



Managing the Sustainable Development of Municipalities in the Context of the Implementation of the SDGs

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Abstract

Sustainable development issues require comprehensive actions to achieve them – from national governments to local municipalities. There is a special need to form a comprehensive and balanced policy of sustainable socio-economic development at the municipal level. The article reveals the concept of sustainable development and key approaches to ensuring the management of the development of municipalities in Russia, taking into account the global principles of sustainable development. The hypothesis is put forward that the choice of a sustainable development strategy by municipal leaders largely depends on the economic state of the municipality, the political goals of municipal leaders-managers and the activity of the population. The research summarizes the materials of the study of the practice of municipal management in the municipality of one of the cities of the Moscow region. The current foreign experience of strategic documents developing focused on the active implementation of the principles of sustainable development is presented. This was done in order to study the “best practices” to activate the process of transition to sustainable development in Russia. The approach proposed by the authors to the development of a socio-economic development strategy is described in detail on the example of a Russian municipality – the “Stupino” urban district.

Keywords Sustainable development · Strategic planning · Municipal management · Socio-economic development

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Introduction

Issues of sustainable development have recently been at the forefront of global and national agendas due to ensuring socio-economic development of territories. Today, when most countries of the world have adopted the global Sustainable Development Goals, it is necessary to carry out comprehensive actions to implement them. Under these conditions, the contribution to the achievement of these goals is simultaneously ensured at all levels of government and territorial development – from national governments to local municipalities (Bartlett, 1994; Adams, 2019; Blewitt, 2017).

The sustainability of the socio-economic development of regions is determined by the achieved level of development of the region's economy, based on its economic potential (Fattakhov, 2019). It is necessary to maintain a constant process of expanded reproduction of the municipal economic complex, which ensures stable growth of socio-economic indicators of the development of the municipality (Khairulloev et al., 2015). Collective actions harmonize relations between economic agents based on formal and informal rules and procedures of behavior. (Kosareva, 2018; Zotov, 2019).

The following stages of the development of regions in the direction of sustainable development are highlighted:

- ensuring stabilization of development;
- achieving self-sufficiency;
- ensuring economic security;
- ensuring sufficient competitiveness;
- public participation (OECD, 2006; Mensah, 2019).

Sustainable development of the region's economy is represented as a process of dynamic capacity-building of the territory, motivation of productive forces for expanded reproduction, growth of competitiveness, investment attractiveness and, on this basis, to consistently improve the standard of living of the population while preserving resources for future generations (Menschikova, 2011). Modern urban policy is being transformed, both in the field of municipal development management and in the mechanisms of citizens' participation in this process (Friedman, 2005).

In Russia, the process of transition to sustainable development is aggravated by a high level of interregional differentiation of socio-economic development and resource potential (Zubarevich, 2010; Rossoshanskiy, 2019).

To date, a whole set of federal-level documents has been formed, providing wide opportunities for ensuring sustainable socio-economic development. This conclusion is confirmed by the results of the Voluntary National Review of the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda for the Period up to 2030 prepared in 2020 by the Analytical Center under the Government of the Russian Federation (Voluntary National Review, 2020).

The key question that we would like to raise in the report is whether it is possible to achieve the UN global agenda through an interconnected policy of local and regional development. At the same time, it is important to understand that global sustainability is mean as a set of institutional, organizational measures affecting all spheres of community life (Zubarevich, 2010; Gagarina, 2021; Nogueira, 2022).

Conceptual Framework

Cities and Sustainable Development

The problems of sustainable development of the world system are reflected in the works of outstanding scientists (Vernadsky, Meadows, Moiseev, Forrester, etc.). However, in relation to municipalities, more precisely, to cities, the number of such scientific works is very small. More often there are works devoted to the study of the stability of regional socio-economic systems to external challenges. The municipality, on the one hand, is a cauldron in which everything is cooked, but, on the other hand, it is the basis from which changes begin. All that is embedded in the concept of “municipal development” are those small steps and deeds that reflect the economic principle: “think globally, act locally.” Urban sustainability strategies typically require articulation of the problem, vision development and construction of a plan to achieve the vision (Etzion, 2018).

There is also an “urban” approach to the sustainable development of territories, which recognizes the central role of cities in achieving sustainable development (New Urban Agenda, 2016). Increasing urbanization leads to competition for resources, mainly water, food and energy. The demographic factor in the development of urban municipalities also remains important – higher rates of urbanization and economic growth lead to a decrease in the birth rate, rapid aging of the population. All this leads to increase the demand and pressure on urban areas, including the fact that young people become more demanding of the quality of the urban environment, opportunities for self-realization.

