From Social Innovation to Innovation System

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This article discusses the problems of European rural development in the context of Finland and the possibility of using European approaches to rural development in Russia. Rural areas in Finland have undergone profound structural changes within a very short time. In the 1970s, the number of farms dropped dramatically and agriculture was no longer a major source of income in rural areas. At the same time, village movement and academic research villages were actively developing. In the early 1980s, these studies had a strong influence in shaping the rural development policy of the state, an important component of which was the close cooperation between the academic world and practitioners. One of the constituent elements of the defined policy was the so-called “developmental block”, which included, among others, the support of local initiatives. The European LEADER approach is one of the mechanisms to support initiatives.

The acronym “LEADER” means “Liaison among Actors in Rural Economic Development”. It is an approach used to mobilize and deliver rural development in local rural communities. In Russia, a pilot LEADER project was carried out thanks to the cross-border cooperation program in the framework of the South-East Finland – Russia ENPI CBC 2007-2013 on the territory of the Republic of Karelia and Leningrad Oblast. The overall objective of the project was “the promotion of rural development in selected Russian regions on the basis of knowledge transfer from the Finnish partner” (LEADER approach).

The project had many and some rather ambitious goals. The goals were educative, activating and transformative. Educative goals included the knowledge transfer from Finland to Russia through training sessions with local activists and Local Initiative group-coordinators. Activating goals concerned local residents i.e. how to make them more interested in their own affairs and to take part in joint activities. Transformative goals of the project concerned new modes of governance, the bottom-up approach, and the development of partnership relations.

On the whole, the Ladoga Initiative project was successful in attaining its main goals, activating local people to cooperate for common interest, and to teach village activists project skills: how to calculate budgets, create time-tables and negotiate with relevant partners. Evidence for this can be seen in the villages in the form of play-grounds, sports facilities (football field, boxing ring) and cultural
events which combine handicraft traditions, tourism and entrepreneurship. The Ladoga Initiative was a successful pilot, but any lasting results require more coherent rural policies and that local people are involved in the design and implementation of development policies like the LEADER-approach notes.

Keywords: agriculture, rural policy, rural development, LEADER approach, local action groups, Russia, Finland

Fewer and bigger – agriculture in the European Union

European Commission notes that, “in 2010 there were about 12 million farms in the EU-27 altogether with 172 million ha of agricultural land. Agricultural production employs 25 million people” [Structure and dynamics of EU farms 2013]. An average farm would thus have 14.3 ha of agricultural land and it would be a family farm held by a single holder who would in most cases be male and older than 55 years. The number of farms in the EU has steadily declined over the last decade for all groups of member states. Between 2003 and 2010, the average annual rate of decline was highest for the countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. The decline has been slow in Southern Europe, Ireland and Malta. The reason for this has been the economic crises in these countries. The lack of alternative employment forces people to stay in farming, which is almost the only economic safety net in these countries where welfare systems are undeveloped compared to central or northern European countries, especially Scandinavian (Sweden, Norway and Finland).

The most rapid decline has taken place in the eastern European countries, in particular the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). Partly it is a process of structural adjustment, where a large number of small holdings, which are not economically viable, are closing down and merged with bigger farms. However, the utilized agricultural area has remained rather stable since the mid-1970s, which means that existing farms are bigger. According to EU-statistics, the average farm size in the EU grew by 3.8% per year between 2005 and 2010. Big differences remain between the 15 older member states (23.6 ha/holding) and the 12 countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 (7.1 ha/holding), but the latter are catching up, with annual growth rates almost three times higher than the former (5.5% as against 2% per year).

In an international comparison, farms in the EU remain small. Close to 70% of all farms have less than 5 ha of agricultural land (in the EU-N12, this share goes up to 81%) while only 3% of all holdings have more than 100 ha. The group of middle-sized farms (between 5 and 100 ha) is only 28% of all holdings. This is at least partly due to differences in climate, topography, soils and production structures. However, farms with less than 5 ha occupy only 7% of the total agricultural area, while the small group of holdings with more than 100 ha accounts for 50% of the agricultural land [Structure and dynamics of EU farms 2013].

Agricultural employment in EU

In 2010, there were around 10 million persons employed in agriculture in the European Union and they represented 5% of the total employment. Most of the farm work in
the EU is still carried out by the holders and members of their family (92.2% of the persons working on the farms), with hired non-family workers accounting only for 7.8% of those regularly working on the farms. For a large number of people, farm work only represents a minor activity (13.8 million, 55% of the total), being the main economic activity for only 28.5% of the total (7.1 million people). In five member states employment in agriculture represents more than 10% of total employment: Romania (31.4%) and Bulgaria, Poland, Greece and Portugal. In 18 member states, agricultural employment accounts for less than 5% of total employment, and less than 2% in Luxembourg, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Germany. Self-employment is very high in Romania, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Poland, Austria and Greece, where at least 85% of those working in agriculture are self-employed. In only seven member states is this rate below 50%, with the lowest percentages found in Slovakia (12.6%), the Czech Republic (30.4%) and Estonia (33.3%). Since 2000, more than 2.5 million persons have left the primary sector, and Poland and Romania together account for 42% of this decrease. The decline of employment in agriculture is related to economies of scale: larger farms allow a much higher degree of mechanization and general technical progress contributes to the replacement of labor by capital [Structure and dynamics of EU farms 2013].

The highest employment rates in the primary sector are in the predominantly rural regions of Romania (41.5%) and Bulgaria (32.0%) and also in rural regions of Poland (24.7%), Portugal (23.1%) and Greece (23.0%) the shares are high. On the other hand, the primary sector provides less than 5% of rural employment in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Sweden. The shares of the secondary sector in employment are highest among the rural regions of the Czech Republic (41.5%), Hungary (35.7%), Slovenia (35.4%) and Slovakia (35.2%), which have a history of very industrialized and “urban” rural areas, compared with Bulgaria, Romania or Poland.

The tertiary or services sector plays a less important role in employment in the rural regions of Romania, Bulgaria and Poland (31.5%, 40.4% and 46.6%, respectively). The share of tertiary sector in rural employment is highest in Belgium (73.9%), Denmark (72.2%), France, Sweden and the United Kingdom (71.0% in the last three countries).

Over the period 2007–2010, the shares of primary and secondary sector jobs in predominantly rural areas of the EU decreased, except some countries. However, the importance of the tertiary or services sector in rural employment has increased over the last years in the EU countries, which indicates a clear shift towards a “post-industrial” economic structure even in the rural areas of most agricultural countries like Romania or Bulgaria.

Rural development in Finland

The Finnish rural areas have undergone a profound structural change within a very short period of time. The number of farms has decreased dramatically since the 1970s. Agriculture is no longer the main source of income in rural areas, but wage labor and other entrepreneurial incomes.
In 2011, there were 61,584 farms in Finland – almost 20,000 less than in the beginning of the millennium and during the previous decade (1990–2000) the number of farms declined by 50,000. As one can see from Figure 1, the average size of farms has increased to 38 ha, which is more than double to EU-average (17 ha). Finnish farms are still predominantly family farms, some 88% of them being owned by a private person and 10% by heirs collectively and agricultural consortiums. The increasing trend is the growth of pluri-active farms, where the incomes are derived not only from agriculture, but also from other types of entrepreneurial activity, like sub-contracting in construction, different kinds of nature services or tourism. Currently more than one third of farms are engaged in entrepreneurial activities, because there is enough labor, skills and also appropriate buildings and technology for entrepreneurial activities. So, in Finnish rural areas there are now more professional and entrepreneurial activities than in 1970s when rural development activity began.

