

Values Orientation Change – an Important Prerequisite for the Development of a Sustainable Economy

Nowe podejście do wartości – ważny warunek rozwoju zrównoważonej gospodarki

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Abstract

Issues of unsustainability or sustainability arise also in the context of the functioning of an economy that should responsibly meet human needs, taking into account human resources, nature and the environment. The current economy needs to be transformed into a sustainable one, and it is pointed out that one of the important prerequisites for this is a change in value orientation. Especially of those actors who are involved in the economy. The change in value orientation concerns, in particular, fundamental values, values that are key to sustainable development, such as nature, the environment, but also the human being who is part of them. In justifying the need to change the value orientation of these actors, we rely on thinkers who reject reductionist-economist approaches in economics and explicate the values that must underpin a sustainable economy. The development of such an economy requires economic actors to be guided not only by economic values, but also by humane and environmental values, and to accept values compatible with a sustainable way of life, which are alternative values to those that underpin contemporary postmodern society. Confirmation of the fact that some economic actors are already orienting themselves towards new values that also support a sustainable economy are some of the new trends in economic thinking, alternative sustainable economic concepts and models. They confirm the start of an environmentally and socially useful transformation process of the economy into a sustainable one.

Key words: values, change, value orientation, sustainability, sustainable economy

Streszczenie

Kwestie niezrównoważoności lub zrównoważoności pojawiają się między innymi w kontekście funkcjonowania gospodarki, która powinna odpowiedzialnie zaspokajać potrzeby człowieka, biorąc pod uwagę zasoby ludzkie, naturę i środowisko. Obecna gospodarka musi zostać przekształcona w zrównoważoną, a jednym z ważnych warunków wstępnym jest zmiana orientacji wartości. Zwłaszcza tych aktorów, którzy są zaangażowani w gospodarkę. Zmiana orientacji wartości dotyczy w szczególności wartości fundamentalnych, które są kluczowe dla zrównoważonego rozwoju, takich jak natura, środowisko, ale także człowiek, który jest ich częścią. Uzasadniając potrzebę zmiany orientacji wartości tych aktorów, polegamy na myślicielach, którzy odrzucają podejścia redukcjonistyczno-ekonomiczne w ekonomii i wyjaśniają wartości, które muszą stanowić podstawę zrównoważonej gospodarki. Rozwój takiej gospodarki wymaga, aby aktorzy ekonomiczni kierowali się nie tylko wartościami ekonomicznymi, ale także wartościami humanistycznymi i środowiskowymi oraz akceptowali wartości zgodne ze zrównoważonym sposobem życia, które są wartościami alternatywnymi do tych, które stanowią podstawę współczesnego społeczeństwa postmodernistycznego. Potwierdzeniem faktu, że niektórzy aktorzy ekonomiczni już orientują się na nowe wartości, które również wspierają zrównoważoną gospodarkę, są niektóre z nowych trendów w myśleniu ekonomicznym, alternatywne zrównoważone koncepcje i modele ekonomiczne. Potwierdzają one początek ekologicznego i społecznie użytecznego procesu transformacji gospodarki w zrównoważoną.

Słowa kluczowe: wartości, zmiana, orientacja na wartości, zrównoważoność, zrównoważona gospodarka

1. Introduction

Every society is characterised by a certain view of values, a certain understanding of values. Even modern capitalist society today, which is described as postmodern, among other things. In explaining economic phenomena and processes, it relies predominantly on liberal theory in the sense of neoclassical economic theory.

Actors in economics are convinced that the achievement of economic goals requires placing a focus on economic values above all others, to the detriment of other values. There is, for example, damage to nature and the environment, but also the undignified treatment of human beings and so on. One of the problems is that the actors in contemporary society have so far not dealt satisfactorily with the conditions for sustainable development.

The primacy of economic values and interests over other values is considered to be an unsustainable situation. Humanity, mankind, the environment, nature and the planet's reproductive capacity are at risk. This economy is unsustainable, which implies, among other things, changes in the system of values on which it is based and a change in the value orientation of the actors involved in it.

