

## SOCIAL PREMISES OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

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A decade of violent discussion, more or less creative generalizations and an intensive collection of detailed information regarding relations between man and his environment, is a period long enough to formulate basic definitions, to eliminate unrealistic concepts, as well as to determine trends for further research and undertakings in this respect. As a result of these discussions we can state that the shaping of man's environment is not a problem which concerns nature exclusively and actually has little in common with a classical nature conservation. Neither is it an entirely technological question since technology itself is neutral in relation to this problem as a whole, whereas the degree of harm caused by technology depends mainly on people who are responsible for its introduction. Neither is it a problem of economic possibilities solely, associated with the level of productive forces of a given community or nation.

If we want to find answers to the following questions:

1. Why only about 40 percent of destructions and devastations of the natural environment are economically justified as a price which we have to pay for progress, while there is no justification, either economic or social, for the remaining 60 percent?
2. Why since we have a wide choice of equally good possibilities we usually choose the one which is most harmful?
3. Why are there no simple dependences between the level of the country's or region's productive forces and the state of man's environment? We know, though, that there exist poor communities taking good care of the environ-

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ment, of its rational utilization, and rich communities treating the care of the environment as being not important.

4. Why can the state of natural environment in two neighboring countries with an almost identical economic progress and a high cultural level of the population differ radically?
5. Why is each proposal to reconsider the social and economic priorities, generally bitterly opposed or scorned?
6. Why do each culture, every nation, class or social stratum approach the problem of the environment and its stimuli in a different way?

We shall not find them in ecological, economic, or technological work. These are typical humanistic, social problems, and we have to seek answers in these fields of human knowledge.

No matter how we want to approach the problem "man-environment" it always emerges that it is predominantly a humanistic, social problem and not a natural, economic or technological issue.

Thus, we may coin the following definition; problems concerned with the issue "man-environment" are all phenomena that occur between man (or rather the human population) and his material (physical, chemical, and biological) environment creating the biotope in which he lives, works and procreates, and which he transforms in a direction, compatible or incompatible with the well-being of his own species. The investigation of the relation "man-environment" is aimed at the identification of permissible limits to transformations of the biotope from the aspect of retaining its competence as regards the fulfillment of man's needs. Its other objective is to identify the causes that brought about the dysfunction of the "man-environment" system, and subsequently to find remedial measures enabling the human community to achieve complete success: biological, social, economic, and intellectual; the range of this success will, of course, be conditioned by the biotope parameters, that is the "environment".

This definition indicates clearly that we are here not concerned with the "natural environment" as such, but with relations that occur between its state as well as possibilities and social needs. Man's social environment is of interest to us only in regards to its influence on the "biotope" variables, that is, on the material environment of human beings and populations.

It should, however, be emphasized that man's material environment is not only created by nature but also includes products made by human beings. To limit the notion of the environment solely to the phenomena produced by nature seems rather anachronistic today, since we often do not know to what category — natural or anthropic — a given structure should be assigned. Is a forest, artificially planted in rows, an element produced by nature, or by man? What is the basic difference between a spatial construction made of aluminium oxide, calcium carbonate, iron compounds, etc. by man (e.g. a residential settlement), and an analogical construction made of the same compounds in a natural way, outside the social function that these constructions fulfill? Is a discussion concerned with the question where the "natural environment" ends and the "anthropic" begins reasonable at all. As it happens the biotope of human community, its "environment", makes a functional and structural whole, in which the elements of nature and technology are so entwined that their artificial splitting up may solely do harm to a research procedure.

One of the basic problems in the study of the system "man-environment" is the identification of the ways and character of information flows between the human community and its biotope. It seems that most of the — at least — environmental stimuli, flowing from the "biotope" to the community, proceed on their way through a *sui generis* prism, that is through the sub-system "production-consumption" before they reach their target. Most of the stimuli from the community to the environment (biotope) also follow the same path. Transformations of the system of natural (physical, chemical and biological) information into a social information are not yet fully identified in this "prism". And the conclusion, if reached on the basis, that the perception of its environment by a given community is solely the function of a current model of work and consumption — that is of the style of living — would be a far fetched simplification since: firstly — not all environmental stimuli proceed through the "prism" of production and consumption (it should be indicated here that direct stimuli have an effect exclusively on individual specimens and not on the whole population in which they only act when their state is changed), and secondly — the perspective abilities of separate communities may widely differ. Identical stimuli, given by the environment, may bring about entirely different reactions depending on the social sub-stratum they come across. This is due not only to the sociological and economic differentiation within a given community, but above all to cultural attitudes which are typical of the respective social groups and actually determine how they react to the environment.

