



## «ТРУДНЫЙ РЕБЕНОК» ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ НАУКИ: ДИСКУРС РУРАЛИСТИКИ

## THE “DIFFICULT CHILD” OF POLITICAL SCIENCE: THE DISCOURSE OF RURALISTICS

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### The Leadership in the Institutional System of Rural Development Policy: The Results of the Empirical Study in Krasnodar Region

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**Abstract.** There is a lack of explanatory models and analytical tools for studying the role of intangible resources in rural development. Based on the results of theoretical modeling and empirical data from independent field studies, the article identifies and characterizes the leadership potential in the institutional system of rural development in the Krasnodar region. The multilevel analysis of leadership as an important component of intangible resources for rural development reveals the considerable potential of a set of resources (human, personal, professional, network, and institutional), which at present is not fully realized in the system of rural development institutions in the Krasnodar region. Leadership as an intangible development resource achieves the greatest effect when it comes to the creation of leadership communities and the institutional practices of their functioning as territorial development institutions. Regional and local identity act as the foundation and significant factors determining the leaders' orientation towards involvement in the territorial development policies and building systems of human capital formation in rural communities, which can become one of the main directions for regional development strategies.

**Keywords:** rural development policy, intangible resources, leadership, development institutions, regional and local identity

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## Лидерство в институциональной системе политики развития сельских территорий: результаты эмпирического исследования в Краснодарском крае

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**Аннотация.** Научная проблема, на решение которой направлено данное исследование, заключается в дефиците объяснительных моделей и аналитического инструментария для исследования роли нематериальных ресурсов развития сельских территорий. По результатам теоретического моделирования и эмпирических данных самостоятельных полевых исследований авторами определен и охарактеризован лидерский потенциал в институциональной системе политики развития сельских территорий Краснодарского края. Показано, что многоуровневый анализ феномена лидерства как важного компонента нематериальных ресурсов развития сельских территорий позволяет говорить об имеющемся значительном потенциале как совокупности ресурсов (человеческом, личностном, профессиональном, сетевом, институциональном), который в настоящее время не в полной мере реализован в системе институтов развития сельских территорий Краснодарского края. Практики актуализации лидерства могут принимать формальные и неформальные вариации в институциональной системе политики развития сельских территорий, но так или иначе они связаны с активацией институтов развития регионального и федерального уровня, позволяющего достигать определенных приоритетов. Наибольшего эффекта лидерство как нематериальный ресурс развития достигает, когда речь идет о создании лидерских сообществ и институциональных практиках их функционирования в качестве институтов развития территорий. Региональная и локальная идентичность выступают фундаментальными основаниями и значимыми факторами, определяющими ориентацию лидеров на включенность в политику развития территорий и выстраивание системы формирования человеческого капитала сельских сообществ, что может стать одним из приоритетных стратегических направлений развития региона.

**Ключевые слова:** политика развития сельских территорий, нематериальные ресурсы, лидерство, институты развития, региональная и локальная идентичность

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## Introduction

The development of rural areas is gradually beginning to enter the system of strategic priorities of modern Russia, which is due to a whole range of factors that are diverse in nature, including the need to ensure national food sovereignty and replenish the shortage of food resources; overcoming the digital divide in rural areas, which exacerbates social inequality amid the digitalization of public relations; the growth in attractiveness of the “non-urban” lifestyle and the deurbanization due to the mass migration of the urban population to the countryside during the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors determine the development of new national priorities for rural development, which are complex and go beyond the policy in the field of agro-industrial complex and agriculture.

The intensive search for rural development practices alternative to the existing financial and infrastructural models is in the subject field of intangible resources that are “tied” to specific territorial spaces and their “carriers” — local communities. One of the significant intangible resources is leadership and development institutions that are able, in close connection with each other, to incorporate new rural development priorities into the practice of national and regional strategic management and achieve qualitatively different results on their basis. In modern public discourse and public practice, leadership and development institutions are considered as significant, but rather autonomous factors that affect the diffusion of innovations in various sectors of the economy and public administration in modern Russia, ensuring the sustainable development of the country and territories. The lack of interaction between leaders and development institutions creates conditions for the formation of facade and imitation development institutions and leadership practices that do not have a significant impact on the development of the country and territories.

This study **aims** to identify and determine the potential of leadership and its configuration characteristics in the institutional system of rural development policy in the Krasnodar Region based on the empirical research conducted by the authors.

## **Leadership as an intangible resource in territorial development policies: the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study**

The scientific discourse on development policy is represented by various narratives in economic and political sciences, the common message of which is the limited traditional material resources and the deepening inequality in the access of countries and regions to development sources. Western models of social development that claimed to be universal (such as the “welfare state” models), based on the principles of economic growth and the mechanisms of state redistribution of income and social responsibility, have ceased to “work” in the new crisis conditions of a lack of resources associated, among other things, with the aging of the population of countries that promoted such models. This led to the search for alternative development opportunities that take into account the diversity of meanings and dimensions of social well-being [Semenenko, Khaynatskaya 2022], as well as unlocking the potential of the state and society in the use of internal development resources of an intangible nature [Semenenko 2021; Miroshnichenko et al. 2022].

The problem of rural development in global social science is largely determined by the “meanings” that scientists put into the concept of “rural” or “non-urban”, which largely determines not only research “optics”, but also the content of political and managerial decisions in this area [Hawley, Koziol, Bovaird, McCormick, Welch, Arthur, et al. 2016; Ray 2001]. The traditional analytical framework that allows assessing rural development through sectoral policies (agrarian, social, migration, tourism and recreation, cultural, etc.) is limited in heuristic potential, as it focuses on universal socio-economic indicators, without revealing the political, managerial, socio-cultural, ethical and axiological content of the development policy for the “non-urban” lifestyle. More productive are theoretical constructs based on the “options” of intangible resources, their actualization as factors that ensure “the growth of the welfare of rural areas, the improvement of non-urban spaces and the consolidation of local communities” [Cloke, Marsden, Mooney 2006; Semenenko 2019; Morozova, Miroshnichenko, Semenenko 2020] in relation to a favorable image of the future for all residents and ways to achieve it.

