

## MANAGEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE INCLUSIVE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

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*The chapter substantiates the theoretical aspects of managing sustainable inclusive rural development projects. It is proved that the sustainable inclusive development of territorial communities in rural areas depends on the availability of natural resources, the location of settlements, and the effective functioning of territorial communities. The author emphasises that inclusive development is not limited to ensuring accessibility and equal opportunities, but also involves building a conscious society. We believe that the main means of ensuring sustainable inclusive development of rural areas is the diversification of rural development. It is noted that in the context of a full-scale invasion, it is necessary to find effective mechanisms to improve the financial condition of communities and achieve sustainable inclusive rural development, which will contribute to the rapid recovery of Ukraine after the war. The main advantages of the project approach are highlighted, which are the ability to focus on specific tasks and results, ensuring monitoring and evaluation of project implementation. It is emphasized that ensuring sustainable inclusive development in the field of public administration requires public involvement in decision-making processes, involvement of NGOs and experts in project planning and implementation, which ensures a more effective and balanced solution to economic, social, and environmental problems. It is substantiated that the effectiveness of any project implementation in rural areas depends on the correctness of management actions, the chosen management model and its successful implementation.*

### Introduction

Rural areas are an important component for the development of Ukraine's agricultural sector, but this situation has changed dramatically in recent years. The number of rural residents is constantly decreasing, rural settlements are disappearing from the map, and farm incomes are decreasing. To stop this negative trend, it is necessary to implement a new approach to rural development, which includes the concept of sustainable inclusive rural development, stimulating entrepreneurship, diversifying rural employment and rational use of natural resources.

Today's realities demonstrate unequal opportunities for people from different social groups and regions to meet their basic needs. The main reason for this unequal situation is the uneven distribution of economic resources and public goods. Therefore, the Concept of Sustainable Inclusive Development can be an effective tool for solving social problems in rural areas, as it provides for the guarantee of equal rights and opportunities for all members of society. In addition, humanity is facing

serious challenges, which are influenced by factors such as population growth, food choices, technological progress, uneven distribution of income, poor state of natural resources, climate change, peace sustainability, etc.

Today, sustainable inclusive rural development is relevant, as it contributes to solving global problems such as climate change, energy and food security. In the context of martial law, the primary task for the Ukrainian agricultural sector is to provide the population with agricultural products.

Theoretical, methodological and applied provisions of rural development are studied by domestic and foreign scholars: O. Borodina, V. Borshchevskyi, L. Gazuda, Y. Hubeni, V. Diesperov, V. Zakharchenko, M. Lendel, Y. Lupenko, M. Malik, O. Pavlov, O. Popova, H. Prytula, P. Sabluk, M. Talavyria, M. Khvesyk, V. Chemeris, and others. However, despite the significant contribution of scholars to the study of this problem, the theoretical foundations of managing sustainable inclusive rural development projects need to be investigated in order to substantiate the prospects for improving the quality of life, empowering the rural population and their active participation in the production and distribution of benefits, and achieving economic, environmental and food security.

### **The essence of the concept of sustainable inclusive rural development**

The state of rural areas is deteriorating, despite the measures taken by the state policy in this area. To formulate the theoretical and practical foundations of sustainable inclusive rural development, it is necessary to clearly define the conceptual and categorical apparatus. Despite the relevance of the study, there is still no single definition of the term "rural area" in the scientific literature. This is due to the fact that this concept is studied in various scientific disciplines: geography, economics, sociology, ecology, etc. Analysing the existing definitions of the term "rural area", we can conclude that they were developed to meet the needs of certain scientific fields.

