

## OPEN FORUM

### SCIENCE, CYNICISM, AND THE GREATER GOOD: IDENTITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE IN POLAND

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*If it's not clear what's going on, then what's going on is about money.*

-Jacek Więckowski (Polish saying)

One similarity that communist regimes shared with their capitalist rivals was the great promise their leaders saw in the role of science to forge a better world. Science was embraced as a cornerstone in the progression toward a more equitable society. This promise remained unfulfilled with living standards in most eastern bloc states lagging behind those of their western counterparts. In addition, in an atmosphere where serious environmental standards were often overlooked and not enforced, environmental problems and related health concerns became increasingly visible. In Poland in the years leading up to the fall of the communist regime, environmental issues played a large part in undermining the state's legitimacy (Hicks 1996). However, in the post-communist era, environmentalists have become increasingly marginalized. This process has also occurred within a broader context in which civil society institutions have been slow to take hold.

Anthony Giddens connects modern experience to doubts about knowledge and science. He suggests that the constant potential revision of knowledge is a source of existential angst for many people, pointing out that, "Change does not consistently conform either to human expectation or to human control. The anticipation that the social and natural environments would increasingly be subject to rational ordering has not proved to be valid" (Giddens 1991:21-28). One result of this failure of science to predict outcomes is disillusionment. In fact, the need to stem or halt the rapid pace of development is supported in the findings of the world's most distinguished scientists (Manes in Killingsworth & Palmer 1996:26); for example, human actions are now widely attributed to increasing rates of global warming and to diminishing the planet's biodiversity.

This paper examines the role of science within the Polish environmental movement. My analysis is based on fieldwork that I conducted with Polish environmental groups in 2000/01, with the

influential organization Pracownia na Rzecz Wszystkich Istot (Workshop for All Beings, hereafter Pracownia) as a central focus. The group is based in Bielsko-Biala, a city in the Beskid Mountains in south central Poland and an important environmental center in Poland. My observations are based on daily participant observation with the organization, focused interviews with members of Pracownia and other environmental and conservation leaders and scholars affiliated with research institutions, as well as analysis of the group's environmental monthly (*Dzkie Życie*) and internet materials.

Pracownia's main mission is to spread knowledge of the philosophy of deep ecology which stresses humanity's status as part of nature, rather than as separate from it. This perspective places the organization's members in a complex relationship with environmental scientists. Many deep ecologists reject scientific approaches to the study of the natural world due to the emphasis on impartial observation from the perspective of the detached outsider.<sup>117</sup> On the other hand, in practice the organization has close contacts with several scientists, in part because they realize the important role that such scientists play in conveying legitimacy on the environmental movement, and in making a case for the organization's specific campaigns. In the following pages I examine attitudes toward science within the Polish environmental movement: first I consider general comments made about the role of science and how certain individuals within the movement assess the role of science in modern society. Next I explore depictions of science in the more specialized context of one of Pracownia's key campaigns. In line with deep ecology's commitment to respect other species, Pracownia was a central force in organizing a campaign to protect wolves. I draw from discussions of approaches to wolf protection below in examining attitudes toward specific scientific procedures, most notably telemetry or the practice of applying radio collars.

#### **The Arrogance of Science**

Like many of their Western counterparts, environmentalists in Poland are often strong critics of modernity and science. In the case of the individuals that I interviewed, this tendency also existed among

environmentalists who had scientific training. Halina Dobrucka, a trained geologist and one of the few environmentalists that I interviewed who was retired, described her attitude toward science in the following way,

*During the time when I was still an active scientist, it was still science then, you know, something, very important. But at this time I see that scientists work ... for diverse firms. At this point I don't believe scientists very much...One (scientist) says that margarine is healthier, another says that butter is healthier. What does this mean? ...this (scientist) is in the pocket (of some company), this is a Polish expression that one of them is being paid by the producer of butter, right? ...A dentist says that this toothpaste is great. ...some doctor says that this pain reliever is great. At this point, I have lost my trust in science (Interview, May 18, 2001).*

