UACES 46th Annual Conference

London, 5-7 September 2016

www.uaces.org

Politicisation and depoliticisation of ecology: perspectives from Poland and Romania 1985-2000

by

Pepijn van Eeden

Aspirant F.R.S.-FNRS / PhD Fellow
Centre d'étude de la vie politique
Université libre de Bruxelles

Brussels, 22 July 2016

Politicisation and depoliticisation of ecology: perspectives from Poland and Romania 1985-2000

Pepijn van Eeden

Abstract

This article advance a pluriversal view on politicisation and depoliticisation of ecology by tracing these processes in the centre and east of Europe (CEE), respectively before and after 1989. The narrated experience of two key actors from Poland and Romania introduces the emergence of scientific ecology under state socialism, its politicisation when socialist certainties crumbled in the 1980s, and its depoliticisation after 1989. Interestingly, the results lay bare empirical shortcomings of two influential narratives on eco-politics; the linear 'economic-developmentalist' one and the 'critical-postcolonial' one. In other words: it appears that when actual actors are taken into account, the politicisation of ecology cannot be reduced to material circumstances, but emphasising local practices from an overly dogmatic postcolonial perspective is equally misguided. With reference to the work of Schmitt and Latour, an empirical argument emerges, according to which the degree of (eco-)politicisation is related exactly to the degree to which such dogmatic narratives are obstructing dialogue and short-circuiting the experiential, environmental and political. (161)

Keywords: political ecology, environmentalism, Poland, Romania, post-socialism, transition, politicisation, Carl Schmitt, Bruno Latour.

Introduction

This article touches upon an almost forgotten history: the rise and fall of political ecology in the centre and east of Europe (CEE) over the period 1980 to 2000. I have attempted to reassemble and represent some fragments of the said history from Romania and Poland, therewith touching upon wider central European and general political ecology themes. In doing so, this paper first makes a proposal for what a process of 'politicisation' entails by tapping into the work of Carl Schmitt (1963; 1985). It then relies especially on Bruno Latour (2004a; 2004b; 2005; 2011; 2013; 2014) and Isabelle Stengers (2011) in what emerges as a Schmittian-Latourian lens for understanding politicisation. The paradoxical key to this lens: relatively dense theorization is employed to come to a 'negative' viewpoint in which theory itself is the main hurdle to politicisation.

In the second and most important section, this paper zooms in on two key actors, from Poland and Romania respectively: Marcian Bleahu and Radosław Gawlik. Both developed an ecological engagement during state socialism, one as a geographer of the scientific establishment, the other as a radical anti-communist activist. Both founded and led ecological party political enterprises shortly after 1989, and both shortly served as Environmental (Vice-)Ministers before their movements imploded. From their narrated experiences this article sheds light on the position of 'scientific' ecology in CEE during state socialism, its politicisation when state socialist certainties crumbled in the 1980s, and its depoliticisation after 1989, when a new and broadly shared consensus arose over the need for a transition toward the free market and parliamentary democracy. The detailed account of only two key actors enables the exploration of precise motivations, actual experiences and personal worldviews at play, which not only significantly enriches our understanding of the processes under consideration, but also amends the dominant perspectives with which these processes are currently understood.

The latter aspect, amending the way in which the politicisation of ecology has thus far been understood, comes to the fore in the concluding section, wherein the histories of Bleahu and Gawlik are confronted to two opposite panoramas in the literature on (de)politicisation and political ecology in central Europe. The first is the linear-progressive 'developmental' or 'evolutionist' one, dominant under the transition regime in the 1990s, in which the politicisation of ecology is typically depicted as part of a larger package of 'postmaterialist values'. According to this view, CEE did still not yet reach the right stage required for such values to flower – which implicitly entails that it should advance along a path of free market-steered development to have them flower in the future. The second perspective draws its inspiration, loosely or more closely, from critical and postcolonial studies. According to this line of approach, the depoliticisation after 1989 is the product of repressive neoliberal and/or post-colonial mechanisms: an 'imagined West' and Cold War mythologies informed and still inform patronizing EU funding schemes and a professionalisation or 'NGO-ization' of locally rooted political movements, rendering them in search for

'fundable causes' Jacobsson and Saxonberg, 2013), depoliticising them by robbing them of their agency as 'a backward other in need of Western advice' (cit. Jehlička et al., 2015; Gille, 2007).

Although this article is in many ways much closer to the second line of approach than to the first, it promotes a 'radical' empiricism for relating to both these perspectives, in adopting Latour's proposal to take the actual perspectives of the actors into account. That is to say: rather than choosing or disqualifying one theoretical narrative in favour of the other, or attempting to integrate them together in a new all-encompassing synthesis, both are left intact as narratives, steering us in constructing an always particular (and never pre-given) reality. However from the Bleahu and Gawlik, and from Schmitt and Latour, we learn that politicisation is probably best be considered as requiring a degree of recalcitrance against pre-established narratives. The wider point of this paper is thus directed against overly dogmatic readings of any narrative, as effectively overruling the possibility of establishing new connections between human actors, non-human actors, processes, experiences, realities and observations, and hence preventing (eco-)politicisation from actually happening.

A Schmittian-Latourian lens

Environment, ecology, political ecology: Ernst Haeckel and Isabelle Stengers

I use 'environment' in its contemporary ambiguity: sometimes as referring to 'milieu' or 'surrounding', and sometimes to the non-human environment *as if* separated from human civilisation, as in 'environmental movements'. As for 'ecology', this term is used as originally intended by the German Lamarckian naturalist Ernst Haeckel in the 19th century, as: 'die gesammte Wissenschaft den Beziehungen des organismus zur umbegenden Aussenwelt, wohin wir im weiteren Sinne alle "Existenz-Bedingungen" rechnen können' (Haeckel, 1866, II, p. 286). The more recent project of *political* ecology is understood as having emerged to include humans into this never-ending network of 'Beziehungen'. The concept and its consequences have been usefully explored by by the Belgian philosopher Isabelle Stengers:

> (…) there is hardly an ecological situation on Earth where the values attributed by humans to different "products" of nature haven't already contributed to the construction of relationships among nonhuman living beings. The only singularity of political ecology is to explicitly assert, as a problem, the inseparable relation between values and the construction of a relationship within a world that can always already be deciphered in terms of values and relations. Which both changes nothing and changes everything, as is the case whenever what was implicit becomes explicit.

The current field of political ecology however, as Stengers would agree, is still relatively 'technical' rather than political in its assessments: it tends to draw

extensive descriptions of interdependencies, but rarely touches upon issues like politicisation. This is understandable, of course, as the field has emanated from positivist biological and environmental science – but it does require looking somewhat more closely into what this 'political' is about.

Politics, the political, politicisation: Carl Schmitt and Bruno Latour

In *Der Begriff das Politischen* (1963), first published in 1932, Carl Schmitt observes that what is called 'political' requires a very crude and non-rational dissociation from an enemy. He remarks, moreover, that construing an enemy tends to resist the regulated social domains of daily life, what Schmitt calls the so-called *Zentralgebiete*: morality (good/bad), economics (profitable/non-profitable), aesthetics (beautiful/ugly), and so on (Schmitt, 1963, pp. 1-10, 80-88). Construing a political enemy rather requires the *absence* of such a 'neutral' third party (*'unparteiischen' Dritten*), whether its stability or 'peace' derives from pre-established moral foundations, economic order, aesthetic logic, or is directly imposed by the state itself (Marchart, 2007, pp. 11-12). Therewith, arguably even more so than Machiavelli or Hobbes before him, Schmitt arrives at a 'naked' or 'groundless' conceptualisation of what *das Politischen* pertains to. His formula is as follows:

> Der politische Feind braucht nicht moralisch böse, er braucht nicht ästhetisch häßlich zu sein; er muß nicht als wirtschaftlicher Konkurrent auftreten, und es kann vielleicht sogar vorteilhaft scheinen, mit ihm Geschäfte zu machen. Er ist eben der andere, der Fremde, und es genügt zu seinem Wesen, daß er in einem besonders intensiven Sinne existenziell etwas anderes und Fremdes ist, so daß im extremen Fall Konflikte mit ihm möglich sind, die weder durch eine im voraus getroffene generelle Normierung, noch durch den Spruch eines "unbeteiligten" und daher "unparteiischen" Dritten entschieden werden können. (1963 [1932], p. 27)

Consequently, Schmitt must distinguish between 'the political' on the one hand and professional daily politics on the other. The professional domain of daily state politics only exists as successful 'neutralisation' or 'colonisation' of political processes. Moreover, because the political is non-foundational and non-rational (not *anti*-foundational nor *anti*-rational) at its very core, politicians can only be successful in neutralising it by borrowing from one or more of the said pre-established *Zentralgebiete* (domains) which, in our age, is dominated by the scientific/techno-economical one: mostly the domains of economics, regulated by functional vs. non-functional and profitable vs. non-profitable.

