



PILGRIMAGES AS A FACTOR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT¹

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Abstract: *The article attempts to analyze and valorize pilgrimage as a useful ally of the principle of sustainable development. By diluting its original meaning, the latter often remains a principle only on paper. Initially emphasizing the inclination to comply with sustainable development, tourism has proved to be a significant threat to integrating the natural and social environment. A pilgrimage, due to its motivation and embedding in transcendence, evades being simply reduced to only one of the types of tourism (religious tourism, pilgrimage tourism). It seems to fulfill the demands of sustainable development in a more determined and promising way not only by caring for the environment and culture, but above all by being restrained towards material goods (hiking, everyday necessities).*

Keywords: *sustainable development; sustainable tourism; religious tourism; pilgrimage; spirituality; ecology; economy; social environment*

INTRODUCTION

The principle of sustainable development was first and foremost born out of concern for the natural environment, particularly in recent years, undergoing a disturbing degradation, threatening the existence of the present and future generations. This idea quickly expanded to include other aspects, so today, we are talking about its three pillars – ecological, social, and economic. It is currently arduous to imagine any ideas, projects, and investments without referring to this increasingly universal principle. It was also realized that balancing separate actions in the three areas, or pillars as mentioned above, would not be practical without internal harmony and balance between them.

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While studying the discussion revolving around the sustainable development issues, one may get the impression of an absolute insufficiency. Without going into detailed deliberations (some aspects are discussed inside the article), it can be briefly stated that another crucial dimension of sustainable development should be considered, namely the spiritual element in its broader sense. The demand to include ethics and axiology in the area of sustainable development does not cease to be relevant. Still, it seems insufficient in the process of internalizing this principle as a way of being, and not only obedient to regulations, often purely external, incapable of meeting the high standards dictated and assumed by this principle.

Tourism is an area of human activity that for years has been regarded as a unique example of affirmation of the natural environment, defined next to anthropogenic values as one of the main tourist attractions and the primary motive for undertaking this activity. However, it was immediately noticed that this affirmation does not go hand in hand with the utmost care for this environment. What is more, tourism proves to be one of the main factors of its degradation. Similarly, this negative impact of tourism was also noticed in relation to culture. One of the main aspects of the degradation of both environments is the one-sided, economic point of view. Justifiably, tourism is defined as a branch of the economy, which in some countries is treated as the critical factor in stabilizing the budget. Although heavily promoted by, for example, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the principle of sustainable development does not always apply. In some regions, it is treated as a factor hindering growth, precisely because of the imbalance between the three pillars mentioned at the beginning. In this text, the authors attempt to describe and assess the incompatibility of tourism and the principle of sustainable development resulting from the imbalance between the three pillars of this principle with reference to tourism, and to put forward a proposal to enhance these pillars with another one, i.e. spirituality that is mismatched to the category of tourism. Pilgrimages are widespread activities in most religions, both national and universal. In the opinion of the authors of this article, pilgrimage itself, with all its shortcomings and limitations, remains the most convincing, credible and promising form of promotion and implementation of the principle of sustainable development, resulting primarily from not only theological, but also philosophical awareness, because man by nature it is the essence of *homo religiosus*.

METHODOLOGY

The analyses contained in the text were documented with the cited literature on the subject. The method of source analysis and the hermeneutic method were used, which in our opinion are the most appropriate for conducting a convincing discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sustainable Development Dilemmas

The concept of sustainable development is problematic to define clearly. Baumgartner and Röhrer already noted 70 different proposals to describe it in 1998 (Fröhlich 2003: 12). Sustainable development belongs to the category of ideas that modern societies have come to terms with and have become so deeply accustomed to that they no longer stimulate anyone to make a considerable effort to deal with them. It has become both an axiom and a fashionable phrase. It is associated with all that we consider to be the heritage of civilization, a proof of maturity and the growing collective consciousness that life must be shaped sensibly, holding on to clear rules, such as responsibility, solidarity, temperance, patience, self-limitation, or empathy (Bartoszewski, Skowroński and Papšo 2017: 118).

