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The Idea and Educational Aspects of Sustainable Development and its Implementation on the Instance of Verkehrsbetriebe Hamburg-Holstein (VHH)

Abstract

As a concept, sustainability appears to be a relatively new one. A closer examination of this phenomenon shows that this statement does not correspond to the facts.

The whole human history seems to be a period of struggle between two opposing different approaches to nature: the first one is restless and focused on looting and making profits at the expense of the environment; the second one focuses on the respect for the world and living in harmony with nature.

The latter direction, encountering obstacles on its way, became a kind of “spiritual ground” on which the concept of sustainable development was born. The implementation of the ecological message has become possible only in the face of environmental degradation and climate changes caused by human activity.

Adapting the economy to the needs of ecology is a great challenge which not all enterprises cope with well. An interesting instance of this process is the case of the HHV transport company in Hamburg, Germany, a country that is undergoing a difficult energy transformation, shifting its economy from non-renewable energy to the renewable one.

An important role has been played in this respect by educational institutions, which help shape a positive attitude toward protecting the environment, among others, in the context of road traffic.

Keywords: sustainability, ecology, *laissez faire* economy.

Introduction

The destruction of the environment by human beings is an old practice; however, those responsible for this have frequently sought an ideological justification for their actions. Because of this, it was as soon as in antiquity that ideological support for the treatment of nature as a reservoir of anything that could possibly be claimed was developed. The proponents of this approach came both from religious and secular backgrounds, using the argumentation ranging from the idea of “filling the earth and subduing it” to the concept of “the freedom of economic action”. They have been united by the fact that they try to legitimize “robbing nature” as a kind of an inalienable right of the *homo sapiens*, demonstrating ruthless egoism and greed.

In reaction to this position, also in antiquity, another ideologies arose, proclaiming that a man is responsible for the well-being of the earth, and that there is no justification for destroying it by human beings. The strength of this group has grown over the centuries, parallelly to the visible damage caused by the overexploitation of natural resources. It is from this pro-ecological movement that the concept of sustainable development as we know it today derives. Its implementation requires a significant effort by the whole of mankind.

The transport is responsible for much of environmental pollution, and appropriate measures to reduce it is in the interest of mankind. A significant role in this is played by phasing out fossil fuels as a source of energy and replacing them with renewable energy sources. Regardless of this, it is very important to shape the appropriate behaviors in transport, owing to which the technical possibilities of acting in accordance with sustainable development are optimized. This trend is increasingly being noticed in the education of personnel employed in transport. It is also important to educate people, among others, in the field of economical driving, which is becoming an increasingly important element of instruction in driving schools.

The instance of Verkehrsbetriebe Hamburg-Holstein (VHH), a company located in Hamburg, a great logistics centre in Germany, allows to understand the economic and political mechanisms of the implementation of the concept of sustainable development in the highly-developed countries. (Johnson, Turner, 2016, pp. 197–223)

Ideological justifications for the wasteful management of natural resources

Among the economic concepts which were successful in propagating a ruthless attitude to nature, *laissez faire* liberalism was found to be one of the most significant. (Bannock et al., 2003, p. 221; Janik, 2016, pp. 76–80) The beginnings

of this doctrine are associated with the Swiss Reformation, conducted in the spirit of the teachings of John Calvin, whose religious views, especially the belief in predestination, had a fundamental impact on the economic activity of his followers. Recognizing that “work is a way of worshipping God”, his followers strove for the maximum effectiveness in it, and interpreted the resulting riches in terms of “Lord’s grace”. They also approached the issue of time management extremely seriously, believing that the Creator will scrupulously account people for its use. For this reason, the clocks of different sizes were used in Calvinist churches so that the passage of time could be rigorously controlled. An important ideological element was also the ‘prohibition of earthly pleasure’, for instance, secular singing and dances; Calvin promoted such qualities as piety, modesty, diligence and frugality. (Bratt, 1968, pp. 9–62; Janik, 2019, pp. 59–64)

