

STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BAIKAL REGION: PROBLEMS, CONTRADICTIONS, WAYS FOR IMPROVEMENT

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Abstract: The viability of any region depends on its capacity to implement the developmental strategy that is aligned with the environmental capabilities, specifics of its location and its culture. In reality, the values pursued by authorities and business go in direct confrontation with the moral imperatives of sustainable development. Lake Baikal is a unique natural sight in the Baikal region, and its uniqueness predetermines certain challenges and visions for the development and implementation of a strategy for sustainable development of the region that should accommodate regional, national and global interests. Transition to sustainable development requires revision of the core values that form the foundation of our society towards recognition of the primacy and respect of the socio-cultural values.

Keywords: sustainable development, the Baikal region, strategic planning, strategic regional development, core values, eco-efficiency, environmental justice, environmental ethics.

1 Introduction

Regional sustainable development strategies are seen as coordination centers for the integration of environmental issues in decision making process, as well as for the identification and implementation of sustainable development priorities. Their significance and high value were recognized three decades ago. The main aim of sustainable development strategies is to translate words into action that will help countries to get on the path of sustainable development and keep pace with the times. The strategies make it possible to identify legislative and institutional mechanisms for implementing sustainable development goals.

There are no common or standard models for an effective sustainable development strategy, since sustainable development institutions, capabilities and priorities are defined individually in each region based on a combination of subjective and objective factors. In this connection, each region should independently determine, develop and implement strategies for achieving its sustainable development goals. It is necessary to determine the best approaches to planning and implementing a sustainable development strategy depending upon the prevailing political, historical, economic, socio-cultural and environmental circumstances.

Geographical and geopolitical location of the Baikal region, its natural, resource, ethno-cultural, economic and workforce potential, and Lake Baikal make it one of the main strategic regions of Russia. Sustainable strategic development of the Baikal region as a unique and integral part of the Russian Federation requires a thorough elaboration of strategy with account of its high national and global importance.

2 Literature Review

In 1992, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the United Nations first called on all countries to make strategic and coordinated efforts for the purpose of sustainable development by defining their sustainable development strategies which the governments may use as an instrument to improve the efficiency of strategic decision making in favour of sustainable development (Agenda 21).

Society is now facing the need to fundamentally rethink the very concept of sustainable development. The renowned Russian philosopher A.D. Ursul (2018) rightly notes: "It is hardly right to believe that the sought concept of sustainable development has already been created and the only problem left is its implementation" (p. 97). Theoretical incompleteness and philosophical crudity of the official concept of sustainable

development is one of the reasons why its implementation has not been successful for decades. The idea of sustainable development originated as a result of reflection on the environmental issues. "In its broadest sense, a sustainable development strategy is intended to ensure harmony between people and between society and nature" (Our Common Future, 1987).

A.D. Ursul (1998) notes that the content of the sustainable development concept falls within the noosphere genesis concept suggested and validated by V.I. Vernadsky, and draws parallels between the harmonious development of nature and society with the relations between human and nature managed in a sensible way, and the transition of mankind to the sphere of mind. Orientation towards creation of the noosphere civilization gives a qualitatively new meaning to the idea of sustainable development, transforming the aspiration of mankind for the indefinitely long existence into the construction of civilization based on the principles of ecumanism, morality, spirituality and mind.

A.S. Astakhov, V.V. Bushuev and V.S. Golubev (2009) consider the sustainable development of the socio-natural system as a progress of society and a balance of the biosphere, and the sustainable development of society as its stable equilibrium state and the progress of its institutions. The degradation of nature as the reverse side of industrial production becomes a direct implication of social, economic and political development. A different prioritization, fair distribution of profits and responsibilities are unrealistic in the current economic practice. Next after nature, the social and political institutions that are losing viability will fall victim to the culture of consumption. U. Beck (1992) comes to the conclusion of inevitability of economic, environmental and social problems with the current development imperatives.

According to A.G. Antipyev and K.A. Antipyev (2014), modernization of economy and society should be based primarily on the effective use and development of human capital, which largely determines the effectiveness of reforms. In such approach, the way out of the current systemic crisis is seen in the transition to a new development model that integrates not only economic and political, but also sociocultural and moral factors. Scientists also point out that the root causes of the modern crisis lie in the socio-culture, in the distorted system of spiritual and moral values.

Professor V.V. Mantatov (2007) believes that the Baikal region may assume a leading role in implementation of a sustainable development strategy should the proper conditions be created to embrace its ethical and environmental potential as a comparative advantage in the process of civilizational transformation. A.P. Sukhodolov (2010) notes that the Baikal region, which has national and international importance, can become the world's model territory to test the methodology and mechanisms of sustainable development. The obtained experience may then be applied in other no less unique regions of the world.

