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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND NATURE CONSERVATION – THE NECESSITY FOR COMPROMISE INSTEAD OF CONFRONTATION

1. Introduction

Some new ecological terms have recently made a brilliant carrier, among which the concepts of the "sustainable use" of natural resources and "biological diversity" (biodiversity) are the most popular. Although very useful, both concepts, as every kind of tool, are often misunderstood or improperly applied, which may bring about serious harm to nature and perhaps also to the long-term prosperity of humans. It is chiefly the lack of a commonly accepted interpretation of the relationship between the two fundamental concepts of Sustainable Development (SD) and Nature Conservation (NC) that causes much confusion. These two forms of human activity are treated by extremists as mutually exclusive, although others perceive them as being compensatory or even partly complementary to each other in the long-term. Neither is there any agreement on to what extent NC constitutes part of sustainability: either the whole of its scope lies within activities promoting SD, or only a part of (active) conservation falls within its framework. Such unclear theoretical aspects, which have so far been overlooked, may result in inappropriate practical recommendations and wrong administrative decisions.

Uncertainty of this sort does not help communication between people. It is especially confusing that there are several versions of both of these

notions. As human influence on the state of environment usually has serious economic and ecological consequences, more clarity on this point is vital.

2. Various versions of the concepts of sustainability and nature conservation

While studying documents on the "sustainable use" of natural resources, such as *"World conservation strategy"* and *"Caring for the Earth"* [IUCN et al. 1980, 1991] or *"Factors Influencing Sustainability"* [1996], one is struck by the continual lack of a generally accepted definition of this notion. SD is understood either as: (a) long-term (in terms of generations) management of the environment and of usable natural resources (in essence a political definition), or (b) management fulfilling the same economic functions, but with an emphasis on preserving the good state of the natural environment (the naturalists' view). These two approaches differ mostly in the way of how the meaning of the "use of natural resources" is understood. From a practical point of view, natural resources can be subdivided into two distinct categories: actually or potentially usable natural resources and currently non-usable natural resources (which may become usable in the future, due to the invention of new technologies or under the pressure of increased need). With such a division in mind, let us look at what these different SD definitions say precisely.

According to the political definition (known as *weak sustainability*) SD is understood as long-term fair management of the environment and of natural resources. This means the prudent use of natural resources at rates within their capacity for renewal. However, it is noteworthy, that SD is understood here as being only applicable to renewable resources and apparently only to usable ones. Thus, politicians and managers pass over non-usable natural resources, which may mean that they leave the issue of the conservation of unexploitable resources outside the scope of SD, or at least do not counteract such an interpretation. The definition of sustainability provided by the Polish Bill on Environmental Protection is more precise (however, this definition is not repeated in the more specific Bill on Nature Conservation): "Sustainable development is such socio-economic development, during which political, economic and social activities are integrated with the preservation of a balanced natural state and stability of basic environmental processes, with the goal of guaranteeing the possibility of fulfilling the fundamental needs of particular societies or citizens, both at present and in future generations"

(author's own underlining and translation from Polish). Hence, it suffices to ensure the balanced state of ongoing natural and environmental processes using appropriate care. These are exactly the requirements listed among the fundaments of Nature Conservation. So, one could argue that in this case SD includes the whole of NC as an integral part. Yet, even this definition fails to specifically indicate the necessity of preserving less "fundamental" remnants of primeval habitats and of vanishing "unimportant" species. In general, these political definitions, which are usually those written in legislative acts, do not explicitly state whether nature conservation (NC) constitutes a part of sustainability and, if so, to what extent.

The definitions made by environmentalists (so-called *strong sustainability*), are surprisingly only slightly clearer on this point. They can be summarised as follows: SD is such a model of life in which the fulfilling of the needs of the present human generation is in balance with the needs of the future generations and with the minimal level of disturbance to the environment. Also in this case, the necessity of conserving non-usable natural resources is not specifically expressed and can only be guessed from the relative expression "the minimal level of disturbance" to the environment. A stronger criterion was once expressed in the seminal report "Caring for the Earth" [1991]. However, this was not in the main section, but in the chapters on the implementation of the principle of sustainability to particular branches of management. Only in these chapters is care for such threatened ecosystems specifically expressed. It is argued that if some natural resources are not economically beneficial today, then they may be useful in the future when presently unknown discoveries or applications emerge. However, it is logical to think that they should be preserved purely for other reasons: ecological, educational, aesthetic and cultural.

