

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN TERMS OF GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES OF SOCIETIES

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SUMMARY

The essence of development is the sustainable development in terms of geographical and cultural differences of societies. The article contains definitions and concepts of sustainable development. The effects of geo-cultural differences in the implementation of sustainable development among societies are determined. The following part of the paper presents the types of cultures oriented positively and negatively to the introduction of the principles of sustainable development. At the end of the article is a summary. The contents included in the article can assist in creating an action strategy of sustainable development in both the micro and macro scale.

Keywords: sustainable development, cultural differences, society.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid pace of economic development of modern societies contributes to the environmental and social risks. Excessive exploitation of natural resources of the Earth needed to ensure the production processes, intensifies the negative impact of manufacturing enterprises on the environment and is the cause of social problems. The observed increase in the demand for various products and services is a consequence of consumer attitudes of highly developed societies and developing countries.

The condition of the environment is deteriorating at a rapid pace. The seventies and eighties of the last century was a period in which the global industry had the most destructive influence on the environment of our planet. Increased industry interference in the absence of respect for norms and standards to protect the ecosystem of the Earth, at a rapid pace, led to a significant deterioration in the condition of the environment. A. Pabian and B. Pabian referring to the *Living Planet Report 2010* write that in the years 1970 to 2007 the number of species classified as vertebrates decreased by 30 % (Pabian, Pabian, 2012). The concept of sustainable development in addition to environmental problems also

includes the social ones. The pursuit of business organizations to maximize profits ignores the social aspect, of which the most important link is the man. The population of the world is struggling with equal kind of social problems, which include hunger, malnutrition, poverty, disease, unemployment, social exclusion, crime and other threats that exist in the modern world.

The global socio-environmental threats mentioned are forcing the international community to take action to deal with the existing problems of the modern world. The answer to the threats is the sustainable development, whose ideas reflect respect for the environment and social aspects in order to provide opportunities for the development of future generations while ensuring the achievement of the objectives of economic enterprises.

THE NOTION AND MEANING OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Deteriorating state of the natural environment of our planet and numerous social problems led to a global discussion on how to reduce the negative impact of human activities on environmental and social surrounding. In 1987 the report of the World Commission of Environment and Development of United Nations has been released, which met under the chairmanship of Gro Harlem Brundtland. The report was called “*Our Common Future*”, and defined the concept of sustainable development as “a process designed to meet the developmental aspirations of the present generation, in a way to enable realisations of the same aspirations of the next generations” (www.unesco.pl). A different definition describes sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present generation that can be met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (www.europa.ue). H. Rogall devotes much space to sustainability matters. The author argues that “sustainable development aims to ensure sufficiently high standards of environmental, economic and socio-cultural limits of the natural strength of the Earth to all people living today and future generations, using the principle of intergenerational justice” (Rogall, 2010).

Analysing the concept of sustainable development it can be said that this concept focuses on three main areas i.e. economics, ecology and social aspects. It should also be noted that one of the key messages of sustainable development is the early prevention of destructive events and phenomena in society and the environment, rather than repairing damage interfering equilibria. The ideas of

sustainable development also point to provide development opportunities for future generations through responsible use of the benefits of Earth.

THE INFLUENCE OF GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The implementation of the principles of sustainable development among modern societies covering the ecological (Chudy-Hyski, 2003), economic and social aspects will not be an easy task. One of the main obstacles standing in the way to take the idea of sustainable development are the geo-cultural differences between nations. G. Stonehouse citing R. Stacey shows one of the terms of culture: "culture of any group of people is a set of beliefs, customs, practices and ways of thinking, which they share with one another by being together and work. It is a set of assumptions used in the mutual interactions that people simply accept, without questioning. Perceptible aspects of the culture of group of people take the form of ritual behaviour, symbols, myths, stories, sounds and artefacts" (Stonehouse, 2001). The presented definition shows that the societies of individual countries in different ways will respond to the ideas and solutions proposed in the concept of sustainable development. Dissimilarities of relationships will be noticeable not only in consumers in specific countries, the differences will be also evident in the economic organisations and in the sphere of the state policy. It could be argued that some societies take seriously the environmental and social risks (Hyski, 2003) occurring in the world and for that reason will counteract the emerging problems, for example, by aiming to change consumer societies into a sustainable society. There is also a likelihood that other nations will ignore the concepts of sustainability, for example, because of the desire of gaining the profits from production activities, which may negatively affect the environment. The approach to the sustainable development will therefore be largely dependent on the culture of a society. Certain features of cultures will promote the implementation of sustainable development principles, and while others will ignore the concept of sustainable management. Lack of consistency and unanimity as to the strategies of societies in accordance with the principles of sustainable development will not bring the expected results in the form of improving the environment and solve many social problems in the world. The necessary condition is therefore cooperation at the macro level, because the polluted

air and water do not recognise national borders. Unilateral efforts of a group of countries in order to protect the environment will not bring the desired results, and only by working together can bring all the nations of the expected results in improving the state of our planet.