I am personally convinced that the identification of cultural determinants of man's attitude towards his environment is one of the basic tasks conditioning all activity aimed at improving relations between people and their material environment. In particular, this is true of the determination of the role of culture and cultural

traditions, when shaping relations with man's own biotope: nature, landscape, as well as living and working conditions. As we are well aware, contemporary attitudes and social behavior, and — what follows — the evaluation, or scale of values, have their roots in the historical past, in cultural traditions. Such roots persist as long as a given cultural variety is alive, though sometimes they continue to live even longer than that since they penetrate — as legends and myths shaping attitudes — into the younger culture which has developed on the remains of the former culture.

Traditions, views, ideas developed under the influence of wide cultural circles are constantly transformed, enriched or impoverished by tribal, national, and class traditions or the economic situation, etc. In consequence we have to deal here with an intricate mosaic of social attitudes and behavior, determining the relations with its own material environment, with the biotope. Views conditioned by the historical past and social as well as the economic situation, determine, moreover, the innovative absorption of the community and its susceptibility to influences exerted by knowledge, mass media, etc.

Without an analysis of cultural sources we are unable to understand why programs of the rational shaping of the environment and its protection, objectively reasonable and scientifically accurate, are approved of by some communities, whereas other communities, at the same level of development and threatened to the same degree dislike them or even entirely reject.

It does not seem likely that cultural habits could be broken by persuasion offered by scholars, or the economic situation; neither bans nor orders are of use. Even when living conditions are badly threatened, all programs for improvement are rejected by the community if they are not compatible with its cultural tradition. That is why a mechanical transfer of concepts and solutions to another country, even if tested in one country, will be a failure. It is necessary, therefore, first to learn in detail the history of relationships with the environment, local traditions and social attitudes, and then to shape the program in such a way as to make its adoption possible. Thus, the identification of the relation "culture-environment" is so important. Unfortunately, our knowledge in this respect is so far scarce. First and foremost there is a lack of comparative studies in the social perception of the environment by various nations, classes, social strata, etc. Nor have there been undertaken detailed studies of the psychological foundations of evaluation. The latter result, on the other hand, from habits and cultural traditions, informative absorption, etc. and on the other from the human organism's often unascertained, biological determinates. This last factor has usually not been appreciated. Today, because of many completed studies, we are aware that man believes a system (landscape, a settlement, etc.) to be good and beautiful, in which his organism feels well and in which

the community he is a member of has absorbed the many centuries of adaptation, which is undoubtedly partially determined genetically.

Taking into account the existing social and cultural differences we should not attempt to shape the world according to the same "technical" or "biological" pattern, even if the latter results from the best intentions and a scientific identification. When we do not include cultural and psychological variables in the optimization model of the environment, the proposed solution may seem "cool", or even "inhuman", and therefore will not be accepted by the community.

The perception of the environment is, as I have already mentioned, a derivative of cultural traditions, modified by the current style of living (the "prism"). These factors, when they operate together, determine "the optimal social model" of the state of the environment. All deviations from it are treated negatively, including these which — objectively speaking — are advantageous from economic aspects or even propitious to health conditions. These deviations are socially tolerated up to a certain intensity, and only when the latter is over stepped is the will to act born. It is highly interesting that in developed communities the limits of tolerance are predominantly determined by biological factors, whereas in primitive communities by cultural factors; this is quite a reverse situation. However, this fact has already been corroborated by other authors who have analyzed the role of culture in primitive communities. For instance, by R. Benedict (1934), L. Krzywicki (1934), C. Levy-Strauss (1962), or B. Malinowski (1957), who moreover held widely differing views.

The will to improve environmental conditions, transformed into an act in the "prism" of work, is usually motivated by the wish to reconstitute the status which a given community believes to be optimal. In such a case the community operates as a homeostat. I will describe the actual process using my own country — Poland — as an example.