Calvinism, as the “ideology of the rich bourgeoisie”, assuming that gaining wealth is a useful thing and proves that a Christian has been bestowed “God’s grace” upon oneself, that is, it confirms God’s destiny of a given man for “salvation”, subordinated economic activity to religion. Calvinists, proclaiming the slogans of “exploiting the Earth” in the name of religious principles, in this respect resembled other ideological groups that adhere to the principle of “filling the earth and subduing it”, which, apart from the Christian ones, also includes some Judaic and Islamic circles. It is worth noting, however, that such views are not representative of all the religions mentioned as there are different interpretations of this issue within them. Both instances of the “pro-ecological” activities of the followers of Judaism and Islam as well as the existence of similar trends in Christianity like the Catholic tradition of St. Francis, and, for instance, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Protestantism, proves that the subject is much more complex. (Folaron, Janik, 1997, pp. 87–122)

Interestingly, this religious doctrine proving that man has the right to ‘subdue’ nature, did not show a positive attitude toward poverty and people in need. According to Calvinists, the poor do not deserve compassion and help, because, in keeping with the concept of predestination, they “find no favour in the eyes of the Lord.” To help them would be to go against God’s decisions, therefore, the activities of that kind were seen as are not popular among the followers of Calvin.

As it was mentioned, Calvinists were eager to increase wealth while ‘prohibiting earthly pleasure’ led them to the accumulation of large amounts of capital, which they could use during the formation of a ‘market economy’. Although Max Weber’s claim that Calvinists played a decisive role in the emergence of capitalism as such remains debatable, they undoubtedly played a significant role in shaping this economic system. The fact remains that the first generations of the members of the Evangelical Reformed (Calvinist) Church can be found not only among the “founding fathers” of the United States, but also among people who adhered to the most ruthless variety of liberal capitalism, *laissez faire* capitalism.

It was to them that the environment fell victim many times, with or without an explicit ideological justification when it was possible to conduct lucrative business at its expense. It is worth noting that although some descendants of Calvinists, who were particularly interested in business activity, lost zeal of their religious over time, the USA and South Korea developed “optimistic Christianity”, a movement which is still perceiving money and success as a manifestation of God’s grace. Some of its supporters are also referred to as ‘possibility thinkers’. (Hudson, Corrigan, 1992, p. 411; Janik, 2022, pp. 36–37)

Liberalism as well as its later variations, did not develop a uniform concept of using natural resources; what characterizes it is the belief that profit, identified with business or, more broadly, with economic activity, has a superior value. (Gray, 1986, pp. 62–81) Theorists following in the footsteps of Adam Smith (1723–1790), Friedrich August von Hayek (1899–1992) or Milton Friedman (1912–2006) did not argue that the environment should be devastated or that it is pointless to protect it. Arguments for the lack of ecological activity have been based upon the claim that, at the moment, business organizations ‘cannot’ afford to protect nature because it is “too expensive”. Doubts have been subtly shed as to whether environmental condition is really as bad as environmentalists claim. The link between climate change and human economic activity has been questioned as well. Especially, the claim that “sustainable development” is a “leftist ideology” seems to be attractive to the supporters of ‘anti-communism’ and “economic freedom” as it discourages many of the latter ideology’s potential supporters from it.

In a historical retrospective, *laissez faire* capitalism is not the only model of economy showing reluctance to protect the environment and rejecting the concept of sustainable development. Fascism, communism and various authoritarian systems also belonged to great environment polluters. They adhered to the idea of economic development “at all costs”. While the fascists have linked this with nationalist categories (considering this as a “national matter”), the communists, on the other hand, have seen this as a class problem; it was especially important for them to create work places in the industry because the rapid development of the working class in these countries should prove the rightness of the “party ideology” as well as ensure earning opportunities to the “masses of the people”. Simultaneously, “revolutionary fervour” caused the environment to be plundered and “transformed”, to mention, for instance, the implementation of Stalin’s plans in the USSR in the 1930s or Mao’s Great Leap Forward (‘great leap’) policy in China. In his ‘concept’, the environment was a *sui generis* ‘hostage’, and the Chairman’s famous struggle with sparrows became synonymous with his ignorance both in the aspect of economics and ecology. The economic activities of autocrats, which generally take place at the expense of the environment, are not very constructive, either. The same applies to the Brazilian ex-president Jair Bolsonaro. (Murray, 2017, pp. 171–177)