Values define a methodological frame of reference within which social phenomena and processes can be understood and explained. They determine the actions and overall behaviour of all actors, including those involved in the economic sphere. In view of the problems and threats in the world underpinning the contemporary economy, the aim of this paper is to justify the need for a change in the value orientation of those involved in it. We consider this to be an important prerequisite for the transformation of the current economy into a sustainable one.

We do not examine value orientation as a complex problem. In the context of the need to transform the economy into a sustainable one, we justify the need to change the value orientation of the actors involved in the current economy. They have the main responsibility for the sustainable development of the economy and, consequently, of society, and so the challenge, or rather the demand for a reorientation of values for the sake of the development of a sustainable economy, is addressed to them in particular.

We assume that a change in value orientation, respectively a value reorientation, is among the basic characteristics of the sustainable development paradigm. Consequently, we justify the necessity of transforming the economy into a sustainable one, pointing out the current reductionist-economist approach of the actors in the economy towards fundamental values, which is incompatible with the idea of sustainable life on Earth. By referring to some thinkers, we draw attention in particular to environmental values, values compatible with a sustainable way of life, or human values for a sustainable future, which also underpin the concept of a sustainable economy.

We take a holistic view of the economy, referring to some theorists, thinkers in the field of philosophy, ecophilosophy, who in various ways support sustainability efforts and initiatives in the world, and thus also directly and indirectly support the transition to a sustainable economy. In the last part of the paper we highlight some sustainable economic models and initiatives that can be considered as a certain positive signal that some actors in the economy are already aware of the seriousness of the situation in the world and that positive changes are gradually taking place in their practices.

2. The crisis of values – an obstacle in the development of a sustainable economy

Thinking about values¹ in contemporary society, which is based on postmodernism, is quite difficult. In one part of his book, J. Keller (2019) focuses on characterizing the contexts out of which this society emerges. Among other characteristics, he emphasizes economic growth, social security, and revolt against established social norms, values, and authorities at all levels.

Postmodern pluralism was introduced by J.-F. Lyotard (1993), the founder and leading representative of philosophical postmodernism, as a certain perspective that takes into account diversity, the variety of thought and life forms, and the existence of different forms of rationalities. He pointed out that people in postmodern society have a superficial approach to the fundamental values in society, while their way of reflecting reality is unsustainable. This is related to individualism, modern hedonism or consumerism.

The economy, which has a dominant place in contemporary culture, also plays a role in this situation in society. It adopts a reductionist-economist approach, based on the rational choice of means with a view to maximising individual utility. In this sense, then, we speak of economising behaviour, or even of economic behaviour in general, whereby some values are not only marginalised but also compromised.

¹ In defining the concept of *value*, the meaning attributed to things is mainly considered and three features are mentioned: values related to human needs and interests; values related to deciding how to act; values related to norms (Kolář and Svoboda, 1997). These are interrelated features, and most of the time the emphasis is placed on any one of them. Nowadays, values are divided and typologized in terms of several criteria (for more details, see e.g., Brožík, 2000; Smith, 1991; Rokeach, 1979 and others).

Economic processes and activities are often assessed with regard to achieving efficiency, profitability mainly on the basis of rationality.² Rational actions lead to the achievement of economic growth, to the promotion of the cult of consumption, consumerism, which are perceived by many social entities as the right paths not only to human happiness, to well-being, but also to the development of personality. They are the promise of a better quality of life, and so the focus is on these values, which, in turn, brings with it the violation and abuse of some human rights, especially in the poorer parts of the world, the manipulation of the values of market participants and, last but not least, the damage to the Earth's ecosystem. In this respect, the economy is also referred to as *anti-natural* because it is directed against the most organised ontic layer of the planet, the natural ecosystems (for more details see Šmajš, 2010). Thus, we question the position that in the economy there is a rational choice between alternative uses of scarce resources/means to achieve a certain goal (for more details see Gerbery, 2022). Particularly when there is a promotion of purposeless consumption and the satisfaction of needs at the cost of environmental degradation and the depletion of scarce resources, this cannot be considered a rational choice with respect to ensuring sustainable development. A sustainable economy also prefers rational choices, but ones that allow for the pursuit of goals that are not an obstacle to the sustainable development of the economy and society.

