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Institutional Prerequisites for the Successful Implementation of a Territorial Community Development Strategy

Roman Parashtin  1 *

¹ National Forestry University of Ukraine (Ukraine). Candidate for the Educational and Scientific Program of Doctor of Philosophy in the Specialty "Public Management and Administration" at the Department of Public Management and Administration.

* **Corresponding Author**, e-mail: parashchyn.roman@nltu.lviv.ua

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ABSTRACT

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The article examines the conceptual foundations of sustainable development of territorial communities in Ukraine and the role of strategic planning in ensuring economic, social, and environmental balance. It emphasizes that sustainable development directly depends on the capacity and willingness of communities to implement local development initiatives, as well as on the recognition of their specificity, which is shaped by diverse needs, resources, and governance approaches. The study highlights the need for tailored solutions based on local knowledge and initiatives, as well as the alignment of interests among public authorities, civil society, business, and the academic sector. The article determines that, under decentralization, local self-government bodies are responsible for addressing key socio-economic and environmental challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, unemployment, poverty, inefficient resource use, and limited business development opportunities. These challenges require an integrated approach to local development and the improvement of strategic planning at the level of territorial communities. It analyzes the regulatory and legal framework of strategic planning. It is found that strategic planning at the local level is a mandatory component of state regional policy and must be aligned with national and regional development priorities. The article summarizes the main requirements for community development strategies, including result orientation, inclusiveness, transparency, monitoring and evaluation, as well as consideration of the social and environmental impacts of project implementation. It is shown that the effectiveness of strategies is determined not by their formal scope but by their ability to be implemented in practice and to generate real changes in territorial development. Particular attention is paid to the institutional aspects of strategic planning, including the role of working groups as inclusive platforms for interaction, the need to take into account the real needs of the population, and the involvement of various social groups in decision-making processes. It is determined that insufficient public participation leads to distorted development priorities and reduced effectiveness of strategy implementation. The article substantiates the importance of formulating goals, objectives, and indicators based on real community needs, along with their prioritization and alignment with implementation capacity and funding sources. It is emphasized that indicators should reflect actual changes rather than merely completed activities, serving as a tool for managerial decision-making and strategy adjustment. The study concludes that strategic planning, in the context of transformation processes and recovery challenges, is a key instrument for ensuring sustainable development of territorial communities and requires a shift from a formal approach to a practice-oriented, inclusive, and results-based governance model.

KEYWORDS

sustainable community development, local governments, strategic planning, regulatory framework, sustainability, monitoring, community recovery.





Інституційні передумови успішної реалізації стратегії розвитку територіальної громади

Роман Ю. Паращин  1*

¹Національний лісотехнічний університет України (Україна). Здобувач освітньо-наукової програми доктора філософії за спеціальністю «Публічне управління та адміністрування» кафедри публічного управління та адміністрування.

* Автор-кореспондент, e-mail: parashchyn.roman@ntu.lviv.ua

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У статті розглянуто концептуальні засади сталого розвитку територіальних громад України та роль стратегічного планування у забезпеченні економічного, соціального та екологічного балансу. Наголошується, що сталий розвиток безпосередньо залежить від здатності та зацікавленості громад до реалізації місцевого розвитку, а також від урахування їхньої унікальності, яка визначається різними потребами, ресурсами та управлінськими підходами. Підкреслено необхідність індивідуалізованих рішень, що базуються на локальних знаннях та ініціативах, а також узгодженості інтересів влади, громадськості, бізнесу та наукового середовища. Визначено, що в умовах децентралізації на органи місцевого самоврядування покладено відповідальність за вирішення ключових соціально-економічних та екологічних проблем, серед яких інфраструктурна недостатність, безробіття, бідність, неефективне використання ресурсів та обмеженість розвитку бізнес-ініціатив. Обґрунтовано, що ці виклики потребують інтегрованого підходу до місцевого розвитку та удосконалення стратегічного планування на рівні територіальних громад. Проаналізовано нормативно-правове забезпечення стратегічного планування. Встановлено, що стратегічне планування на місцевому рівні є обов'язковим елементом державної регіональної політики та має бути узгодженим із державними і регіональними пріоритетами розвитку. Узагальнено основні вимоги до стратегій розвитку громад, серед яких орієнтація на результативність, інклюзивність, публічність, моніторинг та оцінювання, а також врахування соціальних та екологічних наслідків реалізації проєктів. Показано, що ефективність стратегій визначається не їх формальним обсягом, а здатністю до практичної реалізації та досягнення реальних змін у розвитку територій. Особливу увагу приділено інституційним аспектам стратегічного планування, зокрема ролі робочих груп як інклюзивних платформ взаємодії, необхідності врахування реальних потреб населення та залучення різних соціальних груп до процесу ухвалення рішень. Визначено, що недостатня участь громадськості призводить до викривлення пріоритетів розвитку та зниження ефективності реалізації стратегій. Обґрунтовано важливість формування цілей, завдань та індикаторів на основі реальних потреб громади, їх пріоритизації та узгодження з можливостями впровадження і джерелами фінансування. Підкреслено, що індикатори мають відображати реальні зміни, а не лише виконані заходи, і слугувати інструментом управлінських рішень та коригування стратегій. Зроблено висновок, що стратегічне планування в умовах трансформаційних процесів та викликів відновлення є ключовим інструментом забезпечення сталого розвитку територіальних громад і потребує переходу від формального підходу до практикоорієнтованої, та результативної моделі управління.



КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

сталий розвиток громад, органи місцевого самоврядування, стратегічне планування, нормативне забезпечення, сталий розвиток, моніторинг, відновлення громад.

1. Introduction

The implementation of the principles of sustainable development requires the formation of a long-term strategic vision based on the transformation of management paradigms and the renewal of approaches to political and administrative regulation. An effective system of sustainable development management should be based on the concept of public governance, which provides for partnership between state institutions, local governments, business and civil society.

The implementation of such a model is accompanied by the need to solve complex management tasks, in particular: the formation of a coordinated vision of the prospects for the development of the state, industries and territories; the definition of strategic goals and priorities; strengthening the institutional capacity of mechanisms for involving stakeholders in the decision-making process; ensuring intersectoral and interregional coordination; as well as the introduction of long-term planning taking into account the interests of future generations.

The tool for implementing these tasks is strategic planning, which allows, even at the stage of policy development, to ensure the coordination of actions of various authorities and other stakeholders. In Ukraine, strategic planning at the level of regions and territorial communities has gradually gained practical application; however, its effectiveness largely depends on the quality of the methodological approach and the level of institutional training of management entities. The conditions of decentralization have led to the formation of new territorial communities, which often do not have sufficient experience in strategic planning, which actualizes the need to develop relevant competencies and management practices.

2. Literature Review

Sustainable development of territorial communities is considered in modern scientific research as a complex process based on the interrelation of economic, social and environmental components. Its effectiveness largely depends on the ability and motivation of communities to realize their own development potential, as well as on taking into account their uniqueness, which is manifested in the differences in the resource base, socio-economic conditions and models of local self-government, which necessitates the need for individualized management decisions based on local knowledge and initiatives [8].

The scientific literature emphasizes that effective local development requires a systemic approach, which includes strategic planning, the use of internal community resources to form competitive advantages, ensuring partnership between government, business, the public and the scientific community, as well as the ability of institutions to adapt to changes. At the same time, in the context of decentralization in Ukraine, local governments are responsible for solving key socio-economic and environmental problems, including inefficient use of natural potential, insufficient infrastructure development, unemployment, poverty and limited access to quality public services [5, 6].

The regulatory and legal support for strategic planning for the development of territorial communities in Ukraine forms a multi-level system of documents, including state, regional and local strategies. The legislation stipulates the obligation to develop strategies for the development of territorial communities within the framework of state regional policy, as well as short-term programs for socio-economic development. Methodological recommendations determine the approach to the formation of strategies based on coordination with the priorities of the state and regional levels, as well as orientation towards long-term sustainable development goals [7; 10].

Research emphasizes that a community development strategy should be not only a formal document, but also a practical tool for managing changes. Its effectiveness is determined not by the volume of the text, but by the level of implementation of the solutions, which requires the integration of implementation mechanisms at the development stage [2]. In this context, the formation of working groups as inclusive platforms for stakeholder interaction, which provide a link between the development and implementation of strategies, is of particular importance [4].

Modern research also emphasizes the need to take into account the real needs of different social groups in strategic planning. Insufficient inclusion in the process of needs assessment leads to the formation of incomplete or distorted strategic priorities, which reduces the effectiveness of the

implementation of development policies. In this regard, the use of combined data collection methods, including surveys, focus groups and expert consultations, is recommended [3; 11].

An important area of scientific research is also the formation of a system of goals, objectives and indicators for the implementation of strategies. It is emphasized that goals should reflect real changes in community development, and not formal areas of activity, while indicators should be measurable, realistic and focused on assessing results, and not only completed measures. This approach allows for effective monitoring and adjustment of strategic decisions in the process of their implementation [12].

