

MAREK KAZIMIERCZAK
University School of Physical Education, Poznań, Poland

CODE OF ETHICS FOR TOURISM

Key words: ethics, ethics code, tourism, sustainable development.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to define the function and meaning of the ethics code for tourism. It assumes that survival and development of tourism are connected with the moral level of tourist subjects and realization of the idea of sustainable development in tourism. The author tries to justify the thesis that sustainable tourism should rest on ethical foundations. The discourse between the adherents and opponents of codified norms has been transferred into the debate on ethics codes in tourism. There is evident lack of representative data based on measurable parameters which would enable drawing general conclusions about the influence of ethics codes in tourism. However, an analysis of the existing data should induce further intensive empirical social research. The paper concludes with a presentation of the characteristics of the Global Ethics Code for Tourism which has been regarded as an ethical signpost for sustainable development in tourism.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF GLOBALIZATION OF TOURISM

The process of globalization can be seen in the area of tourism as unification of tourism consumption, tourist lifestyles and communications. This process is deep and has ambiguous meanings. In the social and cultural dimension it means strengthening of solidarity and regional, international, ethnic and religious identities. On the other hand, it leads to fragmentation of life, ethical and cognitive relativism, and continuing disintegration of the social space. Social inequalities and income diversity also appear in tourism, where the increasing distance between "global tourist elite" and the "locals" can be observed. The latter have generally fewer possibilities to profit by being the hosts of areas visited by tourists. They are often forced to migrate to seek better living conditions in more friendly and safer places. The process of migration also affects those whose places of living are richer and safer. They are constantly forced to emigrate seeking new forms of professional activities [7].

Globalization tendencies, examples of which we could find in the distant past, indicate technological transfer on a large scale. In the financial sphere the far-reaching economic connections of big tourism companies are accompanied by a multitude of exchange transactions and transfers. In the media and information industry, tourist marketing and advertisement stimulate different forms of tourist activities, promoting the latest trends. All the above transactions and correlations have been changing the shape of contemporary tourism [1].

In the times when the global tourism industry has become the unquestionable fact, the ethical discourse on problems deriving from complicated social relations in tourism has found its place the idea of sustainable development so crucial to the tourist industry.

The concept of sustainable tourism forms a part of the more general idea of sustainable development and is realized in several basic fields. In the area of ecology, it is concerned with activities directed to preserve the natural environment. Ecological sustaining of the natural environment also

includes elements of local culture, and often means getting economic benefits from tourism for local communities. In the long term it means preserving the natural resources. In the economic dimension it means integration and cooperation between tourism and functioning regional economies, which are supposed to ensure fair distributions of benefits and expenses of tourism. In the social and cultural fields sustainable tourism is connected with integration of tourism with the local and regional culture. It is a strategy providing proper living conditions for local populations and developing tourist projects which will limit any negative social consequences [8].

Sustainable tourism has a great deal in common with the model of environmentally friendly responsible tourism. Following the rules of sustainable tourism is the responsibility of governmental and non-governmental organizations, people working in the tourist industry, the international community and tourists themselves. The responsibility, especially in the ethical aspect, should be shared by all these subjects.

Changes in the consumers' lifestyles and habits as well as a new estimation of the hierarchy of needs are crucial in the realization of the idea of sustainable development in tourism. The crisis of ethical values concerns not only modern society but also the whole area of tourism. One of the manifestations of the crisis is promotion of extreme consumption, which is an integral part of modern economy, often absent in poor countries. This radical version of pursuit of happiness and other excitements is often hard to justify, and in its extreme interpretations it invalidates moral obligations. Higher values are treated as myths or relics of the past and become replaced by the logic of business. It is not difficult to find examples of this process in the economic exploitation of local populations in the Third World countries by the big tourist companies, which are persistent in gaining profits from tourist attractions.

The promotion of ethical foundations for sustainable tourism should be accompanied by a deep reflection on ethics in the tourist industry. Building moral responsibility of individual and collective subjects on the tourist market, supported with codified rules and detailed recommendations, can lead to realization of ethical purposes. Sustainable development in tourism in its social, economic, cultural and ecological dimensions will be a natural result of ethical behavior as well as natural motivation.