Interestingly, all these rules are perceived as the achievements of the present day due to the evolution of civilization that has come a long way from a primitive military society to an industrial and post-industrial society. Without noticing that, many times, the ideas mentioned above and specific behaviours have already taken place in history. Modern human beings should instead account for the abandonment of most of them, resulting in disturbing problems that are currently revealed in many areas, including the natural and social environment. In this context, it should be mentioned that the substantial contribution of Christian doctrine and practice to sustainable development is worth recalling as natural sources of this way of perceiving the world as a creature that has come out of the hands of the Creator, which is as doubtful as the effectiveness of the principle of the sustainable development contaminated with particularism. The character who ought to be mentioned here is St. Hildegard of Bingen, in whose view

“... man is responsible for the loss of the natural balance between God, man and nature. The imbalance is manifested by climatic disasters, air pollution, crop failures, etc.” (Łepko and Sadowski 2014: 17).

Today, when we address sustainable development, attention is drawn to the unsatisfactory results of long-term attempts to implement it. “The discussion on sustainability, the specification of attitudes and opinions, the multitude of scientific studies on European strategy in this matter, as well as projects based on *Agenda 21*, make us think that we are dealing with a process in its initial stage. After years of active support and speeches by politicians calling for the introduction of development policy, there is no clear evidence that the promoted idea of sustainable development has become a reality and is changing the world in the global dimension” (Kazimierczak 2009: 10 – 11). In this perspective, it is undoubtedly necessary to speak of sustainable development as a dilemma that has emerged primarily in practical terms, without obtaining the expected lasting effects. But is it only a manifestation of inconsistency and determination in the realization of an otherwise right, noble, and innovative idea? Or maybe the problem occurs in the concept itself, in the premises and assumptions that may be adopted under certain conditions, e.g. historical or political, and whose change has turned the very principle “upside-down”?

It should be remembered that the genesis of the principle of sustainable development is regularly associated with worrisome reports from the Club of Rome, especially the report entitled: “Growth limits” (Marczak 2018: 179 – 180). The Club’s interventions were alarming and critical of failures in terms of environmental protection and lack of concern for the welfare of future generations manifested by the exploitation of natural resources. It must not be forgotten that this report called for a radical step in the form of “zero growth”, which met vehement opposition from economic and financial circles. A situation where civilization development could be stopped was not even imagined. The Club of Rome, therefore, proposed a compromise, and in its second report, it offered a concept of limited development combining economic and environmental interests (Kasprzak and Kostecka 2015: 51 – 52). And so, from the very beginning, the radical idea fell victim to a forced compromise. Behaviours and deeds in the following years confirmed the original fears expressed in the document “Limits to Growth”. Progress and prosperity have prevailed over the sensitivity to preserve nature and the many communities with their local cultures for future generations. The unrestrained desire for profit and the pursuit of ever-increasing economic growth rates have deepened and accelerated the phenomenon of degradation in many areas compared to the Roman Club intervention times. There has been no radical change in thinking, so necessary in this sensitive area, but rather a blurring of the original idea. And so, for instance, instead of a shift in thinking and concrete steps towards sustainable development, as Hirsch (2005: 9) writes, environmentally damaging plants and factories are being moved to developing countries, exacerbating and globalizing environmental problems. The origins of the idea of sustainable development prove that today’s understanding of it is doomed to failure. After all, this approach was not merely a matter of passive refraining from the action or just restraint, but above all a buoyant, active economy, sensitive to its functioning geographical, natural, social, and temporal circumstances. Nothing good will come out of bidding for balance with development, as the product will always be chosen as a starting point, as a basis for discussion and dialogue (Marczak 2018: 179 – 180).

In connection with the above, it should also be mentioned that the significant discrepancy between the universal global acceptance of the principle and the discussion on detailed solutions becomes more and more visible. The latter reaching a consensus seems to be a strenuous effort, among other things in political activity. The idea itself places this state of affairs in several utopian postulates (Loy 2008: 17).

