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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AS A STRATEGY OF USING NATURAL VALUABLE AREAS

Abstract

Advantages and resources of the environment are a base for development of natural valuable areas. In order this process could proceed harmoniously and effectively should be worked out adequate solutions and specific principles of the rational management with resources of the environment. A cohesive and clear conception of eco-development can meet these challenges.

Key words: *sustainable development, natural valuable areas*

The concept and the principles of sustainable development

The concept of sustainable development (also known as eco-development) has evolved over the decades. This expression was already used in the sixties of the twentieth century to determine the view that the socio - economic development and environmental protection should be pursued together. For the first time sustainability themes officially appeared in the I United Nations Conference (“Environment and Development”) in 1972. After a period of dynamic growth economies recovering from the devastation of war, politicians were more interested in the effects of human activities on the environment. U Thant’s report and the first report to the Club of Rome, developed in the seventies, was one of the first and most important steps in shaping the idea of sustainability. Many researchers were engaged in the development of his concept. Most authors emphasized that the sustainable development was a pursuit of societies in the direction of economic efficiency, social harmony and balance of natural ecosystems. (Zabłocki 2002: 7,20)

In 1983 the UN established the World Commission on Environment and Development. In its report “Our Common Future” (Brundtland Report) the urgency of implementing the principles of sustainability was emphasized. Only then it would be possible to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations. Sustainable development should be based on the change in the quality of economic growth and its aim is to provide to all people: an employment, a food, an access to water, electricity and sanitation. These assumptions adopted in the report emphasize the definition of sustainable development: “...economic and social development, which will meet the needs of future generations”. (Brundtland 1991: 9-16)

Milestone of specify the principles of sustainable development was the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The adopted documents: “Declaration of Rio” and “Agenda 21” have saved the basic principles of sustainability: (Górka 1998: 76)

- right to a creative and healthy life in harmony with nature;

- justice in considering the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations;
- inseparability of environmental protection from development processes;
- eradication of poverty as a key task in the process of building sustainability;
- reducing or eliminating the production and consumption distort the implementation of sustainable development.

All the nations of the Earth had to take care of sustainable development according to adopted declarations. However, as evidenced by the “Rio + 5. The second Earth Summit” little could be done with earlier plans. There are still differences in the perception of the sustainability by the developed countries and developing countries. Those first, with highly developed technologies and income, associate the sustainable development with environmental protection. Poor countries involve it only with the development expressed by the rates of consumption. (Górka 1998: 78)

The essence of sustainability is a holistic, systemic understanding of the phenomena of economic, social, natural and interdependencies between them. Development priorities should be classified on the basis of: economic, environmental and social criteria, implemented by a carefully selected set of instruments. The concept of sustainable development implies to treat the environment as an ecosystem that is subject to constant processes of development (evolution) and the occasional transformation - the revolutionary (mainly caused by man). (Górka 1998: 78)

The objectives and the indicators of the sustainable development

The main objective of sustainable development is “better meet the physical and psychological needs of man through his proper position relative to the natural environment”. In literature, there are a number of specific objectives: (Jeżewski 1996: 173-174)

- increase in real income per capita;
- improvement of the health status;
- equal access to environmental resources;
- justice;
- security;
- increase of the level of education;
- protection of Biodiversity;
- sustainable use of land and ecosystems;
- preserve the basic systems that are mainstay of life;
- necessary conditions for the renewal of human biological forces, etc..

The above analytical classification of the objectives of sustainable development can be structured as three groups: (Poskrobko 1998: 161-162)

- social goals - including: meet basic human needs, improving the quality of life providing decent living conditions, maintenance of cultural diversity, etc.;
- economic goals – including: provide adequate quantities of goods and services, fight against unemployment, etc.
- environmental goals - considered to be superior to other goals; including.: long-term stability of ecological processes, protection of biodiversity, high quality of natural environment.

These three aspects of the early nineties were used to measure sustainability. However, due to the complicated nature of such indicators, more precise test methods were searched. In 1995, the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (UNCSD) started work on a system of indicators, based on the principle of causality: cause - state - response. (Poskrobko 1998: 180 - 181)

Among the indicators of environmental pressure (the cause) are those that contribute to reducing the number and quality of natural resources. May be direct (the size of pollution, consumption of natural resources) or indirect (a form of action that contribute to the emergence of direct pressure).

Status indicators define the state of the environment and describe the condition and quality of its resources. These indicators should be constructed to allow assessment of the environment and its changes.

Indicators of social reaction define to what extent and how the public is interested in reducing pressures on the environment. This indicator also describes how people react to environmental stress.

The above diagram: the pressure - state - response should be the basis for implementing environmental policy at all levels of management.

Sustainable development as a main objective of the environmental policy

Sustainability is a process, not the state. Fundamental importance becomes in selecting the appropriate strategy, identify ways of its implementation and monitoring. During the implementation of the sustainable development these tasks belong to the National Environmental Policy. It is defined as “intentional and purposeful activity of the state, which is the rational development of the natural environment through the proper use and protection, based on the knowledge of natural, economic and social rights”. (Jeżewski 1996: 175) Environmental Policy should be implemented by state authorities at all levels of its structure.

