ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS AND CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN CENTRAL EUROPE: THE HUNGARIAN AND CZECH CASES

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Abstract

This paper examines the structure, activism, and evolution of the Czech and Hungarian environmental movements since the political changes of 1989 and then turns to a brief overview of the current major environmental issues in the region. The main findings about the movements are that they have undergone the same processes of institutionalization, specialization and professionalization, along with a rapid increase in networking, especially by issue area. A few continuities from their pre-transition structures remain, and they have been subject to different political pressures, but the similarity of their trajectories is more striking than the differences.

These countries share a host of pressing environmental issues, among them the old issues of industrial pollution and the new issues of urban sprawl, traffic, consumerism and waste management. The legal requirements and programs associated with accession to the European Union also command center stage. A couple of issues are also more salient to the individual countries, in particular nuclear energy to the Czech Republic and water management to Hungary.
Introduction

One of the main questions arising in the study of the post-communist transitions is a question that perhaps reflects the cardinal value giving these transitions such normative weight: are citizens able to participate in democratic governing processes and can they effect the policy outcomes of those processes? There are, of course, different avenues for participation and influence in a democratic system. Much attention has been paid to the primary avenue of elections and party politics. At least in the more advanced countries of East Central Europe, elections come regularly and go rather smoothly with multiple parties competing and complying with the election results. Still, underdeveloped party organizations and elite dominance of party and coalition politics – usually with a lack of significant accountability to rank-and-file members – have often left citizens feeling disappointed, inefficacious, and therefore politically apathetic. So, while these countries continue to develop their electoral and party systems, it is also worth looking to other avenues of participation that might inspire democratic citizenship.

Social movements and interest groups are two other common means of participating in democratic governing processes in pluralist polities. The former enjoyed a strong popular opinion in Central and Eastern Europe in the wake of the 1989 revolutions, whereas the notion of “interest” had during the communist period and continues to have a rather negative connotation. Effective interest group activity also requires stable and predictable state institutions and governing coalitions. These two factors have meant that public interest group activity has been slow to develop after 1989. It is only recently with greater institutional and legal stability and with the development of stronger civil society organizations that we have started to see consistent lobbying of government agencies and legislators, as well as association with certain party platforms and promotion of certain candidates. Leaving aside industrial interests both left over from the previous regime and developing with the economic transition, these new citizen interest organizations seem to be emerging from grass-roots groups, often associated with local or issue-based social movements. Social movements, meanwhile,
experienced a quick rise, followed by declining public interest and a difficult internal transition process, but persist as the avenue of preference for active citizens.

This study focuses on the changing structure and activism of social movements since 1989, taking the environmental movements of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland as cases.1 (The next phase of research will examine the women’s movements in those same countries.) While the current paper lays out these changes in movement structure and activism empirically, the following paper will focus on the question of external influence in these changes and the balance between external and grass-roots influence in shaping the environmental movements and their activism.

Resources and other assistance from abroad have been crucial to many organizations during the lean years of economic transition. Yet, if social movements are to remain channels of democratic participation, then the balance of influence in the movement cannot swing too far from its rank-and-file. A central question for democratic participation, therefore, is how these various perspectives and influences are blended. Focusing on the structure of movements and the activism that emerges from these structures helps us to understand the mechanisms by which different influences are integrated.

These observations are based, in part, on in-depth interviews with people involved in channeling external funding and expertise to movement groups, with movement activists in particular groups, and with scholars studying these movements. Although these interviews were comprised of open-ended questions and tailored to the position of the interview subject and the experience of the organization with which that person was associated, most interviews included a standard bank of questions about the movement in the country, connections between the movement and transnational actors, and the effects of the latter on groups’ activities (see Appendix). Written sources of information include overall studies of the “third sector” in these countries, including statistical data where available, secondary sources on the

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1 Grant #815-6g from the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER) is funding field research on the Czech and Hungarian cases. An earlier grant from the International Research Exchanges Board (IREX) funded field research in Poland. This paper will focus on the Czech
environmental movements, funding lists of granting agencies supporting the environmental movements, and annual reports and other publications of key groups and organizations in the movements.

**Part I: The Movements and their Pasts: How They Have Evolved**

This section will present an overview of the current structure of each movement. Here the focus is on the basic questions of growth trends, centralization versus de-centralization, specialization, and professionalization. Also important for understanding what these movements are and how they function will be an overview of the key internal networks and central service organizations of the movements. To the extent possible, these overviews of the movement will also consider societal values and support for environmental activism. (The data on this point is episodic, so no systematic study of trends is possible. However, some general patterns of waxing and waning support are discernible.) Finally, in order to understand what has changed with democratization, the discussion of each movement will be followed by a comparison to its pre-transition form.

**The Hungarian movement: current state**

The Hungarian environmental movement encompasses many small non-governmental organizations (NGOs) relative to the size of the population. The last full empirical study of the non-profit sector in Hungary reports that in 1999 there were 406 foundations and 590 associations and public benefit associations with primary identity as environmental groups (KSH 2001, 27). The total number of groups grew steadily in the late 1990’s, peaking at 1,012 and then stabilized at its present size just shy of 1000 (KSH 2001, 220). Of these groups,

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2 Full data from annual studies by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) of all registered organizations is available only from 1993. Anecdotal and other sources suggest that the years 1989-1992 were also a period of rapid growth. Another potential source for comparing the size of the movements over time is the series of *Directories of NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe* put out by the Regional Environmental Center (Juras 1992; REC 1994; REC 1997a; REC 2001b). These directories are based on organizations’ self-reporting in response to mailings by country offices and announcements in REC publications and websites. Thus, although they are not as complete as studies like those of Hungarian Central Statistical Administration, they tend to capture the more active groups most tied with environmental identities. The
many are individual local committees that cover a wide variety of issues, from pollution to “beautification” of their towns to popular participation in local governing decisions (Kuti 1996, 122; Kuti 2000). Although the growth in total groups was consistent until the stabilization around 1998, there was a great deal of turnover as older groups died out and new groups were formed. The replacement rate has now slowed (note the pattern in founding years reported in KSH 2000, 37); however, many leading activists still foresee some contraction in total number of groups as some die out, others combine, and networks consolidate.

Three factors contribute to an unusually large number of groups for a country with a population of just under ten million. First of all, the Hungarian environmental movement had earlier and most immediate access to the large amounts, relatively speaking, of international funding entering the region through the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), as the Center’s headquarters were established in Budapest (and later moved to Szentendre, just outside Budapest). Second, the historical development of the movement suggests that a large number of grass-roots organizations not only arose but remained fairly self-contained, not joining national movement organizations (see the section below on the movement prior to the transition). Finally, this pattern of a plethora of tiny groups seems to be characteristic of the NGO sector in general in Hungary (Török and Csikos

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*figure for Czechoslovakia

The data are not, however, comparable from country to country, as there seem to be different response patterns in the various countries. For example, in the Czech case, many affiliates of major organizations like the ČSOP respond as individual organizations, whereas fewer comparable affiliates in Poland and Hungary tend to do this (compare, for example, entries in the 2001 directory). Another REC study gave the following estimates of the number of environmental NGOs in each country in mid-1996: Czech Republic 520, Hungary 726, Poland 600 (REC 1997b, table 2.1). These estimates were based on the mailing lists of REC country offices, which are updated continuously and in consultation with other organizations mailing to movement groups.

