

STATE REGULATION AS A COMPREHENSIVE MECHANISM FOR THE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF TERRITORIES

REGULAÇÃO ESTADUAL COMO MECANISMO INTEGRAL PARA O
DESENVOLVIMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL DOS TERRITÓRIOS

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ABSTRACT

Objective: One of the key objectives of state regulation regional policy today remains the task of ensuring the sustainable development of territories. The goal of the study is to determine priority directions in state regulation aimed at ensuring the sustainable territorial development of Russia. The quality of state regulation is considered in the study as a crucial factor in the sustainability of regional development.

Methodology: For this purpose, the use of the mechanisms of state management of territorial sustainable development in Russia and other states is compared and the absence or presence of certain mechanisms in Russian practice is noted. The main research methods were comparative method and survey study.

Results: The paper reported the results of the analysis of the realization of state policy in ensuring the sustainable development of Russian territories. The authors examined positive international experience in the state regulation of regional development and studied its directions and the features of institutional interaction. The paper explored various components of a comprehensive mechanism for managing the sustainable development of Russian territories.

Contribution: The suggested priority directions for state regulation of territorial sustainable development are strategic planning, the formation of a single management and monitoring center, the organization of management along the line center – regions – territories, as well as interregional interaction, and the development and use of integral indicators for assessing the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Ecology; Integral indicators; Law; Management; Strategic planning.



RESUMO

Objetivo: Um dos principais objetivos da política regional de regulação estatal continua hoje a ser a tarefa de garantir o desenvolvimento sustentável dos territórios. O objetivo do estudo é determinar as direções prioritárias na regulamentação estadual destinadas a garantir o desenvolvimento territorial sustentável da Rússia. A qualidade da regulação estatal é considerada no estudo como um fator crucial para a sustentabilidade do desenvolvimento regional.

Metodologia: Para tanto, compara-se o uso dos mecanismos de gestão estatal do desenvolvimento territorial sustentável na Rússia e em outros estados e observa-se a ausência ou presença de certos mecanismos na prática russa. Os principais métodos de pesquisa foram o método comparativo e o estudo de levantamento.

Resultados: O artigo relatou os resultados da análise da realização da política estatal para garantir o desenvolvimento sustentável dos territórios russos. Os autores examinaram a experiência internacional positiva na regulação estatal do desenvolvimento regional e estudaram suas direções e as características da interação institucional. O documento explorou vários componentes de um mecanismo abrangente para gerenciar o desenvolvimento sustentável dos territórios russos.

Contribuição: As direções prioritárias sugeridas para a regulação estadual do desenvolvimento territorial sustentável são o planejamento estratégico, a formação de um núcleo único de gestão e monitoramento, a organização da gestão na linha centro – regiões – territórios, bem como a interação inter-regional, e o desenvolvimento e uso de indicadores integrais para avaliar o cumprimento das metas de desenvolvimento sustentável.

Palavras-chave: Ecologia; Indicadores integrais; Lei; Gerenciamento; Planejamento estratégico.

1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that Russia has vast territories, the socio-economic and natural-climatic differentiation of the country's constituent entities does not allow for a universal mechanism of state regulation of all the territories. In addition, in the present historical period, the economy is under the pressure of different geopolitical and global factors that produce prolonged adverse effects on business structures and the population's living standards, which, in turn, hinder the efficiency of regional and territorial management (Yashkin et al., 2022).

In recent years, the relevance of the concept of sustainable development has been growing in regional administration in the face of an escalation of the economic, environmental, and social problems in the regions (Eremeeva et al., 2021). In the regional economic discourse, the concept of sustainable development is oriented toward achieving economic growth, environmental security, and social stability (Alferova et al., 2015). The importance of the regional vector of research of the basic provisions of the concept of



sustainable development owes to the need to balance the implementation of social, environmental, and economic imperatives in combination with the development and specification of directions and methods of regional systems management (Alferova et al., 2018; Stryabkova et al., 2021; Marhasova et al., 2022).