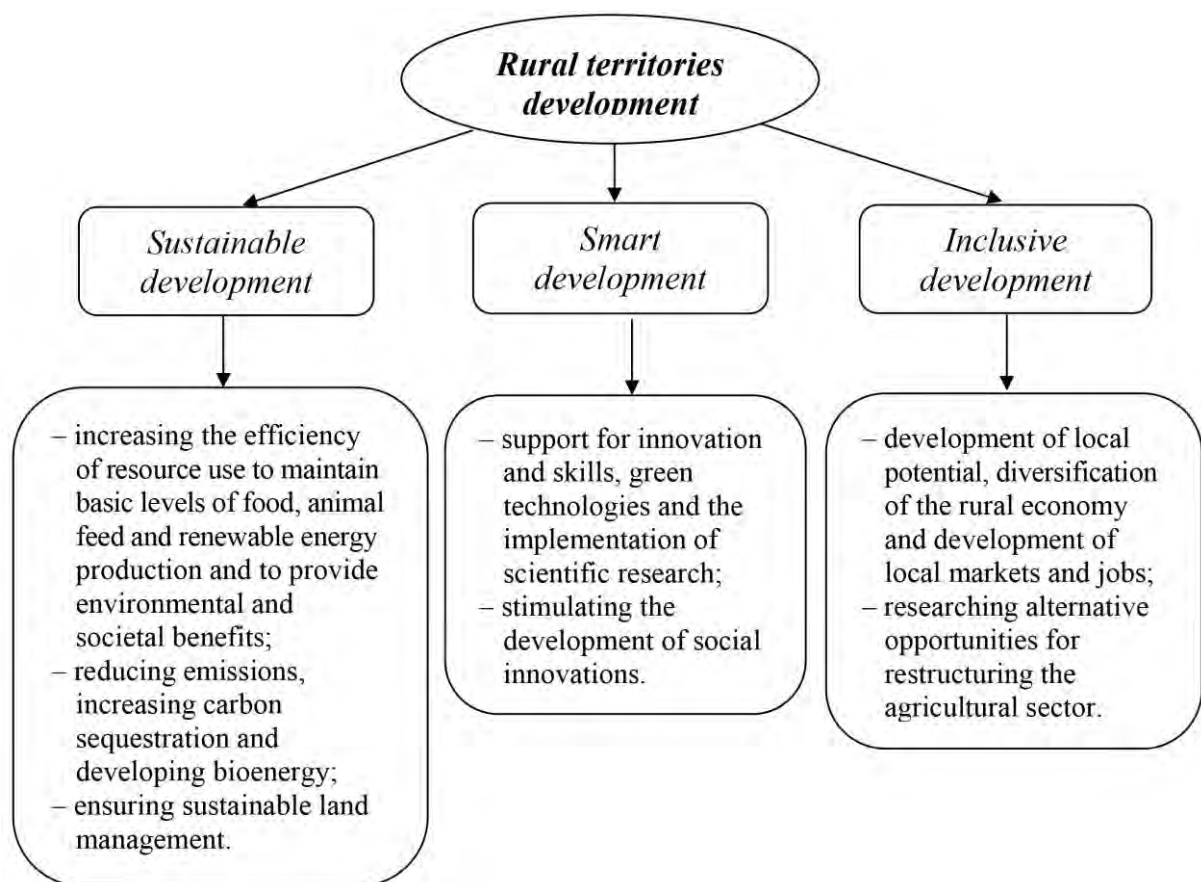
In accordance with the structural approach to the formation of the holistic concept of "rural territory", it is advisable to define its main components – structure, aggregate, elements that have various functional components. In our opinion, these are social, economic, financial, natural and environmental, and institutional components.

Rural areas have a significant impact on the development of the economy of Ukraine and its regions. They occupy about 90% of the country's total area and a third of the total population lives there [1]. The rural economy, according to M. Drohomiretska, is characterised by a low level of development, lack of jobs,

low labour productivity, insufficient requirements for the quality of labour force, which is due not only to insufficient investment in its development, but above all to their irrational focus. Overcoming these negative phenomena in rural areas should be influenced by the rural territorial community, which should first of all identify economic and social priorities, develop mechanisms for both socio-economic and financial support of the functioning of rural territorial communities in order to involve them in the processes of socio-economic growth of the state [2].

The study of the European Union's experience makes it possible to analyse and predict possible ways of rural development, to identify and develop ways to improve it. According to the Europe 2020 Strategy, the EU's development priorities are smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the areas of employment, innovation, education, poverty reduction and climate/energy (Fig. 1). As a result, a strong and effective economic governance system has been established to coordinate policy actions at the European and national levels.

Today, sustainable and inclusive rural development is relevant as it contributes to addressing global challenges such as climate change, energy and food security.