Selected ideologies friendly to environment protection over the centuries

Among the concepts that prefer a particularly 'balanced' approach to nature, and thus prepare *de facto* ground for the development of modern ecology, there are Far Eastern religions, mainly Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism or Shintoism, in which one can find many important elements of respect for nature. (Witzel, 2012, pp. 12–22; Toynbee, 1955, pp. 87–90; Zieliński, 2015, pp. 165–340) Feeling a close relationship with it and a positive attitude toward all living creatures, expressed, among others, in the principle of *ahinsa* (non-killing, interpreted more broadly as the protection of life) treating natural resources as a part of the heritage of all mankind or promoting "appropriate behavior" toward all living creatures, are common to these religions. (Fischer-Schreiber et al., 1999, p. 5) An instance of practical actions undertaken in Buddhist circles can be the reforms of the Indian emperor Ashoka (268 BC–232 BC), an important member of the Maurya dynasty. After his glorious conquests, he converted to Buddhism in 258 BC. (Hope, van Loon, 2006, pp. 9–58) This caused his internal transformation; he resigned from further conquests and warfare, becoming a proponent of pacifism as well as vegetarianism, and abolished the custom of sacrificing animals. His attention turned to promoting the welfare of his subjects, including the creation of hospitals for human beings and animals, and the establishment of schools. He also became famous for conducting and supervising the fair distribution of the land among his subjects, and for fighting against the imposition of excessive taxes on them. It is evident that nature conservation was not an end in itself for Ashoka, but rather 'one of the components' of his ideology. Jains have a special attitude to the world of nature, and this attitude often takes shocking forms, as is the case with the Digambara, a sect known for such practices like walking naked and use a peacock-feather in order to remove any insects of the way and prevent killing them. (Tworuschka and Tworuschka, 1992, pp. 339–348)

Some philosophical directions in antiquity, above all, in Greek thought circles, played a role in the development of "ideological foundation" of the idea of sustainable development. Interest in nature can be seen, for instance, in the concept of Parmenides (c. 515–c. 450 BC) known as "The Parmenidean One"; the views of Heraclitus (c. 535–c. 500 BC) on the essence of reality show similarity to it. (Robinson, Groves, 2013, pp. 10–13)

In fact, the entire Ionian school of philosophy was interested in understanding the material essence of the world and showed a great interest in nature as such. One can also mention Empedocles with his concept of the 4 elements: earth, air, water and fire. As part of the study of the "structure" of the world,

ancient materialism, represented by Democritus (c. 460–c. 370 BC) and his atomistic concept, developed. Almost all Greek philosophers were interested in nature in one way or another. The creators of great systems, Plato and Aristotle, deserve attention in this regard. It was especially the latter that wrote a lot of about the principles of the functioning of nature.

It was also philosophies which managed to gain popularity in Rome such as Stoicism and Epicureanism that had “natural” connotations; the former was largely pantheistic, and the latter alluded to atomism. Among Moslem thinkers dealing with nature, among others, Avicenna (c. 980–1037), Al-Farabi (c. 872–c. 951), Al-Jahiz (c. 776–869) and Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (1201–1274), can be mentioned.

In more modern times, Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) was interested in environment and often treated it as a reference point in his considerations. Pantheism, of which Spinoza was a well-known supporter, and so were philosophers striving to create an ‘ideal society’ like Thomas Moore (1779–1852), is associated with a positive attitude to nature. Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) attracted attention to the problem of animal suffering.

Many philosophers have been interested in, and studying, the role of nature in education; Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) and Anthony Ashley Cooper (1801–1885) were among those who did it especially intensively. It is also worth mentioning in this context philanthropists, progressive pedagogical directions, among others, Johann Bernhard Basedow (1724–1790), who was one of the supporters of good relations with nature.

It is worth paying attention to the fact that not all types of economic activity showed a tendency to destroy the ecological resources of the Earth. For instance, a “social economy” (including the cooperative movement) showed a positive attitude toward nature since its inception, a good instance of which can be Robert Owen (1771–1858) and so-called “utopian socialists” like Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), Charles Fourier (1772–1837), Edward Bellamy (1850–1898), William Morris (1834–1896) or Étienne Cabet (1788–1856).