The “options” of non-material resources are based on various components of various political spaces (intellectual resources of leaders and elites, identity and political culture, social solidarities of various levels, values, moral attitudes, and motivational complexes of development subjects), which are integrated into political and managerial models of interaction between political and social actors, into institutional practices for generating development alternatives [Semenenko 2021]. According to experts, the results of the studies within the framework of the problem of intangible resources have considerable potential for being implemented in real political and managerial strategies, which will further contribute to the formation of new “development spaces” [Bardin, Sigachev 2019].

It is important that the common denominator in the activation of intangible resources as development factors in the socio-economic and political dimension is such results as ensuring equal access to the benefits for all citizens, improving the quality of life of the population, and the emergence of new forms of interaction between the authorities and citizens who provide them. Thus, according to the authors' definition, "a rural development policy is a process of developing strategic priorities and securing institutional mechanisms that allow local communities, in the practices of interaction with authorities at various levels, business structures, and civil society institutions, to create, reproduce and use a variety of resources, including intangible ones, to achieve a qualitatively new standard of living for the population. The cardinal difference of this model is the presence of a socio-cultural mechanism for integrating traditions and innovations in generating and implementing development policies" [Miroshnichenko et al. 2022: 158].

Development institutions as intangible resources are represented by a wide range of institutional practices that allow rural communities to develop policies of common guidelines and values of social coexistence in the public space, and define strategic goals and development priorities, which is associated with the instrumental measurement of spatial and territorial identity. Such institutions lay down the system of coordinates for the interaction of subjects of public policy and act as "conductors" of changes that result from the consolidated activities of local/regional communities and create conditions for investing resources in new activities and the development of new technologies. At the same time, in most cases, the research focus and public discourse in the field of rural development policies is concentrated on structural or institutional mechanisms external to rural areas.

Recently, authors representing various social and human sciences have made attempts to consider more or less deeply the issues of leadership and the contribution that leaders can make to the development of territories [Collinge, Gibney, Mabey 2010], as well as the tactics used by local leaders to achieve certain goals [Sotarauta 2010]. Leadership theories, well-researched within the framework of organizational management, have serious heuristic limitations in the analysis of "leadership of places", since leadership by definition is contextual and is manifested as problems arise, the solution of which corresponds to the abilities, skills, and resource potential of certain individuals. We agree with the author's opinion that "the development of place is not the rolling-out of logical (technical) plans from the centre but the consequence of local agents (leaders) shaping the decisions and interpretations of what is, and is not, possible" [Grint 2010: 366].

The study of how leaders, representatives of local governments become "entrepreneurs" and "administrators" who are able to form and implement strategies for the socio-economic development of territories, ensure the effective functioning of all institutions involved in this process, makes an important contribution to understanding the key components of effective leadership and the

relationship between leadership and development institutions in the institutional environment of rural development policies.

The theoretical framework for identifying the relationship between leadership and development institutions in the context of this study is the conceptual foundations of “building local communities” as a reflection of new management practices that model the residents’ self-organization, encouraging them to take the position of a decision-maker of important public problems for the community [Lyska 2013]. The theoretical foundations of this concept allow us to consider leaders as an integral part of rural local communities, which are included in interactions with other institutions and subjects in generating development priorities and their achievement through joint activities based on cooperation. Leaders, who have significant social capital and actualize the potential of development institutions, ensure the diffusion and consolidation of innovative practices in the institutional environment [Fredericksen 2004; Filyak 2015].

Development institutions begin to “work” not when they just engage leaders with a wide range of open social connections and contacts (social capital as a public good) but when a community of leaders emerges who think and act in the same value paradigm, sharing common development priorities. Investing in leaders and their teams (training and team building, supporting leadership initiatives, and strengthening their social ties) allows them to overcome the inertia OF THE CURRENT POLITICAL, MANAGERIAL, AND ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT and mobilize various public groups, representatives of business structures to generate a joint development strategy and implement it through innovative practices [Miroshnichenko et al. 2022]. At the same time, the institutional environment of the public policy of local or regional communities goes beyond the administrative-territorial boundaries of the territories and includes various regional, interregional, and national development institutions (state and public funds, programs supporting the economic activities of entrepreneurs, business entities and social initiatives of representatives and organizations of territorial or socio-cultural communities).

The heuristic potential of the explanatory research model proposed by the authors is based on the integration of methodological principles of neo-institutional, political-psychological, and identitarian approaches. Leadership from the standpoint of the political-psychological approach is defined as a dynamic process during which leaders and their followers interact in situations and contexts characterized by increasing complexity [Mirzoyan 2013; Samsonova, Shpuga 2016]. The resource potential of leadership and its functions in rural development strategies are determined, on the one hand, by a set of knowledge, skills, abilities, and motivations of a person that have economic value and serve as a source of future income and benefits, and on the other hand, as a set of subjective characteristics of a person: abilities, life, and professional experience and skills, readiness for productive life activities, their identification with the local community and territory.

The neo-institutional approach allows us to consider leadership as a set of formal and informal practices that exist in the institutional environment

(development institutions) of rural development policies. At the same time, leadership practices can play a dual role: leaders can activate, by formal and informal means, the resource potential of regional and federal development institutions external to rural areas to solve the problems of local communities; or play the role of development institutions, producing innovations and integrating them into rural development and securing them in the institutional environment of rural municipalities.

The identitarian approach makes it possible to explain under what conditions leaders and leadership communities become part of the institutional environment for rural development policies. The key factor that ensures this connection is the strongly pronounced positive local identity of the leaders and their emotional attachment to the territory.

