

## Anthropological Perspective on the Decision-Making Process in Environmental Protection

### Antropologiczna perspektywa procesu decyzyjnego w ochronie środowiska

**Grzegorz Embros**

Institute of Philosophy, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0861-6291> • [g.embros@uksw.edu.pl](mailto:g.embros@uksw.edu.pl)

Received: 02 June 2020; Revised: 08 Sep 2020; Accepted: 20 Sep 2020

**Abstract:** The systemic perspective on environmental action adopted in the paper, allows in this thematic area, issues related to the decision-making process. Due to the current crisis affecting human-environment relationships, these issues call for special attention and specific solutions. Against this backdrop, the paper draws on selected patterns, which constitute a point of reference in the formulation of the decision-making process, namely, the Deming Cycle, and the control system worked out by Marian Mazur. Among the manifold determinants of the decision-making process, special emphasis is put on the anthropological one, with reference to the approach proposed by Michał Gierycz. In turn, the idea of oikophilia, as presented by Roger Scruton, has been used as an exemplification of the discussed issues. More specifically, an attempt has been made to determine the influence of the adopted anthropological perspective on the shape and course of the decision-making process, which is the aim of the study. The paper analyses further how a defined profile of the performer, influences the structure and course of the decision-making process in environmental protection. The conducted analyses enable the formulation of a postulate, in order that the adopted vision of the decision-maker, should be treated as a point of reference in the design and construction of a methodology for environmental protection.

**Keywords:** anthropology, oikophilia, decision-making process, environmental protection

**Streszczenie:** Przyjęta w artykule systemowa perspektywa działań na rzecz ochrony środowiska, umożliwiła włączenie w ten obszar problemowy zagadnień związanych z procesem decyzyjnym. Obecny kryzys relacji pomiędzy człowiekiem i środowiskiem sprawia, że zagadnienia te wymagają szczególnej uwagi oraz konkretnych rozstrzygnięć. W tym kontekście przywołane zostały wybrane wzorce mogące stanowić punkt odniesienia przy formułowaniu procesu decyzyjnego – Cykl Deminga i system sterujący w propozycji Mariana Mazura. W pałęcie uwarunkowań procesu decyzyjnego, wyeksponowano determinantę antropologiczną. Przywołano tu ujęcie proponowane przez Michała Gierycza. Oikofilia w propozycji Rogera Scrutona została natomiast spożytkowana jako egzemplifikacja podejmowanych zagadnień. W szczególności podjęto próbę określenia wpływu przyjmowanej perspektywy antropologicznej na kształt i przebieg procesu decyzyjnego, co stanowi cel opracowania. Poddano analizie wpływ określonego profilu sprawcy czynu na strukturę i przebieg procesu decyzyjnego w ochronie środowiska. W konsekwencji prowadzonych analiz możliwe było sformułowanie postulatu traktowania przyjmowanej wizji decydenta jako punktu odniesienia przy projektowaniu i konstruowaniu metodyki postępowania w zakresie ochrony środowiska.

**Słowa kluczowe:** antropologia, oikofilia, proces decyzyjny, ochrona środowiska

## Introduction

One of the current challenges faced by humans in the Anthropocene era is to define, implement and improve action for environmental protection. The modus operandi adopted in this respect will have an impact on the way people act and relate to their environment. Considering the interdisciplinary character of environmental protection, the postulate of a systemic approach to the discussed issues seems possible and justified by this very character. A creative development of this approach may then lead to the development of a specific strategy, method, or finally, methodology. The systemic perspective can be short-term or long-term (historical). In the short-term perspective, the environmental protection system comprises various declarations, goals and tasks, current arrangements, and legal decisions, etc. On the other hand, the long-term perspective allows to trace the determinants of the decision-making process or studies related to the concept of man, which may provide a context (deepening of the systemic analysis) for analysing the short-term sources.

In such a perspective, the issue of the decision-making process in environmental protection comes to the fore, which makes it justified to undertake analyses of its structure or stages. In view of the above, the present paper begins with discussing the Deming Cycle<sup>1</sup> and the control system proposed by Marian Mazur. Attention is drawn to this process' determinants, among others, to its anthropological conditionings. A particular attempt has been made to evaluate the influence of the adopted anthropological perspective on the course of the decision-making process, which presents the purpose of this study. Oikophilia, as proposed by Roger Scruton is next presented as an example of the anthropological approach developed by Michał Gierycz. Finally, an attempt has been made to point

out that the performer's profile influences the structure and course of the decision-making process and that, consequently, it can constitute a point of reference in the design and construction of environmental protection methodology.