**Fig. 1.** Rural territories development in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy

*Source: based on [3, p. 26]*

According to V. Zahorskyi and Y. Borshchuk, sustainable development of rural areas should be based on the modernisation of production infrastructure, increasing the level of employment of the rural population, reducing labour migration, increasing the competitiveness of agricultural production, improving the quality and safety of agricultural products, improving the environmental situation in rural areas and ensuring a high level of reproduction of natural resources. In addition, a balanced approach to the state regulation of rural development, taking into account its specific features, is important in order to create conditions for self-development and enhancement of human potential [4].

Attracting investment in sustainable rural development, taking into account regional peculiarities, will help create jobs, increase rural incomes, revive local crafts, customs and trades, improve rural amenities and change the mindset of rural residents [5].

For the development of agriculture and rural areas, technological progress, entrepreneurship, the dynamism of agricultural development factors, overall economic growth, and political support are of the greatest importance. It is necessary to revise and form a legal framework that would protect the interests of agricultural producers, create conditions for the effective development of the agricultural sector, and form a favourable taxation system [6].

Y. Lupenko believes that to ensure sustainable development, peasants should be given the opportunity to implement their own entrepreneurial initiative, especially in agriculture, through the development of family farming and multi-stage production. This will result in a qualitatively and quantitatively larger middle class in rural areas, and financially capable, proactive communities will focus their activities on ensuring a high quality of life for rural residents and preserving the environment. According to Yurii Lupenko, these components of the model (peasant-owner, powerful middle class, financially and socially capable rural community) in combination with effective public policy can and should ensure sustainable development of rural areas [7].

Ensuring social inclusion in rural areas involves creating conditions for all residents, regardless of their status, age, nationality, etc. to participate in the social, economic and cultural life of the rural community.

I. Tsymbaliuk notes that inclusive development of a region is a process of achieving complex qualitative and quantitative changes in the spatial system based on the development of the economic sphere by increasing the involvement of economic entities in socially useful activities, forming an accessible infrastructure of the region to create equal opportunities for personal development and ensuring

a fair distribution of the results obtained, which is a prerequisite for social upliftment, reducing the level of differentiation of the population and increasing its well-being [8].

T. Zinchuk emphasises that innovative approaches to the formation of the scientific base of agriculture based on inclusive development are a unique opportunity to achieve internal balance, increase the resilience of rural areas and the population by investing in the main areas of the rural economy: socio-economic, educational, healthcare, energy and food security, as well as poverty eradication and, ultimately, access to a progressive, civilised European model of rural development [9, p. 132].

Y. Samsonova notes that in the context of green inclusive growth, environmental protection, rational use of natural resources, food security and solving social problems by involving unequal low-income actors in business to achieve common goals become particularly relevant. Enabling the rural population to participate in the development of agribusiness by creating new institutional approaches based on the principles of environmental protection and efficient distribution of public goods will help to increase the level of well-being of rural residents and their living standards [10].

Inclusive rural development is important for creating an equal society, as it provides equal access to resources for all residents, promotes social interaction, rural sustainability, economic development, improved quality of life and preservation of the cultural heritage and traditions of rural communities [11].

O. Borodina and I. Prokopa consider the issue of inclusive rural development. In their opinion, it should enable all rural residents to use land and other rural resources, the results of economic growth in agriculture and other sectors of the rural economy, participate in socio-political processes and unite social communities on the path of human rights, contribute to poverty reduction and overcome economic and social decline [12].

J. Gupta and other scholars [13] believe that inclusive development will be achieved only through genuine interactive governance that provides tools and creates conditions for adaptive learning and empowerment of marginalised people.

The inclusive development of territorial communities in rural areas in the context of decentralisation depends on the availability of natural resources, the location of villages, the effective functioning of territorial communities, and the correctness of decisions made by the leaders of these communities. Under current reforms, local governments play a key role in managing the inclusive sphere of territorial communities in rural areas. They coordinate the activities of all economic

structures, participate in the development and implementation of strategies, programmes and projects [14].

It is important to understand that inclusive development is not limited to accessibility and equal opportunities, but also involves building a conscious society. This can be achieved by creating a dialogue and cooperation between different segments of the population, government officials and scientists, and by involving citizens in the decision-making process on rural development [15].