To some extent, Halina's comments point to a continuous reviewing of science and its conclusions, supporting Giddens' assertion that the constant revision of information causes malaise. However, her comments about scientists being bought out to make statements that benefit certain industries reveal another kind of deep-seated doubt about science and what she sees as the cause of this inconsistency. This is a sentiment that I often encountered in my interviews, more often with activists, but also with some scientists. For example, when I asked Jacek Więckowski, a doctoral student in zoology, about a scientist in Krakow named Bobek who was an outspoken critic of legislation protecting wolves, he responded with the following comment, "There's a Polish saying, 'If it's not clear what's going on, then what's going on is about money'" (interview July 5, 2000).<sup>118</sup> This comment suggests that Jacek believes that Bobek has taken advantage of his role as a scientist to make money from groups which profit from the hunting of wolves, (which pay him to make such statements). Jacek's comments, like Halina's suggest attitudes that stress the deleterious impact of money on science in the post-communist era.

In her analysis of Hungarian environmentalists' narratives about Chernobyl, Krista Harper also addresses the role of science. She suggests that the Chernobyl accident led to a questioning of the authority of scientific expertise and state bureaucracies. Harper interviews several individuals involved in the environmental movement in Hungary, including one radiobiologist turned environmental activist, who concedes that the Chernobyl accident and the authorities' response to it led her to a sense of great disappointment in science.

While she does not declare an outright rejection of scientific methods, she is wary of the politicization of scientific inquiry. It is this realization that galvanized her activism (Harper 2001:119-120). In many ways Chernobyl marked an important turning point within East Central Europe when the destructive potential of science demonstrated a chasm between official rhetoric on industrial progress and science and reality.

Among those environmentalists that I interviewed, distaste for the practices of scientists also leads some individuals to activism. Joanna Matusiak a central figure on Pracownia's staff, was one of a handful of young activists with a background in scientific training. Her attitudes were informed by experiences at the University of Łódź, where she studied environmental protection and biology and worked for a time with university scientists. For several years, she has worked with environmental and animal rights nonprofit groups. Her assessment of scientists was especially negative, as is indicated in the following passage.

*For a long time ... I worked at the university, but actually, I didn't care much for being a scientist, in fact, it was rather anti-environmental...the things that took place at the university. So, I quit my job there... I don't consider myself to be a scientist in this sense, the way most scientists are.*

*At least based on what I saw at the university in Łódź, and from conversations with colleagues there, this viewpoint is really pretty strong there. Scientists in the biology department, they approach it, maybe not the majority, I don't want to over generalize, but at least those who I knew, had a very utilitarian approach to nature. ...I took part in research on fish...and this research consisted of putting an electric current into the water which stuns the fish and they float to the surface. And these fish were collected, and you know, weighed, measured, and released back into the water. And some of them survived and some of them didn't....to kill an animal or rip up a plant, to take it and do some kind of research on it, for me this was completely unacceptable. I didn't want to do this, because if researching nature, is simply conducting research or observation... I don't know, but not, darn it, extermination...all this killing everything to do research. And this approach is very important. And besides, in the field of biology they do a lot of experiments on animals, and often these aren't experiments that serve humanity, they're done simply to*

*complete a doctoral degree, to write an academic article, simply to publish something. It's not that they have noticed some problem and want to research it, they just think, "oh, I have to write a habilitacja"<sup>119</sup> thesis, I have to find a topic." So, they think up a topic, which will work more or less, and they do the experiments. And later this sits unused in a folder, or in a publication, no one reads it, and in general ... it's completely senseless, because (this research) is rarely used. After all, the quality of science in Poland is pretty weak, it's, not very, I don't know, somehow it's not very modern, it's not in touch with the world, also not many people make use of it. And there are, there is a lot of destruction that it causes...*

*Really, sometimes, scientists are greater enemies of nature than ordinary people from outside the academic world. And yet these scientists' positions are supported by this concept of science, that this is the highest goal, in the end, they consider themselves as somewhat better because of this, that they are scientists, that they... are allowed to do anything, for example they can go into a protected area, and tear out or cut down something there, because they are scientists, because they are doing this for a higher purpose...it's not at all true (Interview, March 31, 2001).*

Like Halina Dobrucka, Joanna Matusiak expresses strong doubts about the motivation of scientists. She sees them as motivated by self interest, not necessarily by direct financial interests, but rather by the desire to advance their careers.<sup>120</sup> She also suggests that many scientists feel entitled to damage nature in the name of science, since they are encouraged to consider this quest for knowledge the ultimate goal. In her view, the poor quality of scientific research in Poland also meant that this damage to plants and animals served no one, except the scientists whose advancement was dependent on the completion of research projects.

