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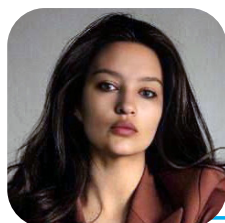
## Professional Identity Formation in “Green Professions” in Russia

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*This study examines how Russian professionals form “green professions” — occupational activities addressing environmental challenges and advance sustainable development. The secondary qualitative analysis of 60 narrative interviews using Hyman and Alkhasov’s recontextualization methodology identifies professional self-identification as the core mechanism through which individuals align biospheric values and environmental behavioral transformation with occupational roles. Career transitions typically stem from ethical dissonance in previous roles, prompting radical shifts toward values-congruent work, while protean careerism enables adaptive mobility across sectors despite prestige hierarchies that privilege symbolic roles over manual eco-jobs. Unlike Western contexts with formal certification systems, Russian green professionals rely on grassroots boundary work and informal validation to establish legitimacy. The findings reveal fragmented institutionalization, with professionals filling systemic gaps through innovation while facing gendered and geographic inequities. This research contributes to professional sociology by demonstrating how ecological identity formation bridges global theoretical frameworks with Russia’s unique transitional context, challenging Western-centric models that overlook precarity beneath clear autonomy. Future efforts must prioritize intersectional policies that democratize*



*ecological work by connecting individual agency with institutional reforms, particularly through standardized certifications, public awareness campaigns to elevate manual eco-jobs, and longitudinal studies tracking value evolution amid geopolitical shifts in post-Soviet economies.*

**Keywords:** sociology of professions; autobiography; narrative; ecosociology; green professions; green jobs; innovation; subject transformation; environmental behavior

## Introduction

Environmental and sustainable professions (commonly termed "green jobs") constitute a transformative category within contemporary labor markets, operationalized as occupational roles that directly contribute to preserving or restoring environmental quality while advancing social equity and economic resilience principles. These jobs support transitions in a few dimensions. Environmental and sustainable professions must be operationally defined to encompass occupational roles that demonstrably integrate three interdependent dimensions: first, environmental stewardship (ecosystem conservation, decarbonization, waste reduction, and climate adaptation technologies); second, social equity (fair wages, safe working conditions, inclusive access to opportunities, and community well-being); and third, economic resilience (circular economy transitions, sustainable production/consumption models, and climate-resilient financial systems)<sup>1</sup> [Urban et al., 2023].

Roles addressing only environmental aspects without concurrent contributions to social and economic sustainability dimensions fall outside this definition, ensuring boundaries exclude compliance-focused or narrowly technical positions that fail to advance systemic transformation across all three pillars of sustainability. In contrast, modern green professionals operate at the intersection of multiple innovative systems: ESG consultants synthesize corporate governance, climate science, and social equity metrics; circular economy designers merge industrial engineering with behavioral economics; and climate communicators translate scientific data into public policy narratives.

The sociological innovation of current green professions lies in their reconfiguration of professional identity as a dynamic, value-driven process rather than a static credential-based status. Unlike traditional professions (medicine or law), where identity is anchored in standardized education and institutional authority, green professionals in transitional economies, such as Russia, construct identity through protean careerism, characterized by non-linear mobility across sectors, hybrid skill acquisition, and self-directed learning. This represents a fundamental shift from institutionalized professionalism to reflexive ecological identity formation, where the very definition of "green work" is co-created by practitioners

<sup>1</sup> How Renewable Energy Transition is Creating a Green Jobs Boom. *World Economic Forum*. 2023. URL: <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/01/renewable-energy-transition-green-jobs/> (accessed: 20.09.2025).

navigating geopolitical and institutional precarity, a phenomenon absent in earlier environmental specializations.

The planetary urgency propelling these professions transcends mere labor market evolution, representing institutional responses to *polycrisis* (climate destabilization, biodiversity collapse, resource depletion, and social problems) through societal functions such as regulatory implementation, social policy, educational transformation, and SDG operationalization [Jansen, 2019]. The environmental issues refer to a functionalism approach to inform analysis of professional green jobs and professions' roles by focusing on institutional stability and societal integration into policy. These professions function as institutional mediators between policy aspirations as future global and international targets and localized implementation, while reconstituting labor markets around ESSEs [Voykina, Potravniy, 2018]. Their growth correlates significantly with enhanced social mobility vectors, particularly in economically vulnerable regions adjacent to sustainability infrastructure projects [Lee, van Der Heijden, 2019].