Thus, ensuring the sustainability of the development of municipalities, on the one hand, should contribute to the achievement of global goals, on the other hand, contribute to the formation of new technological structures and the transformation of the economy without prejudice to its decline and deterioration of living conditions.

The sustainability of local (urban) communities today is associated with a few factors, both economic (the level of economic development, income of the population and their purchasing power) and social and environmental nature (Ilina, 2015).

Sustainable development represents a new model that focuses on the humanization of the socio-economic life of society, ensuring effective control over the efficiency of the use of natural resource potential in the interests of the population (Easterlin, 2005; Mensah, 2019; Nogueira, 2022). The concept of sustainable development is based on balanced growth, which explicitly considers social goals – reducing the number of poor segments of the population and would give them the same importance as economic efficiency (Martin, 2012; Valentey & Federalism, 1998; Yakovets Yu & Rastvortsev, 2017).

The stages of transition to a model of sustainable development are distinguished as a process that is quite long in time:

- The initial period is determined by the need of solving current economic and social problems, improving the standard of living of the population, eliminate poverty. At the same time, reasonable environmental restrictions on economic

activity should be accompanied by the development of environmental improvement programs, primarily in ecologically disadvantaged areas.

- The second stage is characterized by the implementation of the main structural transformations in the economy, technological renewal, greening of the development process.
- The third long-term stage provides for solving the problem of harmonizing the model of economic development with nature.

Issues of Sustainable Development Management of the Municipalities in the World

The problem of harmonization current policy with priorities of sustainability remains extremely important for national governments (Fattakhov, 2019; Masuda, 2022). Given the breadth and complexity of the goals, it is necessary to involve a significant number of public and private parties in the implementation of this policy. In addition, a certain problem arises in the need to ensure proper governance structures and coordination between ministries and levels of Government (Menschikova, 2011; Okitasari, 2020).

Sustainable development itself is a collective interest, as are other common interests, such as sanitation and drinking water facilities, healthcare, education and public transport. To achieve the global goal of sustainable development, it is necessary to use a pluralistic approach, that attract so many stakeholders at different levels as it possible. Such an approach can help to form a common vision of sustainable development and find compromise solutions to achieve (Antanasijevic et al., 2017; Biermann et al., 2017).

On the one hand, sustainable development is considered as a clearly defined goal that can be measured and based on scientific data. On the other hand, there is approach according to which the fuzziness of the sustainable development goal and the role that society as a whole plays in its definition is proved. Governance can be described as the joint responsibility of representatives of the state, the market and civil society dealing with social problems.

In other words, new forms of governance are needed to solve the problems of sustainable development. We propose a triad of activities in which management is a process of solving compromise tasks and providing a vision and direction for sustainability. Management is a way of realization this vision, and monitoring provides feedback and summarizes observations to describe how the situation has arisen and may unfold in the future.

Considering foreign experience, it is worth noting that the development of strategic planning documents for municipalities focused on the active implementation of the principles of sustainable development, including compliance with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. This is currently becoming particularly relevant in a number of European states, the United States and other countries.

One example is the development of sustainable strategies in 2018 by 15 municipalities of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) in Germany. These strategies are designed

to emphasize the international consequences of local actions and the importance of global responsibility at the local level.

The project “Municipalities in the NRV for Global Sustainability” was implemented in the NRV as the most populous region of Germany with a population of about 17.7 million people. Even though this land is characterized by a high population density of 524 people per km², the territory has a very heterogeneous settlement structure. While urban structures such as the Rhine-Ruhr metropolitan region are very compact, there are several rural regions in the NRV. Thus, typical municipalities faced various demographic, economic and structural initial situations that had to be considered using methods of individual analysis and adapted process support.

The development of a local development strategy for the implementation of the 2030 agenda included the following five steps:

1. Creation of project structures within the municipality.
2. Conducting a quantitative and qualitative review of all municipal strategies, master plans, uniform global guidelines, etc., existing in various departments of the municipality.
3. Formation of priorities in the areas of socio-economic activity in accordance with global responsibility. Development of measures and indicators.
4. Development of a local sustainable development strategy and receipt of an official resolution of the Council on the agenda for the period up to 2030.
5. Support for the implementation and monitoring of the realization of the strategy.

One of the important tools for developing strategies has become the broad participation of the local population, considering the opinion of which will become part of the medium- and long-term strategy of sustainable development of the municipality and its vision of the future. This allowed municipalities to form a wide range of activities for the development of part of their daily lives and to ensure regular monitoring of the results of these activities.