In her research with environmental activists in Germany, Eeva Berglund observes a similar frustration toward scientific experts expressed by activists. She writes, "It is a lack of professionalism and a deficit of humility, not inability to know the truth, which irritates activists about experts" (Berglund 1998:192). Berglund also stresses that a fundamental component of human-environment relationships is their connection to human interests and issues of power (Berglund 1998:184-87). This concept is significant in relation to Joanna's claims

that scientists undertake research to further their careers, rather than to advance human knowledge or protect nature.

### Science, Careerism, and Environmental Identities

The issue of career advancement was a topic that I often encountered in my fieldwork. The expression "zeby robić kariere," (in order to make a career) was often used in a negative way among several people that I encountered. In fact, the term *kariera* (career) at times carries a negative connotation that it does not generally have in English (aside from the term *careerism*). Two doctoral students in zoology used the above expression in rejecting the designation of "scientist" for themselves. When I asked Aleksandra Kraśkiewicz if she was a scientist or an activist, she responded in the following way, "I don't feel like a scientist, although I am a scientist" (Interview, July 6, 2001).<sup>121</sup>

Jacek Więckowski, another doctoral student in zoology at the research station, responded even more decisively that he was not a scientist.

*I am certainly not a scientist, I don't want to be a scientist. . . . I think I am one who is passionate,<sup>122</sup> if it has to be classified, right? . . . That's to say... I don't completely trust scientists, although I am constantly in their midst. They are often very nice people, . . . But they are people who make a living off of this, they have an obligation in this regard, meaning they get paid because they are doing something . . . And if someone is doing something for money, this already influences it...in general, if someone is doing something for money, well, it doesn't always have to be in accordance with their views... according to their beliefs (Interview, July 6, 2001).*

These comments reveal ambivalence about, even distrust of science, as well as the degree to which identities can be problematic and conflicting. Aleksandra and Jacek both resist the label of "scientist" for themselves, though they acknowledge that on some level this label is associated with their status as doctoral students in zoology at the Poznań Academy of Agriculture.<sup>123</sup> They reject this classification, not because they lack the specialized technical knowledge that scientists are expected to possess, but because of a perception that to be a scientist often involves compromising one's principles. Alberto Melucci argues that environmentalists are the products of disillusionment with modernity, industrialism, and technology (Melucci 1996:165). The above examples suggest that scientific specialists are sometimes among the

most disillusioned, and that their disenchantment, in some cases, leads them to identify with more assertive environmental causes.

Other individuals, especially those holding more senior positions, did not see a conflict between their role as scientists and their collaboration or identification with advocacy organizations such as Pracownia. Two biologists suggested that in their minds, scientists and environmental activists had similar goals, but that they played different roles in promoting these objectives. They saw activists as serving a vital role in calling public attention to cases of environmental destruction. Their own role, as scientists, came in providing research that often backed up the claims of activists.

A host of opinions, approaches, and orientations contribute to the Polish environmental movement, resulting in varying levels of cooperation. Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia provides a useful framework to examine environmentalist identities. He writes,

*At both the individual and social levels, productive vitality and creativity derive from a continuous dialogic struggle within and between discourses. Language . . . is perceived as stratified through and through into multiple social discourses each representing a specific ideological-belief system, a way of seeing the world (Bakhtin 1994: 73).*