Sustainable economy also favours rational choices, but it is not just about economic rationality in the sense of neo-classical economics, based on the traditional concept of *homo oeconomicus*, which is based on methodological individualism, and so decisions are made on the basis of cost-benefit³ analysis. Neither rationality in the sense of some other economic theories, for which rationality is fundamental. Rational choices in a sustainable economy are intended to meet economic objectives in a way that does not compromise the goals of sustainable development. A sustainable economy must operate and develop in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁴, which objective is to *improve people's lives all over the world, foster prosperity and protect the planet* (OECD, n.d.).

The role of a sustainable economy, like the role of any other economy, is to produce goods and services in order to meet people's needs, since the fundamental purpose of an economy is servility (Rich 1994). This central role of the economy in society corresponds with SDG no. 3, with respect to which the functioning of a sustainable economy is to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all people and at all ages. However, the achievement of this goal is linked to a number of other goals. Ensuring a healthy and good quality of life implies an economy that relies on a stable infrastructure and that promotes inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and fosters innovation (SDG no. 9). Equally, such an economy is tasked with promoting lasting, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, decent work for all people (SDG no. 8), as well as ensuring sustainable patterns of production and consumption (SDG no. 12).

Sustainable economy does not yet have a precise definition; it is usually defined in terms of the resources it uses. Synonyms such as circular economy, etc. are used as synonyms with sustainable economy. Their aim is to meet needs with the least possible use of resources and the least harmful impact on the environment. The situation today is already serious, as has been pointed out, for example, by the reports of the Club of Rome and by several authors of philosophical, sociological, cultural and economic studies.⁵ Not only the current economy, which is largely a linear economic model⁶, but also the entire culture is incompatible with the idea of sustainable life on Earth, and so it is extremely necessary to develop sustainable economic concepts, models, initiatives, etc. Their pillar must be new values, which requires a change in value orientation.

According to T. Parsons and E. Shils (2001), value orientation refers to those aspects of the subject's motivation and orientation towards the environment and the situation that promote actual or potential satisfaction or dissatisfaction with his/her needs. Others understand it as a hierarchically ordered set of values that reflects a realistic order of values formed on the basis of the importance of values shared not only by the individual but also by a particular group of the population at a particular time. It is not only the value system of the individual but also the value system of society (Průcha, 2009), or *social attitudes, the social position of the individual, which indicates the assimilation of social experience by the individual and serves as a determinant of his behaviour* (Zorikova, 2020, p. 302). The value orientation on which contemporary European-American culture is based is leading humanity to a dead end. It directs people towards behaviours that lead to deep global and regional problems incompatible with the concept of sustainable development (for more details see: Nováček and Vavroušek, 1993; Huba, 2006b, Spousta, 2008, etc.). *As we examine environmental problems, we see that the real problem is not caused by the environment,*

² This is economic rationality, the rationality of economic life and the market, or purposive rationality. According to Weber's typology of social action, purposive rationality uses objects and people as conditions or means for its own rational purposes with a view to success (for more details see: Weber, 2009).

³ The so-called neoclassical paradigm, on which neoclassical economy is based, emphasises the economic aspect of the behaviour of market actors and considers rational behaviour to be utility-driven behaviour. Economic rationality is understood in terms of profit maximisation, ignoring historical, social, psychological and other considerations (see more in Márton, 2000).

⁴ UNDP, 2015

⁵ See, for example: Meadows et al., 1972; Juvin and Lipovetsky, 2012; Sen, 2002.