Poland's modern culture is the result of the overlapping of views and concepts that had developed on the basis of a Judaic-Christian wide, cultural circle and were transformed into partly Slavic and a partly Baltic primitive substratum by Roman philosophers. A domineering, arbitrary attitude towards nature, typical of Near-Eastern peoples, which had found its expression in the Old Testament and Talmud, was transformed by the Roman utilitarianism into a set of views of Western Christianity. It met with favorable conditions for development among the West-Slavic tribes living in the area of today's Poland in the VIIIth-Xth centuries. These tribes — as proved by H. Łowmiański (1964), W. Hensel (1971), M. Dembińska (1978) and others — maintained an equally domineering and arbitrary attitude towards nature, especially forests. This attitude — as suggested by Łowmiański — resulted

from the fact that their formed homeland had been covered by forests and steppes. This caused a tremendous — for that time — deforestation and transformation of the deforested areas into agricultural land. The range of this phenomenon can be well illustrated by the fact that in 1168 the boundary separating the fields from the forests in fertile Southern Poland, followed almost the same line as today. The forests then covered about 20 % of the total area (today — 15 %), the remaining area was under fields, meadows, and quite large, usually fortified, settlements. It may be assumed that the West-Slavic tribes had always had a preference for an open, field-meadow-forest landscape, such as had prevailed in their former homeland. These preferences have survived until the present day.

The forest was something peculiar for those tribes. They penetrated into it only if they had some specific motivations (hunting, picking of fungi or berries, bee-keeping, etc.). Evil spirits used to inhabit the forest, which was a natural man's enemy and had to be dominated to a maximum. Even nowadays the attitude towards the forest is at least unfriendly, as evidenced by studies of the spatial distribution of tourism. It appears that over 90 % of tourists have a marked preference for a park landscape, in particular the contact zones of the forest, open waters, meadows and fields. Forests are seldom penetrated and if at all mainly along to roads.

An invaluable source illustrating man's attitude towards nature is the art of painting. An analysis of landscapes, painted by Polish artists from the XIth to XIXth century inclusively, reveals that social preferences of their types are astonishingly similar. All positive phenomena occur in an open landscape, a park or a field, whereas tragic, sad, full of pessimism, happenings are shown to take place in a forest (this situation is quite opposite to what prevails, for example, in Russian painting where the forest is almost always friendly towards man).

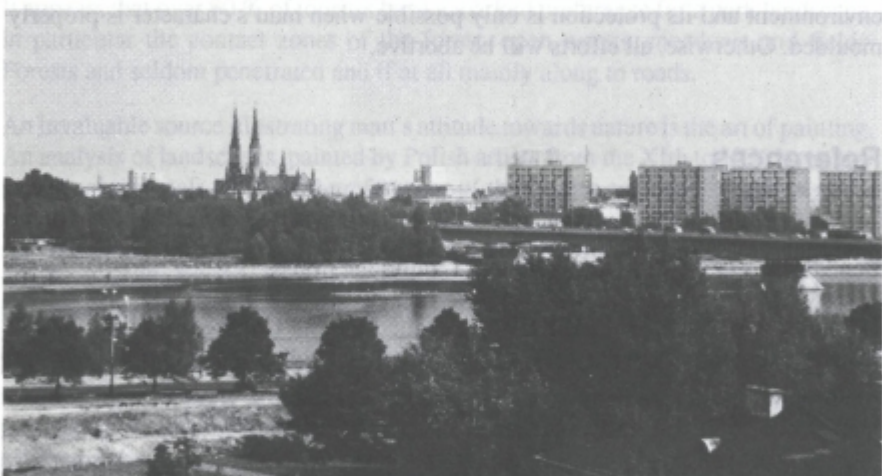
The impact of the Judaic-Christian conceptions on the Baltic (and partly Ruthenian) substratum is entirely different. Contrary to the West-Slavic tribes, with their preference of forest-steppe landscape, the bonds between the Baltic-Ruthenian tribes and the forest were quite close with the latter having been their natural and optimal environment. The acceptance of views disseminated by Christianity was slow, whereas the Baltic-Ruthenian tribes (Prussians, the tribes of Sudovia) were either gradually exterminated or mingled with the West-Slavic substratum. This mingling was however not complete, as even now, Poles with roots in the Baltic substratum, hold different views than that of Poland's remaining population. It is remarkable how positive the attitude towards the forest is and how highly sensitive to the problems of nature protection is Eastern Poland's population. Not long ago, namely at the end of the XIXth century, many villages still observed a custom of the so-called "dry Thursdays" (or "dry Wednesdays"). On those days no animals could be killed or wild plants destroyed. This was a time of total reconciliation with

nature. In North-eastern Poland, even now, it is customary among woodcutters to ask for the forgiveness of the tree they are going to fell.

