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THE QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT: SOCIO-ÉCONOMIQUE AND METHODOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract. In study of the problem of environmental quality, a common methodological mistake is reduction of the problem to everyday idea of quality as consumer characteristics of product. As a result, the ecological-economic interpretation of the problem is represented mostly by the development of the mechanisms of normative determination of materially significant features of ecological complex expressed in certain monetary equivalents. Identification of environmental quality with its functional properties implemented in the system of social-natural relations is a gross philosophical-methodological mistake. Just as the quality of an object is not identical to its property, the quality of environment should not be identified with neither properties nor social functions of natural complexes.

Keywords: environmental quality; methodological base of ecological-economic assessment; categories «quality»; «property»; «function».

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КАЧЕСТВО ПРИРОДНОЙ СРЕДЫ: СОЦИАЛЬНО-ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЙ И МЕТОДОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ

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Аннотация. В исследовании проблемы качества природной среды распространенной методологической ошибкой является сведение проблемы к бытовому представлению о качестве как потребительской характеристике товара. Как следствие такого подхода, эколого-экономические интерпретации проблемы представлены в основном разработкой механизмов нормативного определения материально значимых характеристик экокомплекса, выражающихся в определенных денежных эквивалентах. Отождествление качества среды с ее функциональными свойствами, реализующимися в системе социоприродных отношений, представляет собой достаточно грубую философско-методологическую ошибку. В той же мере, в которой качество объекта не тождественно его свойству, качество природной среды не следует отождествлять ни со свойствами ни с социальными функциями природных комплексов.

Ключевые слова: качество природной среды; методологические основы эколого-экономической оценки; категории: «качество»; «свойство»; «функция».

1. Introduction

The problem of environmental quality acquires a specific form going beyond social-ecological interpretation and identification of problematic units: from medical-biological to social-political ones, where correlation is difficult due to absence of common methodological base of complex normative interpretation. Ecological-economic approach is initially limited by defectiveness of initial methodological background based on the idea of environmental quality as a property of biosphere complex, which can satisfy the need to normalize living conditions. In such cases, environmental quality assessment is limited, only in relation to the

part of environment, which is either real or potential source of raw materials. Such approach reflects the situation when nature-consumer trends dominate over nature protection, which is harmful for development of the practice of social-natural cooperation.

2. Research findings

Study of the problem of environmental quality has two peculiarities. On the one side, the problem becomes more specific in the form of local natural science questions, which are studied as conglomerate of private sporadic attempts of description of negative anthropogenic changes in the structure of biosphere. On the other side, the process of problem research at the concrete natural science level has

already reached the stage when the own methodological base is not enough not only for the necessary theoretical generalization of the available material and creation of conceptual schemes, which is the final goal of any scientific research, but also for formation of initial targets defining the basic directions of scientific search.

If the first trend is expressed in intention to define the degree, forms and nature of deviation of any biosphere component from the normal state, then the second trend is expressed in the question itself on the nature of “normal” and “qualitative”. Evidently, the answer to this question should be the initial stage of any natural science research directed to the search of optimal variants of cooperation between the human and nature. Before we talk about negative anthropogenic processes, the level of abnormal changes in the particular natural complex, and the ways of overcoming them, it is necessary to determine the basic postulates, to reveal the starting point, which helps to define the degree and form of changes.

The problem of environmental quality can be defined as concentrated expression if not the whole complex of the problems of optimization of society and nature cooperation, but at least its significant part, which explains the relevance of its solution. At the same time, there is no single approach to analysis of the problem and interpretation of the term itself. Some aspects of environmental quality are reflected in the concepts “water quality”, “air quality”, “soil quality”. These terms used for assessment of natural complexes, are filled with practical content, but they do not exhaust the concept “environmental quality”, which is not defined totally. Evidently, in this case there is a situation of narrowed understanding of the concept “quality”, when its particular meaning is taken for a universal one. Then one can make an attempt to form an integrated conceptual construction, in which there are internal contradictions formed at the stage of conceptual analysis of the quality problem. The spread of ideas leads to random interpretation of the term and the situation of mutual irreducibility of different components of conceptual structure losing connection between them. For many researchers the concept “environmental quality” is so evident that it does not need a special analysis in determination of its status, detection of its conceptual potency. That is why the most common view about environmental quality is its identification with the system of hygienic criteria.