Sustainable development presupposes the preservation of the balance between the key elements of the socio-economic system of the country (or region, or territory) — the economy, the social sphere, environmental management, resource consumption, and the environment (Kryukova et al., 2018; Tsenina et al., 2022). Sustainable development solves such problems as the accumulation of resources in the creation of a new technological paradigm, the development of competition, the growth of innovation and investment, improvement of the quality of state regulation, and support for labor, creativity, and entrepreneurship. However, economic theory has not yet established a model for managing socio-economic development that would present a multilevel and multisubject system incorporating the territorial level as its full-fledged subject. Thus, research on the issues of managing the sustainable development of territories under the influence of factors that determine the achievement of the pursued goals becomes a topical task.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Analysis of research on the problem reveals that most works assert that the management of sustainable development of territories relies on a strategic plan aimed at economic growth, which provides for a comfortable existence of the territory's population (Bavykina et al., 2021). A number of approaches to understanding the economic sustainability of territories are based on the optimization of various activities. For instance, A.I. Beksultanova (2021) puts an emphasis on the differentiation of state policy with respect to regions with varying levels of economic development. L.A. Valitova and M.Iu. Sheresheva (2020) demonstrate and advocate the benefits of creating integral indices formed from official statistics that adequately reflect the state of the economy, public welfare and health, and natural capital. T.V. Uskova (2020) explores a wide set of administrative influences on the sustainable development of territories, revealing the role of all directions of action. The diversity of opinions and the absence of a universal view on such a vital factor in sustainable development as the quality of management necessitate further research on the outlined topic. New studies on the opportunities to optimize state regulation of the sustainable development of territories have great relevance and practical significance.



The purpose of the present study lies in the optimization of the mechanisms of state influence on the provision of the sustainable development of regions.

Research hypothesis. The efficiency of the sustainable development of territories is largely based on a systemic and consistent public policy, carried out in accordance with the center-region-territory vertical hierarchy of administration.

3 METHODS

The study utilizes systematic and comprehensive approaches in combination with a set of general scientific and specialized research methods. The study of literary sources concerning the research problem is conducted using the methods of analysis, synthesis, and generalization. The comparative method allows to examine and summarize international practice in the participation of the state in the sustainable development of territories and compare it with the Russian experience. The theoretical and methodological foundation of the study is formed by fundamental and applied research by Russian and foreign scholars on the socio-economic development of territories and the management of sustainable development of socio-economic systems. The research hypothesis is tested with the use of such information materials as official statistics and other information on the topic found on the Internet. In accordance with the proposed hypothesis, the specialized research methods employed include a questionnaire and an expert survey on the most important directions of application of state regulation mechanisms to ensure the sustainable development of territories.

The experts recruited for the survey were 23 employees of the Department of Regional Development of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation and the departments of the ministries of economic development of the three regions of the Central Administrative District of the Russian Federation. The experts were selected based on their positions (head of department, analyst) and participation in scientific research. Another criterion considered was their publication activity in the journals cited by Scopus or Web of Science, with at least three articles on related topics. In the course of the survey, the experts (28 in total) were asked to answer the open-ended question: "What approaches in state regulation, in your opinion, are the most efficient for the sustainable development of territories?". The respondents were notified that their answers would be used in this study in a general form.



4 RESULTS

The transition of the Russian Federation to market relations and the integration of the national economy into the world economy have brought about significant changes in all parameters of socio-economic development of the country and its constituent regions and territories. The course of radical reforms chosen by liberals, the concept of incompatibility between the plan and the market, and the ill-conceived implementation of reforms brought the country to the brink of disintegration as a state. By the end of 1995, it became clear that the practical implementation of the chosen model of development of the Russian economy had not proven to be successful. A new paradigm was needed, one that would be able to put the country on a trajectory of sustainable socio-economic development. At that time, the reasonable part of Russian society responded well to the idea of developing and implementing a new paradigm of global, regional, and national development as sustainable development, which became widely known after The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The appeal of this concept for the Russian Federation lay primarily in its core principles, as well as the list of the tasks to be addressed, which were similar to the tasks faced by Russian society (Yevteyev et al., 1989).

In Russia, the transition to sustainable development is marked by the approval of the Concept of transition to sustainable development by the President of the Russian Federation in 1996 (Presidential Decree No. 440, 1996). According to the Concept, the transition should provide a balanced solution to the problems of socio-economic development and preservation of the favorable environment and natural-resource potential (Presidential Decree No. 440, 1996). The sustainable development goals (SDGs) enshrined in the Concept are now integrated into national projects (Presidential Decree No. 204, 2018) and strategic and program documents. It is important to add that national projects are adjusted with consideration of National Development Goals until 2030, which echo the SDGs. Thus, it can be stated that the strategic planning documents in the Russian Federation generalize the SDGs in their content.

The Russian Federation is a federal state where the regional level plays an important role in development. Given the importance of the regional level, it should be understood that achieving the sustainable development of the Russian Federation takes achieving the sustainable development of each of its constituent entities. The regional level can become the key one in achieving SDGs since Russia is the largest state in the world by territory and its constituent entities are comparable to many world countries in size and



population, each constituent entity being unique from the point of development conditions, potential, administrative experience, and demographics. Meanwhile, there is no unified coordinating body in Russia concerned with the issues of sustainable development at the regional and municipal levels. The various public authorities carry out measures aimed at achieving the SDGs in accordance with their assigned tasks and powers. One notable fact is that in 2012, an interdepartmental working group was established under the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation to work on issues related to climate change and ensuring sustainable development with a special focus on the climate component. The authority to compile official statistics on the indicators of achievement of the SDGs in the Russian Federation is vested in the Federal State Statistics Service (Kolmar, Sakharov, 2019). Furthermore, as suggested by the Voluntary National Review (VNR) (2020), Russia did not pay enough consideration to SDGs in strategic planning documents at the regional and municipal levels. In this relation, it can be concluded that the regional and municipal levels are not incorporated into Russia’s system of achieving the SDGs.