Note that these organizations, even if multi-purpose, were included in the environmental category only if they listed environment as their primary area of interest.
which suggests more general influence of the political, legal, and economic climates and, perhaps, of culture.

One particular spur to growth in the number of NGOs is a tax law that is very favorable to the formation of foundations, which are then counted as part of the third sector. Indeed, in the early 1990s the regulations for formation of non-profits and foundations were quite weak, resulting in a burst of organizations across all sectors, some of whose social value could be questioned. The laws remain generous despite efforts, including from the non-profit sector itself, to tighten them.

Although the number of organizations is quite high, the movement does not have a commensurate legion of activists. Most groups are very small – leading one activist to use the Western social science term “MONGO’s” or “my-own-NGO’s” in describing them (Leading activist in Hungarian movement 2000). Many groups do not really do much; and many activists belong to more than one of the organizations which are most active. What results is a small core of active, influential leaders, surrounded by a much larger group of occasional activists, volunteers and supporters. One long-time movement activist involved at the national level made the following remark:

It seems that the movement itself is not communicating very well with the general public, so the basis of environmental activism among the youth or the general public or the local inhabitants is not very big. ... By heart I could name those 200 key persons who are the green movement. ... One person should not be able to name all the relevant, key players. (ibid.)

While the number of organizations remains high, membership is actually shrinking (Perneczky 2000). Other interviewees repeated the sentiment that popular awareness and support for the movement is low, but often added that the situation is starting to improve, and they are hopeful that increased awareness and value support will turn into a renewed base for activism.

The large population of small NGOs, in turn, is a major factor in making the environmental movement as a whole quite de-centralized. Despite early and strong attempts to link all environmental organizations, most notably via the computer network Green Spider (set up in 1994), the movement remained de-centralized. The limits and failures of attempts at overall networking, among them problems keeping groups up with the hardware necessary to
maintain the network and perceived lack of need for every group to be in contact with every other one, led to a conscious decision by key movement elites to give up the global efforts in favor of concentrating on issue areas (Perneczky 2000).

Although there is an annual meeting of environmental NGOs, debate continues on its usefulness as a decision-making forum with some arguing that the meeting has become too large and unwieldy for effective decision-making and that it should be turned into more of a jamboree. Monthly meetings organized by the Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation (the successor of Environmental Partnership for Central Europe or EPCE – Hungary) since 1996 provide the opportunity for more focused gatherings of interested groups. Attendance at these meetings varies depending on the issue, but a core group almost always attends, including most of the prominent organizations in the movement (Foltányi 2001).4

More developed than the overall national network are the issue networks. Groups often belong to more than one network and the issue areas of the networks often overlap, but one can identify several clear networks. Waste, energy, nature conservation, environmental education, and transport have well-developed networks with periodic bulletins.5 There is also a network for rural development and sustainable development, including alternative “bio villages.” Some of these networks feature a prominent group, and others, e.g. nature conservation and environmental education, are actually networks of networks (in some cases multi-branch organizations). Groups involved in the same issue areas have more in common

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4 These organizations include the following: from Budapest – Clean Air Action Group, Hungarian Nature Conservancy, Birdlife Hungary, Green Cross Hungary, ELTE Nature Conservation Club, Waste Management Working Group (HuMuSz), Ecoservice; major groups from other regions – E-Misszio (Nyíregyháza), Tree of Life (Eger), Green Circle (Pécs), Reflex (Győr). Other major organizations also attend seminars relevant to their activities. Each month’s seminar covers a timely issue, e.g. the cyanide spills in Romania affecting the Szamos (Somes) and Tisza rivers, water management, new laws and bills, rural development. When there is no urgent issue, the seminars are devoted to information exchange among groups or some aspect of non-profit activity, e.g. financial management of nonprofits. Hundreds of invitations go out to movement groups and interested parties; normally 20-40 attend. Most groups are from in or around the capital, as it is more difficult for representatives from groups farther from Budapest to get into the meetings. (Information from Foltányi 2001).

5 There is also an alliance of over 300 environmental businesses (e.g. hazardous waste removal firms), but this alliance is more in the business sector than in the NGO sector. For an English-language example of these bulletins, see The Waste Diver, a summary of articles from the bulletin KukaBúvár put out by HuMuSz (2000), the Waste Management Working Group.
than they do with the whole environmental sector and stand to gain more immediate benefits of cooperation, including awareness of developments, regulation and legislation in their issue area, the use of shared experience, and, with coordinated action, possibly greater influence in policy processes and visibility in the public sphere.

While the movement grew rapidly through the mid-1990s and then leveled off at the end of the decade to a maintenance rate, and while networking increased, there was a marked increase in specialization and professionalization of environmental NGOs. Several forces pushed the movement in the direction of professionalization. To register officially, a group needs statutes and an organizational structure. In the communist period, groups were unofficial, and many chose to continue this course at the beginning of the transition. However, in order to carry out any financial activity or to receive government funding or external grants, groups have to be registered. Then came the emphasis of grant-givers on “capacity-building” in order to make organizations more sustainable and effective. Part of this endeavor was funding for seminars and training programs on financial management, organizational development and management, computer technology, leadership training, and even language (almost always English) training. Meanwhile, major decisions about the future of the economy, land and society were being taken. Activists felt the need to try to influence these decisions, and professional expertise and involvement increased credibility with government officials and the public.

Perhaps the major impetus to specialization has been the complexity of the issues themselves, requiring high levels of knowledge and many hours of work. These demands became all the more compelling as the conviction among activists grew that they needed to bring about real, pro-active change in the environment and environmental policy, not just contain themselves to protesting government decisions. In order to deal with complexity and

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6 Interview subjects were unanimous on this point, regardless of their positions in the movement (or as observers of the movement) and their personal preferences for types of organizations and activism.

7 Both the EPCE and the REC had programs to build organizational capacity, and this is still one of the goals they support as they fund projects. (See REC Annual Reports and EPCE 2000). It was also one of the main goals of the PHARE civil society development program (CSDF Slovakia 2000).
the involvement in policy debates required to achieve change, groups had to specialize. The granting process also promoted this strategy, in that grants were most often for specific projects or activism in a given field, and demonstrated knowledge and capacity in an area increased the chances for getting grants. Once a grant was received, financial and substantive reporting requirements furthered professionalism in an organization.

With the professionalization, specialization, and stronger networks have come more services for movement groups and citizens. Although there is no real umbrella organization for coordinating movement policy, some movement-wide activities are taken on by individual groups. The Environmental Management and Law Association (EMLA), for example, is quite a developed organization and is recognized as a leader in the legal field. The group comments on and suggests its own versions of draft legislation; it also offers pro bono legal services for citizens’ groups and other organizations seeking an end to environmentally-damaging activities or redress for the effects of contamination. The Clean Air Working Group not only works on pollution and transportation issues, but develops an “Alternative State Budget” every year, as a means of raising social consciousness and as a point of departure for lobbying the government for more positive action in the environmental and social fields. A number of organizations, e.g. the Ecoservice Foundation in Budapest, also offer information services for citizens and groups or for environmental education.