Russia's engagement with green professionalization reveals that asynchronous institutionalization characterized by structural constraints around resource-curse path dependency in carbon-intensive sectors creates disincentives for green workforce investment, fragmented sustainability, and job policy without inter-agency coordination mechanisms for promoting social program development and green professions. As a result, educational-industrial decoupling produces graduates lacking industry-relevant competencies due to obsolete curricula and minimal corporate engagement [Cardoso et al., 2019; Sulich, Sołoducho-Pelc, 2022].

This study advances the sociology of professions by demonstrating how ecological identity formation functions as a mechanism for professional boundary work in transitional economies, where Russian green professionals construct legitimacy through informal validation and grassroots innovation rather than formal credentials, challenging Western-centric models that overlook precarity beneath apparent autonomy. It simultaneously contributes to environmental sociology by revealing how environmental values become embedded in professional practice through reflexive identity work, providing empirical evidence for the socio-structural dynamics of sustainability transitions beyond mere environmental attitudes or policy frameworks [Abramov, 2003]. This study investigates the micro-sociology of ecological self-actualization and examines how workers integrate environmental values into their professional habitus through *competence* (i.e., environmental skill mastery), *autonomy* (i.e., transition agency), and *relatedness* (i.e., movement solidarity). The institutionalization of green professions constitutes a societal coordination project with concrete applications in educational repatterning, social elevator engineering, and self-determination, infrastructure and policy integration models. The sociology of green professions represents a diagnostic lens for examining how post-industrial societies reconstitute labor around environmental and sustainability discourse imperatives.

The next section explains the theoretical frameworks applicable to the sociology of professions and green jobs. The methodology section will describe the research methods employed, sample characteristics, and limitations of the study. The results



and discussion section presents the findings regarding the transformation of professional identity among respondents in green occupations, with particular attention paid to evolving values and the emergence of ecological identity. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the key findings and suggests potential avenues for further research within the Russian context and beyond.

## Theoretical frameworks in the sociology of professionals

The *structural-functional* approach views professions as institutions that maintain social order through specialized knowledge, ethical codes, and regulatory autonomy [Archibong, 2014]. Applied to green professions, this perspective emphasizes normative internalization — where professionals adopt ecological norms through socialization, such as circular economy principles, climate ethics, and SDG goals [Jansen, 2019]. These norms form competence “regimes” that guide professional conduct. The status of green professions stems from state recognition, educational credentials, and institutional roles, with functional value tied to mitigating systemic environmental risks [Gaile et al., 2022]. However, this approach overemphasizes top-down control and overlooks grassroots reinterpretations of ecological mandates. For example, the standardized certifications of the EU Green Deal have enhanced jurisdiction and prestige in building decarbonization, yet mobility among green professionals remains uneven<sup>2</sup>. While some sectors transition (corporate to NGO) to align with ecological values, precarity in gig-based green jobs is often ignored. Identity regulation theory by Alvesson and Willmott explains organizational control over mobility but neglects instability in informal eco-work [Alvesson, Willmott, 2002]. Similarly, the labor market segmentation theory fails to account for how global policy shifts disrupt eco-sector employment. Longitudinal studies on mobility among geopolitical disruptions are critically lacking [Fernandez-Urbano, 2025]. The social constructionist framework, inspired by Abbott [Abbott, 1988], examines how professions compete for jurisdiction over environmental problems to better understand the role of social actors. Boundary work is central: green professionals assert their expertise by framing ecological crises as requiring their intervention. Discursive strategies position “green skills” as solutions, legitimizing new occupational niches [Pham et al., 2024]. Power dynamics shape this process: dominant groups may co-opt environmental agendas, while marginalized actors challenge exclusion from professional legitimacy. Bourdieu’s cultural capital further mediates prestige, as certifications and elite education confer symbolic value, yet reproduce inequity. High-status roles, such as sustainability consultants, often require inaccessible credentials, privileging elite actors [Xiaowei, 2019]. While social constructionism reveals struggles over “green expertise,” it underestimates material constraints, such as funding cuts that limit environmental agency.

<sup>2</sup> The European Green Deal. Striving to Be the First Climate-Neutral Continent. *European Commission*. 2024. URL: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en) (accessed: 20.09.2025).