The methodology of empirical research includes a set of qualitative and quantitative methods, and techniques for collecting, processing, analyzing, and interpreting data. The empirical research strategy is based on the case study method in regional and local projections. The Krasnodar Region was chosen as the object of the empirical study of the institutional practices of rural development policies. The Krasnodar Region is an agro-oriented region with a rural population of 2.48 million (43 % of the total population),<sup>1</sup> where the processes characteristic of all non-urban areas of Russia are manifested clearly, diversely, and, at the same time, contradictory.

The choice of local cases for the development of rural municipalities was due to the existing and legally fixed spatial division of the region into specialized economic zones (according to the “Strategy of the socio-economic development of the Krasnodar Region until 2030”). For the empirical study of cases, we used the methods of focus groups with the population, expert surveys with leaders of local communities and representatives of development institutions, as well as the analysis of documents (regulatory documents, media publications, posts in social networks) characterizing the activities of leaders and institutions for the development of rural areas.

To determine the potential of the regional leadership community and study the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms for recruiting leaders into the public administration system, we conducted an online questionnaire survey of the finalists of the governor’s personnel competition “Leaders of Kuban — Moving Up” (it had 300 participants during the 2018–2022 seasons). 500 people (100 finalists in each season) participated in the finals through the five seasons of the Leaders of Kuban personnel competition (according to the rules of the competition), so the results of the study represent the opinion of the most active part of the region’s leadership community.

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<sup>1</sup> Estimation of the permanent population of the Krasnodar Region as of January 1, 2023 (taking into account the results of the 2020 All-Russian Population Census). Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <https://23.rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/МО%20cisl.htm>

## Rural Development Institutions

The theories of exogenous, endogenous and neoendogenous development are productive for understanding the system of interactions between the subjects of rural development policies. The exogenous approach to rural development, based on attracting external resources to the territory, developing economies of scale, and recognizing state support for agricultural production as the basis of rural development policies, while having its positive aspects, was quite rightly criticized. The development of rural areas, based solely on exogenous institutions and resources, firstly, is increasingly becoming dependent on them (“the culture of dependence on subsidies” [Olmedo, O’Shaughnessy 2022]), and secondly, it leaves unique local assets and development messages “beyond the scope” and negates their specific features.

The endogenous approach to rural development [Ray 2000], which involves development from the inside through bottom-up initiatives, encourages the involvement of local people in the formulation of needs and decision-making, strengthening local capacity for leadership, entrepreneurship, innovation, and networking [Flora et al. 1997]. Emphasizing the socio-economic diversity of rural areas, as well as the possibility of mobilizing previously unused resources to increase the potential of each specific rural area, the endogenous approach in practice means excessive autonomy and concentration on local resources as the basis for development, without taking into account the influence of factors and trends external to rural areas [Fischer, McKee 2017].

The neo-endogenous approach to rural development policies is becoming increasingly popular [Marango, Bosworth, Curry 2021], implying integrated, locally focused development based on local resources and, at the same time, the ability to attract external resources and compete for them, as well as to introduce, through external resources oriented at local conditions, solutions that promote community development.

Researchers of the potential of neo-endogenous development policies emphasize that local rural development is inevitably associated with exogenous actors and factors. From this point of view, external institutions can play an important role both as providers of resources that are not available locally and as “animators” of rural development [McElwee, Smith, Somerville 2018]. From the neoendogenous point of view, this raises the question about the abilities of local community leaders in rural areas to mediate internal and external development processes, and manage them within a broader institutional environment. In this neo-endogenous architecture of rural development policies, the role of external state development institutions (financial, legal, infrastructural, investment) is undoubted, but more as a factor that sets the general framework for the development of local initiatives aimed at solving specific problems of rural areas. At the same time, the main catalyst for activating the potential inherent in development institutions external to the territory is the leadership initiative of local actors capable of developing networks, using resources at different spatial scales, and increasing the involvement of the local population in the implementation of development projects.

The external institutional environment, the main actor in the creation of which is the state, is an ordered structure of institutions that set the matrix for the development



of rural areas. The state creates a legal framework and develops directions for rural development policies and financial mechanisms to provide for them.

Recently, in our country, development institutions, as coordinators and operators of the most significant projects, have become widespread, increasing the density of the institutional environment for rural development policies. By development institutions, the authors mean “such organizational forms of interaction between business and government that help attract investment, launch new projects and increase economic growth” [Balatsky, Ekimova, Yurevich 2019: 95–100]. Development institutions, on the one hand, are state tools for stimulating and modernizing the economy of rural areas, including based on public-private partnerships, and, on the other hand, are institutional structures that redistribute financial, innovative, investment, organizational, infrastructural, informational and other resources for the implementation of rural development projects.

The interaction of the subjects of rural development policies is an open, continuous, interactive process based on the opportunities and abilities of rural community leaders that transform in the process of development and create mechanisms that promote progressive socio-economic transformations based on incentives coming from outside.

The constituent principle makes it possible to classify rural development institutions into two groups: federal development institutions, whose activities are aimed at supporting regional development; and regional institutions. The activities of the institutions provide support for various areas: production and consumption, prices and markets, social policy and infrastructure using such tools as subsidies to agricultural producers, preferential credit programs, infrastructure construction, subsidies for the construction and purchase of housing, etc.

