

# Transformation of the concept of rural development in the context of sustainability

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**Abstract.** The development of post-industrial society lies in the plane of conceptual transformations in the functioning of rural areas, which have additional potential opportunities that are currently unused. Their identification and development through the allocation of state support funds will allow not only to restructure social and economic processes in rural areas, but will also lead to the achievement of more strategic goals, for example, in the field of sustainable development. The system of state support for rural areas should adopt a new vector of development to overcome rural migration, poverty of these territories, socio-economic instability. At the same time, it is important to propose such a conceptual scheme of socio-economic development of rural areas, which will make it possible, through in-depth analysis, to identify negative aspects of the functioning of localities, to transform or adapt for further development, both in the direction of economic stability and within the framework of achieving the goals of environmental sustainability. The empirical part of the study involves the collection and processing of statistical data reflecting the results of the functioning of a number of rural territories of Rostov Oblast, and a selection of the most promising rural territories that are already focused on achieving sustainable development goals will be made. It should also be noted the universality that the authors will strive for in the framework of the study, as the value of the concept is that it can be applied to rural areas throughout the country.

## 1 Introduction

The uneven development of urban and rural areas has been observed for quite a long time, and it is extremely difficult to overcome it. However, the new opportunities that have come to rural areas in the conditions of current socio-economic uncertainty predetermine the need to develop such concepts for the development of rural areas that will enable them to achieve sustainable growth.

Speaking about the development of rural areas we understand the large-scale changes in the villages that are already observed at present, namely:

- development of the agro-industrial complex in the direction of finding and attracting investments for the introduction of more technological processes at existing enterprises, as well as the implementation of projects to open new agricultural companies (it is assumed

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that it is rural areas that can contribute to the achievement of food sovereignty in the entire state),

- attracting young people to the villages who want to develop these areas through the implementation of projects (this will help to overcome the problems of rural outflow),
- infrastructural development - rural areas become.

When it comes to the socio-economic development of rural areas, it is necessary to understand that the goals to achieve their sustainable growth can be divided into short-term and long-term perspectives. In the short term, it is necessary to neutralize the negative economic consequences for rural areas, overcome the outflow of personnel from these territories, develop infrastructure and increase the attractiveness of rural areas both economically and socially. Although long-term objectives may overlap with short-term ones, more emphasis should be placed on the long term to achieve sustainable development goals. This agenda highlights the significance of ecological matters, that is, the rational use of land with the necessary climate risk assessment, full employment of rural population, and diversification of economic structures. When the objectives of short-term development of rural areas are achieved, long-term goals will make it possible to make forecasts for the future and work through the issues of interterritorial interaction [1].

The analysis of the listed documents made it possible to identify key vectors for the development of rural areas and draw up the ways of their transformation, considering the need to achieve not only stable socio-economic growth, but also environmental sustainability [2].

## **2 Materials and methods**

The research will be clearly structured and thus it is possible to distinguish a number of stages in it, which are oriented towards the solution of specific tasks:

- analyzing the main legislative sources that allow assessing the format of rural transformation proposed at the state level,
- statistical analysis of data reflecting the achievement of sustainable rural development goals,
- identification of key conceptual problems that hinder the development of rural areas,
- improving the concept of rural development with the allocation of specific author's stages.

The study will use a combination of scientific and practical research methods. The authors refer to the following tools:

- in the process of practical evaluation of data - horizontal and vertical analysis, index method, calculation of average indicators, economic and mathematical modeling,
- in the research process - the method of observation, generalization of material, structuring, methods of induction and deduction.

## **3 Results**

The conceptual and methodological foundations of the socio-economic development of rural areas suggest the need for a comprehensive study that reflects the study of the legislative framework, an assessment of the current state of the rural area, and the development of a development program taking into account the identified features.

Legislative regulation is always developed and approved for the purpose of transformation in the country, but there are situations when the provisions that are approved at the level of laws do not sufficiently take into account the territorial specificity of

development or there are logical differences between legislative acts aimed at regulating similar processes.

