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DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION VS. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – A COMPLEMENTARY STUDY OF POLAND AND NORWAY

Introduction

This article is concerned with the relationship between development, environmental protection and sustainable development¹. The basic thesis of the article is that we, today in the Western world, find economical development with built-in environmental standards primarily addressing environmental problems felt in the rich countries themselves, at the expense of protection of the natural resources of the third world and global environmental issues like the “greenhouse effect”. To put it shortly; we have development and environmental protection, but not sustainable development.

Our first object of scrutiny, Poland, may be seen as a representative of the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) wishing to become fully integrated into the economy of the European Union (EU). It is characteristic for the CEEC that environmental problems did not really become an accepted political issue until after the democratization of 1989, and that the organisational background and economic context for the addressing of environmental issues is quite different to the development of environmen-

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¹ The word “sustainable development” has no legal definition, it simply means “to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (as stated in the report of The United Nation (UN) World Commission on Environment and Development (also known as the Brundtland Commission) in 1987).

tal consciousness in Scandinavia. In all the CEEC environmental non-governmental organisations (NGO) are quite recent phenomena, as non-governmental (i.e. non-communist) organisations with some kind of political agenda were not allowed prior to 1989. The fact that civil society in these countries is still in the making when compared with Western Europe, and that the State apparatus is still influenced by the authoritarian communist bureaucratic culture of pre 1989, are probably the main reasons that NGOs in the CEEC, generally speaking, have considerably less political influence than their sister organisations in Western Europe. Moreover, after 1989 environmental problems have in the CEEC had to compete with other serious problems often felt by the citizens to be more immediately pressing for attention (like a high rate of unemployment and/or ineffective social security systems). These circumstances are, with specific local variations, shared by all the CEEC. In a larger framework, however, one may see Poland as a representative of the countries of this world aspiring to a living standard and economical system similar to the one in North America and the EU. In general terms, the current developments in the environmental field in Poland will be copied in other developing countries aspiring to the standard of North America and the EU. The brief study of Poland, will thus, to some extent, provide a general notion of the relationship between development, environmental protection and sustainable development in not only the CEEC, but also in "promising" countries in general.

Norway presents a very different position to Poland's. Norway is among the richest countries of the world and represents the social democratic third way between liberalism and socialism, which during the cold war and the early 1990s was referred to as the Scandinavian Model. If Poland may be seen as representing the CEEC and "promising" countries in general, Norway may be seen as a representative of the Scandinavian social democratic state with an unprecedented integration of environmental concern in the State apparatus. In the Scandinavian countries environmental NGOs have been part of the political landscape for the last thirty years and have gradually moved from a generally antagonistic and peripheral position, to becoming, in general, acknowledged partakers in the democratic decision process. This is to such an extent that most NGOs in Scandinavia in fact are relying on government funding.² This study will provide a basic outline of the main trends in the development of environmental NGOs in Norway. In this context, this may serve as back-

²In the Scandinavian context, one could argue that this indicates a new phase in which we, possibly, ought to understand NGOs as semi-autonomous bodies of environmental expertise loosely incorporated in the State apparatus, rather than as non-governmental organisations in the true sense of the word.

ground information for environment-conscious readers in the CEEC. As an example of a Scandinavian social democratic state, Norway is, it should be noted, a special case. The vast reserves of oil and natural gas in the North Sea has turned Norway into "the Kuwait of Northern Europe". Besides having a social democratic state system with an ingrained awareness of environmental issues, Norway is in addition an immensely wealthy country. As such, Norway will in this study furthermore illustrate how even aware and rich populations are able to postpone facing the environmental challenge of sustainability. The focus on environment easily becomes concerned with local matters at the expense of global issues. In spite of the rapid growth of NGOs in Norway from the early 1970ies right up to today and the many results they have achieved in the environmental field, the Norwegian population has, during the same period, been enjoying a continued increase in its material living standard, which in itself compromises sustainable development. The brief study of Norway highlights the difficulties in taking the step from awareness building to an actual change in the premises of the present economic system of non-sustainable development and increasing economical growth.

