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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE POSTULATE IN THE CONTEXT OF STATUTORY TASKS AND FUNCTIONS OF NATIONAL PARKS

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ABSTRACT: The postulate of intergenerational justice is the core concept of sustainable development. National parks as protected areas with the highest status of protection bring together individual elements contained in the Brundtland definition and the tasks they perform are intended to satisfy the needs of the present generation, without prejudice to subsequent generations. The article presents the implementation of this postulate through a review of sustainable development concepts and their reference to the statutory tasks and functions performed by national parks.

KEY WORDS: sustainable development, national park

Introduction

The process that involved changes taking place in the public consciousness and science has made it impossible to precisely determine the emergence of the concept of sustainable development. Even in the mid-twentieth century, pollution of the environment was not seen as a serious problem for the economy and society. However, progressive environmental pressure on the environments resulted in the launching of activities to rationalize such interference. Civilizational crisis in its social and economic aspect, as well as changes in the perception of the surrounding world and moral considerations became the genesis of the coming changes. First, *environmental sustainability* was mentioned as economic development compatible with environmental protection requirements, highlighting the ecological aspects thereof. Then came the concept of sustainable development.

The best known definition of sustainable development was formulated by the World Commission on Environment and Development established in 1992 and chaired by Gro Brundtland, then Prime Minister of Norway. In light of this definition, development that meets the needs of the present without depriving future generations of the possibility of such can be called sustainable (Report, 1991). Thus, the durability and sustainability of growth are determined not only by short-term, but also intergenerational justice. The definition comes down to meeting needs, or the area of the research interest in economics. However, this concept primarily affects the development of environmental policy, as its fundamental premise is such an economic activity that ensures resources and values of the environment remain in a condition that will make it possible for the next generations to use them in a sustainable manner. This requires preserving the viability of the natural processes and biodiversity at every level: species composition, ecosystem and landscape. Therefore, if the concept of environmental sustainability underlines the environmental aspects of development, it is the concept of sustainable development that adds economic, social and spatial order to environmental governance. Its essence is thus an equal treatment of the economic, social and environmental factors (Górka et al., 2001; Żylicz, 2008a). National parks as protected areas with the highest status of protection bring together individual elements contained in the Brundtland definition and the tasks they perform are intended to satisfy the needs of the present generation, without prejudice to subsequent generations. The article presents the implementation of the intergenerational justice postulate through a review of sustainable development concepts and referring them to the statutory tasks and functions performed by national parks.

Statutory tasks and functions of national parks

Among all natural objects protected under the law, national parks enjoy the highest rank of protection. The Act of April 16, 2004 on Nature Conservation (art. 8, paragraph. 1 and 2) defines a national park as a region distinguishing particular natural, scientific, social, cultural and educational area, not smaller than 1,000 ha, protecting all nature and landscape values therein. It is created to preserve biodiversity, resources, formations and elements of inanimate nature and landscape values. Its purpose is maintaining the condition of natural resources and the restoration of distorted natural habitats, plants, animals or fungi.

Originally, the most important tasks of national parks were nature conservation and conducting scientific studies of nature. Now, however, the parks are acquiring new tasks that cause certain effects of economic and social nature. Therefore, the main tasks of national parks in Poland include (The Act of Nature Conservation, art. 8b paragraph. 1):

- maintaining protective action within the ecosystems of the national park, aiming to achieve the purpose for which national parks were established, and thus the preservation of biodiversity, resources, formations and elements of inanimate nature and landscape values, restoration of a proper state of natural resources and the reconstruction of distorted natural habitats, animals, plants, and fungi,
- provision of the national park's area to other parties on terms specified in the plan of protection or conservation tasks and ordinances of the director of the national park,
- conducting activities related to the education about nature.

Each park has several functions, resulting both from the general needs of nature conservation, but also from the natural phenomena characterizing that specific entity. There are 6 functions specific to each national park:

The *protective function*, which consists in securing and documenting the biodiversity of the country. The most important issue is the protection of the largest possible collection of fauna and flora-containing the largest possible pool of genes of animated nature-and the preservation of the remains of primary and natural biocenoses, on top of semi-natural ecological communities existing at present. The protection also includes a variety of natural structures and their spatial layouts, not only natural, but also those that emerged as a result of long-term management and showing the culture of the nation. The parks are also gene banks, which serve as a source of genetic material for growing valuable plants and breeding rare animals or their local breeds and varieties.

The *educational function*, i.e., keeping a library and a natural museum, a scientific and popular publishing entity, but also the creation and maintenance of educational nature trails. The park, in order to be able to perform this function properly, must be adapted to it in terms of organization, staffing and facilities.

