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Environmental movements in space-time: the Czech and Slovak republics from Stalinism to post-socialism

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Environmental movements in space-time: the Czech and Slovak republics from Stalinism to post-socialism

To investigate the role of space and time in social movements, the paper analyses the evolution of the environmental movement in the Czech and Slovak republics from 1948 to 1998. It shows that the movement's identity was formed under socialism and that political opportunity and resource availability changed markedly over time as did its organisational and spatial structure. The movement played a significant part in the collapse of the socialist regime, but in the 1990s was pushed aside in the interests of building a market economy and an independent Slovakia. Nevertheless a diverse and flexible range of groups existed by the late 1990s. If the movement is to prosper in the new space-time context post EU membership, it will need to renew its identity, showing some of the ingenuity which allowed it to flourish even in the difficult circumstances of the 1970s.

key words space-time/time-space environmental movements Czech Republic Slovakia

1 Introduction:

Geographers interested in the political processes which attempt to frame and influence environmental issues can choose from, or combine, a range of approaches. Within geography, political ecology is an obvious starting point, since that is where environmental processes are most explicit, though it tends to emphasise local struggles over production in the developing world, and connections to politics at the state level are less explored. Political geography has begun to address environmental issues, with a particular concern with governance of the global commons. Robbins (2003) suggests that the 'parallel tracks' of political ecology and political geography are potentially complementary, and that some convergence would be advantageous. Beyond geography, environmental politics exists as a named field, with a substantial amount of work at national level, as well as global and local issues, and hence complements the local and global issues emphasised by geographers. Global environmental governance (Paterson, Humphreys and Pettiford, 2003) sets the most inclusive frame for studies of how societies regulate environmental issues. For those with particular interest in environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) as aspiring agents of change, the extensive new social movement (NSM) literature in politics and sociology can be particularly helpful, since with some honourable exceptions such as Routledge (1993), NGOs are neglected in geographical work on environmental governance

(McCarthy, 2005) and the wider literature on NSMs offers a range of approaches, methodologies and accumulated knowledge.

Geographers have in fact studied, and sometimes participated in, social movements, under a variety of labels, including resistance (Pile and Keith 1997) and feminism (Rose 1993), over several decades. At least since Harvey (1996) saw such movements as resisting capitalism and the state system, there has been a tension, analysed by Miller (2004), between studying locality based movements, where identity and trust are relatively easy to develop, but spontaneous politics may be parochial, inward looking and ineffective, and globally networked movements, which seem appropriate to oppose global capitalism, but face great problems in developing communications, agreeing campaigns and maintaining solidarity (Routledge 2003).

The most sustained effort to relate geography and the new social movements literature, Miller (2000), argued that geographers have drawn selectively from approaches in politics and sociology, focusing particularly on work on identity formation, but have much to gain from other approaches, including growing recognition of the temporal context of movement mobilisation. He judged that geographers had failed to convince workers in other disciplines that space is constitutive of social movements, and he suggested that all sides would gain from better integrated approaches across disciplines.

Since Miller's book, geographers have done more to clarify how to conceptualise space in studies of economic and political issues (Dicken *et al.* 2001), alternative economic practices (North 2005) and environmental governance (Bulkeley 2005). There has been some recognition of the need to consider space more seriously in work on new social movements (Tilly 2003). However, Miller's goal of an integrated interdisciplinary approach to new social movements has yet to be achieved.

As a contribution towards the development of such an approach, the next section will identify some key components, reflect on how better conceptual integration can be achieved and identify some appropriate methods to use in an investigation. Later sections will report on a relevant case study.

2. Integrating studies of space and social movements

As stated above, Miller (2000) both makes a case for better integration of approaches in geography, politics and sociology and begins to build towards a theoretical model and an empirical investigation. His analysis of the existing literature in these three disciplines points

to three main approaches, which he claims are complementary but in need of a more active spatial perspective to complement their awareness of change over time

Broadly conceived, resource mobilization theory has focused on internal organizational considerations and attempted to explain social movement mobilization in terms of the resources available to organizations, for example, money, skills, leaders and social networks. Political process models, in contrast, have focused on conditions external to social movement organisations, in particular changes in the structure of political opportunity. New social movements theory takes a third tack, emphasizing social and economic structural change that gives rise to new grievances and collective interests, values and identities. For each of these bodies of theory, there are corresponding geographies (Miller 2000, 39-40).

He carried out an investigation of the building of the peace movement in three municipalities in the Boston area, with serious attention to data gathering to clarify resource availability and political opportunity structures as well as investigation of how the movement was built in different areas. He shows that the movement developed differently in the three areas, though all enjoyed considerable success until a counter campaign showed that embracing peace could threaten jobs.