When developing strategies, the mandatory task of their integration and integration into existing international and national agreements was identified. The 12 integrated municipal sustainable development strategies developed include strategic and operational goals, as well as measures contributing to the achievement of the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda. These strategies emphasize the international implications of local actions and the importance of global responsibility at the local level.

When developing strategies, municipalities were given different priorities in their content, especially against the background of relevant starting points and local problems. The developed goals contribute not only to the achievement of the 17 SDGs, but also directly to the implementation of the 169 goals of the 2030 Agenda.

The implementation of the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda at the municipal level has made it possible to ensure sustainable and integrated local development combining social, economic and environmental goals, promote more active participation in sustainable development and encourage intersectoral thinking and action within the municipality.

Tasks of Ensuring Sustainable Development in the Context of the Implementation of State Policy in Russia

Functioning and development of socio-economic systems of various hierarchical levels (from global to local (urban or rural)) is caused by a whole set of external and internal factors, the genesis of which is related to the conjuncture in the markets of goods or services, formed value chains, the quality and structure of human capital, etc.

In these conditions, the establishment of strategic priorities for the development of municipalities, mainly urban settlements, should proceed from the task of facilitating the fulfillment of state tasks at higher levels.

National projects approved and implemented in Russia are consistent with SDGs. The fundamental principles of Russia's transition to sustainable development were laid down back in 1996 in the Concept of the Transition of the Russian Federation to Sustainable Development. Sustainability as a priority for the development of socio-economic systems is laid down, for example, in such documents as the Concept of Sustainable Development of Rural Areas of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020, the Urban Planning Code of the Russian Federation.

Work on synchronizing indicators for assessing the achievement of global goals is systematically carried out at the level of relevant departments, including the Federal State Statistics Service. The logic of the strategic planning system being formed in Russia is determined by the principle of continuity of all documents being developed at the federal, regional and municipal levels.

However, it is worth noting that over the past decade, despite the attempts made by the state to ensure the implementation of the principles of sustainable development, the main problems to their implementation in Russian municipalities are: the complexity of the perception of the topic of sustainable development, lack of experience, expertise and low qualification of personnel in municipalities, short-term planning horizons (Reznichenko, 2018; Sokolova, 2021).

The paradigm of sustainable development, which presupposes a dynamic process of successive positive changes that ensure a balance of economic, social and environmental aspects, should be the basis for the formation of approaches in solving the problems of territorial entities.

The sustainable development of the economy of any territorial unit is represented as a process of dynamically increasing the potential of the territory, its productive forces for expanded reproduction, competitiveness, investment attractiveness and, on this basis, improving the standard of living of the population while preserving resources for future generations.

Considering the documents of strategic planning (strategies and programs of socio-economic development) at the regional and municipal levels, it is worth noting that the problem of sustainability is expressed while ensuring horizontal and vertical balance of indicators of the development of individual sectors of the economy and the social sphere (Budaeva & Klimanov, 2016). On the other hand, is expressed at the formation of a system of priorities and their corresponding development projects and measures aimed at ensuring the socio-ecological well-being of the population, preservation of the natural environment, rational use of land resources, development

of high-performance sectors of industry, including the transition to industry 4.0, services, digitalization of the economy and public administration.

Experience in applying the principles of sustainable development within the development of a municipal strategy (“Stupino” case)

The solution of the task of formation a sustainable development strategy of a municipality begins with determining the basic prerequisites of its current socio-economic system development and building an interconnected system of goal-setting, prioritization of projects and key economic and social activities (Leavesley Amelia, 2022; Shi et al., 2019; Wilson & Wu, 2017).

The achievement of the sustainable development goals at municipality level should be based on the organization of inter-municipal interaction, as well as on the formation and maintenance of various forms of partnership - between regional and municipal authorities, enterprises and municipal authorities, authorities and public structures.

Management system of strategy implementation is built according to targeted and phased realization of strategic projects aimed at stimulating sustainable socio-economic development and creating a comfortable environment in the municipality, including the description of organizational and institutional, investment, socially-oriented measures.

When developing a municipal strategy, the means to achieve the strategic goals, including sustainable oriented, of a municipality in terms of transition to sustainable development can be divided into social, economic and environmental policies. Thus, within the framework of achieving the main development goal, a system of several interrelated priorities of socio-economic development can be formed. At the same time, the strategic priorities should correspond to the most appropriate global sustainable development goals and are designed to provide Russia’s contribution to their achievement at the local level. In addition to determining additional budget revenues due to the development of new types of activities on the territory of the municipality, it is important to determine the resource potential for the implementation of the strategy (Menschikova, 2011; Khairullof, 2015; Sokolova, 2021).