To reach a positive conclusion on the involvement of NC in SD management, one needs, therefore, to possess not only a wider knowledge of ecology, but also to have a good will to care for something which has so far been non-usable and seemingly unprofitable, a part of so called wild nature. This means that the implementation of ecological thinking in administrative and legislative processes is becoming increasingly important.

To generalize this brief overview, no definition, political agreement (convention, program) nor publication recommending the sustainable use of natural resources, indicates the necessity of preserving currently non-usable natural resources. This means that the laudable aim of the concept of SD to elaborate a formula for a wise compromise between human needs (present and future) on the one hand and the requirements

for a healthy environment on the other has not been fully achieved. The weaknesses in this program is exploited by the proponents of the maximal use of natural resources. To correct this weakness, indications or strong warnings that some species or unique ecosystems are not exploitable at all, at least at present, should be formulated and then widely distributed through the mass media. This, however, would require above all a lack of barriers from managerial and administrative groups to improving the implementation of SD.

Additional complication arises from the fact that concept of Nature Conservation (NC) has had two distinct forms for a long time: strict (or traditional) nature conservation understood as preservation of selected areas or species, which should be entirely free of exploitation (the so-called "protective" type of conservation, which is usually passive), and active conservation (managing or improving conservation), which may undoubtedly constitute a part of SD. In view of this, the question of how the position of NC should be seen in relation to the logical content of the concept of SD appears to be complicated. Either the whole scope of NC should be seen as incorporated in activities promoting SD (which means that any activity promoting NC strengthens sustainability), or that only a part of NC, chiefly active conservation, falls within the SD framework (Fig. 1A versus 1B). If the former possibility is accepted, then any form of nature conservation may be subordinated to managers trained to be responsible for economic efficiency only. In the latter case, traditional (strict, usually passive) NC would be left completely outside the scope of SD, with the possibility of it becoming entirely forgotten. A model assuming that only active NC represents a part of SD, had been reflected in Polish NC law for a long time and had been working fairly well. Now this interpretation has been obscured by a new category called "landscape protection". It is unclear whether this approach falls within the realm of NC or SD. Highlighting the clear logical relations between the basic notions may be purposeful, since confusion in this field may be associated with the decline in the area of strict nature reserves and even the use of sustainability as a weapon to fight NC.

The following question is a practical implication of this problem: who should decide about particular aspects of managing various types of natural resources. Faced with a lack of clarity in the aims and methodology of NC, most managers strongly prefer active NC as being the form of management appropriate for them and, therefore, feel capable of appropriately carrying out such activity. Hence, the existence of two forms of contemporary NC means that technically educated managers enjoy a free choice in deciding about the application of forms of NC without wider public or scientific consultation.

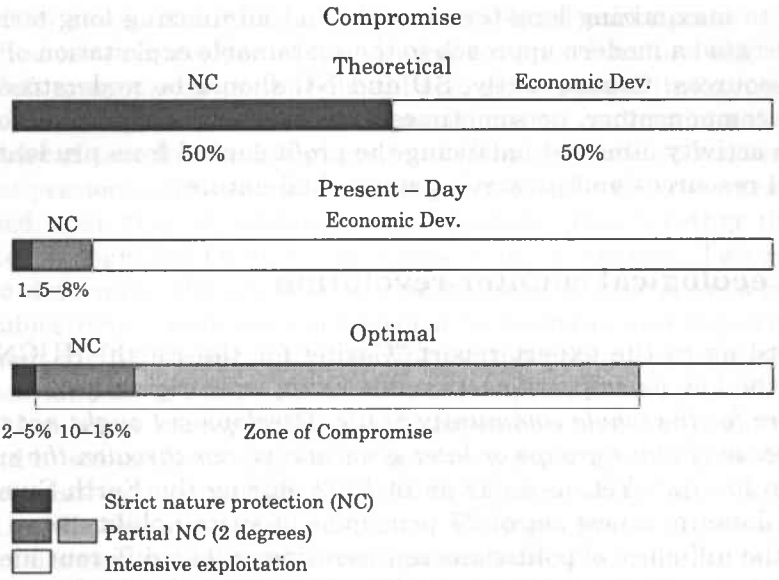


Fig. 1. Trade-off between Nature Conservation and Economic Development
Source: author's own elaboration.