Miller's agenda has been taken seriously, but his practice has been criticised, first, for its reliance on Habermas (Marston 2001); second, for not recognising that since the 1990s social movement activity has become much more networked and operates at larger scales (Bauder 2001); and, third, because his methods should have been more focused on ethnography (Herbert 2001). In his response to these criticisms, Miller (2001) accepted that his reliance on Habermas was problematic (though at that stage he saw Lefebvre as equally problematic), argued that the internet has changed social movements less than is sometimes supposed (though Miller [2004] does acknowledge the internet as significant, and in doing so recognises the importance of flows and networks as well as place based interactions and identities), and accepted that more use of ethnographic methods would have been helpful, though only as a complement to the methods he used, and not as a replacement.

Two years later, in their editorial introduction to a special edition of the journal *Mobilization*, Martin and Miller (2003) advocated a view of space based on Lefebvre, supplemented by references to a number of geography's 'big hitters', and referred to a subset of the mechanisms identified by McAdam *et al.* (2001) rather than the full range of approaches to social movements. The empirical papers that followed considered the effects of place on a variety of movements (from squatter settlements to regional separatists) but only hinted at some of the networks that influenced mobilisation. In our view, the special

edition represents a stimulating response to Miller's call for an integration of space with social movement studies, although neither his revised conceptual position nor the empirical results have fully achieved his goals.

Miller's ambition of an approach to new social movements that would integrate divergent approaches and take account of geography has been partially anticipated by an approach refined over a decade by Jamison and his collaborators. These authors have built an approach which overcomes the early division of social movement studies between 'resource mobilisation' and 'identity formation' schools and also takes account of political opportunity structures. The key proposals, elaborated in Eyerman and Jamison (1991) are that social movements should be studied in historical and comparative context and with a focus on 'cognitive praxis'; ideas as manifested in action as part of experimental or emergent counter cultures engaged with, and trying to change, dominant cultures. Jamison *et al.* (1991) demonstrated that the environmental movement emerged very differently in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands.

In view of the critique of Miller's failure to take account of change over time, there may seem to be a danger in applying an approach that was developed to deal with the 1960s and 1970s to more recent events. However, Jamison and Baark (1999) not only articulated the stages of development of the environmental movement towards ecological modernisation in the 1990s but also showed that the different geography, history, culture, institutions and political styles of Denmark and Sweden resulted in ecological modernisation being played out in significantly different forms in the two countries. Jamison (2001) extended that argument, adding the different experience in the US and pointing also to different processes in India. He focuses on distinct national policy styles, cultural biases and movement legacies as constraints on, and resources for, environmental activists. Within a particular national context, a social movement has to relate to these national styles even while it is engaged in trying to change them. In so doing, 'movement intellectuals' (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, 98) articulate the cognitive identity of the movement in ways that are designed to mobilise activists and appeal to wider publics. Jamison's approach has many strengths in integrating approaches to NSMs, including European development of theory and US expertise in methodology, and demonstrates the importance of time, but falls short of Miller's objectives in using only one explicit spatial framework, the system of nation states. Hence, while it is in some respects a more integrated interdisciplinary approach than those examined by Miller, it too needs a more effective conceptualisation of space.

We derive this from one of the authors Miller (2000) reviews favourably, but does not follow through into more recent thinking. Massey (1999) cogently cuts to the heart of how to conceive space in the light of postmodern, postcolonial and feminist critiques, as well as her own concerns about the tendency to associate place with exclusiveness and reaction. The heart of her current position is stated in three propositions:

- Space is a product of interrelations, social and material.
- Space is always being made, always becoming, and hence never finished; this requires us to think about events in space- time and not just in space.
- Space includes the possibility of multiplicity, of the coexistence of difference and the meeting of different trajectories.

In her later work Massey (2005) points out that her position excludes other views that are, explicitly or implicitly, widely held, including: space as stasis or as a dichotomous opposite to time; space reducible to temporal terms, like advanced, backward, modern or developing; or space as essentially divided into places, at different scales, with different cultures. In her view, places are themselves the products of interaction, have been made and thus can be remade. In practice, any investigation has to take account of the initial pattern of places, but we need to avoid taking them for granted, and expect them to be remade as internal and external interrelations change.

Massey's third proposition explicitly allows the possibility of new social movements. Indeed, it provides for the possibility, identified by Soyez (2000) in his study of environmental NGOs, that as well as seeking to influence events in existing spaces, new social movements may seek to construct new spaces. And though new social movements face powerful adversaries, including states and economic interests, those forces are not set apart as somehow 'systemic' or 'structural', but are themselves being made and remade. The same logic applies to the construction of identities in a locality, to the making of a nation state or to the making of globalisation. More, or different, interrelationships may be involved, some with more initial political power, but interaction, multiplicity and incompleteness apply in principle to all.

Massey's work has contributed to recent debates on space and scale, as reviewed by Bulkeley (2005) in relation to her own work on environmental governance. She notes growing criticism of views of space as a taken for granted hierarchy of territories, and growing interest in networks. She argues against abandoning hierarchy or boundaries, because they still have important effects, but sees them as constructed and open to

restructuring. She uses a study of a transnational municipal network, Cities for Climate Protection, to show that “*scalar and network readings of space are not necessarily opposed, but may be mutually constitutive*” (Bulkeley 2005, 898).