From the position of complex analysis, there can be the following peculiarity: the quality as expression of optimality in its connection with the human means immutability of essential characteristics due to

permanent quantitative parameters of an object, that is the content of different components in the structure of biosphere complex, quantitative certainty of thermal characteristics, numerical order of entropic processes and so on. Conjugation of the concepts “quality” and “quantity” becomes pared down in this case: the quality means the degree of compliance with the social element (which is “external”, not included in the natural system of factors), and “quantity” is reduced to numerical expression, which depletes significantly its content.

Such approach can be used for applications solutions, but at the level of global optimization of social-natural interaction, its limited nature and general vulnerability become evident.

It should be noted that the norms of concept determination could change and improve in the process of science development and in real practice of social environmental management. Emergence and implementation of the new needs of technically equipped society lead to the change of concept formation principles and correction of the whole conceptual scheme, which reflects the process of social-natural interaction.

Understanding of environmental quality is at the base of analysis of the principles of rational environmental management, that is why heuristic character of any concept of optimal interaction between society and nature depends on the right interpretation of it. Understanding of the structure of the phenomenon under research and the mechanism of interpreted processes lets to present different prognostic schemes, to form conceptual structures adequate to the changing reality. That is why adequacy of theoretical constructs becomes dependent on the level of development of methodological and conceptual arsenal.

It should be noted that conceptual structure has a migratory character in this case, which is connected with poly-functionality of the phenomenon itself and with multi-qualitativeness of natural objects, processes, connections liable to modal assessment with the principle “qualitatively – not qualitatively”. Displacement of links liable to such assessment can lead to serious mistakes. It is important not to prevent conceptual divergence due to complexity of the phenomenon and insufficiency of theoretical, proper philosophical ensuring of conceptual construct.

The notion “environmental quality” cannot be fixed just like interactions between the human and environment can't be static, because the notion which reflects functional social-natural connections, has a specific content in every particular case. Qualitative, optimal, positive things in one case are usually defective, harmful, not qualitative in the other case.

Plurality of links in social-natural interaction is just the aspect of multi-qualitativeness of material objects. Taking this fact into account, one can make a conclusion about internal contradictory nature of the term “environmental quality”. This term can be concretized through the close notions “optimality”, “usefulness” and so on. Such parallel terms are quite effective in the applied research, but they cannot be incorporated in theoretical structure on many reasons. One of them is impossibility of broad interpretation. This drawback is a serious obstacle to building of dynamic conceptual scheme, because conceptual unidirectionality is always connected with the need of artificial adjustment of narrow theoretical scheme to the changing reality. For example, in comprehensive economic assessment of some natural complex, when there is need to choose directions and sequence of involvement of a natural component in the economic process, the task of determination of variants of capital investment becomes complicated with the factor of dual nature of “usefulness” of natural complex. Evidently, assessment from the point of view of usefulness is interpretation of social-natural interaction on one side, and this assessment cannot reflect emergent nature of ecosystem and give an adequate assessment of eco-complex.

Analyzing the problem of development of social ecology concepts one should take into account two aspects: first, it acts as a specific factor of integration, combination of variable conceptual structures having different degree of generality: from fragmentary structures typical for narrow disciplines (forest knowledge, ornithology, entomology and so on) to conceptually developed structures having their own methodological base, which lets to adapt conceptual scheme to the changing conditions of social-natural interactions almost without losing the specificity and with minor changes in the nature of mutual compatibility. Second, the concept “environmental quality” is generated form the ecological situation itself due to insufficient conceptual arsenal of natural sciences, which should interpret and develop practical recommendations on optimization of forms, rates and methods of social consumption of environment. Meeting the need of description of the processes, which exceed the frame of interpretation of each separate discipline, natural science had to expand its own conceptual structures through new terms (“content”, “system” and so on) and through expansion of conceptual volume of traditional terms.

These two mutually conditioned processes are typical for formation of the term “environmental quality” and acquisition of conceptual status. In addition to determination of general volume of the concept and definition of semantic load, introduction

of this new term required the correlation of the new notion with traditional terms “goodness”, “optimality” and so on, which means the state of natural resources in their economic manifestation, based on the specific form of economic use when one talks about assessment and practical use of separate components of biosphere complexes.

If the concept “environmental quality” is general towards the concepts “water quality”, “soil quality” and so on, then in the process of using of this notion one should take into account the complexity of their mutual conjugation, because each natural element correlates with each other through relation to the human. Water, air, soil are qualitative or non-qualitative in relation to the human, but not to each other. That is why formation of integrating concept “environmental quality” should also mean the relation to the subject of assessment.