Although in varying forms, every country has some elements of state regulation of the development of its individual territories. A regional policy can be active, institutionally isolated, equipped with specialized tools, etc., but it can also sometimes be inconspicuous, weakly distinguished from other areas of state activity (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of expert opinion on efficient approaches in state regulation*

Essence of the approach	Distribution of expert opinion, %
Systemic and vertical (center-region-territory) principle of state regulation in sustainable development.	56
Presence of a single center for managing sustainable development, the responsibility of its leadership for the results in achieving the goals	24
Developed regulatory and legal framework, established law enforcement practice for the implementation of SDGs	11
All the rest	9

* Based on the results of the expert survey

The study of international experience in the implementation of policies for the development of territories of different states is of great importance for finding the most optimal tools and directions for the development of national public policy aimed at regulating territorial development.

In developed countries, SDGs are pursued by means of various methods (legal, administrative, economic, and other) established at the government and local levels.



In this, the regional policy serves as a kind of instrument used by the state to regulate market processes. “Regional policy was finally established as a set of state measures for the development of territories in market conditions in the 1970s” (Grebenkina et al., 2019, p. 34). Widely used are the tools of the fiscal system, the preparation of plans and forecasts, as well as other tools, the set and implementation of which are determined primarily by the established order of the countries, the specifics of economic development, the characteristics of regional problems, and others (Plisetskii, 2013).

Russia’s neighbor Finland has traditionally had a reputation as a leader in sustainable development. The achievement of high indicators is primarily due to a clear understanding on the part of Finnish government authorities of the importance of achieving the SDGs. Already in 1993, a special body was established in the country – the National Commission for Sustainable Development (hereinafter – the Commission) under the leadership of the Prime Minister. The composition of the Commission is very diverse and includes representatives of central, regional, and municipal authorities, civil society institutions, and business entities, who have the opportunity to reflect on the SDGs at discussions and meetings. In addition, the Commission has a multidisciplinary panel of expert scientists on sustainable development that provides scientific advice (Voluntary National Review, 2016). Finnish public authorities actively use a program-targeted approach to sustainable development management. Since the mid-1990s, various sustainable development programs have been developed and implemented in the country on an ongoing basis: in 2006 — the National Strategy for Sustainable Development “Towards Sustainable Choices. A Nationally and Globally Sustainable Finland”; in 2013 — “The Finland we want 2050. Society’s Commitment to Sustainable Development” (updated in 2016 in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda, 2030)) (Voluntary National Review, 2016).

The primary regional development regulations in Finland are the Regional Development and Management of Structural Funds Act (7/2014), which establishes the objectives and work program for regional development, as well as the tasks of the responsible authorities, and the Financing of Regional Development and Structural Fund Projects Act (8/2014), which contains provisions for financing projects implemented through national funds and structural funds of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and regional councils (Iakimchuk et al., 2021).



Finland is currently one of the most decentralized countries in the world. The welfare of its citizens largely relies on an efficient local self-government system. Municipalities in the country provide a considerable amount of services: organizing the provision of medical care and preventive measures; education and social protection; providing public services, solving issues of land use, land development, road network, and environmental control; development and support of entrepreneurial activity, employment, development of digitalization, etc. Many municipalities voluntarily take on additional tasks: central heating, electricity, and public transport. Finnish municipalities have a total of about 650,000 employees. The volume of municipal budgets in the country is approximately equal to the state budget. On average, 47 % of local budget tax revenues come from the payroll tax, which amounts to 15 to 21 % of the salaries of residents of the municipality (The regional development decision 2020-2023: Sustainable and vital regions, 2020). The government and Parliament regularly engage in dialogue on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with the regions and municipalities. Notably, the involvement of youth, the private sector, and municipalities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda tends to grow every year (Table 2).