Bruno Latour, the prominent political ecology philosopher of our own age, leans quite heavily on Schmitt's observations. One of his main projects is to extend the political to include non-human actors, in order to advance, together with Stengers, toward a *political* ecology. In *Politics of Nature* (2004a) Latour hails Schmitt for 'bringing back to light the essential […] importance of the enemy

whom one does not hate' for literally any*thing* to acquire a political dimension (pp. 146, 207-209, quotation 278n64). In the fifth of his Gifford Lectures Latour also emphasises the importance of Schmitt's absence of a 'neutral' third party in the regard (2013). Crucial in these variations on Schmitt, as in many others, remains the *non-foundational* notion of 'the political' vice versa regulated social domains or *Zentralgebiete*, which aims to:

> carve out the specificity of the political realm and to defend its autonomy versus other domains of the social and society at large, not by falling back upon a ground or essence of the political domain, but by employing a paradoxical formulation, which avoids … the question of ground (Marchart, p. 37).[1]

In other words, politicisation is what happens when some (new) entity, actor or situation is not explaining itself semi-automatically (anymore), by a priori developed theory, by pre-established ideological coherence, by 'foundations', by a 'grand-narrative', or by 'common-sense', that are all emerging from what Schmitt calls the *Zentralgebiete*. Hence politicisation entails that terminology is utterly flexible, open for redefinition, and the 'social order' is considered unstable, malleable, or at least not pre-given: this provides for the deliberations through which a community or collective is constantly reassembled, sets goals for itself, decides how its teloi are best achieved, and, most importantly, defines what it should include, and what should exclude.[2] Closure on such questions is of course possible, indeed even very necessary, for the stability of any collective. Objective knowledge, hierarchies, institutionalised essences, foundations, depoliticised truths, or established institutions are certainly not to be discredited (e.g. Latour, 2004a, p. 107-108, 140). They can, however, only be considered as *the final outcome of past processes of deliberation* of a collective. Ultimately, they are all ultimately temporary, relative, spatially limited, contingent and situated. Moreover, when closure is not 'dialogized', but the deliberative processes that preceded it are hidden from view, when closure is presented as a 'matter of fact', or as an universal absolute, when something is not only taken-for-granted but imposed as such, then its processual political character is obstructed – until at some point 'the political returns', inevitably, simply because everything is contingently moving and transforming anyhow (Latour, 2004a, p. 207; cf. Mouffe, 1993).[3]

Re-appropriating the empirical: Bruno Latour and ANT

[1] Other theorists have attempted to imagine a Schmittian political but without the antagonism so central to it for Schmitt himself. The renowned American political theorist Sheldon Wolin, for example, proposes it as: 'moments of commonality when, through public deliberations, collective power is used to promote or protect the well-being of the collectivity' (Wolin 1996, p. 31). Notably, also Habermas projects a similar but further rationalised 'deliberative' version of the political. I follow a Schmittian-Mouffean-Latourian 'agonistic' line (see note **Error! Bookmark not defined.**).

[2] Here appears a still little explored link of post-foundationalism with neo-Aristotelian stances (cf. MacIntyre 1981/2007, especially p. 176-178).

[3] *Dialogue/dialogizing/dialogized*: this is of course borrowed from Bakhtin (1981, see the glossary by Holquist, p. 427).

I also follow Latour in insisting on the need for full-blown empiricism in tracing the relative presence or absence of 'a neutral third party' in processes of politicisation – varying loosely on what he and others call 'empirical ontology': the quest for identifying, exploring and describing worldviews: 'washing away assumptions about pre-given realities and instead asking questions about how realities are done in practices' (cit. Law and Lien, 2012, p. 12; cf. Kelly, 2014; Latour, 2014, pp. 301-307). To this aim, actor-network theory, as developed by Latour, Law, and others, takes as its leading imperative to 'follow the actors themselves' meaning that analysts should not explain (words of) actors by shifting them to their own a priori fixed grids on what the social consists of. While this paper is pre-occupied by historical description, this barely prevents taking ANT's imperative to heart:

> We have to resist the idea that there exists somewhere a dictionary where all the variegated words of the actors can be translated into the few words of the social vocabulary. Will we have the courage not to substitute an unknown expression for a well-known one? (Latour, 2005, p. 48).

Along these lines it is important to note that the two interviewees presented below are not cases in the classic sense, used for claiming truth for a 'general theory'. For such an aim, the presentation of only two cases would be wildly insufficient, of course. To the contrary, the lens metaphor in the title already suggests that, in what follows below, the theory above is best understood as an abductively useful visual instrument: the claim (or hypothesis) is not that the 'theory' of this paper is true, but merely that taking note of politicisation of 'scientific' ecology through the non-foundational political lens, as defined above, produces a far better, more lively, and potentially more useful and productive account on what happened with regards to the politicisation of ecology in Poland and Romania from 1985 onwards (for an extended discussion on abductivism: Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012, Ch. 2). It is an instrument, moreover, that makes it possible to incorporate these accounts together with those from western Europe on the same topic, into a pluralist, but altogether coherent composition.

Tracing eco-politicisation: the realities of Bleahu and Gawlik

A communist environment: Romania and Bleahu

Marcian Bleahu was born in Braşov, in Transylvania, in 1924. His father was a notary and on his maternal line, Bleahu claims descendance from Constantin Brâncoveanu, Prince of Wallachia between 1688 and 1714. After having served in the army during the Second World War, in 1949, he graduated from a study in Geology at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Bucharest. He was a silent supporter of the outlawed liberal PNL at the time, but refrained from

active engagement.[4] Instead he started a career at the Geology department, as assistant lecturer, and it was only from that point that he was first personally affected by politics: as Bleahu's familial background could easily be marked as 'bourgeois', he was banned from teaching in 1961. Strikingly, he joined the *Partidul Comunist Român* in 1965, only four years later. On the question why, he delivers the following anecdote, which is typical for his political pragmatism:

> Why? That is funny again… the reason why I became member of the party. (…) We went by car and passed Brasov, but when almost in Sibiu the driver fell asleep. We had a huge car crash. Our driver was dead immediately. Our director had several fractures, I don't know where, but he died the second day. And me, I escaped. I escaped because I was on the couch, on the right. I watched the other car coming. I put my hands in front of me to protect me. That I still have my hands… I was lucky because I had 40 fractures, pain everywhere. Then the Minister responsible for geology came to the hospital. 'It is all very tragic etcetera, etcetera.' And when I left the hospital he said to me: 'Listen, the rector is dead. You have to become the new rector of the Geological Institute.' And as rector I was obliged to enter the Communist Party. I never had any political taste for it or things like that. There was the political charge, and I had to accept it.