This concept can be utilized to demonstrate the manner in which various voices contribute to environmental discourse. Environmentalists often enlist the voices of scientists and other experts in discussions over controversial issues to lend legitimacy to their causes. Other contributors include international figures within the activist world, as well as the voices of tradition (or environmentalists' appropriation and adaptation of traditional culture). The latter is especially evident in areas of symbolic production where groups can benefit from "reelaborating" codes that are identified with dominant groups in mainstream society (della Porta and Diani 1999: 76). For example, many Poles identify with Polish folk culture which played a significant role in the awakening of national identity in the nineteenth century. Polish environmentalists often lay claim to folk traditions, in the form of traditional festivals and folkways. A prominent example of this tendency is the important role that summer solstice celebrations play within environmental circles. This incorporates elements of folk culture such as a central focus on the bonfire which has its roots in Slavic pagan culture. More recently some groups have made efforts to

demonstrate a connection between environmentalism and Christianity. Articles in Pracownia's monthly *Dzkie Życie* (Wild Nature) included interviews with pro-environmental Christians. Another article examined the Polish folk tradition of creating and maintaining roadside chapels (*kapliczki*), arguing that a decrease in their numbers was linked to increased development in rural areas (Okraska). Polish environmentalists' use of folk culture and religion illustrate ways that they draw from and reshape codes embraced by mainstream Polish society.

The competing voices of heteroglossia are also manifest in the individual. Pam Morris describes this connection in the following way,

*What is the case at the macro level of 'destinies of human discourse' is also the case at the micro level of individual consciousness. Self-consciousness is arrived at dialogically by an inner polemic with the social voices which inevitably first structure our inner being (Morris in Bakhtin 1994:16).*

The issue of identity within the environmental movement is complex. Terms such as "activist" and "scientist" can also prove to be problematic.<sup>124</sup> Very few of the people I interviewed appeared comfortable with the label of "activist," including environmentalists who had participated in numerous demonstrations; I have already mentioned my encounter with doctoral students in zoology who rejected the designation of "scientist." In both cases, the reason for the rejection of such labels is a perceived negative connotation which the designation carried. One scientist indicated that he had a negative association with the term "activist," due to its use by the communist regime to designate party loyalists. The previous section demonstrates that at least some individuals associate scientists with self-serving career advancement or other pursuits of self interest.

Discussions of identity and its relationship to modernity and globalization offer useful insights. In recent decades scholars have observed the complex nature of identity and the important role that it plays in structuring social relations. Among these is Stuart Hall's observation on the utility of examining identity, as "strategic and positional," rather than "essentialist." He writes,

*Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are*

*constantly in the process of change and transformation (Hall 1995:3-4).*

Elliot Oring makes a similar point when he argues that ethnic identity is situational. He writes that, "Rather than being something constant and immutable, the recognition of a group or the sense of an identity may change with situation and circumstance" (Oring 1986:28). Identity is the product of social interaction and is, therefore, not static, but under continuous negotiation (Goffman 1959); individuals employ performative devices in the on-going project of self (Bauman 1986). Because identity is itself under constant revision, identification with a movement or group often fluctuates, based on feelings of belonging and the degree to which one's ideas correspond to those officially recognized by the group at a given time (della Porta and Diani 1999:100). In reality most individuals identify with a number of social identities ranging from those based on organizations, social movements, and community (Stoecker 1995), as well as national, ethnic and religious identities (Smith 1991, Hobsbawm & Ranger 1987). Such multiple identities demonstrate a "polycentric rather than a hierarchical structure" (della Porta and Diani 1999:100).

Some environmental activists are strong critics of rationalism and its effects on humanity. However, they are also products of the reflexivity that modernity engenders. For example, proponents of deep ecology have largely rejected traditional religion, which they often blame for promoting anthropocentrism. Instead, they often seek to reinvent human awareness based on eco-centric thought, feeling, and lifestyle choices. This search for a new way may be the product of another aspect of modernity. Zygmunt Bauman suggests that a lack of belonging is a prominent feature of modernity, describing modern man as "man without essence." He argues that this is the result of a society built upon networks rather than situated within stable communities (Bauman 1999: 160-61). In contrast, in her study of Latvian immigrant groups, Inta Carpenter, argues that in certain contexts, networks foster stable communities (Carpenter 1996). These two perspectives illustrate divergent perspectives on whether networks foster a sense of community or provide a poor substitute for it.