The definition of “rural areas” in Finland

As many documents and studies have noted before us, Finland is among the most rural country in Europe. “The Statistics Finland” official definition of “rural” is the statistical division of municipalities into urban, semi-urban and rural municipalities [Tilanstokeskus 2008]. It is based on a scale of urbanization in municipalities where the rural municipalities are those ones ‘in which less than 60 per cent of the population lives in urban settlements, and in which the population of the largest urban settlement is less than 15,000, as well as those municipalities in which at least 60 per cent but less than 90 per cent of the population lives in urban settlements, and in which the population of

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1 Constructed on the base of the statistical data http://www.maataloustilastot.fi/ (in Finnish only).
the largest urban settlement is less than 4,000’. An alternative and more precise definition is represented in the latest 6th Rural Policy Programme 2014–2020 (draft 2013). This program defines the rural typology as follows:

- **Rural local centers.** Smaller centers outside larger urban areas and their sphere of influence: population centers, small cities and large village centers. It is typical for local centers to be structurally compact and serve as a center for surrounding areas. There are 41 rural local centers in Finland. In 2012, 6% of population lived in rural local centers (327 000 people).

- **Rural municipalities close to urban areas.** This is a rural type of area which is physically close to an urban area and has more links to an urban operational area. The entrepreneurs in rural municipalities close to urban areas have versatile local markets. Rural municipalities close to urban areas are located mainly in southern and western Finland and thye includes different kinds of rural areas; population centers, rural heartland type of areas and sparsely populated areas. Rural municipalities close to urban areas cover 10.8% of Finland’s area, and 7% of population lived in these areas in 2012 (396 000 people).

- **Rural heartland** is either area for strong primary production or versatile activities, it is relatively densely populated countryside. Concentrations of specialized primary production are related, for example, to pig production, fur farming, green-house growing or poultry. The area is characterized by mid-sized centers, village centers, and a network of small, relatively densely populated centers. The population in rural heartland is decreasing moderately and is less intensive than in 1999. Also, immigration has brought new residents to rural heartland. The municipalities of rural heartland are located in southern and western Finland. 15.9% of Finland’s area belonged to rural heartland and 12% of Finland’s population lived there in 2012. Thirty eight per cent of Finland’s 1.6 million rural inhabitants live in rural heartland.

- **Sparsely populated rural area.** The settlement structure in sparsely populated rural areas is scattered. Population centers are far apart and between them there can be vast, unpopulated areas. Sparsely populated rural area has a lot of space, clean environment, natural resources, beautiful landscapes, and their own life culture. The industrial structure of sparsely populated rural area is undiversified and dispersedly populated in terms of population. The shortness of the growing season in connection to other limits imposed by nature hinder the required conditions for development of primary production. The majority of rural municipalities in sparsely populated rural areas are located in eastern and northern Finland. Migration losses have made the servicing rate gloomier in the municipalities of sparsely populated rural areas. The area covers 68.3% of Finland’s area, but only 6% of the population (308 000 people).

The important thing to note here is that the boundaries between rural and urban areas are porous and fuzzy, meaning that there are a lot of links and nodes of interaction between the two. Generally, the differences between rural and urban areas in Finland in terms of service provision in education and health care are relatively small, thanks to the welfare system. However, there are clear contrasts between the different types of rural areas – the levels of income employment and health are lower in sparsely populated areas than other types of rural areas and in rural local centers many indicators surpass the urban ones. One reason for this is the changed nature of rural areas in terms of industrial structure, sources of income, and, to large extent, the residential structure.
As noted already, rural areas are no more predominantly agricultural areas, but inhabit a vast array of activities. Also, the residential structure is becoming more varied due to the increased presence of summer residents and immigration from urban areas to rural areas.

**Rural development activity in Finland since the 1970s**

The first sprouts of rural development activity were planted in ‘the village movement’. This began in many universities almost at the same time around the 1970s, but the “deep roots” of such activities are in the cooperative actions of rural people. They usually are unpaid, voluntary and reciprocal community work in order to achieve a common goal, for example, there are building a community house, doing repairs, maintaining a village road, etc. Another more recent root of the village development movement is academic village research activity, which has many roots in Finnish universities and disciplines. The research, which began earnestly in the early 1970s at the University of Joensuu and expanded at the University of Tampere during late 1970s, had the most significant impact on rural development activity in Finland. The “critical village research” of the early 1970s at the Karelian Research Institute in Joensuu was ignited by the “Great Migration” of the 1960s and 1970s which resulted in the desolation of large rural areas of eastern Finland. Village research was exclusively social scientific and aimed to analyze those structural and political factors which resulted in outmigration of the rural population. Jukka Oksa’s notes the contradictory role of a researcher in his account on the series of village research he and his colleagues conducted at the Karelian Research Institute in Northern Karelia. The researcher can take the role of an expert, possessing knowledge and ability to gather and analyze relevant information which (s)he communicates to other experts, policy institutions and the scientists around the world. Another role for the researcher is to act as the “voice of the people”, i.e. a person who articulates the interests of the local population to decision makers so they can understand the problems of the local communities. The third role is the mediator between local village life and policies. At least in the early stages of village research the second option was more dominant. At the later stages, the emphasis moved gradually towards the first option and finally towards the role of the mediation of knowledge [Oksa 2012].

Action research was the key methodology in the rural and village studies at the University of Tampere and it was based on the view that the village was seen as basic unit of rural development. The principal aim of the action research-inspired village research was the organization of village committees as a means to maintain and enhance services and the overall livelihood in the villages. The initial idea with the establishment of village committees was to create an intermediate level of administration in the regional governance structure and link it to the regional administration. Village committees acted as a voice for the community, addressing the problems of the village and sending proposals for their solution to the regional administration. The role of researchers was to support the inauguration process and the operation of the village committees in the beginning.
From Social Innovation to Innovation System: LEADER in European and Russian Rural Areas

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**Figure 2. Time path in the evolution of rural policy**

2 http://www.maaseutupoliitikka.fi/
Granberg notes that the emergence of rural development policy coincided with the “cultural turn” in social sciences. In rural studies, it meant the acknowledgement of culture as a means for rural development efforts [Granberg 2008, p. 51]. Instead of abstract macro-structures of society, the objects of research became everyday life, locality, cultural heritage, nature and meanings. That implied also a change in the sense that the village and villagers were not anymore only objects of laws of economy and the state, but the experiences and understandings of rural people also guided the way in which locality and local resources could be used in the development efforts. In this regard, the village research was a key factor in the formation of separate rural policy in Finland from the early 1980s onwards. Also, OECD acknowledges in its evaluation of Finnish rural policy the important role which the network between academic researchers and rural developers at a local level played in the formation of rural policy in Finland during the early 1980s. Siiskonen [Siiskonen 2009] notes that the formation of new rural policy was fuelled by the realization of insufficiency of agricultural and regional policies to mitigate or solve the problems of intensified rural emigration and urbanization.

The Finnish rural policy committee has depicted the evolution of rural policy in a time-line showing the developments at local, governmental and “global” levels. Many processes coincided at different levels after the 1980s; the village committees were set up at local level, committees and working groups were formed at governmental level, and the formation of rural policy was an on-going process. This phase was called the “Planning stage” and the actual implementation stage took place between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, before Finland entered the European Union.