The development of sciences was ascertained to be important in promoting environmental protection. Discoveries made in the name of science, which proved the evolutionary development of nature, constituted a breakthrough in human thinking. The adoption of Charles Darwin theory of evolution meant the “dethronement of human beings”. From the “Lord of creation” man became a ‘product of evolution’. This paved the way for creating a scientific basis for environment protection; it is worth mentioning in this context that the protagonist of evolution Ernst Haeckel was the one who “coined” the term “ecology” around 1866. Interest in the functioning of human civilization has been shown by “philosophers of physics”, exerted influence upon by Buddhism and Taoism; Fritjof Capra (born 1939) may be a worthy representative of this trend in thinking. In modern times, those interested in the subject of environment protection,

including so-called environmental philosophers, among others, Richard Sylvan (1935–1996), Pierre-Félix Guattari (1930–1992), Rachel Louise Carson (1907–1964), and Arne Dekke Eide Næss (1912–2009), who is credited with creating the concept of ‘deep ecology’ as well as J. Baird Callicott (born 1941), deserve attention.

Among well-known personalities distinguished by a positive attitude toward nature, one can mention, for instance, Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) and Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965). An interesting phenomenon has become the combination of politics and ecology which can be seen in the green movement.

The concept of sustainable development in the context of education

Sustainable development did not have an easy start in the period of shaping the medieval forms of management. Both mercantilism and cameralism, related to it, had a mixed relationship with nature. At that time, manufactories were established in which the division of labour was already applied, but, as a rule, the ecological harmfulness of the production practices was not taken into account. Due to the development of cities, much wood was then needed. A lot of ships made of wood were also built at that time, and what was related to the development of fleets, especially in the countries with overseas colonies like England. This led to the destruction of many of European forests. In the atmosphere of “struggle for resources”, related to this state of affairs, the concept of “sustainable development” was created upon the basis of cameralism. Its author was the German expert on forestry Hans Carl von Carlowitz (1645–1714), who used this term for the first time in 1714 as “Nachhaltigkeit” (sustained yield), which accelerated the way of thinking about nature in terms of goods that should be handled responsibly.

The Industrial Revolution, which soon changed the conditions of production, was ascertained to be a very serious burden for nature. (Hirst, 2009, pp. 151–168) In the times of the accelerated degradation of our planet, taking a decisive action became indispensable. (Janik, 2017, pp. 97–100) It acquired more mature forms after the World War II and took serious shape only in the eighties of the twentieth century when the public awareness of the catastrophic state of the Earth became so great that it enabled a public debate on this subject, dealt with the problems of the destruction of the Earth’s environment and the “greenhouse effect” as well as the search for the answer to the question “what kind of Earth will we leave to the next generations?”. Its result, largely related to the work of the think-tank Club of Rome, was a document titled the “Brundtland Report”, published in 1987, which was prepared by a commission led by the former Prime Minister of Norway Gro Harlem Brundtland at the request of the United Nations.

The concept of sustainable development is not limited to dealing solely with the ecological aspects of human life. In fact, its authors rightly noticed that the relationship of our species to the environment is the result of a whole range of factors that determine the specific relationship of mankind with nature. (Janik, 2002, pp. 174–82) As a result, the concept of sustainable development has a holistic character, striving to take into account all the aspects of this subject as far as it is possible. (Cavanagh, Mander, 2004, pp. 77–102) Over the years, the organizational background of the ecological movement was also created, supporting the implementation of the concept of sustainable development, and that includes, for instance, Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth. The increasingly rich network of pro-ecological organizations has recently been enriched by the Fridays for Future (School Strike for Climate) movement. Among the advocates of sustainable development, one can find the representatives of a wide variety of doctrinal directions, often contradicting each other, but united by the common interest of mankind, stopping an ecological disaster and establishing a “sustainable order”. Simultaneously, this broad movement toward positive changes is causing a revolution in terms of technology and morality, changing the lifestyle of entire human communities. They adopt sustainable development as their symbolic driving force, referring to its ancient ideas as well as to its contemporary concept. The politically-oriented green movement, which is particularly strong in Germany, has proved to be a powerful base for supporting various environmental initiatives.

