stipend of 40–50 rubles was practically insufficient for students who lived in dormitories; relatives, if they could, sent money and food parcels, so the natural desire of students was to improve their financial situation.

In the 1980s, the attitude of students towards SCBs changed somewhat. This became especially evident in the second half of the decade, when communist ideology gradually ceased to have an effect on young people, the economic system changed, and the romance of communist labor became a thing of the past. But student romance remained. “In our SCB uniforms, we seemed to

<sup>2</sup> Memories of A.M. Sarsenov, recorded by the author on 16 December 2023. Private collection of T.S. Minaeva.

<sup>3</sup> Nechaeva O. Everyone had a case to his liking. *Nash temp*, 1984, no. 16.

ourselves to be ‘geologists-pioneers, going to conquer the remote taiga’ — this is how ASMI student A.M. Varvinskiy described himself and his comrades in 1981 [3, v. 1, p. 404]. I.F. Avdyshev, an AFEI student of 1986, went to the construction brigade because “I wanted to feel what SCB was, and I wanted some romance” [3, vol. 1, p. 492]. A.V. Brovin from the Arkhangelsk State Pedagogical Institute (hereinafter — ASPI) joined the brigade to “get in touch with history and great deeds”<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, according to the data obtained, there were only 10% of the romantically inclined members of the 1980s construction and restoration brigades. The most frequently stated reason for joining the brigade in those years was to earn money and feel financially independent for a while; at least a third of the veterans of the student brigades stated this. Completely different interests attracted student guides from the ASPI Biarmy brigade to Solovki; the earnings were small, they went to the islands to see architectural monuments, learn more about history and try themselves in professional activities. The veterans of the 1980s wrote about their reasons for participating in the group of guides: “I was captivated by the stories of course mates about the Solovetsky Islands”, “the practice of communicating with a group of listeners whose attention you are obliged to keep for several hours in a row”, “to master the skills of the profession”, “the opportunity to become familiar with Solovki”<sup>5</sup>. Those who joined the Kommunar volunteer work brigade in 1984 and students from the Moscow Engineering Physics Institute brigade who worked on the improvement of the village and restoration of the canals on Bolshoy Solovetsky Island in the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s wanted to see Solovki<sup>6</sup> [3, v. 1, p. 536]. Overall, about a third of the members of various brigade profiles noted the opportunity to see new places. Another reason that some veterans of the construction brigades wrote about (15%) was the desire to do something useful with their own hands: “spend free time usefully”, “acquire skills of working professions”, “work on restoration”<sup>7</sup> [3, v. 1, p. 403, 474].

Thus, if in the 1960s and 1970s, the desire to benefit the country and society, to contribute to its transformation, to assert oneself through the performance of responsible work were among the main motives for participating in the construction brigades, in the 1980s, material interests and the opportunity to go somewhere, get acquainted with unknown regions and learn something new came to the fore. In general, the romantic mood of the majority of participants was gradually replaced by the desire to acquire professional skills, to fulfil the assigned work conscientiously, thus earning respect and a decent salary.

### ***Motivation for joining student construction brigades in 2000–2020***

The revival of the student brigade movement began in the Arkhangelsk Oblast in 2000 on the basis of AFEI. The Komsomol as an ideological basis for youth formations no longer existed, so

<sup>4</sup> Memories of A.V. Brovin, recorded on 02 May 2022. Private collection of T.S. Minaeva.

<sup>5</sup> Memories of M.Y. Ananchenko, E.F. Lutskovskaya, V.G. Shestakov, N.M. Shulakova. Recorded in 2020. Private collection of T.S. Minaeva.

<sup>6</sup> Dolgoroborodova S. No one will do except us. *Nash temp*, 1984, no. 28.