The state program “Integrated Development of Rural Territories” became the basis for building a modern system of rural development institutions at the federal level, the main goals of which include: “maintaining the share of the rural population in the total population of Russia at a level of at least 25.3 %, achieving the ratio of average monthly disposable resources of rural and urban households of up to 80 %, increasing the share of the total area of comfortable housing in rural settlements to up to 50 %”.<sup>2</sup> One of the target indicators of the program is to increase the level of interest and participation of the population of rural areas in its implementation to 80 % of the total population of rural areas, and one of the directions provides for the implementation of initiative projects in rural areas, in which individual residents or groups, rural businesses can also take part. As part of the order of the President of the Russian Federation following the meeting of the State Council of the Russian Federation on December 26, 2019, several mechanisms were created to integrate the activities of federal development institutions into the activities of rural development entities.<sup>3</sup> In general, we can

<sup>2</sup> The state program “Integrated Development of Rural Territories” has been approved. *Government of Russia*. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <http://government.ru/docs/36905/>

<sup>3</sup> List of orders of the President of the Russian Federation following the meeting of the State Council of the Russian Federation on December 26, 2019. *President of Russia*. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/assignments/orders/62785/print>

state that at the federal and regional levels, there is currently a further expansion of the system of development institutions as tools for stimulating the development of rural areas and consolidating ongoing support programs and projects.

Currently, there are more than 15 different programs in the Krasnodar region implemented by various development institutions within the framework of federal and regional programs directly or indirectly related to the development of rural areas. Thus, in 2023, financing of projects for the development of rural areas within the framework of the federal program “The Modern Look of Rural Areas” will amount to 312 million rubles. It should be noted that in order for the state program to support development projects in rural areas the rural communities need to provide equity participation (at least 30 %) in the implementation of the projects, including through financing, labor contribution, and the use of their own technical means.

### **Leadership Potential in the Institutional System of Development Policies: Rural Cases of the Krasnodar Region**

An empirical study of rural municipalities in the Krasnodar region made it possible to identify and characterize several typical leadership practices in the studied local communities and, on this basis, to assess their potential as intangible resources in the institutional system of territorial development policies.

#### **Case “Consolidated Leadership and Responsible Development of a Rural Settlement”**

The Kuban rural settlement of the Apsheronsky District municipal formation belongs to a regressing territory with an increasing rate of regression in the Predgornny economic zone of the Krasnodar region and is typical in terms of the natural-geographical and socio-economic specifics of the foothill zone of the Krasnodar region, in which the focus on agricultural production, logging, and wood processing and the status of a logistic corridor of regional significance in the form of the Krasnodar-Apsheronsk highway and the Belorechensk-Tuapse railway line has been preserved since Soviet times. The territory of the municipality includes 6 settlements (the Kubanskaya village, the Vpered village, the Zarechny farm, the Erik village, the Kalinina farm, and the Malko farm) with a population of 7876 people, with constant population growth due to an increase in the birth rate and a decrease in mortality, the influx of labor migration for employment in agriculture<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> The history and current state of the Kuban rural settlement of the Apsheron region municipality. *Administration of the Kuban rural settlement of the Apsheron region*. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <https://kuban.apsheronsk-oms.ru/istoriya-poseleniya.html>

The key factors that ensure the development of a rural settlement include the pronounced positive local identity of the locals, which contributes to their unity and joint participation in solving the problems of the territory, as well as the leadership community integrated by the head of the administration into development practices. The head of the rural settlement has serious managerial experience, including Komsomol and party experience in the Soviet period. His communication skills and his wide formal and informal social ties, including those with regional elites, allow him to successfully build interaction with various subjects of the rural settlement development (the business community, the local deputy corps), including the leaders of the Muslim diaspora (30 % of the population of the settlement are Meskhetian Turks, Kurds, Yezidis, Hemshils, Azerbaijanis and others): *“People everywhere and everyone wants life to change somehow. Because everyone has different opportunities... Some people reproach that the Malko farm is a small settlement, of 400 people, but there are also people there. We have a subsidized budget. There is little money, so we make it work where possible. Somewhere we save budget funds on our own, somewhere we have entered the program, somewhere we ask entrepreneurs to get involved... And we are slowly developing”* (from an expert interview with the head of the settlement). It is important that the head was able to create a team of like-minded people focused on attracting resources and involving active citizens in solving the problems of the territory: *“Our head, Ivan Matveyevich, loves grants... state programs in the region, he probably knows them by heart. And the assistant, Alexandra Viktorovna, with whom they work all the time. They know what is being done and where, how, where you can join in order to improve the life of the Kuban rural settlement”* (from a focus group with residents of the rural settlement).

The personal and business resource of the head of the settlement administration made it possible to create a leadership community capable of aggregating and providing for the needs of the population, updating the resources of local identity in the practices of territorial development and contributing to a high level of public confidence in the authorities: *“we are happy here”, “our village is the best... the most successful”, “For some reason, all the organizations of the settlement are at the forefront and people try to be the most active everywhere... library, club, administration, school, hospital, post office... the best in the area”, “and a sports school, achievements, development. Somehow everyone is moving forward. Everyone is trying to glorify the Kubanskaya”; “In general, it’s nice to be in the settlement, because it’s clean, we are improving the environment... infrastructure is being developed: a hospital and a sports complex are being built”* (from a focus group with residents of the rural settlement).

The lack of financial and material resources for the administration of the rural settlement is overcome by being included in various grant programs, the implementation of national projects and programs, as well as initiative budgeting projects, which leads to the intensive development of the social infrastructure of the territory: *“The goal of our work is not to earn fame, but to create normal conditions for the residents who*

*work here... to change life for the better in all populated areas of the settlement...*” (from an expert interview with the head of the settlement).