We conclude that a study of social movement mobilisation can be conducted at any spatial scale, provided it actively takes account of larger and smaller scales and regards places and networks as interacting and open to restructuring. Such a study should centre on the ‘cognitive praxis’ of movement leaders, including their experience, values and strategies, and must cross check between their accounts, those of other participants and relevant information about the contexts in which they operate. The grievances they use to develop campaigns, the opportunities and constraints generated by the political context and the resources available to the movement, their allies and opponents combine to present the immediate context, but may need to be related to wider historical, cultural and economic contexts.

Given our argument that states and economies are themselves being made and remade, we chose to locate our empirical study in a context in which this could be expected to be salient. The transitional situation leading up to and following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 created just this situation over half a continent. Czechoslovakia represents a particularly striking case, since the ‘velvet revolution’ of 1989, which replaced the state socialist regime with a democratic system, and the ‘velvet divorce’ of 1 January 1993, in which one state divided into two, were themselves the results of successful social movements, and indeed happened very differently from the changes happening elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). This case also allowed for more cultural diversity than might be expected in what was initially a single state, since the Czech and Slovak republics have a period of shared history but very different experiences both before and since they were joined as Czechoslovakia.

We started our investigation with 46 detailed interviews with salient leaders in the late 1990s, found that many respondents had been influenced by organisations that operated in the socialist period and had to extend our scope back in time. As we investigated organisations active in the 1980s, we learned that they were influenced in turn by precursors and had to probe earlier times by searching documentary sources and seeking targeted interviews. Relating changes in environmental organisations to the wider context of Czechoslovak history showed significant, and at times dramatic, changes in the extent and forms of environmentalist activity over five decades, with periods of rapid change and others of relative stability, suggesting a periodisation of spatial and other relations. In successive

space-time periods, political opportunities changed, as did access to resources, but aspects of the movement's identity showed substantial continuity. For ease of comprehension, we present the results in chronological order.

3. Environmentalism under state socialism 1948-1989

The conventional view (van der Heiden 1999) is that non-governmental environmentalism did not exist in CEE until the late 1980s. This would not have been surprising, since the political opportunity structure was extremely hostile. Nevertheless, significant activity did occur, and played a part in influencing the identity of the movement in later years.

For the first decade of Czechoslovak state socialism, starting in 1948, the regime tightened its control and set about re-educating citizens for the new society. This was a period when non-governmental organisations, including those focused on outdoor youth activities such as scouting and woodcraft and those related to nature and monument protection, were either incorporated into the party-state system or forbidden. The regime focused on its central goal of developing Czechoslovakia as a united socialist country. In doing so, they needed to overcome cultural and economic divisions resulting from the different historic trajectories of the Czech and Slovak lands, the former closely tied to Austria and the latter to Hungary, though linked under the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918. The first period of a democratic Czechoslovak state, from 1918 to 1938, had increased the distinctions between the two parts of Czechoslovakia. The Czech lands were urbanised and industrialised, while Slovakia was largely rural, had lost mining and industry because of Czech competition, with only Bratislava and the second city Košice experiencing the growth of smaller industrial and service activities and the development of a middle class.

Once the socialist regime took power in 1948, it set out to equalise the level of development of Slovakia with the Czech part of the country. The chosen means was the Stalinist model of industrialisation, emphasising the importance of heavy industry, urbanisation and rising educational levels. In the interests of development, and the creation of an industrial proletariat in all regions, new industrial plants were often located in areas of natural beauty with little regard to their environmental consequences. In both parts of the country, high density forms of urban and industrial development were superimposed on to the pre-World War II built environment and used energy and material intensive technologies, which generated serious pollution impacts in developed areas. These were set within a collectivised agricultural landscape and extensive areas of forest and mountains. This geography yielded some benefits to citizens in access to work, housing and education,

but the polarity between ‘grey’ cities and green nature further contributed to a long-established culture of ‘urban escapism’ and outdoor recreation in Czechoslovakia (Pavlínek and Pickles 2000), as it did in Poland (Whitehead 2005). However this had significant political effects only after a period of discreet organisation.

As early as 1957 a chance meeting between a professional zoologist and a group of young people showed that there was interest in conservation and environmental education, provided an acceptable organisational form could be found (Leiský 2004). The vehicle was the creation in 1958 of a Nature Conservation section of the National Museum Society, a prestigious, state approved and funded organisation. Under the officially accepted rationale of scientific conservation and preservation of the beauty of the Czechoslovak landscape,¹ adult leaders were able to organise work camps in the forests and mountains, and hence promote understanding and appreciation of nature to young people, often through activities which would have been illegal if conducted under the label of scouting. By 1964, its membership reached 4,000 (Leiský 2004), led by highly educated urban professionals employed by academic, research and cultural institutions and drawn from Prague and its surroundings, other major Czech cities like Ostrava and Plzeň, and the Slovak capital Bratislava (Zajoncová 2004). The leaders of the group typically had a scientific educational background and experience in outdoor youth activities, both of which became identifying features of the Czech and Slovak environmental movement over the coming decades.