Observing the situation from this year, marked by the coronavirus pandemic, one can conclude that only extreme events were not caused, at least consciously, by human beings. Epidemics or other cataclysms can change the human being’s unrestrained urge to possess and reign and lead him/her out of a mental collapse. The “zero growth” advocated by the Club of Rome proved to be possible, although forced by circumstances that threatened the entire population’s existence. The “breath” of nature, which is being reborn at a rapid pace, freed from the ruthless reign of man, should be an incentive for fundamental change, which should occur in individual and collective behaviour, including political decisions. Unfortunately, there are already beliefs that care for nature and sustainable development is a luxury in times of such serious crises as the pandemic (Magliulo 2012: 53). The quoted Antonio Magliulo, who criticizes such a way of thinking, adds that the aforementioned crisis and similar ones give rise to the temptation to

postpone care for future generations for better times. It should be the other way around – this concern is supposed to become a driving force for overcoming crises and intensified actions for the benefit of endangered nature and devastated societies and cultures. This is all the more urgent when the mechanisms that were supposed to protect are failing, and when the effects of actions and processes that deepen destruction on a global scale are revealed: "... the paradigm of civilizational pluralism is insufficient for the understanding of the social world... phenomena have emerged which have put into question the contemporary survival of not so much individual civilizations as of the whole human race. Overpopulation, depletion of natural resources, ecological threats, the danger of a nuclear conflict, opposites between the North and the South, and structural unemployment have become the most visible symptoms of the new, crisis-oriented socio-economic and political situation, common to the whole world" (Gowor 2007: 23 – 24). The problem is also exacerbated by scandalous inequalities in the use of natural resources. Well, 20% of the population that lives in the richest countries consumes 80% of all natural resources (Kazimierzczak 2009: 12).

It seems that the problem of the ineffectiveness of the principle of sustainable development lies, irrespective of many other reasons already mentioned partly above, in the fact that a legalistic, statutory and rule-based way of guaranteeing the effectiveness of this principle has been trusted (Loy 2008: 17), forgetting that it should remain, above all, a precept and a moral norm, stemming from solid ethical foundations. "A legal understanding of the value of sustainable development, if it refers only to its defining meaning, without an ethical and philosophical context that significantly broadens the content of this principle with values such as ideal, autotelic or instrumental, will be reflected in a limited way in the legal decision-making process" (Klimska and Syrat 2018: 197). The formal status of sustainability as a rule of law has made it more likely to be circumvented and ignored on the basis of profit and loss calculations or in the context of discrepancies and conflicts of interest. Here, only seemingly, one can speak of a paradox, since a similar mechanism has been revealed in many areas of social life. It is worth reaching for a seemingly distant analogy to the world of sport. The noble principle of fair play is worth mentioning as well. Here, the ethical principle still remains problematic to implement. Moral postulates referring to moral sensitivity and intuition are no longer effective. Therefore, the principle of fair play is attempted to be moved from the category of moral demands to the category of legal norms and detailed regulations, which paradoxically make this principle easier to circumvent or break, since not the principle itself, but the associated sanction will determine its rank. The principle of sustainable development is the result of a compromise (it was to be zero development). In fact, this principle, limits development, and often even prevents it under certain circumstances. The success of plans formulated on the basis of the principle of sustainable development is hard to believe in without taking into account the moral relationship between the three pillars of this principle: care for nature, society and economy, or, in other words, between nature and culture (Łepko and Sadowski 2014: 21).

At this point, it is worth noting that the relationship between nature and *ens per se* creates specific forms of human expression in the form of works of art, musical works, or religious worship, e.g. among primitive or ancient or nomadic peoples, not excluding the peoples of the Western and Eastern civilizations. It is impossible to ignore the fact that, according to God's Revelation, the natural world was given to man to take care of it in a rational and, using the language of theology, decent way. As a result, it led to an understanding of the natural world, but through the prism of God's creative act. This gave rise to a number of places where monasteries and churches were built, which in turn became places of pilgrimage for societies seeking pious men and the sacred.

The problematic nature of sustainable development is also evident in one of the most widespread human activities, namely tourism. Tourism is no longer an attribute of the elite social class, since leisure time has ceased to be a privilege and has become a right of every working person. The dissemination of tourism – travelling and visiting attractive destinations – entails multidimensional benefits for both incoming and receiving tourists' hosts. The adverse effects of tourism are more and more often indicated as one of the main factors of environmental and cultural degradation and economic turbulence. Criticism has turned, among other things, against the excessive commercialization of tourism. In Germany, the criticism of tourism in the works of Hans Magnus Enzensberger, who had already described tourism as "a manipulative element of the world of goods" ("Teil einer manipulierenden Warenwelt") (Balaš and Strasdas 2018: 17) in 1958, was widely echoed.