In contrast, the *Anglo-Saxon model*, shaped by neoliberal thought, emphasizes individual agency and market-driven careers. Subjective success arises from the alignment between personal environmental ethics and professional work, independent of hierarchy [Svensson, Evetts, 2010]. "Self-direction" and "influence in sustainability decisions" are key fulfillment predictors. Market demand and state incentives drive the proliferation of green jobs, although policy volatility can create precarity. The emergence of an EPI reflects a pivotal sociological shift that transcends traditional occupational boundaries and integrates ecological values into professional self-concept. Understanding how professionals internalize ecological imperatives amid structural constraints is vital for sustainability transitions as planetary crises intensify. However, the Anglo-Saxon model underestimates how precarity undermines value congruence, as seen among underpaid recyclers lacking autonomy [Brante, 1988]. Notably, workers in the Middle East and North Africa region who transitioned to renewable industries reported higher career satisfaction despite income loss, highlighting values-congruence as a core dimension of subjective success<sup>3</sup>.

The subjective dimensions of EPI are further illuminated by psychological theories. Stern's VBN theory and the NAM posit that pro-environmental behavior stems from a cognitive chain linking personal values, perceived responsibility, beliefs about consequences, and normative commitment [Stern, 2000]. Motivation in green professions is often rooted in biospheric values as a concern for ecosystems and future generations [Caniëls et al., 2021; Gifari, Sanusi, 2025]. Empirical studies show that environmental scientists and sustainability officers prioritize such intrinsic motives over salary or status. Super's life-span theory reinforces this notion, framing career choice as an expression of vocational self-concept [Super, 1980], while Schwartz's value theory identifies self-direction and universalism as key drivers of green professionalism [Schwartz, 2006]. Although useful, Freidson's model of professional dominance underestimates resistance, such as indigenous stewards asserting traditional ecological knowledge against state-led conservation [Quick, 2017].

Self-actualization in green careers aligns with the protean career model of Hall and Moss, emphasizing autonomy and values-driven transitions [Hall, Moss, 1998]. Institutional barriers, rigid labor markets, and limited green job creation can hinder this process. Despite growing cultural prestige, elite bias in high-status roles reproduces inequity, contradicting the ethical foundations of sustainability. Mobility-identity trade-offs are evident in fossil-fuel regions, where professionals suppress EPI to retain employment, causing identity dissonance. No single theoretical lens is sufficient. This requires the development of a multidimensional approach that combines all three perspectives. Subjective self-actualization (Anglo-Saxon) depends on structural-functional institutional recognition and discursive legitimation (social constructionist). Russian green professionals exemplify this synthesis of bricklaying state policies, market roles, and personal values

<sup>3</sup> How Renewable Energy Transition is Creating a Green Jobs Boom. *World Economic Forum*. 2023. URL: <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/01/renewable-energy-transition-green-jobs/> (accessed: 20.09.2025).



[De Vos et al., 2009]. This integration enables a holistic analysis of how personal values, structural opportunities, and cultural narratives interact to shape green careers [Abdelwahab et al., 2024]. Ultimately, subjective dimensions mediate broader forces, while resource economies' path dependencies demand localized, context-sensitive research.

## Research methodology

This study is based on a secondary qualitative analysis of narrative data from 60 in-depth interviews with professionals in Russia's emerging green sectors, conducted between 2021 and 2024. The participants included experts from the fields of manufacturing, eco-product entrepreneurship, media, IT, marketing, consulting, circular economy, design, and ESG — individuals who have implemented environmental practices in their work or businesses. The sample consisted of 70% women and 30% men, all of whom held university degrees.

This research applies a complementary methodological framework developed by Hyman [Hyman, 1972] and Alkhasov [Alkhasov, 1989] who focused on recontextualizing secondary data to uncover latent meanings in professional narratives. Additionally, the study uses iterative thematic analysis guided by Meiring's depth-oriented approach to explore participants' experiences of professional self-realization, personal values, career barriers, and social mobility. This method prioritizes paraphrasing, contextual explication, and structural refinement over automated processing. It ensures fidelity to the richness of lived experiences while addressing the challenges of reusing secondary data.

Originally collected to study grassroots environmental engagement, the interviews were reinterpreted through a new lens: the formation of professional identity during the green transition. This required detaching narratives from their original context and reconstructing them around emerging themes, such as perceived prestige in green jobs or systemic obstacles to career advancement. Cross-case patterns were identified through repeated close reading while preserving the unique depth of individual stories.