The analysis of these legal acts is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Comparative analysis of the legal acts related to the development of rural areas

Goal of the area development	Legal act		
	Spatial development strategy	Strategy for sustainable development of rural territories	Integrated rural development plan
1. Reducing interterritorial differences (quality of economy, standard of living, social aspects, infrastructure)	+	+	+
2. Dialogue between the federal government and local authorities (rural municipalities)	+	+	
3. Development of areas that have economic potential (the potential should be discovered and developed)	+		+
4. Improving the competitiveness of the rural economy	+		
5. Encouraging increased labor mobility	+	+	+
6. Development of the income base of rural areas		+	+
7. Priority funding for rural development		+	+
8. Overcoming environmental disasters in the areas		+	

The analysis reveals key goals identified at the legislative level in terms of the development of rural areas. Most of the goals overlap, and the whole system of activities boils down to the following:

- improvement of the quality of life in rural areas,
- development of self-governance in rural areas,
- identification of the socio-economic potential of rural areas and ensuring its steady growth,
- priority funding of programs to support rural areas,
- attracting the population to villages in order to popularize rural areas [3].

It is challenging to build a concept for the development of rural areas without assessing what has already been achieved. For this purpose, we analyze the development of rural areas of the Rostov region, which is the object of research. The development of rural areas depends on both their geographic location and the number of inhabitants, so the sample for the assessment includes three areas with similar socio-economic characteristics [4].

It should be noted that the set of indicators that allow assessing the current socio-economic development of rural areas is limited, due to the fact that open data reflecting the results of the functioning of these territories are not provided, i.e. there is a problem of data

sufficiency, which also predetermines the need for the development of statistics aimed at providing data on rural development.

Table 2 shows summarized socio-economic data for the territories selected for analysis.

**Table 2.** Socio-economic data of the selected rural areas of the Rostov region

Indicator	Rural area		
	Kalitvenskoye rural settlement	Razvilnenskoye rural settlement	Ekaterinovskoye rural settlement
2021			
1. Average annual population of the rural area (permanently residing), thousand people.	1.2	5	4.1
Additional information: total rural population in the Rostov region, thousand people	1346.9		
2. Share of the average annual resident population of the area in the total rural population of the Rostov region, %	0.09	0.37	0.3
3. Number of entities (agricultural or industrial*)	2*	3*	24
4. Number of people employed	-	2820	1683

The given set of indicators was compiled based on the information from the passports of territories, along with the data from the report of the Rostov Region Territorial Department of Federal State Statistical Service – statistical yearbook “The Rostov Region in figures 2022”. It is worth mentioning that there is a problem of limited information on the socio-economic development of rural areas, which significantly complicates the process of comprehensive assessment. The statistical data of rural areas which were selected for assessing the achievement of sustainable development goals, make it possible to evaluate only a number of indicators, including the following:

- employment rate - the share of the number of inhabitants employed in the average annual resident population of the area, %. In 2021, for the Razvilnenskoye rural settlement the indicator amounts to:  $2820/5000 \cdot 100 = 56.4\%$ , and in case of the Ekaterinovskoye rural settlement it is equal to:  $1683/4100 \cdot 100 = 41\%$ . These values suggest that, in general, there is a good employment rate in the territories under study. For more detailed conclusions, it is necessary to calculate the indicator in dynamics and identify the trend of growth or decline,