In order to make the work of local village committees more institutionalized, they were registered as associations. And during the 1980s, a new stage of development began as village associations started to cooperate and the first associations within provinces were established.

At the governmental level, the Rural Development Project started in 1988, accompanied by the First Rural Policy Program in 1991 and was followed by Advisory Committee on Rural policy. The first rural policy document was published by the government in 1987. The document defined the diversification of economy, supporting local initiatives, improvement of living conditions in rural areas and diminishing the income and employment differences between rural and urban areas as the main goals of rural development. The municipalities were given the main responsibility for these tasks. After the late 1980s and early 1990s, the emphasis was shifted to overcoming the borders of different policy sectors (i.e. regional policy vs. agricultural policy, or cultural policy vs. employment policy), and constructing a comprehensive developmental policy which would combine the efforts of civil servants, politicians, researchers, and local activists to pursue a coherent development policy [Granberg, Csite 2003]. Jukka Oksa coined the term “developmental block” to depict this kind of body for pursuing rural development policy. Membership to the European Union meant also new possibilities to enhance activities through new forms of financing village development activities through LEADER and national programs, like ALMA (Regional Rural Development Program) or POMO+ (National Development Program), both of which were functioning during the first program period 2001–2006. The POMO program (The Rural Program Based on Local Initiative) was a kind of national version of the LEADER program, with
similar principles of action and completely nationally financed. The ALMA program was concerned solely western and southern Finland and aimed to stem rural migration and enhance the preconditions for local entrepreneurship. The POMO program was implemented through small-scale development projects and related investments, and the total funding for the program was 24 million euros. It was an important means of expanding the LEADER method in new areas of rural Finland [Kuhmonen 2011, p. 9].

In the latest program period 2007–2013, the rural development work was “based on two parallel programs: the Rural Development Program for Mainland Finland and the Rural Development Program for the Åland Islands. The program for the mainland is run by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The program for Åland is administered by the Åland’s autonomous regional government. These wide-ranging programs provide a variety of tools that can be used by all kinds of stakeholders to promote rural development. This work involves farmers, rural enterprises, rural residents and their organisations, as well as LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs)”

LEADER as a European instrument for rural development

The acronym “LEADER” comes from French words “Liaisons entre Acteurs du Développement Economique Rural” meaning “Liaison among Actors in Rural Economic Development”. As its name suggests, it is a method of mobilizing and delivering rural development in local rural communities, rather than a fixed set of measures to be implemented. The difference between LEADER and other more traditional rural policy measures is that it indicates ‘how’ to proceed rather than ‘what’ needs to be done. Seven key features summarize the LEADER approach (Figure 3).

![The LEADER approach](source)

Figure 3. The LEADER approach

Source: The LEADER approach: a basic guide European network for rural development.
1. **An area-based approach** takes a small, homogenous, socially cohesive territory, often characterized by common traditions, a local identity, a sense of belonging or common needs and expectations, as the target area for policy implementation. Having such an area as a reference facilitates the recognition of local strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities, endogenous potential and the identification of major bottlenecks for sustainable development.

2. **The bottom-up approach** means that local actors participate in decision-making about the strategy and in the selection of the priorities to be pursued in their local area. The involvement of local actors includes the population at large, economic and social interest groups and representative public and private institutions. LEADER conceives the local people as the best experts on the development of their territory. It can be seen as a participatory democracy tool supplementing the electoral parliamentary democracy.

3. **The local partnerships** for area development work through a structured governance mechanism – referred to as the Local Action Group (LAG). The LAG should associate public and private partners, be well-balanced and representative of the existing local interest groups and be drawn from the different socio-economic sectors in the area. At the decision-making level, the private partners and associations must make up at least 50% of the local partnership; its legal form may vary from country to country, but it is often a non-profit, registered organization.

4. **Multi-sectoral integration.** For the purpose of developing the Local Development Strategy (LDS), the LEADER approach requires the needs of the area to be explored in an integrated way, rather than focus on development needs of specific sectors. The LDS must integrate relevant development needs for all sectors to achieve the desired common goals. The actions and projects contained in local strategies should be linked and coordinated as a coherent whole. The LAG encompasses sometimes surprisingly diverse actors, which can be fertile ground for partnership and innovation. In order to allow for inclusion of different points of view and resources, the LAG must be able to bring the different interests and interest groups together in a constructive manner.

5. **Networking.** The LAG is a network itself but it should also look around and cooperate with other development organizations on local, regional, national and international levels. Networking is a means of transferring good practice, of disseminating innovation and building on the lessons learned from local rural development. Networking forges links between people, projects and rural areas and so can help overcome the isolation faced by some rural regions. It can help stimulate co-operation projects by putting LEADER groups in touch with each other.

6. **Innovation.** The LAG must bring new elements and solutions to the development of its territory. In its strategy design and project selection decisions, the LAG must be able to tolerate a certain amount of risk – otherwise the most surprising and innovative ideas would always become disqualified.

7. **Inter-territorial and international cooperation.** Co-operation goes further than networking. It involves a Local Action Group undertaking a joint project with another LEADER group, or with a group taking a similar approach, in another region, member state, or even a third country. Cooperation with other regions is often the best source of innovation for the LAGs. From new viewpoints one can better see new opportunities. In the European rural development policy, LEADER has the main responsibility for transnational cooperation.
These seven key distinctive features explain what the LEADER approach is about. Putting these principles into practice means real people designing local strategies and participating in activities. The operating principle of the LEADER groups has been the project, which has been interpreted as the organizational device to cope with the contingency, complexity and fast changes of the late modern area [Andersson 2009]. The realization of different projects that fit into the selected priorities of a targeted area through the formation of a partnership, integration and cooperation allows making real a difference to the daily lives of rural people.

**LEADER in Finland**

Finnish LAGs are registered associations that develop rural areas by funding local rural development projects and supporting local enterprises. There are 56 LAGs in Finland, covering the whole country. During the program period 2007–2013, the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was the first in the EU to approve the establishment of LEADER local action groups, which were set up for mainland Finland in August 2007. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, total public funding for the LAGs over the years 2007–2013 was 252.72 million euros, varying between 2.5 million and 6.8 million euros per LAG. The activities of LAGs are steered by their boards. The tripartite principle is followed in the composition of the board. This means that the decision-making board of each local action group should have a balanced representation of the following parties:

- **municipalities** (local administration)
- **communities** (organizations, associations and large enterprises)
- **local people** (individual people and small entrepreneurs)

All these groups are equally represented in LAG boards. The maximum term of office for a board member is six consecutive years. According to expert evaluations, the success of LEADER in Finland is based on two factors: 1) the network-based national rural development policy, and 2) the viability and functional capacity of Finnish civil society. The other side of the coin is the trend to which Pertti Rannikko paid attention to already in 1999. Along with the expansion of LEADER-type activity and its stabilization, the state has retreated from rural areas and has transferred the responsibility of provision of social services and local development in general to municipalities. Rannikko and some other researchers [Moisio 2012; Kumpulainen 2012] argue that together with the expansion of LEADER activity, the principles and goals of local development were changed. The goal was not anymore well-being at the local level, but the competitiveness of the locality. The development efforts were not anymore based on voluntary activity of local people, but more and more demanding duties in a “projectified” environment. This is detrimental to the initial idea of the LEADER if the local activity becomes professionalized and its goals defined out with the local communities. Kumpulainen notes also that the ability to change is a central necessity in local developmental work. Villages are being transformed into neoliberal local communities, where old traditions are combined with developmental strategies, entrepreneurship and productization. These trends are visible in the latest rural development policy documents. Officially, the Finnish rural policy treats the rural area as a part of sectorial policies which aim a) to
guarantee adequate attention is paid to rural areas and b) the importance of orienting specific programs to promote rural development and competitiveness. The goal is to guarantee the balanced development of the whole country, as the latest Rural development policy 2014–2020 document notes. From the beginning, it defines rural areas as an environment which encourages entrepreneurship and creativity. The document emphasizes experiences of inclusion and functioning services, which are publicly, privately and communally produced as prerequisites of good living in rural areas. This implies a view according to which an increasing share of social, cultural and other services will be produced by private and third sector service providers, not only the welfare state (as until now). According to the document, the main direction in the development of livelihoods is eco-economy, which means the utilization of rural resources in an effective and sustainable manner.