During data analysis, Meiring's three-phase protocol [Fairclough, 2003] was followed, adapted as follows. First, concise summarization: interview transcripts were condensed through paraphrasing, preserving core meanings and key semantic categories related to professional values. Second, explicative analysis: dominant themes were examined in context, exploring how participants balanced personal environmental values against organizational limits or societal expectations. Third, structural filtering: thematic matrices organized narratives into hierarchical frameworks, clarifying the relationships between concepts such as autonomy, recognition, and career progression. Manual coding was used instead of computational tools to ensure precise control over thematic boundaries, especially when interpreting subtle expressions such as irony or metaphor in descriptions of career challenges.

To enhance validity and reduce bias in secondary analysis, three strategies were applied: first, triangulation of findings with trends from existing research literature; second, member checking, where preliminary interpretations were shared with a subset of participants; and third, audit trail documentation, which recorded all coding decisions and excluded incomplete narratives (those lacking career-path details).

## **Results**

### *Motivational value drivers and entry strategies in green professions*

Biographical narrative analysis of green professionals in Russia reveals a complex interplay between deeply held values and adaptive career strategies. At the heart of their professional transitions lies a powerful alignment between biospheric values and a sense of ethical purpose. This alignment resonates with Stern's VBN theory, which posits that personal values initiate a cognitive chain: awareness of environmental consequences leads to a sense of responsibility, which activates normative commitment to action [Stern, 2000]. In the context of green work, this chain becomes a structuring force that shapes not only career choices but also professional identity and social impact perceptions.

Three dominant value clusters intersect with Schwartz's theory of basic human values across the narratives. First, biospheric values are central to those who frame their work as planetary stewardship. These individuals often describe pivotal moments that triggered ethical dissonance with their previous careers, such as exposure to ecological degradation or attending a talk by Bea Johnson on zero-waste living. As one former marketer recalled:

*"Bea Johnson's talk at the UN changed everything. I couldn't ignore the environmental impact of my job anymore"* (ESG manager, 2024);

*"About two years ago, I became sick with ecology when I read the National Geographic magazine 'Arctic, Winter is Canceled' and could no longer walk past climate change and environmental pollution"* (climate activist and Arctic specialist, 2022).

This illustrates biospheric values as the primary driver of professional transition, which is central to Stern's VBN theory. This moment exemplifies the VBN mechanism: a shift in beliefs leads to new life goals and, ultimately, a normative decision to act. Such narratives often culminate in radical career shifts, underscoring the ecological consciousness's transformative power.

Second, altruistic values — defined as concern for others and social-ecological justice — drive engagement in community-based initiatives, education, and advocacy. These professionals often transition into roles that blend environmental and social goals, such as developing social policies for local governments and creating NGO initiatives. A blogger and policy advocate stated the following:



*"My goal is to make sustainability a 'boringly normal' part of daily life" (chief, 2024).*

This quote captures a crucial insight: the desire to embed ecological values as a normalized, accessible practice into everyday routines. This reflects a strategic form of altruism that seeks systemic cultural change through incremental, relatable actions. Rather than positioning sustainability as exceptional, these professionals aimed to democratize ecological knowledge, making it part of ordinary life and expanding its reach beyond elite or activist circles.

Third, self-direction values that emphasize autonomy, innovation, and personal agency motivate those who pursue entrepreneurial or hybrid roles. A bioecologist who founded a waste management startup explained the following:

*"I wanted to solve technical problems like optimizing waste systems, but on my own terms" (waste management director, 2023).*

This reflects Hall and Moss's protean career model, where success is defined internally through alignment with personal values, rather than external markers such as status or salary [Hall, Moss, 1998]. In this context, green professionalism becomes a space of creative agency, where individuals reframe existing skills, such as marketing, engineering, and journalism, toward ecological ends.

These value systems are enacted through key green jobs and mobility strategies: first, boundary work; second, informal learning and skill hybridization; and third, protean and boundaryless careers, as described below.