The brief studies of Poland and Norway are different in nature. They focus on different sides of the societies of the respective countries and they do it from different perspectives. While the study of Poland focuses on politics and development in relation to the European Union (EU) at present, the study of Norway is essentially an environment-oriented history of mentality with a dash of sociology. The study of Poland indicates the problematic nature of the current type of development in countries aspiring to an EU standard of living. The study of Norway highlights the problems of consciousness building, how radical counter-cultural demands gradually become accepted by and incorporated into the political system, while leaving the basic structures of the system untouched. Through what the title calls "a complementary study of Poland and Norway", the article thus addresses the complementary issues of environmental problems at the essence of what we generally consider to be development, and the problems involved in taking the step from awareness building to an actual change towards sustainability once a high standard of development has been achieved.

Poland: The great leap forward – to consumerism in cleaner surroundings

Compared with the EU, Poland is a poor country. In 1998 the Polish GDP per capita was ca. 3800 ECU, not even close to the 15 174 ECU of the

poor EU member Portugal, not to mention the EU average of 20 194 ECU (source: Eurostat). In addition to a ruined economy, post-1989 Poland also inherited massive environmental problems from the communist era. Today, more than ten years after, Poland still faces serious environmental problems, primarily due to this legacy. The quality of the drinking water is in most parts of the country very poor. Polish experts have estimated that pollution annually inflicts economic costs on nature and buildings equivalent to between 10 and 20% of the nations gross domestic product (GDP). The economic cost of the annual corrosion of buildings caused by pollution alone, is estimated to exceed the governments annual spending on education, health services and defence taken together. The health-related costs of pollution are also considerable. More than two thirds of all industrial air polluters are concentrated in areas containing more than half of the Polish population, but which only covers 15% of the nations land mass. In these areas indicators for life-expectancy, infant mortality, and birth defects are all substantially worse than the respective national averages. The costs of raising Polish environmental standards to the EU level are massive. The official Polish estimate is that it will cost 32 billion euros to achieve this goal.

Polish society faces serious problems apart from the environmental ones. In 2000 alone, major reforms in the fields of education, social and health service, and regional administration were implemented. In a country with an official unemployment rate of 15% and with substantial social problems due to the rapid transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, costly investment in the field of environmental protection is not on the top of the political agenda among the population as such. If not for the EU stance that full implementation of EU-standards in the environmental field must take place before Poland can be a member of the EU, Poland would probably to a larger extent prioritize investing its funds in other types of programs. The general adaptation to the standards of production and quality in the EU and on the global market has, in fact, already improved the environmental situation in Poland significantly. Since the radical change of the political system in Poland in 1989, a great number of traditional and heavy-polluting industrial complexes have been forced to close, due to the new competitive situation and the fact that a substantial number of the many worn-down vehicles of the pre-1989 carpark have been substituted with new, less polluting models. In the same period Poland has had a steady and solid economic growth.

In spite of the really positive development in the environmental field over the last ten years, future development may be more ambiguous from an environmental point of view. The equivocal nature of the EU's

accession-demands to Poland with regards to the environment, is illustrated by the ISPA (Instruments for Structural Policies for pre-Accession) fund. This fund represents the only financial support to costs related to applicant member's efforts to comply with EU standards. Poland received 170 million euros from this fund in 2000, and can expect a similar amount annually in the period 2001-2006. Half of this amount is reserved for improvements of conditions related to the environment. The other half is reserved for improving Polish infrastructure. To comply with EU standards in this area Poland has to improve the standard of existing highways and build new ones, to the extent that all major cities in Poland are connected nationally and internationally. As a new market within the EU, Poland must become fully accessible to companies from the present EU. The present Polish infrastructure cannot handle the heavy trucks of Germany and other EU countries. This is not only a practical problem of transport. The situation gives Polish transport companies a competitive advantage as their smaller trucks have no problem using the EU highways, something which is not in accordance with the EU principle of free trade in similar conditions. The necessary improvement in Polish infrastructure is estimated to cost approximately 20 billion euros. A consequence of the exclusive focus on highways and the excessive costs related to creating an EU-standard highway grid across Poland, is that more environmental friendly transport like railways, are not prioritized. The result will be a significant increase of emissions of CO₂ as well as a substantial encroachment on the cultural landscape and local ecosystems. Up to now, the increase in the pollution from the growing number of cars in Poland has been counteracted by the parallel disposal of older and more polluting cars. From now on, however, we must expect an increase in CO₂ emissions, from the growing number of cars, the increased traffic facilitated by the coming highway grid across Poland, and as a result of the increasing reliance on heavy trucks as the main form of transport of goods.