Under the conditions of martial law in Ukraine, the primary task for the domestic agricultural sector was to provide the population with agricultural products. Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of our country, the rural areas of the eastern region and the Ukrainian agricultural sector in general have been facing very difficult circumstances. The greatest threat to the economy and the country's survival in the war would have been a complete disruption of the sowing campaign, but this did not happen [16].

Rural areas are mostly used for growing agricultural products, which are one of the main export sectors of the Ukrainian economy. In 2022, Ukraine exported at least \$20 billion worth of agricultural products, which is about half as much as in 2021. From the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion until the end of 2022, agricultural producers supplied 38.94 million tonnes of grains, legumes, oilseeds and processed products to foreign markets. The hostilities have caused significant damage to land resources (mining of territories, increased need for land reclamation), which have been damaged by trenches, shells, military equipment.

The full-scale invasion affected all areas of the country's development, including rural development. On the one hand, the war has resulted in the destruction of agricultural crops, livestock, and infrastructure, which is causing serious difficulties in the agricultural sector. The loss of jobs and lower living standards is another serious consequence of the war for rural residents. Many local residents work in agriculture, and as a result, many workers in this sector have lost their jobs, their wages have been reduced and food prices have risen. This leads to lower living standards and increased poverty in rural communities.

On the other hand, the war has led to an increase in demand for agricultural products. This is due to the temporary restriction of food imports, which forces the state to use its own resources to ensure national security. Thus, rural communities have the opportunity to increase production volumes and receive additional income [17].

Rural communities also help create jobs in other sectors of the economy, such as industry and services. For example, the development of tourism in rural areas will help to create additional jobs and increase the income of local residents.

In addition, infrastructure development in rural communities will help ensure their competitiveness and attract investment. Improved roads, communications and energy infrastructure will make rural communities more attractive to investors and entrepreneurs.

According to O. Zakharchuk, an important condition for the development of the agricultural sector of the economy is an appropriate level of investment support. Investments play a leading role in the technical and technological modernisation of agricultural enterprises and in increasing their competitiveness. Investments are an important prerequisite for innovative growth [18].

Taking into account international standards and requirements, as well as the internal needs of rural areas, it is advisable to implement the principles of sustainable inclusive development of rural communities in national policy, and to focus state support on different areas [19]. For example, in the economic sphere, it is advisable to promote the creation of the following conditions: attracting investment; diversification of agricultural production; diversification of non-agricultural activities; providing state support to small and medium-sized farms; assisting agricultural producers in increasing the added value of agricultural products through storage, processing, trade, marketing, creation and development of cooperatives; improving production, market, and road infrastructures for agricultural development

In the social sphere, it is necessary to promote the creation of the following conditions: creation of a system of cultural and aesthetic education of the community; consulting, training and professional development of rural residents; assistance to young agricultural producers; conclusion and guarantee of compliance with labour contracts of employees with the employer's administration; improvement of infrastructure and material resources in the fields of education and medicine.

In the environmental sphere, it is advisable to promote the creation of the following conditions: development of a system of environmental and patriotic education of the community; responsibility for the state of the environment in the territory of communities; arrangement of rational agricultural landscapes; conservation of degraded low-productive agricultural lands, creation of cultivated pastures and forest plantations on them; work to prevent erosion and landslides; development and implementation of agro-ecological community development programmes.

O. Krupelnyska, O. Gudenko and O. Volynets focus on the fact that sustainable development is based on achieving a balance between the results of socio-economic (in particular, improving the quality of life of the population) and environmental (state of the natural environment) development on the basis of a combination of informatisation and intellectualisation with simultaneous ensuring

its social efficiency, aimed at structural and technological restructuring of all sectors of the economy, increasing the welfare of the population and economic growth, building social, market, communication and information systems. In addition, they propose to develop the rural economy by stimulating non-traditional agricultural production, developing a network (in particular, business networks based on marketing projects) for the provision of agricultural innovations as one of the priorities of the "multifunctional" model of sustainable rural development [20].