Boundary work, which is central to Abbott's theory of jurisdictional contestation, enables professionals to claim expertise without formal credentials [Abbott, 1988]. Many began as volunteers, organizing cleanups or contributing to NGOs, which served as proving grounds for practical knowledge. Some respondents demonstrated boundary work and informal learning strategies for establishing expertise without formal credentials, which is key to the social constructionist approach, in the article. As one eco-trainer noted:

*"I started volunteering at an eco-center while working in publishing. Eventually, my hands-on experience allowed me to pivot full-time" (eco-trainer, 2024);*

*"After a year of deep study of the problem, I realized that I wanted to do this professionally. My soul ached for every cigarette thrown away in front of me, for every bag taken by someone at the cash register. First, I studied at the Green Driver school to become an eco-trainer. After graduating with honors, my passion only grew. I wanted to learn more and know more. At one point, I realized that I had enough knowledge to share with others. I started an Instagram and TikTok blog while simultaneously studying on various courses on sustainable development and reading professional literature" (eco-blogger and consultant, 2022).*

By engaging in grassroots projects, they carved out professional jurisdictions that later gained legitimacy in corporate or academic settings.

Informal learning and skill hybridization enable professionals to bypass traditional educational gatekeeping. Respondents frequently acquired knowledge through online courses (e.g., Coursera, Ecowiki), mentorship in eco-communities, and cross-sectoral skill transfer. A former journalist turned climate communicator said:

*"I had no ecology degree, but my media background allowed me to translate scientific research into accessible content...Certifications came later"* (biologist, 2023).

This reflects a broader trend of the deinstitutionalization of expertise, where practical competence and narrative authority often outweigh formal qualifications.

Protean and boundaryless careers characterize mobility patterns. For example, a former railway engineer who became an ESG consultant described her path as follows:

*"I spent 10 years in RZhD<sup>4</sup>, then launched a sustainability consultancy. My engineering skills remained relevant, but I rebranded them around green goals"* (environmental engineer, 2022).

Similarly, many leveraged their international experiences to build transnational credibility — a strategy consistent with the Anglo-Saxon model's emphasis on self-directed career capital [Svensson, Evetts, 2010]. However, this mobility is often precarious. As one ESG specialist noted:

*"Freelance eco-consulting pays the bills, but does it provide job security?...Nonexistent"* (ESG specialist, 2023).

This tension reveals a critical insight: while the Anglo-Saxon model celebrates autonomy, it often masks structural vulnerabilities, particularly for those without institutional support. Although international experience may enhance prestige, it does not guarantee stability, especially in Russia's underfunded green economy. These quotes from the interview with one respondent exemplify protean careerism and adaptive mobility across sectors despite precarity, on Russian green professionals:

*"I love my job because I constantly learn something new and sometimes do things that seem impossible at first glance";*

*"Life throws something unexpected every time I think I've already decided what I'll be doing this time"* (startup consultant for international eco-markets, 2021).

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<sup>4</sup> RZhD means Russian Railways.



Moreover, structural and social barriers persist. Rural women and professionals reported greater difficulty accessing elite eco-networks, reinforcing gendered and geographic inequities. The prestige associated with green roles, often mediated by Bourdieu’s cultural, social and symbolic capitals, frequently reproduces existing hierarchies, privileging those with access to education and cosmopolitan networks [Xiaowei, 2019].

Altruistic values, in turn, motivate roles that focus on education and community empowerment. The desire to normalize ecological practices, making them accessible rather than exceptional. Such professionals act as cultural translators, often outside formal institutions, using media or education skills to democratize environmental knowledge.

Self-direction values drive entrepreneurial and hybrid roles, reflecting Hall and Moss’s protean career model, which emphasizes autonomy over hierarchical advancement [Hall, Moss, 1998]. These professionals reframe existing expertise — marketing, engineering, journalism — to ecological ends, often bypassing formal training through self-directed learning on platforms such as Coursera or Ecowiki. This process involves boundary work — a concept from Abbott’s theory of jurisdictional contestation where professionals assert expertise without formal credentials [Abbott, 1988]. Many volunteer, using grassroots projects to build legitimacy. In Russia, where green certifications are rare, such informal validation is essential. Ethical dissonance triggers radical career shifts toward values-congruent work, reflecting Stern’s Value-Belief-Norm framework:

*“After many years of working in marketing, even though I enjoyed the work itself, I began to feel a lack of meaning, spending half my life making people buy more yogurts, chocolates, etc. I couldn’t. Furthermore, I began to search for these meanings”* (entrepreneur and founder of Want Her Dress, 2024).