Beyond these trends that are basically internal to the movement, movement actors have recently expanded their cooperation with groups and other actors outside of ecology. Among the most marked efforts at cross-issue cooperation in the NGO sector are projects like the Hungarian Partnership’s Greenwork program, which seek to combine environmental concerns with those of the Roma minority (Ökotárs Alapítvány 2000, 28). Environmental organizations have also increased their efforts to work together with local governments. Encouraging this development was a grants program funded by U.S. AID and administered by the REC’s local

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8 An example of groups that incorporate Roma into some of their projects is Gőncöl Alliance, a long-established group in Vác, that developed a project in 1997 to involve Roma basket-makers in their bird protection program.
office (REC-Hungary 2000). Some efforts at cooperation with the business sector have been undertaken, but, although more groups and especially more national-level actors recognize the importance of these endeavors, this type of cooperation is still limited. The limitations stem from genuine differences in interest, different ideological and political perspectives, and lack of business experience on the part of the NGOs (Perneczky 2000).

Movement actors also continue to strengthen their international connections in the environmental sphere. Not only do more groups have experience with foreign groups and funders, but the types of cooperation are also growing. Immediate cross-border cooperation has been developed by groups local to the borders and prioritized by grant-givers (in, for example, the “Black Triangle” grant program of REC). Issue networks in the country have helped to expose new organizations to like-minded organizations abroad and have very definitely increased the flow of specialized knowledge and awareness of different events, types of activism, and solutions attempted elsewhere.

Ecology is recognized as one of the NGO areas that gets more foreign funding than most (Kuti 1996, 123; Kutí 2000). This funding has come through two major Western initiatives – the Regional Environmental Center, set up jointly in 1990 by the United States government, the European Commission, and the Hungarian government, and the Environmental Partnership for Central Europe (EPCE), a consortium of major private foundations – as well as from individual organizations abroad, for example the Dutch initiative Milieukontakt Oosteuropa or the Soros Foundation. Governmental and intergovernmental aid has also come to the environmental sector from the United Nations Environment Program, US AID, the European Union’s PHARE program and pre-accession funds, and the Danish and Dutch governments, as well as other countries and organizations.

There is also funding for NGOs from domestic sources. Most comes from the Central

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9 A look at the lists of grant recipients in the REC, EPCE, and PHARE reports since the inception of their programs produces a list of 300 different groups (and many more, if one counts branches of organizations separately) that have had some experience with foreign funding. Over time, the prominent groups do tend to get more and bigger grants, but the point here is that a significant part of the movement has had some contact with foreign organizations or groups.
Environmental Fund administered by the Ministry of Environment for services rendered by specific organizations, often on the basis of subcontracting. The Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation has been leading a movement-based effort to make the tendering process for these contracts more transparent (Foltányi 2001). The parliament also has some funds to disperse. One of the more interesting sources of funding for NGOs, particularly small ones outside the capital, derives from Hungary’s “1% law.” This law allows taxpayers to designate 1% of their taxes to a qualifying NGO or foundation of their choice. Environmental groups get some funding from this source, but it is a very small part of the resources flowing to the movement. The environment tends to be lower than first place in citizens’ priorities, and because so few taxpayers designate environmental NGOs, campaigning for this funding is not a priority for most ecology groups (Kuti 2000; Török and Sopp 2000).

Although environmental values in the population and support for the Danube movement in its opposition to state socialist authorities were high prior to the transition, the environment quickly fell down the list of citizens’ priorities. A Gallup poll in 1992 already placed the environment behind issues of unemployment, poverty and crime (reported in Szirmai 1997, 31-32). A study based on a representative survey of the adult population’s giving and volunteering behavior in 1993, showed that 4% of the hours volunteered went to environmental organizations (Nonprofit Kutatócsoport 1995, 36). The movement fared worse with donations, receiving 1.4% of the cash and 1.1% of in-kind donations (ibid., 34-35). These results would have been during the low point of support identified by activists and observers. The situation has started to improve in the last couple of years, though, as the changes of the

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10 An additional 1% may be designated for religious organizations or for a particular item of the state budget. Taxpayers may designate their 1% increments to only one organization [i.e. they cannot split them up] and in order to designate the 1% they must submit a separate slip with the full name of the organization and its tax number. Undesignated or incorrectly designated donations revert to the state budget. It took some time and concerted annual campaigns led by the Non-Profit Information and Training Center (NIOK) for citizens to become familiar with this practice (Török and Sopp 2000). Still, the process is cumbersome and not utilized by over half the taxpayers. From 1997 through 1999, 30.6% of taxpayers exercised the 1% option all three years, about another 14% filed designations during two of the years, and a further 14% designated a beneficiary for one of the three years (Nonprofit Kutatócsoport 2000, 219). By far, the greatest number of designations go to foundations supporting individual schools (Kuti 2000). For further discussion of various aspects of this law and its effects, see Nonprofit Kutatócsoport 2000 or “1% law” under NIOK 2001.
economic transition settle and local communities and elites either have resources or feel that addressing environmental issues at this point will not necessarily threaten their livelihood (Szirmai 2001).

The Hungarian movement before the transition

During the period of transition away from communist rule, the Hungarian environmental movement played an active role in mobilizing popular protest against the government. The focal point for this protest was the decision to build two dams on the Danube river at Gabčíkovo (Slovakia) and Nagymaros (Hungary) as the basis of an Austrian-Czechoslovak-Hungarian hydroelectric energy project. The project raised a number of serious environmental concerns, particularly as the dams would divert part of the river from its natural course, causing major change to the environment in Hungary.¹¹ Hence, the Danube Circle [Duna Kör] with a coalition of similar groups¹² became the most visible actor in the environmental movement and the dam issue became a vehicle for broadening social activism against the government from the small circle of well-known dissidents to larger sectors of the population (Enyedi and Szirmai 1998, 151; Szirmai 1997, 34).

While outside of Hungary the Danube Circle was seen as the pinnacle of the movement, a lot more activism was taking place on different levels. Local movements or citizens’ committees formed to challenge various types of pollution or government decisions deemed detrimental to the health of the community. These groups comprised a whole second level and accounted for a major part of environmental activism in the 1980s. It was in this forum that

¹¹ After the transition, the Hungarian government resigned from the plan to build the Nagymaros dam and tried to prevent the Slovak government from going ahead with the project. Slovakia won its case in international court and proceeded to build the Gabčíkovo dam.

¹² A few groups were active on this point, including the “Blues,” “Friends of the Danube,” “Initiators of the Plebiscite” (over whether to continue with the dam project) and “Watermark Group.” See, for example, the open letter of these groups to the Chairman of the World Commission for International Environmental Protection and Development (“Open Letter” 1987). Signed in Budapest on May 10, 1987, it was originally published in the opposition journal Demokrata. For a good overview of the Danube Circle movement before and just after the transition, see Szirmai 1997 (36, 39-57)
citizens gained the experience of challenging – and occasionally changing – policy decisions.\textsuperscript{13} Many of these committees were also the forerunners of the local groups still active today and some of their participants have gone on to form other local committees (not necessarily in the area of ecology).