DISCUSSION ON ETHICS CODES

The debate on the purposefulness of ethics codes has been continuing for some time [5]. In arguments formulated by its adherents and opponents, we can find various justifications of controversial assumptions of ethical conditions and of the needs of recipients of such codes. On the one hand, the control and educational functions of ethical codes are emphasized, especially for the benefit of those who expect simple advice concerning everyday life and those who are not able to solve moral problems. On the other hand, ethics codes are criticized for dullness of personal responsibility, especially in reference to those who could refer to their inner moral sense and act according to the ethical code without one. In any view, the code recipients are not criticized for their ethical choices as they are considered to be "mature" enough to accept moral responsibility.

The adherents of ethics codes emphasize the need for them as the latter create beliefs and moral activities in their recipients. The codes are supposed to make uniform and influence individual and social patterns of behaviour, contribute to the establishment of moral awareness, avoid controversies in the comprehension of right and wrong, and eliminate insinuations and inaccuracies resulting from moral relativism.

For many people codified ethics becomes less abstractive and theoretical, and more practical and concrete. An ordinary man expects simple clues and advice concerning everyday life and he or she does not solve serious, moral problems using philosophical aspects. In this case an ethics code with its hints for proper behaviour makes the society's value system uniform.

The necessity to formulate ethics codes derives from relations among employees, for example, in a tourist company. Professional ethics codes have a positive impact on the employees' honesty and conscience. Accepted ethics codes can help limit or even eliminate evading and violating regulations, which could bring harm to the entire working environment of a tourist company. In this case an ethics code provides a feeling of comfort and exclusivity. Formalization of ethical rules of behaviour of certain professional groups is supposed to help develop employees' professional identity, moral standards and personality. It can help regulate relations within the group according to the spirit of solidarity, mutual assistance, kindness and defining common values for employees. It is considered important that the codes define the limits of deviation from the universal standards. An ethical

code becomes a kind of Decalogue, which one should refer to in moments of uncertainty and hopelessness. A significant and pragmatic argument put forward by the adherents of ethics codes is that the codes should be promoted, because our life becomes brutal and degraded in its ethical dimension.

On the other hand, the critics of ethics codes claim that the universal ethical rules, along with formalized professional pragmatics, are enough to develop an ethical model of behaviour. They doubt whether complicated ethical regulations included in the codes can increase the moral responsibility of individuals. In their opinion urging professional ethics will not replace the impact of traditional ethical systems or acting according to the primal moral impulse. Replacing morality by ethics codes leads to replacing morality by ethics, moral responsibility by conformity, and autonomy by heteronomy [2].

From the standpoint of the opponents of ethical codification, morality is reflective and, unlike the contents of ethical codes, based on the foundation that the world of values and obligations can be changed into a well-ordered and readable instruction of moral behaviour. It seems to be at odds with one of the basic foundations of ethics – its legally unnormalized character. “A morally unambiguous situation is utopian” [2]. Codified professional ethics cannot avoid manipulations of social engineering nature. It is supposed to derive from the disinterestedness of moral behaviour.

Doubts concerning the necessity of creating ethics codes, formulated also in relation to the tourist branch, are supported by the belief that they threaten individual moral responsibility and self-determination. Among the controversies which result from the attempts to reach a consensus in the field of universal values (present in ethics codes), moderate optimism of tourism reformers can be noted. These reformers seek opportunities to improve the image of tourism by way of global codified regulations. The existing global relations in the areas of economy, culture, society and tourism can be a proof of that.

WHAT ETHICS CODE FOR TOURISM?