Another area where Poland's efforts to comply with EU standards may be seen as detrimental to the environment, is in the area of agriculture. The tendency in the EU over the last thirty years has been to make farming more effective by practically all means. This has resulted in still larger scale farms with an increasing dependence on technology, so that we in the English language today find words such as "battery hen", "meat factory" and "factory farming". One manifestation of the increasing pursuit of profit and maximizing utilisation of all aspects of the food production, was the practice, until recently, of feeding cows fodder, in which one of the ingredients was bone meal from other animals (particularly sheep). Increased ethical concern over the ways of production in the

present EU agricultural field, has been voiced by NGOs and political parties in the EU for the last twenty years. Moreover, the state of modern EU agriculture has been presented as the underlying reason for the agricultural crisis haunting the EU these days (cf. the outbreaks of mad cow disease, and foot and mouth disease). Polish agriculture is characterized by many small units, which are not very effective and profitable from a narrow economic point of view. At present the use of fertilizer in Polish agriculture is 30% of the EU average. The EU does not explicitly demand that Polish agriculture should comply to the modes of agricultural production in the EU. However, demands on areas such as sanitation standards, which are too costly to implement on a small scale, and the competitive situation EU brings with it, seem sure to push Polish agriculture in the direction of the state of affairs in the EU. It seems reasonable to fear that Polish agriculture in the future will adopt to the main form of agricultural production in the EU, without taking full account of the present ethical and environmental problems of such production.³ The crisis in the agricultural field of the EU highlights the problem of pace. Poland wants to become a member of the EU as soon as possible. Poland cannot become a member until the structure and standards of the Polish society conforms with the *aquis communautaire* of the EU. This forces Poland to carry out major reforms at practically all levels of society over a period of a few years. Lacking political room for manoeuvre and time for reflection on how to adapt the specific Polish circumstances to the EU system according to its own premises, Poland stands to share the benefits as well as the drawbacks of the EU system in the future.

At present, the level of energy consumption and overall consumption is substantially lower per capita in Poland than in the EU countries. Considering the necessity of finding a level of economical development which is in accordance with sustainable development for the planet as a whole, the environmental situation of Poland may thus at present be considered more sound for the global environment, than the situation represented by the EU. It seems obvious that this is soon to change. Poland will in the near future most likely become a member of the EU and become a part of the privileged family of nations with a living standard and way of life, which in itself represents the biggest environmental threat to the earth.

³ Except for having produced a general statement that the Polish government considers ecological farming a beneficial pursuit, there are at present no indications that the overall development of Polish agriculture will be influenced by such ideals (source: Interview with G. Szuba, Ministry of the Environment, 2001).

Norway: NGOs, environmental consciousness and increasing emissions of CO₂

Norway is one of the richest countries in Europe. In 1998, the Norwegian GDP per capita of 24 805 ecu was well above the EU average (20 194 ECU). Environmental NGOs arose in Norway at the beginning of the 1970s, in the wake of the counterculture movements of the late 1960s. This counterculture was a challenge to the values of the present culture and of consumerism as such. The Vietnam war fostered a widespread feeling of mistrust in the political system in the Western world, in the wake of which NGOs arose fighting for issues that groups in the population felt were not dealt with properly by the authorities. In the Norway of today, there exist more than 40 environmental or third world oriented NGOs representing at least 10% of the population. Giving a simplified outline of the development of environmental NGOs in Norway, we may distinguish between two main types: The national NGO focussing on awareness building and the national/regional NGO of a more activist orientation.