⁶ The linear model of the economy is the industrial model of the economy that shone under conditions of resource abundance. It is characterized by a unidirectional linear process of *resources-products-waste*, oriented towards maximizing social wealth and profit, while overconsuming natural resources and producing uncontrollable amounts of waste (see e.g. Sariatli, 2017).

but by people (Sadowski and Ayvaz, 2023, p. 160). The problem is that people take a superficial approach to such fundamental values as nature, the environment, and the human being who is part of them. As tools, instruments or means, in order to achieve set economic goals and thus profit. They are not understood as values in themselves, which are essential for the quality of people's lives, but become what are called instrumental values, derived values by means of which the target values are fulfilled. They thus represent means to something that is considered valuable. According to H. Skolimowski (1992) values are largely based on the understanding of the world as a machine. This attitude translates into our relationship to the Earth as an object, and control becomes the dominant value. It can be agreed that, for example, the short-term exploitation of natural ecological cycles, the development of production and consumption processes, the use of outdated and unsustainable technologies, and so on, lead to environmental degradation. At the same time, this confirms that many actors consider value as an economic category.

Value in economics is primarily what can be expressed in terms of price. This is also how natural resources, living and non-living nature and the environment, which are expressed in monetary units, are viewed in terms of their current market value or their utility. Not only is it unsustainable that these values are understood as economic categories, but we also see the problem in the fact that the economy is focused primarily on achieving short-term goals that bring only temporary or short-term benefits. This is without taking into account the fact that behaving in accordance with them, or protecting them, has negative consequences for humanity and the planet. Yet the role of the economy is clear – to help people to ensure a good quality of life, now and in the future. It is thus necessary to be aware that the decisions of economic actors are not only about profit and economic values, but also about social, environmental, ethical, aesthetic values, etc. In the interests of sustainable development, they should therefore bear in mind the so-called *values compatible with a sustainable way of life*⁷ or *human values for a sustainable future*⁸, which form the core of the common heritage of humanity from the earliest religions and cultures to the present day. Respect for these values will move us all towards a sustainable future. Economic actors decide not only on the size of profit or utility, on individual economic methods and practices, but also on the quality of life of the present and, to some extent, on the living conditions of future generations. They, are also obliged, in their individual activities, to respect values compatible with a sustainable way of life or human values for a sustainable future.

M. Huba (2022) and some others⁹ subscribe to the sustainable living concept, which is *driven by the effort to reach – as much as possible – the ideals of humanism and the harmony between man and nature, based on the respect of life as well as the non-living parts of nature* (Huba, 2022, p. 2).

A holistic view of the economy and its interpretation from this perspective becomes a condition for the continued existence of humans on Earth. H. Daly (2007)¹⁰, a critic of traditional economic thinking and traditional economics, stressed that humanity must make the transition to a sustainable economy on the basis of taking into account the natural biophysical limits of the global ecosystem, which may continue into the future. He believes that failure to do so may cause not only non-economic growth, but also an ecological disaster that would greatly reduce living standards.

The views of the thinkers outlined above confirm us in the fact that it is reasonable to consider a moral crisis of values and, at the same time, the need for a change in value orientation. Certainly, this challenge is not only for those who are involved in the economy.

3. Value reorientation for the purpose of developing a sustainable economy

A value orientation encourages people to behave in a certain way. It is to a large extent the result of the process of socialisation and is of great importance in the organised system of the personality, which influences his whole life and penetrates into all spheres of life – social, economic, political, etc. There is no doubt that it also plays an important role in the economy.

Value orientations and values do not arise spontaneously; they emerge as an individual and social need (Smolková, 2003, p. 474). Considering the fact that the functioning and development of a sustainable economy has to be based on a sustainability-focused value orientation, which requires a change of value orientation, or a kind of *rethinking* of values, we agree with Skolimowski (1999), that the cause of many of the world's problems has become a *misreading* of nature and therefore we need to *recycle our minds* (Skolimowski, 1999, p. 180). He calls for a kind of *rethinking* of values and an adherence to values that will support sustainability efforts. In doing so, he probably had in mind the recycling of the mind so that it is reused and able to make rational decisions that will not harm people,

⁷ Sustainable living is not just about survival. It should be a life based on harmony and the ecological satisfaction of all needs, as well as on the development of human resources, but also on the protection and restoration of natural resources (see Hanusin et al., 2000).