In 1969, in spite of the defeat of reform efforts associated with the Prague Spring and the progressive tightening of state control under the label of ‘normalisation’, this covert group was able to separate itself from the National Museum Society and emerge as an explicitly voluntary body. Under the name Tis (Yew Tree), the earlier camps and conservation work grew to a larger scale, aided by positive coverage in the media, while the need to raise funds (since no state funding was available to a body which was not part of the National Front² and which did not recognise the leading role of the communist party in its statute) encouraged the professionals to offer consultancy services, at first to parks and local authorities at home. This later grew to include international expeditions and consultancies (for example, Vietnam, Peru and Kenya) and participation in international bodies and programmes (for example, UNESCO) (Leiský 2004, Zajoncová 2004). As an ‘exporter’ of environmental ideas and expertise, Tis was a more significant international player than its

successors. Tis's high profile international activities were an important element of the leadership's defensive strategy aimed at demonstrating the usefulness and worthiness of the organisations to the authorities, in spite of its anomalous status. By engaging in these activities, Tis also conformed to the ideologically privileged 'scientific', 'technicalistic' and pseudo-optimistic patterns of thinking whose origins can be traced back to Marx's equating technological with social progress (Hunnius and Kliemt 1993).

Nature conservationists in Slovakia, which was politically more distinct as a result of the law on the Czechoslovak federation of 1968, founded the Slovak Union of Nature and Landscape Conservationists (SZOPK) in 1969 (Huba 2003). This brought together former members of the National Museum Society in Slovakia with previously unorganised groups of conservationists and made available state funding, subject to a degree of state control. In so doing, they accepted the dictates of 'normalisation'.

However, in the Czech part of the federation young researchers from the recently established Academy of Sciences Institute of Landscape Ecology in Prague, inspired by their recent involvement in drafting a government document for the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment, joined with the Socialist Union of Youth, which had declared 1974 as Year of Environmental Protection, to launch a year-long campaign under the name Action Brontosaurus. A year later it was transformed into a permanent programme of the Socialist Union of Youth named Hnutí Brontosaurus (Movement Brontosaurus; HB) to promote ideas and activities which would enhance sustainability. Young environmental activists, mostly high school or university students, were able to use the vast resources of the parent youth organisation to advance the cause of environmental protection and education for the next 15 years. In Slovakia, the Socialist Union of Youth set up a similar organisation under the name Strom života (Tree of Life; SŽ) in 1979; it operated within varying degrees of tension with its parent organisation until it became independent in 1989.

As the regime tightened its policy of 'normalisation' throughout the 1970s, it became progressively more difficult for an independent organisation to continue, and in 1979 Tis was forced to disband itself (Vaněk 1996). A new state-approved organisation, the Czech Union of Nature Conservationists (ČSOP), was founded by the authorities. In effect, Tis was 'beheaded', since the urban expert leadership did not join ČSOP, while most of its small town and rural membership continued doing voluntary conservation work, in the regime-favoured form of brigades, and some low key environmental and outdoor education. ČSOP

was numerically significant, with a membership of 23,714 in 1984 (Barták and Moravec 2004) although its political effect was limited until the mid 1980s. In effect, environmentalists accommodated to the prevailing mood of political apathy in Czechoslovakia, as people were unable to challenge a regime they had lost faith in.

From the mid 1980s, several contextual changes in the international system – both within the Soviet bloc and between the two blocs - began to change the political opportunity structure. First, the policies of *glasnost* (*openness*) and *perestroika* (*restructuring*) in the Soviet Union, provided legitimacy to voicing protest and discontent and undermined the credibility of ‘normalisation’. Second, seeking to improve relations with the West, state socialist countries became part of European efforts to tackle trans-boundary air and water pollution, and took on international obligations which enabled the movement to hold the authorities accountable for their domestic implementation. This provided an opportunity for the experts to refocus attention towards the potentially controversial issue of pollution and its effects on human health. The more permissive atmosphere and new international links encouraged HB to invite a German Green MP and a Czechoslovak emigrant to its youth camp, while immediately before the 1989 ‘velvet revolution’, some Brontosaurus groups began to scale up their activity by linking with similar organizations in Poland and Hungary (Vaněk 1996).