The *scientific function*, which involves carrying out research activities. It ensured the protection of animate and inanimate nature, which is or will be the subject of research. The protected object become an indispensable workshop for scientific work, allowing one to conduct research without interference caused by exposure to exploitation, and their number is constantly increasing.

The *economic function* permitting the use of objects created for nature conservation for economic purposes, for example. the acquisition of wood raw material from ongoing conservation measures or paid entry to national parks.

The *tourist function* is implemented by sharing specific sites and hiking trails for exploration and recreation in the form of hiking, biking, water sports or skiing. Due to the unique landscape and natural value, these areas are extremely attractive for tourists.

The *cultural and historical function* supports the local architectural style, regional clothing, the care of national memorial sites and other historically important places (Lubczyński, 1999).

Intergenerational justice vs. the tasks and functions of national parks

The concept of sustainable development includes three groups of opinions: *ecocentric*, focused on the primacy of the principles of nature protection and its survival in every field of human activity, *moderately anthropocentric*, and therefore also ones assuming such a economic activity that would maintain the integrity of economic and non-economic environmental resources, and *radically anthropocentric*, continuing the neoclassical growth theory model adjusted for ecological conditions. The Brundtland definition corresponds with the balanced, moderately anthropocentric approach. According to it, development is sustainable when there is a balance between the objectives of protecting the environment, preserving natural resources for future generations, and social objectives, while maintaining the socio-economic development and quality of life.

Socio-economic development, however, involves the depletion of non-renewable resources, so it seems that there is a contradiction here with the postulate of sustainability of the natural capital in the name of intergenera-

tional justice. In theory, therefore, the criterion of substitution between natural and anthropogenic capital is taken into consideration and definitions connected with a strengthening of the principle of the durability of the capital are distinguished. Thus, *weak*, *sensitive*, *strong* and *restrictive* principles of the sustainability of natural capital are listed. The *weak* principle of capital sustainability approves of the full possibility of substituting natural capital by another type of capital: human, social or anthropogenic. According to the *sensitive* principle of sustainability, maintaining the total capital, as well as the stability of its structure is equally important. It is thus possible to substitute capital only within its scope. The *strong* principle of sustainability is based on the preservation of all kinds of capital, both qualitatively and quantitatively, excluding substitution, even within the particular type of capital. The *restrictive* concept of natural capital sustainability, which is the most radical example of the strong sustainability principle, excludes any compensation of natural capital for any other type of anthropogenic capital, which in relation to the economy as a whole is not only impossible, but rather pointless (and probably mentioned only for educational purposes).

Currently, the first principle, that is, the weak durability of sustainable development, according to which the current generations compensate for the losses in capital due to the reduction of natural resources by increasing investment in anthropogenic capital is of particular importance in economic and environmental policies (Fiedor, 2002). However, with regard to the activities of national parks, which are enclaves of biodiversity, at least a strong principle of sustainability is the most justified. The aim of the national parks in Poland, by far, is not an optimal use thereof, but the preservation of natural resources. For national parks, the most important natural resources and the most effective ways to protect them are a priority. A large part of the resources of the national parks can be classified as non-renewable resources, but it does not mean having to completely abandon their exploitation. They should be used in such a way that does not lead to irreversible changes in ecosystems, which changes could affect their quality for future generations.

Simply put, within certain limits, one type of capital loss can be compensated by an increase in the other. However, the different types of resources are not substitutes for each other in an unlimited manner, and above all, the scarcity of natural capital is felt acutely, though, of course, for the proper functioning of the economy, each type of capital (including man-made) is needed. This restriction in substitution is an argument against the weak sustainability principle. The next generation can and will inherit the whole pot of the capital, but if its structure will be depleted of its most desirable component which will be replaced with one of less value, the entire value will decrease too. Who and how might be able to assess biodiversity and land-

scape according to the preferences of the future? It is therefore difficult to use weak sustainability to justify the demand for equal opportunities for the next generations, which is the foundation for the concept of sustainable development.

Similarly problematic is the demand for strong sustainability when one type of capital cannot be replaced by another. The natural capital itself is composed of renewable resources, which can be exploited at the rate of their renewal without prejudice to future generations and non-renewable resources (Żylicz, 2008b). The use of the latter excludes the strong sustainability principle, and at the present level of civilization, resigning from their exploitation is at least an unlikely scenario. Of course, strong sustainability can be implemented in protected areas, especially where the protection is strict, but not in the whole economy.