We do not even have to believe Bleahu's every word to consider this a beautiful tale – somewhat reminiscent of the hilarious but slightly morbid themes of some of the Romanian New Wave cinema.[5] Certainly, also, we can capture much more than only the necessity of becoming a party member if one aspired to a higher position in state socialist Romania. Bleahu's separation between the formal political act of becoming a party member on the one hand and personal convictions on the other reveals one of the most striking and well-known general traits within 'real existing socialism': its radical division between the public and private sphere. This radical divide was ultimately indebted to the threat of physical repression, later morphing into social exclusion, by a socialist state that did not allow for formal opposition. A highly protected and secluded private zone was sheer necessity in this situation – as famously reflected in the reinvention of 'civil society' by the region's leading intellectuals: Havel's talk about the 'parallel polis' against the 'post-totalitarian state' (Havel, 1985); Konrad's antipolitics (Konrad, 1986); Michnik's opposition to the 'Leading System' (Michnik 1985; 1986).[6]

The top-down politics of regime maintenance by the threat of force or exclusion was, however, only possible because it could be defended. 19th Century

---

[4] There was also the option of more active resistance at the time. Armed resurgent groups resisting the communist regime had a significant presence in Romania until the late 1950s.

[5] Nea Caranfil's *Filantropica,* 2002, for example, or Cristi Puiu's, *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu,* 2005. Everybody should be obliged to watch these great movies.

[6] Later reflections and developments: Gellner, 1994; Cohen and Arato, 1994; Ignatieff, 1995; in relation to the environment: Rupnik, 1990; Jancar, 1992. An interesting revision of the reinvention of 'civil society' concept in CEE in the 1980s – and its consequences for post-communist society – was recently developed by Matt Killingsworth, 2012.

communists had generally followed Marx in proclaiming universal scientific rationality for a sociological theory predicated upon class reductionism. After the turn of the century, 'theorists of orthodoxy', like Kautsky, Plekhanov, and then Lenin, started to become distinguishable from the reformist Marxism, led by Bernstein and other founders of contemporary social-democracy, in upholding the idea of revolution against all odds, prescribing precise socialist dogma on how the correct 'objective' role for 'the proletariat' in the revolution had to be conceived to achieve it. An internally highly coherent theoretical panorama emerged, idealist and far removed from anything experiential, but successful in claiming 'hard' sociological Laws on how the downfall of 'bourgeois capitalism' was unavoidable and, thus, the leadership of the party necessary. Laclau and Mouffe (1985, pp. 12-23) have already made clear that this decrying of non-negotiable socio-scientific Laws, determining Society and History, was of course highly political at its core, but suffocated the political in the Schmittian sense. There was *always* a 'neutral' third party: the proletariat, as represented by the communist party leadership, a dogmatic *Zentralgebiet* provided for by Marxist sociology. Or in Thatcherian rather than Schmittian terms: the communist parties effectively managed to annihilate political deliberation by believing (or claiming to believe) that 'there was no alternative'.

After the Second World War, the Marxist-Leninist narrative provided the orthodox communist parties sufficient leverage to crush the entire opposition in those countries where it was, under the Jalta agreements, also internationally entitled to do so. While the regime therefore claimed sociological Law it also, as a matter of course, had to claim the natural science and its Laws – considered to be even 'harder' than the sociological ones. Provided that issues such as party membership were formally 'in order', and the party's position in power firmly established, even formerly bourgeois 'elements' such as Bleahu could be readmitted in the sciences. When the notion of ecology rose to prominence in mostly Anglo-Saxon scientific communities, this therefore also permeated CEE with relative ease. In the 1960s and 1970s left-leaning ecological works – Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) and Barry Commoner's *The closing circle* (1971) for example – were translated in Russian and extensively commented on in the Soviet press. Also world-system theory was carefully followed by the Soviets, most notably, of course, the Club of Rome and its ground-breaking *Limits to Growth* (1972) (cf. Cholakov, 1994, p. 38; Komarov, 1980).[7] The first spheres in which these works circulated were those of Bleahu and his colleagues: working within the environmental and natural sciences and/or the quite substantial state socialist managerial classes trained in forestry and agriculture. Indeed, CEE socialist states already enacted large and highly ambitious packages of environmental legislation from the 1960s onwards – based on the assumption

---

[7] The developments in world system modelling which lead to *Limits to Growth* were closely monitored by some of the highest Soviet authorities even before the report was published (Rindzevičiūtė, 2015). The influence of *The Limits* and the other mentioned translations is clear in Komarov's groundbreaking samizdat publication *The Destructions of Nature in the Soviet Union*, 1980 (cf. p. 138). On the intriguing story of Komarov himself: Altshuler, Golubchikov and Mnatsakanyan, 1992.

of objectivist proletarian control over society as well as nature.

An anti-communist environment: Poland and Gawlik

Gawlik was born in 1957 and grew up in the 1960s, in a regular Polish family, in a village not too far from Wrocław. In contrast to Bleahu his interest in the environment was unmistakably politically charged when it first developed, firmly outside of the state controlled public domain, in the private underground. Out there it was quite clear that:

> the Oder was as black as pitch. And the fish that got caught, because they were still alive, they smelled phenol. People tried to eat the fish, but even on a plate after frying it reeked of phenol [...] and I started to read about the subject. I think that at the end of 1970s the *Black Book of the Censorship*[8] came into my hands, through my brother-in-law whom had to do with people from the opposition. From the Black Book I learned that the information about the environment was simply censored. The communists imposed the barrier.

> [My engagement] had to do with a certain place, a matter of some sensitivity to and observing environmental degradation, and also with the knowledge that I possessed after reading the censorship book. Then I began to develop this interest.

When assessing Gawlik's eco-political engagement, it is clear that his acquisition of the *Black Book of Censorship* was of crucial importance. However, what exactly did Gawlik consider to be the reason for his engagement? Was it a result of the polluted Oder, the smelly fish, his social sphere, or the *Black Book*? Through the Schmittian-Latourian lens, it is exactly this undetermined status that, together with Gawlik's clear-cut identification of an enemy, renders his position political, turns it into an open-ended project, and differentiated it from Bleahu's non-political 'objective' position.

> They [the communists] treated it [the environmental question] as a valve, let people read, learn, and then they wouldn't be political. 'They are into some ecology' [laughing].

They were likely believing it was a valve indeed – but it turned out to be nothing but. In 1985 Gawlik's old activist friend Leszek Budrewicz assisted in organising

---

[8] In 1977 Tomasz Strzyżewski, an official of the Polish censorship or *Main Office of Control of Press, Publications and Shows* (GUKPPiW), left Poland for Sweden with one of two copies of the guidelines of his office, which were reprinted in 1977 and 1978 in Polish in London by ANEKS publishers, and then spread in Poland as *samizdat* (large samples were published by NOWa, or Independent Publishing House, related to KOR, in 1977). A translation in English also appeared (Curry, 1984). The book contained guidelines for covering up sensitive environmental information. It was forbidden to talk or write about 'anything that gives information on the disaster in X', or 'about any increase in deaths from XY', about the carcinogenicity of asbestos, or even about the noxiousness of the plastics used in artificial Christmas trees.

a hunger strike in support of the imprisoned Marek Adamkiewicz, who had refused military service on moral grounds.[9] The ultimately successful action led to the foundation of *Wolność i Pokój* (WiP, Freedom and Peace), which was the first sign of open oppositional life since the repression of Solidarność in 1981. In contrast to post-'81 Solidarność, WiP used a tactics of radical aboveground 'transparency'. WiP also broke with Solidarność by stripping its oppositional stance of any allusion to a particular ideology or worldview (Kenney, 2002). WiP-members were often radically political in the private sphere, of course, but wherever WiP appeared in public it took an absolute distance from anything that came close to 'politics'. Rather, when in public, WiP used a 'politics of style', surrealistically mimicking rather than criticising state socialist discourse, or provocatively exploiting loopholes within it. Notably through state socialist allegiance or even dependency on natural science claims and universal human rights, ecology soon proved a perfect niche.