A good example of an awareness building NGO arising in the early 1970s, is the Norwegian NGO *Framtiden I Våre Hender* ("The Future In Our Hands" (FIOH)). The impetus starting it came from a book written by a Norwegian advertising agent. Having "dropped out" of society and spent a year on an island in the Pacific with his family in the late 1960s, Erik Dammann in 1972 published the book *Fremtiden i våre hender*. In the book Dammann criticized Western culture for focusing on increased growth of consumption and argued for the necessity of an alternative lifestyle with an improved quality of life. Thousands were inspired by the book and at a public meeting in April 1974, around 3000 participants founded the NGO *Framtiden I Våre Hender* (FIOH). As stated on their web-site, FIOH focuses on simple and straightforward ideas: The gap between the rich and the poor countries ought to shrink and not widen, sustainable development is necessary out of a respect for nature as well as our descendants, and materialism and a consumerist culture feel comfortable, but actually impair our quality of life. At present FIOH is the second largest environment oriented NGO in Norway and has about 18 000 paying members in Norway (ca. 0.4% of the total population). FIOH has an information centre located in Oslo with 25 full-time and part-time workers involved in handing out information, developing teaching material for schools, writing and publishing the six annual issues of the FIOH magazine "Folkevett" ("Common Sense"), as well as doing scientific research (12–15 scientific reports are published every year). FIOH has also started the so-called NorWatch project, which

keeps a critical eye on Norwegian companies in developing countries, in view of improving their environment and human rights performances.⁴ FIOH also has 15 local chapters around Norway, typically advocating ways for the local community to live up to the guidelines of Agenda 21, running second-hand shops, arranging meetings or manifestations and the like. In addition to these activities, FIOH notes in their presentation on the web (www.fivh.no) that their members get about 1500 articles published in national and local media annually. The impact of FIOH's activities are difficult to measure, as they are mainly concerned with awareness building. According to a poll quoted by the FIOH itself, 75% of all Norwegians consider that a lower level of consumption in the rich countries is necessary, if we are to solve the global problems of environmental protection and poverty.

The Norwegian environmental NGO *Miljøstiftelsen Bellona* (Bellona) represents a more activist stance. The *raison d'être* of such groups lies in the fact that although a society may have quite strict laws regarding levels of pollution, that does not necessarily mean that the government is enforcing them, or that they are being lived up to by every industry. Bellona was founded in 1986, by two 26 year olds with a long record of activism on behalf of the environment. The aim was to create a mobile and energetic organisation, with sufficient resources to be up to date scientifically without being hampered by internal administration. Not being a membership-organisation, Bellona relied at the outset solely on financial support from so-called support members. Bellona declined from accepting grants from the Norwegian state, as it felt it might compromise its integrity. Bellona's main strategy was in the beginning to make violations of current environmental standards (or what they considered reasonable environmental standards) visible to the public at large through direct actions. In the period from 1986 to 1996, Bellona carried out at least 20 direct actions which had as a direct consequence that a violator of existing environmental standards was exposed and forced to comply with existing standards, that an existing practice of dumping polluted waste was abandoned in favour of a more secure manner of depositing the waste, that accessions to pollute were withdrawn by the state, or that export of polluted waste was stopped. The actions were often spectacular, with Bellona activists in red battle dresses (with "Bellona" written in big letters on the back) chaining themselves to the top of large industrial pipes with the press as sympathetic witnesses.

⁴The Norwegian company Norsk Hydro stopped using the heavy metal cadmium in its production of plastics in India, after NorWatch had made the use of this metal public knowledge (source: www.fivh.no).

Bellona became the watchdog of Norwegian industry, checking if their outlets complied with the environmental standards, uncovering hidden deposits of heavily polluted waste, and blowing the whistle every time the industry did not live up to its legal or moral obligations.

During the 1990s, Bellona began co-operating with her former enemies, the industrial co-operations. Tired of waiting for stricter rules being worked out by the state, as Bellona herself put it (www.bellona.no), Bellona began contacting different firms with worked out plans and suggestions for how they could reduce their emissions and use more environmental friendly modes of production. This strategy was quite successful. Bellona is today primarily financed by donations from what she calls "environment-interested capitalists". With this the traditional dichotomy between an industrial complex marred by polluting production in search of maximal profit and environment oriented NGOs was to a large extent dismantled, with Bellona now all the more often in the role of a sort of consultant on the environment to Norwegian industry. Due to limitations of space, we will not here dwell on Bellona's increased level of activity in North-western Russia during the 1990s. This engagement reflects the fact that local environmental problems are related to the geographical nature of a region (in this case the Barents Sea), and thus tracing the source of a local problem often may lead to a crossing of national boundaries. We may in this context finally note that Bellona's most significant feat has been its groundbreaking work in accessing the extent of the problem of toxic waste in North-western Russia. Bellona today has offices in Oslo, Murmansk, St. Petersburg, Brussels and Washington D.C.⁵