Sustainable tourism is nothing more than the long-term sustainability of tourism by achieving a balance between environmental, social and cultural aspects of development (Chahal and Devi 2016a: 274). Chahal Hardeep and Devi Asha write, in simple terms, about the positive and negative impact of tourism. In their opinion, the development of tourism has both positive and negative effects on the quality of life of communities. The positive ones include increased currency exchange and additional income, increased quality of life (Moscardo and Murphy 2014: 2541), and favourable employment opportunities for the local community. With regard to the positive aspect of tourism, sustainable development helps to protect the target environment, raises the standard of living of the host country's inhabitants, the values of its society, and the satisfaction of tourists (Chahal and Devi 2016b: 274).

Sustainable tourism as a response to the negative effects of conventional tourism is gradually gaining in importance. Initially, the forms of this tourism were treated as a niche phenomenon, reserved for small tour operators, which in fact significantly limited its development (Griffin and Raj 2017: 2). Over time, it has become popular and is today considered a kind of fashionable trend (Günther et al. 2014: 9). Thus, many new types of environmentally-oriented tourism have spread over time, including nature tourism, ecotourism, responsible tourism, and sustainable tourism. Analysts have created such diverse terms in an attempt to capture the phase of transition from mass organized tourism to more individualized and varied leisure activities (Hughes 2008: 500).

Regretfully, numerous years ago, it was warned about the negative consequences of tourism in various dimensions. Therefore, in ecological terms, these are, on the one hand, the growth of cities for recreational purposes, and, on the other hand, environmental contamination caused by the behaviour of holidaymakers (car exhaust, sewage, waste, trampled and annihilated plants and animals, noise, etc.). Globally, air travel and the use of vehicles contribute to increasing sources of greenhouse gas emissions, loss of biodiversity resulting from habitat loss, resource consumption, and degradation of various types of environments, such as coastal areas, mountains and wilderness, rural areas and small islands. All this corresponds to environmental changes affecting air, land, and water (Wong 2008: 450). In the economic and socio-cultural dimension (aspect), in turn, it is the seasonality of jobs in tourism and the risk of the so-called tourism monoculture that leads to a one-sided economic dependence of destinations on tourism. On the other hand, there is a tourism-related inflation as the price level in the tourist region rises, resulting in e.g. higher property prices. This development has the potential for social conflicts and can cause or intensify disparities between travellers, and thus tourism may lead to foreign infiltration and commercialization of local culture (Fröhlich 2003: 16). It is not difficult to conclude that this simple presentation of the negative and positive aspects of tourism lacks an approach that takes into account the humanistic and moral context, and yet sustainable tourism is ethically oriented, which is demanded by, among others, Kazimierczak (2009: 9). It is right to conclude that the human impact on the environment is greater than the impact of the natural environment on humans. Hence the postulate to increase the value of not only natural, but also social indicators in tourism projects, such as place of residence, health, nutrition, literacy, employment, education, people, transport, tourist services, and others (Nawaz 2013: 109).

In the case of sustainable tourism, we are dealing with the same problem as in the first paragraph, namely the bidding between sustainability and development, with the former taking a back seat. Too often, economic benefits are chosen as the prior goal of tourism, and this reflection on sustainability goes to the background. The placement of tourist or market needs as the main driving force of this process, and the often undefined and unquestionable assumption that a profitable tourism industry is the ultimate goal of tourism planning, have also been inappropriately adopted in most applications of sustainable tourism (Moscardo and Murphy 2014: 2540). In the case of increasing pressure on the balance, which is being exerted on tour operators, another paradoxical phenomenon appears – competition in the field of sustainable offers that take into account the postulate of sustainable development, which only spurts the economic aspect of these offers, making the diversity of forms of sustainable tourism a similar threat to conventional forms of tourism in the near future. Sustainable tourism can simply become mass sustainable tourism (Weaver 2014: 324), which is its actual negation, and the principle of sustainability will remain nothing more than a marketing trick. Therefore, sustainable tourism is "... a new form of tourism or a wise marketing strategy to provide more ethical packaging for the same old toys" (Dzwonkowska 2011: 36). As Dzwonkowska writes, "the ethical 'envelope' does not have to be associated with full awareness