A third set of important activists were the university and high school student groups. Their members often had some technical knowledge of the environment and ecology and made the early contacts between the Hungarian environmental movement and organizations abroad (Foltányi 2001). One of the best-known of these groups is still a major group in the movement: the ELTE Nature Conservation Club founded in 1983 at Eötvös Lorand University in Budapest. A couple of important regional groups also date back to pre-transition student activism, namely Reflex in Győr and E-Misszio in Nyíregyháza.

All of these groups were volunteer-based. Almost all were informal and unregistered, unless they were a chapter of an official organization. The general tenor of the activism of independent groups was resistance to a given policy decision by the government or practice of a local enterprise. While the Danube movement parlayed its popularity in the direction of a more general opposition to the system and its insulated decision-making processes, the groundwork for a more general movement was set up by the university and technical college groups. Some activists in the official organizations became more critical through the 1980s, and then helped transform their organizations into participants in the post-communist movements.

With the transition, many leading environmental activists joined the new political parties and attempted to bring their priorities into party platforms (Hajba 1993, 19; Szirmai 1997, 81-86). A few others formed green parties that failed badly in the first free election in 1990 and have never succeeded in gaining enough votes to go into parliament. Of the more mainstream parties, several mentioned environmental issues during their campaigns, but little was done by the new governments.

\textsuperscript{13} The prevalence and importance of this second part of the movement during the 1980s was emphasized to me in an interview with Éva Kuti (2000). See also Enyedi and Szirmai (1998, 151).
Environmentalists elected as candidates of the main parties’ and deputies who support environmental protection have formed a green caucus of 30-40 members in the parliament that attempts to push environmental legislation forward in their own parties and in parliament, often working with colleagues from the movement (Szirmai 2001). Some of these deputies are members of the Parliament’s Environmental Commission, which is also relatively open to contact with movement groups. However, the caucus and the Environmental Commission are not very strong, and the environmental minister has remained a weak voice in the cabinet. So, while there are green “movements” closer to the Hungarian Socialist Party (the post-communists) or the Federation of Young Democrats (the leading party in the current governing coalition), the political party system has not been the main arena of environmental activism.

Summary

Many continuities help to shape the overall structure of the Hungarian movement. In particular, the multiplicity of actors in the environmental movement and its marked decentralization continue trends from the pre-transition past. Also still visible are the three tiers of activism – the local, university-based, and national – and, indeed, many of the prominent pre-transition groups. The national level has probably changed the most, as the Danube Circle (and the Danube movement in general) has become one of many issue-focused organizations. Issues and level of organization have changed on the local level, but this still remains a large sector of rather autonomous groups in the movement. The university-initiated groups of the past have become some of the lead organizations in certain issue areas (e.g. ELTE) or in certain regions (e.g. Reflex, E-misszio).

Even with these continuities, though, rapid growth, institutionalization, strong trends toward specialization and professionalization and a clear increase in networking have transformed the movement significantly in the period since 1989. The old division between official and unofficial organizations has lessened as all (with the exception of a couple marginal green parties and party-based movements) have focused more on the spheres of environmental activity most important to them than on national politics. A much more developed layer of
national-level and foreign-supported foundations, networks, services, and information centers has helped to provide the expertise and assistance for individual groups to build effective organizations and pursue their goals.

At the same time, the emphasis in activism has shifted from protest to participation in decision-making processes at various levels, monitoring, education, lobbying, and action to improve the physical environment. In organizational structure and types of activism, then, the Hungarian movement now resembles much more its counterparts in the developed countries of the West. It has yet to achieve the level of activism and base of support that characterizes many of the Western movements.

Worrying for activists is the fact that the high priority given to environmental issues by society at the time of the transition has been eclipsed by economic and employment issues and, in some cases, lessened by the decrease in visible industrial pollution. Moreover, tackling the new issues of urban sprawl, land use, traffic, and waste often runs counter to the consumerist aspirations of average citizens and the power of commercial advertising. In general, the movement has low visibility in the public sphere, a fact recognized and bemoaned by some of its leaders, and one addressed by the swing in emphasis in environmental education back toward children.

**The Czech movement: current state**

In terms of number of groups and organizations, the Czech environmental movement has grown until the last couple of years, when the number of groups stabilized at over 600 (including multiple branches of some large organizations). Most of the growth occurred in the

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14 The data for the Czech movement are more sketchy than for the Hungarian, as there are no comparable studies to the KSH series on non-profit organizations. The REC *NGO Directories* for 1994 and 2001 list 636 and 644; the 1997 directory lists only 435 and REC 1997b reports 520 in mid-1996. It is possible that there was a dip in the number of organizations in the second half of the 1990s, but none of the movement participants I interviewed saw this pattern, even though they did see dropping membership within organizations and, especially, declining public support. Currently the general list on the ecn.cz server, which functions as the server for the movement and most of the third sector, has 795 organizations and foundations subscribing to its general environmental protection list (549 of which are chapters of larger organizations, especially the ČSOP). Among those organizations, though, are several that are concerned primarily with other causes, so, again, the total comes out in the mid-600s counting branch chapters.
first couple of years; and for several years there was a fairly rapid turnover of organizations as old ones died out and new ones came in. Both growth and turnover have slowed now (Šulcová 2001).

The Czech movement, like the Hungarian, encompasses many local, multi-issue groups. However, its national coordinating presence is stronger than in Hungary. One explanation for this difference is that some of the early prominent actors in the movement were founded as national, often “campaign-oriented” groups (Kotecký 2001, Jehlička 2001b). Among the more visible of these were Děti Země (Children of the Earth) and Hnutí Duha (Rainbow Movement) and then Greenpeace; other less campaign-oriented organizations with visible profiles at the time of the transition were also nationwide actors with many branches, e.g. Hnutí Brontosaurus (Brontosaurus Movement), Strom Života (Tree of Life), both officially tolerated education and awareness movements aimed at youth, and the even more official ČSOP (Czech Union for Nature Conservation) and SZOPK (Slovak Union for the Conservation of Nature and Landscape). The ČSOP and SZOPK were the main state-sponsored organization, but some chapters and activists worked together with activists from the independent movement, and many of the chapters have remained active in the new system.15

Data is not available on the number of individual activists in the movement. Current activists and observers talk of a fall in interest in the early to mid-1990s followed recently by more engagement on the part of the youth and local grassroots organizations (Beckmann 2001, 9; Kotecký 2001). A study on giving and volunteering in the Czech Republic estimates, based on a survey conducted in April 2000, that 29% of Czechs are members of some sort of non-profit organization (12% are members of civic associations). Of those who claim membership, 20% of them belong to ecological organizations (Frič et al. 2001, 37). This would mean that about 5.8% of the adult population belongs to ecological organizations. This figure seems high even counting passive membership in one of the chapters of the ČSOP.16

15 For more extensive discussions of the history of the movement during the communist period, see Vaněk 1996 and Kundrata 1992.
16 With over 400 chapters still on the books in the ČSOP alone, a lot of the symbolic membership
Of those who volunteered, that is 16% of the population in the post-communist era, 12.4% (or about 2% of the adult population) volunteered for an environmental organization (ibid., 61-62). An estimated 0.7% of the adult population gave some form of in-kind donation and 0.6% gave some form of monetary donation to environmental organizations (ibid., 50) Although this survey data is not a conclusive study of the actual number of members and supporters of the environmental movement, it does not indicate a strong, active base of support, but neither does it indicate overwhelming indifference. More important for the future of the movement are the youth that the study excludes; and this is where activists are placing their hopes.