Rural areas aim at sustainable growth, well-being and competitiveness by combining traditional skills, research results and latest technology. The document emphasizes the willingness and preparedness to move as the keys to success, and in the spirit of latest managerial guide-books, the document notes that “Changing operational environment creates threats and challenges, but also new opportunities”. The urge for “local branding” is visible in the interpretation which the document sees in the application of knowledge, skills and activity of rural residents in realization and development of rural well-being. This is realized by a special “place based policy, which recognizes the diversity of localities and takes into account the circumstances and needs of each locality.”

Piloting LEADER in Russia

The Ladoga Initiative project ran for two years (between March 2011 and March 2013) and it was implemented in the Lodeinoe Pole municipal district of Leningrad oblast’, and Olonets and Pitkaranta municipal districts of the Republic of Karelia. All these three districts are located on the Lake Ladoga, which gives its name to the project, Ladoga Initiative. The Finnish partner (Lead Partner) was the Ruralia Institute of the University of Helsinki, located in the city of Mikkeli.

The three pilot regions are different. Pitkaranta district is an industrial territory with mainly mining, forestry and pulp and paper industries. Olonets district is a typical agricultural territory and at the beginning of the 1990s still had nine agricultural enterprises – nowadays only five have remained. Pitkaranta and Olonets districts have a common history and a common net of settlements, while Lodeinoe Pole, which is only 40 km from Olonets, is a different kind of territory. There is a combination of industry (mainly forestry) and agriculture. Another factor of economic development is tourism. The three big monasteries in Lodeinoe Pole district have more than 100 000 tourist visits every year. The rural areas of Lodeinoe Pole district are less developed in economic terms than in Karelia, and the settlement structure differs from Karelian territory. The Karelian rural municipalities usually consist of up to 10 villages, whereas in Lodeinoe Pole district, one rural municipality can have up to 65 villages, most of them small villages with less than 20 permanent inhabitants. Roads between villages are worse than in Karelia. Such differences can be explained by the historical, political, and geographical factors. The two Karelian districts are located in the southern part of
Karelia, which has historically been a relatively developed territory. Nowadays it is the main agricultural zone of the Republic of Karelia, and also its most densely populated territory, located not far from the republic’s capital, Petrozavodsk (130 km from Olonets). Lodeinoe Pole district, on the other hand, is located on the periphery of the Leningrad oblast’ and it is in the margins of the economic development of the oblast’. Economic investments are steered mostly to Saint Petersburg and the neighboring municipalities.

The overall objective of the project was “the promotion of rural development in selected Russian regions on the basis of knowledge transfer from the Finnish partner” (LEADER approach). The more detailed objectives of the project include the support of local bottom-up initiatives in order to strengthen sustainable rural economic development. This took place through a) knowledge transfer and networking among partners from both sides of the border; b) through the promotion of cooperation between various parties at a local level; c) through the establishment and development of partnership relations; and d) through increasing the awareness of the local population and local authority concerning the needs and opportunities of local development.

The project had many and some rather ambitious goals. The goals were educative, activating and transformative. 

**Educative goals** included the knowledge transfer from Finland to Russia through training sessions with local activists and LIG-coordinators. The trainings were organized by LEADER and other experts from Finland. Such trainings were an important stage of the projects, because the LEADER method was not known in Russia as an instrument for rural development. At the beginning of the project, this instrument was introduced both to the management staff of the project (local coordinators) and to local people, who were selected to the board of LIGs (local initiative groups)\(^4\). The trainings were organized both in Finland and in Russia and they had different goals. The Russian training for LIG members mainly consisted of the introduction of project work, while training in Finland aimed at getting acquainted with a Finnish LEADER. Trainings for coordinators combined both of these goals.

During the first training for **project coordinators** in Finland, samples of practical implementation of LEADER were presented and the things possible to do with the LEADER were explained. Futhermore, they gained practical experience of the association’s activities. The training included also a visit to the LEADER office and the familiarization with the necessary paperwork for concrete projects and their implementation. In this manner local coordinators were provided with a comprehensive understanding of LEADER activity in Finland.

According to feedback from coordinators, the general impression from trainings was very positive. The trainings gave local coordinators an actual chance to learn how to adopt a European instrument to the Russian reality. It meant that they were not just listening to theory, but tried to prepare the necessary documents, for example, a questionnaire for local people. They were not given utopian speculations about LEADER in Russia, but they got a clear understanding of LEADER as European instrument for rural development and the necessary preconditions for the adaptation of this instrument to the Russian circumstances.

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\(^4\) LAG in European terminology is local action group. The straight translation into Russian language did not reflect goal of this group. We named this group as Local Initiative Group (местная инициативная группа), which is better sound in Russian language. So, European LAG is LIG in Russian context.
We would like to hope that the society in Russia can solve problems without external assistance and that there will be political and civil institutions, ready to support rural areas in the same way, and to the same, or at least some, extent. In other words, we are real pioneers. After the trainings, we realized very well, we are beginning from scratch. In Russia, we are not ready yet to work in such an open society.

The difference in mentality of Russians and Finns is really obvious. Here, association is voluntary and the people are actively partaking. In today’s Russian civil society and associations, though proclaimed, have in fact no significant impact on people’s life and the development of the territory (interview with coordinator).

The first training for LIGs members took place in Russia and dealt with the procedures of project applications: how to write application and to work with the local population. During this training, LIG members played a double role: they presented ideas for mini-projects and they evaluated mini-projects. Seven draft applications were presented and discussed during the training. LIGs were working not only within their own groups, but interregional cooperation of three LIGs took place. The second training for LIG members was organized in Finland, where they could see how Finnish LAGs work, what kind of project can be implemented with LEADER, and what LEADER is in Finland. The group visited different places and different projects, saw how they were implemented and what results projects had. These visits to Finnish LEADER projects strongly impressed the Russian participants. These visits taught them three main points:

- A project cannot be done without an active attitude of local people and a lot of voluntary work by the local community;
- A project cannot be implemented only with external financing, but there must be some share of co-financing from local level;
- It is possible to make big things with little money.

Activating goal concerned local residents, i.e. how to make them more interested in their own affairs and take part in joint activities. Activation of local residents took place through children’s essays on the “Future of my village”, verbally through distribution of leaflets, and in village meetings. Separately each of these activities did not bring good results, but the combination of different activities made it possible to achieve the goal.

Village meetings held the central role in the activation of the local people. Each household got an invitation to this event and the invitation included a small questionnaire about life in the village and village problems. Village meetings had several goals: a) to announce the idea of the project, b) to discuss problems and needs in the villages and to make a list of development priorities for each rural municipality, c) to suggest candidates for the LIGs. These meetings were an attempt to engage, activate, and empower the local community. All together, 27 public meetings took place in the project area.