At present, following civilizational progress and cultural unification, the views on environmental quality are becoming similar throughout Poland. Unfortunately, the model "man-environment" relation, advocated mainly by the Polish mass media, which on the one hand glorifies economic advantages in the narrow sense of this term and popularizes a sloppy, sentimental conception of nature protection; on the other, is not conducive to the development of proper relations between people and nature. However, even now when society is relatively unified, we can observe great differences in the social attitudes towards nature, caused not only by ethnical reasons but also by cultural aspects as a consequence of the mutual penetration of various traditions: class, group, etc. These are extremely interesting problems, though not yet fully understood. However, the future of our country — and not only of its nature, but also of its people — depends largely on their identification. Studies of these problems are therefore of vital importance since a real shaping of the environment and its protection is only possible when man's character is properly moulded. Otherwise, all efforts will be abortive.

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**Up:** Old town in Warsaw. An example of urbanization well adjusted with natural environment.

**Down:** New housing estate in Warsaw built up against the environmental conditions.

**Zgoraj:** Staro mesto v Varšavi. Primer naravnemu okolju dobro prilagojene urbanizacije.

**Spodaj:** Novo stanovanjsko naselje v Varšavi zgrajeno v nasprotju z naravnim okoljem.

*Foto J. Solon*



## Družbene značilnosti ekološke politike

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### *Povzetek*

Dve desetletji, odkar se je človeštvo začelo upirati nadaljnji degradaciji okolja, v katerem živimo, sta dovolj dolgo obdobje, da na podlagi tega, kar je bilo (teoretično, še več pa praktično) narejenega ovrednotimo vzroke naših neuspehov. V zadnjih letih je nastalo neskladje med hitrim razvojem znanja o bistvu povezanosti med človekom in okoljem ter konkretnimi dejanji v prid njegovi ohranitvi.

Žolčne razprave, bolj ali manj uspešna posploševanja, intenzivno zbiranje podrobnih informacij (kljub temu, da niso zajela vseh področij in ved) omogočajo izoblikovati znanstveno ekološko paradigmo. Zaščita in oblikovanje okolja v skladu s paradigmo nista problem izključno naravoslovja in nista zgolj v tesni povezavi s klasično ekologijo ali zaščito narave. Nista pa tudi že ključno tehnično vprašanje, ker ostaja tehnika nevtralna glede na bistvo problema. Zaščita in oblikovanje pa tudi ni izključno ekonomsko vprašanje, odvisno od bogastva ali revščine posameznih družb in dežel. **Kakorkoli že gledamo na bistvo problema "človek — okolje" bomo videli, da je le-ta predvsem humanističen, socialen in ne naravosloven, tehničen ali ekonomski.** Z znanstvenega vidika ima problem vse značilnosti t.im. velikega razvojnega sistema, v katerem so naravoslovne, tehnične in ekonomske variable podrejene družbeno sprejetemu sistemu vrednot. Odločajo o tem, kakšno naj bi bilo željeno stanje okolja in kakšna odrekanja je družba pripravljena prenašati, da bi takšno stanje dosegla. Če tako gledamo na bistvo konflikta med naravo in družbo, potem se izkaže, da so danes v svetu dominantni sistemi vrednot, ki niso naklonjeni racionalnemu, znanstveno oblikovanemu urejanju okolja, še manj pa zaščiti narave. Vendar pa je potrebno opozoriti, da je ideja zaščite okolja že skoraj povsod sprejeta, kar npr. vidimo v številnih volilnih programih; obstajajo močna in dobro organizirana ekološka gibanja — črnogledost pa vendar obstaja, ker se splošna družbena akcija kaže v glavnem le v besedah. Dejavnost okoliških gibanj se konča tam, kjer le-ta naletijo na ovire, predvsem v družbeni zavesti, manj pa na ekonomske ovire. Premagovanje teh ovir zahteva njihovo spoznavanje, brez tega bodo vsa naša prepričevanja in dejanja brez učinka. Pogosto srečujemo mnenje

(zastopajo ga predvsem ekonomisti, ki se ukvarjajo z ekološkimi vprašanji), da je varovanje narave produkt premožne družbe. Enako popularna je trditev, da okolje vedno gledamo skozi nekakšno prizmo "proizvodnja — poraba". Obe trditvi nista povsem resnični. Poznamo namreč bogate družbe, za katere so problemi ekologije nepomembni in revne družbe, kjer je skrb za naravo visoko v njihovi zavesti. Če že govorimo o "prizmi", potem je njena veljava odvisna od družbenih značilnosti ter civilizacijskih opredelitev, veljavnih v družbi, ki opredeljujejo odnos le-te do okolja.