Environmental communities such as that which exists around Pracownia are themselves based on a system of networks, though stability may be rather precarious. However, it is clear that such communities often emerge from the type of alienation that Bauman describes. According to Bartłomiej Szymczyk, many young people in Poland are

dissatisfied with mainstream culture and turn to alternative or countercultural lifestyles (Szymczyk 2003). In some cases, such individuals look to New Religious Movements, as well as to the environmental movement. Giddens argues that in the post-traditional world, "the self becomes a reflexive project." Within this context, the self has to be derived from a source of exploration and innovation relating to social relations (Giddens 1991:33). The cultivation of new religious and spiritual identities by environmentalists and others can be interpreted as an example of such innovation.

Perceptions that damage the legitimacy of environmental activists include the notion that they are radicals, perhaps even terrorists<sup>125</sup> and promote non-Christian traditions. One young scientist at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow told me that he avoided referring to himself as an "ekolog" (environmentalist/ecologist) even though his research centered on ecology, suggesting that to many people the term connoted extremism.

*I have a doctorate in biological sciences with a specialization in ecology, so...my profession is ekolog (ecologist),<sup>126</sup> right?...But I would never tell anyone if they asked me what I did that I was an ekolog, because everyone would think that I am some kind of dangerous guy. I say that I am a zoologist, an evolutionary scientist, or a naturalist, or something like that, but I don't say that I am an ekolog...because everyone would start to treat me like I was touched in the head (Interview with P. Adamski, February 18, 2001).*

He reveals his own reluctance to use the term *ekolog* to describe his work. In his mind, most people view environmentalists (*ekolodzy*) as abnormal and perhaps dangerous. Such images are major reasons for the negative sentiments that some people express toward environmentalists in Poland. It is also worth noting that his attitudes toward environmental activists were the most negative that I encountered among the scientists that I interviewed.

### **Contrasting Perspectives among Wolf Advocates**

The controversy over the status of wolves in Poland provides a useful site to examine different perspectives among scientific and activist communities. The powerful symbolic value of the wolf also contributes to the significant differences that exist among wolf advocates. One division lies in disagreements over acceptable levels of intervention. Many scientists who are involved in studying wolves also engage in research that includes trapping wolves, conducting various tests, and sometimes applying

radio-collars to track their future activity. In contrast, some environmental activists, particularly those who subscribe to a philosophy of deep ecology, object to such forms of intervention. They believe that trapping wolves, even with the intention of releasing them in a short time is unnecessary and causes great stress to the animals. Some environmentalists also suggest that wearing radio-collars may actually cause wolves harm and inhibit their movement, perhaps even making it easier for poachers to hunt them. Such activists claim that enough research has been conducted on wolves; they insist that no further studies are necessary to know that wolves require strict legal protection to ensure their survival. Janusz Korbel, a founding member and key leader in Pracownia, described his feelings about research on wolves in the following way,

*. . . personally I think there is no need to research wolves, it's enough to protect them ... Because it seems to me that there are already very few wolves. I have the impression that if there was only one wolf left in Poland, only one, that all the scientists would do research on him. You know, he would be the last wolf! I think that we know, in general, I believe that on the subject of nature we already know quite enough, but we're doing too little. And research is of course necessary, in the sense that, maybe not necessary, but research is justifiable...if the motive of the research is to ask questions about the truth...but at this moment research is usually supported by money, and encourages the kind of research that brings the greatest profits, even more money. This is one bad tendency in present-day science...these aren't practical questions... they're not deep questions, they're just questions about how to develop, how to increase finances... Scientists only research a forest, (to ascertain) how to get the most wood, lumber, and furniture from a hectare of forest, and keep this forest so that it will continue to survive. That is the subject of scientific research. This kind of research isn't necessary for the sake of nature. And that's what present day science looks like, in order to work at a university, in order to build a career, one has to write a thesis. In this regard, scientists have to research everything and complete another doctorate. Sometimes these things have, well, already been researched many times .... The situation in Poland is such that, in northeast Poland, in Białowieża there are two groups of wolves and a lot of scientists who are researching them and they hate each other, because there's competition, and the wolves are constantly observed, they follow them with telemetry*

*equipment, they have radio collars. It's not normal. But I would not say this publicly to the Polish media, because many of these scientists want to help wolves when the occasion arises (Interview, April 6, 2001).*

Janusz asserts that scientists who study wolves often undertake invasive research, not because it is necessary, but because their livelihoods require it. In order to receive funding for their work (usually in the form of grants), they have to continue with research. In many ways his statements echo those of Joanna Matusiak recounted above. Szymon Ciapała, a botanist who worked for a time with Pracownia, also expressed a similar view.