The leadership community must be multigenerational and consolidated, which makes it possible to accumulate the resources and traditions of the older generation and the innovative potential of young leaders while maintaining continuity in development. The transformative nature of leadership is associated with its ability to build new priorities for the socio-economic development of the territory, taking into account its resource potential. New priorities include gardening, greenhouse vegetable growing, cultivation of planting material for ornamental crops, beef farming; development of the resort and recreational industry and expansion of the sales market for agricultural products; cultivation and processing of medicinal and essential oil crops (including wild ones), and agricultural tourism. In the context of the implementation of the priority investment project of a regional scale “Reconstruction and development of a logging complex, wood processing, organization of the production of MDF” boards based on the production facilities of CJSC Production and woodworking complex “PDK Apsheronsk”, the administration of the Kuban rural settlement sees the creation of new enterprises specializing in the manufacture of furniture from an array of local valuable hardwoods or MDF boards produced in the Apsheronsk region.<sup>5</sup>

The transformative nature of the rural leadership community is also revealed through the “soft power” tools, which consist of the team’s ability to win over various population groups and representatives of the regional elite, transferring certain worldview constructs and basic social meanings and civil solidarity shared by the local community, find support for their projects and innovations through regional and federal development institutions. The local identity shared by all has become a connecting component for the leadership and the local community, which allowed the formation of a culture of civic participation and a model of responsible development, in which the local government becomes the “designer” and “operator” of positive changes.

#### Case “Informal farming community as a subject of change”

The Medvedovskoye rural settlement of the Timashevsky District municipal formation, which includes the village of Medvedovskaya, the Bolshevik and Leninsky farms, is characterized as a developing steppe territory with accelerating economic growth in the Central Economic Zone of the Krasnodar region with a population of more than 17 thousand people. The dominant economic activity of the residents of the settlement is agriculture (mainly in the

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<sup>5</sup> The history and current state of the Kuban rural settlement of the Apsheron region municipality. *Administration of the Kuban rural settlement of the Apsheron region*. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <https://kuban.apsheronsk-oms.ru/istoriya-poseleniya.html>

field of crop production), which involves two large agricultural enterprises (“Holding Company-Agricultural Firm “Rossiya” LLC and Agricultural Company “Khutorok” LLC, which account for 90 % of the gross agricultural output of the settlement) and 28 peasant farms.<sup>6</sup> The local population is differentiated in their life and labor strategies: some are oriented towards employment in the sphere of production and services in the nearby cities of Timashevsk and Krasnodar while maintaining a rural lifestyle, and the other part is engaged in local agriculture (at enterprises, farms, and personal subsidiary farms); the rest are older residents, including migrants from other subjects of the Russian Federation who have chosen a rural settlement as an attractive place for retirement. These factors have led to a shortage of consolidating resources of the local community and local administrative and business elites.

In the rural settlement, a conflictive leadership interaction has developed, based on several lines of confrontation: representatives of the administration of the rural settlement (“varyags”) — top management of large profit-oriented agricultural enterprises — communities of local farmers and active social activists interested in solving problems of the territory and positive changes. Elected in recent decades, the heads of the administration of the rural settlement were not indigenous people, and their tenure in this position worked as a “social elevator” for further administrative work at the level of the district and region. These circumstances laid the foundation for a certain level of distrust among the population and the local elite, which includes representatives of farms and public figures. The positions of the top management of large economic enterprises, “Holding Company-Agricultural Firm “Rossiya” LLC and Agricultural Company “Khutorok” LLC, regarding their contribution to the development of the rural settlement are quite tough: since they account for 90 % of the gross agricultural output of the settlement, then *“there can be no talk of any ‘social investments’”* (from an expert interview with community leaders of the settlement).

The community of local farmers sees the solution to rural problems in a completely different way. They are fully integrated into the local community and emotionally attached to their “small motherland”. They are engaged in family and neighborly entrepreneurial activities, they involve a wide range of relatives and fellow villagers of different generations, who are the indigenous inhabitants of the rural settlement. This has resulted in their indifferent position concerning rural changes that they carry out on their own initiative or at the request of local residents through the community members of the settlement: *“Good people live here. Both the village is good, and the people are good... The Council of Farmers, the Council of Entrepreneurs help a lot... There are councils, there are chairmen, where they collect a certain amount and distribute it where? To kindergartens and schools, to houses of culture...”* (from a focus group with residents of the rural settlement). *“So, we gathered with our circle of farmers and we understand that communications are not equipped at all in the*

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<sup>6</sup> The plan for the integrated development of the Medvedovskoye rural settlement of the Timashevsky district of the Krasnodar region. *Official website of the Medvedovskoye rural settlement*. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from [https://admmedved.ru/?page\\_id=6207](https://admmedved.ru/?page_id=6207)

*house of culture... the toilet is on the street, and there our children regularly study in various creative clubs, participate in events, this is a place for festive meetings of our fellow villagers. We decided to invest in making everyone comfortable and our children healthy*” (from an expert interview with a farmer-community leader).

At the same time, when solving the problems of developing their own business, the income from which allows them to make social investments in the rural settlement, farmers skillfully and regularly use federal and regional state support for entrepreneurs operating in the field of agriculture and agro-industrial production. They also actively introduce advanced technologies and innovations into the economic system, importing them from the practice of European countries: *“At some point, it became clear that we needed to reach a different level... And we went to Denmark, Switzerland, Italy, France... We looked and realized that we can do this too, there is nothing complicated about it”* (from an expert interview with a farmer-community leader).

Actively interacting in the formal institutional environment, using the resources of federal and regional development institutions, the farming community creates informal institutions of local development at the settlement level in the form of a council of farmers and entrepreneurs, a farm fund to finance rural changes: *“Several times a year we collect certain amounts (as much as we can) so that we can finance various civil initiatives or quickly solve problems in our social sphere and improving the environment... This fund is in the hands of our informal leader and all issues are resolved through it... Heads of schools, kindergartens, hospitals, houses of culture, chairmen of territorial public self-government, everyone turns directly to us with specific requests... At the same time, we do not coordinate our decisions with the administration, we do everything ourselves...”* (from an expert interview with a farmer — community leader).

Thus, the leadership potential of the farming community (personal characteristics and competencies, social capital and financial resources, motivation to develop their native rural settlement) makes it possible to solve the problems of rural areas on a systematic basis. However, an obstacle to building a strategy for the development of the settlement is the lack of a consolidated position of key actors in the development of rural areas (heads and representatives of local governments, large business entities, the farming community, and public leaders). Under these conditions, farmers create an environment of informal practices, autonomous from the formal institutional system, that contributes to positive rural changes. Using federal and regional development institutions, the farmers strengthen their businesses, which opens up new opportunities for them to develop rural areas.