Within the country, the urban expert environmentalists, through the Ecological Section of the Czech Academy of Sciences and urban branches of SZOPK, made use of their access to data about the environment and their knowledge of the international context to publish critical accounts of environmental conditions (Vaněk 1996). In Slovakia ‘Bratislava/nahlas’, an account of pollution and health in the city, which was published in 1987 by one of the SZOPK branches in the city, contributed to the erosion of the credibility of the regime (Huba 2003). In contrast to the distinctly defensive strategy pursued by the movement in the 1970s, the movement of the late 1980s was confronted with a regime weakened by changes in the Soviet bloc. As a consequence, it was able to adopt a more critical and pessimistic line, using a new focus on pollution and its health effects to imply that the growing environmental problems amounted to a systemic failure of state socialism.

As a result of better access to information, another significant spatial shift occurred domestically. While from its beginning in the late 1950s, the focus of environmental activism was associated with intellectuals in urban areas, the shift of emphasis to pollution extended activism to new territories such as the heavy industry region of Northern Bohemia,

which had previously been loyal to the regime. Environmental discontent culminated in major demonstrations taking place in Teplice, a Northern Bohemian town, which preceded the Prague student protest march of 17 November 1989, which in turn precipitated the collapse of the socialist regime. For a brief post-1989 period, the Czech working class and industrial heartland of Northern Bohemia became an electoral stronghold of the newly formed Green Party (Jehlička and Kostelecký 1995). This separated the Green Party from the largely middle class base of the environmental movement, and, together with accusations communist sympathies, took it out of the environmental movement for a decade, leaving an organisational space which was rapidly filled by new ENGOs.

To sum up, the four decades of state socialist Czechoslovakia can be separated into four time periods for the environmental movement. Only in the first decade was it fully suppressed. In the 1960s it grew discreetly. In the 1970s it flourished, though at odds with the policy of 'normalisation'. In the 1980s, a period of normalized activities preceded its participation in the upsurge of protest that brought about the collapse of the regime. In each time period, different external contexts and internal organisation suggest that these were distinctive space-times.

4. Czechoslovak environmental movement 1989-1992: a fleeting moment of hope

After the velvet revolution, just as Gille (2002, 156) identified the equivalent period in Hungary as 'a fleeting moment of hope', the Czechoslovak environmental movement seemed well placed to prosper in the new democratic era. It had both depth and breadth. Depth in that urban expert groups, by emphasising pollution-induced health grievances³ had played significant roles in undermining the legitimacy of the socialist regime - hence the metaphor of 'green velvet revolution' in Slovakia (Podoba 1998) - and breadth in that ČSOP and SZOPK had branches all over the country with substantial membership. The public had been alerted to environmental problems, and substantial numbers had strong attachments to landscape and nature through experiences with Tis, HB, SZOPK, ČSOP and SŽ in earlier years. However, few members were trained or experienced in politics, and, on the basis of limited knowledge of western societies, most believed that democratic politics and the free market would automatically protect the environment (Jehlička *et al.* 2005).

Initially, under the Civic Forum/Public Against Violence federal government, it seemed that social reform would address the three main sets of concerns of the victorious political movements; political, economic and ecological. Many environmental activists entered the Czech, Slovak and Federal Parliaments and Ministries of Environment (Tickle

and Vavroušek 1998; Pavlínek and Pickles 2000, 181). Environmental laws were passed, encouraged by aspirations to join the EU, and Czechoslovakia was brought into international, and especially European, policy debates. While in economic and political terms the transition was a one-way process dominated by western institutions and discourses, in the environmental field it was, although temporarily, different. Such was the importance of the domestic national and regional environmental mobilisation at the demise of the socialist era, and such were the fears of western countries of the CEE environmental crisis, that for a brief period immediately following the 1989 political earthquake, these countries found themselves in a position when they were contributing to the setting of an environmental agenda on a continental scale (Tóth and Hizsnyik 2001; Sokolov and Jäger 2001). This is perhaps best demonstrated by the launch of the Environment for Europe process at the European ministerial conference held at Dobříš Castle near Prague in 1991.

In these favourable national and international circumstances, the environmental movement expected to have a harmonious relationship with the new government, as it assumed that the government would take action on major environmental issues:

In 1990, we did nothing against (the construction of the nuclear power plant at) Temelin. We thought: There is a new government, the government of our heart, democratic, and they will certainly close Temelin down (Interview 11/2/1999).

However, they did not do so, because, after the euphoria of revolution, problems were becoming apparent in developing the economy on the basis of ageing industries and an inexperienced service sector that was increasingly exposed to open competition. Faced with the possibility of unemployment and the fast rising cost of living, most citizens became more concerned with economic growth than with environment. In Slovakia, higher unemployment, exacerbated by President Havel's principled proposal to close down armaments factories- most of which were in Slovakia, and the campaign by a minority for independence also distracted from, and even contradicted, environmentalist claims. Faced with a more difficult situation than it had expected, and weakened by the loss of many of its leaders into government, or to newly legalised youth activities, the movement was in need of direction. One response to increasingly contentious and divisive domestic politics was to build bridges: for the first time ČSOP and SZOPK institutionalised their co-operation by establishing the Council of Czechoslovak Conservationist Unions (1990-1993), and HB and SŽ were discussing the possibility of founding an umbrella body (personal communication,

17/2/06). The most influential co-operation was the establishment of the Societies for Sustainable Living (STUŽ) simultaneously in both republics in 1992 (Snajdr 2001), to articulate the traditional emphasis of Czech and Slovak environmentalism on the environmentally positive role of lifestyle change induced by education.