Yet, structural inequalities shape professional growth. Bourdieu’s theory of capitals explains why roles such as sustainability consultants gain prestige through education, networks, and symbolic recognition, while manual eco-jobs (as the waste pickers) remain stigmatized despite their critical role in circular systems [Xiaowei, 2019; Ermolaeva, 2020].

Despite these barriers, green careers offer pathways for social mobility. Volunteering, skill hybridization, and community advocacy serve as entry points, aligning with protean careerism but often leading to precarity. Institutional support remains weak. As one respondent explains:

*“We’re building frameworks from abrasion... no state-backed programs exist”* (certification developer, 2024).

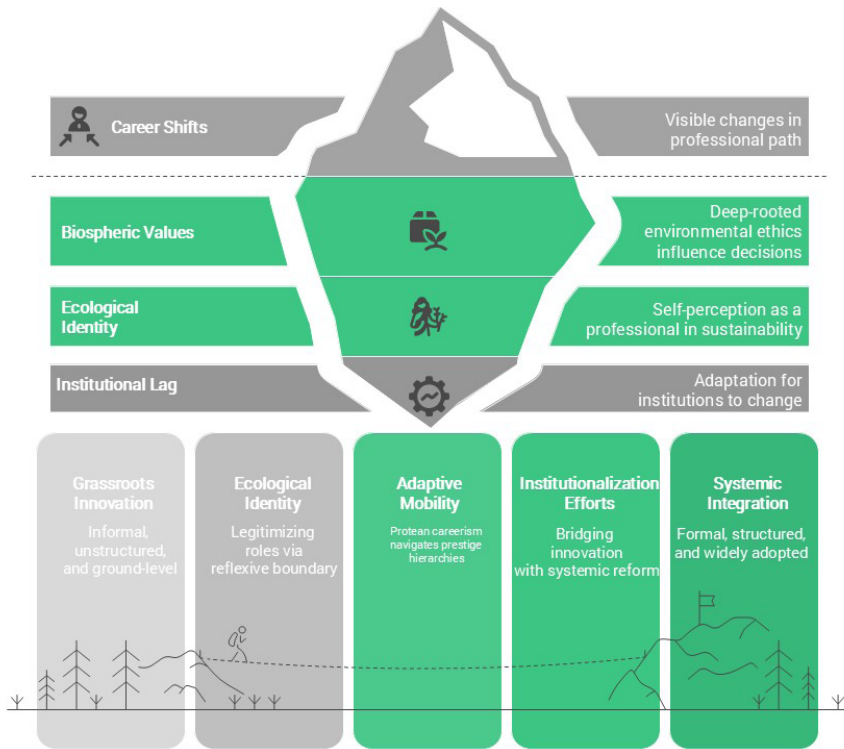
As noted, this sharply contrasts with regulated systems, for example, in Germany or Finland [De Vos et al., 2009]. The analysis of sociodemographic characteristics reveals consistent patterns across the GPC cohort. A significant majority of respondents are women, reflecting broader trends in environmental activism,

where women often dominate community-based initiatives and educational roles. All participants hold university degrees, yet their professional backgrounds span diverse. This demonstrates that green professions in Russia are not confined to traditional environmental science graduates but emerge from interdisciplinary pathways in which individuals apply their existing expertise to ecological challenges. Notably, the geographic distribution shows that urban professionals predominantly engage in policy-oriented roles, whereas rural respondents focus on localized solutions, such as permaculture and waste management systems, adapted to regional constraints.