Table 2. Key differences in the mechanisms of ensuring the sustainable development of territories in Russia and Finland

Russia	Finland
Lack of a coordination center	Coordinating center – National Commission for Sustainable Development
Lack of a clear interaction between different levels of government authorities (center – region – territory) and interregional connections in achieving SDGs	A clear system of interaction along the line Center – region – municipality and interregional and municipal interaction in implementing SDGs
Lack of established indicators for calculating the index of SDG achievement	A developed and implemented system of indicators for calculating the SDG achievement index

4 DISCUSSION

Contemporary studies prove that public authorities at all levels possess a wide range of methods and tools, the use of which in the practice of territorial administration can considerably advance the sustainability of territorial socio-economic systems. Among these instruments, priority should be given to strategic planning of socio-economic development of regions and territories, public-private partnership, and the development of civil society, including by means of strengthening the role of local governments (Uskova, 2009). Among all the tools for managing the sustainable socio-economic development of



regions, researchers especially prioritize strategic planning, the purpose of which is to define strategic (prospective) and current development goals and develop a system of planning documents to ensure the implementation of these goals (Shomshekova et al., 2020). The thesis about the priority of strategy over tactics is fully confirmed by global practice. The sustainability of a territorial socio-economic system and, as a consequence, the well-being of the population depends on how properly the strategic tasks are set and structured, how rationally the resources are used for their solution, and how consistent the planned activities are (Uskova, 2020; Bezpалov et al., 2021).

It is emphasized that state regulation of the transition to sustainable development involves the development of a system of programmatic and forecasting documents: state strategy for long-term action; long-term and medium-term forecasts; short-term forecasts and programs of local, regional, and federal levels (Bezpалov et al., 2019). Under these conditions, particular importance is attributed to the creation of a well-functioning system “federal center – regions – territories”, which, in turn, necessitates the development and implementation of programs for the transition to sustainable development for each particular region (Kitieva et al., 2020).

Researchers also provide substantiation for the need to create a national integral indicator of territorial sustainable development. In this respect, full use of international experience in creating integral indicators could hardly be advisable since the regions of one country exist within a single political regime, healthcare system, and education system. This suggests that differences in the assessment of the sustainable development of regions will lie mainly in the economic plane and the effects of the anthropogenic factor. An example of the creation of an integral indicator for assessing sustainable development could be the development introduced in the North Aegean region, the island part of Greece characterized by a rather high environmental and economic vulnerability. To analyze the regional system and establish the parameters of the created model, system analysis was used (Indicators of Sustainable Development: Guidelines and Methodologies, 2007). Three subindicators were developed and combined into one composite index for each dimension of sustainable development. The economic aspect of sustainable development was defined by three components: the size of the economy, the production structure, and the degree of specialization of the economy. The social dimension of sustainable development was characterized by the components of population size, population structure, and degree of social cohesion (Indicators of Sustainable Development: Guidelines and Methodologies, 2007). Finally, the environmental aspect of sustainable development was shaped by a set of quantitative and qualitative characteristics associated



with the preservation of the environment (quantity and quality of groundwater and surface water, seawater quality, land and air quality, biodiversity, landscape quality) (Fedulin et al., 2020). The composite index is used to account for long-term changes by comparing its values with a 10-year gap (Indicators of Sustainable Development: Guidelines and Methodologies, 2007). The dynamic approach proves to be important as it gives an idea of whether the territory progresses towards the desired sustainability indices. Moreover, negative trends in the assessed parameters allow detecting regions that need improvements and, accordingly, administrative intervention (Valitova et al., 2020).

Some studies substantiate the importance of organizing interregional interaction for the sustainable development of regional potential. In particular, the work “Interregional interaction as a factor of economic growth” (Uskova, Lukin, 2013) unfolds the theoretical and methodological aspects of developing interregional economic interaction and proves its impact on regional economic growth. The degree of influence of various forms of interregional interaction on economic growth in the region is assessed. Strategic directions for the intensification of interregional economic cooperation are substantiated.

The importance of utilizing the potential of municipalities and the role of local self-government in ensuring the sustainable development of territories are also emphasized in a number of papers (Chekavinskii et al., 2017; Safonov et al., 2022). Aside from the great role played by local self-government in improving public welfare and providing public services, it is also tasked with the creation of institutions that contribute to an acceleration of economic growth, ensuring their sustainability, and improving the competitiveness of the territory and the country as a whole (Zainullina et al., 2022). Accordingly, the efficiency of local self-government, as confirmed by international practice, shapes the country’s present and future, since local self-governments bear the potential that could eliminate many crisis phenomena inherent in our society and generate additional impetus for the development of the Russian state.

5 CONCLUSIONS

At present, a transition to sustainable development requires coordinated action in all spheres of public life, as well as a proper reorientation of the social, economic, and environmental institutions of the state, whose regulating role is fundamental for such transformations. Thus, the sustainable development of territories can be ensured by means of improving the administration, which relies on a systemic-structural organization of regulatory action and develops and pays consideration to the principles and patterns of



territorial development expressed in the content of the forms of their use for qualitative changes in the parameters of the territory. In this, the sustainability of the socio-economic system has to be assured by state support at all administrative levels (macro, meso, and micro), and at the core of the systemic sustainability of the territory has to be the vertical axis of administration “center – region – territory”. Thus, the hypothesis of the study can be considered proven.

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