Special attention in the literature is paid to the problems of harmonizing local strategies with the priorities of state and regional policy, which determines the possibilities of attracting financial resources, in particular within the framework of public investment programs and international assistance. Accordingly, strategic planning at the community level is considered a tool for integrating local needs into the national development system [14].

3. Problem Statement

The purpose of the article is to substantiate the key conditions and mechanisms that ensure the effective implementation of the territorial community development strategy, as well as to identify factors that influence the effectiveness of its implementation at the initial stages of strategic planning.

4. Methods and Materials

The theoretical and methodological basis of the work is the provisions of the theory of sustainable development, the concept of public administration and regional policy, as well as modern approaches to strategic planning at the local level. The study is based on a systemic approach, which made it possible to consider the development of a territorial community as a holistic multi-level system, encompassing economic, social, environmental and institutional components and characterized by their interdependence. The methodological tools include system-structural analysis, which was used to study the relationships between the elements of strategic management of community development, as well as an analysis of the regulatory framework, which allowed us to study the provisions of the legislation of Ukraine in the field of state regional policy, strategic planning and socio-economic development programs. To generalize scientific approaches and identify modern trends, content analysis of scientific publications by Ukrainian and foreign researchers on issues of sustainable development, decentralization and local self-government was used, as well as comparative analysis, which made it possible to compare approaches to strategic management of the development of territorial communities in different management practices.

Additionally, methods of generalization, synthesis, induction and deduction were applied, which ensured the formation of a holistic understanding of the features of strategic planning as a tool for managing community development and allowed moving from the analysis of individual elements to the formation of generalized conclusions. The material basis of the study is the regulatory and legal acts of Ukraine that regulate the sphere of regional policy and strategic planning, methodological recommendations for the development and implementation of strategies for the development of territorial communities, scientific works of domestic and foreign authors, and analytical materials of international technical assistance projects that accompany the processes of strategic planning in Ukraine.

The applied approach ensured the comprehensiveness of the study, the combination of regulatory, theoretical and analytical dimensions, and created the basis for substantiated conclusions regarding the institutional and managerial prerequisites for the effective implementation of territorial community development strategies.

5. Results and Discussion

Sustainable development of territories is largely determined by the level of involvement and motivation of territorial communities in the implementation of local development policy. Its conceptual basis is the interconnected functioning of economic, social and environmental components that form an integral system of balanced development. At the same time, each community is characterized by the uniqueness of resource potential, socio-economic conditions, management practices and local

challenges, which necessitate the need for individualized approaches to development planning based on internal resources and local initiatives [8].

The key priorities of local government activities in the field of sustainable development are the development and implementation of local development programs taking into account the system of performance indicators and ensuring their practical implementation; rational use of internal community resources to create competitive advantages and attract investment; ensuring a balance of interests of key stakeholders – government, business, the public and the scientific community; as well as increasing the institutional capacity of government bodies to adapt in the face of dynamic changes in the external environment.

In the context of decentralization processes, local governments are responsible for solving a complex of socio-economic and environmental problems that have accumulated at the territorial level. Among them are the inefficient use of natural resource potential, insufficient level of infrastructure development, waste management problems, socio-economic inequality, unemployment and limited opportunities for the development of entrepreneurial activity of the population [5; 6]. Overcoming these challenges requires the use of integrated approaches to managing the development of territories and improving strategic planning mechanisms at the community level. The regulatory and legal support for these processes is determined by the provisions of the Law of Ukraine “On the Principles of State Regional Policy”, which establishes the need for development and restoration planning at the level of territorial communities. An important element of the institutional support for local development has become the improvement of the regulatory and legal framework for the strategic planning of territorial communities. In particular, amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On the Principles of State Regional Policy”, which entered into force in 2022, established the obligation to develop strategies for the development of territorial communities as a basic tool for long-term management of local development. In accordance with the legislative provisions, local governments have received the authority and responsibility for the formation of strategic documents aimed at determining priorities, goals and mechanisms for community development [13]. The strategic planning system is supplemented by tools for short-term forecasting and programming of socio-economic development, which ensures the relationship between long-term strategic guidelines and current management decisions. This approach contributes to increasing the coherence of planning documents, more efficient use of resources and strengthening the effectiveness of local development policy [8]. The methodological principles for developing strategies for the development of territorial communities are defined at the state level and provide for the coordination of local strategic documents with the priorities of state and regional development policies. This ensures vertical integration of strategic planning, increases the efficiency of the implementation of planned activities and creates the prerequisites for the comprehensive development of territories [7]. Under such conditions, the community development strategy is not only a program document, but also a tool for consolidating the efforts of the authorities, business and the public aimed at achieving common development goals. Its preparation requires broad involvement of stakeholders, a thorough analysis of the internal potential of the community, risk assessment and identification of mechanisms for adapting to modern socio-economic challenges. This creates the basis for the formation of a realistic and effective strategy focused on the long-term sustainable development of the territorial community in practice [2]. Therefore, its implementation should be thought about at the development stage – and immediately lay down the necessary mechanisms for implementing the document, and not postpone it “for later” – after its approval.