#### Case “The Role of Transformative Leadership in Social Investment in Rural Areas: Traditions and Innovations”

Rural settlements of the municipality Ust-Labinsk district (Aleksandrovskoye, Bratskoye, Vimovskoye, Voronezhskoye, Vostochnoye, Dvubratskoye, Zheleznoye, Kirpilskoye, Ladoga, Leninskoye, Nekrasovskoye, Novolabinskoye, Suvorovskoye,

Tenginskoye) are located in the Central Economic Zone of the Krasnodar region and represent actively developing areas of agro-industrial specialization, gravitating towards the regional center (city Krasnodar). Today, the Ust-Labinsky district is one of the leaders in the production of agro-industrial products in the Krasnodar region, ranking 4th in terms of the contribution of GDP in agriculture (In 2020, 15.9 billion rubles).<sup>7</sup> The settlements of the municipality are developing in the agglomeration strategy of rural areas, which involves close relationships between settlements in providing cost-effective and labor-intensive production capacities, orienting the population towards employment within the local agriculture and agro-industrial complex, creating a system of continuous education to keep the employable population in the economy of the municipality.

A key role in the development of the rural agglomeration of the Ust-Labinsk district was played by the persona of Oleg Deripaska, who is one of the largest entrepreneurs and philanthropists in Russia, the founder of the “Basic Element” industrial group. Born in the Nizhny Novgorod Oblast, from the age of 4, O. Deripaska lived in a rural settlement in the Ust-Labinsk district, which contributed to his deep emotional attachment to the rural area and influenced his motives as an already successful entrepreneur to be interested in and invest in the integrated development of the territories of the municipality.

The practices of rural development in the Ust-Labinsk district, implemented by O. Deripaska, represent the social investment of big business in the local community. In 2002, O. Deripaska founded the “Kuban” Agroholding as part of the “Basic Element” industrial group based on several state farms in the Ust-Labinsk district, which until 2019<sup>8</sup> remained one of the industry leaders throughout Russia and included more than 20 agricultural enterprises divided into five divisions: “Agricultural Enterprises”, “Seed Production”, “Grain Storage and Processing”, “Meat Processing” and “Sugar Production”.<sup>9</sup>

It was during this period that the entrepreneur implemented private charitable initiatives aimed at developing the territory where the enterprises of the Agroholding are located. Starting in 2008, O. Deripaska created a non-profit organization in the form of the “Volnoe Delo” Social Innovation Support Fund, which became an institutional mechanism for the implementation of a comprehensive territorial development

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<sup>7</sup> Draft Strategy for the socio-economic development of the municipality Ust-Labinsky district until 2030. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from [https://www.adminustlabinsk.ru/upload/iblock/094/rsaxui07gvupdgwoxnkufmhhe0xuoxy/UL30-Strategy-1.3-230217\\_01.pdf](https://www.adminustlabinsk.ru/upload/iblock/094/rsaxui07gvupdgwoxnkufmhhe0xuoxy/UL30-Strategy-1.3-230217_01.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> After the introduction in 2018 of sanctions by the US Department of the Treasury against Oleg Deripaska and his enterprises, the foreign trade activities of the “Kuban” agricultural holding turned out to be significantly hampered. In this regard, in 2019, Deripaska sold the enterprises that were part of the “Kuban” agricultural holding to the “Progress Agro” group of companies, which continue many of the economic and social initiatives of the Agroholding. Source: Progress-agro: regional development. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <https://www.progressagro.com/region-development/>

<sup>9</sup> Special project of “Komsomolskaya Pravda”. “Who feeds Russia? 15 years of history of AgroHolding “Kuban” in grains, liters and rubles”. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <https://www.kp.ru/best/msk/agroholding-kuban/>

program, the priorities of which are the human, social, and cultural capital of the rural agglomeration of the Ust-Labinsk district.<sup>10</sup>

An innovative project aimed at developing human capital is the opening in Ust-Labinsk of the First University Lyceum named after N.I. Lobachevsky — a unique academic school with an in-depth study of the natural and exact sciences. The project is aimed at attracting gifted schoolchildren in grades 7–11 from different regions of the Russian Federation (485 students in total) to study with the help of grant support measures and is a social lift to the scientific and technological sphere for talented youth. The quality of the educational process and early career guidance is ensured by cooperation with leading universities and educational centers of the country, including the natural science faculties of Moscow State University after M.V. Lomonosov. The lyceum also has high-level social infrastructure and logistics.<sup>11</sup>

To stimulate public self-government and civic initiatives in the Ust-Labinsk district, a local development institution was created in the form of the “Stimulus” local community fund, which, in partnership with the “Volnoe Delo” Foundation, implements competitions of social projects: “Khutorok”, “We all come from childhood”, “Children are our future”, as well as various projects for the development of social infrastructure and improved environment. Public discussions of the plan and projects of the strategic development of the region are being held with the participation of the heads of rural settlements, heads of enterprises, and representatives of the public. According to Tamara Rummyantseva, General Director of the “Volnoe Delo-South” Foundation, it is in the Ust-Labinsk district that “we manage to implement the principle of strategic partnership between government, business, public organizations, and the population, which greatly increases the effectiveness of our programs”<sup>12</sup>.

