

MANAGEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CITY COMMUNITY ON BASIS OF THE RESEARCH ON THE CITY OF KIELCE

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ABSTRACT

Presented paper will be focused on the concept of quality of life in the context of sustainable city development and management. The main goal of this paper will be diagnosis of how conditions of life are perceived in social awareness of the inhabitants of the City of Kielce. The main components of the problem will be trust to chosen institutions of local authorities, social safety, anxieties, affection to the place of life, satisfaction resulting from living in given place, the most important social problems felt by its inhabitants, social perception of public institution's decisions and activities, etc. The paper will be based on a research conducted on the population of Kielce city inhabitants.

KEY WORDS: city and regional management, sustainable development, quality of life, local management

INTRODUCTION

No matter how we understand localism and what specific contents we ascribe to it, it requires not only reflection on specific applications of this notion, but also reflection on its major references to such categories as traditions, contemporary culture, civil society, democracy, quality of life, sustainable development, etc. Such references become especially important when one analysis essential principles and directions of transformation of social systems in circumstances of dramatic changes in individual lifestyles, political systems, supranational political systems and globalisation of virtually any sphere of collective life.

A concept of sustainable development of a city is a major factor that organises these deliberations. The most significant areas of sustainable development as it is understood today are: environmental protection and reasonable management of natural resources, economic growth and fair distribution of its benefits, social development. It is a common understanding that these areas most affect welfare and quality of life of communities, their harmonious development, and therefore they require integrated management. Furthermore, they are recommendations and postulates that describe necessary and possible actions of all densely populated locations on an universal scale. It is also a positive example to an impact of international institutions and communities on a global scale.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT VS. QUALITY OF LIFE

Sustainable development requires integration of the three areas – special order, including environmental protection, economy and fair distribution of its benefits and social development. Speaking in more detail, everyone's chance of good life, including reasonable management of natural resources is a consequence of adoption and reasonable management of sustainable development. All the more that all adopted areas must harmonise with each other, and namely:

1. environmental protection and reasonable management of natural resources through, inter alia, reduction of environmental pollution, protection of endangered species of plant and animal world, promotion of renewable energy sources;

2. economic growth and fair distribution of its benefits through, inter alia, facilitation of market entry for developing countries, provision of financing for development, alteration of non-rational consumption and production patterns;
3. social development through, inter alia, fighting poverty, access to education, healthcare and alleviation and elimination of social problems, etc.

Securing the highest possible quality of life is always a high-level goal of such activities. If, at the same time, activities integrating multi-faceted spheres of collective life are involved, a requirement for application of management mechanisms becomes obvious. One must underscore that a high quality of contemporary life is not, and cannot be the one and only criterion - the goal is to secure a possibly high quality of life for future generations. Because of that, overexploitation of resources, overconsumption and exorbitant, unjustified search for comfortable living may deprive future generations of such goods and opportunities which can be enjoyed, with all limitations, by people nowadays.

A separate, albeit not less important, issue is to develop assessment criteria of the present level of sustainable development and quality of inhabitants' life. This problem deals with determination of suitable indices that, on the one hand, may be used for the measurement of sustainable development in specific communities or local government units, and, on the other hand, can be a simple, understandable and easy-to-implement tool for making comparisons of various population centres. Thirdly, at last, management must be based on clear criteria, free from subjectivism and fortuity. However, what is characteristic of it is that both sustainable development and quality of life, even if they have a qualitative nature, must be described with the use of quantitative parameters that are often referred to as *hard parameters*.

There are a lot of attempts to measure life quality (See: Czapiński, 1998; Gawlikowska – Hueckel, 1999; Kościółek, 2004). Both Polish and foreign authors alike, following shorter or longer discussions, have adopted certain indices that in their opinion describe and measure life quality in the most comprehensive manner. It is also the case with sustainable development. „The essential purpose of indices is to measurably present a degree of achievement of principles and goals adopted in a sustainable development strategy. Indices, adopted in specific circumstances, should make it easier for authorities of a specific area (municipality, county, etc.) and its inhabitants an assessment of a degree of achievement of the sustainable development concept; make them aware of a pace of achievement of the concept and existing problems; stimulate them to become more engaged in activities for sustainable development; verify existing policy directions and previously adopted development goals and action strategies implemented in order to achieve those goals” (Borys, 2010).