One of the key prerequisites for the effectiveness of strategic planning is the orientation not on the formal development of the document, but on the creation of real mechanisms for its further implementation. Practice shows that excessive concentration of attention on the preparation of the text of the strategy often leads to the formation of declarative documents, the goals of which do not meet the current needs of the community, and the planned indicators are not provided with the necessary resources and tools for achievement. In this regard, it is advisable to consider each stage of strategic planning through the prism of the practical implementation of the defined goals, the availability of responsible entities and resource provision for the planned activities. An important role in ensuring the effectiveness of the strategy is played by the working group, which should act not only as a body for preparing the document, but also as a platform for further coordination of community development processes. The effectiveness of strategic planning largely depends on the involvement of representatives of various sectors of local development in the working group, including business, public organizations, educational and medical institutions, veteran associations and other interested parties. This approach

contributes to the formation of a common vision of the future of the community, increases the level of responsibility for the implementation of decisions made and provides broader support for strategic initiatives [4]. An equally important stage is a comprehensive assessment of the needs of the territorial community. Its results should form the basis for determining strategic priorities and development goals. At the same time, the process of identifying needs should cover the widest possible range of residents, in particular representatives of socially vulnerable groups of the population, youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, veterans, internally displaced persons and residents of remote settlements. Taking into account various interests and requests allows to form a more objective vision of development problems and to ensure social legitimacy of strategic decisions [2]. Strategic goals should reflect not the directions of activity of local self-government bodies, but the desired changes in the social, economic and spatial systems of the community. Their formation should be based on the results of a needs assessment, analysis of the potential of the territory and identification of promising development directions. Accordingly, each strategic goal should characterize a specific expected result, the achievement of which will contribute to improving the quality of life of the population and strengthening the competitiveness of the community. The next stage is the development of a system of tasks, which should be based on real needs and take into account the possibilities of their practical implementation. The feasibility of including individual tasks in the strategy should be assessed, taking into account the availability of responsible executors, potential sources of financing, the institutional capacity of the community and the possibilities of intermunicipal or intersectoral cooperation.

In conditions of limited resources, the process of prioritizing tasks becomes of particular importance. An effective strategy cannot cover all existing problems at the same time; therefore, an important management decision is to determine those areas of development, the implementation of which will have the greatest impact on achieving the strategic goals of the community. Refusal of an excessive number of tasks allows for the concentration of resources and increases the effectiveness of strategic management [12]. An important condition for the successful implementation of the strategy is also its coordination with the priorities of state and regional development policy. Taking into account relevant areas of support from state programs, international organizations and donor structures increases the possibilities of attracting financial resources and ensures the integration of the community into broader processes of socio-economic development [14]. A necessary component of strategic planning is a system of monitoring and evaluating the results of strategy implementation. Monitoring indicators should be measurable, based on available data sources and reflect real changes occurring in the community. At the same time, the indicator system should be used not only for reporting, but primarily as a tool to support management decisions, allowing for the timely detection of deviations from planned results and the adjustment of strategic priorities in accordance with new challenges and needs for the development of the territorial community.

Within the framework of the "Recovery for All" project, comprehensive support is provided to territorial communities in the processes of recovery and strategic development, in particular by providing methodological support during the development of strategic documents and ensuring their further implementation. As a result of the project, 14 territorial communities, including communities of Kharkiv and Donetsk regions, approved their own development strategies during 2025 and moved to the practical stage of their implementation. The beginning of 2026 creates an opportunity for an initial assessment of the effectiveness of the implementation of strategic documents based on the established monitoring system. At the same time, the experience of implementing strategies in communities operating under conditions of increased security risks demonstrates the presence of significant challenges. Practice shows that even with due consideration of military threats during the preparation of strategies and the development of relevant indicators, some planned indicators remain unachieved. In most cases, this is not due to shortcomings in strategic planning or errors in defining target benchmarks, but to the need for prompt reallocation of financial, material and organizational resources of communities to respond to the deterioration of the security situation and the consequences of hostilities. In this context, monitoring results require a comprehensive interpretation. Deviation of actual indicators from planned values does not always indicate ineffectiveness of strategy implementation, as it may be due to the influence of external factors, in particular, economic instability, changes in state priorities, or security threats. At the same time, the formal achievement of established indicators is also not an unconditional confirmation of positive changes if the results obtained do not lead to a significant improvement in the living conditions of the population and do not ensure the achievement of strategic goals for community development. Thus, the monitoring system should be