If we accept the fact of the world uniformization, then the creation of a global ethics code will be its natural consequence. Will it bring moral development not only in individual behavior? No explicit answers to this question have been available. This question refers to the moral sensibility of people and their moral level, which is created

by all of us for the whole of our lives. Many factors influence our moral behavior, e.g. educational values, our relations with the surrounding world and our life experience. Until now the simple relation: the lower morality level, the bigger need for an ethical code, perceived as a kind of beacon for the lost ones, seems to prove correct. On the higher level, it may be only a kind of test used to specify ethical self-awareness. In both cases the presence of an ethics code is justified. Empirical studies on the level of moral awareness of managers showed that the higher level of education was linked to taking well-considered moral decisions. In consequence, those who can recognize and solve ethical dilemmas in a particular way are able to advance ethical actions.

The study of selected tourist codes leads to an observation that their main principles concentrate on the realization of individual and collective aims, leading to an increase in the level of moral behaviour and achievement of ethical standards established by the company [4]. The company takes care of its surroundings and its employees should know that the company acts according to certain ethical principles. The ethical codes are mainly based on formulated recommendations (instructions), prohibitions and regulations supported by deontological ethics. They appeal to the conscience and individual moral awareness of tourists and employees of the tourist industry. They should also include ethical consequences of marketing and advertisement in tourism. The ethical criteria used in that case should include honesty (telling the truth) in order not to expose the employees to trouble, or a potentially life-threatening situation.

By providing reliable information we respect the dignity of our potential customers. In the professional literature there are no representative data based on measurable parameters, which could enable us to formulate more general conclusions on the range and effects of ethics codes in tourism, and in consequence, to estimate their practical effectiveness in shaping the employees' moral behaviour. This analysis should lead to deeper empirical and social studies into this matter. From the point of view of tourism consumers, ethical behaviour is expressed by the purchase of a tourist offer. Mature consumers need more information in order to become aware of their maturity. Very rarely tourists are asked about the motives of their trips in the ethical context. For many of them morality means inner attitude and an accepted value system, which is not a recognizable part of the tourist product. Ethics in tourism needs transparency, complete information and fulfillment of the basic conditions

by organizers of tourist activities [3].

Confrontation with the reality and the ethical state of modern tourism led to establishment of the Global Ethics Code for Tourism in 1999. The contents of the Code differ from other codes. The text of the code should be regarded as a collective work of authors from 138 states and territories belonging to the WTO. The document differs from the other ethics codes in tourism in terms of formulation of articles, its postulation character, but first of all the estimated range of the code's influence.

The Code presents the rules of actions which should be undertaken by the governments, local authorities, tour operators, tourist branch investors, tourist agents, and other employees and tourists themselves. The Code is supposed to be a model for other ethics codes in tourism, which should include detailed and local regulations concerning tourism. It supports the idea of sustainable development in tourism in the spirit of agreement, peace and respect for human rights.

The authors of the Code do not consider this document completely finished. Their intention is to begin a debate on its improvement and future shape. They anticipate that gathering opinions about the code from over the world can result in introduction of possible amendments and supplements.

The WTO assembly suggested non-obligatory acceptance of rules formulated in the Code and using them as a basis for local regulations. A special Committee was set to collect opinions and edit the final version of the code. The Committee also provides for possibility of measures against violations of the Code.

The Global Ethics Code for Tourism focuses on the main problems of contemporary tourism. It can be regarded as one of the forerunners of global ethics in tourism, and as a return to the moral foundations of the industry. It also shows how long it takes to realize the assumptions of the Code. It contains ten postulates and 50 articles concerning the most important aspects of tourist activity, and touches upon relations between tourists and local communities, economic activities, problems of the natural environment and protection of cultural heritage.

The Code indicates numerous moral problems connected with and specific to tourism such as abuse of the rights of employees in the tourist sector, destruction of the natural environment, "tourist neocolonialism" and sex tourism. It stresses that tourism should not become a discriminatory factor, particularly in terms of human exploitation threatening the fundamental human rights. Human

exploitation includes proliferation of sex tourism, present mainly in the Third World countries. The Code calls for a fight with the problem and appeals to eliminate this pathology with all means necessary by cooperation of the interested parties.