Tasks in this respect are numerous, and they are augmented by the necessity to meet universal requirements to make it possible to compare findings of analyses on a global scale. At this point, it may be worth paying attention to an interesting analogy between globalisation, sustainable development and quality of life. All these phenomena are of a qualitative nature and therefore there are subject to people's assessment. Globalisation is meaningful in social terms if people are able to see on a local scale that it is beneficial for them and it has a positive impact on their lives. Undoubtedly, by a similar rule, sustainable development and life quality are closely related to globalisation, also with regard to the idea of localism. Just as the concept of globalisation and its practical accomplishment will make no sense if local community members cannot see for themselves how the globalisation materializes in their everyday lives, sustainable development and quality of life alike, as one may say global ideas will be of no meaning unless local community members can see some benefits they offer. One may assume an argument that sustainable development and quality of life, although they have a universal dimension, are most meaningful in their local materializations. Thus, the notions

being discussed are another *generation* of universal ideas, similar to, inter alia, freedom, equity, solidarity, etc., which, in specific applications, i.e. in local exemplifications, assume a final and proper meaning.

A two-stage administrative reform that took place in Poland in 1990 and 1998 aimed at strengthening a local government level of administration and, at the same time, relieving of the central government from duties, responsibilities and rights, transferring a major part of these rights to, initially, municipal local governments, and after 1999, also county and provincial governments. It allowed for implementation of the principle of subsidiarity that is a fundamental principle of self-governance, meaning decentralisation of the decision-making process to a level that is possibly closest to citizens. As early as 1990, a long-forgotten municipal form of ownership was restored, which allowed municipalities, and later, after 1999, counties and provinces to obtain essential tools for implementation of their own objectives of development. It can be achieved through the creation of development strategies, special development planning, giving decisions concerning locations of man-made structures and licenses to use natural resources (for example building permits for residential and industrial premises, roads, mines, etc.). The tools are a basic element allowing for the development and formation of economic processes and the creation of infrastructures for such processes.

Shaping social and economic processes, in which we all continue to be involved, must comply with specific legal and administrative requirements, and the concept of sustainable development which should harmoniously combine environmental management with social and economic issues becomes the broadest perspective of these limitations and a unique philosophy of development. Local governments, especially the municipal ones, became responsible for education, healthcare, social welfare and public security. They are also responsible for economic development and have suitable tools for such development. Those tools allow the to fully balance aspirations against necessary actions taken in respect of social and economic issues, including the local economic and infrastructural policy. It is a very general plan of integration of directions of development of local governments at all levels with requirements of the sustainable development concept. This concept may be and is formulated in a universal manner on a global level, however it can only be applied under local-scale environmental, social and economic conditions, and mechanisms for management of those conditions must be applied on such a local level. This is an all too obvious conclusion.

In June 2006, the Council of the European Union formulated a renewed Sustainable Development Strategy which shows a number of key challenges for EU member states in the area of economic, environmental and social policies, including suppression of climate changes and promotion of clean energy; ensuring transport systems to comply with environmental protection requirements; promotion of rational production and consumption models; avoidance of excessive exploitation of natural resources; promotion of high-quality public healthcare; creation of a society respecting intergenerational and intragenerational solidarity, striving for multidimensional consistency of internal and external EU policies with principles of sustainable development (Muller, 2013).

Care and actions taken by the City of Kielce make a good example of implementation of the sustainable development concept and a significant step towards materialization of this splendid concept on a local level. In 2006, Kielce was included in a reputable group of "The Golden Cities" including cities awarded for a particularly interesting and warmly-received campaign for the European Week of Sustainable Transport. In 2008, Wojciech Lubawski, Mayor of the City signed the European Charter to underscore the significance of this issue, and consequently, the city joined the Campaign of European Week of Sustainable Transport.