3. Proper understanding of the mutual relations between SD and NC

One practical question is whether these two forms of human activity are contradictory (competitive), independent (neutral), compensatory or supportive with respect to each other. Originally, because of their opposite aims (either gaining a yield or protecting nature), these activities were undoubtedly seen as competitive, often as contradictory. For millennia the old-fashioned purely exploitative management of natural resources has caused an irreversible loss in the natural ecosystems of many regions. For example, the Yonian hills of ancient Greece were already entirely deforested by the time of Plato. Only quite recently did natural resources start to be understood as the common heritage of several generations. Meanwhile, extensive management carried out in the past has created several species-rich secondary (anthropogenic) mosaic-like habitats, which also deserve to be actively maintained in their ancient form, alongside pristine nature.

Against such a historical background, the novelty of the SD concept is that it has offered a switch from competitive relations with NC to supportive or compensatory relations. SD – by restricting the volume and intensity of production and switching from the goal of high, immediate

profits to maximizing long-term profits and minimizing long-term risks – has created a modern approach to the sustainable exploitation of renewable resources. Consequently, SD and NC should be understood today as two compensatory, or sometimes even mutually supportive, forms of human activity aimed at balancing the profit earned from prudent use of natural resources and preserving untouched nature.

4. An ecological counter-revolution

According to the expert report "Caring for the Earth" [IUCN et al. 1991], the key principle of sustainable living was originally "*The respect and care for the whole community of life. Development ought not to be at the expense of other groups or later generations, nor threaten the survival of other species*". Yet, as early as in 1992, during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, a new set of 27 principles of sustainability were coined under the influence of politicians representing quite a different hierarchy of values than expert environmentalists. Consequently, the first principle again starts from the ancient (from the Holy Scriptures) claim that human needs are above all other ones. Soon after that, a publication of the World Bank [Wells et al., 1992] was entitled symptomatically as *"People and Parks: linking protected area management with local communities"*. This report assessed the short-term needs of local societies as being more important than long-term consequences to future generations and nature. During this process of gradual softening of demands for nature protection, it has been widely overlooked that this kind of ecological counter-revolution will particularly counteract any prudent evaluation of the remnants of unspoiled nature and that it undermines the whole philosophy behind the original concept of sustainability. In spite of this, soon afterwards even the titles of IUCN publications started to support this overly radical switch of focus. Until the 1980s the main stress was placed on the preservation of remnants of undisturbed nature within strictly protected, but usually small areas (nature reserves and national parks) or on the most endangered species. Today we know that this was a far too narrow and inefficient way of saving nature. However, this does not mean that it is entirely replaceable by active conservation, which is presently in fashion. By the mid-1990s the pendulum had gone too far in the opposite direction, even in the case of regulations concerning national parks. Most authors began to stress the dichotomy of such parks: to serve nature protection and people's access and recreation. For instance, two volumes entitled *"Parks for* Life" [Report of the IVth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas, 1993, as well as Action for Protected Areas in Eu-

rope, 1994] stated clearly that European national parks preserve areas which had never been free of human impact and therefore they should not be left to nature alone, but should also serve people (indigenous and tourists). The logic of this sort of recommendation undermines the basic philosophy of care for the biosphere, according to which at least a few of the most precious areas should be strictly protected and if they are partly disturbed, then they should be restored (renaturalised) rather than allowed to be degraded by enabling access to many visitors. Two reasons seem to determine the enthusiastic acceptance of active conservation: a) the objectives – habitats transformed by humans and requiring improvement (active conservation) constitute the prevailing part of many countries' land area, where almost no close-to-pristine nature is left. This means that active conservation should prevail in terms of the area covered and b) subjective – it is easier to earn a return from funds directed at manipulative or restoration works to be carried out in a disturbed habitat, while there is almost no way of getting a financial reward from a project developing strict protection, because donors – administrators or business – often decline from financing strict nature protection. Ideological downgrading exacerbates this effect.