It is important that by investing in the development of rural areas, the foundation successfully combines innovative formats with traditions that are an integral part of the socio-cultural complex and markers of Kuban’s regional and local identities. For example, thanks to the participation of O. Deripaska in 2019, the public initiative of local residents to return the historical name Argatov to the Oktyabrsky farm of the Ust-Labinsk district was supported by the deputies of the Legislative Assembly of the Krasnodar Region.<sup>13</sup> From this period, a new life began in the rural settlement:<sup>14</sup> architectural objects of traditional Cossack life

<sup>10</sup> Territorial development. *Volnoe Delo Foundation*. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <http://volnoe-delo.ru/directions/territorial-dev/>

<sup>11</sup> The First University Lyceum solemnly opened in the Krasnodar Region. *Yuga*. April 8, 2022. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <https://www.yuga.ru/news/462549/>

<sup>12</sup> Territorial development. *Volnoe Delo Foundation*. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <http://volnoe-delo.ru/directions/territorial-dev/>

<sup>13</sup> The Kuban farm, where Deripaska lived, will get back its historical name. *Delovaya Gazeta*. South. March 29, 2019. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <https://news.rambler.ru/other/41949657-kubanskomu-hutoru-gde-zhil-deripaska-vernut-istoricheskoe-nazvanie/>

<sup>14</sup> Zheleznoye Rural Settlement: How Oleg Deripaska's Small Motherland Lives. *Kuban Inform*. July 17, 2022. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <https://kub-inform.ru/news/2022-07-17-khutor-zheleznyy-kak-zhivet-malaya-rodina-olega-deripaska/>



began to appear, a church was built, and a Sunday Orthodox school was opened by it, an annual festival of traditional Cossack culture “Alexander Fortress” is held annually, which include the best folklore groups not only of the South of Russia and the central regions but even Siberia and the Urals<sup>15</sup>.

The leadership of one successful person with serious resource potential made it possible to influence the development policy of rural areas, create powerful institutions for development of the federal and local levels, and organize multi-level (federal, regional, and local) cooperation of various subjects. The ideological and moral priorities of O. Deripaska, who is focused on his small motherland, are associated with the actualization of local identity at its various levels: cognitive (knowledge and systemic understanding of the history and present of the territory, the image of its future and development prospects); emotional (feeling of love for one’s Motherland, its positive perception and attitude towards it); value-motivational (sharing traditional values characteristic of the local community and relying on them in one’s life strategy); instrumental and behavioral (active citizenship, inclusion in projects and practices of territorial development).

The analysis of individual leadership practices in the rural development policies in the Krasnodar region raises a logical question for researchers: how large is the potential of the leadership community in the region? Are the described cases exceptions or does the region have the potential to include active, motivated, enterprising people in the development policy system?

The authors were able to answer these questions based on the data obtained through a study of the regional leadership community, which includes participants in the regional personnel project “Leaders of Kuban — moving up!”. The results of the survey of 300 finalists of the competition (participants of all five seasons of the project) represent the most active and motivated cohort of real leaders or those who aspire to take this position.

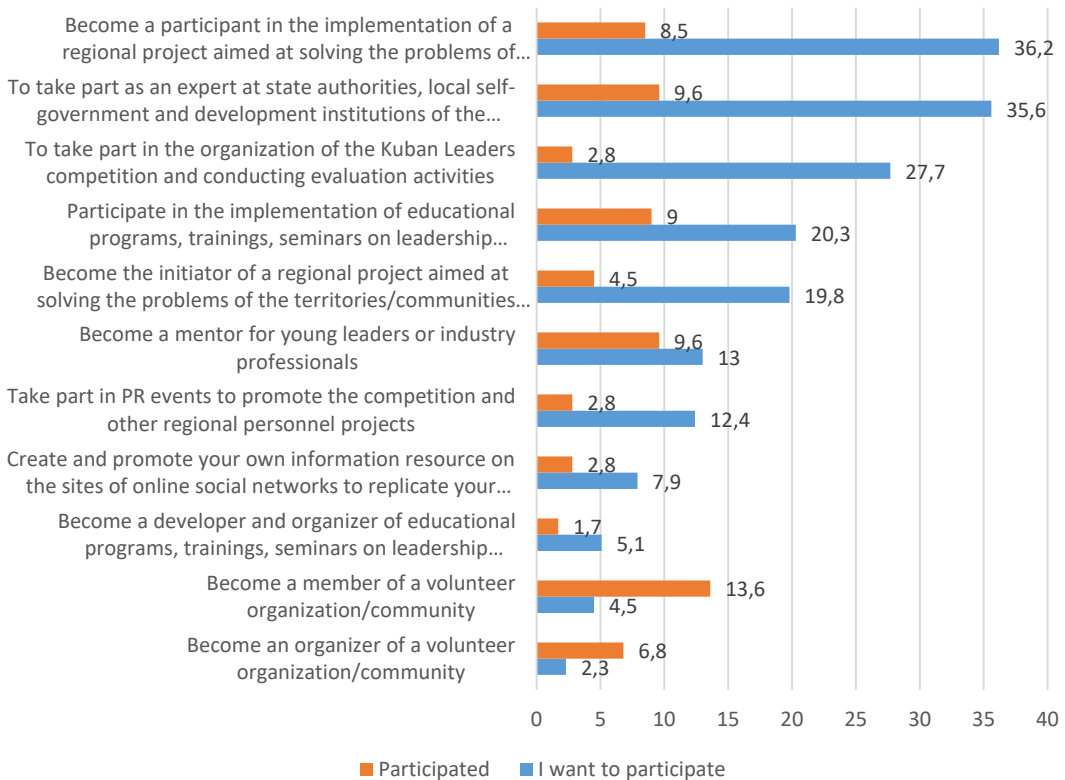
The results of the survey of the region’s leadership community show that there is a significant *potential* for leaders to integrate into regional projects aimed at solving the problems of territories or communities (36.2 %). Even though the leadership community is focused on various formats of activity (expert activities in state authorities and local self-government (35.6 %), involvement in regional personnel projects (27.7 %), in the implementation of educational programs, seminars, and trainings to develop leadership potential (20.3 %), etc.), solving the problems of rural areas is an absolute priority for them (Figure 1).