Most activists are not opposed outright to all kinds of research, but rather that which is seen as unnecessarily intrusive. A frequent criticism among activists who oppose invasive research on wolves is the assertion that science is allied with economic interests, which subverts efforts to make science benefit nature for its own sake. Instead, science becomes a tool to determine how to more efficiently exploit the environment.

In his response, Janusz shifts from speaking directly about research on wolves to research on forests. This supports observations that stress the importance of the wolf as a representative creature of the forest and “wildness” in general (Warner 1994:182). This association also has a practical connection, insofar as wolves live in forests and require large, healthy forests to thrive.<sup>127</sup> In Janusz's critique of current research on forests, he indicates that one problem is that scientists fail to ask “deep questions.” This suggests that his response to current research practices is informed by deep ecology which advocates protecting nature and asking oneself deep questions as a means of improving oneself (and the world).

Janusz's critical perspective on research on wolves contrasts with that of many scientists. Those who study wolves maintain that further research is necessary for a more persuasive basis for protection. Biologist Sabina Nowak of Stowarzyszenie dla Natury “Wilk” (Wolf-The Association for Nature) asserts that most scientists do not conduct research for its own sake and that their efforts are focused on information that will contribute to the protection of wolves. For example, she told me that the tracking of wolves in the Silesian Beskid Mountains and bordering areas with Slovakia makes it possible for her to assess how many “Polish” wolves were killed by Slovak hunters, and then to present this information to member of the Slovak parliament.<sup>128</sup> With regard to radio-collars, many scientists maintain

that these devices are especially helpful in controlling poaching. According to Nowak, there have been cases of poachers being caught when they killed wolves wearing radio-collars (Interview, February 7 2001). Wolf biologist Wojciech Śmietana takes a similar position with regard to the role of telemetry (the procedure of applying radio collars).

*I think that telemetry is very necessary. However, it should be used in moderation. A lot of things can be done without using (it). It's not necessary for all kinds of research...we should limit telemetry as much as possible, so that it's applied to the fewest number of animals possible (Interview, July 29, 2001).*

Śmietana believes that telemetry is essential in collecting certain kinds of information. However, he also stresses that it should be undertaken on as few wolves as possible since the experience does stress the animals involved and put them at risk. In 2001, biologist Simona Kossak, who works at a research institution in Białowieża, received attention for her public criticism of the use of telemetry. During our interview, I asked about her thoughts on telemetry. She replied in the following way,

*Telemetry itself as a means to send signals, and from this information the ability to learn something, what (animals) are doing, where they are, if we can't follow them, it's a very good method. However, experimental telemetry, that's something completely different ...the results of one researcher will show that all or almost all the animals survived,<sup>129</sup> and in the case of another researcher that no animals survived, they'll all have died...because he used incompetent methods, and he doesn't care about what happens to the animal, etc., a lack of skill in working with animals...it's like the difference between a good doctor and a bad one (Interview, August 3, 2001).*

Kossak stresses that she is not against telemetry per se, that it has its advantages and is a good method for maintaining data when other means are not available. Her objection centers on what she believes to be the indiscriminate use of telemetry, and the fact that, in her view, some researchers engaged in using the procedure were poorly trained and are indifferent to the fate of the animals they work with. For example, if collars are not applied properly, or if the animal is too young when a collar is applied (so that it becomes too tight as the animal grows), this can result in injury and death. Kossak is outspokenly critical of other researchers who she believes are conducting unnecessary experiments on animals,

especially in cases where such research has already been done.<sup>130</sup> In this sense her objections are similar to some activists that I interviewed. This may not be surprising since Simona Kossak was on Pracownia's advisory board and has worked with the organization in the campaign to protect Białowieża Forest.