In one pilot territory, the local population reacted warmly to the invitation, because they were invited not just for a traditional meeting, but a meeting with a cup of tea. For them, this was a new form of work with the population. People came, sat down, took a cup of tea, relaxed and began to communicate with each other. Due to the prolonged
Crisis of the local economy, rural people have rare possibilities to meet each other and discuss different topics. Increased anomie means that social ties have become much weaker in Russian villages. The people who came to the village meetings were interested in the future development of their village. Also, talking about project issues, people discussed many different rural affairs and problems.

In another pilot region, people in the village meeting were confused about the reason why they were invited, and what would take place; even those people who distributed invitations with questionnaires.

The activity level of the local population differed a lot in different villages and therefore the meetings were not similar. In some villages, many people came, while in others only a few. And in some villages, people were not interested at all. In many small villages, where inhabitants know each other well enough, and know about each others’ problems and general village problems, people were more active and more solid than in the larger villages. In small villages, people wanted to communicate and had a clearer view about common goals and common interests. The bigger villages had more disjoined and less active populations. They were less willing to discuss common problems. Nevertheless, active people can be found in any village. Women were usually more active, especially women from the social sphere and pensioners.

Often, rural people came to the village meetings with pessimistic feelings, but during the discussions the psychological climate changed. People’s desire to act increased when ideas for mini-projects were born. In some cases, people were ready to act even without the financial support of the Ladoga Initiative. For example, in one village there was a talk about the necessity to clean the cemetery.

*For this purpose we do not need the project. Let us write the announcement, hang it out somewhere in the village, define a day when all people should come and clean garbage from the cemetery* (village meeting in Lodeinoe Pole district).

The goal of informing the local population about the idea of the project was not fully achieved in all 27 village meetings, because of relatively low participation. However, even in these cases the information about meetings and their results was later distributed among villagers. Some of the main reasons behind the low participation rate were general passivity and pessimism of rural people, weak information channels inside villages, and deep lack of trust of any institution, including village meetings as local democratic institution. The lack of trust was visible in that that people sometimes do not want to be in touch with the authorities and do not see any difference between e.g. state and municipal authority. Passivity is in some cases related to the passive local authorities, but neither of them have a vision of their own role in the community development.

The second task for village meetings was to discuss the villages’ problems and needs in order to compose a list of development priorities for each rural municipality. People participated very actively in this part of village meetings. At the same time it was clear that there was a huge number of problems in these villages and that the majority of them could not be solved in the framework of the project.
The standard of living varies much between villages. As a consequence, the ideas for small local projects were also different. On one hand, people wanted to grow flowers on the bridge (as they had seen in Finland), or to have a project based on landscape design. On the other hand, in some villages the very basic needs were raised, such as the water supply or the lack of a bridge across the river.

It is a pity and sad to speak with people when you understand that with these means it is not possible to make their life better. Therefore I am seriously concerned with the project advertising, and I do not advertise that people can improve their life with our project (one of the local coordinators).

The last part of village meetings consisted of suggesting candidates for the LIGs. The idea was to elect three candidates during each meeting: one from the local authority, the second one from business and the third, a representative of the local population or a voluntary organization. After carrying out of all village meetings, the chosen candidates were asked to continue informing and questioning rural inhabitants.

The activity of the population during the election of candidates was very different. There were two village meetings where no candidates were elected. Both of them are small villages with about 100 inhabitants. In small villages, not many people are ready to invest their time in participating in trainings about paper work. There are mainly pensioners and they “have got used to work, instead of talking” – they are not organizers. The selected activits in the LIGs were mainly teachers and employees of local administrations.

There were no enterprises in the small villages; often there were not even shops. In three village meetings out of six in Olonets district, there were no representatives of business. The same problem was found regarding the participation of business people in the work of LIGs in two other pilot territories. Only a few businessman came to village meetings; even fewer were ready to spend time working in the project. Therefore, in all three regions, the local coordinators had to try to find a local businessman ready to actively participate in the project.

The election of representatives of local authority came smoothly. There were no extra and no shortage of candidates. In this group, there was only one head of rural municipality, all others were employees of local administrations or deputies.

The biggest group of volunteers to work on the project came from so-called ordinary people. There were no associations or NGOs at the local level. Therefore, only ordinary people were represented the last third of the LIG. In this group, a second stage in the selection procedure was needed, because there were many more candidates than were needed. In the selection of LIG members, geographical factors were kept in mind. LIG members should represent different rural municipalities and different villages.

The basic problem faced during the selection process for LIGs was that people were afraid of being overloaded with work, or not coping with all tasks they would face. Also, the difficulties of participating in events and seminars played an important role, because of a supposed lack of time, problems in acquiring passports and visas, and the permission of employers to take part in the project activities. In the end, three Local Initiative Groups were formed.
The transformative goal of the project concerned new modes of governance, bottom-up approach, development of partnership relations and negotiation of the conditions for equality.

The Ladoga Initiative project from the very beginning was planned and later implemented as a bottom-up project with goals of promotion of cooperation between various parties at local level, establishment and development of partnership relations, and increasing the awareness of the local population and local authority concerning the needs and opportunities of local development. All activities and all participants were from local (village and municipal) levels and all decisions were made at the local level. Examples of bottom-up approach could be found at any stage of the project.

During the application period, each local initiative group selected its own strategy of the project implementation. The LIG from Olonets district decided to divide the amount of financing into smaller portions to be able to implement more projects in different villages. As a result, 25 applications were received from this territory and 18 of them were approved. Lodeinoe Pole district, on the contrary, arrived at the decision to apply for a larger amount of financing and not to dissipate resources for smaller projects. There were 10 applications and five of them where approved. Pitkaranta district combined these strategies – both small and large projects were promoted (13 applications and seven implemented projects).

The application period lasted four months, after which a selection procedure took place. The whole selection procedure was based on the voice of locals – members of local initiative groups. The evaluation of the applications received included several stages. At the first stage, the local coordinators prepared the applications for evaluation and developed evaluation papers to be used by every LIG member to assess the projects according to an agreed-upon criteria. The applications were divided among the LIG members. Each member evaluated a different number of applications. The LIG members did not evaluate the applications from their own village, their own applications (where applicable), or the applications in the same sphere as their own project (where applicable). The last criterion turned out to be superfluous, because the applications in the sphere of culture did not compete with each other. Though this LEADER principle was followed, it does not seem to be relevant in the Russian conditions.

The local initiative group members received applications had to evaluate applications during the period specified. Based on the LEADER principles and in order to ensure unbiased and transparent decision-making, each LIG member evaluated the applications independently according to the specified criteria and using the same rating system. The LIG members could write down their special opinion concerning the applications from their village. This opportunity was provided to obtain an additional opinion which could be used in case of disputable or controversial evaluation results. Though the LIG members did not evaluate the applications from their village, they could also voice their opinion about the possible importance of a particular project for their village.

Following individual evaluation, the LIG members got together to rate the applications according to the rating tables filled out at the first stage and to select the winning applications in their district. The content of applications was primarily discussed at this stage. After that, the coordinator made score calculations without evaluating the applications and without affecting the group’s decision.
At the next stage, one-day evaluation seminars were held in each district for LIG members. The seminar agendas included each project’s contents, their compliance with the selected priorities, and their relevance for the rural community. The participants also estimated whether the budget was realistic. The total amount of the fund was 1,000,000 rubles in each district. There were 25 applications submitted in the Olonets district for the total amount of 2,370,145.55 rubles. In Pitkaranta district, there were 13 applications for the total amount of 2,492,276 rubles. In Lodeinoe Pole, there were 10 applications for the total amount of 3,018,730 rubles.