Norway may have been the country with the biggest potential for developing an alternative and more environmental friendly way of life in the 1990s. Already in 1977, five of seven Norwegian politicians held that the average living standard in Norway was high enough as it was. In the 1980s, the Norwegian prime minister Brundtland, became the leader of the United Nations (UN) World Commission on the Environment and Development. With the Brundtland report "sustainable development" became a common term in modern day politics. The report made it clear

⁵In 2000 Bellona received The Council of Nordic Ministries' environmental prize, for its work on environmental problems in arctic seas and in North-western Russia. The jury emphasised that Bellona's activities have served as a catalyst for the formation of Russian environment organisations, that Bellona has put a focus on the environmental problems of the region and thus contributed to cooperation between the Nordic countries and its neighbouring areas in important environmental questions, and that Bellona's bringing attention to the risk of radioactive pollution in the Barents region has resulted in a series of international projects aimed at protecting the environment.

that the present mode of economic development will in the long run lead to large scale destruction of the environment and compromise future generation's chances of living on this planet. It simply said that if we do not change our present mode of economical development, we are slowly cutting off the very branch upon which we are sitting. Norwegians were immensely proud of their prime minister's role, looked upon themselves as frontrunners in the process of creating a more environmentally friendly society, and NGOs like Bellona became the heroes of the majority of the population. Not only was there great motivation in the population for a change, the practical circumstances were also unusually favourable. Norway is a relatively small country and a very rich one due to the oil in the North Sea. It is sparsely populated, with large areas of practically unspoilt nature. Furthermore, it is tucked away in the northern corner of Europe, which means that nobody needs to go through Norway with loads of goods for big markets. In the early 1990s, people in Norway felt special and wanted to be different. In the referendum about EU membership in 1994 a modest, but clear, majority voted "no". Environmental issues were part of the agenda of the "no"-movement; Norway – *anderledeslandet* ("the differing country") as the slogan had it – was to become an alternative to the narrowly capitalist oriented continental Europe.

Things were, however, to unfold differently. Politically the main reason was simply that there was no consensus as to how a politics constituting an alternative to the development of the EU should be defined and implemented. Moreover, in the following elections the majority of the electorate voted for parties seeking as close an association with the EU as possible, showing that people were generally not interested in alternative experiments to modern market economy. This political development is not altogether logical (something political developments rarely are), and the following brief attempts at throwing light on it can in no way be considered conclusive. First of all, specific historical circumstances played a large role. Norway is a very young country, attaining its independence as late as 1905. The German occupation of Norway during the second world war illustrated to many Norwegians, that this independence could not be taken for granted. Moreover, Norway was during most of the Middle Ages in a political union with Denmark or Sweden (1814–1905), political unions in which Norway had a marginal political influence. The word "union", as in "European Union", did not have a good ring in Norwegian ears... In the early 1990s, the traditionally poor, peripheral and small country Norway, became established in the position of being one of the richest countries of the world. It was, in a way, like in the old Norwegian fairy tales about the youngest good-for-nothing brother (*Askeladden*), who ends up marrying the princess and inheriting the kingdom, in front of his

older learned brothers and all the other fine men of the kingdom. (This parallel was explicitly drawn by the advocates of rejecting Norwegian membership of the EU). Psychologically, it may seem that the Norwegians at this point became concerned with protecting their newly achieved and unprecedented position. At the UN's Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Norway played the part of the laggard due to its specific interest in keeping up oil production under the most favourable terms. A more intensive exploitation of the reserves of oil and natural gas in the North Sea had from the late 1980s, served as the locomotive for increased economic growth accompanied by an improving material living standard in the following period. The increased exploitation of the reserves in the North Sea brought a continual increase in the CO₂ emissions in the latter half of the 1990s. In the late 1990s, the Norwegian government had to abandon its goal of stabilizing CO₂ emissions at 1990 level by the year 2000, which had been announced with pride and confidence in the wake of the summit on the environment in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