⁸ J. Vavroušek formulated Ten Alternative Sustainable Values (for more details see Huba, 2006b).

⁹ For example, Vavroušek, 1993; Hanusin et al., 2000.

¹⁰ H. Daly, a representative of ecological economics, proposes the so-called Steady-state economy, in which the optimal level of population and economic activity should lead to sustainability. A steady-state economy is one in which depletion is within the rate of recovery and pollution is within the absorptive capacity of the biosphere. It is based on the equitable distribution of resources with respect to the present generation and future generations (Daly, 2007).

nature, the whole environment, or the whole world, but vice versa. The recycled mind should understand them as lasting values that need to be at least protected, but also enhanced and developed. They are intended for the present but also for the future inhabitants of the planet. In this context, it seems to us more appropriate to think of a change in value orientation, or *value reorientation*. It is a change in the current value orientation, a reassessment of the values that have been recognised, and an understanding and acceptance of new or old values, fundamental values such as nature, environment and human beings.

The Global Sustainable Development Report 2023 also calls for a change in value orientation. According to the report, changes are needed not only in energy sources and consumption patterns, but also in values, hearts and minds. Among other things, the report calls for *Sustainable and just economies – Encouraging inclusive, pro-poor growth including progressive redistribution measures, doubling welfare transfers in low-income countries, rollout of good practice climate policies and global carbon pricing, encouraging lifestyles that promote sufficiency levels, investment in green innovation, and circular and sharing economy models* (Global Sustainable Development Report, 2023, p. 23).

The change of value orientation is one of the basic characteristics of the sustainable development paradigm and, according to several thinkers (Huba, 2006a; Vavroušek 1994; Smith-Sebasto, 1997 and others), it is the most essential and also the most difficult to define attribute of moving towards sustainability. It is based on a holistic perception of the changed economic reality, respecting the laws of the real world and of nature.

The development of a sustainable economy cannot do without the valorisation of nature, but the ways in which this is done must be rationally considered, not only with regard to the benefits but also with regard to nature itself, which is a value in its own right. It is one of the fundamental values and, together with the environment, it must be seen as an existential value, as it enables the existence of the 'human' layer. The requirement of complementarity is also contained in some EU documents. For example, as stated in one, behind the Sustainable Development Goals (UNDP, 2015) is a global vision to act not only in the interest of prosperity, but in the interest of humanity and our planet (for more details see European Commission, 2016).

On the basis of changes in their value system, economic actors should be able to adopt more environmentally friendly approaches to scarce and non-renewable resources in all economic activities, to preserve and protect natural resources for future generations, to reduce pollution and environmental damage through various measures, and so on. In addition, for example, there is a need for some restrictions on production to meet human needs, or a responsible distinction between human needs, taking into account, above all, the long-term benefits for people, for society as a whole, and for future generations (see also, for example, Mravcová, 2023).

Responsible approaches to nature, to the whole ecosystem, assigning inherent dignity and respect to nature have been justified by many thinkers. Among them, for example, H. Jonas (1997) or A. Schweitzer (1993), who demanded not only respect for nature, but also respect for life in general. H. Skolimowski (1999) even later identified respect for life as a primary value for sustainable development and at the same time considered it as the foundation on which people's responsibility for life is based. But the fact is that these values continue to be neglected, and not only by actors in the economic sphere. People continue to violate their duties towards nature and the environment, and so, ultimately, they also violate their duties towards themselves.

The role of the economy is to promote the benefit of as many people as possible by making responsible use not only of nature, but also of people and human resources. Together with respect for *environmental values*, which have been the main focus of our transformation to a sustainable economy, there is a need, particularly in some places in the world, to replace the current approaches to human resources as means. They are not only undignified but also unsustainable. People can, after all, determine their actions by reason, which, according to I. Kant forms the basis of human dignity, and also the basis of human rights.¹¹ A sustainable economy does not allow people to be abused, respects their rights and demands that they are treated as purposes.