Ranked lists of applications had been prepared prior to these evaluation seminars, which ensured the smooth work of the local initiative groups during the meetings. The discussion was held in several stages. At first, the projects with the lowest scores were considered. Some projects did not comply with one or more criteria and were, therefore, immediately removed from the list. Some of the projects were put aside due to the necessity of budget reductions. After the first discussion round, the total amount applied for became significantly smaller. During the second discussion round the projects with the highest scores were considered. The majority of attention was paid to the budget: how realistic it was and whether reductions were possible or necessary. The work on project evaluation was very fruitful. Special opinions were voiced and comments were given for some projects. In Olonets and Pitkaranta districts, the discussion was very successful and no particular problems arose. In Lodeinoe Pole district the selection process was very painful. There were only 10 applications, but the budgets of each of them was big and it was difficult to refuse applications right away. The decisions were made according to the principle of equal geographical distribution, i.e. at least one project from each rural community was to be supported. There were regrets voiced during the discussion that all the projects applied for large financing – if the budgets had been smaller, there would have been more chances to implement at least something.

Purely business projects were not supported in any district. The inhabitants were unwilling to finance entrepreneurs, because they do not see any socially significant effect of rural business. The people prefer to wait for state initiatives and hope to obtain services free of charge. They do not realize the same services can be provided by entrepreneurs, even if for a fee. The jobs (e.g. farms and factories) are not easily created, that is why every new job is important and valuable for rural areas. Though the creation of new jobs was set as a priority at village meetings, the applications of private businesses providing for new jobs were refused. The principle here was ‘we would rather be poor, but will not let others earn money’ (citation from interview). This suggests that Russian rural society is not yet ready to see entrepreneurship as a real instrument of local development.

After the discussion was over, the winning projects were selected. Their total budget was one million rubles in each district.

At the last stage, the ‘expert council’ meeting took place. It was devoted to selecting the applications for financing based on the LIGs’ recommendations. Thanks to the thorough work on projects evaluation done by the local initiative groups, the decision-making at the council was smooth and effective. In Lodeinoe Pole and Pitaranta districts, the list of mini-projects recommended by local initiative groups was approved without any changes. In Olonets district, one project received reduced financing, because some work had been already fulfilled using sponsor funds. This amount of financing was allocated to another project ranked high enough but not selected by the LIG.
Examples of implemented LEADER projects in Russia

1. Construction of a village bathhouse (*banya*), Sharkhinichi Village, Alekhovshchina Rural settlement, Lodeinoe Pole district, Leningrad oblast’

   The project idea was to construct a village bathhouse. More than 10 years had passed since the public bath burned down in Sharkhinichi village. Not so many families could afford the construction of an individual bath during these years. One local resident came up with the initiative to construct a new public bath. Together with other villagers he started to do this work. Part of the expense was covered by the Ladoga Initiative project.

2. Museum of the inhabitants of the Oyat River area: under the roof of a traditional house, Alekhovshchina Village, Alekhovshchina Rural settlement, Lodeinoe Pole district, Leningrad oblast’

   The project idea was to preserve the museum building. During the project, the museum roof was repaired, porch renewed, and territory was improved. A lot of work was done on a voluntary basis. School pupils, local entrepreneurs and enterprises, and local residents participated in the project.

3. Skating-Rink – organization of active leisure in winter, Yanega Village, Yanega Rural settlement, Lodeinoe Pole district, Leningrad oblast’

   The project idea was the creation of a skating-rink aimed at the development of sports, encouragement to do winter sports, and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. During project implementation, the integration of different age groups took place; common work integrated the local community.

4. Names of the native region, Vidlitsa village, Vidlitsa Rural settlement, Olonets district, Republic of Karelia

   Within the project, the initiative group collected photos and videos about veterans from the oldest village inhabitants and village stories. Photo materials are issued in exhibitions and presented to inhabitants in rural events and in halls of public places. Courses with masters of journalism and photojournalism from the local newspaper were organized. The camera, the scanner, the color printer and the laptop were bought.

5. Family Center “Rodnik”, Hiidenselga village, Laskela rural settlement, Pitkaranta district, Republic of Karelia

   The idea was to renovate an old building and to create a place for recreation and cultural leisure of inhabitants: a classroom with a weaving loom for crafts workshop, a gym, a children’s game room, an assembly hall, and a village library. The biggest part of the works was made on a voluntary basis. The project positively affected the relations inside the local community.

6. Health club, Harlu village, Harlu rural settlement, Pitkaranta district, Republic of Karelia

   The idea was to renovate premises for the creation of a gym for classes in fitness and aerobics. The gym is used by villagers and free aerobics classes are organized for youth groups three times a week.

Conclusions

On the whole, the Ladoga Initiative project was successful in attaining its main goals, activating local people to cooperate for common interest, and teaching village
activists project skills: how to calculate budgets, create time-tables and negotiate with relevant partners. Evidence for this can be seen in the villages in the form of play-grounds, sports facilities (football field, boxing ring) and cultural events which combine handicraft traditions, tourism and entrepreneurship. Therefore, we can say that as a whole, the experience of the Ladoga Initiative had promising results. The project notwithstanding, there are some positive signs in rural Russia’s socio-economic development. These can be seen in the strong economic growth that Russia experienced until 2008–2009 and special rural programs to enhance small farming, housing and welfare.

The level of activity and commitment of local actors have ridiculed the general beliefs of passivity, kolkhoz and consumer mentality among rural population, which gives reason to maintain that the Ladoga Initiative verifies the strengths of participatory action as a method to initiate and to support local development. There is a need to create and to maintain partnerships and networking at the local level and between local and external actors to solve local problems. Thus far partnerships have mainly concerned interaction between administration and large-scale enterprises. Various models of partnership between local people and both administration and enterprises have been experimented with in the Ladoga Initiative and some differences can be seen between the three project areas. More work is needed to demonstrate the benefits of joint action for the stakeholders at the local level. Below are a few quotes from interviews with participants:

- The population began to believe that it is possible to achieve results showing an initiative.
- The first experience in the realization of socially oriented projects gave very positive results. We are ready to continue.
- I have experience with the achievement of a goal which seemed to be inaccessible.

The Ladoga Initiative was a successful pilot, but any lasting results require more coherent rural policy and that local people are involved in the design and implementation of development policies like the LEADER approach notes.

Nowadays Russia has developed several important documents directed at the development of agriculture and rural areas. Among them are the Conception of long-term socio-economic development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020, which defines the main objectives of the state agricultural policy, in particular the sustainable development of rural areas and improving the living standards of the rural population. There is Food security doctrine of the Russian Federation, in which the directions of the state policy in the field of sustainable development of rural areas are defined. In order to implement the provisions of these acts, the Conception of sustainable rural development for the period till 2020 was developed.

The state policy for sustainable development of rural areas is implemented in accordance with some principles. Among them there are principles strongly connected to the LEADER approach.

- partnership between the state, local governments, businesses and rural populations in order to achieve the sustainable development of rural areas;
- development of local self-government, civil society, all forms of cooperation;
- increasing the participation of the rural population in decision-making related to access to natural resources (land, water, forest), social services, as well as the prospects of development of rural settlements.