The experience of foreign countries shows that the contribution to the achievement of sustainable development goals is made by all subjects of management of territorial units of a particular state – from regions to municipalities. So the identified strategic priorities should be coordinated with the development priorities defined in the strategy of the higher level – regional, macroregional and national.

“Stupino”: Strategy Development

To date, there are 20,303 municipalities in Russia, each of which forms its own strategic development priorities based on federal and regional guidelines. Here, the experience of developing a Strategy for the socio-economic development of the “Stupino” urban district of the Moscow Region for the period up to 2030 is very remarkable.

Until recently, the entire history of Stupino was associated with the rapid growth of enterprises belonging to the military-industrial complex, so the city was “closed”. What is a closed city? This is an administrative-territorial entity with local self-government bodies, within the boundaries of which industrial enterprises for the development, manufacture, storage and disposal of weapons of mass destruction, processing of radioactive and other materials, military and other facilities for which a special regime of safe functioning and protection of state secrets is established, including special living conditions for citizens (Fedorov, 2019). But they were cities of a new type, the basis of which were research institutes, design bureaus, pilot plants and test sites.

Research methods are system analysis, interviewing, sociological survey, SWOT analysis, factor analysis, modeling. The analysis of the combination of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the economy and social sphere development of the “Stupino” district determined a conclusion about the high level of competitiveness of the district, both at regional and national scale. Favorable geographical location and climatic conditions, steady economic growth in recent years, high investment potential, innovation-oriented economy, development of high-tech production, highly developed agro-industrial sector, a stable market for goods and services, highly qualified personnel, relatively high wages, job security, a developed social security system create the basis for competitive development of the district in the future. Unfortunately, municipal authorities in Russian cities cannot link the budget of local authorities with the SDGs. This is due to the limitation of the powers of local self-government (Cabannes, 2018; Velichko, 2020).

At the same time, the municipality is also characterized by a number of disadvantages characteristic to most of Russian municipalities related to the deterioration of municipal infrastructure facilities, the volatility of the level of budget provision, economic imbalances in the development of settlements and uneven placement of infrastructure (social, road transport, etc.), the development of small business (Iontsev & Magomedova, 2015; Polterovich, 2016). Although, as in many countries of the world, in Russia local authorities should play a leading role in achieving the SDGs by assessing the local situation, identifying needs and resources, and implementing appropriate policies and projects (Reddy, 2016; Satterthwaite, 2016; Masuda, 2022).

During the work on the analysis of the prevailing trends and factors affecting the socio-economic development of the “Stupino” urban district, more than 600 questionnaires were received and processed obtained by conducting an Internet survey of residents of the urban district, and expert focus groups were organized with representatives of the city district administration. In an online survey, about 70% of

Table 1 Well-being by residents of Stupino and other small towns of the Russian Federation, %. (according to Levada Center surveys, 2005 and Rosstat (Federal State Statistic Service of Russia), 2013–2020)

Category of residents by income level, %	low-income			medium-income			high-income		
	2005	2013	2020	2005	2013	2020	2005	2013	2020
small towns of the Russian Federation	54,6	49,9	31,8	33,5	43,2	54,0	11,9	6,9	14,2
Stupino	35,0	28,7	24,1	47,2	59,7	60,4	16,8	11,6	15,5

respondents are residents of the city of “Stupino”. More than 270 people have lived in the “Stupino” urban district for more than 35 years.

The conducted survey of residents showed that the main directions of development of urban areas requiring priority and prompt measures to overcome the accumulated problems are as follows:

- optimization of the activities of healthcare institutions by improving the quality and accessibility of medical services – 74,4% respondents;
- development of sports infrastructure, including the construction of a ski track, stadiums – 35,2% respondents;
- development of bicycle infrastructure in settlements – 43,5% respondents;
- to strengthen the work on the improvement and landscaping of the territories of settlements, the organization of dog walking grounds, the development of public toilets, etc. – 53,8% respondents;
- to increase the accessibility of cultural, leisure, and additional education facilities for children in localities – 49,5% respondents;
- improving the quality of the road infrastructure, including the roadway, sidewalks, the formation of an accessible environment – 79,9% respondents;
- acceleration of relocation work from the dilapidated and emergency fund – 54,3% respondents;
- increasing the accessibility and connectivity of territories by public transport routes – 49,6% respondents.