Even in Europe, in spite of its stable human population, relative economic prosperity, surplus agricultural capacity and public increasingly sensitive to nature degradation, traditional nature conservation was gradually undermined in the late 1990s due to increasing pressure on tiny protected areas from mass recreation and tourism, the skiing industry, all terrain vehicles, motorised traffic, etc. The transformation of the Central-Eastern European countries to a market economy has also exposed our national parks to increasing assaults. Protected areas gradually began to be considered as land to be subjected to management for profit. This is reflected in such titles as "*Protected Area Economics and Policy: Linking conservation and sustainable development*" [Munasinghe and McNeely, 1994] or "*Sustainable land use in European protected areas*" [IUCN, 2004]. They leave no room for doubt that all protected areas are intended for human use, not for nature. Moreover, the publications of several major environmental NGOs [WWF et al., 2004, BirdLife International..., 2005], while correctly stressing the role of SD as a central socio-economic model incorporated into EU policies and emphasizing the fundamental role of a "healthy" environment in SD, also pass silently over the weakening position of strict NC.

In spite of the great increase in acceptance of the SD concept among intellectual elites and most European governments, after more than a decade of implementation, the misinterpretation of the relationship between SD and NC is still very widespread among managers in everyday practice.

These two notions are considered as being sharply antagonistic, while for some profit-oriented people the concept of sustainability has even become a weapon to fight NC. During the last few years the Polish mass media have started more and more frequently to spread claims about an apparent "overdevelopment" of NC, in spite of the clear facts that the country has one of the lowest percentages in Europe of area protected as national parks (1%) and as Nature 2000 sites (below 9%). This should be a warning light, that the continual neglect of the problem of misinterpretation opens the door to a silent retreat from the implementation of the SD concept in general and, in particular, to degradation of NC.

5. The decline of protecting pristine habitats in the EU

The EU administration has not succeeded in avoiding such a change in the approach to NC. On the one hand, the number of documents and papers concerning the issue of biodiversity is becoming really impressive. Yet, almost all the main documents, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (ratified in 1993), Nature 2000 Network, The EU Forestry Strategy [1998], Countdown 2010: Halt the Loss of Biodiversity in Europe [2001], the Third Report on the Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity by the European Community [2005], focus on active conservation and appear to receive little or no support from administrative funds. Some of them instead of providing practical remedies to the decline in biodiversity, seem to be more concerned with sustainable production. EU officials surprisingly take the same stand as many forestry administrators in ignoring the necessity of protecting the remnants of the primeval Central European forests. The fact that not even a slightest hint on such a necessity has been issued from high UE posts is the best indicator of the true attitude to the two forms of NC. Moreover, several recommendations literally state that protected areas should be "managed sustainably". Disregarding the knowledge of biologists, some administrators even deny the very existence of near-pristine nature, an attitude helpful in extending access even in nature reserves and increasing timber exploitation even in protected areas, always under the pretext of "sanitary treatment" or "improving woodlands". Such arrogance overlooks the well-founded scientific fact that forests possess the powerful ability of self-restoration within the framework of the process called plant succession. Every forest is able to "heal" disturbances itself, even better than any human. In the otherwise laudable documents mentioned above, there is usually no strong warning or any indication that even the most sustainable use of resources, when they are extracted

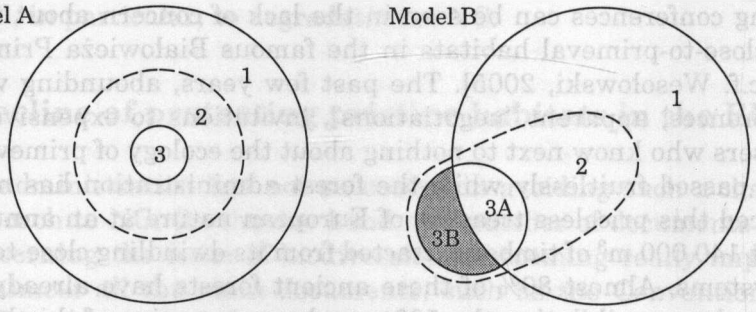
from near-pristine habitats, means nothing else but a gradual biological degradation of such sites, together with the possible extinction of their vulnerable, specialised (flora and fauna). Consequently, the fate of the last primeval European ecosystems, or of thousands of inconspicuous species dependent *e.g.* on dead or rotten timber, has been generally ignored by European administration. Only Nature 2000 is publicized, while strict scientific reserves are forgotten.

