

Russian Rural Fieldsite

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Location of the fieldsite

Kalikino is a village with a population from 4,000 to 5,000, in the Lipetsk province in Southern Central Russia, at the Northern edge of the fertile black soil zone. Enterprises derived from the former collective and state farms are still the largest employers in Kalikino, but they no longer offer nearly as much work as they used to in the soviet times. Almost all the households are involved in small scale private agricultural production (partly for the market) which is a traditional part of the village economy, reflected in the layout of the streets set wide apart to give room to agricultural plots behind each house.

Nucleus of family network

The nucleus of the family network includes blood brothers and sisters, parents, cousins, their children and the children's children, and also – the living great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers. There is practically no difference between blood relations and relatives by marriage (wife, husband, genealogical relatives). There is a slightly bigger difference between first brothers (sisters) and cousins. We can say, however, that kinship relations are largely functional, and to a great extent they are determined not by the place in the kinship network, but by the quality of personal relations and economic criteria: mutual assistance, mutual support, mutual advantage, and, to a high degree, - by moral qualities and ethics of economic behavior.



Lorry and tractor.



Potato-pickers at work.

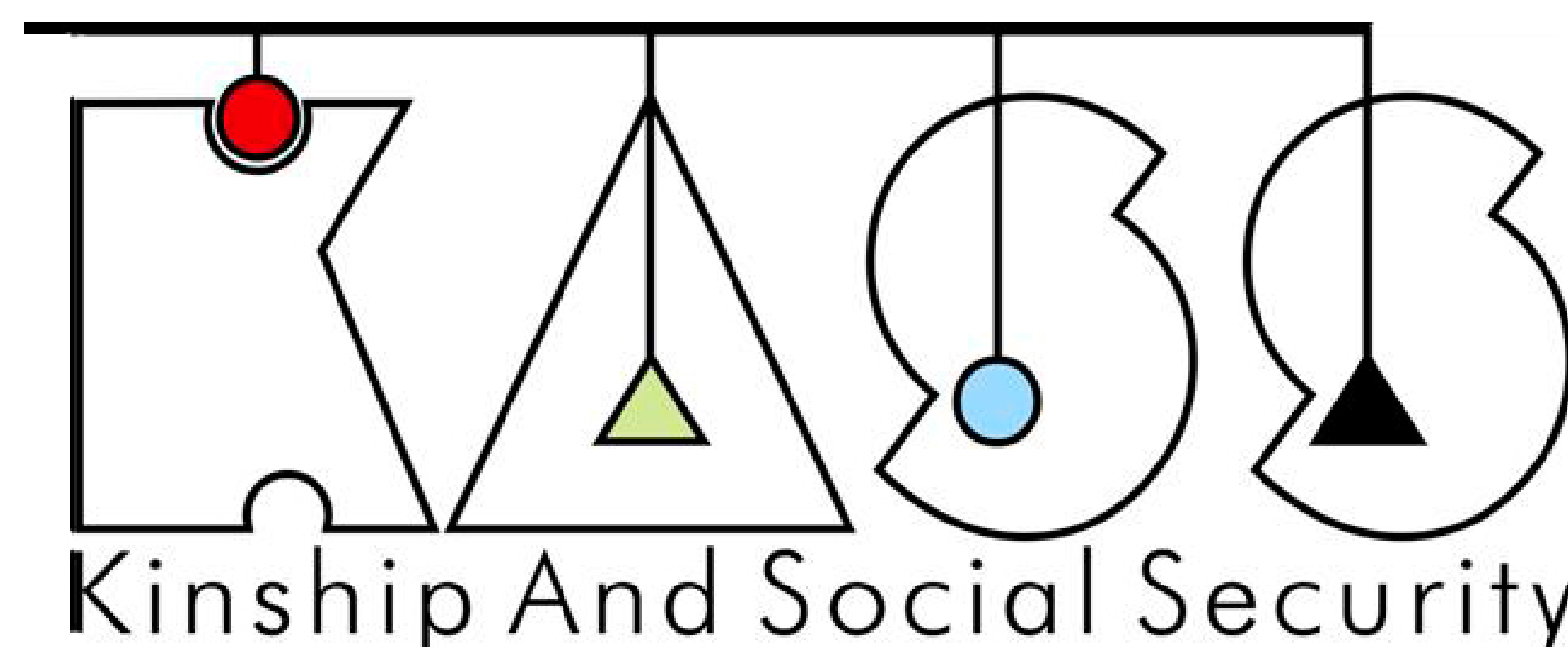


Laundry.



Organisation of assistance between kin

Speaking of a typical organization of the family assistance network and the closest relatives, we can present it in the following form: a kinship network of the closest relatives, including aged parents, children – two brothers, a sister and a cousin with children. All in all we have five families here: the parents' family, the families of the brothers, the sister's family and the cousin's family. Spring is the time to plant potatoes, to make hay. All the five families in various combinations of family members pool their efforts to plant potatoes on the first day in, say, the parents' vegetable garden, then – in the sister's vegetable garden, the first brother's and so on. Some time later the able members of these families get together to jointly mow and make hay on the same principle. One day they all together make hay for one family, then – for another and so on. The elder brother may get 2 hectares of haying meadows. In the sister's family, the husband may be seriously ill and unable to help with hay mowing. Then it would be absolutely natural to help them. The brothers, together with the parents and the cousin, would mow the hay and give part of it to the sister's family. This is quite normal and natural. Usually, it is not customary to speak of any payment or compensation on behalf of the sister's family. It is equally quite natural and ethically necessary to help the aged parents on a gratuitous basis to work the vegetable garden, look after the cattle, give them money, buy things they need, help in organizing and paying for medical treatment etc.



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