The same document has defined financial security of the Conception. An important direction in it is the creation of a system of grant support to encourage
initiatives of rural communities (authors’ emphasis) for the improvement of rural settlements, the development of physical culture and sports, children’s and youth recreation, folk art, conservation of local cultural and historical heritage, and the preservation of the environment. The implementation of the Conception is to be carried out at the expense of the federal, regional and local budgets, as well as extra-budgetary sources, including funds of economic entities acting in rural areas and the means of the rural population.

This is the first official document from the federal level, in which democratic principles of rural development were taken into account. Among them are the formation of partnerships, the development of local self-government and civil society, increasing the participation of the population in decision-making, supporting local initiatives, and the principle of co-financing from different levels and different sources, including the means of the local population. The main question is how much time the transition from the paper to a real life will take place.

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От социальных инноваций к инновационным системам. LEADER на европейских и российских сельских территориях

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Ключевые слова: сельское хозяйство, сельская политика, сельское развитие, подход ЛИДЕР, местные инициативные группы, Россия, Финляндия

В данной статье рассматриваются вопросы европейского сельского развития на примере Финляндии и возможности использования европейских подходов к развитию села в России.

Сельские районы Финляндии претерпели глубокие структурные изменения в течение очень короткого времени. В 1970-е гг. количество фермерских хозяйств резко сократилось и сельское хозяйство перестало быть основным источником доходов в сельских районах. В это же время активно развивается так называемое «сельское движение» (village movement) и академические исследования села. В начале 1980 гг. данные исследования оказали сильное влияние на формирование политики сельского развития государства, важной составляющей которой было тесное сотрудничество между академическим миром и практиками. Одним из элементов выработанной политики оказался так называемый «Блок развития», включающий среди прочего поддержку местных инициатив. Европейский подход ЛИДЕР (LEADER1) является одним из механизмов, направленных на протекцию этих инициатив.

Это подход означает мобилизацию населения и обеспечение развития местных сельских общин. Семь главных особенностей формируют идеологию подхода ЛИДЕР:

1 Аббревиатура LEADER означает «обеспечение связи между акторами для экономического развития сельских территорий».
1. Территориальный подход основан на выборе небольшой, однородной, социально-связанной территории, часто характеризуемой общими традициями, местной идентичностью, чувством принадлежности и общими потребностями и ожиданиями. Эта территория оценивается как целевая область для стратегического планирования и развития. Выбор такой территории облегчает выявление местных сильных и слабых сторон развития, угроз и возможностей, эндогенного потенциала и идентификации основных сложных, проблематичных аспектов развития в рамках идей устойчивого развития.

2. Подход «снизу вверх» (или эндогенный) означает, что местные акторы участвуют в принятии решений по выбору стратегии развития и необходимых приоритетов, которых в будущем будут придерживаться на данной территории. Местные акторы – это местное население, представители бизнеса, государственные учреждения и власть. Подход ЛИДЕР рассматривает местных жителей в качестве лучших экспертов в области развития своей территории. Учет мнения населения, их активное участие в делах своего села может рассматриваться как инструмент демократии участия в дополнении к электоральной демократии.

3. Партнерские отношения на местном уровне, необходимые для успешной работы по развитию территории, можно развивать через так называемые местные инициативные группы. Эти группы должны связывать частных и государственных партнеров из разных секторов экономики, быть сбалансированными и представлять интересы всех местных заинтересованных в развитии территории сторон.

4. Мультисекторная интеграция. В целях разработки Стратегии местного развития подход ЛИДЕР требует, чтобы потребности и проблемы выбранной территории были исследованы интегрированным способом, а не рассматривали только нужды определенных секторов. Только так можно достичь желаемых результатов для всей территории. Различные проекты и задачи, реализуемые на выбранной территории, должны быть объединены в единое целое.

5. Нетворкинг или организация сети. Местные инициативные группы – это тоже сети, но они также должны сотрудничать друг с другом и другими организациями на местном, региональном, национальном и международном уровнях. Сети – это средство передачи лучших практик, распространения инноваций и обучение на своих и чужих примерах, полученных в результате деятельности по развитию сельских территорий. Нетворкинг усиливает связи между людьми, различными проектами и сельскими территориями таким образом, что это позволяет преодолевать изоляцию, с которой сталкиваются многие отдаленные сельские районы. Нетворкинг может помочь стимулировать реализацию проектов сотрудничества, связывая инициативные группы друг с другом.

6. Инновации. Работа местных инициативных групп должна привнести новые элементы и решения по развитию территории. При выборе стратегии и проектов необходимо учитывать возможные риски и быть готовым к ним. Иначе самые необычные и новаторские идеи не получат достаточного внимания и не будут реализованы.

7. Межрегиональное и международное сотрудничество. Оно вовлекает местные инициативные группы в совместные проекты с другими ЛИДЕР-группами, использующими аналогичный подход, но реализующими его в другом регионе или даже в другой стране. Сотрудничество с другими регионами зачастую является лучшим источником инноваций для местных инициативных групп. Взгляд
на старую проблему с новой (другой) точки зрения может точнее показать новые возможности. В европейской программе развития сельских территорий подход ЛИДЕР несет главную ответственность за межнациональное сотрудничество.

Перечисленные выше семь отличительных особенностей объясняют суть подхода ЛИДЕР. Использование этих принципов на практике означает, что местное население самостоятельно разрабатывает стратегию местного развития и активно участвует в ее реализации. Операционный принцип подхода ЛИДЕР – это различные проекты. Реализация этих программ, которые соответствуют выбранным приоритетам территории посредством формирования партнерства, интеграции и сотрудничества, позволяют привнести реальные положительные изменения на селе.

ЛИДЕР в Финляндии

Финские местные инициативные группы являются зарегистрированными общественными организациями, которые развивают сельские районы посредством финансирования различных проектов и поддержки местных предпринимателей. Всего в Финляндии насчитывается 56 таких инициативных групп, и они покрывают всю территорию страны. Согласно данным Министерства сельского и лесного хозяйства Финляндии, общее финансирование местных инициативных групп в течение программного периода 2007–2013 гг. составило 252,72 млн евро, т.е. на одну местную инициативную группу пришлось от 2,5 до 6,8 млн евро в течение указанного периода.

Инициативные группы управляются Советами, состав которых выбирается на основе трехстороннего принципа. Это означает, что Совет, принимающий решения по финансированию тех или иных проектов, должен быть представлен представителями местной власти, местных общественных организаций и местного бизнеса, а также уполномоченными местными жителями. Все эти группы должны иметь равное количество голосов в Совете.