The change of regime had made new resources available, as western governments and NGOs sought to influence events in the transition countries, especially through contributing to the re-emergence of a vibrant civil society in which ENGOs were the prime representative due to their historical role in the process of democratization. The most obvious organisational effects were the foundation of new groups modelled on Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth (FoE). Greenpeace Czechoslovakia, Hnutí Duha (Rainbow Movement, HD) and Děti Země (Children of the Earth, DZ), drew on western NGOs' know-how and resources and established themselves as leading groups.

The availability of funding from abroad has had a much more pervasive effect on the structure of the movement than just the formation of local affiliates of international NGOs. At a time of low incomes and economic uncertainty, grant funding was attractive to many individuals and groups wishing to set up new organisations. Indeed, since western funders seemed unwilling to fund traditional, conservation-oriented groups established during the state socialism period such as ČSOP and SZOPK (Carmin and Jehlička 2005), some of the many organisations which spun off from these two bodies may well have been formed specifically to gain eligibility for funding. These new groups, untarnished by any association with the old regime and boasting the credentials of champions of democracy, became favourites of various US and west European backed funders (e.g. Regional Environmental Center, Environmental Partnership, Foundation for the Development of Civil Society, Foundation Via, Ekopolis, Open Society Foundation and the Matra Programme) who arrived in Czechoslovakia to help to build civil society as an antithesis of the authoritarian and interventionist state (Pearce 1998), and hence to reconcile the strategy of marketisation with political liberalisation.

For the most part, however, since the new funders brought pressures to move towards sustainable development and the new international practices characterised by Bernstein [2000] as 'liberal environmentalism', the grant bidding culture which grew up in the early 1990s was one which favoured organisational development and non challenging activities and made it difficult to pursue radical agendas, or even to sustain any campaign for more than a year or two. Indeed, groups from CEE often felt that they were injecting energy into rather jaded western groups (personal communication 17/2/06). Hence, outside funding

contributed to professionalisation, but did not do much to help ENGOs to formulate strategies for the new situation or to develop a supporter or membership base.

A less discussed, but ultimately very significant trend which started in the early 1990s was the localisation of environmentalist activity. This was driven by a number of factors. First, previously existing grievances, like polluting industrial plants, were supplemented by new threats, including highway projects, proposed new factories, shopping and tourist developments. Second, democratisation opened up a variety of local political contexts, and hence new opportunities for protest, lobbying, campaigning and practical projects. Third, growing government hostility from 1993 made campaigning in Prague or Bratislava less rewarding than doing so in an area where at least some of the public were interested and some in local government were more positive. Localised ENGO activities could take many forms, area-based, networked, or both, whether the ENGO was opposing development ideas coming from business or the state or proposing ideas for alternative forms of development.

A key aspect of localisation was the creation of an ENGO system in the soon to be independent Slovakia. In 1992-93 a former branch of SZOPK transformed itself into the Centre for Environmental Public Advocacy (CEPA) and moved to a hamlet near Banská Bystrica, in central Slovakia, initially to create a local community, but soon becoming a professional service organisation carrying out consultancy and legal work for local communities and NGOs. It raised funds from abroad and provided organisational and legal help to groups in conflict. It had an interest in human rights and changing power structures, worked with the anti-globalisation agenda, was the headquarters organisation for the Environmental Law Alliance worldwide and played a key role in the 1990s.

During 1992, the combined effects of prolonged political mobilization, the reduction of state funding for the traditional groups, the demobilizing effect of the largely 'integrative' model of NGO activism promoted by many western funders, greater assertiveness of emerging private economic interests, consolidation of political parties that began to view NGOs as competitors lacking a democratic mandate and the growing pressure from Slovakia to be allowed independence to pursue their own agenda combined to put an end to the 'fleeting moment of hope' that a government of national unity could bring environmental issues to the centre of decision making

5. Environmental movements in adversity 1993 – 1998: diversification and collaboration

In June 1992, the Czech election gave power to the Civic Democratic Party under the leadership of Václav Klaus. This was a party modelled on the Reagan/ Thatcher style of neo liberal economic management, hence the free market and privatisation were predominant. The Ministry of Environment was downsized and environmental legislation largely ceased, though an act did establish Environmental Impact Assessment in law (Kružiková 2004), in anticipation of the demands the EU would make on aspiring new members. Relations between ENGOs and the Klaus government deteriorated until 1995, when four leading groups -Greenpeace, DZ, HD and Animal SOS- found themselves on a list of “subversive” organisations considered dangerous to democracy (Jehlička 2001). However, in the most difficult times of the mid-1990s, the historical association of the Czech environmental movement with political liberalisation, modernization, openness and internationalism forged by its moderate resistance to state socialism helped it to find some powerful allies, such as President Havel.