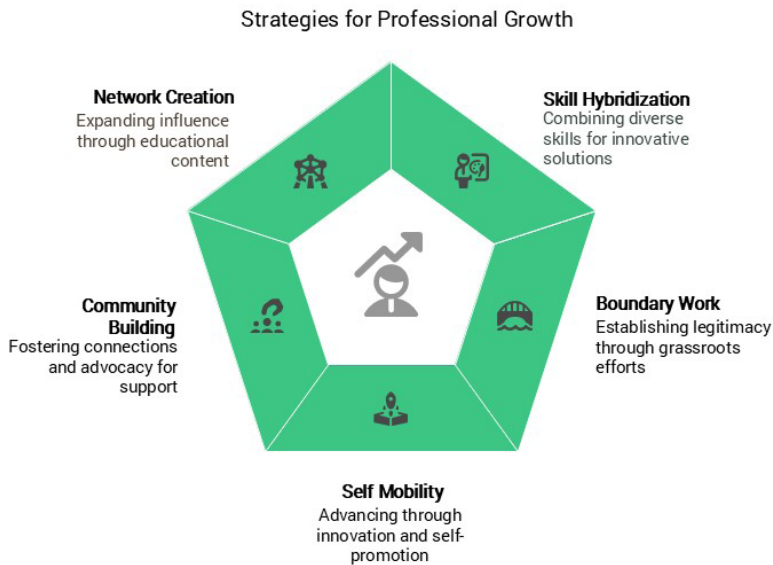
The environmental context critically shapes professional trajectories through the formation of place-based identity. Regional pollution patterns directly influence career priorities, with coastal cities fostering marine-focused activism, industrial regions driving localized environmental justice movements, and Arctic regions shaping specialized climate adaptation expertise. This aligns with the findings of Dunlap and co-authors [Dunlap et al., 2000] on how ecological identity is inherently place-dependent. The data indicate a strong correlation between personal exposure to environmental degradation and professional commitment, with many respondents reporting pivotal experiences with local ecological crises as catalysts for their career shifts. These patterns highlight how environmental challenges are not abstract global issues but deeply localized experiences that shape professional identity and action in transitional economies such as Russia.

The professional trajectories of Russian green professionals, as revealed through biographical narratives, allow us to build empirical observations and construct a holistic framework for the research of green professions' values and motivations (Figure 1). Professional self-identification and environmental identity are the processes by which individuals align ecological values with occupational roles and serve as the cornerstone of green career transitions in Russia. Consistent with Stern's Value-Belief-Norm framework [Stern, 2000], biospheric values emerge as the primary driver, triggering radical career shifts when ethical dissonance arises in non-ecological roles. This self-identification unfolds through reflexive identity work, where professionals navigate "splinting" (adopting established green roles like "eco-trainer") and "patching" (integrating ideals such as "circular economy pioneer" into evolving identities), as explained by Giddens' structuration theory.

The integration of environmental values into one's self-concept serves as a foundation for green professionals' career choice, job satisfaction, and impact. In Russia, professional identity is shaped by three core value clusters: biospheric concern (care for ecosystems and future generations), altruism (community well-being), and self-direction (autonomy and innovation) [Stern, 2000; De Vos et al., 2009]. These values do not merely guide personal behavior; they become drivers of professional self-actualization, shaping how individuals navigate careers during institutional gaps and societal skepticism, and creating deep-rooted environmental ethics that influence decisions. Biospheric values often trigger profound career shifts. This reflects Stern's Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) model, where ecological harm awareness leads to personal responsibility and normative commitment to action [Stern, 2000]. This moral clarity becomes the foundation of professional identity



**Figure 1.** Empirical model of green profession transformations: core mechanisms and stages. *Source: Ermolaeva V. Yulia*



**Figure 2.** Empirical model of green profession transformations: strategies for professional growth. *Source: Ermolaeva V. Yulia*

for many people doing green jobs. Strategies for promoting the new career path include network creation, community building, skill hybridization and self-education, boundary work strategies (grassroots efforts), and self-mobility (self-employment, business innovations) (Figure 2).

Our findings reveal that the core drivers of green professions — biospheric values (concern for ecosystems and future generations), altruistic values (social-ecological justice), and self-direction values (autonomy and innovation) — align with universal psychological frameworks that operate across cultural contexts, such as Stern's Value-Belief-Norm theory. These fundamental motivations for environmental engagement manifest globally, as evidenced by comparable career transitions driven by ethical dissonance in Western contexts and the widespread adoption of protean career models that emphasize values-driven professional identity. However, the Russian case reveals how these universal values interact with unique institutional structures. While Western systems often rely on formal certification to legitimize green roles, Russian professionals navigate fragmented institutionalization through grassroots boundary work and informal validation, illustrating how global environmental imperatives are locally enacted [Caniëls et al., 2021]. This local perspective positions Russian green professionals as active participants in a transnational sustainability discourse, where the universal aspiration to "make sustainability a boringly normal part of daily life" (as one respondent described) coexists with context-specific strategies for institutionalizing ecological values amid systemic constraints. Thus, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of environmental sociology by showing how global environmental values are simultaneously translated, adapted, and reconfigured across different sociopolitical contexts.