The shocking evidence for the intellectual and legislative impotence of this avalanche of documents and of the flood of meaningless words during conferences can be seen in the lack of concern about the fate of the close-to-primeval habitats in the famous Białowieża Primeval Forest [c.f. Wesołowski, 2005]. The past few years, abounding with facile conferences, apparent "negotiations", invitations to expensive Western advisers who know next to nothing about the ecology of primeval forests, have passed fruitlessly while the forest administration has mercilessly reduced this priceless treasure of European nature at an annual rate of about 140 000 m^3 of timber extracted from its dwindling close-to-primeval ecosystems. Almost 80% of these ancient forests have already been cut down, thus annihilating the 500-year-long protection of this heritage by Polish kings and Russian tzars, who were rather effective at protecting this magnificent forest even without knowing the concept of "sustainability". For centuries common sense had been enough to guarantee that a large proportion of pristine habitats and high level of biodiversity were preserved. Today, these otherwise useful modern concepts, which have been turned into meaningless buzzwords, have became handy screens for the endless destruction of nature by never satiated business groups. The unique Białowieża Forest, constitutes 0.6% of the country's forested land. However afforestation of previously neglected agricultural areas could easily lead to this acreage being increased to around 20 times as great as present. Yet, there is no mercy for these close-to-pristine forests. John Steinbeck's [1961] observation – "*there is no such thing as just enough money. Only two measures: No Money, and Not Enough Money*" – finds full support in Western and Central European attitudes to the conservation of pristine nature.

6. The necessity for an honest compromise

To those who properly understand the relations between SD and NC it is clear that both these forms of human activity should be developed alongside each other. Similarly, the two forms of NC (active and passive) should both be used on a large scale. There is an urgent need to protect

the remnants of primeval ecosystems and retain natural processes (within strictly protected though relatively small areas), as well as to develop extensive active conservation of natural elements (sites or species) across almost the whole area under management (Fig. 2). A compromise of this kind must, however, depend on particular sites, regions and countries. It is also necessary to make the European public as a whole understand that even the best Western concepts or solutions should not be applied uncritically in the regions of central Europe.



1 – Sustainable development (SD)
2 – Sustainable development (EP)
3A – Nature conversation – partial (NC)
3B – Nature conversation – strict (NC)

Fig. 2. Focal issues of sustainable development
Source: author's own elaboration.

But what should be understood as a sound compromise? Theoretically, it may be close to a 50-50 proportion (Fig. 1). However, even the most orthodox environmentalists agree that the dense and growing human population requires much more land for industrial/municipal development and cultivation than can be left for undisturbed nature. The present-day proportion in Poland, for instance, where only 1.4% of the country's acreage has been left as nominally unmanaged land (national parks and nature reserves), while 98.6% of land serves economic purposes is greatly biased, but in the opposite direction. Therefore, in spite of ferocious opposition, a sound compromise must be one involving a further (slight) increase in the acreage of strictly protected areas, while elsewhere an extensive spatial overlapping of SD incorporating some active NC should be implemented.

Any honest compromise needs knowledge and good will on both sides, as well as mutual respect. However, such good will is often lacking. For instance, the Nature 2000 network proposal, recently prepared under the auspices of the Polish Ministry of the Environment (ME), has become the

newest source of conflict between the political/manager lobby and the environmentalists. The shockingly short list of proposed Nature 2000 sites accepted by the ME, which represents a mere excerpt from a more complete "shadow list", remains in contrast to both EU law and the still fairly good state of Polish nature. The opposition of Polish administration to the EU regulations from the Bird and Habitat Directives has only one positive aspect: it shows how negative the attitude of administration is towards the idea of combining SD with NC (underlying the philosophy underlying the Nature 2000 project). This exemplifies the atmosphere reigning in the ministry, where almost no biologists-ecologists have been employed for many decades.