As the core values of sustainable development of the Baikal region, V.V. Mantatov (2007) names: the awe of life, the immanent value of biosphere and its components, non-violence as the only way to well-being. When making decisions on Lake Baikal the following guiding principles should be used: axiological approach in the development of a sustainable development program for the Baikal natural territory; promotion of the esthetic (not consumer) attitude to the Baikal nature and maximized non-competitive use of its natural wealth; maintaining stability of the Lake Baikal ecosystem, rather than spreading the myth about "the growing economy"; in discussion of the Baikal issues, the value judgments are to be made first, with precedence over the quantitative ones: figures have no worth outside the value context (Mantatova & Protasov, 2015, p. 29).

3 Research Methodological Framework

The purpose of this study was to identify current contradictions and prospects for sustainable development of the Baikal region and find ways to improve the regional development strategy. The objectives were: (a) to identify the main challenges and factors impacting the strategic development of the Baikal region, (b) to identify possible ways and tools for improving the regional strategy of sustainable development.

Due to the complexity of the problem under exploration the dialectical method was chosen as a key method to comprehend integrity of a multidimensional structure. Dialectics as the basis for understanding the nature of contradictions between material and non-material, social and natural, helps to reveal the deep interrelatedness and interdependence of opposed socio-economic and environmental interests associated with the development of the Baikal region. The systematic-axiological approach helps to identify the sources of problems in social and economic development, and to consider the current regional development tasks in conjunction with national and international development goals.

4 Results and Discussion

There are several factors behind the peculiarities and nature of strategic development of the Baikal region. Firstly, this is the natural and resource potential, which is the basis for socio-economic development of the Baikal region. In addition to the rich abundance of virtually all kinds of natural resources in the region, it is important to stress the general natural and recreational potential. The region's natural ecosystems undisturbed by human interference are of profound importance.

Secondly, the geopolitical factor. The Baikal region is located at the intersection of all the world's major axes. "A special formation emerged here, characterized by the interaction between the western and eastern civilization" (Saktoev et al., 2015, p. 69). From the point of view of strategic importance, the Baikal region as a part of the Russian-Chinese transboundary area is of great importance for sustainable development of Russia as a whole, allowing to pursue geopolitical interests and thus ensure national security, attract national and cross-border corporations to the Baikal region and promote national interests in the international arena (Andreev, 2009).

Thirdly, another positive factor and potential resource for the development of the region is its multi-ethnic composition. Various ethnic communities reside in the region. The culture of the Baikal region has deep roots in the ethnocultural traditions of its indigenous population, which has developed a coherent ecological worldview. The revival of the ecological, cultural, ethical and environmental traditions of the indigenous population is the most important premise for the sustainable environmental development of the Baikal region.

The major problems faced by the Baikal region at the current stage of its development are as follows:

1. Disregard of the decisions of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, the results of researches and positive foreign experience in creating regional development programs and models;
2. Disagreement in the public administration system as a result of contradictions between the interests of different institutions (between federal and regional authorities, between different ministries and agencies of the same level, etc.);
3. Low environmental consciousness among people, including representatives of authorities and business; according to the sociological study "Environmental Attitudes of Youth in the Republic of Buryatia", urban youth have underdeveloped ethical and environmental attitudes and skills (Mantatov & Mantatova, 2015);
4. Imbalance between economic interests and environmental constraints;

5. Disregard of the relationship between regulatory and structural elements of the process of sustainable development institutionalization. Legislative norms adopted without due regard for the peculiarities of the target environment (cultural, socio-economic, educational, etc.) do not facilitate positive changes in the current environmental situation;
6. Ineffective legal regulation mechanism implying creation of a system of incentives for compliance and a system of penalties for non-compliance with the prescribed norms. (Gunzenova, 2016).

When analyzing attempts to solve the "Baikal problem" over the last few decades, some conclusions can be drawn. First, the taken decisions spurred the development of the region's economy for the benefit of the entire country, but to the detriment of the lake ecosystem, the balance between ecology and economy is possible only subject to the widespread introduction of science-intensive technologies. Second, it has been proven that the solution of environmental problems hinges on the development of legal and economic mechanisms for nature management, previously the environmental problems were tackled mostly based on prohibitions. Third, involvement of international organizations to find solutions to the environmental problems of Lake Baikal, as the territory belonging to the world natural heritage, remains mostly declarative (Environmental problems in the Lake Baikal basin and the role of "green economy" in their solution, 2013). And most importantly, it is impossible to address the Baikal problems without transformation in the consumer mentality of the Baikal region residents.

The humanitarian aspect of sustainable development is to unleash the spiritual and creative potential of the people (and each individual), as well as to create a socially oriented framework of environmental management. As was repeatedly highlighted by V.I. Vernadsky, a creator of the Noosphere Theory, "everything starts from the human personality", and to a great extent, the global sustainable development is contingent upon raising highly moral and creative individuals capable of solving complex problems of modernity. (Saktoev & Mantatov, 2010). The creation of an advanced education system is conducive to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities corresponding to environmental and ethical standards of development.