Согласно экспертам, успех ЛИДЕРа в Финляндии обусловлен двумя факторами: первое – это основанная на сетевых партнерских отношениях национальная политика развития сельских территорий; второе – это жизнеспособность и функциональность финского гражданского общества. Но у ЛИДЕРа есть и другая сторона медали, которую еще в 1999 г. отмечал Петри Раннико. С распространением ЛИДЕРа в Финляндии и его стабилизацией, государство несколько отстранилось от сельских территорий и передало ответственность по предоставлению различных услуг и по вопросам местного развития в целом муниципальным властям. П. Раннико и другие ученые [Moisio2012; Kumpulainen 2012] отмечают, что вместе с распространением ЛИДЕРа принципы и цели местного развития поменялись, и общее благосостояние на местном уровне перестало быть главной целью; основным ориентиром теперь стала конкурентоспособность села. Усилия по развитию сельских территорий в настоящее время больше не основываются на добровольной активности местного населения, а больше выглядят как обязанность действовать в «проектной среде». Работа по развитию территорий становится профессиональной проектной деятельностью и часто цели определяются без учета мнения местного сообщества. Это, конечно же, противоречит первоначальной идее ЛИДЕРа. Кумпу-
И. Копотева, Й. Никуланен также отмечает, что современные села трансформируются в неолиберальные сельские сообщества, в которых старые традиции сочетаются со стратегиями развития, предпринимательством и продукцией. Эти тенденции нашли отражение и в последних документах политики сельского развития страны. Официально сельская политика Финляндии трактуется как часть секторной политики, целью которой являются: 1) гарантировать адекватное внимание сельским территориям и 2) важность ориентации специальных программ для содействия по развитию сельских районов и их конкурентоспособности. Как отмечается в документе «Сельская политика развития 2014–2020», главная цель всего этого — гарантия сбалансированного развития всей страны. Этот же документ определяет сельские территории как среду, которая поддерживает развитие предпринимательства и творчества, и также особо отмечает опыт функционирования сферы услуг, которая развивается за счет государства, частного бизнеса и местных сообществ и направлена на улучшение жизни на селе. Это означает, что развитие сферы услуг будет идти за счет частного бизнеса и третьего сектора, а не только за счет государства, как это было ранее. Таким образом, развитие ЛИДЕРа в Финляндии повлияло не только на развитие отдельных местных сообществ, но и на политику сельского развития в целом.

ЛИДЕР в России

В России пилотный проект ЛИДЕРа был осуществлен благодаря программе «Приграничного сотрудничества в рамках Инструмента Европейского Соседства и Партнёрства ЕИСП – ПС 2007–2013» в течение двух лет (март 2011 – март 2013). В проекте принимали участие три муниципальных района (Лодейнопольский, Олонецкий и Питкярантский), расположенных на территории Республики Карелия и Ленинградской области, на побережье Ладоги, что и дало название проекту «Ладожская инициатива». Ведущим партнером в проекте выступил Институт «Руралия» Хельсинкского университета. Общей целью данного проекта является стимулирование сельского развития на пилотных российских территориях на основе передачи знаний от финского партнера (подход ЛИДЕР). У проекта было несколько задач, и некоторые из них являлись достаточно амбициозными. Первая задача — образовательная, она включала в себя передачу знаний от финских партнеров российским через организованные экспертами ЛИДЕРа семинары, тренинги с местными активистами и координаторами местных инициативных групп. Эти семинары проводились и для координаторов проекта каждого муниципального района, и для местного населения, и для участников местных инициативных групп. Обучение проходило как на территории Финляндии, так и в России.

Российские семинары касались вопросов проектной работы, написания заявок для проектов, составлению бюджетов. Члены местных инициативных групп, с одной стороны, учились писать эти заявки, чтобы потом распространять полученные знания среди местного населения, а с другой стороны, они сами оценивали написанные документы, так как в дальнейшем им пришлось оценивать все поступившие в «Ладожскую инициативу» заявки и выбрать лучшие для финансирования.

Финские семинары касались главным образом ЛИДЕРа и его результатов в Финляндии. Российские участники ознакомились с тем, как работают фин-
От социальных инноваций к инновационным системам.
LEADER на европейских и российских сельских территориях

ские местные инициативные группы, какие проекты они реализовывают в рамках ЛИДЕРа. Россияне посетили различные села и ознакомились с достигнутыми результатами. Три главных урока, которые были извлечены из этих визитов, потом активно использовались в России:

• Реализация проекта не может быть осуществлена без позитивного отношения местного населения к идее и без огромной волонтерской работы местного сообщества.
• Проекты не могут быть реализованы только за счет внешнего финансирования, местное сообщество должно предоставить долю софинансирования.
• Реализовать большие дела малыми финансовыми ресурсами вполне возможно.

Кроме того, российские координаторы познакомились с принципами работы общественных организаций, каковыми в Финляндии являются местные инициативные группы.

Вторая задача проекта – это активизация местного населения. Сельские встречи сыграли ключевую роль в стимуляции населения. Представитель каждого домохозяйства, получивший приглашение на такую встречу, должен был заполнить небольшую анкету, касающуюся жизни в деревне и насущных деревенских проблем. Организация сельских встреч преследовала несколько целей, а именно, 1) информирование население о «Ладожской инициативе»; 2) обсуждение проблем конкретных деревень, участвующих в проекте, и выбор приоритетов развития в рамках проекта; 3) выбор кандидатов для Советов местных инициативных групп2.

Первая цель – информирование население об идее проекта – не была полностью достигнута из-за достаточно низкого уровня участия местного населения. Причиной этого могла быть общая пассивность и пессимизм сельского населения, слабые информационные каналы внутри сельских сообществ, а также глубокое недоверие к политическим институтам, проявляющееся в том, что сельские жители не хотели вступать в контакты с властью и очень часто не видели разницы между государственной и муниципальной властями, а также между другими институтами.

Второй задачей сельских встреч было обсуждение проблем села и выбор приоритетов. Эта часть встреч прошла в очень активном обсуждении. К сожалению, были выявлены такие проблемы, которые не могли быть решены в рамках «Ладожской инициативы». Последняя часть встреч была посвящена выбору кандидатов в Совет местных инициативных групп: один кандидат от представителей местной власти, второй – от бизнес-структур, и третий кандидат – от местного населения или общественных организаций. Выбор кандидатов от представителей местной власти прошел достаточно гладко, среди выбранных членов советов были главным образом депутаты, работники сельских администраций. Лишь один глава сельского поселения вошел в состав Совета в своем районе.

Наибольшее количество желающих участвовать в работе проекта оказалось среди местного населения. В России на селе практически отсутствуют общественные организации, поэтому представителей гражданского общества среди членов Советов местных инициативных групп не было. Выбор кандидатов из представителей местного населения пришлось проводить в два этапа, так как было выдвинуто много кандидатов. Основная проблема проявилась при выборе представителей бизнеса в состав Советов. Основные причины этого – слабое развитие предпри-

2 Всего было проведено 27 сельских встреч в трех муниципальных районах.
нимательства на селе и боязнь предпринимателей быть перегруженными работой в проекте и отсутствие свободного времени. Несмотря на это, три местные инициативные группы все же были сформированы.

Трансформативная задача проекта — это развитие новых, демократичных способов управления (снизу вверх) и развитие партнерских отношений. Проект «Ладожская инициатива» изначально был спланирован и позднее реализован как эндогенный проект с целью развития сотрудничества на местном уровне, установления партнерских отношений между различными акторами, повышение ответственности населения и местной власти за развитие сельских территорий, своей малой родины. Все участники проекта — это местные жители пилотных территорий; все решения принимались на местном уровне. И примеры реализации эндогенного подхода можно было увидеть на всех стадиях реализации проекта.

В целом проект «Ладожская инициатива» был успешным в достижении своих главных целей: активизация местных жителей, развитие сотрудничества для достижения общих целей, а также в развитии навыков проектной деятельности. Доказательства этого можно увидеть в деревнях в виде игровых площадок, спортивных сооружений (футбольное поле, боксерский ринг) и культурно-массовых мероприятий, которые сочетают традиции ремесленничества, туризма и предпринимательства. «Ладожская инициатива» был успешным пилотным проектом, но дальнейшее развитие в этом направлении требует более последовательной сельской политики российского государства и возможности участия местных жителей в разработке и реализации этой политики.

Литература