7. Harmful practical consequences

It is obvious that in most cases SD and NC activities should not be carried out with equal intensity, nor by the same people, in a given area. A compromise between two independent groups of administrators should definitely be elaborated. As for now, however, in many countries there is still no suitable atmosphere with regard to various aspects of such an approach.

A) A wrong understanding of the relation between SD and NC in European forestry. The chapter on "Forest lands" in the seminal report "Caring for the Earth" [IUCN et al., 1991, 127) formulated a radical recommendation to protect natural woodland: "*...in general not less than 10% of total land area should be maintained as old-growth forest. Even this will often be insufficient to meet all conservation and development objectives...*". However, another statement in the same document negated this, opening the door to exploitation (even if limited) of pristine forest: "*Substantial areas of natural forests need to be protected to conserve biological diversity and life-support systems, but protected areas should be part of a system including production forests and plantation forests. All categories must be managed sustainably, but for different primary purposes*". The naivety of this statement was soon discovered by administration workers and used to fulfil foresters' dreams of increased timber production. They started to imprint public opinion with a controversial claim that only foresters know how to manage forests sustainably, extending their practices even to nature reserves and national parks without foundation. Hence, "Conservation" by axe and saw has been carried out for the last decade, causing a dramatic fall in the size of the last few close-to-primeval forests. Soon the environmentalists will have entirely lost their influence on the

methods by which even the most precious remnants of pristine forests are protected.

Differences in the interpretation of the notions of SD and NC have enlivened the earlier, seemingly slowly dying out, controversy over the ecological and forestry concepts of managing the forest ecosystem. Under the umbrella of "sustainability", often used as a buzzword to cover the real intention of foresters, several forest administrators have launched a new form of holocaust all over the European continent – this time aimed at the total extermination of the remnants of pristine woodland. This is truly the "final solution", successfully obscured by propaganda about "*the prevalence of active management over the old-fashioned method of strict nature protection*". To ensure their interpretation remains valid as long as possible, the foresters' lobby stubbornly ignores new findings and conclusions in the ecological literature on the functioning of the forest ecosystem, hammering its opponents with false slogans of the type: "*the forests cannot grow without foresters*". This absurd claim hides the fact that forests had existed on this planet for millions of years before humans existed and that they still flourish in the Amazon basin, Siberia and Canada, well out of reach of any management. Unfortunately, the foresters' mass propaganda has succeeded in conquering the minds of laymen, EU administrators and activists in environmental organisations. Under the pressure of almost irreversible imprinting, many people and whole societies have started to neglect the preservation of their most precious natural ecosystems.

B) Administrative consequences (Polish example). After a period of fairly good understanding of ecological issues among our administrators and politicians in the early 1990s, during the last eight years we have faced a more and more extensive retreat. Successive Ministers of the Environment have blamed *"overdeveloped nature conservation"* in public as an alleged obstacle to the socio-economic development of the country! Polish nature, our part of the joint European treasure, has fallen under serious threat. None of the major political parties in Poland have treated natural resources as our precious heritage to be included in a new Europe and managed over many generations, but press for quick economic gain. Our administration of nature conservation remains seriously underdeveloped, while the Ministry of the Environment devotes only 0.05–0.1% of the funds at its disposal to investments in this domain [Tomiałojć, 1996]. Ministerial publications are full of advertisements on sustainable use, but without any warning that only species occurring in large enough and safe populations and habitats covering patches extensive enough (and therefore considered safe) should be open to exploitation, even sustainable.

Another administrative result is that the whole of NC is assumed to be included in SD endeavours and therefore both forms of activity have been left to be carried out by forest managers, who have the strongest lobby within the Ministry of the Environment. For the second time in the last ten years the Department of Nature Conservation has been combined with the Department of Forestry. Consequently, NC is being run either by laymen or by people with a clearly opposing hierarchy of values. To prevent this discrimination against professional environmentalists in the future, the aims of NC should be fulfilled by independent and specifically educated groups of people, those with a hierarchy of values differing from those prevailing among managers. Environmentalists and managers should jointly arrive at a precisely defined compromise to guarantee an acceptable profit on one hand and preservation of the remnants of close-to-primeval nature on the other. Any other solution will always be close to a one-sided managerial dictatorship, which neglects nature conservation and its priorities.