If Czech environmentalists had a difficult time after 1992, their Slovak counterparts were in an almost impossible position, since the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) was in power for most of the period 1992-98 and Prime Minister Mečiar pursued an avowedly nationalist set of policies which branded environmentalists as anti-Slovak. Slovak nationalism had survived centuries of Hungarianisation, which Podoba (1998) has argued reduced it to a rural relic. The achievement of HZDS in the 1990s, in alliance with the owners, managers and workers of big industry, was to construct a version of Slovak nationalism which supported a continued energy intensive industrial and engineering based economy and society.

The diversion of the Danube through the Gabčíkovo lock and power plant, against Hungary’s wishes, though achieved before the ‘velvet divorce’, crystallised the new Slovak nationalism (Hood 1998). Environmentalists who had opposed the project with some success in 1990 were brushed aside by the anti-terrorist police at demonstrations in 1991, and thereafter persistently accused by sections of the media of being western funded groups that oppose Slovak interests. Indeed, it is quite remarkable that a system of ENGOs survived at all, since the 1996 Special Act on Foundations and NGOs was intended to marginalise, or even eliminate such organisations.⁴

During the mid 1990s, when ENGOs in both the Czech and Slovak republics were operating in conditions that would be seen as very difficult by western standards, though they were significantly easier than under socialism, many more ENGOs were started, though most remained small. Reflecting the harsher conditions, there were fewer in Slovakia (141,

as against 520 in the Czech Republic) and they were smaller, averaging only 13 members (REC 1997). Both in size and to a degree in style, these groups resemble the 'affinity groups' which Routledge (2000) describes in the context of the anti-globalisation movement. There was also a remarkable diversification of their aims, styles and the spaces they worked in as they attempted to build funding and influence. In turn, the proliferation and diversification created a need for collaboration to combine strengths and work across spaces.

The process of diversification is best understood through looking at the ends pursued by different organisations (with a tendency to move from opposition to specific development projects and towards aspiration towards something more positive); the spaces they chose to work in (with some choosing global issues and collaborators, others national, regional or local); and the styles they adopted (from confrontation towards a range of more sophisticated approaches intended to appeal to government and/or the public). The concern for local conservation, delivered through the remaining network of ČSOP and SZOPK branches continued at a reduced scale due to reduced state funding, but lost members and energy as new organisations were started to pursue more ambitious targets (Huba 2003). Some of these attempted to move towards national or international roles, others to develop more elaborate aspirations for localities or regions with particular problems and opportunities. Our account will start with the newer phenomenon; national and international oppositional groups.

DZ and HD were both professionally staffed organisations with a head office and regional branches, though HD was headquartered in Brno and DZ in Prague. Although located in regional centres, they interacted mainly with decision makers in those towns, and made little attempt to connect to the general public across the region. Both organisations moved from direct action towards professionalisation of media relations, lobbying (although headquartered in Brno, HD has a Prague office for this purpose) and use of legal staff and processes. Both relied heavily on grant funding from abroad. Neither organisation had very clear values, but in both cases they had social goals, expressed as 'civic society' or 'social ecology', as well as environmental ones (Interviews 30/9/98 and 11/2/99). HD tended to be more radical than DZ, both in the type of people who joined and in their inclination to stage demonstrations.

HD's radicalism was established early, and was first demonstrated through its alliance with the best known anti-nuclear local oppositional group in the Czech Republic - Jihočeské matky (South Bohemian Mothers, JČM) (Císař 2004) - which was formed in the early 1990s to campaign against the building of the nuclear power station at Temelín. Initially it was stimulated by mothers' organisations in Austria and subsequently received

funds and support from a number of western countries. It is, in Flitner and Soyez' words (2000, 3), an example of 'transnationally defended localism'. JČM supported the annual blockades of the Temelín site by HD – the supporting role required by the fact that 'mothers can't stay three days' (Interview 23/3/99). Over the years, JČM became involved in other local issues, including logging and incinerator proposals, as well as having a broader interest in women's position and status. It remained a critical voice and consequently had difficulty obtaining access to decision makers.

As with ČSOP, from which its founders came, DZ branches had particular interests as a result of local problems and staff interests. For example, the DZ Plzeň branch had a particular concern with incinerators and the DZ Brno branch with transport. DZ Liberec played a leading role among ten local organisations which campaign to preserve the Jizerské hory Mountains from development. Hence it linked DZ's international and national network to a territorially demarcated local campaign.