The main means of ensuring sustainable inclusive development of rural areas, in our opinion, is the diversification of rural welfare, which should be considered as a set of measures aimed at diversifying agricultural and non-agricultural activities, expanding sources of funding for rural development programmes and activities organised by amalgamated territorial communities to expand employment and increase the income of the rural population on the basis of a systematic approach and through information measures.

Therefore, the paradigm of sustainable inclusive development of rural areas is the basis for the development of the concept of diversification of the welfare of these areas, which is based on the principles of complexity, interdisciplinarity and synergy. The concept's target is the effective use of existing and potential opportunities for rural development to improve the quality of life of the rural population; strengthening the competitive advantages of the territories and achieving environmental and food security [21].

One of the areas of sustainable development diversification is the transition to environmentally friendly, i.e. organic, farming, which reduces the negative impact on the environment through the use of organic fertilisers and mechanical processing. In recent years, demand for organic products has been growing in many countries. This creates new opportunities for farmers to switch to environmentally friendly farming and develop this area. In addition, governments promote the transition to organic farming through financial support and training. Another area is the development of sustainable forestry, which ensures the balanced development of forests, preservation of forest cover and reduction of the impact of forestry on the climate and the environment. The use of renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind energy, is relevant in times of war, as it reduces dependence on oil products and reduces carbon emissions [22].

Thus, even in the current conditions of full-scale invasion, it is necessary to find effective mechanisms to improve the financial situation of communities and sustainable inclusive development of rural areas. This will contribute to Ukraine's rapid recovery from the war.



## **Theoretical foundations of the study of project management for sustainable inclusive rural development**

Project management, or project management, is a professional activity based on the combination of the most advanced scientific knowledge and technologies with practical skills. It is focused on obtaining the most effective result in the process of project implementation. Project management is not a dry science, but a living methodology for organising, planning and coordinating the use of human and financial resources throughout the project life cycle. Any project manager, like every aspiring entrepreneur, inevitably faces the fact that in the process of implementing a particular idea, there is always something missing for complete success. In fact, there are three main pillars of success: the quality of the project, its cost and the time it takes to implement it. This "trinity" was called the "trinity of constraints" or "project management triangle" in the USA in the late 50s. Because each side of it is a constraint, and a change in one side inevitably affects the other. The task of project management is to ensure a balance between them [23].

In the rural areas of those communities that have amalgamated and formed self-governing entities, projects are often implemented to improve social infrastructure, which contributes to the quality of life of rural residents. However, it should be noted that not all projects implemented in rural areas are financed by public funds. Grants are the most common form of project funding by donor organisations.

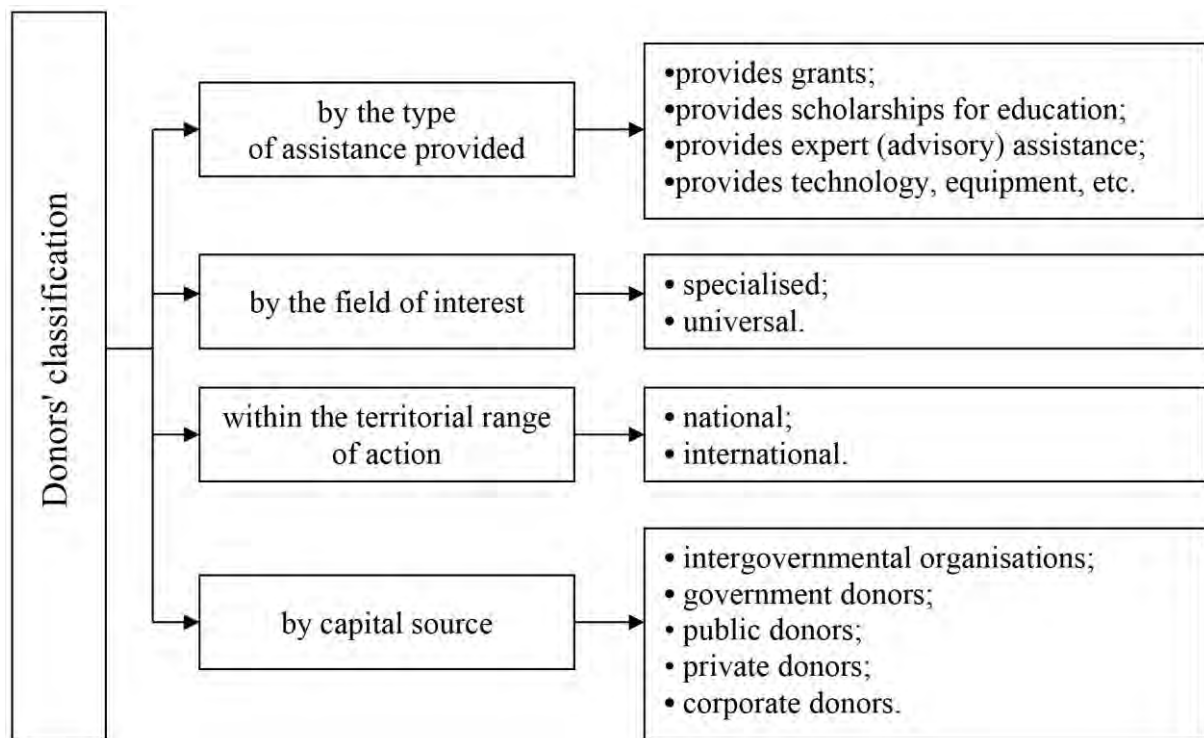
Donors are international organisations, government agencies, commercial entities, public non-profit organisations (religious, scientific, etc.), private charitable foundations or individuals who provide citizens and organisations with the necessary additional resources of various types on a non-commercial, non-refundable basis for the benefit of the whole society [23]. There are many types of donor classifications, which we have systematised and presented in Fig. 2.