One may ask again, why was such a development accepted by an, in many ways, environmentally conscious population? Again, we can only provide a psychological explanation. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the following years, the mental climate slowly changed in Norway. The previously quite widespread sense of impending danger and potential catastrophe if no action was taken now, slowly dissolved. An awareness of and interest in environmental issues was still current among the population, but a sense that things were not approaching a catastrophe and that environmental problems was being taken care of by competent people (if not the government, then Bellona), became general. Freed from the shadow of the cold war, people to a larger extent allowed themselves to enjoy their increasing purchasing power and not to worry all the time as in the 1980s. New alarming reports on the status of environmental protection could not change this.⁶

Final remarks; sustainable development is still the only option – but how?

From an overall viewpoint we see today that the leading economies of the world endorse and promote a classical growth-oriented economic

⁶The Global Environment Outlook 1 report of the United Nation Environment Programme concluded in 1996, that the environmental situation of the earth was increasingly getting worse and that the will to do something about it was diminishing.

system with built in standards of environmental protection. We have seen that the current development in Poland in many cases is bringing about a substantial improvement of the local environment. On the other hand, economic growth in Poland will in the near future lead to a worsening of the environmental situation, specifically in areas such as traffic, CO₂ emissions and the environmental costs of higher consumption in general. This shows that the present EU ideology of economic development together with strict environmental standards, is inconsistent in the big picture. We have development with environmental protection, but not sustainable development. In fact, "environmental protection" is a term denoting measures taken to ensure protection of the local environment in specific cases. This term tends to be used in a way not taking into consideration the place of a certain industry within a larger framework of production and the consequences for the environment of this system as such. A country like Denmark or Norway may take pride in its high standard of environmental protection, at the same time as it partakes in an economical system not compatible with sustainable development and enjoys a living standard that is impossible to uphold for the population of the world in general. In a certain sense the term "environmental protection" has become a hostage and alibi for a non-sustainable, growth oriented mode of production. As long as modes of production and levels of consumption are not in accordance with sustainable development, environmental protection is essentially nothing but a slight restriction of the fundamentally unjustifiable exploitation of the world's resources on the premises of the narrow self interest of the richest countries in the world. One may even ask oneself, if high national standards on environmental protection do not have a tendency of becoming a sedative, under the influence of which the population of these countries feels justified in enjoying extensive consumerism.

The cases of Poland and Norway are very different, primarily due to their very different level of economic development and different historical background. There is a feeling in the Polish population that it is now their turn to partake in the good life represented by the EU. This is understandable. In fact, it highlights the necessity for the richest countries to reduce their living standard to a level compatible with sustainable development. While environmental concern in Norway has arisen from the bottom of the political pyramid and has fought its way to the top, we today in Poland see that the main political force pushing for stricter environmental standards is the government and that the population at large, facing problems of unemployment and rising crime-rates, often question whether such measures are really necessary. In Norway environmental concern was at the outset largely voiced by NGOs arising out

of a counterculture and gradually became part of the standard political agenda. In Poland such a "natural" development was never given time to unfold itself, due to the repressive political system pre 1989, its less privileged economical situation and the dominating foreign policy goal of achieving EU membership as soon as possible. A consequence of this is that, with the exception of mostly local environmental NGOs in Poland focussing on local issues, the focus upon environmental issues at large is a stance making its way from the EU to the Polish government, and which is then imposed on the general population of Poland. In contrast with the Norwegian scenario, this chain comes to resemble a top-down process.