<sup>7</sup> Memories of A.Yu. Dmitriev, O.V. Losev, V.G. Rogachev from the brigade “Atheist”. Recorded in 2022. Private collection of T.S. Minaeva.

if the organizers of the first brigade were interested in reviving traditions, then the members were primarily motivated by the need to earn extra income. For the first few years, financial motivation prevailed: “I was only thinking about where to find a part-time job for the summer” (V.A. Sikstov, 2000), “For young people, the most important aspect of this matter is probably the material one” (T. Garay, 2002) [3, v. 2, pp. 60, 69]. As the movement developed, students began to see construction brigades as more than just a way to meet their financial needs: “The school of student construction brigades means new friends, good income, and most importantly — industrial training” (A. Koposov, 2003), “A construction brigade is not just a way to earn money, but also a good school of life. In addition, teamwork helps to reveal the abilities of each student” (D. Pogozhev, 2004)<sup>8</sup>. The organizational formation of the movement on the scale of the state, federal district, and region in 2003–2004, the propaganda of RSG activities through periodicals and stories about the students’ stay in the brigades contributed to the creation of new teams not only in construction, but also in teaching, transportation, service, excursion, search, and other areas. These changes generally influenced the students’ motives for joining RSG, which is reflected in a phrase from a letter written by A. Anufriev, a member of the Medved brigade in 2010: “Each of us came here with a specific purpose! Someone wants to discover something new, someone wants to test his strength, someone just needed company, new friends, someone needed to earn money and rest, and someone just wanted to get a shock wave of new emotions and sensations that would overwhelm with a head ...” [3, v. 2, p. 188].

During a sociological study conducted in 2020, RSG participants from the Arkhangelsk Oblast filled out questionnaires where they noted the three most important points related to their desire to become a member of the brigade. The results showed that at the first stage, when students are just planning to join the brigade, their expectations are primarily related to expanding their circle of acquaintances (noted by 41.7%), employment and earnings (40.5%), and self-realization (31.9%). Slightly less important is the prospect of travelling outside the region (noted by 28.2%) and the desire to engage in socially useful work (23.6%). As they accumulate experience in participating in the brigades, students’ views and interests change. For the study, 17 parameters reflecting different types of motivation for further participation in the RSG were selected. The respondents assessed the significance of each parameter on a five-point scale, where the maximum score corresponds to the maximum significance. As a result, it was found that self-realization becomes the leading motive, the second place is occupied by the desire to be together with friends and the third — by the opportunity to engage in socially useful work and an active lifestyle (the same number of points). At the same time, additional professional training and the opportunity to earn money took 7th and 16th positions, respectively, and travelling — 6th place. It should be

<sup>8</sup> Koposov A. “Lotus”. *Nash temp*, 2003, no. 23-25, p. 2; Pogozhev D. SCB: Leto-2004. *Nash temp*, 2004, no. 26-31, p. 20.

noted that interest in an active lifestyle was characteristic of both first-year members (30.5%) and experienced participants of the movement <sup>9</sup>.

Thus, in 2000–2020, financial motivation occupied the main place among students only in the initial period of the revival of construction brigades, then it gave way to the desire to make new friends and spend time with them, as well as to get an opportunity for self-realization. The members, whose expectations from participation in the brigades were met, received not only emotions and satisfaction from social communication, but also a sense of their significance and the importance of their contribution to a socially useful cause, which contributes to both the process of socialization of young people and the growth of the popularity of the RSG movement.

It should be added that in many respects similar results were obtained in the course of sociological research conducted among Novosibirsk students to study the motives of their social activity. The leading place was occupied by motives of self-development, the significance of the activity carried out and motives of transformation of the surrounding reality [16, p. 136].

### Conclusion

In general, it can be concluded that socio-psychological features of youth, associated with its need for self-assertion, self-organization and self-expression, were and remain the main motives for participation in the student brigades at different historical stages of development of our society and state. The desire to lead an active lifestyle, see new places, and get vivid emotions are also common for both Soviet and post-Soviet times. Differences in motivation manifested themselves primarily in the prevalence of romantic sentiments and the desire to work (including free of charge) for the benefit of the whole society in the 1960s — first half of the 1980s and the increased desire to improve their own financial situation in subsequent years, which is explained by the ideological and economic features of the corresponding historical periods. Nevertheless, both in the second half of the 20th century and in the first quarter of the 21st century, student brigades contribute to the socialization of young people, their involvement in socially useful work, the formation and strengthening of an active life position of its representatives.

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