I also interpret the objections of many deep ecologists to research interventions on wolves as having much to do with the great value they place on the concept of "wildness." In addition to the fact that many deep ecologists believe that such research is unnecessary, direct scientific intervention compromises the wild status of the wolf. The act of placing a radio-collar on a wolf brings it a step closer to the domesticated dog. Within such circles, it is generally the mystery and beauty of the wild animal that is valued over domesticated animals, which are tainted by their connection to humanity. The wolf is valued over the dog precisely due to its wild nature.

This attitude is not unique to Polish environmentalists, but is also seen in western environmentalist materials. In fact, the newspaper published by Earth First! (based in the U.S.) had a regular section entitled "Wolves and Poodles" in which it called individuals and groups that made a positive contribution to the environment the "wolves." On the other hand, those who demonstrated disregard for the environment were described as "poodles" (the epitome of the decadent, pampered, domesticated dog). Such dichotomies demonstrate the symbolic nature of human associations with specific animals. Canines, in particular, possess rich symbolic value since the dog occupies "the threshold between wildness and domestication and all the valences that these two ideal poles of experience hold" (White 1991:15).

Polish environmentalists have successfully employed key symbols in the name of specific causes, for example in their successful campaign to ban wolf hunting and to expand protection to a larger part of the primeval Białowieża Forest. However, these accomplishments were made in the mid to late 1990s; since this time environmentalists have faced increasing obstacles to attaining their objectives. One problem has been significant internal disputes within the environmental movement, including differences over the appropriate role for scientific methods and perspectives. Conflicts also stem from differences over which tactics are viewed as acceptable in bringing about change. Some activists reject engaging with the political party system and are very critical of globalization and free market policies. This perspective has led to a split with those environmentalists who were involved in reconstituting Poland's Green party in 2004.<sup>131</sup>

Another challenge has been the predominance of discourse which implies the inevitability of East and West integration, and which assumes this will follow a “correct” course based on neo-liberal policies (Dauphinée 2003), making it increasingly difficult to successfully oppose development projects. Dominant ideologies also stress the important role that developing civil society institutions should play in the transition to western-style democracies. However, many scholars have observed that civil society remains underdeveloped in many post-communist societies, especially regarding its ability to engage citizens (Celichowski 2004:77).

One reason that civic participation in the post-communist period has remained disappointingly weak in the region may be that mandatory types of participation required under communism continue to poison attitudes toward public engagement (Howard 2003). For some, such involvement may also appear suspect; a notion exists that individuals who take part in civic initiatives must have ulterior motives (i.e. the desire to make money). In line with this thinking, it appears that some Poles doubt environmentalists’ sincerity, and believe that they use protest as a means of extorting money from potential developers. In some cases there is considerable negativity directed at environmentalists. In the climate surrounding recent decisions to allow increased tourist development in the Tatra National Park, there were declarations that this decision demonstrated that “the eco-fascists will not rule Poland!” Such declarations reflected the perception that environmentalists interfere with the efforts of ordinary Poles to get ahead.<sup>132</sup> There are also accusations that they are under the influence of actors outside of Poland. According to these arguments, environmentalist opposition benefits competitors in other countries by undermining Polish economic productivity. This assertion is significant in light of Poland’s recent entry into the European Union and rising concerns about how businesses will fare in the European market.

Within the Polish environmental movement, many environmentalists express distrust and cynicism toward science and see it as a tool serving private interests. At the same time, many activists realize that science plays an important role in providing legitimacy to a movement which has been rendered marginal in Polish society. The distrust that many non-environmentalists express towards environmentalists suggests that there is a need to employ more effective communication strategies, and to demonstrate the relevance of environmental issues to the lives of Polish citizens. Poland’s membership in the European Union introduces another element to

environmental discussions, offering new possibilities and constraints on the role of science, development, and concern for the greater good.

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## Notes

<sup>117</sup> In a pamphlet produced by Pracownia to articulate the organization’s mission, there appeared two drawings side by side depicting this distinction. In the first drawing a stick figure sat on the sidelines and observed nature from a distance; in the second the figure dove into a lake, suggesting the emphasis that deep ecology places on first-hand experience of nature as an engaged participant.