The history of environmental consciousness in Norway over the last thirty years illustrates how difficult it is to change the very structure of a global financial system oriented towards short-term economic profit. In contrast with the more traditional capitalism of the cold war, modern day capitalism is extremely flexible. Counter-cultural expressions in art, music, design etc. are picked up almost immediately, used in commercials and made into products within the very consumerist system alternative milieus are trying to distance themselves from. In this way most, if not all, creative forms of alternative culture become neutralised by market forces.⁷ The way the environmental concern arising out of a critique of materialistic Western culture today has become an integrated part of the consumerist culture itself, reflects the same process. The adaptability of modern day capitalism goes hand in hand with an increasing globalisation, where multinational companies are players, which not many individual states have the financial weight to control. The 1990s were marked by a sense that the last battle of ideologies was over, that the market economy had won and that there is no present alternative to the market economy and globalisation. The break-down of 1989 was "the end of history", as the American philosopher Francis Fukuyama (1993) put it. At the threshold of the new millennium, however, such an attitude is challenged by movements such as *Action pour une Taxe Tobin d'Aide aux Citoyens* (ATTAC). ATTAC is at the outset an association seeking to restore the political power countries and regions have "lost to the financial sphere" (quote "Platform of the association ATTAC", www.attac.org). ATTAC argues that we need new regulatory and monitoring instruments constituting democratic control of market mechanisms, on national, EU and international level. With a so-called

⁷The dynamics and sociological implications of this process, seen from a Norwegian perspective, was cleverly analysed by Myren and Otnes in their acclaimed documentary series "Vi som ventet på 90-tallet", (made for NRK Television by Mediaoperatrefrene TV).

Tobin tax, a tax on speculative transactions on the exchange market,⁸ substantial funds would be generated which would give nations and citizens some "room for manoeuvre and show that politics can be restored to its proper place".⁹

From an overall environmental perspective, the only sound political goal is to reduce the material living standard of the Western world and reorganize the production of goods according to the criteria of sustainability, the quality of life, and respect for the different life-forms of the earth. The task is enormous and the alternative to the present day economical system is by no means clear, but development towards such an ideal is nevertheless possible and necessary. It is basically a political issue and such a change will thus only take place, when a majority of the electorate in the main economies of the world demands it and upholds that demand over an extended period of time. The structure of the traditional economical system will by nature be resistant and powerful representatives of this system who have something to lose, will work to avoid such a change. Nationally developed and internationally co-ordinated NGOs must in the process of facilitating change, not only play a vital role in the crucial task of awareness building, but also exert critical political pressure reminding our governments of the direction of the future.

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⁸ 1500 billion dollars come and go every day on the exchange market in search of instantaneous profit, without any relation to the state of production and trade of goods and services. If put at as low as 0.05%, a Tobin tax would gather close to 100 billion dollars every year. This sum, which primarily would be collected in the financial centres of the richest countries, could be redirected to international organisations fighting inequality, promoting education and public health, food security and sustainable development (source: www.attac.org).

⁹ Ibid. In this context we may note that ATTAC currently (April 2001) has chapters in 19 countries, but none in the CEEC.

Documentaries

"Vi som ventet på 90-tallet", (made for NRK Television by Mediaoperatørene TV, series producers Hanne Myren and Jacob Otnes).

Interviews

Interview with Søren Riishøj (professor of Political Science, South Danish University Esbjerg, Denmark) on his paper "The EU Enlargement, Poland and the Environment", presented at the Third International Conference on Environmental Protection in the Baltic Region, Gdańsk, Poland, 9–11/3, 2001. Conducted by Anders Grys and Susan Pierce, 10th of March 2001.

Interview with Gabriela Szuba, European Integration Unit, Department of Ecological Policy and European Integration, Ministry of the Environment, Poland. Conducted by Anders Grys and Rasmus Reinvang, 10th of March 2001.

Web-sites

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countries going international - before the sea becomes a concern of the Union

Nowadays both municipalities and counties are no longer only agents subordinate to some national centre and acting within the country. Despite many legal and administrative constraints, those bodies possess both the resources, their own decision-making system and political legitimacy to work for their own needs and goals outside the borders of one country as well. Even in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region, local and regional authorities have been recently showing an increasing interest in international issues and cooperation with corresponding bodies in other countries.

The environment is definitely one of those areas where international cooperation, not only between countries, but also regions or municipalities, is very important and effective. Different regions and towns in different countries are facing similar problems, and by exchanging experiences with each other, special solutions to those problems can sometimes be developed in a much more efficient way than through contacts between national authorities. Some of the environmental problems