It should be noted that situation when initial predetermination of selection provides directivity of ecological assessment, is not a mistake of social-ecological analysis, and it doesn't contain an attempt to falsify the results of research. Moreover, it is in the base of evaluation of environmental condition of certain “valuable” species, separate population, breed, for which there are specially created comfort conditions in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. On a limited scale in research of stenobiotic populations such approach is justified, and often it's the only possible approach in the assessment of reproductive prospect of species. But any attempt of its extrapolation to the level of social-natural interaction acquiring global scale makes it not only methodologically vulnerable, but also it can lead to the state of ecological crisis.

Forbidden ecological comfort of certain species is provided at the expense of serious restrictions on different factors of anthropogenic and natural origin (limiting the number of predators, limiting the number of trophic competitors, complex of biotechnical measures of protectionist type and so on), that's why the problem of environmental quality in such conditions becomes narrowly specialized, limited by the territory and time. Emphasizing and development of one or several species is conducted at the expense of other ones that are the main content of ecological system, so it cannot be spread outside forbidden territory. Environmental quality in the national parks of directional mode is determined by the level of potential fertility of the patronized species, and it is limited by the period of the full qualitative-quantitative regeneration of population.

Evidently, such approach to environmental quality phenomenon should be based on clear comprehension of contradictions between ecological

comfort of one species and conditions of preservations of system organization of biogeocoenosis itself, because artificial privileged position of certain system elements includes the danger of biocenosis degradation and can lead to the situation when high quality and comfort of one species is provided at the expense of restrictions on reproductive potential of other ones, reduction of species diversity, and other forms of ecosystem depletion. Such situation can be defined as the state of narrowly-oriented environmental quality for limited circle of system components with simultaneous deterioration of the quality of systemic organization of the environment itself.

There are certain mistakes in such approach to environmental quality: the interpreted concept is worse in volume than the concepts “optimality» and “high quality of environment”, because it does not include the whole complex of qualitative-quantitative features of the reflected object and fullness of their manifestation; functionally the term should serve to the narrow circle of system elements with probability of serious mistake in the choice of priorities; structural limitation means strict hierarchy of the components; and at the system level - the state of irreducibility, absence of correlation between different aspects of the notion “environmental quality”. It does not allow to take into account the biosocial essence of the human in the system of their interaction with environment, which determines the specificity and orientation of assessment process. Not by chance almost all methods of assessment of natural components are oriented to determination of social-economic (industrial, agricultural, urban and so on) significance of the object under research.

The concept “environmental quality” has a normative character and implies the assessment procedure. Idea of environmental quality as a complex of conditions of optimal vital activity is quite typical in environmental theme, and it does not need a significant correction. Moreover, it corresponds to the task of qualitative-quantitative interpretation of the term. The quality of environment as a whole can be both satisfactory and unsatisfactory just like the quality of water, soil, air. It can be extreme (characterizes economic crisis) and normal (provides optimal conditions of development of an individual, population, species and so on). In such cases the degree of ecological comfort is determined according to quantitative indicators of the state of certain natural complex, and it's concretized in such indices as “level of saturation with harmful impurities”, “percentage of the pollutant” and so on.

The need to introduce the assessment scale in characterizing the environment practically removes

the traditional question on axiological nature of the concept “environmental quality”. Regardless of the assessment procedure, it is neither positively nor negatively directed. The necessary axiological properties can be reached only in concretization and certain assessment addition (the quality is “normal”, “extreme”, “optimal” and so on).

The state of environmental goodness as a whole and its components in particular is determined by optimal combination of qualitative and quantitative indices. That is why the concept reflecting such state cannot be limited only by quality representation, it presumes actual quantitative content.

In natural ecological systems that have not become the object of active economic management yet the assessment procedure is based on the same principles of combination of qualitative-quantitative manifestations. So in the characteristics of natural biogeocoenoses one of the main indices is species diversity of the ecosystem. It is taken as quantitative characteristic determined by the ratio of the number of species in it to the total number of individuals in the community (plants, animals, microorganisms) [3, p.47].

The question of objectivity of the concept “environmental quality” in social ecology is of fundamental importance, because in social-natural problems it becomes the question about the way of overcoming of contradictions between the form of social consumption of natural resources and the character and the nature of environmental protection measures.

The approach, in which social nature of assessment is ignored, can lead to realizing the environmental quality (water, soil and forest quality) as some abstractly prosperous state of natural complexes. Underestimation of social-natural character of evaluation process leaves the question of direction and orientation of the factor of natural complexes quality.