In the context of intergenerational justice, one refers to the concept of John Rawls, first used by Talbot Page, whereby representatives of different generations meet to decide on the distribution of wealth between them (Rawls, 1971). However, they have no knowledge about which generation they belong to, and no one is favored. They act from *behind the veil of ignorance*. The only division that gives everyone an equal opportunity is one where no generation lives at the expense of the other. Rawls' concept is something of a philosophical groundwork for the concept of sustainable development. David Pearce, who is the author of the most famous philosophical stance on sustainable development, interpreted the principle even deeper. He distinguished three elements: intragenerational justice, intergenerational justice, and justice for non-human species.

Intragenerational justice is associated with a reduction in disparities between the rich North and the poor South, poverty eradication, provision of health care for all people, providing opportunities for intellectual growth and cessation of war, hatred, terrorism and domination of some nations over others, as well as the protection of cultural diversity. *Intergenerational equity* is the need to preserve the natural capital for future generations through efficient management of natural resources, using the potential of nature only partially, maintaining a dynamic balance of ecosystems and resource recirculation. This issue justifies the Polish translation of Sustainable Development as *enduring development*.

Justice to nonhuman species is to provide and maintain an ecological balance so that other species could survive in decent conditions (Pearce, 1988). Intergenerational equity and justice to nonhuman beings are basically the reason for the existence of nature conservation areas and national parks. They are appointed, after all, so that the next generations could also see the unique sceneries and specimens of animate and inanimate nature. Without

nature conservation, many species of flora and fauna would have been already considered extinct, and the maintenance of biodiversity would be extremely difficult. Meanwhile, thanks to appropriate treatment, species and populations are being restored, eg. the European bison or the increasing number of the Tatra chamois.

On the basis of the theory by John Rawls (which is difficult to include as an economic theory, since it uses the term usability and discounts), equity can be achieved as a hypothetical contract between generations, but without faith in a practical chance of its implementation. In economics, intergenerational justice or equality of opportunity for all generations can be included in the economic analysis, but this cannot be achieved except through the adoption of arbitrary assumptions (Żylicz, 2013).

The contradiction between the traditional analysis based on the recognition of constant discounting due to the passage of time and the need to ensure sustainable development, drew the economists' interest in the models of *overlapping generations*. In these models, intergenerational optimization is achieved by considering three periods of life of the consumer: *pre-decision* – if decisions are taken by the previous generation on their behalf, *decision-making*: when the consumer takes decisions for themselves and the pre-decision generations, and *post-decision* – where the consumer adjusts to the decisions of the next generation, and bears the consequences of decisions taken in previous periods. It is assumed that the consumer adopts an altruistic attitude towards their children, so values are not discounted in the next generation. Then, durable development is the result of rational decisions (Żylicz, 2004). Thus, intergenerational justice is the resignation, by the current generation, from the best meeting of their needs in favor of the next generation's needs. The establishment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 only shows the need to implement this concept to achieve better standards for people, institutions, and the environment. But the basic question remains – will it ensure wellbeing not only for near future people but also for more distant generations (Oliveira, 2018). Economics, which is the science of verifying theses by means of empirical research, at the present state of scientific knowledge, cannot provide a clear and objective estimate of the preferences of future generations. Although theories of intergenerational justice conceptualise the obligations of current generation may have to future generations it is still based mostly on ethics (Sanklecha, 2017). Nevertheless, the concept of sustainable development is accepted and begins to be reflected in the environmental policy, and political goals in general.

In the case of national parks, the matter is much simpler, as these areas protect biodiversity and landscape values for the sake of now living and future generations and from their intervention. Each of the functions per-

formed by national parks can be looked at through the prism of sustainable development. The protective, scientific, educational, cultural and historical functions do not raise doubts as to the realization of the postulate of justice between generations. Meanwhile, one can look at the other two functions: tourist/leisure and economic from a different perspective, in particular on the forest management.

National parks in Poland are forest areas, so they also achieve revenues from timber sales. The wood for sale does not come from forestry as understood by the State Forests. It is wood harvested e.g. after the occurrence of hurricane winds and during active protection. Forests can be protected in two ways, either by the abandonment of any action, or actively, by aiming to restore the original form of the areas previously changed by the human species. After the annexations and wars in Poland, forests were in poor condition. The forests were plundered by the occupiers, destroyed, ravaged during the world wars and overexploited. To restore the Polish forest resources, spruce trees were mass-planted in mountainous areas and pines in the rest of the country. The result are monoculture forests, forest stands comprising of trees in the same age, vulnerable to the winds and pests. In the mountain areas, stands with an admixture of fir, beech, and sycamore, which are deeper-rooted trees, should prevail. In the commercial forests, the economic goal is a healthy forest, which will provide a lot of good quality wood. In national parks, forest management is a more complicated. Deciding on the reconstruction of a stand in the national park, the naturally occurring processes are used, but also one should examine whether it will not be in opposition to other protective purposes. In some national parks, on nearly half of the active area of conservation, it is planned to carry out reconstruction of the tree stands to restore proper habitats. This means reducing the share of spruce in the stands in favor of fir and beech, which means returning to the species composition which is appropriate for the particular area. However, voices are raised saying that the reconstruction of the forest stands is a way to rescue the budget (Loch, 2013). These actions will be evaluated only by the next generations.