The institutionalization of green professions in Russia requires bridging grassroots innovation with systemic reform through standardized certifications and public awareness campaigns that democratize ecological work. Ultimately, effective professional development in this field requires intersectional policies that align individual agency with institutional support, ensuring that the formation of ecological identity translates into sustainable career pathways rather than precarious transitions. Legitimacy is often asserted through grassroots validation rather than formal credentials, with self-direction values fueling non-linear, boundaryless career trajectories across sectors. However, adaptive mobility remains constrained by prestige hierarchies and institutional gaps that stigmatize manual eco-jobs while elevating symbolic roles such as sustainability consultants.

## **Conclusion**

This study reveals how ecological identity formation mediated through biospheric values, altruism, and self-direction enables professionals in Russia to navigate institutional barriers during green career transitions. Unlike in Western contexts, where formal credentials legitimize green roles, Russian professionals rely on boundary work and grassroots to transform ethical dissonance into actionable expertise.



Our key contribution lies in demonstrating how reflexive identity work bridges global theoretical frameworks (e.g., VBN theory and protean careers) with the unique constraints of transitional economies, where institutional support is minimal and innovation persists. This challenges the dominant Anglo-Saxon models that overlook precarity despite clear autonomy. For meaningful sustainability transitions, policies must democratize ecological work by addressing gender, geography, and class intersectional barriers that reproduce inequities even within “green” sectors. Future research should employ longitudinal mixed-methods to track how ecological values translate into career stability during geopolitical shifts, particularly in post-Soviet contexts where environmental agendas compete with economic priorities.

These findings confirm that the core drivers of green innovation — value-driven identity formation, adaptive boundary work, and knowledge-sharing across formal-informal divides — are universal, even though their manifestations vary contextually. For meaningful sustainability transitions, policies must recognize that the Russian case exemplifies a “glocal” innovation model: locally adapted yet globally connected solutions that collectively advance planetary-scale environmental stewardship. Future research should prioritize comparative analysis of green innovation across diverse sociopolitical contexts to map how localized adaptations enrich international best practices in sustainability transitions.

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## Формирование профессиональной идентичности в «зеленых профессиях» в России

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Данное исследование посвящено анализу процесса становления «зеленых профессий» в России как нового социально-профессионального феномена. Под «зелеными профессиями» в работе понимаются профессиональные деятельности, непосредственно направленные на решение экологических проблем, сохранение природных ресурсов, обеспечение экологической безопасности и продвижение принципов устойчивого развития. В статье выявляются особенности трансформации социально-экологического поведения и информирования экологической профессиональной идентичности через призму концепций социологии профессий (структурно функциональный подход, социальное конструирование, англосаксонский подход) и зеленых профессий. Мы рассматриваем этот процесс через призму взаимодействия субъектных индивидуальных ценностей и экологической идентичности, влияющих на формирование социальной политики продвижения зеленых профессий. Исследование основано на вторичном качественном

анализе данных 60 нарративных интервью с представителями «зеленых» профессий в России с применением техники реконтекстуализации Х. Хьюмена и М. Алхасова. Для обработки и интерпретации данных применяется содержательный (тематический) анализ, позволяющий выявить ключевые паттерны и смыслы в рассказах респондентов об их профессиональном пути согласно субъектным и объектным основам. Исследование выявило, что профессиональная самоидентификация является ключевым механизмом, через который российские специалисты в области экологии соотносят биосферные ценности с профессиональными ролями, преодолевая институциональные барьеры с помощью самосконструированной экологической профессиональной идентичности. Карьерные траектории определяются согласно ценностям и целям и позволяют адаптироваться к нелинейным переходам между секторами. Институционализация остается фрагментарной, опираясь на инновации снизу (например, волонтерскую легитимизацию, гибридные навыки в профессиях), чтобы компенсировать системные пробелы в формальных системах экологической профессиональной сертификации. Результаты подчеркивают необходимость внедрения интерсекциональных политик, демократизирующих экологическую работу за счет объединения активностей и институциональных реформ, обеспечивая справедливые возможности для развития зеленых рынков труда в России и за их пределами.

**Ключевые слова:** социология профессий; автобиография; нарратив; экологическая социология; зеленые профессии; зеленые рабочие места; инновация; субъект трансформации, экологически-ориентированное поведение

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