TYPES OF BUSINESS CULTURES ORIENTED TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

On the modern map of the world, you can find more than two hundred countries. The world's population uses approx. 3,000 different languages, and in some countries, such as India and Zaire residents speak more than one language. In India, where the official language is English, the overwhelming majority of citizens, as many as 95 % do not speak the language. This example highlights the percentage of the population that understands the language (Geuns, 1993).

In the face of present geo-cultural conditions, introduction of the principles of sustainable development is not an easy task. By taking consideration of the diversity of cultures, it can be said that there are cultural nations that are willing to follow the principles of sustainable development. A. Pabian and B. Pabian cite results of a study by B. Husted, which indicate that wealthy countries with low level of distance to power, low level of male features and high preference of individualism are more likely to respect the concept of sustainable management (Pabian, Pabian, 2012). The authors present a model of cultures according to F. Kluckhohn and F. Strodtbeck. The conclusions of this model indicate that "some cultural differences may facilitate or inhibit the implementation of the concept of *sustainability* in a given society. Preferring good and harmony between man and nature, orientation for the future, perception of relationships between people in terms of their actions and decisions are the characteristics of societies, facilitating sustainable development. The aim for domination over nature, underestimation of the future, faith in the efficacy of bad behaviour, focusing only on oneself, will inhibit progress in the field of sustainability at the macro and micro scale of nations endowed with such qualities" (Pabian, Pabian, 2012). A different model, which authors present was proposed by E. Hall. According to this model, important criterion is referred to as *beliefs* and *attitudes*. "Society included in the group of low-context cultures (e. g. USA, Western Europe) believe that individuals control the destiny. In societies with high context cultures (e. g. Japan, China, Saudi Arabia) units accept destiny" (Pabian, Pabian, 2012). Socie-

ties that believe they control the destiny can also control their behaviour in the use of Earth's natural resources and have influence on the social processes taking place in own country. Such an attitude is conducive to the spread of the idea of sustainable development.

CONCLUSIONS

The deteriorating state of the environment requires undertaking an international effort to contradict the environmental and social risks. For companies operating in foreign markets, the success depends largely on the knowledge and understanding of cultural habits prevailing in the country in which business activity is carried out (Trojanowski, 2014). Also, working together for sustainable development requires knowledge of geo-cultural conditions of contemporary societies. Reducing the negative impact of industry on the environment, or the transformation of societies from consumer into sustainable society, is one of the fundamental challenges that humanity must face in the early twenty-first century. The geographical and cultural differences will not facilitate this task. In the interests of the inhabitants of the Earth is to just overcome the existing cultural differences and discrepancies as to take measures to introduce the principles of sustainable development in social and economic life of nations. Even though there are certain characteristics of cultures unfavourable the implementation of sustainable development, the author hopes that a global agreement will be reached for the benefit of all mankind and future generations.

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9. www.unesco.pl, UNESCO a Zrównoważony Rozwój.

DARNUS VYSTYMASIS VISUOMENĖS GEOGRAFINIŲ IR KULTŪRINIŲ SKIRTUMŲ POŽIŪRIU

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje darnus vystymasis nagrinėjamas visuomenės geografinių ir kultūrinių skirtumų požiūriu. Pateikiamas darnaus vystymosi sąvokos apibrėžimas. Darnus vystymasis įgyvendinamas atsižvelgiant į visuomenės geokultūrinius skirtumus. Pateikiami kultūrų tipai, nukreipti į pozityvų ir negatyvų darnaus vystymosi principų įgyvendinimą. Pristatomi tyrimo rezultatai gali padėti sukurti darnaus vystymosi veiksmų strategiją makro- ir mikrogeografiniu lygmenimis.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: darnus vystymasis, kultūriniai skirtumai, visuomenė.