of the organizers of this form of recreation, and can sometimes be an example of a high level of motivation to gain profit even at the cost of misleading tourists. A notorious example is the so-called 'natural ecotourism' in some parts of Kenya" (Dzwonkowska 2011: 36). It can be immediately noticed that the principle of sustainability is slowly becoming a driving force for competitiveness on the tourism market, and that customers, paying more and more often and boldly than for 'regular services', choose offers that ensure compliance with this principle (Magliulo 2012: 56 – 57; Gupta and George 2009; Günther et al. 2014: 7). Hence, it is easy to be tempted to make sustainable tourism "... a tool for building a positive image of the company, a marketing gimmick that has nothing to do with the actual implementation of sustainable tourism objectives. In such cases, 'sustainable' tourism services, as Dzwonkowska further writes, represent only a low percentage of all activities of the tourism service provider, who does not necessarily consider the principle of sustainable development a priority" (Member States 2011: 37).

Pilgrimages and Sustainable Development

The sense of the sacred has given birth to civilization, and great religious centres have always been pilgrimage destinations (Mann, 2011: 40). Tourism, a relatively new field of science, is rooted in ancient pilgrimage. This interaction and dependence must not be forgotten, and the issues of tourism, religion and pilgrimage should be treated as independent phenomena (Collins-Kreiner and Wall 2015: 692). Travelling for religious reasons is the main cause and driving force of tourism (Duda and Doburzyński 2019: 3). Moreover, religious travel is becoming a paradigm for a new perception of mobility in contemplation. Today, religious tourism, especially pilgrimage, is regaining its historical significance. Unfortunately, at the same time, it is becoming more and more difficult to distinguish between tourist and pilgrim (Ivona and Privitera 2019: 54). In this context, however, it should be emphasized that the fact that tourism is related to pilgrimage does not always correspond to their close and mutual cooperation. Researchers often detect the desperate struggle of local communities to protect a sacred place from a massive influx of tourists who simply ignore the sacred character of a particular area. In addition, this rivalry, which is clearly detrimental to the image of a given destination, takes place between religions and denominations that usurp the right to a certain sacred place. There is also another downside of the problem. In religious tourism, local residents bear the costs of the popularity of their communities, i.e. they pay a price for it. The identity of the city and the quality of life change with religious tourism. Innumerable tourist buses block narrow country roads, tourists make noise and display undesirable behaviour, and properties change from regular residences into houses to be rented (Esplin 2019: 12).

Pilgrim mobility is poorly researched and the literature analyzing the problem of linking pilgrimages to the principle of sustainable development is quite poor (Hole, Khedkar and Snehal 2019: 6). This phenomenon, however, is of immense significance due to the number of participants, cyclicity, and the broad social masses it creates (Collins-Kreiner 2010b: 441). Since the 1990s, there has been a growing interest in distinguishing between pilgrimage and tourist travel (Eliade). The main difference arises from the direction chosen by pilgrims (to socio-cultural centres) and tourists (the opposite direction – for example, to foreign cultures) (Collins-Kreiner 2010b: 442). As research shows, pilgrims look for a spiritual experience at all costs in the commercialized tourism (Árvavölgyi and Sági 2019: 37).

The fact that tourism is rooted in the pilgrimage does not mean that the latter is, in a way, exhausted and dissolved in the former. This is suggested by the opinions of some theorists, such as Collins-Kreiner, who explicitly imposes tourism as the superior and exclusive point of view of pilgrimages and research in this area.