The educational systems developed during the Industrialization and the Great French Revolution such as those of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi or Herbert Spencer were pragmatic and utilitarian in their approach, preparing their pupils to cope with various difficulties and challenges. Issues related to the promotion of hygiene and a positive attitude toward nature played an important role in it. This initiated a period of preparing pupils by schools and other educational institutions to consciously follow the rules of conduct that would allow them to stay healthy. This involved sensitizing children and youth as well as adults within various kinds of educational institutions to the need to remove waste, both industrial and of different kinds, from various types of manufacturing processes and from households.

Gradually, as education developed, more and more thematic elements related to the use of means of transport entered educational programs. Also, centers developing skills in various types of mobility began to spring up.

Implementation of the concept of sustainable development in Verkehrsbetriebe Hamburg-Holstein (VHH)

The Verkehrsbetriebe Hamburg-Holstein GmbH (VHH) is a company which specializes in the transport of people in and around Hamburg. (Krieger 2012,

pp.105-115) This is the second largest company of this kind in northern Germany. It was founded on 7.4.1954, drawing upon the tradition of the Bergedorf-Geesthachter Eisenbahn (BGE), established in 1905 (and fully operating since 1907). VHH employs 2,100 people and operates 677 buses. It is particularly active in the west and east of Hamburg and in Schleswig-Holstein districts such as Segeberg, Pinneberg, Stormarn and Duchy of Saxe-Lauenburg, and it provides transport services for about 106.6 million passengers annually.

The implementation of the programs related to both transport safety and ecology in Germany is facilitated by the practice of a “social market economy” in this country, namely the kind of economic system preferring a mixed capital composition, rather than only the private one. (Cole 2004, pp. 269–281) Owing to this, the economic decision-makers in Germany did not conduct radical privatization in the area of passenger transport in the nineties of the last century when it was popular in many countries. A deterrent instance in this regard can be the politics of ‘liberal privatization’ in Great British in the 1980s under the rule of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, as a result of which tragic accidents occurred on the privatized railways, whose owners did not want to invest in safety. (Wren, 1994, pp. 408–410)

The rational position of the German authorities in this area was ascertained to be favourable in the case of the implementation of the concept of sustainable development, as, due to significant financial shares in transport companies, the authorities exert influence upon the actions in the entrepreneurs of this kind. (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 27–49)

This can be traced on the instance of VHH. The HGV Hamburger Gesellschaft für Vermögens- und Beteiligungsmanagement mbH, which belongs exclusively to the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, owning as much as 94.19% of the capital group of VHH. The remaining shares in VHH, amounting to 5.81%, are in the hands of the VHH Beteiligungsgesellschaft mbH, one quarter of which is possessed by the counties of Pinneberg and Stormarn as well as by the Duchy of Saxe-Lauenburg and Segeberg. A very important disciplinary element, rendering it indispensable both to invest in safety as well as to implement the concept of sustainable development, is the organizational participation of VHH in a “collective company” associating firms providing similar services, from Hamburg and the surrounding area, in the Hamburger Verkehrsverbund (HVV). This kind of “umbrella organization”, founded in 1965 and operating since 1966, has the status of a transport and tariff association, and the range of its activities seems to correspond to the functioning of the Hamburg Metropolitan Region, established in 2006, covering an area of 28.50 km² with 5.3 million inhabitants. He grew up on the belief that, in the period of globalization and joining forces, only such large organizational units have a chance of success. (Gilbert, 2012, pp. 218–222)

It is worth noting that also the discussed VHH company did not give up on the enlarging the sphere and forms of its influence. In 2012, HHV merged with the Pinneberger Verkehrsgesellschaft mbH (PVG), and assumed its present organizational form (HHV). It should be noted that, in 2015, there was a transformation of the existing legal form, from a joint stock company acting as a public transport service provider into a limited liability company (GmbH).