Over the last decade, environmental groups have clearly developed and institutionalized their organizations. Not only have most registered with the authorities, which requires having statutes and at least a minimal organizational structure, but many have also sought and received grants for office technology, especially computers, staff salaries, and staff development programs on everything from accounting to management to specialized training regarding technical environmental issues (see note 7 above). This direction of development has not suited all groups, especially those for whom a lack of hierarchy and formalism is an important ideological commitment. All-volunteer groups who do not conduct any financial activity can avoid this sort of institutionalization, but those who want to carry out financial activities must register, as must those who seek grants from foundations or the government.

Following on the heels of organizational development, the twin trends of specialization and professionalization have strongly affected the Czech movement.17 The large number of groups, the level of expertise needed to participate in newly-opened venues for influencing political decision-making, and the increasingly project-focused nature of available grants all encourage specialization. Even some of the more general campaign groups have set up

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17 As in Hungary, this was a unanimous view, regardless of position at the center or periphery of the movement and of personal preferences for certain types of activism.

characteristic of the old regime may still remain. However, this membership figure is probably the result of a skewed ecology sub-sample in the general survey.
specialized sections and focused their activities on a handful of issues (see, for example, the programs featured in Hnutí Duha 2000). Although there is still room for general consciousness-raising activism and although some leading groups still engage in these activities, the predominant forms of activism are disseminating information, longer-term education, trying to influence decision-makers through lobbying, participating in open meetings, commenting on draft laws, and engaging officials in impact assessment meetings. Many groups also engage in direct clean-up or nature-sustaining activities.

Protest occurs, but it is not as central a strategy as it was at the time of transition. Most groups and movement leaders fought the government attacks on them in the mid-1990s (see discussion below) by distancing themselves from radicalism and presenting themselves as professionals well-armed with knowledge of the issues. In a representative survey of the NGO sector in 1998, a full 65% of the surveyed ecology groups reported that they did not mobilize the public, and 78% said that they did not organize protests against government decisions (Frič 1998, 28). This surprising result may be partly based on an unusual sample, but it also reflects the urgency with which movement groups wish to avoid a radical image.

National-level networking seems a bit stronger than in Hungary. Among those working the third sector in the Czech Republic, ecology is recognized as one of the best when it comes to organization (Kelly-Tychtl 2001). With several prominent national groups, the Econnect computer network, and centers of activism (where key groups are located in close proximity to each other) in both Prague and Brno, communication is generally quite good. Groups have also developed issue-specific networks to facilitate information exchange and their own activism. Among the strongest environmental networks in the Czech Republic are those for transportation, energy (with a subgroup particularly concerned with issues of nuclear energy and the new Temelín atomic energy plant), environmental education, nature conservation, and environmental information service and advisory groups. Waste management and toxics also have substantial networks.18

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18 Transport, energy, waste management, nature protection, and environmental education have their own
These networks operate at various levels of formality, from the formally established and officially registered, e.g. environmental education, through those who have not registered but have a formal structure and regular meetings for coordination, e.g. waste management, to informal cooperation networks, e.g. energy (Kotecký 2001). The level of formality does not always correspond to the level of cooperation, though, as cooperation is to some extent driven by whether there are pressing issues.

Beyond the general national network and issue area networks, the movement has a few central service organizations that assist all movement groups (and provide information to citizens). Three of the most developed of these organizations are Zelený Kruh (Green Circle), the Center for Citizens Support run by Děti Země, and the bulletin Sedmá Generace published by Hnutí Duha, which serves as a forum for the exchange of views in the movement. Other, more specialized centers are also recognized and consulted by movement groups. Examples would be the Veronica Ecological Institute, which provides advice and assistance principally to groups working on sustainable development projects, and the Ecological Law Service, which serves as a legal consultant.

The Green Circle was first set up in 1989 as a service to help environmental NGOs unify the movement, but there were different opinions about the role Green Circle should play, with some organizations being more wary of submitting to an umbrella organization than others (Drhová 1998). Its member organizations19 then reconstructed Green Circle as a legislative coordinator for the movement, relying on the support and initiative of the Dutch organization Milieukontakt Oosteuropa.

The two main purposes of the center are to gather and disseminate information to movement groups about legislation in process and regulations in the Ministry of Environment and to represent any coordinated views of those groups to the ministry and parliament (Drhová lists on the homepage of the movement server (see www.ecn.cz).

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19 These fifteen members include some of the most prominent organizations in the movement (Zelený Kruh 2000, see also their website at www.ecn.cz/GreenCircle/) Besides the legislative service, Green Circle runs an information center for groups and citizens and puts out an occasional newsletter, Strípky.
The center also organizes a yearly Green Forum meeting between environmental officials and any interested movement groups and tracks legislative voting records on environmental issues. Most active are the member groups, but others are welcome and invited; they are also on an e-mail list to be notified of the legislative events and opportunities for input.

The information center run by Děti Země serves individual citizens, small local groups and other movement actors as a comprehensive resource center. Indeed, interviewees from other groups and organizations mentioned that they sometimes refer people and groups to this information center when they receive requests beyond their specializations or capacity. The center helps citizens and groups with a whole range of needs from basic information about ecology or policy or law to assistance in participating in environmental impact assessment hearings. *Sedmá Generace*, features short articles on a variety of environmental topics and a letters section where many of the central issues facing the movement are debated. Other environmental publications, e.g. *Nika* and *Veronica*, have a more defined focus, conservation/nature protection and sustainable development, but are also widely read in the movement.

Movement organizations are now engaged in a new trend toward forming alliances or coalitions with actors other than environmental NGOs in order to address specific issues. For example, a formally-registered coalition of local community groups and local and national environment groups has formed to monitor and influence issues related to gold-mining (Kotecký 2001). More generally, ecology groups join, and even mobilize, local populations and governments trying to preserve not only the environment but also their traditional ways of life and culture.