These activities are being continued and one must proudly conclude that efforts made by the City Authorities and a group of enthusiasts, employed with Kielce Town Hall and others, bring better and better results in this respect. In 2012, Kielce was ranked 8 in a group of towns endowed with county rights in the *Ranking of Sustainable Development of Local Government Units*. Kielce was ranked in the first 10 as the only provincial capital endowed with county rights from Eastern Poland. In the previous edition of that ranking, our town secured 11 position. The ranking is based on an analysis of 16 indices considered by the Central Statistical Office and dealing with 3 major policies of all local government units, i.e. economic policy, environmental policy and social policy that are major areas considered in any analyses of sustainable development. The main objective of this ranking is an attempt at presentation of the best-developed Polish towns and municipalities and an analysis of major factors of development. Rational use of municipal resources, a long-term municipality development plan, and first of all verification of its implementation, accompanied by respect of natural environment is nowadays one of the essential and most significant duties of each local government unit¹. The ranking also shows that a combination of proper management, suitable people, social dialogue and willingness to act may bring a great deal of good, even with limited financial resources.

Another success and a proof for effectiveness of the above way of thinking is an award for Kielce at the *Smart City Expo World Congress*, which took place from 13 to 15 November 2012 in Barcelona. The aim of the Congress was to choose cities, initiatives and solutions which have contributed most to the development and popularisation of the concept of *Smart City*. A true smart city develops, increases its efficiency and productivity, protecting its natural resources at the same time, reduces pollution and improves quality of life, and, in the world of increasing urban complexity, makes use of the state-of-the-art technologies to manage the city in an open manner, including its citizens. The City of Kielce was in a group of 6 finalists of the *World Smart Cities Awards 2012* contest in the category *Project for The Urban Spatial Information System*. And consequently, Kielce was granted the global quality certificate for solutions in the field of shaping functionalities of sustainable development management.

It is worth mentioning that 160 presentations from all over the world took part in the Contest in three categories - *Project*, *City* and *Innovative Initiative*, and a professional jury chose 16 finalists. Thus, Kielce competed with such cities as Mannheim, Bilbao, Istanbul or Amsterdam, whose application offering access to information about urban multimodal transport to its citizens, and thus improving city traffic and mobility, was the winner in the *City* category. Presentations of good practices and projects presented in Barcelona will be a further inspiration for our system development.

Big Belly Solar, an American company won in the *Project* category. It presented a solution of a state-of-the-art waste management and recycling involving waste bins with a sun-powered roller for waste compaction, which increased an effective capacity of a bin by five. And what is more, these smart waste bins are connected to a filling reporting system. A system designed like that allows to significantly reduce public expenses for waste collection and removal, and it has already been implemented in Philadelphia, USA. Summing up the Congress, one may say that sustainable development and innovativeness intended for the improvement of life quality are the major guidelines for cities for the years to come².

¹ Based on contents made available by Kielce Town Hall, <http://www.um.kielce.pl> [09-11-2012]

² Cf. <http://www.um.kielce.pl/biuro-prasowe/aktualnosci> [24-11-2012]

CONCLUSION

Efforts for sustainable development fall within so called *soft* undertakings, contrary to *hard* ones, aiming at measurable and strongly materialized effects and activities, such as any investments in road and railway infrastructure, buildings and equipment, telecommunication etc. Although care for *soft* areas of life, such as education, health, social and human capital, culture, security, social policy, ecology, etc. is accounted for in current plans of strategic actions and expenses, it is less visible and less spectacular. Although, they will be undoubtedly more prominently visible in the following years of Poland's presence in the EU and a new financial perspective of the European Union for 2013 – 2020. That is why they should be clearly articulated in management of cities and local communities.

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