Environment preservation and rational use of natural resources to a huge extent rely on high environmental culture of population achieved through a system of universal, continuous environmental education and upbringing. High environmental culture of population is one of the necessary preconditions for the balanced socio-economic development of the Baikal region. Thus, high environmental awareness and environmental culture should become the pillars for the sustainable development of the Baikal region. There is a need to change a vector of spiritual values towards respect for and considerate attitude to nature. Education in the field of sustainable development is an effective socially oriented technology for building a safe and healthy future (Solominskaya, 2017).

The core value underpinning strategic sustainable development of the Baikal region may become the idea of co-evolution. The most important tools to put this idea in motion are the environmental ethics and environmental education. The major aim of environmental ethics is to build in the society a system of guiding value attitudes central to the harmonious relationship between human and nature (Mantatova, 2004).

The historical practice of nature protection shows that it is impossible to solve the problems of strategic development using only an environmental approach. The main drawback of this approach is that it attempts to address environmental problems without account of socio-cultural context. Therefore, it becomes necessary to seek for ways to reconcile the values dominant in the society and the actual environmental and economic situation through co-evolution of human and nature. The issues of strategic sustainable development should be viewed not only

through the prism of environmental and economic parameters, but also with reference to values. Sustainable development is only achievable as a roll-out of the core values and intrinsic potential of the society, and here the revival of spiritual values, ecological and ethnocultural traditions of the people is of utmost importance. Public consciousness is objectively prime and determines the level, structure and the whole essence of society's existence. In its turn, the consciousness of society, its economic mentality, its relationship with nature, its overall economic behavior, how rationally it uses the natural resources and the natural environment, and finally, management of life processes fully depend on the culture, spirituality, morality and intellectual development of society (Drozdovsky et al., 1999).

Eco-efficiency can be used as one of the key criteria for strategic planning.

The concept of eco-efficiency is related to the assessment of relevance of the planning and strategic documents of the state to the ideas of sustainable development. This concept is conducive to finding a balance between economic interests and preservation of nature.

There are two possible applications of the eco-efficiency concept: for assessing the state's action toward socio-natural development and in relation to activities of individual enterprises (Korotkov & Trubyanov, 2014). Thus, two aspects of eco-efficiency can be distinguished, political and economic.

Economic aspect of the eco-efficiency concept is related to reduction of potential costs of the enterprise achieved through a competitive advantage of sustainable production. Eco-efficiency is possible in the production of competitive goods and services that fully accommodate the needs of population, and have a positive impact on the quality of life amidst gradual curtailing of resource consumption and of negative impact on the environment, which should be minimized to the level when our planet restores its capacity to overcome such impacts on its own (Eco-Efficiency Learning Module, 2019). In this case, it can be asserted that the concept of eco-efficiency from the economic perspective is a fleshed-out idea of sustainable development in relation to economic actors in public domain.

Political aspect of eco-efficiency is quantifiable and facilitates detection of imbalances in a certain system, while determining the benefits and effectiveness of various methods used for regulation and management of socio-natural development. Eco-efficiency as a tool, first, is useful for assessing the effectiveness of state regulation of issues concerning socio-natural relations, and secondly, allows to carry out a comparative analysis of the success of various approaches to confront the problems of environmental pollution and degraded quality of life (Methodology, 2018). Quantitative metrics developed under this concept are an effective framework for tracking trends in the quality of state policy for environment protection.

The concept of environmental justice implies curtailed impact on the environment through respect for nature; promotes cultivation of thinking and a worldview of relevant sustainable development; regulates relations between government and business; encourages the development of high-tech industries and, in general, induces the economy's turn to a path of innovation-based development. The concept of eco-efficiency provides an opportunity to translate the idea of sustainable development into action using various tools and assessment methods that make it possible to regulate economic practices and at the same time minimize impact on the environment.

5 Conclusion

The prospects of the Baikal region to become an environmental and ethical model of sustainable development, among other reasons, emanate from the fact that this region possesses a wealth of environmental and ethical, cultural and historical traditions related to the moral imperative of sustainable development. The task is to build an ethically and legally solid strategy of national share responsibility for protection of Lake

Baikal and sustainable development of the Baikal region. The lack of an effective strategy for sustainable development of the Baikal region impedes the full use of potential and advantages of the transboundary territory. In light of the factors mentioned above, the core values that will provide a solid foundation for building a rational and effective sustainable development strategy for the Baikal region should be clearly defined.

As follows from the axiology of sustainable development, economic growth makes sense and is justified only if it promotes social justice and satisfies the vital needs of all segments of the population. The concept of sustainable development extends the principle of justice to future generations. Social and environmental justice (as well as recognition of nature's rights) as a compilation of principles governing development of the modern civilization sets a direction for the development of society and nature. Implementation of the environmental justice principles is closely linked to law enforcement, economic and social institutions and consists in fair distribution of resources, equitable economic development and just relationship between human and nature. The development of harmonious relations between nature and society is impossible unless environmental justice gets underpinned with a holistic theoretical framework that finds its practical application.

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