<sup>118</sup> “Jeżeli nie wiadomo o co chodzi, to chodzi o pieniądze” (Polish original).

<sup>119</sup> The Polish educational system is similar to the German model. In order to advance within the academy, individuals possessing a doctorate must complete a *habilitacja* thesis, usually five to ten years within the academy. Generally, one must have completed it to be considered an independent scholar or one who has the power to determine her or his own areas of research, although in recent years the system has been somewhat more flexible.

<sup>120</sup> Of course, advancing one’s academic career often improves one’s earning potential. However, academics in Poland do not generally make large salaries, prompting some to work at two or more institutions. As Halina Dobrucka indicates in her comments above, some scientists use their credentials in commercial pursuits.

<sup>121</sup> “Nie czuję się naukowcem...choć naukowcem jestem” (Polish original).

<sup>122</sup> Jacek uses the non-standard noun *pasjonata* to describe himself, I have not been able to produce a direct equivalent in English.

<sup>123</sup> However, this issue is somewhat complicated by the presence of the *habilitacja*—a higher degree of doctorate in Poland. Some scholars feel that only after attaining this level can one undertake independent research. This concept may allow for some to view the doctorate alone as a more technical kind of training, rather than as a guarantee that one has attained the status of scholar or scientist.

<sup>124</sup> I devised a series of twelve, mainly open-ended questions to structure my interviews. One question asked “Do you consider yourself an activist or a scientist.” In retrospect a more open question, or at



least adding a third undefined category would have been more useful. In fact, most respondents, to some degree, rejected both labels and choose to define themselves in more abstract terms. However, I have yet to find satisfactory replacements for these categories beyond the more general term “environmentalist.”

<sup>125</sup> The image of the environmentalist as “eco-terrorist” is not unique to Poland, but is also a prominent depiction in the West, particularly in U.S. media representations of environmentalists and opponents of globalization (DeLuca 1999).

<sup>126</sup> In Polish the term *ekolog* can refer to both specialists in ecology as well as to environmental activists.  
Interview with Paweł Adamski, February 18, 2001.

<sup>127</sup> In my interviews with scientists, they explained that wolves require large amounts of wooded territory. This is one reason why preserving small pockets of forest is not adequate to protect the species. Large terrain is necessary to ensure a healthy gene pool. Wolf populations suffer from the introduction of highways and other infrastructure which separate packs and individuals (and are otherwise hazardous). In response to this need, some scientists are attempting to create and gain support for migration corridors (Interviews with Krzysztof Szmidt 8/7/01 and Wojciech Śmietana 7/29/01).

<sup>128</sup> In 1998 wolf advocates were successful in promoting legislation eliminating the hunting of wolves in Poland (at least in most situations). However, the practice remained legal in countries bordering Poland, such as Slovakia, Ukraine and Belarus. This situation is especially problematic because most of Poland’s wolves live in border areas.

<sup>129</sup> Here Kossak refers to studies that show how many animals survive after being radio-collared, such results are sometimes calculated after a 6-month or 1 year period.

<sup>130</sup> Simona Kossak’s criticism of fellow scientists is part of a larger dispute between two groups of scientists affiliated with different research institutions in Białowieża and which Janusz Korbel mentions in his statement above.

<sup>131</sup> This tendency was likely exacerbated by the rapid demise of the nascent Green party in the early 1990s. In addition to internal divisions, the party’s integrity was compromised when key Green party members

were accused (apparently accurately in some cases) of having ties to the communist secret service and neo-fascist groups. However, in anticipation of Poland’s entry into the European Union a new Polish Green party was established, partly funded by West European Green parties. Jacek Bożek, the head of Klub Gaja, another organization from Bielsko-Biała and artist/philosopher Magda Mosiewicz were elected to chairs the new party. However, it remains to be seen whether or not it will continue to function as a viable party.

<sup>132</sup> Such comments can often be found in internet responses to newspaper articles, such as those at the following sites:  
<http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/72,2.html?f=410&w=22852018&a=22859953> 9/5/05 and  
<http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/72,2.html?f=53&w=18204967&a=19177535> 9/5/05.

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