Its subject is the environment. In the process of implementing sustainable development policy should be on equal terms with economic and social policies because these policies affect each other and condition each.

For decades the nature and importance of environmental policy in Poland was subject to significant changes. Until 1989 it has the passive character. It was part of economic and social policy. Issued statements and environmental programs were to be “dead” documents. During the transition the environmental policy slowly began to separate. In 1991 the first program in Poland and Eastern Europe that included environmental policy objectives was developed. It found that the economic goals should include environmental and social aspects. During the implementation of the concept of sustainable development the state is leading the integrated actions on the tasks of economic, social and environmental policy. (Górka 1998: 63-64)

For the properly implementation of environmental policy the undertaken tasks should be guided by the following principles: (Górka 1998: 67-68)

- harmonization of business processes with natural processes;
- law and order - applies the appropriate structure of the legal system, avoiding any abuse of law;
- equality of rights and responsibilities - this means that all entities, both natural and legal persons shall have equal right to benefit from the environment and equal responsibilities for its protection;
- the complexity of conservation undertaken projects;
- socialization - the participation of citizens, of all social groups and NGOs in the implementation of environmental policy;
- „polluter pays”;
- economization of environmental policy - means the use of the instruments of the market mechanism and state intervention in the conduct of environmental policy;
- regionalization of environmental policy - means the transfer of competencies to achieve its objectives to local authorities;
- liquidation of pollution at its source - is to use recycling, installing protective devices, etc.
- staging - that is to classify tasks of environmental policy according to their importance and planning of their implementation in stages.

The implementation of these principles serves to fill the objectives of environmental policy. The main one is the practical implementation of sustainable development. The final document at the „Round Table” already stated that sustainable development should be the basis for state policy and the further socio - economic development. The document: „National Environmental Policy” (adopted in 1991.) stated that „sustainable development policy will be

implemented through the enforcement of environmental requirements in each of the socio – economic activities in the country, through appropriate policy in relation to the neighbouring countries, and through raising public awareness of personal responsibility for implementing environmental protection and natural resources in the workplace, dwelling and leisure place. (Jeżewski 1996: 44)

Among the specific objectives of environmental policy, dependent on general economic social and political conditions, this document lists among others: (Górka 1998: 71)

- elimination of excessive environmental burdens;
- special protection of valuable nature areas;
- unification of the Polish environmental standards with those of Western Europe;
- implementation of environmental forecasting ecosystem;
- increasing the responsibility of individuals and legal entities for the environmental effects due to the activity carried out;
- environmental education;
- supporting the activities of environmental organizations.

Report on the implementation of new environmental policy for the years 1991 - 1993 points to its first profits. The production in industries of particular nuisance to wildlife was limited (for example: mining, metallurgy). Demand for electricity decreased. There was a reduction in pollution. The outlays on environmental protection were increased. (Górka 1998: 75) Currently, G. Zabłocki (Zabłocki 2002: 192) argues that the effects of actions for sustainable development are inadequate. Among the reasons he mentions: that sustainable development is not a process that is not a social development, the severity of the phenomena perceived as a threat to development in the future, etc.

In the early nineties, Poland was the first country in Central - Eastern Europe, which started to implement the concept of sustainable development (proceedings of „the Round Table”, The first national environmental policy). Today, the need to achieve sustainable development results from the Constitution, acts (in particular, environment protection and development or development planning), international conventions and agreements (such as the Treaty on European Union, Agenda 21).

Forms and directions of implementation of the sustainable development in the valuable natural areas.

Environmental values of valuable nature areas are the basis of socio - economic development of these areas. Therefore, it is extremely important to work out a coherent and concrete development programs in these areas. Forms of activities undertaken should be

limited by nature. One way of activation of valuable nature areas is tourism (ecotourism, rural tourism). The preferred management directions are also: natural medicine and spa care, agriculture, forestry and industry based on „clean” technologies.

Directions of development of different forms of activity should be also in line with the overall strategy for regional development. Sustainable development should be the aim of the ongoing regional policies. In 1996, only 10% of districts in Poland had a program of sustainable development. The first regional plan of sustainability was developed for the area of Polish Green Lungs already in 1991. The aim of the introduced program was activation of the economy through the rational use of natural resources and prevention of social depression. In addition to the existence of a general policy for the region, more than 50 districts, unions, associations of districts have developed their own environmental policies and principles of sustainable development. (Górka 1998: 80)

Currently, the number of districts and other territorial units, which are aimed at sustainable development, is growing. The developed plans are compatible with the overall objectives of development of the region, state and European Union recommendations.

In summary, once again it should be emphasized that the management of valuable natural areas should be in accordance with the principles of sustainability. These activities are designed to provide rapid development of economic processes, the sustainability of use of natural resources, protecting biodiversity and improving and preserving the high quality of life. One of the preferred directions of activation of these areas is tourism.

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