The HHV company has a “holistic” approach to the implementation of the concept of sustainable development, in which, apart from the ecological ones, also political, social and cultural aspects are clearly visible. The human factor plays a vital role in the implementation of this concept. Because of it, trainings are conducted in this company, during which the environmental goals of this organization and the ways of their implementation are discussed.

The basic declared goal of the VHH company is to achieve climate neutrality as soon as possible so that by the 30s of 21st century the buses of the HHV will be able to drive completely emission-free. This will be achieved through a complete switch to electric buses; therefore, from 2020 on, only the electric cars (e-buses) have been purchased by HHV.

An important issue is the conversion of the company to renewable energy and saving energy. In the course of conducting the latter task, the reorganization of the company’s work helps. An interesting idea in this regard is introducing advanced information connections with vehicles which can, at the request from passengers *ad hoc* arrive, collect and carry them to their destination (“Hamburg-Takt”). This creates an alternative to passenger private cars. It renders it possible to limit traffic and organize it in a more ecological way. An important aspect of this concept is its social aspect. Frequent travel in smaller vehicles on the same routes promotes networking, breaking the atmosphere of anonymity barrier experienced in mass transport. The above-mentioned practice of “small vehicles” (as long as there is no need for sending the larger ones) creates a more pleasant driving atmosphere, which is known, among others, from the practice of “a social economy”.

The ecological responsibility of the VHH company is demonstrated also by buying products meeting ecological criteria. It is also important in this context to save water and purify dirty water; it is used, together with rainwater, for washing buses and cars.

The management’s concern about ecology can be seen in the choice of services as those which are characterized by high ecological standards are preferred.

The HHV company demonstrates a pro-ecological attitude encouraging its mechanics to repair parts which are out of order, and thus give them a “second life”; this is a clear departure from the previously preferred practice of disposing of them.

Considering the entirety of the implementation of the concept of sustainable development in such enterprises as HHV, one should appreciate the role of the state-enforced function of innovative enterprises in the field of ecological

practices, which goes hand in hand with the obligation to inform the public about the actions taken and to explain any negligence in this regard in accordance with the “Comply or Explain” principle. Therefore, a significant role in the implementation of sustainable development is played by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), under which the company is obliged to present relevant plans and to determine the degree of their implementation. The German Sustainability Code (*Deutscher Nachhaltigkeitskodex*) performs a similar function, forcing the companies to be transparent in their activities and to report them. The effect of pursuing a policy in line with the above-mentioned one is the creation of the Compliance Management System with the director whose task is to fight corruption in VHH.

It is also worth mentioning that VHH is actively involved in the implementation of the “Deutschlandsticket” program, initiated by the German government in the face of the energy crisis resulting from the war in the Ukraine. The aforementioned “ticket” is a monthly or periodic ticket valid on local public transport (U-Bahn, S-Bahn, streetcars, subways and buses). An interesting fact is that the Deutschlandsticket also remains valid in some areas of countries bordering Germany, e.g. in France or Poland. This ticket has a positive impact on the environment, contributing to reducing the volume of passenger car traffic and the amount of harmful emissions.

Conclusions

The human species has proved to be a serious threat to the mother nature. By ravaging her wealth in an ill-considered manner, people have long destroyed the foundations of a harmonious coexistence with her. However, not all human beings have practiced this “destruction of natural riches”. There are many instances of a positive approach to coexistence with nature in history; philosophers, religious reformers, political leaders and so on created *de facto* the foundations of the ideological framework which finally became this what we know as the concept of “sustainable development” today.

Not always did the ideas that constitute it develop at a steady pace; they were often forgotten, and then, under changed conditions, they “came back to life”. They gained popularity only when the degree of destruction of the environment was caused by unrestrained industrialization. After the appearance of the signs of the destruction of nature on a massive scale, which threatened the health and life of people, the international community decided to take steps to contain the disaster. As a result of a collective effort made by various specialists, the Brundtland report in which the idea of sustainable development acquired its modern and feasible form, was prepared.