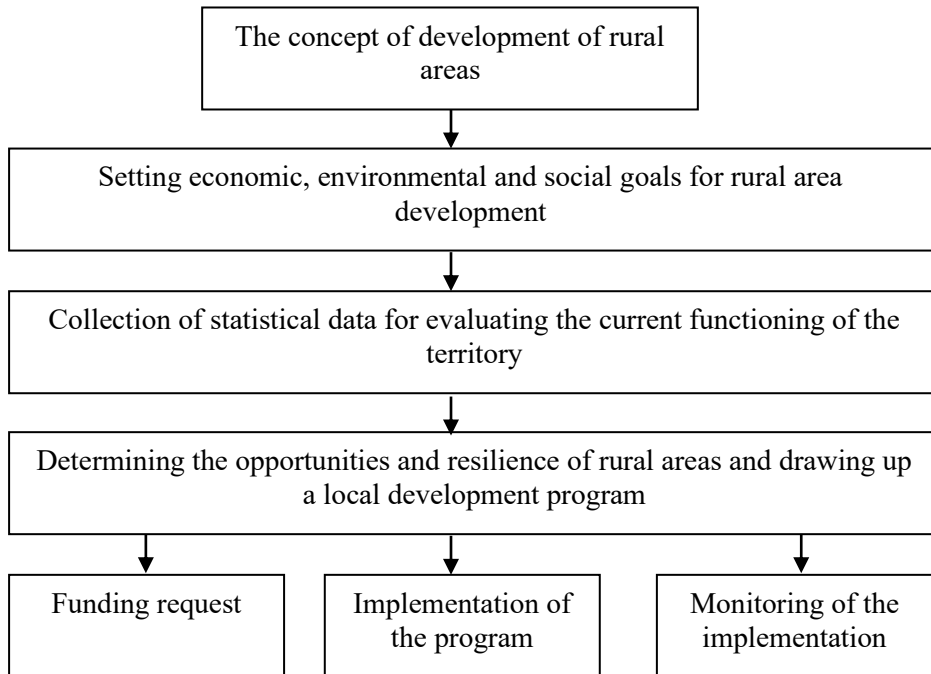
- the share of profitable businesses in the total number of entities functioning in the rural area, which cannot be assessed due to the lack of data,

- level of environmental pollution in rural areas,

- level of housing provision for inhabitants [5].

Data collection for calculating indicators is hampered due to the lack of statistical data in rural areas. Thus, building the concept for the development of rural areas must also imply the development of tools for collecting and processing rural statistics.

Let us now move on to building a conceptual framework for the development of rural areas in the context of environmental sustainability (Figure 1). Note that within the framework of this study the concept contains the main elements that differ from the existing methods of rural development assessment concretization, for example, it is proposed to conduct an assessment of the territory's resilience and on its basis further development of a strategic map of territorial transformations.



**Fig. 1.** Conceptual framework for the development of rural areas in the context of environmental sustainability.

The implementation of the presented program, if it clearly defines the indicators of assessment of the current situation of the rural area, to determine the level of potential opportunities, to understand the level of resistance, by collecting the processing of quality statistical material will allow to approve and proceed to the request and direct implementation of the program of rural development, which will lead not only to the stabilization of socio-economic development of the territory, but also to achieving the goals of sustainable development, as well as inter-territorial interaction [6].

## 4 Conclusions

Thus, the study was carried out:

- the need to improve the concept of rural development, which should take into account the achievement of not only stability of socio-economic development, but also the goals of sustainable development,
- evaluate a number of rural areas of the Rostov region and prove the lack of openness and content of statistical information to assess the results of achieving the goals of the development of territories,

- identify indicators that are relevant to calculate in order to assess the current situation of rural areas,

- develop a conceptual model for the development of rural areas, which should include a number of stages: setting tasks for the development of the territory, developing a statistical sample necessary to assess the current situation of the functioning of rural areas, assessing the potential, resilience of the territory, requesting funding and direct implementation and subsequent control of the territory development program.

The concept developed includes unique stages of assessment and can be used as a universal toolkit for various rural areas. It is based on using the integrated approach from identifying the tasks of area development to adjusting the program according to the results of assessing the current and potential capabilities of the territory.

The economic turbulence that takes place in modern economic conditions requires, in the process of developing and implementing complex programs for the development of territories, to pay attention to such an important concept as resilience, which is manifested in the achievement of sustainable development goals, a stable increase in the socio-economic indicators of the functioning of the territory. Particular attention to this concept began to be paid during the period of economic recovery in the regions, after the consequences of the global financial crisis, sanctions, and a pandemic. The villages need to return to the level of socio-economic development, which was before the negative trends, and it is the assessment of resilience that allows us to determine the ability of the territory to do this at one time or another. At the same time, the constant changes that occur in the country's economy and on the world stage do not allow simply to statically assess this indicator and predict the period of return to socio-economic indicators. That is, it can be argued that the assessment of resilience is a process of studying the adaptability of the economic system to constantly changing socio-economic conditions. Based on this assessment, it is possible to develop a strategy map and make decisions regarding the functioning of territories and the achievement of sustainable development goals.

It should be noted that achieving stability in the indicators of socio-economic development of the territory is possible only if a balance is built in the territory in the management of capital, resources, finances, investments. It is to this conceptual rule that one should strive for in the programs of territorial development of the village.

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