## 1. Systemic approach to environmental protection

The systemic approach to the human-environment relationship is based on the scheme incorporating the system and its surroundings. In this approach, the human being (decision-maker) who influences his surroundings will be indicated as a special case of the system. The surroundings are defined as "everything that is outside the system under consideration and which may affect it (external input of the system) or which may be influenced by a given system (external output of the system)" (Kempisty 1973, 291). The system interacts with the surroundings influencing and eventually, transforming them. The environment is perceived in its manifold aspects, as surroundings actively transformed by the system (Hull 2006, 107-108). In a broad sense, it comprises both natural and cultural components (e.g. science, technology, art, and religion) (Dołęga 2002, 7-8). In the present paper, the environment will be understood in the above-presented broad sense of the surroundings transformed by the system.

The adopted systemic perspective requires identifying a specific case of the system, whose impact has a risk-generating character and may cause a threat (destruction, degradation) to the environment. In other words, it is such an impact of the system on the environment which makes it necessary to protect that environment. Also, the very system itself presents a special case, since it uses environmental resources to begin processes leading to the regeneration of that environment. At the same time, this system can recognize (not only react, but also reflect) that its previous actions led to disturbances in the functioning of the environment or its

<sup>1</sup> Dedicated methodology in Environmental Management Systems – EMS.

components. The systemic approach allows to identify such a “special case” of the system which is characterized by so significant a degree and range of impact on its environment that it can damage its structure as well as disturb its properties and functions. In extreme cases, it can cause a complete destruction of this environment – excluding the possibility of restoring its structure, properties, or functions. In this perspective, it is justified to postulate highlighting humans (society) in relation to the environment that is transformed by them. As it seems, it is impossible in such a system to justify the need or necessity to protect the environment because of any other special case of the system apart from humans. At the same time, the feedback between the system and its surroundings (and then the environment), emphasized in the systemic approach, makes it possible to notice the influence of this environment on the system functioning in it. Degraded by people, the environment has in turn a degrading impact on people.<sup>2</sup>

In the systemic perspective, people are perceived as a special case of the system in the surroundings that they transform while creating their environment. The product of so positioned humanity will be an environmental protection system aimed at, among others, preserving the structure, properties and functions of systems influenced by human activity; shaping correct relations among those systems and their elements; maintaining an appropriate level of organization and order; maintaining the ability to regulate systems or counteracting loss of control and the ability to maintain those systems in a state of functional equilibrium. The above goals will also define the scope of tasks and activities undertaken for the protection of the environment; they will therefore allow to define the character of this protection.

Only *humans* can destroy the environment, but at the same time protect and care for it.

It seems justified to state that the systemic approach concentrates on protection of people in their environment or with protection of the environment for the sake of people functioning in it. Only humans can understand the importance of the discussed issue and besides giving it due consideration, react accordingly by taking adequate decisions or by intensifying activities aimed at reducing or eradicating threats. This fact implies that analyses concerning the decision-making process become the focal point of environmental protection, and that the vision adopted by people will have an impact on the characteristics and course of this process.

## 2. Integrating properties of the decision-making process

Currently popular among environmental protection specialists is the methodology of conduct within the environmental management system, based on the so-called “Deming Cycle”. The ISO 14001:2015 standard provides a recommendation as regards the systemic approach to environmental management as well as basing this system on the PDCA concept (model – in accordance with the provisions of Clause 0.4 of the Standard). This model “is an iterative process used by organizations to achieve continuous improvement. [It] can be briefly described as follows.

- Plan: establish the environmental goals and processes necessary to achieve results that are consistent with the organisation’s environmental policy.
- Do: implement the processes according to the plan
- Check: monitor and measure processes against the environmental policy, including commitments, environmental objectives and operational criteria specified by that policy, and report on the results.
- Act: take action for continuous improvement” (Clause 0.4 of the Standard).

<sup>2</sup> It is manifested in the form of the so-called diseases of civilization.

Formulated in the above way, the proposal seems to have a rather general character, and as such, it may give rise to some difficulties in case of specific issues. From the outset, the vague definition of planning and its attitude to the postulation of goals raises doubts. It is not obvious that planning can be equated with postulating goals, although any plans should be purposeful (Kotarbiński 1965, 177). Plans can be brought down to preparation consisting in description of activities envisaged in the intended action, as Marian Mazur wrote while presenting the principles and concepts of praxeology and conducting its criticism from the point of view of cybernetics (Mazur 1969, 83-96). It cannot be assumed that there must appear any additional elements necessary for the decision-making process at the planning stage (e.g. goal setting). It may, moreover, be risky to move directly from planning, or even from setting goals to implementing processes, and then only post factum "checking" the effects of undertaken actions.<sup>3</sup> Simple common experience prompts the existence of a stage in the decision-making process between postulation of goals and their implementation.