> There were ironworks located in aquifers, it was simply ridiculous, it contaminated those aquifers and there were heavy metals in tap water... We had evidence for this and the communists couldn't deal with it. We were capturing those, those blatant nonsenses, right. When Chernobyl had exploded and there was no information about it, you know, we started talking about it. I wouldn't say that there was some great ideology behind it.

Gawlik accepted to become responsible for environmental subjects in WiP from 1986 onwards, one year before the explosion of Reactor 4 of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. Besides a meltdown of matter, the accident also caused an acute meltdown of socialist self-esteem, dependent as it was on its scientific claims. The socio-political impact of the explosion is still underappreciated, partly, perhaps, because its radical 'revenge of contingency' simply escapes social structural assessment (Kenney, 2001).[10] Over the whole of socialist Europe it aroused massive discontent, quickly followed up in Poland by Gawlik and WiP, leading to the biggest public demonstrations since Jaruzelski proclaimed martial law in 1981. It propelled WiP's already planned actions against water pollution, heavily policed but accompanied by the slogan 'Police drinks the same water!'[11], onto a whole new level.

While the regime clung to its premises on the possibility for total proletarian-state control, the tension between on the one hand its public sphere, regulated by the *Zentralgebiet* of Marxist-Leninist sociology, and the public sphere of 'lived reality', outside of it, grew to enormous proportions. There were hardly any areas in which the schizophrenia became more tangible than in the government's discourse and policy on the environment, which had been so ambitious in its design, but so notoriously ineffective in its implementation. Hence, ecology turned into effective frame for protesting the existing system in

---

[9] In Podkowa Leśna, just outside of Warsaw.

[10] Recently an excellent article on the matter was written by Kacper Szulecki, Tomasz Borewicz and Janusz Waluszko (2015).

[11] In Polish: *Policja pije tą samą wodę!*

its entirety, especially after Chernobyl. An increasing number of non-human actors, from rivers to woods, from the air to alimentation, were simply unable to do anything else than turning into heavily charged signifiers for the bankruptcy of the socialist regimes.

Not surprisingly, the actions of Gawlik and WiP were initially small-scale in terms of participants, but very significant in terms of impact. Other 'ideological' discontent could be justifiably repressed as a deviation from the 'neutral' third party regime of objective Marxist-Leninism. However, Nature itself provided the ultimate core of this neutrality. Again, did Gawlik *used* the 'objectivity' of environmental hazard as a tool for political goals? Or was it the other way around, and did he depart from an 'objective' and neutral environmental concern, and from there to a political stance contra the regime? The point is exactly that even after being asked repeatedly, Gawlik is unable to give a clear answer to this question; the two seem inextricably intertwined. Gawlik asserted however:

> It was a very powerful thing. One hundred people could make a fuss and it became a subject of discussion, you know. The communists, whether they wanted it or not, right, and maybe they didn't talk about it in public, but for sure, in their circle, they had to talk about what could be done.

Actions followed against plans for a nuclear plant near *Żarnowiec*, intelligently reframed by WiP as 'Zarnobyl'. It strengthened the general perception but also increasing self-perception of state socialist unworldliness and 'being out of touch'. As the American historian Padraic Kenney (2001; 2002) has convincingly shown, WiP and, arguably, the environmental malaise itself, strongly contributed to the regime's decision to search for a new order, by de-criminalising the 'old opposition' of Solidarność, finally starting talks with the latter after wild strikes broke out around wage controversies at the end of the 1980s. The Round Table Agreement was signed in April 1989, and partly free elections followed in June.

Revolution?

The wording 'revolution' for the events of 1989 is altogether questionable. Neither the socialist establishment nor the opposition were happy to use word at the time. Quite typically, Bleahu gives only a short comment the collapse of one party rule in Romania, in December 1989*:*

> Ok, good, there was a 'revolution' and I participated as well, I went to the demonstrations and all that. And actually, these were led by Iliescu. [...] In my opinion, you know, Iliescu is a criminal.

Elsewhere Bleahu refers to the events as a 'boulversement' – meaning upheaval, not revolution. This stance is certainly understandable. Different from Poland,

the Ceauşescuian version of reality had gone unchallenged until late 1989, and there was no question ecology could politicise under these circumstances. Moreover, the murder on the dictator and the takeover of power by Ion liescu did not happen under pressure from outside of the political establishment but is perhaps best described as a well-orchestrated intra-party coup, in response to events elsewhere in CEE. After 1989 the old party elite held on to power under the name of the National Salvation Front (*Frontul Salvării Naționale,* FSN) (Antohi and Tismăneanu 2000; Deletant, 2001).

Under these circumstances, an ecological party was founded by an 'old friend' of Iliescu, shortly before the first free elections in May 1990, according to Bleahu's own words: in anticipation of the 'ecologist wave' elsewhere in CEE: the *Miscarea Ecologista din Romania* (MER, Ecological Movement Romania). Bleahu was asked and accepted to become part of this party, while a second ecological party was also founded, called PER. After the first elections they received 12 and 8 seats respectively – around 5 percent of the total vote (Nohlen and Stöver 2010, pp. 1599-1600).

In Poland, the Round Table Agreement can certainly not be described as an intra-party coup. But the situation is most certainly oversimplified as a victory for 'the Polish people' however, as a unified block lead the heroic opposition of Solidarność.

> RG: Most of the WiP's people thought that there was some risk, just as the radical part of Solidarność, called *Solidarność Walcząca* (SW, Fighting Solidarność). Kornel Morawiecki [from SW] said that it was a betrayal and so on, a collusion with the communists, it was betrayal and we had to take a stand. He stayed hidden, if I remember well, until 1991 [laughing]. And some of my friends are hiding until today [laughing], just in case.

In WiP-affiliated circles Solidarność was generally seen as the 'old opposition', and some dismissed the Agreement altogether, as a communist plotted attempt at 'normalisation' (Kenney, 2002; Kennedy 2002; Ash, 1990; cf. Szulecki, 2015, p. 29). In many ways their intuition was in many ways quite right. Many of the Solidarność-invites to the Round Table had a past in the communist party. The Agreement can very well be seen as the first step toward installing a new 'neutral' regime, a new objectivity, or a new Schmittian *Zentralgebiet* – albeit not quite a Marxist-Leninist one. Gawlik chose to join the deliberations, as one of the very few invites from WiP and the 'new generation', on one of the subtables on environment (Kenney, 2002).

Integrating the environment

In contrast to Gawlik, the reality as it was known to Bleahu did not establish itself but rather started to fall apart from 1989 onward. In Romania, in June 1990, violent anti-government riots led Iliescu to call on groups of miners to defend the government, secretly joined by one of the successors of the

Securitate, the SRI. Violent repression led to several deaths and thousands of wounded among the protesters (Deletant, 2001, pp. 218-19).[12] Iliescu remained seated as President, but the government fell, and then fell again. Finally, in October 1991, Bleahu's MER was asked to form a government with the FSN under Stolojan. Shortly after the coup on Ceaușescu the first Environmental Ministry had also been erected, over which Bleahu now came to be in charge.

On these turbulent times:

> *MB*: Ecologism was something new and appealing at the moment. It was known already known by biologists, naturally, as it is originally a biological term that talks about biotopes, biodiversity, and so on. And so, partly because it was a notion so new, the world came for it. It linked a very good sort of people: the Ecologists.

After Bleahu's term as minister, the MER disintegrated along with the existing regime and its certainties – while Bleahu objectivist ecological position politicised. As former minister, he co-founded yet another ecological party, the FER (*Federacia Ecologista din Romania*), that now turned *against* Iliescu's FSN by becoming a member of the unified opposition assembled under the Romanian Democratic Convention (*Convenția Democrată Română*, CDR). In May 1996, the CDR managed to replace the FSN. Bleahu entered parliament once again, as FER's only senator.