A good example of the combination of these goals are the initiatives in the White Carpathians (Bile Karpaty). A number of sustainable development projects have been initiated

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20 See, *Pověz mi, kdo je nejkrásnější II*, a booklet listing the major bills related to the environment and the voting records on them in parliament (Zelený Kruh [1998]).
by different groups in that region, and the cultural identity of the area has led local environmental activists from the Society for Sustainable Development (Společnost pro trvale udržitelný život, STUŽ) to combine with local citizens and officials on both sides of the Czech-Slovak border to create a Euroregion.\footnote{Veronica and many other organizations are active throughout the region. However, the creation of the Euroregion was a STUŽ initiative to mitigate the negative environmental and social effects of the new border between the Czech Republic and Slovakia.} The Greenway tourism trail projects – there are several on the Prague-Vienna Greenway – also try to preserve environment and culture, in part by engaging and supporting local businesses. Funds from European Union’s PHARE program distributed through the Civil Society Development Foundation (Nadace rozvoje občanské společnosti, NROS)\footnote{In the literature on the Czech NGO sector, this name is also translated as the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society, which is closer to the original. However, the foundation has been using the form given above in its publications.} support projects that promote ecology and development of the Roma community.

Popular support for the movement dropped off quickly in the early 1990s (see, for example, Růžička 1993 and Kundrata 1992) and stayed down until the last couple of years. Several forces militated against the appeal of environmental activism. First was the pre-occupation with the economic transition and maintaining living standards during the initial inflationary period. Then the split of the country into two occupied center stage and postponed policy and institutional development in several issue areas (Kotecký 2001).

A more pointed cause of declining support was the attack on environmentalists as radicals and subversives by the governments of Vaclav Klaus (Jehlička 2001b; Vaněk 2001).\footnote{Klaus has a strong neo-liberal economic ideology. As Czech Prime Minister from 1992, he argued that the environment was a luxury to worry about after economic development. His party was re-elected in 1996, but the government fell in the wake of the 1997 financial crisis. While in office, he grew increasingly critical of environmentalists.} The media picked up these attacks and accented the more radical elements of the movement (Beckmann 2000; Šulcová 2001). This crisis in public image added to divisions and controversies inside the movement. The main longer-term effect, however, was to shift the movement away from direct action to more mainstream activism (Fagin and Jehlička 2001).
Meanwhile, the environmental problems of the transition started to cause citizens to question the hostility to the movement. As one activist put it “they began to see that we were right” (Leading activist in Czech movement 2001).

While they were building their organizational capacity and struggling with the political scene at home, Czech environmental NGOs were strengthening their ties with transnational environmental organizations. These ties exist at several levels. Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace have Czech chapters, the former of which is Hnutí Duha, one of the leading organizations in the movement. The prominent national groups are participants in a wide variety of transnational efforts, including, among others, the Earth Summit in Rio, the Aarhus Convention, and Central and East European (CEE) Bankwatch, programs of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and an ongoing dialogue with European Union officials, the DG ENV-NGO Dialogue Group. At the local level, cross-border cooperation is encouraged by grants from REC and other funders. Finally, there are the transnational issue networks in the environmental sector. In sum, the movement is well-connected to foreign groups. How much actual joint activism takes place is hard to judge, though. Most contacts seem to be related to information exchange, funding, and training.

Many groups in the movement have dealt either directly or indirectly with foreign funders. A handful of granting agencies channel external funds to movement groups. Two of these are based in the environmental sector and focused on the development of the movement: Nadace Partnerství (Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation, the successor to the Czech Office of EPCE) and the Czech country office of the Regional Environmental Center. Partnership has much more extensive resources than Czech REC, so both the organization and its granting operations are several times larger. A couple of other smaller foundations

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24 For a summary of the Dialogue Group’s meetings and purposes, see REC 2001a, 5.

25 The Czech office of REC was set up in 1996, later than the others in the Visegrad region. REC’s original country office for Czechoslovakia was set up in Bratislava, and Bratislava remained the contact for Czech groups after the country split. Because the Prague office was set up so late, it missed being the administrator of most of REC’s original local grants program. These grant programs were instrumental in raising the profile and stature of REC in Hungary and Poland.
support ecology groups, and the movement groups receive funding from some general civil society development foundations, most notably the Civil Society Development Foundation (NROS). Some groups also receive funding from the Ministry of the Environment for projects related directly to protecting nature.

The Czech movement before the transition

Most of the Czech environmental movement developed either at the very moment of transition or after the transition. In an atmosphere of greater political repression than in Hungary or Poland, it was difficult to sustain independent initiatives, among them environmental ones. Most visible before the transition were the official organizations, such as the ČSOP, working in the environmental area in accordance with government policy and with government support. Brontosaurus, a more independent movement focused on environmental education and organizing youth camps in nature, developed in the 1980s and was allowed to function without much intervention. Local citizens’ initiatives to change government policy, especially with respect to air pollution and strip mining, also arose in the devastated area of Northern Bohemia (Vaněk 1996). Other locally-focused groups included a particularly active circle of environmentalists in Bratislava. Finally, a small set of (usually) younger oppositionists criticized government policy under the umbrella of dissent groups like Charter 77 (ibid).

Scientists generally played a strong role in these movements, as they were the people most likely to have a general overview of the state of the environment, were often interested by virtue of their specializations, and (if anyone did) had access to data that could be used to discuss trends and policies in an informed way (Kundrata 1992, 45-46; Vaněk 2001; Jehlička 2001b). In particular, the Ecological Section of the Biological Association of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences supported environmental initiatives with information and reports, as well as with some of its own members’ participation in these initiatives. One outlet for the information gathered by specialists was the official nature journal Nika, which published increasingly frank articles starting even in the 1970s. Veronica started publishing in the mid-1980s with an independent, even more critical voice.
Immediately preceding the “Velvet Revolution” that toppled communist rule there had been a series of environmental demonstrations in Teplice and a small protest in Prague (Tickle and Vavroušek 1998, 128). While huge demonstrations developed in Prague, environmental protest meetings continued in Northern Bohemia. The spark for the regime-toppling mass demonstrations in Prague was the brutal suppression of a student demonstration on November 17. The students were protesting the regime, and among the issues they raised were the environmental conditions in Northern Bohemia and the demonstrations going on there. Likewise, the environmentalists were discussing the events in Prague (Vaněk 2001).

With the transition, many long-time activists and specialists took up positions in the government and political parties. Although this phenomenon created a bit of a leadership crisis in the movement, it led to very active environmental politics in the first post-communist government (Jehlička 2001a, Tickle and Vavroušek 1998). With the last meeting of that government, the tide began to turn, as efforts to stop the construction of the Temelín nuclear energy plant were defeated. That defeat, the election of the new Klaus government, and the split of the country into two turned the tide for the movement as well.

**Summary**

The Czech movement has changed quite substantially since 1989. The heavy sanctions on independent action during the communist system meant that groups not supported by the regime were few, small, and isolated. Most independent activity took place as sporadic local mobilization and protest against specific phenomena. (The exception was environmental education, which was less controversial.) That left the national level occupied by the official organizations, a small dissident group under Charter 77, scientific circles, and a couple more activist chapters of the official organizations.

Now several key organizations in the movement have both a national presence and branch chapters throughout the country. Overall, the Czech movement remains de-centralized and individual groups have full autonomy, but, of those in the region, it is perhaps the most well-connected movement at the national level with several issue networks, some of which are
quite strong, the Green Circle, and the generally high level of coordination among prominent groups. The growing pains associated with political pressure and movement responses to that pressure, as well as the general trends toward institutionalization, specialization and professionalization, have helped to bridge some of the early ideological gaps. As one person involved in the fundraising and granting side of the movement put it: “My perception has changed over the last couple of years. I think we can talk of a movement. Groups know what others are doing. I saw the movement as fractured. Maybe that’s not so much the case now” (Beckmann 2000). Indeed, networking has been quite successful. Although limited in scope, the coordination of major organizations’ legislative and policy efforts through their sponsoring of Green Circle assures that the key actors are informed of each other’s positions and activities.