In the course of the study, it was possible to clarify the most important directions of urban planning for citizens. In total, after analyzing the answers to the questions, 50 directions were identified, which can be conditionally grouped into 12 thematic blocks.

The study showed significant differences in the perception of the urban environment among the indigenous residents of the city and newcomers – “New citizens”. For the respondents of the 1st group “indigenous people”, the most effective areas were: affordable movement around the city, air quality, job creation. Such factors as the development of local production of environmentally friendly products and the state of the urban environment are not perceived as effective.

For the respondents of the 2nd group “New citizens”, the most effective areas of a prosperous city were: water quality, the development of local production of environmentally friendly products and affordable movement around the city. Such factors as job creation and housing affordability are not perceived as effective.

Both groups attributed to effective directions: providing social support, ensuring public safety, creating conditions for a healthy lifestyle.

The use of indicators of social and economic efficiency in a single coordinate system allows the administration of the municipality:

- to build a planned trajectory of socio-economic development of the territory according to the developed strategic plan;
- regularly apply actual indicators of social and economic efficiency;
- build the actual trajectory of the development process;

- provide an effective system of control and monitoring of strategy realization.

At the same time, considering the state of infrastructure, the environmental situation and the standard of living of the population that have developed in Russian municipalities as a whole, the goal of sustainable socio-economic development can be achieved only through new types of activities, progressive technologies and effective forms of management. This requires investments for the development of productive forces, which, in turn, must be provided with appropriate economic and legal mechanisms. In this case, clear private goals and objectives appear in the management structure of the municipality, aimed at achieving the main goal and forming a feedback mechanism for the development of productive forces.

Conclusion

In general, there are socio-economic prerequisites for the formation of a policy of sustainable development of municipalities in the state and legal system of Russia. The main principles of sustainable development in strategic planning have now been transformed into 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015 at the UN summit. These sustainable development goals are reflected in various areas of strategic

Table 2 The main indicators of socio-economic development of the “Stupino” urban District in 2020 and 2030

The indicator	Basic indicators (2020)	Target indicators (2030)
The permanent population (at the end of the year), thousand people	120,9	122,6
Total fertility rate, people/thousand inhabitants.	11,80	10,95
Total mortality rate, people/thousand inhabitants	12,17	10,40
Life expectancy at birth, number of years	74,0	80,1
Total fertility rate of births (per woman)	1,61	1,73
Number of people employed in the economy	55,250	64,500
Accrued wages of employees (for the full range of organizations), RUB	44871,1	88277,7
Personal income taxable income tax, mln RUB	29740,3	68290,7
The volume of shipped goods of own production, performed works and services on its own, mln RUB	168500,0	330433,5
Investments in fixed assets at the expense of all sources of financing (per year), except budget, mln RUB	14930,0	21444,6
Budget investments (per year), mln RUB	239,2	1215,5
Length of paved public roads, km	364,05	520,00
The share of small businesses in tax and non-tax revenues of the budget, %	17,0	22,2

Source: Strategy for the socio-economic development of the “Stupino”, 2020.

planning of municipalities, starting with the analysis of the situation in the region (or municipality) and ending with the development of a strategy for socio-economic development, measures of its implementation and monitoring.

The sustainable development of municipalities in Russia requires the resolution of a complex of social and economic problems at both the federal and regional levels. An analysis of the processes of developing sustainable development programs shows that not all municipalities of the Russian Federation are equally engaged in institutionalizing their own policies in this area. The application of the principles of sustainable development in the strategic planning of municipalities is based on the broad application of the model approach at all stages of the development of development strategies and programs. The most significant contribution to the orientation towards sustainable development of municipalities is provided using a modern system of indicators and indicators focused on sustainable development goals. At the same time, we have to admit that the topic of sustainable development of municipalities by the entire system of state regulation in Russia is affected in fragments and expects closer attention from both federal and regional and local government authorities.

Challenges and problems of sustainable development of municipalities require a qualitative, transparent and unified approach based, inter alia, on the involvement of the population in the management process. The results of the analysis showed that Russian legislation in the field of sustainable development of municipalities has not yet been formed.

Thus, the answer to the key research question, obtained the analysis of foreign experience and consideration of the Russian practice of strategizing, confirms the possibility of achieving sustainable development goals both through ensuring an interconnected policy of local and regional development, and by balancing the interests of all key parties in the process of socio-economic development.

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