Blurring the logical relations between these basic notions may sometimes be a purposeful activity aimed at softening the law. This kind of new trend threatens NC: work in traditional protection tends to be undervalued and underpaid, the administrative posts in the Ministry of the Environment and in national parks are largely occupied by managers who stand in opposition to traditional NC. All this causes an increasing and irreversible loss of remnants of pristine nature. Under the veil of sustainability and "sanitary treatments", the remains of pristine ecosystems may soon be replaced by their sheerly man-made substitutes.

C) A threat to Eastern European protected areas. Western models of nature conservation may appear to be dangerous to the eastern half of our continent, because they tend to propagate only active (manipulative) conservation. Such an approach can, obviously, be highly appropriate for western and some eastern regions, those with deeply transformed nature. In the East, however, some ecosystems are still in a state close-to-primeval. Thus, a campaign for their preservation and traditional protection within the magnificent strict scientific reserves called "sapovedniks" is fully justified. Labeling such activities as "old-fashioned" or "out-of date", as it is in western publications, is a grave error. Unfortunately, in Poland, and apparently also in Belarus and Russia [Shtilmark, 1996], the tendency of imitating Western models and approaches, even if inappropriate to the state of nature in Eastern Europe, is becoming overwhelming. This new "fashion" downgrades traditional nature protection, an activity which is irreplaceable when non-usable components of nature are to be preserved.

In extreme cases, such western terms as the *conservation of nature* (instead of *nature protection*), *sustainability* or *maintenance of biodiversity*

happen to be used by managers as an "ideological club" against traditional nature protection. A failure to re-analyse this issue may cause a return to the pre-sustainability state of affairs – when not only a part of the ecological domain was embraced by SD, but also all of traditional NC was subordinated to rapacious short-term economic benefits.

8. The value of the close-to-primeval ecosystems

It seems useful to briefly specify the values that the remnants of close-to-primeval ecosystems may have, in order to make economists and managers, who have had no closer contact with nature conservation, to be aware of their importance [for details see Primack, 1993 and Wilson, 2003].

Firstly, they are resources left for hard times in the future. Secondly, future generations may need them not only for education as "museums" or "sanctuaries of nature", but also as "scientific laboratories" in which still largely unknown undisturbed ecological processes could be studied with increasing accuracy. Thirdly, such samples would serve as "natural models" of undisturbed nature, where new knowledge could be developed in order to help, among other things, to shape better future management of a type which would imitate natural processes. Fourthly, such areas may serve as refuges for thousands of species, thus helping to save them from extinction. Fifthly, refuges for rare species may constitute gene banks for future, very practical use in biotechnology.

9. Conclusions

1. It should be agreed widely as to what extent Nature Conservation (NC) constitutes a part of Sustainable Development (SD): either the whole of its scope is comprised within SD activity, or only manipulative (active) conservation falls within the framework of SD. It is argued here that the second possibility is more sound and in theory commonly accepted, yet often misinterpreted or misused in practice.

2. Traditional strict NC (passive or "hands-off protection" of pristine elements) remains an irreplaceable tool in caring for non-usable natural resources and almost undisturbed ecosystems, as well as in the maintenance of natural ecological processes. Such sites and forms are still present in less transformed parts of Central and Eastern Europe. Any such close-to-pristine areas should be monitored by administrators with higher qualifications in ecology.

3. Traditional conservation should support a more extensively applied active conservation, the second form being carried out within the framework of the sustainable management of resources for economic profit. In this domain decisions should be agreed upon between managers and environmentalists.

4. The present-day attempts of some foresters to use the sustainability concept as a tool for transforming close-to-primeval habitats into man-modified areas, is a harmful "colonial-like" tendency. It apparently meets with the acceptance of the EU administration. The last remnants of close-to-primeval nature are still exposed to arrogant assaults from humans veiled by slogans of "improvement" and "active care for nature".

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