In Poland, after the Agreement, Gawlik ran for the first partly free elections on the list of Solidarność. He was elected to the *Sejm* and, after some reshuffling, became part of the liberal democratic *Unia Wolności* (UW, Freedom Union) in 1994 – led by Balcerowicz, one of the many post-'89 figures with a background in Solidarność *and* the communist party, and one of the architects of explicitly neoliberal 'shock therapy' privatisation. Within the UW Gawlik co-founded the 'Ecological Forum' (FE, *Forum Ekologiczne*). The UW became one of the winners of the 1997 elections and Balcerowicz forged a coalition government

---

[12] Bleahu's remark on Iliescu's criminality links to the court case running against Iliescu, reopened at the time of the interview, on charges of crimes against humanity in relation to these events.

with the conservative *Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność* (AWS), led by Buzek.

> *RG*: I think that he [Balcerowicz] didn't want to appoint me to this post. According to him I was a green fundamentalist, and actually he was right [laughing].

Within the framework of the UW, the *Forum Ekologiczne* had monopolised the ecological theme to such an extent that it seemed impossible for Balcerowicz to ignore Gawlik as one of its leaders. The competition with the post-communist SLD, to which another ecological group had just entered, may also have played a role (cf. Frankland, 2004, p. 138). Gawlik was appointed Secretary of State and Vice-Minister for the Environment – and quite similar to Bleahu, Gawlik also remarks on a 'green moment' of the political establishment for this period.

> *RG*: It was the perception and opinion of politicians at that time… A lot of things could be done because everyone accepted it. There was greater approval for ecological issues. We entered the new political system with the awareness of terribly polluted environment. The feeling that it is devastated. The recognition of green issues was much bigger at that time, in the 1990s, than today.

What can overall easily be established, empirically, for the Polish and Romanian case, is that the disintegration of previously held Marxist-Leninist foundations, 'common-sense', and known truths, coincided with the politicisation of the environment and ecology. Or to put it differently: both Bleahu and Gawlik remark on a growing concern for the environment, although from entirely different positions, and also their own advocacy emerged during a period of instability of the ruling truths. Gawlik's case is an excellent example of how a professional establishment is such a situation may 'open up' for what it had excluded under pressure from the latter. Bleahu, on the other hand, politicised gradually as one of the members of the establishment. In both cases the heavily codified, 'neutral' *Zentralgebiet* of state socialism became contested, while its political class intertwined, cross-fertilised and mingled with formerly excluded elements: the environment literally inscribed itself within established politics. The politicisation of ecological issues elsewhere in the region during this period, above all in Hungary, is also well documented (French 1990; Jancar 1992; Jancar-Webster 1991; Kenney 2001; 2002; Pavlínek and Pickles, 2000, Ch. 7; Rupnik 1990; Szulecki et al., 2015). So altogether, nothing really new is postulated when remarking that: *crisis of the foundations or* Zentralgebiete *of orderly society in CEE coincided with the appearance of political ecology in the public domain.*

The transition: implementing a new Zentralgebiet
The period during which Bleahu and Gawlik became active as professional politicians for political ecology parties was a time in which the slogan 'transition to parliamentary democracy and market capitalism' started to dominate Polish as well as Romanian society. That of course raises questions on what this

'transition' meant according to Gawlik and Bleahu. Although their views are very different in this regard, there are also some similarities. First, both did not define transition, if not probed, as a process in which something positive coming from the West or the EU was adopted or taken over. There was even some resistance, if often humorous, to such views.

> *MB*: We have already discussed that the first law of environmental protection stems from the 1920s. It is very old. […] But now we have adopted European laws which do not cover the protection of Chamois, because in your countries you do not have the same sort of chamois. On the other hand, we have adopted an article on the protection of whales [laughing].

> *RG*: The model of, for example, the Inspection for Environmental Protection [*Inspekcja Ochrony Środowiska*]: this was developed independently. Maybe they looked at Western solutions, but key is that problem was identified by ourselves. Forestry law is also rooted in Poland. It is even said that the management of Polish forests is an example for other countries.

> *RG*: French people have been helping us with the water management [laughing], for 25 years, without result [laughing].

Second, in both cases, the establishment of free market principles was by far the most important feature. According to Gawlik:

> *RG*: I understand it like this. First of all, transformation was connected with some basic economic regulations and the economy: the value of money, the currency convertibility, economic freedom.

Gawlik then continued by associating 'transformation' (not 'transition'), with democracy, human rights, and finally 'social issues' – but only secondarily. For Bleahu, land reform was the defining feature of transition. The large Romanian agricultural sector had been completely nationalised under communism, and after 1989, it had to be privatized to fit in the new free market framework.

> *MB*: The process of giving back all the domains had started, all the agricultural farms, to the old owners expropriated by the communist party. There was nothing preceding the agricultural laws at this moment.

Apposite this huge operation, similar to Gawlik, Bleahu comes up with general elections and press freedom only when he asked specifically about such matters. When asked about the connection between environment and transition, the following:

> *MB*: No, transition is something else. We started to reconsider property rights. This was very important, as I told you, we gave back the agricultural lands and so on. It was a total upheaval, the whole economy.

Altogether we can, with Schmitt, witness the establishment of a new *Zentralgebiet*. Whether from the former communist party (Bleahu), or from the

radical opposition (Gawlik), a new common ground was found and being implemented in the form of a market-steered economy and its rules. The big difference comes with their position towards the introduction toward the new market principles. Gawlik linked the new market economism, as a new structure for society, positively to environmental concerns, and worked to advance it.

> *RG*: From an ecological perspective, it [transformation] was connected to the fact that we introduced a whole body of environmental legislation which didn't exist during communism. There were some interesting elements that we managed to continue quite well, for example the *Narodowy Fundusz Ochrony Środowiska* [NFOS, National Fund for Environmental Protection, founded by the socialist government in 1989]. But in these cases there was the area of various practices, and the money that was involved in it, that we had to get access to, and somehow include in the new economic system. And then there was the construction of ecological infrastructure: during communism, there were basically no sewage works, for example.

Herewith, Gawlik adopted a position which Steven Bernstein coined 'liberal environmentalist': a position in which the advance of environmental aims is thought to be fully reconcilable with installing 'rational' free market principles, hence favouring policies based on an economisation rationale, like 'polluter pay' principles, environmental tax measures, requirements for environmental impact research, 'precautionary principles' in case of 'environmental risk', and so on (Bernstein, 2001; Neale 1997; Hobson 2013, its first instalment in CEE in 1990 and 1991: Vargha, 1992).

For Bleahu, on the other hand, the economic reorganisation threatened the existing environmental policy framework. He considered himself its protector, with forestry regulations, natural monuments and national parks as his focal points in an attempt to evade the worst excesses of privatisation.

> I managed to successfully push for the condition that no terrain was given back that had become part of the national parks. There were not a lot of them at the time, three, or four, but anyway. And then the protection of natural monuments. This was important: one of the biggest successes from my side.

Bleahu gradually accepted the new free market principles within 'rational' limits, thus again similar to Gawlik, but with maintaining a defensive, preservationist line of approach.

The difference between Gawlik and Bleahu roughly reflects the most important dividing line in established politics at the time, between proponents of 'shock-therapy' or 'big bang' privatisation (Gawlik) and proponents 'gradualism' (Bleahu) – a distinction that was partly the result of successful framing by the former (cf. Balcerowicz, 1995, pp. 158-159). Unlike the differences between Bleahu and Gawlik in the 1980s, there no 'foundational' enmity between the two however: both Gawlik and Bleahu conceived the transition first of all as the transference of free market principles into a range of other domains, in their

own case most importantly into the environmental domain.

