Rural development in the project perspective

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Abstract. The article deals with the development of rural areas in the context of political decisions, project management and psychological specificity of the Russian hinterland.

1. Russian Politics: Focus on the Russian Hinterland

In recent years, the spatial development of our country has attracted considerable interest. Russia's spatial development strategy is designed to equalize the disproportions of large agglomerations and small settlements, to ensure security and sustainable economic growth [1]. The Russian hinterland has a special role in the Strategy. Remote territories, rural settlements have significant natural, climatic, historical, and cultural resources that increase the attractiveness of the territory and can serve as sources of economic well-being [2]. Discussion of the Strategy has been ongoing since 2015, but to date it has not been approved.

Presidential Decree No. 204 of May 7, 2018 “On the National Goals and Strategic Objectives in the Development of the Russian Federation for the Period until 2024” imposes on the Government of the Russian Federation responsibility for achieving the nine national development goals of the Russian Federation for the period until 2024, in particular: (a) ensuring sustainable natural growth of the population of the Russian Federation; (b) increasing the life expectancy up to 78 years (up to 80 years by 2030); (c) ensuring sustainable growth of real incomes of citizens, as well as the growth of the level of pensions above the level of inflation; (d) halving the level of poverty in the Russian Federation; (e) improving living conditions for at least 5 million families annually; (f) accelerating the technological development of the Russian Federation (an increase in the number of organizations implementing technological innovations is up to 50 percent of their total number); (g) ensuring an accelerated introduction of digital technologies in the economy and social sphere; (h) the Russian Federation is among the five largest economies in the world, ensuring the faster economic growth in comparison with world one, while maintaining macroeconomic stability, including inflation being at a level not exceeding 4 percent; (i) creating, primarily in the manufacturing industry and the agro-industrial complex, a highly productive export-oriented sector, which is developing on the basis of modern technologies and provided with highly qualified personnel [3].

The stated goals are achieved within the framework of the implementation of 11 national projects (programs), 88 large-scale tasks are defined, covering the most important spheres of the social space of Russia: demography, healthcare, education, housing and the urban environment, ecology, safe and high-quality roads, productivity and support employment, science, digital economy, culture, small and medium entrepreneurship and support for individual entrepreneurial initiatives, international
cooperation and export. At the same time, direct or indirect references to rural settlements, remote, and sparsely populated residential areas are contained in the formulation of only five tasks: (a) completing the formation of a network of medical organizations of primary health care using a geo-information system in the field of healthcare, while taking into account the need to build medical ambulatories, medical attendants and medical assistants; (b) creating the mechanisms for the development of a comfortable urban environment, ensuring the integrated development of cities and other settlements, taking into account the quality index of the urban environment; (c) the creation (reconstruction) of cultural and leisure organizations of club type in the territories of rural settlements, the development of municipal libraries; (d) creating conditions for the demonstration of national films in cinema halls located in settlements with a population of up to 500 thousand people; (e) creating a support system for farmers and the development of rural cooperation [4]. There is no doubt that the solution of the tasks set will significantly improve the quality of life in the countryside. However, it is obvious that development priorities are mostly related to large urban settlements.

2. Project Reality and Territorial Public Self-Government: Regional Experience

The transition to project management in many industries led to an accelerated growth in the number of project offices designed to form portfolios of territorial development projects and monitor the progress of their implementation. The municipalities, which began to initiate the development of projects/project applications, did not stand aside either. Particular hopes were pinned on the bodies of territorial public self-government (TPS). However, the activity of the TPS is limited to a number of serious problems: (a) the population is not sufficiently informed and motivated, even a strong leader is faced with high inertia; (b) not enough high level of legal literacy; (c) in the budgets of municipalities, there are no funds for the development of TPS; (d) as a rule, long-term programs for the development of human settlements are not developed; (e) the TPS elected officials and members of the TPS bodies do not possess the necessary legal and financial information; (f) the practice of encouraging best practices has not been formed; (g) local self-government bodies simultaneously support TPSs and restrict their powers, fearing the generation of an alternative authority [6].

Understanding the development objectives of TPS, the Association of the Council of Municipalities of the Saratov region organized the TOC School. In 2017, a group of teachers from the Volga Region Management Institute named after P.A. Stolypin – The Branch of the Russian Academy of National Economy and Science (T. I. Chernyaeva, D.Sc., Prof.; G. G. Panikchina, Ph.D., Assoc. Prof.; Yu. A. Korsakov, Ph.D., Assoc. Prof.) was developed and implemented the Program of the project session “Organizational and Management Design in the System of Territorial Public Self-Government”. The project session was attended by representatives of TPS and LSG bodies whose partnership was necessary for the development of territories. An extended presentation of the features of the organization and the results of the project session is presented in the article “Project Practices in the System of Territorial Public Self-Government of the Saratov Region” [7].