It should be noted at this point that the methodology of conduct proposed in ISO 14001:2015 basically fails to provide a stage which could comprise the issues that seem indispensable in the decision-making process. Especially, those crucial from the point of view of the determinants of the decision-making process. This problem concerns in particular the contextual factors which are among the recommendations of the Standard. Therefore, it may seem that the Standard recommends a methodology

that makes it difficult or, in extreme cases impossible, to implement its own recommendations. The indicated shortcomings of the proposed approach are of fundamental importance. They can have a negative impact on the entire decision-making process in its early stages. This, in my opinion, is the reason why necessary additions should be proposed in this regard.

The control system proposed by Marian Mazur, may provide a basis for clarifying or complementing the PDCA model. In this case, the system consists of the postulator, optimizer, and performer. It also takes into account their reciprocal dependencies and relations with the surroundings. The coupling between the optimizer (responsible for optimization processes) and the surroundings, allows to observe and modify the surroundings. The optimizer is also coupled with the postulator, i.e. the second element of the system responsible for goal setting. This coupling allows to determine interdependencies between the ways of action and goals. The postulator is linked in a feedback loop with the performer – an element of the system responsible for the implementation of goals indicated by the postulator. As a result of this coupling, it is possible to determine the interdependence between means and goals. The performer is coupled with the environment, by which he gains the ability to determine the means of modifying the environment and the feed (Mazur 1976, 102-103). The final stage of the decision-making process includes implementation of the goal indicated at the postulation stage based on a previously optimized decision, using the means specified by the performer (Embros 2010, 54-70). Referring to the control system, Mazur notes that "In this scheme it is noteworthy that optimization and implementation are coordinate processes in relation to postulation. In other words, not only ways and means are dependent on goals, and goals are dependent on ways and means, but through postulation, ways also depend on means, and means depend on ways" (Mazur

---

<sup>3</sup> Especially, as regards the specific character of activities for environmental protection. The iterative character of the PDCA methodology may raise special doubts here, particularly when it is understood as "trial and error" or learning from mistakes. It may prove to be problematic to reconcile such a methodology with the postulated goal of environmental management aimed at minimizing the environmental risk.

1976, 113). It should be emphasized here that the above-mentioned interdependencies are not so clearly marked (if they can be discerned at all) in the Deming Cycle.

The key stage allowing to incorporate the multifaceted nature of the subject of environmental protection, i.e. the interaction of humans with their surroundings – the environment) is the optimization stage. Mazur presents it in the following way: “There is a set goal to be achieved, it is necessary to define all the ways of conduct that can lead to this goal, recognize the side effects of each of them and on this basis indicate the optimal decision, i.e. the conduct leading to the goal and having the most favourable side effects (constituting the optimization criterion) [...]. Solving optimization problems means showing ways” (Mazur 1976, 102–103). It should be emphasized that the issue of optimization procedures is related to the issues raised in discussions on environmental risk (Beck 2002; Scruton 2017, 75–132).

Including Mazur’s proposal in the PDCA methodology allows to overcome the most serious problems in which it entangled the decision-making process. The unclear and methodically questionable stage of planning can be replaced by the postulation stage which is followed by the optimization stage. Thus, the decision-making process is complemented with an important stage which allows to comprise the manifold issues arising from the complex and multifaceted nature of environmental protection as well as the determinants of the decision-making process itself. At the same time, it incorporates various aspects, e.g. natural, technical, economic, or social, etc.

Optimization can be understood as a stage or moment in the decision-making process that allows to take into account the limitations of the decision maker himself, and thus the necessity of considering by him more than one context factor. By including the determinants of the decision-making process per se, optimization becomes a stage when it is possible to harmonize

or treat integrally the multiple elements of considered factors/aspects instead of identifying them. Thus, the proposed scheme of conduct has an integrating character. It facilitates methodological ordering of the structure, elements, or stages (and their mutual relations) of the decision-making process. Consequently, it allows to take an adequate approach to the material object of environmental protection as well as to the aspect in which it is viewed. The decision-making process gains a kind of “methodological protection” against isolationism, the problem of amalgamation (Gierycz 2017, 129–130) or against attempts to reduce a given problem to only one aspect and thus “inherit” a methodology characteristic of the discipline to which this aspect belongs. In this case, it is possible to consider many aspects within the framework of a strategy or methodology founded on the proposed model of conduct. The methodological issues emerging here call for a more detailed separate study.