The statutory duty of the national park is making its area available for exploration. For this purpose, they maintain hiking trails and the necessary infrastructure (hostels, shelters, campsites), and sanitary facilities. Tourism is not only a source of income for national parks and the local population, but also a serious threat to the health of the nature sites. In 2017, the national parks were visited by nearly 13.3 million people, which means nearly 1.7 thousand people per ha (GUS, 2018). That is a lot. Tourists leave their money in the park, which works to the benefit of its business activities and finances the fulfillment of the tasks laid down by law, but also the large number of

visitors in a protected area exposes it damage, and even devastation of the natural resources of such areas. It is very difficult to manage tourist traffic in national parks, especially in the most crowded ones. Despite channeling tourist traffic by creating a network of hiking trails, too much traffic still threatens nature. Tourists have often quite low ecological culture, not knowing how to behave in national parks. Picking plants, destroying the bark of trees, breaking branches, straying from the designated trails, which e.g. launches erosion processes, littering, relieving their physiological needs outside places designated for this purpose, making excessive noise, feeding animals, air pollution, violations of prohibitions related to the strict protection, and leaving inscriptions on natural objects are only some examples of the misconduct of tourists in national parks. It happens that the tourist impact on nature does not directly affect its degradation and is not observable without conducting specialized studies, but it may, for example, reduce the possibility of nesting for certain species of birds.

National parks are extremely attractive for tourists. If, however, they remain overburdened by excessive tourist traffic in relation to their capacity, it can lead to environmental degradation of the areas and as a result to the need to close the trails, and ultimately to reduce the share of revenues from tourism. Following the development of the idea of sustainable development, the notion of *sustainable tourism*, or responsible tourism arose (it applies to tourist traffic, as in the case of tourism as a sector of the economy, we can talk about sustainable tourism). This is quite a general concept, and the only criterion for qualifying a particular form of tourism as sustainable is the compatibility of its development with the principles of sustainability, and therefore a compromise between the needs and expectations of tourists, adaptation of infrastructure to different forms of tourism and the economic interests of the local communities, on top of the protection of wildlife and the general environment while preserving natural resources for future generations. Similarly as in the theory of sustainable development, integration of social, economic, environmental and spatial planning orders is necessary.

One of the most frequently quoted definitions of sustainable tourism is the definition developed in 1995 by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) with the World Tourism Organization (WTO) together with the Council of the Earth, contained in *Agenda 21 for Travel and Tourism Industry*, based on the decisions of the Rio summit. Sustainable tourism combines the needs of tourists and the reception regions, while maintaining the ability to satisfy those needs in the future. It manages the resources in such a way as to maintain cultural distinctiveness, ecological processes, biodiversity and vital processes and to meet aesthetic, economic and social needs (Agenda 21, 1997). In turn, the Federation of National Parks and Nature Reserves in

Europe (EUROPARC) produced a definition, according to which sustainability is any form of tourism development, area management and tourist activity supporting ecological, economic and social integrity of the area and preserving cultural resources and natural resources of these areas unchanged for the next generations (Kurek, 2003).

Conclusions

It follows from the definitions that using the principles of sustainable development in relation to tourism in national parks, the most important item is that tourism do not contribute to the destruction of nature, and that it promotes and protects the cultural values of the region. Tourism as part of the regional economy should not also be troublesome for residents. That is why the local community is engaged in the development and support of tourism. Tourism in protected areas requires constant monitoring to prevent damage to nature. In addition, tourist traffic must be supported by educational activities conducted among residents and tourists alike. National parks fulfill the requirements of this last task perfectly, engaging in educational activities focused on both the population living in municipalities adjacent to the national park, various interest groups operating in the area of the park, and the tourists. Educational activities, as of today, are the only weapon of national parks in the struggle for educated, non-harmful tourist. In fact, limiting access to the park admittedly could be implemented, but it would be extremely difficult, not only due to the fact that the national parks are a public good, and therefore excluding anyone would be difficult or even impossible, but also because of the technical and staffing limitations. All that remains is the question of who and how would ensure that these limitations are observed. Therefore, education is by far the best and basically the only tool that allows the operation of national parks in the spirit of sustainable development for the benefit of nature and leaving it in excellent condition for future generations.

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