Depoliticisation of ecology
This transition ended with a rather tragic note for both FER and Ecological Forum, as well as for virtually all other political ecology movements, parties and groups in CEE. To most observers at the time this came as surprise. The glorious role of political ecology in the 1980s and early 1990s seemed to promise a bright future and indeed. During the time of 'philosopher-presidents', most governments in the region initially took up pro-active and progressive positions with regards to environmental questions – most notably during the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 – where liberal environmentalism made its global breakthrough (Bernstein 2001). After the implosion of state socialism however the great majority of activists in CEE left the movements, often making high-ranking careers as politicians or civil servants within the new administrations. Movements gradually professionalised, became grant-dependent, and depoliticised or 'NGO-ized' (Jacobsson and Saxonberg, 2013). Those stubborn enough to combine 'politics' and 'ecology' by founding ecological parties (initially no 'green' parties), such as Gawlik and Bleahu, were often worst of. Of the many such parties founded in 1989 and 1990 only a few acquired parliamentary representation, and mostly for a very short period.

Bleahu's FER did not manage to cross the threshold in 2000. It finally morphed into the *Partidul Verde* (Green Party), which exists until today as an official member of the European Green Party (EGP), operating without parliamentary seats in the very margins of the Romanian political spectre. In Poland, Ecological Forum ceased to exist after the UW collapsed in the elections in 2001. Four years later Gawlik and his friends founded *Zieloni 2004* (Greens 2004), which also became a member of the EGP, but has so far not managed to acquire parliamentary seats – and recently saw plenty of its younger members leave to found, ironically, a new socialist party: RAZEM, which is currently one of the few viable oppositional voices left in Poland. Central European political elites, in general, gradually became disinterested if not outright hostile to eco-political ideas by the turn of the millennium.

Discussion on post-socialist political ecology in central and eastern Europe: the perspectives in the literature, and those of Bleahu and Gawlik
One of the main dividing lines that can be identified in the literature on political ecology, greens and environmental movements in CEE has been between those following a 'developmental' and a 'critical-postcolonial' perspective. This is an opposition, of course, that is not that far removed from the dividing lines in general academic and political discussion, and indeed even reflects the ongoing discussion between Bleahu and Gawlik to some degree. Interestingly, there are several compelling and thought-provoking turns to be traced here with a much wider implications than one might initially assume, also outside of east and

central Europe.

According to the 'developmental' or 'evolutionist' school, dominant from the early 1990s into the 2000s but increasingly questioned, ecological issues are typically viewed as politicising as part of a package of 'postmaterialist values' which arrives when 'Advanced Industrial Society' progresses (Inglehart 1990). This linear developmental outlook, originally developed to explain the rise of environmental activism in the wake of 1968 in the West. The measuring of 'postmaterial values' is of course a perfect fit for large-*n* quantitative researchers, has resonated strongly in the political science discipline, certainly after the first green parties emerged in the 1980s. Today it surfaces in the majority of electoral research, and also in party political science on CEE the postmaterialist outlook has been influential, including some studies on green party politics (e.g. in Frankland 2014; Rüdig 2006). From this perspective, the relative lack of politicisation of ecological issues is, explicitly or inexplicitly, considered a consequence of not *yet* having arrived in the 'advanced' stage. Per consequence, this entails that the region should further advance along a path of free market-steered development to arrive at this stage the future. This developmental view also still tends to be the 'common-sense' starting point of conversation on the topic, in the west as well as the centre and east of Europe.

The problem is, first, that the predictions on the basis of this scheme have never come true. Empirically, a more profound issue is that when ecology in CEE *did* politicise this did *not* happen, like in western Europe and the US in the 1970s, under conditions of abundant consumerism and growing material welfare. When it did flower politically in CEE, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, socio-economic *in*security was at peak level, whether personal income, the state budget, or general confidence in the ruling economic structures were concerned. When indexers started to register improvement of socio-economic conditions, in the second half of the 1990s, political ecology groups and parties did *not* grow more successful but instead disintegrated or 'professionalized'. It thus becomes difficult, if not impossible, to depicture depoliticisation and politicisation of ecology in CEE in accordance with classic developmentalist-postmaterialist scheming.

Once Gawlik story is brought to mind this becomes more than clear. Even though Gawlik's position is not far removed from the developmentalist line of approach, to completely embrace this approach would make it impossible to appreciate his own ecological activism before 1989 – except by regarding it as somehow 'fake' before 1989, which is indeed the prevailing 'commons-sense' reaction nowadays: Gawlik was 'actually' anti-communist, not a 'real' political ecologist but only an opportunist. No valid empirical argument can be found for such a judgement, and it is certainly not the view of Gawlik himself, as we have seen. It is sticky anyhow however, no doubt under influence of our a priori linear progressive-developmental perspectives. Even when pointing out the political opportunism of CEE many ecology activists before 1989, which of course was often very present (Oberschall, 1996), and which Gawlik fully

confirms for his own case, it is quite beside the point to dismiss 'proper' environmental engagement on this basis.

Second, one may recall how green politics in the west of Europe emerged largely out of political opportunism too, most obviously in Germany (Bütikofer, 2009, pp. 84-85; Probst, 2007). Thirdly, and perhaps most instructive, as Kenney has suggested, one should remind oneself that practically *no one* was expecting the Iron Curtain to come down before it actually did (Kenney 2002, p. 145). This means that *even if* environmental activism was somehow 'fake' before 1989, activists apparently preferred their 'masks', not thinking they could ever lay them off. What are the fundamental differences on all these points, precisely, with those involved or identifying with May '68 in western Europe? There is, of course, remarkable little difference. Both those in eastern and western Europe were alienated from and by the professional political class, but unable to find any common ground internally, before some of its proponents successfully gathered under the 'scientific' banner of ecology when environmental crises came along (cf. Stavrakakis, 2000).

More recently, and undoubtedly because the Great Recession shattered much previously held progressive developmental optimism, another viewpoint is growing in popularity, especially nourished by anthropologists, sociologists, cultural scholars, and critical geographers, often drawing on psychology, and mostly outside of political science departments. Here the pivotal references are drawn from the critical tradition and from postcolonial theory – Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Babha, 1994. With it, one is well equipped to point out that progressive transitional discourse in CEE worked *against* internal political differentiation and, thus, against a properly political democracy in its Schmittian-Mouffean 'agonistic' conception, even if multi-party systems were successfully installed. Typically an *externalisation-thesis* is formulated, pointing to a postcolonial tendency to 'locate goodness elsewhere', to use a phrasing of József Böröcz (2006).

> An 'imagined West' is invoked both as 'sovereign and as sovereign measure' in moral geopolitics, but also from a frustrated location of the inadequate ('eastern' etc.) Europe. Goodness, just like 'life' in the title of Milan Kundera's novel, is imagined in Eastern Europe as being 'elsewhere' (pp. 133-34).

This tendency is typically explained as a consequence of Ottoman, Russian, or German imperial domination, followed by Soviet repression, which psychologically conditioned the entire ruling elite simply into simply accepting whatever regime manages to present itself as the dominant one. Usually, postcolonial scholars then follow this up with pseudo-imperialist or otherwise western- or euro-centrist cultural or moral geopolitics after 1989, pointing out a tendency in central and eastern Europe to externalise 'the morally good' from the local 'here and now', to the either the future or a spatially distant 'West'. This legitimises anti-democratic and patronizing attitudes of local elites, the EU, or international donors or NGOs. Moreover, *within* the local here and now, this

mechanism arouses popular opposition toward 'morally good things', including environmental stances, but also including women's rights, LGBTQ+ equality, asylum policies, Roma integration, or, in Böröcz case, anti-racism. We are thus trapped in an endless vicious circle (Böröcz 2006).