The role of a sustainable economy is to take into account environmental values together with both human and social values, respectively values compatible with a sustainable way of life or *human values for a sustainable future*.¹² Such an economy will not disturb the balance of the ecosystem, even when it comes to meeting human needs. However, humane or social values should not be placed above environmental values. After all, the environment affects ecosystems, flora, fauna, and human health and life on the planet as a whole. The so-called commensurability of values is required, when we are able to rely on some common foundations (for more details see: Sisáková, 1999) or complementarity of values, i.e. that individual values cannot be understood independently from others, or cannot exist without others. The essence of complementarity of elements in a given system is that they condition each other for the possibility of their comprehensibility and existence. Thus, the social good of the people on the planet, or terrestrial nature, should have been understood as equivalent to economic values in the world.

¹¹ See more in, Sen, 2004

¹² Universal human values are considered to be: peace, freedom and social progress, equality of rights and human dignity. (see more in: [UN, 1948](#)). On humane values, see further, e.g., Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 2012, and others. Social values underpinning sustainable development rightly focus on equality, inclusion and justice, but a growing body of evidence suggests that such values must also focus on and include the natural world and the human connection to it, as well (Leal Filho et al., 2022).

Ultimately, the Sustainable Development Goals, which, as mentioned above, are also based on the complementarity of values, are the basis on which a sustainable economy should operate and develop. They are formulated not only with regard to the protection of human and social values, but also environmental and other values.¹³ It is precisely the model of a sustainable economy that cannot work in contradiction with the Sustainable Development Goals that is becoming one of the hopes for meeting the needs of current and future populations while maintaining a healthy environment. Like the concept of sustainable development, it encompasses a long-term and global perspective that integrates more specific objectives - social progress, effective environmental protection, responsible use of natural resources and maintaining a high and stable level of economic growth.

We consider the change of value orientation as a morally right process that can bring people a better quality of life. In the long term. We agree that: *It is more of a transformative process that is environmentally and socially beneficial* (Schneider et al., 2010, p. 511).

4. Orientation towards new values in the economy – some new trends, models and concepts

It is encouraging that, especially in developed countries, some economic actors are already realising that economic development should be sustainable development and should be based on sustainable *production and consumption*.¹⁴ This implies respect for environmental and ecological values, but also for human rights, justice, responsibility and other humane, social, political and moral values. Both in production, in the distribution of production and in consumption. Human, environmental, social and other values are considered to be equivalent to economic values. Thanks to them, we are encountering new trends in economic thinking, alternative sustainable economic concepts or sustainable economic models that promote more environmentally and resource-friendly approaches in economics. They are the proof that the linear economic model is gradually changing into a circular economy, which operates in closed circles: biological and technical. Within these circles, materials move, while the circular economy sees waste as a resource. This economic model relies on sharing, renting, reusing, repairing, refurbishing or recycling existing products, raw materials, materials.

The new trends in economic thinking include ecological economics, mentioned above, which is based on the systems theory of life and the philosophy of the organism. It focuses on achieving economic, social and ecological well-being on the basis of efficient use of resources and minimal burden on the environment. Similarly, the green economy, which the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2011 defined as one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

They focus on green growth, which is sustainable economic growth achieved with a view to ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being depends (for more details see: OECD, 2021). Green growth policies combine economic growth with an emphasis on preserving the environment for future generations.

For example, the sharing economy is a sustainable economic model based on sharing, lending exchanging or renting goods instead of owning them (Investopedia Staff, 2020). It is also referred to by the term co-consumption or shared consumption and its main principle is the idea that having access to an item (whether paid or unpaid) is better, more practical, cheaper, greener, etc., than owning it. Today, more and more so-called 'sharing economy platforms' cover important economic areas such as transport, renting, accommodation, retail, logistics, finance, consumer credit and other areas of work. It allows individuals and groups to raise money from unused assets, even at the cost of reducing production in order to pursue sustainable consumption patterns.