The tasks included the “step-by-step” mastering of the technology of organizational and managerial design (analyzing the social and managerial situation; structuring the problem field and identifying key stakeholders interested in solving urgent problems; forming teams aimed at achieving the project’s targets (related to changing the situation) as their personal goals, organizational, managerial, resource and communication support of project activities).

28 participants took part in the development of projects (18 TPS representatives and 10 employees of administrations of the Saratov Region Defense Ministry). Following the session, five project applications for the following topics were submitted to public defense:

1. “Formation of a Cultural Brand of the Territory Using Information and Communication Technologies in the Village Shirokoe of the Tatischevsky District” (head: S. Yu. Andrianova, Tatischevsky MR). The goal is to develop the concept of the brand territory and promote it, which would enhance the attractiveness the village Shirokoe (to increase the participation of residents in branded and other public events by no less than 15%; the production of own products of private farms
and entrepreneurs by 20%; the flow of tourists by 10%; revenues to the budget of the municipality by 10%). The timing of the project: December 2017 - October 2018.

2. “Water in Every House” (head: Y.A. Parashchukova, Volsky MR). The goal of the project is to provide uninterrupted supply of quality drinking water to the population of the village (to repair of the water supply system in the village of Pokrovka, Volsky District), using the organizational form of social partnership. Duration of the project: November 6-30, 2017.

3. “Improving the Spring of Gremuchy in the village Mordovoye, Krasnoarmeysky MR” (head: V.A. Kaldin, TPS “Sokolovaya Gora”). The goal of the project is to equip the area around the spring (1564 sq. m) in order to make the spring a more attractive place for village residents and tourists (which would ensure participation of at least 50% of village residents in the events held at the spring, increasing the influx of visitors/tourists by 10%). Dates: November 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018.

4. “The Memory of the Heart (Arrangement of the Cemetery of a Rural Settlement)” (head: N.A. Sazhneva, TPS the village Almazovo, Pinerovskoe MO, Balashovskiy MR). Purpose: arrangement of the cemetery the village Almazovo as a component of the memorial culture through the joint efforts of citizens and the administration of the Pinerovsky MO. The project implementation period: March 1 - August 30, 2018.

5. “Family Park” (head: O. Kazakova, TPS “Natalinsky MO”, Balakovo MP). The goal of the project is the improvement of the area of 1500 square meters for the creation of a “Family Park” and the involvement of at least 50% of the population of the village Natalino for collaboration. Dates: January - December 2018.

All these projects are related to the solution of actual problems in the development of a specific territory. The strategy of their implementation was the formation of partnership institutions (coordination councils, initiative groups, project teams) ensuring the interaction of the population and local governments.

Project developers have demonstrated the ability (albeit not yet perfect) to structure targets, to provide the assigned tasks with the necessary resources. Project budgets are usually calculated taking into account an available resource, which ensures the possibility of their implementation. Almost all project ideas, despite being tied to a specific territory and conditions, have a multiplicative effect, i.e. they can be implemented in other locations, becoming an example of organizing works on landscaping, building a settlement brand, changing the image of a municipal administration.

The presented design developments in structure and content can be referred to project applications, since a number of components of a full-fledged project (for example, budget, communications, risks, performance evaluation) are reflected generally and not to the fullest extent. However, these projects could be used to attract the attention of all interested individuals and organizations (stakeholders) to the actual problem, to demonstrate the project idea and its diverse justification, and to unite the efforts of citizens and the municipal administration to achieve their goals [12].

At the same time, project developers noted a rather low level of activeness of residents, which could significantly slow down the progress of project implementation.

3. Social and Psychological Sources of Social Inertia of the Rural Population

Even a successfully developed project does not guarantee its effectiveness. Relationships and real actions of local residents are key to the success of the project in the village. There is no doubt that local social activism in reality is due to a number of features: the large number/small population of the rural community, spatial distance from the regional centers, the degree of social cohesion, solidarity, the degree of social conflict, social apathy, social negativism, social and economic status of residents, their financial capabilities, homogeneity/heterogeneity of the composition, educational level, the presence of people with higher education, the specificity of religious views and religious activity, psychological readiness to participate in social projects and other [8-11].

During the working discussions, we identified several extreme socio-psychological groups of rural residents, differing in activity parameters and resources:
1. **Well-off, active.** This group includes leaders with financial and material resources, ready to improve, change the current situation, and actively participate in the life of the village.

2. **Wealthy, inert.** Such residents have the resources, but are not ready to participate in local initiatives. Sometimes they agree with the proposals, but they usually do not get to the point.

3. **The have-nots, active.** Show activity, but do not have the resources. These are local agitators who can influence others, but with varying success.

4. **The poor, inert.** They sabotage participation in any socially useful activity.

Thus, the development of rural areas essentially depends on political decisions; readiness for partnership of authorities, territorial public self-government, local population; social activity. Joint development and implementation of projects relevant for the territory can be a platform for consent and a resource for improving the quality of life in rural areas.

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