Different from the developmentalist perspective, the postcolonial perspective can be substantiated by actual observations in political ecology, for example in research to the influence of international donors or EU grants to the professionalisation or 'NGO-ization' of civic activism after 1989. As a consequence of such programs, local groups started to seek 'fundable causes', lost all incentive for involving with their local (human or non-human) environment, with depoliticisation as its implication (Fagan, 2006; cit. Jacobsson and Saxonberg, 2013; Jancar-Webster, 1998; Szulecki, 2015). Scholars like Petr Jehlička or Zsuzsa Gille, meanwhile, have adopted the post-colonial viewpoint more explicitly in their attempts to destabilise persistent 'Cold War myths of ecocide, toxic nightmare and ecological disaster' on which much of the liberal developmental narrative is based (Jehlička, 2009, p. 102). Jehlička, Gille, and many others have pointed out that local environmental discourses, movements, and practices have far from disappeared, even as they have been politically neutralised as 'a backward other in need of Western advice' (cit. Jehlička et al., 2015; Gille, 2007).

Also this second perspective is not without its own problems however. As we have seen, although the liberal environmentalist discourse was perhaps first developed in the US and western Europe, neither Gawlik nor Bleahu adhered to it under 'neo-imperial' financial incentives, direct political pressure, or an articulated wish 'to become like the West'. Rather, when probed, they strongly protested against such assumptions. It is of course still possible to claim that they did not admit to have done so. A 'critical' spirit would perhaps go even further and would argue that Bleahu and Gawlik have *unconsciously* been 'mimicking the West', to use Babha's term. However, as Latour (2004b) showed very well, such arguments can *always* be made. It provides the 'critic' with a comfortable psychoanalytic superiority, but is also certain to cut off any fruitful dialogue with those literally *subjected* to the analysis: at best the critic must deny both Bleahu and Gawlik control over their own agency and complexity, and at worst the critic is himself wildly aggressive, anti-democratic and patronizing, even if paradoxically so.

Thus taking Bleahu and Gawlik viewpoints into account touches upon a larger controversy with the postcolonial perspective circling around, notably, Spivak's proposition for adopting 'strategic essentialism' in battling against existing hegemonies (from which she herself later retreated). As Stanley Bill (2014) following Chibber (2013) pointed out, Polish writers and intellectuals have picked such a viewpoint in promoting flawed images of 'authentic national culture' vice versa 'fake' or inauthentic, heterodox, 'Westernised' elites. Many of them – Bill names the academics Ewa Thompson and Dariusz Skórczewski, the author Rafał Ziemkiewicz, the poet Jarosław Rymkiewicz – have openly aligned

themselves with the national-populist *Law and Justice* (PiS) or even the extreme-right. Bill convincingly shows how postcolonial terminology enables them to *invoke* the essentialism present in 'locally rooted' practices, nationalist imageries or East-West mythologies rather than expose its constructed character. Of course, the work of Petr Jehlička, for one, strongly opposes such nationalist essentialism. But nonetheless the warning from Bill and Chibber against a fixed 'postcolonial metaphysics' is a powerful one, and should certainly be taken seriously.

Conclusion: moving forward within the pluriverse

In order to finally come to terms with the observed depoliticisation, I propose to the scholars akin to developmental views *and* those drawn to postcolonial or critical theory to appreciate each other's viewpoints, but especially to appreciate those of the actual actors. It is not the time, as some say, to move toward another Cold War, 25 years after it has been overcome, between only two perspectives. What first has to be done to evade this, and here I follow the advice of Latour, Schmitt and Stengers explicitly, is to give up on platonic thinking on politicised ecology – or anything else for that matter – as having only one pseudo-eternal Form, *Zentralgebiet*, panorama, scheme or foundation 'behind' it, as a 'neutral' third party in the Schmittian sense, whether it be 'the Advanced Industrial Society' or 'authentic local practices'.

As remarked before, this is far removed from dropping essences or perspectives altogether. Rather, by understanding them as constructed, they sink 'deeper into the abstraction', as Latour has called it: they become accepted as important and inspirational but fluid and contingent thought-experiments. The need for confrontation between 'progressive developmentalist' and the 'critical post-colonial' viewpoint then becomes irrelevant, not by a new overarching totalizing synthesis, but by adding many others possible shades in between and elsewhere, all to be absorbed into a pragmatist, multipolar, 21st century ecological 'pluriverse' (Stengers, 2010, p. 32, from the American pragmatist William James). As this article shows, within such a pluriverse, serious experiential dialogue with actors leads to proper empirically oriented progress in our understanding, which however takes the shape of a *collage* or *composition*, rather than being based on an (always inadequate) single *Zentralgebiet*, new platonic Form, or illusionary final solution (Latour 2010).

Interestingly, politicisation and depoliticisation are comprehensible *and* can be more fully empirically substantiated from this line of approach by referring to the *depoliticising effect* of invoking 'stable ground' – a single panorama, a 'strong foundation', institutionalised truth, or hegemonic *Zentralgebiet* – which works to exclude the environment and to remove the political in favour of 'technical' policy-making. Again, this is not necessarily bad, as not everything can be under discussion all the time. However, this understanding of politicisation, which is very different from the 'strong' versions of the

developmental as well many 'critical' perspectives themselves, this approach does apply equally to *both* the former West and the East, but without elevating either one of them. In the western parts of Europe, also, 'scientific' ecology politicised during instability of the known truths in society, from the end of the 1960s onwards into the 1970s. Also here, it was picked up by groups outside of the ruling political class, and the aura of sheer scientific necessity helped to successfully catapult a great many of them into the establishment.

Also in western Europe, a free market economic *Zentralgebiet* soon reigned supreme afterward, already from the early 1980s onwards, but continuing ever more forcefully after the fall of state socialism in 1989. Movements 'NGO-ized' in both the former West and East, and politicality (in the Schmittian sense) retreated from the western European green party sphere, most emblematically in Germany where the fall of the Berlin resulted in a decisive victory of *Realos* over *Fundis* in 1991, signalling a wave of 'professionalisation' replicated by the majority of green parties in Europe (Klein and Alzheimer, 1997). The related dominance of the 'liberal environmentalist' discourse after the 1992 Rio Summit, and the administrative managerial apparatus that put it into practice, effectively managed to 'colonise' and depoliticise environmental problems for most of the 1990s and 2000s (Swyngedouw, 2007): bringing them in-line with 'established knowledge'. Indeed, this happened much more efficiently in the US and in the west of Europe as compared to CEE: there were initially little 'issues of implementation' with regard to environmental policy.

The crucial difference with CEE is that there was never a sharp break with the past in the west of Europe. Market principles had grown dominant gradually. Therefore, in the 1990s and 2000s, 'established' political environmentalism did not (yet) end up as fully depoliticised and absorbed with the ruling political class as in CEE. Relative to CEE, even the most professionalised or particratic greens in the US or the west of Europe could, until quite recently, always differentiate themselves from the ruling consensus by tapping into their history. Finally, in both CEE and the west of Europe, it is only since the Great Recession hit, and former securities are in crisis, that ecological issues started to regain their former political urgency – and strikingly often at odds or independent from the established NGOs (for CEE see: Jacobsson and Saxonberg, 2013).

Along these lines, even some good old fashioned predictions about the future can be made. Further re-politicisation of ecology in CEE will not come about semi-automatically through (market- or state-steered) advancement into a more 'developed stage'. Neither will it come about by recovering an authentic 'subaltern' purity instead. Firstly, it will only develop when the ruling consensus can be cast in doubt. Secondly, it is unlikely to be sustained when the resolve for such doubt is as total as it was in 1989.

References

Altshuler, I.I., Y.N. Golubchikov and R.A. Mnatsakanyan 1992. "Glasnost, perestroika and eco-sovietology." Pp. 197–212 in *The Soviet Environment: Problems, Policies and Politics*, edited by J.M. Stewart. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Antohi, S. and V. Tismăneanu 2000. Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath. Budapest: Central European University Press.

Ash, T.G. 1990. The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague. New York: Vintage Books.

Bakhtin, M.M. 1981. The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, University of Texas Press Slavic series. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Balcerowicz, L. 1995. Socialism, capitalism, transformation. Budapest: Central European University Press.

Bernstein, S.F. 2001. The Compromise of Liberal Environmentalism. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bhabha, H.K. 1994. The Location of Culture. London; New York: Routledge.