Pilgrimage naturally becomes an ally of sustainable development through a more modest range of comfort chosen by pilgrims with spiritual motives (Árvavölgyi and Sági 2019: 38). It is proving to be one of the conditions for achieving sustainability, which can be considered a remedy for managing the effects of tourism (Chairman and Singh 2014: 1). With the various forms of pilgrimage, tourism can effectively achieve the goal of sustainable development, as it is inherently less burdensome for the environment, the killing of animals is mostly prohibited, local communities are highly involved, the cultural difference between guest and host is smaller, and only occurs at certain times of the year (Chairman and Singh 2014: 2).

Apart from that, pilgrimage becomes a phenomenon that inspires new forms of secular tourism. We are dealing with a gradual spread of the term "pilgrimage", e.g. pilgrimage to the graves of famous stars, artists, etc. There are also new types of tourists inspired by pilgrimage: e.g. spiritual tourists, new

romantics or hippies who have started to visit India and the Himalayas since the 1960s. The “New Age” spiritual travel market is growing for personal development and non-traditional spiritual practices. More and more studies focus on contemporary secular pilgrimage, in which the search for miracles is a feature common to both religious and secular pilgrims (Collins-Kreiner 2010b: 442).

The unique place of religious tourism (including pilgrimages) on the tourism market justifies its separate treatment in the context of sustainability, as is the case for other types of tourism (Collins-Kreiner and Wall 2015: 694).

As in the case of tourism, pilgrimages and religious tourism have negative and positive effects. Among the positives, one may distinguish the stimulation of other forms of mobility, such as trade, cultural exchange and political integration, while among the negatives, for instance, the spread of contagious diseases (Collins-Kreiner 2010a: 441).

When one talks or writes about pilgrimages, one often forgets that they also have a local dimension and magnitude. These places are visited not only by pilgrims from afar, but also by families from the immediate vicinity as part of weekend excursions. There are also small local pilgrimages to these places. In this context, consideration should be given to the sustainable dimension of such a pilgrimage. It may be that mass pilgrimages pose a threat to selected pilgrimage centres, and local pilgrimages favour this principle. It is also a fact, however, that mass pilgrimages from afar are clearly less frequent than local ones (Fallsolyman, Hajipour and Romyani, 2019: 316). The fact that pilgrimages in their essence are local in character is paradoxically evidenced by the conflicts in India, where traditional pilgrimages are attempting to become a modern economy of tourism. This is another example that makes us rethink the question of whether pilgrimage can be equated with tourism, including religious tourism (Hole, Khedkar and Snehal 2019: 8).

The locality of pilgrimages reveals the important role of the local community, which, through its religiously motivated commitment to preserving valuable religious heritage for future generations, indirectly contributes to the implementation of the idea of sustainable development (Gedecho 2014: 43). Unfortunately, it happens that people who show a low level of competence, but guarantee loyalty to the principal that is a religious institution, are made to serve tourists in sacred places and facilities. The religious community (clergy and non-clerics) is often reluctant to join the initiatives of local government institutions aimed at reviving the pilgrimage movement, assuming that pilgrimage is an internal matter of a given religion (church). On the other hand, religious circles disapprove of local government institutions (local administration) that undertake tourism and religious initiatives. The investment of money is a common problem, as well as the subsequent possible distribution of income.

There seems to be no sustainable tourism (including religious sustainable tourism), but rather tourism for sustainable development. A reduction in the number of tourists in areas and places hitherto suffering from overcrowding does not necessarily mean that it will automatically be possible to speak of sustainable tourism, and that these areas and places will automatically be preserved more effectively for future generations. Even one or two tourists can contribute to the degradation of tourist sites and facilities, including trails and pilgrimage centres. In the Roman catacombs, there were pilgrims who were stealing utensils (e.g. the remains of Christ’s followers buried there), which were irretrievably lost as a result of such actions. Sustainability, in our opinion, is a state of mind that is achieved through persistent and patient education and awareness-raising. Due to its growing understanding, the principle of sustainable development, is more and more often treated as something like an ideology or a religion, or as an obstacle to unlimited development by its haunted followers.