An important part of the mechanism for integrating leaders into the policy of territorial development is their involvement in various communities and their subjective position regarding the solution of significant problems of the territory, as well as their willingness to take responsibility. The survey showed that in the

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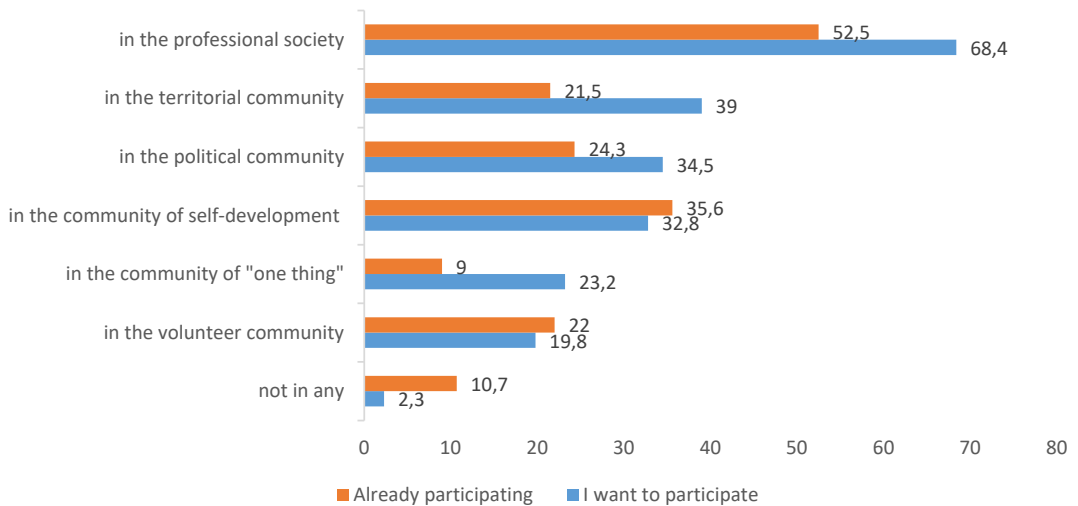
<sup>15</sup> A festival of Cossack culture takes place in Ust-Labinsk Argatov. *Ust-Labinsk Info*. October 1, 2022. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <https://ustlabinfo.ru/news/2022-10-01-v-argatove-prokhorit-festival-kazachey-kultry/>

Krasnodar region leaders are included, first of all, in professional communities, whose members are united by common interests in the development of professional activities and industries — 52.5 % of respondents; 35.6 % are included in self-development communities, whose members are united by common interests in personal self-development, hobbies or leisure activities; about a quarter of the leaders (24.3 %) are active participants in political communities that are united by common political values, views, interests, and the country’s development goals; 22 % are active members of volunteer communities, whose members are ready to share their resources, strength, time, abilities and professional skills for the benefit of other people free of charge. Approximately the same number (21.5 %) actively participate in the life of territorial communities, whose members are united by a sense of belonging to the territory, common interests in solving the problems of the territory, and development goals of the municipality/region. The participation of respondents in “single case” communities, whose members are united by common interests in solving a specific problem, can be considered episodic (9 %).



**Figure 1.** The Potential of Integrating the Leadership Community into The Region’s Public Administration System, %  
 Source: compiled by the authors based on the research.

Territorial communities, professional communities, and “single case” communities have the maximum potential for integrating the leaders, delta (the positive delta between the desire to participate and participation is 17.5, 15.9, and 14.2 %, respectively) (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Potential Involvement of Survey Participants in Various Communities (indicate up to three, the most significant ones)

Source: compiled by the authors based on the research.

The motivation for constructive activity aimed at the development of local communities, based on local identity, is an important part of the mechanism for integrating leaders into the implementation of development policies. For 40 % of the leaders, the main motives for participating in regional personnel projects are the desire to benefit their region (21.5 %) and join the activities of change teams for the development of the Krasnodar region (18.6 %).

**Conclusion:**  
**The political and managerial practices  
of actualizing leadership potential in the system  
of institutions for the development of rural areas**

The multilevel analysis of the phenomenon of leadership as an important component of intangible resources for the development of rural areas allows us to speak about the existing significant potential presented by a set of resources (human, personal, professional, network, institutional), which is currently not fully implemented in the system of institutions for the development of rural areas of the Krasnodar region. Leadership actualization practices can take formal and informal variations in the institutional system of rural development policies, but in one way or another, they are associated with the activation of regional and federal development institutions that allow achieving certain priorities. Leadership as an intangible development resource

achieves the greatest effect when it comes to creating leadership communities and institutional practices of their functioning as institutions for territorial development.

The existing social lifts for leaders in the form of competitions (“Leaders of Russia”, “Leaders of Kuban”) and specialized training programs (for state and municipal employees, for entrepreneurs and social activists) are aimed at individual and group trajectories of representatives of leadership communities, which are autonomous in relation to the existing institutional environment of territorial development policies. Moreover, the cognitive horizons of most leaders are limited by their career strategies, which may not coincide with the needs of rural communities for leaders who align themselves with rural development priorities.

At the same time, our research has shown that leadership can become one of the key resources that determine the successful future of rural areas. Regional and local identities are the fundamental foundations and significant factors that determine the orientation of leaders towards involvement in the territorial development policies and building a system for forming the human capital of rural communities, which can become one of the priority strategic directions for the region’s development. Therefore, there are several levels of strategic goals and practices corresponding to them in the development of leadership potential in the rural development policies: long-term (associated with the education and formation of a cohort of young (younger) regional leaders based on integrating traditional values and innovative approaches in the education system and youth policies); medium-term (associated with the formation of change teams, which are primarily consolidated through common values that do not contradict the existing values and identification matrix of the community) and operational (popularization and replication of already established practices of integrating leaders into the policy of rural development).

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