Bill, S. 2014. "Seeking the authentic: Polish culture and the nature of postcolonial theory." *nonsite.org (Online Journal in the Humanities) 12*.

Böröcz, J. 2006. "Goodness is elsewhere: the rule of European difference." *Comparative Studies in Society and History 48*: 110–138.

Bütifkofer, R. 2009. "Was ist Grün?" Pp. 83–93 in *Akademiegespräch: Was Ist? Konservativ, Links, Liberal, Grün*. Mainz: Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung Rheinland-Pfalz.

Carson, R. 1962. Silent Spring. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Chibber, V. 2013. Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital. London; New York: Verso.

Cholakov, V. 1994. "The tides of environmentalist discourse." *Science Studies 1*: 31–64.

Cohen, J.L. and A. Arato 1994. Civil Society and Political Theory. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Commoner, B. 1971. The Closing Circle: Nature, Man, and Technology. New York: Random House.

Curry, J.L. (transl.) 1984. The Black Book of Polish Censorship. New York: Vintage Books.

Deletant, D. 2001. "The successors to the Securitate: old habits die hard." Pp. 211–262 in *Security Intelligence Services in New Democracies: The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fagan, A., 2006. "Neither 'north' nor 'south': the environment and civil society in post-conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina." *Environmental Politics 15*: 787–802.

Frankland, E.G., 2014. "East and central European greens." Pp 137-140 in *International Encyclopedia of Environmental Politics*. London; New York: Routledge.

French, H.F. 1990. Green revolutions: environmental reconstruction in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Worldwatch paper 99. Washington, DC: Worldwatch Institute.

Haeckel, E.H.P.A. 1866. Generelle Morphologie der Organismen. Allgemeine Grundzüge der organischen Formen-Wissenschaft, mechanische Begründet durch die von Charles Darwin reformirte Descendenz-Theorie. Berlin: Georg Reimer.

Havel, V. 1985. The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central Eastern Europe. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Hobson, K. 2013. "On the making of the environmental citizen." *Environmental Politics 22*: 56–72.

Ignatieff, M. 1995. "On civil society: why Eastern Europe's revolutions could succeed." *Foreign Affairs*: 128–136.

Inglehart, R. 1990. Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Jacobsson, K. and S. Saxonberg (eds.) 2013. Beyond NGO-ization, The Mobilization Series on Social Movements, Protest, and Culture. London: Ashgate Publishing.

Jancar, B. 1992. "Chaos as an explanation of the role of environmental groups in East European politics." Pp. 156–184 in *Green Politics Two*, edited by W. Rüdig. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Jancar-Webster, B. 1993. Environmental action in Eastern Europe: responses to crisis. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Jehlička, P. 2009. "The souvenirs of communism: missed opportunities for sustainable development innovations in the enlarged European Union?" Pp 45-53 in *Environment, Development and Sustainability: Perspectives from Around the World*. : W. Gordon, P. Furniss, R. Kimbowa. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Jehlička, P., J. Smith and T. Kostelecký 2015. "Quietly does it: questioning assumptions about class, sustainability and consumption." *Geoforum 67*: 223–232.

Kennedy, M.D. 2002. Negotiating revolution in Poland: conversion and opportunity in 1989. Washington, DC: National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER).

Kenney, P. 2002. A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kenney, P. 2001. "Framing, political opportunities, and civic mobilization in the Eastern European revolutions: a case study of Poland's Freedom and Peace movement." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly 6*: 193–210.

Killingsworth, M. 2012. Civil Society in Communist Eastern Europe: Opposition and Dissent in Totalitarian Regimes. Colchester: ECPR Press.

Komarov, B. 1980. The Destruction of Nature in the Soviet Union. London: Pluto Press.

Konrad, G. 1984. Antipolitics: An Essay. San Diego; New York; London: Harcourt.

Laclau, E. and C. Mouffe 1985. Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics. London; New York: Verso.

Latour, B. 2013. Gifford lecture series, facing Gaia: a new enquiry into natural religion. Fifth lecture, war of the worlds: humans against earthbound.

Latour, B. 2011. "Politics of nature: East and West perspectives." *Ethics & Global Politics 4*: 1-10.

Latour, B. 2010. "An attempt at a 'compositionist manifesto.'" *New Literary History 41*: pp 471–490.

Latour, B. 2005. Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor-network theory. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Latour, B. 2004a. Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Latour, B. 2004b. "Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern." *Critical Inquiry 30*: 225–248.

Law, J. and M.E. Lien 2012. "Slippery: field notes in empirical ontology." *Social Studies of Science 43*: 363–378.

Marchart, O. 2007. Post-foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Michnik, A. 1986. Letters from Prison and Other Essays. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Michnik, A. 1985. "Letter from the Gdansk prison." *The New York Review of Books*. July 18. Available at: www.nybooks.com/articles/1985/07/18/letter-from-the-gdansk-prison (22 July 2016).

Mouffe, C. 2000. The Democratic Paradox. London; New York: Verso.

Mouffe, C. 1993. The Return of the Political. London; New York: Verso.

Neale, A. 1997. "Organising environmental self-regulation: liberal governmentality and the pursuit of ecological modernisation in Europe." *Environmental Politics 6*: 1–24.

Nohlen, D. and P. Stöver, P. (eds.) 2010. Elections in Europe: A Data Handbook. Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos Publishers.

Oberschall, A. 1996. "Opportunities and framing in the Eastern European revolts of 1989." Pp. 93-121 in *Comparative perspectives on social movements: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framings*, edited by D. McAdam, J.D. McCarthy and M.N. Zald. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Pavlínek, P. and J. Pickles 2000. Environmental transitions: transformation and ecological defense in Central and Eastern Europe. London; New York: Routledge.

Probst, L. 2007. "Beiträge über Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Bündnis 90, Neues Forum, Alternative Liste Bremen." in *Handbuch Der Deutschen Parteien*, edited by F. Decker and V. Neu. Wiesbaden, Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Rindzevičiūtė, E. 2015. "Towards a joint future beyond the Iron Curtain: east-west politics of global modelling." Pp. 115–143, in *The Struggle for the Long Term in Transnational Science and Politics: Forging the Future* edited by J. Andersson and E. Rindzevičiūtė. London; New York. Routledge.

Rüdig, W. 2006. "Is government good for Greens? Comparing the electoral effects of government participation in Western and East-Central Europe." *European Journal of Political Research 45*: 127–154.

Rupnik, J. 1990. "Central Europe or Mitteleuropa?" *Daedalus 119*: 249–278.

Schmitt, C. 1985. Political Theology. Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press.

Schmitt, C. 1963. Der Begriff des Politischen. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.

Sowa, J. 2014. "Forget postcolonialism, there's a class war ahead." *nonsite.org (Online Journal in the Humanities) 12*.

Spivak, G.C. 1988. "Can the subaltern speak." Pp. 271–313 in: *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by C. Nelson and L. Grossberg. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Stavrakakis, Y. 2000. "On the emergence of Green ideology: the dislocation factor in Green politics." Pp. 100-118 in *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, edited by D.R. Howarth, A.J. Norval and Y. Stavrakakis. Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press.

Stengers, I. 2010. Cosmopolitics I. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Swyngedouw, E. 2007. "Impossible 'sustainability' and the postpolitical condition." Pp. 13-40 in *The Sustainable Development Paradox*, edited by in: R. Krueger and D. Gibbs. New York: Guilford Press.

Szulecki, K., T. Borewicz and J. Waluszko 2015. "A brief green moment: the emergence and decline of the Polish anti-nuclear and environmental movement." *Interface: a Journal For and About Social Movements 7*: 27–48.

Tismăneanu, V. 1992. Reinventing politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel. New York: Free Press.

About the author

Bio (in third person) with contact email in the form jane.bloggs AT gmail.com

[ANONYMOUS PEER REVIEW…]