Unfortunately, it was ascertained that the implementation of his recommendations was extremely difficult as it violated many business interests. Powerful interest groups were able to successfully avoid decisions which were painful for them, for instance, by relocating jobs from developed countries to the poorer ones, where they continued the destruction of the environment by using production techniques which were harmful to nature. Influential economic circles also defended themselves against obtaining energy from renewable sources for a long time, which was visible, among others, in transport. (Marshall, 2016, pp. 283–287) The change in this state of affairs, which we have been observing for several years, was exerted influence upon by natural disasters, rendering mankind aware of the consequences of climate change, to which it itself contributes through its actions.

Despite goodwill, it is not easy to shift economies to their “green forms”. An interesting instance of such ‘struggles with difficulties’ that occur during such transformations is Germany, the highly industrialized and pro-ecologically oriented country, which is implementing a unique and very ambitious program consisting both of the abandonment of nuclear energy production and the significant reduction of the use of energy coming from the other, non-renewable sources, in favour of “green energy” nowadays.

The implementation of the assumptions of sustainable development is the culmination of the historical process of developing this concept. In this context, the instance of the HHV company is interesting, *inter alia*, due to the aforementioned energy transformation taking place in Germany and the logistical importance of Hamburg. However, one should be aware that such experiences are difficult to “copy” and transfer automatically to other places. It is also worth noting that transportation is relatively easy to control, but there are many other economic fields more difficult to supervise.

The adaptation of man to the conditions of nature, which enables economic development without devastating the Earth’s natural resources, is especially difficult in the case of poorer countries as well as small, economically weaker companies. The state authorities of various countries should, therefore, take steps to support and control the implementation of the concept of sustainable development in the area of an entire economy; these steps ought to be appropriate for the situation. In this context, the German experience can be, despite its limitations, interesting.

In order for this to succeed, it is also indispensable to change the way in which people think about the processes taking place in the world and to find their own way of behaving that will not be harmful to nature. (Elias 2017, pp. 365–435) Owing to the wealth of reflections formulated by the creators of sustainable development over time, it is now easier for us to look for answers to the specific questions.

In the light of the numerous natural disasters associated with climate change, it is the high time to fulfil the legacy of many generations of sustainable creators. Mankind is also obliged to leave it to the future generations, who have the right to live in a clean environment. For this reason, obstacles to the implementation of the principles of sustainable development should be removed, and defeatism and malcontentcy should be rejected. It is important to realize that applying ecology to economy is no longer the matter of voluntary decisions, which may or may not be accepted, but rather, that it takes more and more the form of a Kantian imperative. In all this, supporting education in the area of transport and committed efforts to protect the environment, especially by practicing recycling, the importance of which seems to be growing, deserves attention.

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Idea i edukacyjne aspekty zrównoważonego rozwoju oraz jego realizacja na przykładzie Verkehrsbetriebe Hamburg-Holstein (VHH)

Jako koncepcja zrównoważony rozwój wydaje się być stosunkowo nową koncepcją. Bliższe zbadanie tego zjawiska pokazuje, że stwierdzenie to nie odpowiada faktom.

Cała historia ludzkości jawi się jako okres zmagania dwóch przeciwstawnych sobie podejść do natury: pierwsze jest niespokojne i nastawione na grabież i czerpanie zysków kosztem środowiska; drugie skupia się na szacunku do świata i życiu w zgodzie z naturą.

Ten ostatni kierunek, napotykając na swojej drodze przeszkody, stał się swoistym „duchowym gruntem”, na którym zrodziła się koncepcja zrównoważonego rozwoju. Realizacja przesłania ekologicznego stała się możliwa dopiero w obliczu degradacji środowiska i zmian klimatycznych wywołanych działalnością człowieka.

Dostosowanie gospodarki do potrzeb ekologii to wielkie wyzwanie, z którym nie wszystkie przedsiębiorstwa sobie radzą. Ciekawym przykładem tego procesu jest przypadek firmy transportowej HHV w Hamburgu w Niemczech, kraju, który przechodzi trudną transformację energetyczną, przedstawiając swoją gospodarkę z energii nieodnawialnej na odnawialną.

Ważną rolę odegrały w tym zakresie instytucje edukacyjne, które pomagają kształtować pozytywne podejście do ochrony środowiska, m.in. w kontekście ruchu drogowego.

Słowa kluczowe: zrównoważony rozwój, ekologia, gospodarka leseferyczna.