The gradual emergence and introduction of sustainable economic practices but also models, initiatives, etc. can be seen as some evidence that actors in the economy are gradually moving away from the linear economic model. In the interests of sustainability, they are gradually changing their value orientation and thus their attitude towards nature, the environment and the Earth in general. The ownership approach is gradually changing into a stewardship approach. There is also a gradual shift from a linear economy to a circular economy. This process is also supported by some world institutions and organisations. Nevertheless, they are still not recognised or they are still rejected by many actors. One of the main reasons for their slow uptake in the economy is the persistent focus of actors on efficiently maximising profits, while many of them do not realise that even reducing profits in order to do business sustainably in the economy can give them a competitive advantage in the long term.

We consider responsibility to be one of the main values underpinning this concept of the economy, which should be in the mind of every entity in the economy. Finally, this is also clear from the Brundtland Report, which includes the best-known definition of sustainability, according to which the present society has a responsibility for the quality of life of today's population and for the preservation of resources, the environment and other components necessary for the future population, as they have an equal right to a good quality of life. Thus, as it states, the present generation

¹³ See more: SDGs no. 6, 7, 13, 14, 15 (UNDP, 2015)

¹⁴ The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) sees sustainable consumption and production as a holistic approach to minimising the negative environmental impacts of production systems and consumption while promoting quality of life for all (UNEP, 2011).

faces an enormous task that obliges and requires enormous changes in thinking, policy or economics (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

5. Conclusion

Given that both the economy and the culture as a whole are incompatible with the idea of sustainable life on Earth, there is no doubt that several changes are needed. The way out of the 'value chaos', which is seen as a serious obstacle to moving towards sustainability, is to change the value orientation, to focus attention on the values that are the pillars of the concept of sustainability and, equally, the pillars of a sustainable economy.

A value reorientation is crucial not only for the transformation of the current economy into a sustainable one, but for sustainable development in general. This rethinking of values, which Skolimowski called for, should be in the interests of everyone. We really do need to recycle our minds, or to rethink the values that have guided human activities up to now, even in the economy. The fundamental role of a sustainable economy remains unchanged. It is to meet real human needs and create the conditions for a good life for people on Earth. However, it must do this by relying on responsible attitudes not only towards people, but also towards nature and the whole ecosystem.

Changing value orientation is proving to be an important prerequisite for the development of a sustainable economy, and overall – an important prerequisite for moving towards sustainability. It must be in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. So that the balance of the ecosystem is not disturbed, the laws of the real world and of nature are respected. The concept of a sustainable economy is based on the sustainable use of natural resources and takes into account that the degree of use of renewable elements should be in balance with their creation, so that the consumption of non-renewable resources does not exceed the degree of possibility of their gradual replacement by renewable resources, which will enable sustainable life.

The transformation of the economy into a sustainable economy calls for a change in value orientation so that human, environmental and other values key to sustainability are protected alongside economic values. The change in value orientation for a sustainable economy and for sustainability in general should be based on complementarity of values. It is important to respect both human and environmental values, and to integrate values into the value system of individual actors, such as – values compatible with a sustainable way of life, or human values for a sustainable future, or other values that are alternative values to those on which the current society is based. At present, this will make it possible to eliminate, or at least reduce, many of the unsustainable attitudes that have so far been applied in the economy to both human and natural resources.

Some of the above-mentioned and other sustainable economic models and initiatives can be seen as a certain positive signal that some of the current economic actors are aware of the seriousness of the situation the world is in and have decided to make a change. However, there is a need for as many economic actors as possible to rethink their value orientation. In addition to them, those involved in politics, education and other areas that can in some way create the conditions for the development of the sustainable economy should also reconsider their values.

The quality of life of people in some parts of the world, as well as the current supply of natural resources, the environment and the overall state of the planet, among other things, demonstrate that not only the change in the value orientation of economic actors, but also the entire transformation of the economy into a sustainable one, is a long-term and challenging process. And also that a sustainable economy is, for the meantime, primarily a new concept that holds the promise of a sustainable life.

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