All movements are fundamentally affected by the political system in which they work. The opening of the repressive political system clearly had a strong impact on the movement in removing the barriers to organization and sparking a strong push for participation. Likewise, the political attacks on the movement during the Klaus years put ecology groups in a dilemma that challenged their perceptions of popular support and, in some cases, the logic and effectiveness of their own modes of activism. The challenge reinforced the professionalization and specialization processes already underway and put a premium on cooperation and careful presentation of the movement to the media and public. It also prompted movement groups to expand their contacts with activists in other sectors of society and local communities.

Part II: Major Current Environmental Issues in East Central Europe

East Central Europe, like most other areas of the industrially developed world, experiences the entire gamut of local and transnational environmental problems associated with modern development. On top of the general environmental issues of development, however, these countries struggle with the legacy of the resource-intensive economy and poor regulation of state socialism, as well as the legacy of its penchant for huge projects that changed extensively the local environments in their areas.

General issues for the region
Many of the most pressing issues addressed by the environmental movements of the cases under study here are the same. A number of dominant issues associated with the socialist past, the transformation of the polity and economy, and, now, the accession to the European Union consume most of the time and effort of environmental activists.

The main environmental issues for activists and the general populations of East Central Europe before and at the time of transition were those associated with *industrial pollution* – air emissions, water pollution, mining damage (Carter and Turnock, eds., 1993; Slocock 1992). These were very visible and severe by-products of the intensive industrialization during the socialist era; and in many cases they had noticeable effects on human health. Areas of these countries also experienced serious problems with groundwater contamination resulting from untreated industrial and municipal waste, as well as chemical treatment of agricultural lands. The pollution legacy remains, even though some major strides have been made in water treatment and reducing the emissions of the more damaging enterprises.

The transformation of the East Central European economies to a market system and their opening to foreign investment has produced a mixed record on the environment. Some of the most polluting and inefficient enterprises have been shut down, scaled back, fitted with better filters, or gone bankrupt. The net effect of all of these decisions was a drop in the emission of key air pollutants in industrial cities. Yet, governments still deem certain heavily polluting enterprises as strategic to the economy or too important socially to close.

Moreover, some environmentally taxing industries, like cement and gravel, have piqued the interest of foreign investors. Recently the air emissions levels have started to climb again as the economies have recovered from the deep recession caused by the initial transition. Only some of this pollution can be attributed to industrial emissions, though. Vastly increased automotive traffic is the main culprit. The situation with water pollution is better, as these

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26 For a thumbnail sketch of some of these changes, see REC n.d., 3.
governments have launched programs to build water treatment plants, often supported by funds from foreign sources.

One of the stickier issues associated with privatization and foreign investment has been responsibility for past environmental destruction. The new owners of former state enterprises argue that they should not have to bear the burden of clean-up, and in some cases they even seek to extend the old firms’ easements toward meeting environmental standards. The fuzziness or lack of laws in this area often either cause investment to stall or lead local and national officials to be lenient with respect to clean-up and even new emissions. Foreign industrial investment, however, has also been beneficial for the environment, as new owners update old production facilities, or put up whole new enterprises that bring jobs and wealth into the locality. The increased resources in these communities then allow local authorities to address some of the environmental problems that a tight central budget (and, in the Hungarian case, an increasingly re-centralized budget) would not finance (Szirmai 2001). The environmental sector has also recognized the need to participate in making business eco-efficient. REC is now coordinating the “Aarhus Business and Environment Initiative,” funded by the Danish government and the European Union, to achieve these goals (REC n.d.).

Early in the transition, environmentalists accelerated activism on a range of issues related to public participation and access to decision-making, as well as the legal and financial regulation of the nonprofit sector. Not only did these issues arise in the debates associated with democratization and in the course of the daily activities of movement groups, but they were also heightened by the 1992 U.N. Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the 1998 U.N. Economic Commission for Europe’s Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation and the Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (generally referred to as the “Aarhus Convention”), and the attention of Western governments and foundations to the development of “civil society.”

The three prime arenas in which these issues have been negotiated with governments are the debates over non-profit legislation, “right-to-know” laws, and legislation on environmental impact assessment requirements and procedures. The countries in this study
have all adopted (and in some case amended) legislation on these three points. Movement actors pressed these issues onto the agenda and continue to work for improvement in them. They have also pushed for more access to the process of drafting legislation and regulation and for more transparency in government decisions over the allocation of funds. The legal basis of public participation is probably the area in which the movements have made the most progress, often by compelling governments to implement the international agreements they have signed. However, there are still issues about how effective that participation is, whether access to information and consultation in the drafting of laws, regulations, and programs gives social movement groups genuine influence over outcomes (Jehlička 2001b; Szirmai 2001).

Increasingly salient are the issues of land use and urban sprawl. While urban sprawl is particularly urgent around the capitals and a handful of other major cities, land use issues extend to forests and agricultural areas. These lands account for a vast majority of the territories of Central and East European countries. Changes in ownership and management practices of these non-urban areas threaten landscape and animal habitats. Thus, environmentalists often come into conflict with specific privatization processes and their interested parties (Szirmai 1997, 31).

Urban sprawl has been facilitated by foreign investment and a rapid increase in automobile ownership. Traffic now chokes cities where roads were not built to sustain such a volume and has recently reversed the progress in lowering air pollution made by closing or modifying smokestack industries. Small communities around large cities have changed rapidly, as increased use of automobiles has turned them into bedroom communities and their lower real estate prices have made them sites for large shopping centers, other space-consuming retailers, warehouses, and new plants.

One reaction to this sprawl has been a renewed emphasis by environmental activists on sustainable development and closer association with local communities. Most sustainable

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27 For a slightly dated but comprehensive review of the conditions for public participation in these countries, see REC 1998.
development projects are situated in small towns and villages distant from the capitals and major cities. Here these projects are undertaken in association with local communities that are trying to maintain their traditional livelihoods and culture. Good examples of these programs are the transnational efforts in the White Carpathians and the series of Greenways projects (nature and culture tourism trails). The latter are older initiatives, stemming from the “Greenway network” set up even before the political transitions, but they have received new impetus in the last couple years with funding for sustainable development and the new trend toward cooperating across sectors by ecology groups. The recent availability of E.U. pre-accession funds for bringing cities up to European environmental standards have also sparked stronger initiatives in larger cities as well. In 1999, the Regional Environmental Center launched a “City Towards E.U. Compliance” award competition, sponsored by the European Commission’s Directorate General-Environment.