Osnovna naloga, ki pogojuje učinkovitost vseh dejavnosti na področju zaščite okolja je predvsem v spoznavanju civilizacijskih odnosov človeka do okolja. To je predvsem zadeva opredelitev vloge civilizacije in njenih tradicij na področju oblikovanja odnosa do lastnega okolja: narave, pokrajine, pogojev za življenje itd. Brez poznavanja civilizacijskih korenin ne bomo razumeli, zakaj nekatere družbe sprejemajo razumne in znanstveno utemeljene (objektivno gledano) programe racionalnega oblikovanja in zaščite okolja, medtem ko druge, ki se nahajajo na enaki stopnji razvoja, take programe omalovažujejo ali enostavno odklanjajo. Zdi se, da za spremembo civilizacijskih navad niso dovolj samo znanstveno prepričevanje, propaganda ali ekonomski razvoj. Ukazi ali prepovedi gotovo ne bodo pomagali. Celo takrat, ko bodo pogoji za življenje resno ogroženi, bo družba odklonila program izboljšanja, če se bo pokazalo, da le-ta ni v skladu s civilizacijsko tradicijo in njenim sistemom vrednot. Zaradi tega je zelo pomembno poznati odnos "civilizacija — okolje". Na žalost pa naše poznavanje tega področja še vedno ni dovolj široko kljub številnim, včasih zelo kvalitetnim študijam, posebej s področja psihologije, civilizacijske antropologije in sociologije. Primanjkuje pa poglobljenih komparativnih študij družbenega dožemanja okolja s strani različnih narodov, razredov, slojev itd. Primanjkuje tudi globjega znanja o bistvu vrednotenja. Predstavljeni sistemi vrednot niso izpeljanka stopnje ekonomskega razvoja in pridobljenega znanja — torej variabel prizme "proizvodnja — poraba". Korenine tega sistema izvirajo iz navad in civilizacijskih tradicij, kot tudi podzavestnih nagnjenj človeka. Zavedamo se, da človek spontano pripisuje največjo vrednost lastnemu okolju (pokrajini, bivališču), pa tudi širše, okolju, kateremu se je najbolj prilagodila družba, ki ji pripada.

Če se zavedamo, da na svetu obstajajo družbeno civilizacijske razlike, ne smemo "par force" težiti k unifikaciji sistemov vrednot. Če zaščita okolja ne bo upoštevala civilizacijskih norm, bomo pri najboljši volji sestavljali "hladne" rešitve, ki se bodo večkrat pokazale kot "nečloveške". Takšne rešitve ne bodo nikoli družbeno sprejemljive. Nastala bo torej paradoksalna situacija: besedna podpora ob hkratni nedejavnosti, torej t.i.m. "sindrom kadilca".

Vrednotenje okolja je, kot smo že omenili, rezultat civilizacijskih tradicij oblikovanih z načinom življenja in vzgoje (predvsem zunajšolska vzgoja, šola kot trdnjava verbalizma vpliva namreč preveč destruktivno zaradi uporabe "imprintinga" kot osnovne slike izročila). Hkratno součinkovanje omenjenih dejavnikov ustvarja optimalni vzorec družbenega dožemanja okolja. Vsa odstopanja od le-tega so negativno ocenjena, tudi ta, ki so objektivno gledano, zdravstveno ali ekonomsko upravičena. Zanimivo je, da v visoko zazvitih družbah predstavljajo meje tolerance in odstopanj v glavnem biološki dejavniki. V bolj primitivnih družbah pa so to civilizacijski dejavniki. Namen izboljševanja naravnega okolja je vrniti okolju takšno podobo, ki se zdi določeni družbi najboljša. Družba v takem primeru deluje kot homeostat. Če vzamemo okolje raznovrstnih človekovih dejavnosti (kot na primer v Sloveniji in na Poljskem), potem dobivajo vsi poskusi urbanizacije okolja ali njegovega vračanja v naravno stanje negativno oceno. Seveda ima vsaka civilizacija lastno predstavo o naravni pokrajini: za Mongole je to npr. stepa, za Tunguze gozd. Za obe omenjeni civilizaciji predstavlja evropska, uglajena pokrajina nekaj popolnoma tujega in odbijajočega. Odličen ključ za spoznavanje preferenc različnih civilizacij je umetnost, predvsem slikarstvo. Če na tak način gledamo slike italijanskih, angleških, poljskih ali ruskih slikarjev, nam to postane jasno.