Social-economic orientation of evaluation process proves that the concept “environmental quality” contains at least two important aspects: first, the concept reflects objectivity of the object, its state, features, material-structural characteristics, and second, the concept includes relations with the estimated phenomenon, process, complex, and especially relations of social-natural type characterizing the degree of optimality of social-natural interaction.

The mentioned ideas in their extrapolation to the environmental quality problem lead to the following conclusion: the concept “environmental quality” cannot have an absolute meaning. It is relative, and it is implemented only in the system of relations: economic, biogeocoenologic, and aesthetic ones.

Mutual correlation of economic and aesthetic aspects of quality

In the structure of complex assessment of environmental quality aesthetic indices are traditionally not a priority. At the same time, enhanced functionality and enhanced evaluation adequacy of aesthetic criteria are important theoretically and practically, which is connected with the need to increase emotional comfort for the human in the environment.

If applied the possibility of environmental quality assessment is connected with the perspective of development of ecological tourism as one of the most sparing variants of social environmental management not connected with significant changes of the settled ecological systems, not requiring the increase of technogenic load on nature, and taking place with preservation of traditional ecological values.

A detailed ecological assessment is possible in the following conditions:

- Preservation of the main biogeocoenologic parameters of natural ecosystems;
- Maintenance of the main parameters of normal life of the human;
- Absence of ecological crisis in development of social-natural interaction.

Evidently, significance of aesthetic indices grows in conditions of ecological optimality of social-natural relations, when evaluation structure tends to the form of evaluative equality of the criteria, in which different aspects of complex assessment (medical, biological, social-ecological, economic, aesthetic and so on) are considered to be equivalent.

In extreme ecological situation, especially in post-catastrophe period the structure of complex assessment hierarchical, for which the following things are typical:

- Structuring of evaluation criteria according to the principle of centralized hierarchy;
- Presence of criteria of priority level (first of all, medical-biological ones) in all following ones;
- Pyramidal form of the whole complex of criteria providing functional-target unity of assessment of environmental quality.

In these conditions, the significance of aesthetic aspect in the system of criteria of complex assessment significantly reduces.

If in the situation of ecological optimality there is certain dependence of aesthetic indices on conditions of preservation of the main parameters of sustainable development of social-natural relations, in which the importance of aesthetic assessment can grow because of the need to provide comfortable

psycho-emotional environment through creation of recreation areas: national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and so on, then in ecologically extreme situation adaptation of aesthetic criteria to other indices and their structuring on the hierarchy principle is difficult because of the absence of objective criteria of environmental quality assessment.

Since in this situation the aspects of assessment are subjective feelings, when personal perception of environment not only prevails in the evaluation system, but also becomes often the only index of ecological viability of natural complex, there is a threat that excessive subjectivization of evaluation procedure can significantly limit the sphere of practical implementation of aesthetic criteria and complicate comparability with other criteria (ecological, economic, medical-hygienic and so on) at the same time.

That is why environmental quality evaluation on aesthetic base is still not conceptually implemented in the system of hierarchical interdependence. It should be taken into account that excessive rationality in evaluative interpretation of sensual images can lead to mistakes, that is why one should not misuse the possibility to reveal “beauty logic” in the process of aesthetic assessment. It is enough to admit that sensual-emotional sphere is a priority in the structure of aesthetic criteria. This the main requirement to practical use of environmental quality assessment on aesthetic indices. Subjectivity is inevitable in such procedure, that is why minimization of the possibility of mistakes in aesthetic evaluation is still one of the most important tasks of conceptual interpretation of the problem of complex assessment of environmental quality.

This problem is a particular aspect of traditional unresolved issue if perception of «beautiful” and “ugly” exists regardless of utilitarian needs or it takes place in the context of the practical use of an object.

The history of philosophy is full of different theoretical constructions that interpret this problem, but within this article, it is logical to be limited with reference to the authority of two historically significant personalities: Socrates and Kant, the representatives of contradictory approaches to understanding of interaction between aesthetic and utilitarian content in evaluative perception.

Categoricity of Kant's approach is expressed in the following statement: “... everyone should agree that judgment on beauty with the slightest interest is very biased. It is not a clear judgment of taste. That is why in order to be a judge in taste issues one should not be interested in existence of the thing. They should be absolutely indifferent» [4, p. 205]. The declared requirement “to be indifferent” to the fact of

existence of the thing becomes a condition of the “clear” perception of phenomenon, regardless of specific forms of existence of “the thing in itself”, which is axiomatics of Kant’s (subjective-idealistic) understanding of the sensual perception nature. Such approach does not include any functional feature of the object, so system approach is impossible here. One-aspect understanding of the nature of aesthetic perception does not assume a complex evaluative interpretation, that is why it’s methodologically poorly productive in evaluative description of environmental quality.