The Code points out to dangerous transformations that cause the destruction of tradition and disregard of artistic, archaeological and cultural heritage of mankind. The Code appeals for a persistent search for resources to protect natural heritage as a gift for all generations. It admits that promoters of tourism should accept certain limitations that allow better preservation of the natural environment. The document propagates ecotourism. Finally, it makes an appeal to all subjects involved in tourism: state governments, businessmen, international organizations including the United Nations and tourists themselves to "comply with its decisions". The Global Ethics Code for tourism in its contents and range goes beyond the problems described in traditional ethics codes. The ethical questions in tourism are defined in a wider way. The authors of the Code assumed that it was not enough to simply enumerate the kinds of threats in tourism or patterns of bad behaviour. The Code is about something more; it is about raising awareness and understanding behind the formulated advice and appeals. It gives a stimulus to moral thoughts and creates opportunities to see the problems of tourism worldwide in a wider perspective.

In its appeal to the consciousness and responsibility of tourist subjects (for example, in the care for the cultural and natural environment) the Code is an important weapon in the fight against unethical attitudes and activities in tourism. The awareness and responsibility propagated by the Code cannot (and should not) be only based on appeals. The Code encourages developing responsibility by way of rational education. We know that unethical behaviour often results from the unawareness of the effects it can cause, and therefore, it is important to realize the scale of danger and irreversible harms caused by irresponsible tourism in the process of tourist education. All the subjects in tourism should have a possibility to get to know the consequences of unethical behaviour of individuals or institutions. The educational effort to promote alternative, pro-ethical behaviour should concern these subjects that get the most material profits from tourism.

It is not enough to comply with ethical rules in tourism by merely formulating their ethical foundations (although it is a significant starting point). Practical ethics of travel requires building bridges between abstract and theoretical founda-

tions of tourism axiology and concretization of tourist events and activities. The only and elementary measure for consciously and ethically responsible tourism will be its sustainable character. In the tourist branch we deal with unexpected feedback of business and management ethics, as well as ecological ethics and social justice ethics. All of them are parts of a larger system. Their rules, introduced in tourism, require relations with the global ethics, responsibility for the future generations and explanation of the need of common good for humanity [6]. The Global Ethic Code for Tourism is one of the conditions. As a new imperative, it applies not only to individual behaviour but also social policies. It is important because no other former ethical system focuses on the global conditions of human life.

The strength of the Code lies not only in its contribution to the already codified human rights, but in its concretization of the tourist reality. Complying with the rules of the Code requires discipline from each of us, which cannot be simply enforced by sanctions and restrictions suggested by the authors of the Code. Time will show if the acceptance of common rules and instructions becomes the basis for dialogue and positive solutions of ethical problems in tourism. The authors of the code base their assumptions on human dignity, i.e. on the undeniable rights of European religious,

cultural and legal heritage. In this way the Code defines man's humanistic and creative vocation.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bauman Z., *Moralne obowiązki, etyczne zasady* (Moral obligations, ethical principles), *Etyka*, 1994, 27: p. 24.
- [2] Bauman Z., *Etyka ponowoczesna* (Postmodern Ethics), PWN, Warszawa, 1996, p. 23.
- [3] Baumgarten Ch., *Tourismus als Standortfaktor im österreichischen Tourismus*, (in:) *Tourismsforum*, 2002 der Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, Baden, 2002.
- [4] Fennell D., Malloy A, Cruise D., *Codes of ethics and tourism: An exploratory content analysis*, *Tourism Management*, 1998, Vol. 19, 5: 453-461.
- [5] Friedl H., *Tourismusethik* (The ethics of tourism), Profil-Verlag, Munchen-Wien, 2002.
- [6] Jonas H., *Zasada odpowiedzialności* (The Imperative of Responsibility), Platan, Kraków 1996.
- [7] Kazimierczak M., *O filozoficznym wymiarze turystyki* (On the philosophical dimension of tourism), *Roczniki Naukowe AWF*, 2003, 52: 151-161.
- [8] Kazimierczak M., *Turystyka w etycznej perspektywie* (Tourism in ethical perspective), *Roczniki Naukowe AWF*, 2003, 52: 143-151.