Another set of issues resulting from the economic transition to capitalism are those stemming from rapidly increased consumerism. Not only has the avalanche of goods and new packaging created serious problems of waste disposal (accelerating local conflicts over incineration and siting of landfills), but controversies have arisen over what is being consumed, and particularly the health effects of genetically-modified food (Roe, Rousseau and Kruszewska, 1998). On a more general level, environmentalists question these values and priorities in general and, especially, in a time of economic restructuring.

In recent years issues related to accession to the European Union have taken central stage. Demands for legal harmonization and the availability of pre-accession funding for a variety of projects designed to meet European Union standards have pushed these issues into first place on the environmental agenda. Many aspects – though not all – of environmental harmonization are greeted by movement activists as positive developments. However, the

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28 When I started interviewing in Poland in 1997-98, the European Union and changes related to joining formed a complex set of issues that were listed alongside other issues. Interviewees in Hungary and the Czech Republic this year all emphasized the dominant role of European Union-related issues. The closer date of accession and their own governments’ heightened sensitivity to demands and opportunities coming from Brussels have pushed these issues ahead of others.
general accession process has drawn criticism on several accounts. In particular, activists in all three countries criticized the highway program, questioning the need for some of the highways, the siting of the highways, and the process by which the plans for the highways were adopted. Others pointed out that adopting European laws or standards actually weakened existing laws in certain areas. Finally, environmentalists have been very critical of the top-down, Brussels-centered decision-making processes in the European Union and the asymmetry in the accession process.29

**Case-Specific Issues**

Although environmentalists in both countries (and in Poland) expend most of their efforts on the issues discussed above, the weight given these issues varies some, depending on the actual environmental conditions in the country. There are also a couple of major issues specific to the country in question.

**Czech Republic**

In the Czech Republic, energy is an urgent topic. The Czech economy is still very energy-intensive. Debates over energy issues often involve nuclear energy. Although Hungary relies more extensively on nuclear energy than the Czech Republic, the salience of the issue in the Czech Republic has been heightened by the building of a new plant this decade. (Hungary and the Czech Republic each have one older plant with four reactors30; Poland has no functioning nuclear energy plants). Over the course of the transition, the most heated debate has been over whether to finish construction of the Temelin nuclear plant. After many delays, the first reactor was finished and connected to the power grid in December 200031; the second

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29 For a discussion of some public perceptions about the environmental accession process, see REC 2000.

30 These nuclear power plants are located in Dukovany, Czech Republic, (put into operation between 1985 and 1987) and Paks, Hungary, (put into operation between 1982 and 1987). Nuclear reactors accounted for about 20% and 40%, respectively, of the Czech Republic's and Hungary's electricity production in 2000. (IAEA 2001)

31 The original attempt was made in September, but a series of technical problems led to delays and to running the plant at less than half its capacity (Albert 2001).
reactor is due on-line in March 2002. The Temelín issue is not only a domestic one. Opposition from the Austrian government and Austrian environmental groups has been quite strong, with the latter periodically blocking border crossings in protest.

**Hungary**

In Hungary, issues of water pollution, flood control, and water management generally have a stronger importance than in the Czech Republic. The floods in the summer of 1997 raised the profile of water management issues in the whole region. However, the centrality of the Danube and Tisza rivers to Hungary’s natural landscape and human settlement make water management particularly salient. The subject has received heightened attention in the last couple of years with Hungary’s loss of the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros dam case in the International Court of Justice in the Hague, the release of cyanide into the Szamos and Tisza rivers from a gold-processing plant in Baia Mare, Romania, and the blocking of shipping on the Danube after the NATO bombing of Yugoslav bridges.

A more positive impetus to focusing on water management has come from international efforts to clean and manage the Danube, punctuated by the Environmental Programme for the Danube Basin launched in 1991 and developed through the mid-1990s by a consortium of the countries along the river with the support of major European and international organizations (Hajba 1993, 23), the Danube Information System set up in 1992, the Danube River Convention of 1994, and the Danube Pollution Reduction Programme founded in 1997 (Duffy 1998). Hungary is a very active participant in all of these efforts.

**Issues for movement development**

Beyond the issues affecting that state of the environment, movement actors are concerned about some internal issues. The major groups are generally in pretty stable, if tight, financial situations, but sustainability remains an issue for many smaller groups. With the topic of sustainability come questions of whether a given organization should run certain for-profit ventures. Some activists object to doing so on philosophical grounds; others see such
moves as a guarantee of independence from government or foreign funding. Many groups already have such projects up and running, involving everything from consulting to making apple juice.

The need to cooperate with businesses is on the agenda for several reasons. As foundation funding dries up in the early accession countries, some organizations are looking to corporate sponsors to fund projects. This is a sensitive topic, as the balance between working to the advantage of the environment and “green-washing” is delicate and differently perceived by different actors in the movements. Forging new relationships with business is also on the agenda because businesses make key decisions affecting the environment. If activists are striving for pollution reduction and sustainable development, they need to become involved; this is the principle behind the Aarhus Business and Environment Initiative, as well as the theme undergirding movement actors’ increasing involvement with local communities.

Another decision faced by ecology groups is how much of their time, effort, and resources to put into alliances with groups in other issue sectors and local community development groups. Sustainable development is the current focus of many leading groups and seen as the key to safeguarding the government. Work with groups from other issue areas is key to improving the legal and political climate for their own activism; but it is also necessary for tackling complex and interrelated issues.
Appendix

About the Movement

Is the environmental movement in [country] growing, shrinking or remaining on the same level as it was at the time of the change in the political system?
Are new types of groups forming and certain types dying out?
How do you see the general level of cooperation among ecology groups in this country? Has cooperation generally increased or decreased in the last 7 or 8 years? What are the current trends?
How does the general pattern or structure of cooperation among groups look? Do certain groups always initiate the cooperation?
Do local groups ("grass roots") generally cooperate with one another more or less than movements active at the national level?
Do you see cooperation more in certain areas than in others? For example, do groups cooperate more in lobbying and less in protests?

How do you see the cooperation between the environmental movement in [country] as a whole and foreign groups and organizations?
What does the cooperation between specific groups and foreign organizations look like?
Is there a clear division in [country] between those groups that have connections with external organizations and those that don't have these sorts of contacts?
If so, does that division correspond to: (a) the levels on which they act (e.g. local, national); (b) their issue interests; (c) their views concerning appropriate forms of activism; (d) some other factor?
Do [country] groups cooperate across this division (i.e. between those who do and do not have foreign contacts) -- or is that line rarely crossed?

About Effects of External Funding

How important is external funding to the movement? / Has your organization received external grants to support its activities?
[For organizations only] From where have you received grants? What sort of grants do you apply for?

Have you noticed whether groups that receive funding from external sources experience [has your organization experienced] pressure to reorient priorities or activism in order to gain or maintain that funding?
If so, how do they [you] react? Do these pressures conflict with their [your] need to respond to the priorities of their [your] own membership? If so, how do they [you] resolve these conflicts?

General

What do you think were the most important changes in the law on environmental protection since the change of political system? (laws and ministerial orders)
What were the most important investments in environmental protection? in concrete projects? in infrastructure (e.g. monitoring systems)?
What have been the most important organizational changes?
What are the most important or “burning” environmental issues in [country] at the moment?
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