focused not only on assessing the level of implementation of indicators, but also on determining the real impact of implemented measures on the socio-economic development of the territorial community. By the time of approval of the main documents regulating strategic planning, the challenges, priorities, goals and objectives of both the State Strategy for Regional Development of Ukraine and regional development strategies had passed and they had ceased to be relevant. And they can no longer be relied upon when developing local development strategies, which delays the development of development strategies for territorial communities. For territorial communities in whose territories hostilities took place and/or which were temporarily occupied, and/or whose territories suffered destruction of critical infrastructure, social infrastructure, and housing facilities as a result of hostilities, the Law introduced a new functional type – recovery territories, as well as the possibility of developing another, simpler planning document – a plan for the recovery and development of a territorial community. Improving the regulatory framework for the restoration of territories has become an important stage in the development of the strategic planning system in Ukraine. The procedure for developing plans for the restoration and development of territorial communities, as well as relevant documents at the regional and national levels, was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine only in July 2023, that is, a year after the relevant amendments were made to the Law of Ukraine “On the Principles of State Regional Policy”. However, the practical implementation of these provisions was accompanied by several institutional restrictions. First of all, this was due to the lack of an approved list of restoration territories and, accordingly, the inability to officially launch the process of developing restoration plans at the state, regional and local levels.

Despite regulatory uncertainty, a significant number of territorial communities, with the support of international partners and technical assistance programs, have begun preparing their own restoration and development documents. This practice was due to the urgent need of local governments to form a strategic vision for post-war reconstruction, determine development priorities, and attract financial resources for the implementation of relevant projects.

A feature of the current stage of recovery planning is the significant differentiation of territorial communities in terms of the level of institutional readiness for strategic management. Some communities were created as a result of the 2020 administrative-territorial reform and did not have comprehensive strategic documents covering the entire territory of the community. At the same time, some communities already had existing development strategies and some experience in strategic planning. Such heterogeneity significantly affected the pace and quality of preparation of recovery plans.

Additional difficulties arose due to the need to forecast long-term development in conditions of high uncertainty. The most difficult tasks included assessing the actual population size and forecasting demographic processes taking into account large-scale migration movements, determining possible scenarios for economic development, calculating the amount of damage caused, as well as planning recovery measures in accordance with the principles of inclusiveness, energy efficiency, environmental safety and the “Build Back Better” concept. No less important were the issues of mobilizing financial resources and integrating the security component into strategic development documents.

An important step in resolving these problems was the formation by the Ministry of Community and Territorial Development of Ukraine of a list of recovery territories, which was subsequently repeatedly updated in accordance with changes in the security situation and the course of hostilities [8]. At the same time, the update of the provisions of the State Strategy for Regional Development for 2021–2027 ensured the formation of a more holistic system of strategic planning for recovery and development of territories, focused on long-term sustainability, competitiveness and balanced spatial development of communities [13].

6. Conclusions

The effectiveness of the territorial community development strategy is largely determined by the quality of its preparation, since it is at the strategic planning stage that the prerequisites for the further implementation of the identified priorities and the achievement of the planned results are formed. The validity of strategic decisions, the realism of the goals set and the coherence of the mechanisms for their achievement determine whether the strategy will become an effective tool for managing community development or will remain a formal program document. In the context of military challenges, post-war reconstruction and European integration, the territorial community development strategy should serve as a practical tool of public administration, which ensures the definition of priority areas of

development, coordination of actions of interested parties, attraction of investment and donor resources, as well as the formation of partnerships for the implementation of projects for the reconstruction and modernization of territories. At the same time, the strategy is designed to ensure transparency of the activities of local government bodies and contribute to increasing the level of trust of citizens by clearly substantiating management decisions and regularly informing them about the results achieved. The lack of an up-to-date development strategy, its implementation plan and an open monitoring system significantly limits the community's ability to define long-term development guidelines, effectively allocate resources and assess the effectiveness of management activities. Under such conditions, it is difficult to form a common vision of the future development of the territory, determine funding priorities and assess the effectiveness of implemented measures. Therefore, ensuring transparency of strategic planning, institutional coherence, proper regulatory support and financial capacity is a necessary prerequisite for high-quality local governance and adaptation of the territorial development management system to European standards.

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