The systemic approach to the decision-making process which, due to optimization, is open to various aspects, circumstances or contexts, allows to reveal determinants of this process, for example, praxeological, axiological and ethical ones (Embros 2016a, 101–127). The above may also include an anthropological reference, which allows to define the profile of the performer (decision maker). It has a diagnostic function allowing to disclose the anthropological (pre) assumptions relating to the concept of man, often implicitly ascribed to natural, legal and even technical issues (Lekka-Kowalik 2011, 429).

The decision-making process in environmental protection is not anthropologically neutral. On the one hand, the anthropological plane allows to define a vision of the human being and to construct and conduct an adequate decision-making process, on the other, it may lead to revealing visions of human nature, adopted as if in the background of the decision-making process.

### 3. Limited and unlimited anthropology

Michał Gierycz, referring to Thomas Sowell who represents two opposing sources of human vision, provides a description of limited and unlimited anthropology (Sowell 2007). The scientist reconstructs anthropology of an integrating character, which develops, in line with its own goals and in the perspective of the systemic paradigm, research techniques worked out within cultural, philosophical or theological anthropology.

Limited anthropology takes into account the twofold limitation of the human being. The “primary” one, related to imperfections resulting from human nature and the “secondary”, related to the mechanisms of controlling power which are aimed at preventing abuse (the check and balance system). In this approach, the limitation is founded on the constraint of the “primary” type. However, there remains here the question of a broad spectrum of human freedom, providing space for the person’s development and the realization of the common good. It is “human dignity that determines the objective, though possible to cross, boundaries of choices that can be considered truly human” (Gierycz 2017, 271).

Gierycz emphasizes that such a perspective allows humans to discover, with the help of reason, their own nature and behaviours proper to that nature, which contributes to an integral development of the human being. There is a shift of emphasis from the possibility of action (Is it possible to be done?) to the propriety of action (Is it allowed to do?). In this approach, boundaries are determined by human nature. They define “the proper space of human normality and freedom” (Gierycz 2017, 271). Gierycz notes further that in the presented trend of anthropology, “human ecology” understood as agathological defining of the boundaries of human activities, gains crucial importance. Due to their internal character, those boundaries, which are only secondarily social or legal, can be crossed by humans. However, “the consequence of crossing them constitutes

a form of dehumanization. In this sense, it is a limited anthropology: our humanity is bound with the existence of nature, which is moral rather than solely or even primarily physical” (Gierycz 2017, 271). Gierycz refers these issues to Spaemann’s standpoint presented in his book *Grenzen: Zur ethischen Dimension des Handelns (Limits: On the Ethical Dimension of Actions)* (Spaemann 2001, 95).

Limited anthropology finds its opposition in an ideal model of unlimited anthropology proposed by Sowell. This model includes a conviction harking back to Rousseau that human nature is free of any inherent limitations. This approach, characteristic of late modernity, in fact assumes the absence of any fixed aspects of human nature, including those rooted in biology. In such a case, any limitations are considered oppressive to human freedom (Gierycz 2017, 274). In this perspective, man is the highest being, an autocrat (Gierycz 2017, 276), and “anthropological limitlessness means lack of anthropological boundaries not so much in a practical or declarative, but in an ontological sense: it assumes that it is possible for humans to establish or push them themselves” (Gierycz 2017, 277).

The successes on the path of modernization and progress, along with the “apparent success of science and technology” (in the sense understood by Łepko 1998, 9-28), contributed to the emergence of conviction about human omnipotence, belief in people’s unlimited possibilities (with regard to the control over nature and wildlife or nature equated with wildlife). This conviction, which still happens to find its supporters, may lead to founding the decision-making process on unlimited anthropology.

Limited anthropology presents a human being who is aware of his limitations (boundaries) and in this light tries to understand and identify the determinants and conditions of the decision-making process. In other words, knowing their own deficits and limitations, humans try to increase the chances and effectiveness

of their action, taking into account the determinants of the decision-making process. Thus, this process involves considering the necessary aspects (people, making a choice, consider more than one issue) or contextual factors (to use the terminology of the ISO 14001 Standard). In this process, people consider the risk and the distribution of responsibility, including the consequences of decisions and actions in the context of their own, recognized limitations. Thus, it seems that limited anthropology constitutes an appropriate basis and corresponds to the challenges posed by the decision-maker by environmental protection founded on a systemic strategy.