The most common source of additional resources (financial and non-financial) for socio-economic projects in rural areas in the European Union is charitable foundations that provide assistance in the form of grants.

The limited funds in both the State Budget of Ukraine and local budgets encourage government agencies, businesses, and the scientific community to look for options to expand the sources of funding for projects in various fields.

Cooperation on international projects and programmes always yields positive results in combining the efforts of small producers to achieve their goals, a transparent mechanism for selecting applicants for participation in the competition, and fulfilling contractual obligations. International projects are being implemented quite successfully in Ukraine. The main donors to Ukraine are the US and the EU.

Significant investments come from Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Japan, Denmark, as well as the UN, the World Bank, the EBRD, and the OECD. Most international projects provide free assistance for the purchase of material and technical resources for enterprises operating in rural areas, but subject to co-financing from various sources. These may include funds from local budgets (oblast, rayon, village, amalgamated territorial communities) and enterprises' own funds [24].



**Fig. 2.** Classification of project donors  
*Source: structured according to [23]*

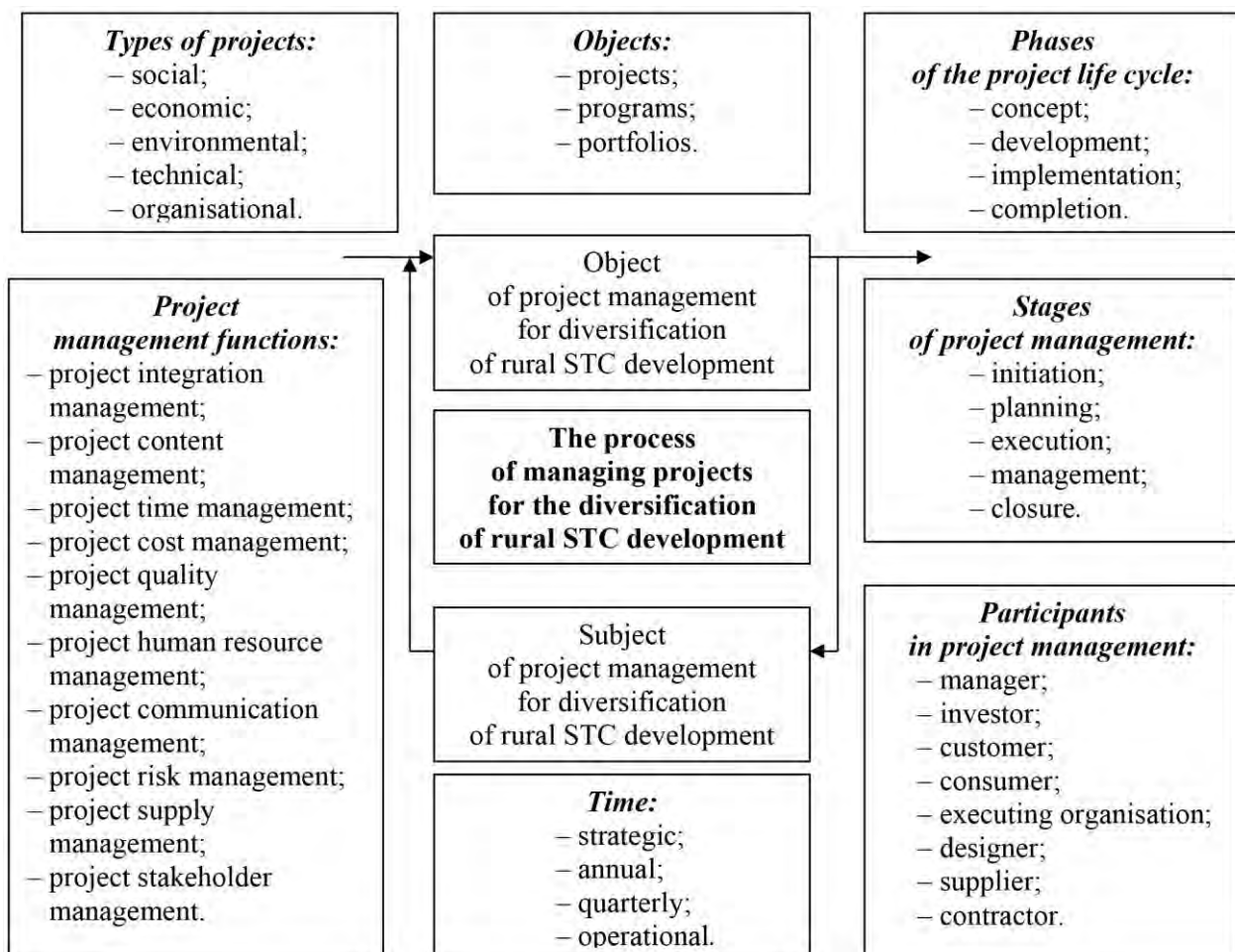
Modern project management tools and methods are recognised worldwide and are widely used in all areas of project-oriented activity. Project management is a powerful tool not only for managing the creation of new products and services, but also for implementing targeted changes within individual organisations, companies, and national socio-economic and organisational systems [25].

Project management is "a special type of management activity that consists in the development, preliminary and thorough elaboration of a comprehensive plan (model) of actions aimed at achieving specific goals and its (her) implementation" [26].

Project management is a professional activity based on the application of project culture through the combination of the latest scientific knowledge and technologies with practical skills. With active rural development, through the creation of rural territorial communities, local residents can self-organise, as they are