The postulate to distinguish religious tourism from spiritual tourism (another, albeit misleading term for pilgrimages) proves to be useful. The former is objective, the latter subjective. Rather, spiritual tourism should be combined with sustainable development. This brings us back to spirituality as a unique aspect of pilgrimage, which does not allow for the simple identification of pilgrimages with religious tourism. A good way to protect the spiritual character of a pilgrimage and to promote the spiritual motivation for it at the same time is a walking pilgrimage. The Kumano Kodo pilgrimage route on foot in Japan is an excellent example of sustainable spiritual tourism. It is consciously emphasized that it is a form of hiking tourism that is conducive to thought and reflection. Spirituality is treated here as the main motif of the journey and not only as an accompanying element (Kato and Prozano 2017: 248 – 250).

According to some, such an approach is typical of postmodernism, manifested, among other things, by challenging existing theories (Collins-Kreiner 2010a: 442). An objective approach to the phenomenon of pilgrimages situates most of the research in the area of tourism (hence the identification of pilgrimage with religious tourism). The subjective approach shifts research to the area of spirituality, theology and religion, which results in the postulate to radically distinguish pilgrimage from tourism, including religious tourism. According to Collins-Kreiner, although the literature on pilgrimages and religious tourism is still fragmented and lacks synthesis and holistic conceptualization, a common theme seems to have been found – the point of view of tourism (Collins-Kreiner 2010b: 445). In the context of what has already been said above, it is hard to agree with the part of the statement in which the author positions pilgrimage in the area of tourism with satisfaction. In our opinion, the case is not settled (Alecú 2010: 60). Such an approach naturally removes from the field of research the spiritual, subjective and internal element, which was and remains the criterion for distinguishing pilgrimage as a separate phenomenon, and clearly decides about this distinctness. "... Spirituality – like the moral sphere – exists only in the world of people. It is this extraordinary sphere, thanks to which a man can ask himself a question about his own secret and understand himself. Spirituality, then, is a kind of superintelligence. It is a man's ability to ask himself where he comes from, who he is and where he is going to. As a consequence, spirituality can become a central system for managing our lives. Until an individual develops the spiritual sphere, i.e. understands the meaning of his or her own existence, he or she cannot take a mature attitude towards himself or herself, towards his or her own life and towards the world around him or her. No one can take a conscious and prudent attitude towards a reality he does not understand" (Borowska 2012: 23). Sustainability of pilgrimage tourism is to reduce the harmful effects of the tourism industry and intensify spiritual experiences (Chairman and Singh 2014: 5). Finally, one should agree with the suggestion made by Johann Hirsch who, already in 2005, called for a fourth pillar of sustainable development – religion, possibly spirituality – to be taken into account in addition to the three pillars of ecology, society, and economy (Hirsch 2005: 13 – 14).

CONCLUSION

The article attempts to present pilgrimage as a promising and most credible ally of the sustainable development principle and to justify this view. This positive potential of the pilgrimage comes primarily from the motivation that the source and purpose of creation is situated in transcendence, thus offering the strongest possible justification for the need to care for the environment. The analyses carried out in this article lead to the following important conclusions:

1. The principle of sustainable development, although right in its assumptions, is proving ineffective in practice. Initially formulating the most important postulates related to environmental protection, the principle has been transformed into a rather vague and general norm, thus exposing it to the danger of constant breaking and ignoring. Trying to defend this principle through its jurisprudence also turns out to be a way out of nowhere, as the ethical aspect is not taken into account in this case (the legal norm is of interest to the majority not because of the values it upholds, but because of the sanctions that threaten to be imposed for non-compliance with it).

2. Tourism as one of the primary forms of migration and as a seemingly natural ally of the principle of sustainable development also turns out to be a field where this principle is resisted because of conflicts of interest. Over time, the demand to promote and support sustainable tourism has become only a form of a profit-driven promotional campaign for specific tourism products.

3. Because of the religious (ideological) motif of care for the natural and social environment, and because of the postulated restraint and self-restraint in relation to the material and economic aspect that dominates in other areas of human activity, the pilgrimage turns out to be the most promising way of preserving the integrity of the above-mentioned environments, and thus the most effective model and means of implementing the principle of sustainable development in its original intention.

4. The analyses carried out in the article may contribute to a wider discussion on spirituality, neglected in diagnosing contemporary society, which is more widely demanded by researchers of selected scientific disciplines, especially philosophy, pedagogy, sociology, psychology, and theology.

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