In view of the above, the decision-maker's profile, defined and deepened at the anthropological level (with particular emphasis on limited anthropology), translates into the shape and course of the decision-making process in environmental protection. The fact of including the anthropological determinant will have a significant impact on the course of the decision-making process in general, and of the optimization stage in particular. The decision-making process carried out within the trend of limited or unlimited anthropology will result in specific activities constituting its final stages. It can be stated here that the exemplification and realization of the decision-making process in environmental protection carried out in the spirit of limited anthropology is oikophilia as proposed by Roger Scruton.

#### 4. Roger Scruton's idea of oikophilia

Oikophilia is pointed out by Scruton as the main motive for environmental activities. He defines it as love (affection and compassion) of one's own home and its surroundings. The multi-layered structure of this motif is closely related to human settlement. Thus, the success of activities for the environment is possible thanks to motivation arising from commonly shared love for a commonly shared place. Scruton writes, "I see the environmental problem as

arising from the loss of balance that occurs when people stop seeing their surroundings as a home" (Scruton 2017, 9). At the same time, he understands "home" as "the place where we are and that we share, the place that defines us, that we hold in trust for our descendants, and that we don't want to spoil." He emphasizes that "[...] nobody seems to have identified a motive more likely to serve the environmentalist cause than this one, of the shared love for our home. It is difficult [...] to imagine a motivation more for the cause of ecology than this – shared love for one's own home." He calls this motive (or rather a group of related motives) oikophilia, love for *oikos*, or the household (Scruton 2017, 30-31).

Oikophilia, according to Scruton, results from the need for a sense of security and from concern that we show for those who are under our care, but it also encompasses the entire human surroundings. "It is a call to responsibility, and a rebuke to calculation. It tells us to love, and not to use; to respect, and not to exploit" (Scruton 2017, 243). Oikophilia leads to a change of perspective – things in the "home landscape" become then perceived as persons, as ends in themselves, rather than means (Spaemann 2001). Oikophilia allows to preserve the motives of love, beauty, and respect for the sacred, which are important from the point of view of environmental protection (Scruton 2017, 243).

Scruton juxtaposes oikophilia with oikophobia emphasizing that the first presents the most easily obtained and renewable resource, positively influencing the environment. Its renewal is possible thanks to education that strengthens love for a given place, tradition, or community. According to Scruton, destruction of this attitude by, as he calls them, "advocates of multiculturalism" was one of the more serious acts of vandalism in the late twentieth century. It is, according to the author, "oikophobia of a vociferous and self-righteous kind" (Scruton 2017, 344).

In the systemic approach presented by Scruton, the following deserve special attention: investigating the deepest human motivations to act for environmental protection and revealing the key mechanisms for this activity. This is evident in the author's deliberations on the principles of precaution and resilience, bottom-up activity in relation to the environmental issue and homeostatic mechanisms characteristic of the proposed approach (Embros 2016b, 86-103).

Overcoming problems revealed in relation to the environmental question (such as: global warming, the problem of waste, pollution and hazards, the environmental risk, etc.) links Scruton with organizational solutions of a homeostatic nature. Their implementation is possible thanks to the systems "that correct themselves in response to destabilizing change. Markets are homeostatic systems; so too are traditions, customs and the common law; so too are families, and the 'civil associations' that make up the stuff of a free society" (Scruton 2017, 18-19). At other point, Scruton writes: "Civil associations are homeostatic systems, which usually recover from their own mistakes and return towards equilibrium when they are disturbed. Environmental problems arise largely because human purposes, pursued in a linear way, destroy homeostatic systems" (Scruton 2017, 40). He distinguishes between two approaches to environmental problems: in the first, politics is seen as a collective pursuit of an egalitarian goal, in the second, it is a free relationship between individuals, in which absent generations and modern hierarchies also share their place. Hence there are two types of affiliation: self-centred movements and civic associations, which constitute an end in themselves. The first type, according to Scruton, presents a threat to homeostasis, the latter is its form (Scruton 2017, 96).

Scruton highlights the feelings of territorial attachment that helped maintain the inherited social and ecological balance. Rejection of these feelings, according to the author, contributes to the increase of

entropy. Thus, "traditional communities deserve protection from sudden and externally engineered change, not merely for the sake of their sustainable economies, but also because of the values and loyalties that constitute the sum of their social capital" (Scruton 2017, 29-30).

The author of *Green Philosophy* sees global problems such as pollution, resource depletion and global warming. He realizes that they must be viewed at the international level and resolved under global treaties in which the interests of states will be put aside in favour of the planet as a whole. Scruton recognizes the demands made in this regard by radical environmentalists. In response to them, he points out that "in fact, it is oikophilia that offers us the best hope, on the global as much as the local level" (Scruton 2017, 273).