united by a common living space, common aspirations, and most importantly, by the willingness and real actions aimed at improving the economic, social and environmental situation of their native village. In this case, villagers create a so-called local interaction group on their own and elect a leader from among themselves to head it [27].

Effective use of the rural development project management mechanism requires appropriate adaptation, supplementing this methodology with specific approaches, organisational and methodological tools [26]. The scheme of project management for the diversification of the development of rural amalgamated territorial communities is shown in Fig. 3.



**Fig. 3.** Management scheme for diversification projects in rural amalgamated territorial communities  
*Source: developed on the basis of own research*

Rural areas are home to not only agribusiness projects, but also non-agricultural activities. Examples include rural (green) tourism or agritourism; timber

harvesting and processing; crushed stone and sand extraction; and the construction of processing and food processing facilities.

The development of rural tourism allows for the creation of a comprehensive tourism product that contributes to the development of rural areas. Attracting investment in green tourism will help create jobs; increase rural residents' incomes by providing services to tourists and selling food products; improve village amenities; and revive local folk crafts, customs and traditions.

We agree with the opinions of scientists [28] that promising directions for solving key problems of project implementation, in particular rural development projects, depend on the following factors: creating a favourable institutional climate in Ukraine for implementing innovative projects and attracting foreign investment; economic incentives for the introduction of domestic innovative equipment and technologies; bridging the existing gap between the professional competences possessed by graduates of higher education institutions and those required by employers; ensuring the required number of graduates in line with the real needs for specialists in agribusiness and local self-government.