Socratic approach has a greater methodological potential in providing complexity of the assessment procedure. It demands to combine aesthetic and functional content of the object. There is a famous Socrates’ statement that “...everything is good and beautiful in relation to the things it’s adapted to, or bad and ugly if it’s badly adapted” [6, p.91]. It coincides with our understanding of structural fullness, from the one side, and functional effectiveness of aesthetic criterion of social-ecological assessment of environmental quality, on the other side.

Evidently, such criterion should be based on both emotional-sensual perception of natural object and rational comprehension of its functional-applied justification. Such complex structure will help to provide functional justification of the criterion and make it practically demanded in the evaluation procedure.

In our opinion, the term “aesthetic comfort” best corresponds to the requirement of optimal combination of emotional-sensual and functional-applied aspects with emotional evaluative priority.

So, aesthetic criterion in the complex assessment of environmental quality is the index of the level of aesthetic comfort in the environment.

It is logical that such understanding of the criterion corresponds to Darwin’s understanding of aesthetically justified or not justified (from the position of human perception) things in nature. Darwin supposed that the coincidence of human understanding of beautiful things in nature with positive reaction to these beautiful things of the representatives of flora and fauna is occasional. According to the scientist, the fact of «distinctiveness» of a natural component from the others is at the base of either positive or negative reaction of animals. Beauty of a butterfly, attractiveness of a flower is the result of certain distinctiveness from ordinary series, just like ugliness of some phenomena in flora and fauna. Such manifestations as ugliness and beauty assessed by the human according to aesthetic parameters, have a functional precondition. If the situation defined as manifestation of beauty, is justified by the desire for

self-preservation, then manifestations of «ugliness» are justified by the same reasons – the need to save the species by deterrence of the predator. According to Darwin, “...beauty is not a universal phenomenon. Everyone can realize it seeing some poisonous snakes, some fishes, and ugly bats resembling human face. Sexual selection gave the most shiny colors, elegant forms and other decorations to males or both sexes of numerous birds, butterflies and other animals... Flowers and fruits began to differ with bright colors so as flowers could be easily seen, visited and fertilized by insects, the seed could be spread by birds. How did it happen that many colors, sounds and forms delight both human and lower animals? How did the sense on beauty appear in its simple form? We do not know it. And we also don’t know why the known flavors became pleasant” [9, 23].

Evidently, Darwin's approach can be the natural science base for conceptual interpretation of the phenomenon of aesthetic assessment of environmental quality. Natural objects (trees, bushes, meadow ecosystems) stand out from familiar stereotypes of sensual images typical for a modern citizen, and such originality is at the base of aesthetically positive perception of landscape irregularities justifying the variety of spatial perspectives typical for hilly area. Everything, which distinguishes the perceived object from usual traditional forms being the manifestation of ordinary compositions, can be seriously perceived as positive phenomenon and vice versa. The functional component is the possibility to apply the mentioned features of environment for maintaining the necessary aesthetic comfort with preservation of the main biogeocoenologic, medical-biological, hygienic and other characteristics.

The main difficulty of criterion formation on the base of combination of functional-applied and emotional-sensual aspects is in the fact that the sensual component prevails in this criterion. It includes the aspects of emotionally positive or negative experiences while objective reality is presented in a simplified form in the conceptual expression, in the system of biogeocoenologic, ecological-economic, hygienic and other criteria. Environment in the conceptual expression is presented as separate fragments, unfinished conclusions, that is why the relation of conceptual structure to objective reality is characterized by isomorphism when a number of real elements are reflected in one notion or a limited complex of notions. Not a single categorical-conceptual structure can reflect the whole complex of relations and peculiarities of inter-element and inter-level order typical for a real object.

Determination of the natural component quality on the base of ecological comfort criteria should correlate with other features of the natural complex: recreational, agricultural, forest management features and so on. In addition, there is needed a conceptual correlation of the elements, because environmental quality assessment in practice can be done only in complex taking into account the main aspects of qualitative distinctness of ecosystem. Empirical assessment always implies a moment of subjectivity, because it does not have clear logical rational borders, parameters of its interpretation when an individual perceives the world according to their internal predisposition, which is based on mental, cultural and psycho-emotional features. An attempt of logical systematization of emotional perception is traditionally limited by quantitative generalization of individual complexes of emotional perception, because modern methods of environmental assessment are an attempt to summarize emotionally positive and negative moment of environmental perception.