The above-outlined approaches translate into the mode of action. Some emphasize the precautionary principle, while others are guided by the principle of resilience. It is associated with the courage to take risks and bear responsibility or with an attempt to avoid them.

## 5. The principles of precaution and resilience

The precautionary principle assumes that if human actions involve a high risk of any negative effect, people should refrain from undertaking them. However, while in certain situations (nuclear power or geoengineering) such a principle can be justified, the author warns against extrapolating it to all human activities related to the environment. In fact, as Scruton notes, all our actions involve some kind of risk, so the precautionary principle is not rational (Scruton 2017, 105).

The author shows a critical attitude to the precautionary principle in relation to issues related to risk. Scruton points out that risk does not occur as a singular phenomenon at one specific moment or point in time. He points to risks analysis, which is characteristic of practical reasoning and which takes into account interrelations

between risks as well as their consequences, identification of unknowns, determination of probability or calculation of relative benefits and costs, etc. According to Scruton, the precautionary principle leads to separating individual types of risk as independent of each other. Reaction to such a risk, separated from other risks, may be a ban to take any activities. This may give rise to further risks, and the reaction to them will be governed by the same principle – “Not allowed!” (Scruton 2017, 109–110). In other words, the precautionary principle leads to the ban on taking a specific, identified risk and to the elimination of all other risks from sight. Scruton reminds that reducing specific risk to zero comes at the expense of increasing risk in all other areas.<sup>4</sup> He explains that such behaviour is a “convenient” and widely-practiced in administrative structures way of transferring risk not only to other areas of activity (departments), but also to other people (Scruton 2017, 110).

Scruton emphasizes that avoiding all risks can lead to a risky situation in which the society will not be able to survive a crisis whose only solution will involve risk-taking (Scruton 2017, 115). Thus, as he further writes about the precautionary principle “By forbidding everything it permits everything, and leaves us without clear instructions as to what we should do, to ensure that the risks are properly confronted” (Scruton 2017, 121). The ban on negotiating the terms of risk-taking deprives the decision-maker of the most important tool necessary to overcome it. The Scrutonian rational subject develops and gains resilience only when he is allowed and able to deal with risky situations. This also refers to duties, obligations or responsibilities related to such situations (Scruton 2017, 124). The author points to certain legal solutions that become an obstacle in risk-taking. Instead of contributing to creating a framework which

would allow to take risks and responsibility for actions, law “becomes a way of siphoning responsibility from society and transferring it to the impersonal state, where it can be safely dissolved and forgotten. As soon as there is the faintest suspicion of risk, the legislators will produce an edict designed to eliminate it” (Scruton 2017, 108). The above considerations lead the author to reveal the “risk-generating” nature of the precautionary principle.

A positive proposition in this context will be solutions assuming resilience which take into account adaptation mechanisms. It is related to the ability to develop resilience, to return to the original state after experiencing negative influences (Scruton 2017, 66–67). Scruton, noticing the embedment of risk in the decision-making process, writes: “rational decision-making means not avoiding risks, but choosing between them, and continuously adjusting in the face of new and unanticipated dangers” (Scruton 2017, 115–116). From the point of view of the present study, it is particularly important to emphasize after Scruton that “Environmental problems involve managing risk. This means assessing what can and what cannot be changed, the likelihood of adverse and beneficial consequences, and the agencies best suited to manage risk on our behalf” (Scruton 2017, 124–125).

## 6. Act performer's profile of the oikophile

Scruton defines man as a subject, a rational being acting in a specific place (oikos). An important role is assigned to settlement, which influences the development of people as persons. This is illustrated by the passage: “Virtues like thrift and cleanliness, the habit of offering and receiving respect, the orientation towards others that Jonas called the ‘feeling of responsibility’ – all those aspects of the human condition that feed into oikophilia and shape us as stewards and guardians of our common settlement – arise through our growth as persons[...]. To acquire these virtues we must circumscribe the ‘instrumental reasoning’ that governs

4 It is particularly noticeable in situations of global threats (e.g. pandemics, epidemics) and of a multifaceted character – which affect many areas of human life (economy, social phenomena, etc.).

the life of *homo economicus*. We must vest our love and desire in things to which we assign an intrinsic, rather than an instrumental worth, so that the pursuit of means can come to rest, for us, in a place of ends. That is what we mean by settlement” (Scruton 2017, 222).

Scruton recognizes and emphasizes the communal nature of man and defends “small-scale institutions of friendship against large-scale and purpose-driven campaigns” (Scruton 2017, 9). In this approach, the bottom-up activities of organized “little platoons” (reference to E. Burke) are possible only in communities that are locally rooted. Scruton postulates the need to combine the idea of values with people’s motivations. He emphasizes that the decision-making process is conditioned not only axiologically, but also ethically (morally) (Scruton 2017, 192).