The main advantages of the project approach are that it allows focusing on specific tasks and results, and ensures monitoring and evaluation of project implementation. The use of the project approach in public administration ensures the efficient and effective use of resources, achievement of specific goals and objectives of sustainable development. In addition, sustainable development in public administration requires public involvement in decision-making processes, the involvement of NGOs and experts in the planning and implementation of sustainable development projects. This ensures a more effective and balanced solution to economic, social and environmental problems [29].

It is worth noting that there are many different project management methodologies. One of the most common is the Waterfall methodology. This is a traditional and logical approach to project management. In the waterfall model, the project process is divided into stages or phases. This approach is effective for projects that can be divided into sequential logical parts, where each stage builds on the previous one. This makes it easy to understand and describe the project logic [30].

The advantages of using Waterfall for sustainable inclusive rural development projects are: it fits projects with precise requirements and defined success criteria; it is suitable for projects with stable and minimal changes in requirements; it provides detailed planning and certainty about project timing and cost.

However, this approach is not suitable for projects with unclear or changing requirements, which is typical for social projects. An additional problem with the

waterfall methodology is that it is not suitable for projects with a high degree of uncertainty and change. If each stage is complete, it is difficult to change something after the project has moved to the next stage. This can lead to significant delays and inefficient use of resources [30]. There is also no active interaction with clients or stakeholders during the project. This can lead to incomplete satisfaction of client needs or misperception of requirements.

Today, the *Agile* approach is very popular in project management. It is characterised by flexibility and a special approach to management, which involves the provision of a final product at each stage of work, as well as elements of uncertainty at the end of the project [30].

The *Agile* approach provides flexibility and the ability to change project requirements and priorities in response to changing needs, promotes active interaction between the customer and stakeholders throughout the process, and allows for quick response to changes and adjustments to the project during its implementation. However, it requires active participation and involvement of everyone throughout the process. It can also be a challenge for a team that does not have sufficient experience or resources to iterate and adjust on a regular basis.

Given the specifics of sustainable inclusive rural development projects, *Agile* may be the most appropriate approach to use, as these projects often require flexibility to deal with constant change and interaction with stakeholders. This approach allows for quick adaptation to changes and facilitates the involvement of rural residents and stakeholders in the decision-making process for the implementation of the community development project.

*Design Thinking* is an innovative approach to project management that focuses on understanding the needs and concerns of local people. The approach involves iterative work, development and testing of prototypes, which contributes to the development of new solutions that meet the needs of local communities. This approach allows us to identify the needs and problems of local residents and develop innovative solutions to meet these needs. *Design Thinking* actively involves villagers and other stakeholders in the decision-making process, which provides greater legitimacy and support for the project. The approach also allows for rapid prototyping and testing of solutions, adding changes based on feedback and findings.

*Lean* is an approach to project management that aims to use resources efficiently and minimise costs. It focuses on defining value for rural people and eliminating unnecessary steps and processes. The advantage of *Lean* for inclusive rural development projects is the efficient use of resources. *Lean* aims to reduce costs and optimise processes, which can be beneficial for projects with limited resources. It also allows you to focus on the real needs of local people and make useful decisions.

Depending on the specific conditions and needs of the project, you can use a combination of different approaches, i.e. apply a *Hybrid Approach*. For example, you can combine elements of *Waterfall* and *Agile*: *Waterfall* is used for the stable stages of a project (e.g. planning and analysis) and *Agile* for the more flexible and iterative stages (e.g. implementation and delivery).

## Conclusions

It is important to emphasise that the choice of approach to managing sustainable inclusive rural development projects should be based on the results of the analysis of the need and content of the project, consultations with stakeholders and consideration of available resources. It is better to develop an individual approach that meets the specific needs and characteristics of the project and ensures the successful achievement of the set goals.

Thus, the effective use of the project management methodology for sustainable inclusive rural development requires appropriate adaptation, supplementing it with special approaches, organisational and methodological tools. Therefore, the effectiveness of any project implementation in rural areas depends on the correctness of management actions, the chosen management model and its successful implementation.

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