In order to provide compatibility of aesthetic assessment of environmental quality with economic, biogeocoenologic, radio-ecologic and other ones where the rational aspect prevails over emotional one, it is necessary to reduce the set of emotional assessments to the rational form, which can be presented in conceptual expression and adapted to the conditions of complex and multifactor assessment.

Such problem can be solved with different attempts of “objectification” of aesthetic evaluation. The most successful are the variants where the principle of qualitative-quantitative conjugation is implemented. It lets to express the level of quality of the natural object through quantitative assessment of the complex of aesthetically modal perceptions per time unit in condition of a fixed view of time in fixed angles (audial, visual, tactile and other). Evidently, even having a full and detailed expert assessment of environmental quality for aesthetic indications, a researcher, when trying to interpret the environmental quality state, meets the contradiction, which is implied in both emotional way of perception and conceptual-categorical one.

An approach to development of the assessment procedure mechanism should be principally new. It should justify the new adequate criteria, the system of ecological standards taking into account the possibility of formation of synergetic effects of overlap between the factors, evaluation principles reflecting hierarchical relationship of qualitative characteristics of natural processes. If applied this task can be implemented through introduction of “soft”, mobile criteria able to adapt to the changing

conditions of ecological situation because of the possible aggravation or improving of social-natural contradictions in conditions of ecological crisis.

Functionally such operation can be effectively implemented through qualitative-quantitative interpretation, in which the complex of emotional perceptions of qualitative characteristics of natural landscape is subjected to quantitative generalizations. The following quantitative comparison of aesthetically positive and negative experiences helps to determine the qualitative stability of the natural complex, which is useful for development of ecological policy in the region.

In the application plan, the possibility of environmental quality assessment on aesthetic base is connected with the perspective of ecological tourism development, which is the most nature-saving variants of social environmental management and not connected with significant changes of the settled ecological systems. It does not require the increase of technogenic load volume and it saves traditional ecological values.

The need of aesthetic assessment of environmental quality is important both theoretically and practically. Practical significance is connected with the need to improve psycho-emotional comfort of the human. In the narrow sense the need of aesthetic assessment is connected with at least the need to develop ecological tourism.

Ecological tourism is one of the most promising forms of services export. Development of ecological tourism as one of the aspects of social-economic development of the republic is not connected with environmental exploitation in its technogenic forms, or with the need of significant changes of the settled ecological systems. It does not require the increased volume of technogenic expansion, but it saves traditional ecological values. Organization of environmental management according to the criteria presented for ecological tourism is not contrary to the objective dynamics of biosphere development. Ecological tourism means acquaintance with natural conditions of fauna, traditional conditions of aboriginal European flora, and improvement of ecological competence and professional competence of managers of those enterprises that influence the environment. In economic aspect tourism is very profitable for any state, because it doesn't involve significant material investment to develop its infrastructure, and it's based on preservation of traditional forms of cooperation between the human and environment, and increase of ecological comfort removing (at least temporary) the costs of technogenic civilization development.

This type of foreign economic activity has the most morally justified indicators and broad prospects of its implementation. The country, which will manage to save its environment in its natural form, has undeniable advantages socially, morally and economically. Moreover, social development in such conditions will be correlated with moral, aesthetic, ecological limitations developed as a result of communication with environment not subjected to significant anthropogenic changes.

Fulfillment of the requirement of complexity including the criterion of aesthetic comfort significantly increases the reliability of environmental quality assessment and expands the sphere of its practical implementation.

Conclusions Scientific traditions of theoretical interpretation of the quality phenomenon let to consider environmental quality as conceptual feature of natural complex represented as a set of structural links and functional relations.

Introduction of a standard scale into characteristics of the state of natural complex practically eliminates the problem of axiological nature of the concept “environmental quality”. Without regard to the evaluation procedure, it is neither positively nor negatively directed. Only in concrete defining and certain estimation addition the necessary axiological nature can be reached. Ecological-economic interpretation of environmental quality operationally is evaluative determination of ecological effects: ecological benefits or ecological loss that appear because of social-natural cooperation.

Such approach opens wide prospects for development of applied methods of normative determination of economic potential of natural objects connected with exploitation of its ecological status in the system of social-natural relations.

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