The rules of the rational subject’s functioning should encourage him to adopt a strategy of resilience, and thus to take risks, and then responsibility for his actions (bear their costs) (Kiepas 1999, 189–206). This requires defining appropriate rules to prevent pathologizing key mechanisms of action. Therefore, the Scrutonian rational subject should possess knowledge, competences and skills adequate to the specific tasks, requirements or obligations prevailing in the environment. He uses these competences to formulate the methodology of conduct, to work out a decision-making process, strategies or specific instruments. Such a characteristics of the decision-maker inscribes itself in the range of competences pertaining to the systemic environmental protection. On the one hand, we are dealing here with the properties of systems (with particular emphasis on control – management), on the other hand, with their functions such as adaptation, stability and homeostasis. Properties and functions of systems allow to define the area of general and specific goals related to the decision-making process in environmental protection.

In the light of the above considerations, it can be concluded that the definition of a human being as an *oikophile*, broadened within the framework of limited anthropology, may constitute the basis for determining the character of the decision-maker. On the other hand, limited anthropology is an elaboration of the performer’s profile, i.e. of someone who fulfils the characteristics of the *oikophile* in Scruton’s proposal. Such clarification then influences the shape and course of the decision-making process. This should further translate into the effectiveness and efficiency of environmental protection activities. Therefore, it seems reasonable to put forward a thesis that the range of determinants of the decision-making process includes its embedment in the anthropological framework.

Limited anthropology makes it possible to elaborate and specify the profile of the decision maker or the performer within the characteristics of the *oikophile*.<sup>5</sup> In this case, aware of limitations, both his own and those resulting from the context, the decision-maker will be able to use the issues arising from them in the course of the decision-making process. The structure of such a process should provide a space for the determinants and context of the decision-making process. A special case of such a structure may be founded on a model based on Marian Mazur’s proposal of the control system. The optimization stage incorporated in such a structure allows to take into account issues resulting from the determinants of the decision-making process, context factors or a possibility to conduct risk analyses. This translates into the construction of an environmental protection matrix compatible with the environmental protection strategy developed on the basis of the systemic approach.

---

<sup>5</sup> An interesting continuation here could be an in-depth study referring to Wojtyła’s personalistic depiction of the person – the performer of the act (Wojtyła 2011).

The above differs from preferences as regards the structure, elements and course of the decision-making process, which apply to the decision-maker characterized within the trend of unlimited anthropology. In this case – the decision-maker “absolutely free from any limitations” will not see the need to consider certain issues in the decision-making process. He (or somebody from the outside) may at most arbitrarily decide to include or reject certain issues. The entire problem area of environmental protection may be reduced to or identified with its specific, e.g. economic, technical, and sometimes natural aspect. The decision-making process conducted within the framework of unlimited anthropology, in principle, does not require optimization procedures.<sup>6</sup> The method of operation is orientated here to the precautionary principle. At the same time, justification is provided for the expectation that the actions will be taken by someone else (e.g. the state, relevant services, environmental organizations, etc.). This arises from a desire to avoid the challenges associated with prudent decision-making, responsibility and readiness to take risk, which often leads to transferring responsibility, consequences, risk, and thus costs of actions onto others, with a view to ensuring that the necessity of moderation is avoided. In this case, the influence of the characterized perspective is also noticeable as regards the way of both constructing the decision-making process and adopting the concept of environmental protection different from the one presented above.

## Conclusion

Studies on issues related to environmental protection may sometimes lead to the conclusion that their authors seem not to be interested in what environmental protection is, but rather in key issues falling within its problem area. It may be assumed,

that they are similarly not interested in answering the question about the nature of the human being, the decision-maker and performer of the act. What is highlighted are problems faced by today’s society in relation to the environmental issue and the ways and means of solving these problems. However, it seems dubious whether it is possible to solve the indicated problems without specifying the profile of the decision maker. Without specifying environmental protection. In particular, without specifying the structure, elements or stages of the decision-making process in environmental protection. These doubts may lead to the formulation of a fundamental question, namely, whether the adopted type of anthropology will influence the structure of the decision-making process, consequently leading to obtaining a different concept of environmental protection? The analyses carried out in this article seem to lead to an affirmative answer to these questions and they locate the key issues in the anthropological and methodological areas.

The systemic perspective allows to reveal a homeostatic nature of oikophilia, which is realized through feedbacks and adaptive functions of systems. It is manifested in the bottom-up activity, carried out in the spirit of the resilience principle. It thus differs from global-scale activities carried out with reference to the precautionary principle.

The presented concept of oikophilia allows us to define the image of a human being, deepened on the level of anthropology, which subsequently influences the shape and course of the decision-making process. In a way, that image determines that process and leads to including specified conditions within its framework. Profiled in a defined way, the decision-maker will seek, prefer, design, and conduct an adequate decision-making process.

Approached in a systemic way, environmental protection with its characteristic material and formal subject allows to construct an appropriate action strategy (with an appropriate method or methodology). It

<sup>6</sup> Most often there remains a plan, or alternatively a postulation, and a transition to the implementation phase.

leads to a decision-making process which takes into account the limitations of the decision-maker as well as the limitations resulting from the context (internal and external factors) and the associated risks. It is consistent with the oikophilia proposed by Scruton and with the limited anthropology in the characteristics proposed by Gierycz.

Activities carried out as part of environmental protection may have a crisis-generating character. At the methodological level, it may be caused by lack of order as regards concepts, failure to determine the proper object (material and formal), upholding the reductionist paradigm, or by problems related to the structure, elements and course of the decision-making process in environmental protection. It seems necessary to address these issues in a separate study. On the anthropological level, in turn, approaching the acting subject within the framework of unlimited anthropology as an oikophobe functioning according to the formula of the precautionary principle. So constructed, environmental protection contributes rather to increasing the environmental risk. Thus, it does not achieve the basic goal of the decision-making process which consists in minimizing that risk.

## Bibliography

- Beck, Ulrich. 2002. *Spoleczeństwo ryzyka. W drodze do innej nowoczesności*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR.
- Dołęga, Józef. 2002. „U podstaw kultury ekologicznej.” W *Podstawy kultury ekologicznej*, red. Józef M. Dołęga, 7-8. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Acta Universitatis Masuriensis.
- Embros, Grzegorz. 2010. “Control and optimization in sustainable development.” In *A Humanist Approach to Sustainable Development*, edited by Zbigniew Łepko, and Ryszard Sadowski, 53-73. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW.
- Embros, Grzegorz. 2016a. “Prakseologiczne uwarunkowania procesu decyzyjnego w ochronie środowiska.” *Studia Ecologiae et Bioethicae* 14(1): 101-127.
- Embros, Grzegorz. 2016b. “A Systemic View of Oikos.” In *Return to the Oikos. Ways to Recover our Common Home*, edited by Joshtrom I. Kureethadam, Zbigniew Łepko, and Ryszard Sadowski, 86-103. Roma: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano.
- Gierycz, Michał. 2017. *Europejski spór o człowieka*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UKSW.
- Hull, Zbigniew. 2006. „Ekofilozofia i środowisko przyrodnicze.” *Diametros – Internetowy Serwis Filozoficzny* 9: 105-115.
- Kempisty, Maria. 1973. „Otoczenie” W *Mały słownik cybernetyczny*, red. Maria Kempisty, 291. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wiedza Powszechna.
- Kiepas, Andrzej. 1999. „Ryzyko jako problem ekofilozofii.” W *Między filozofią przyrody a ekofilozofią*, red. Anna Latawiec i Grzegorz Bugajak, 189-206. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW.
- Kotarbiński, Tadeusz. 1965. *Traktat o dobrej robocie*. Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.
- Lekka-Kowalik, Agnieszka. 2011. „Doświadczenie wartości – konstytutywny element uprawiania nauki.” W *Oblicza doświadczenia aksjologicznego*, red. Piotr Duchliński, i Grzegorz Hołub, 423-440. Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM.
- Łepko, Zbigniew. 1998. „Spór o testament F. Bacona.” *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* 34(2): 53-74.
- Mazur, Marian. 1969. *Cybernetyka a zarządzanie*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo MSW.
- Mazur, Marian. 1976. *Cybernetyka i charakter*. Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.
- PN-EN ISO 14001. 2015. *Systemy Zarządzania Środowiskowego – wymagania i wytyczne stosowania*. Warszawa: Wydział Wydawnictw Normalizacyjnych.
- Scruton, Roger. 2017. *Zielona filozofia. Jak poważnie myśleć o naszej planecie*. Poznań: Zysk i S-ka.
- Sowell, Thomas. 2007. *A Conflict of Visions. Ideological Origins of Political Struggles*. New York: Basic Books.
- Spaemann, Robert. 2001. *Osoby. O różnicy między czymś a kimś*. Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa.
- Spaemann, Robert. 2006. *Granice. O etycznym wymiarze działania*. Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa.
- Wojtyła, Karol. 2011. *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego KUL.