Greenpeace Czechoslovakia, which has effectively become Greenpeace Czech Republic, started in 1992 as a professional body, funded mainly by Greenpeace International (GI), to campaign on national and global issues, notably whaling, tropical deforestation, toxic wastes, climate change and GMOs. It initially recruited a limited number of supporters (up to 200) and left local action to others. Conforming to the national style characterized by scientific and technical thinking on the environment, it sought, in particular with respect to the latter three issues, to use scientific arguments and professional media relations and avoids demonstrations. It has achieved some successes, including changes to the laws on waste, including a ban on imports of PVC from 2001. Following the decline in the number of Greenpeace supporters worldwide, GI put pressure on the Czech office to develop a strategy aimed at expanding its domestic support base. From the late-1990s, it began to succeed in recruiting a growing number of supporters and was a pioneer in moving towards financial self-reliance (Interview 28/9/98).

Slovakia also had a set of internationally linked ENGOs influenced by the two big global players, but they have been realised very differently in the different conditions. Greenpeace Slovakia gradually detached itself from GP Czechoslovakia and adopted a very different approach. It attracted 'non conformist and anarchist people not used to hard work' (Interview 17/9/98) and hence focussed on direct action, a provocative strategy in the face of police and local support for projects seen as tied up with national pride. Dependent on foreign funding but sceptical of western know how, Greenpeace Slovakia has seen

considerable turnover of membership and of leadership, with some leaders departing to found new bodies.

One of them was *Za Matku Zem* (For Mother Earth, ZMZ) , founded in 1994 by three teenagers from Greenpeace Slovakia who disliked the imposition of policy from GI, though they appreciated the usefulness of foreign funding and accepted support from Belgium. Their initial concern was energy, especially stopping the construction of the nuclear power plant at Mochovce, but later expanded to include water and waste issues. The organisational structure of ZMZ was described by its own staff as chaotic. Like Greenpeace Slovakia, it has faced harassment and criticism for its opposition to prestige projects, including being described in Slovenská Republika as ‘paid from the west to serve anti-Slovak interests’. By the late 1990s, the dominance of these groups in the movement had been challenged by a variety of new groups building from local or regional bases.

A successful example of a local organisation was *Přátelé přírody* (Friends of Nature, PP) based in Ústí nad Labem which set out in 1995 to protect localities and promote biodiversity. They were initially dependent on funds from grants and foundations, as well as the Ministry of Environment, but later began to build a growing membership and stressed internal democracy and self-funding. They had some successes, and as a respondent stated ‘initially we were not worth ridiculing, but now we are taken seriously’ (Interview 7/12/99). Like their national counterparts they were engaged with professionalising their activities and using experts, celebrities, politicians and the law to bolster their case, which has become more oppositional rather than less.

But styles can change in different directions: Rosa was set up in České Budějovice as an information centre of ČSOP, became effectively independent in 1989 and formally so in 1991. It did policy work on transport and waste management, ran courses, circulated a directory of skills and needs and has helped several other ENGOs to start in the district. One of its projects – ‘Rural Idyll’ - became a distinct focus: drawing on a long established feature of Czech and Sloval environmentalists’ identity, it promoted local self-sufficiency, both as an ideological alternative to globalisation and as a way of life, with 50 or so people developing the skills to allow them to move to the countryside and lead life according to the ideal of voluntary simplicity

Slovak organisations pursuing similar goals were A-Project NO of Liptovský Hrádok, which had professionals working with volunteers and villages to promote village tourism, and *Pospolitosť pre harmonický život* (Companionship for Harmonic Life) of

Pliešovce and Zaježová, which used camps and schools of crafts and folk culture to promote sustainable lifestyles, including vegetarianism and organic farming (Interview 20/10/98).

A more generic advocacy of sustainability on a regional and national stage came from Spoločnosť priateľov Zeme (Friends of the Earth Society; SPZ) which was founded in Košice in 1996 by one of the co-founders in 1992 of Sloboda zvierat (Freedom for Animals) - one of the most successful NGOs in Slovakia. The move to SPZ was to allow pursuit of sustainability through courses, campaigns, legal prosecution of breaches of laws on waste and the building of an eco-farm.

As a result of the interactions between national and local governments, research and education institutions, ENGOS, the media and the public, the major cities have changed their roles. Although for decades the intellectual centre of environmentalism, Prague's position has changed to a place channelling money flows from abroad and distributing the money to the rest of the country. The role of intellectual and activist centre has been assumed by Brno with its vibrant and heterogeneous movement. For example, in the second half of the 1990s nobody in Prague was willing to work voluntarily for HB, so it moved its HQ to Brno. In contrast, Bratislava remained central to the movement in Slovakia, possibly because it was able to redefine environmentalism in opposition first to socialism, then to the Mečiar regime's view of Slovak nationalism with its electoral base in smaller towns and rural areas in the north-west of the country. However, because the style of Bratislava activists has remained oppositional and conceptual, the second city, Košice, has played a distinct role in building a more developmental approach to sustainable living.

These distinctions between places, characterized by functional specialism, varying degrees of radicalism and professionalisation, and use of place-based and/or networked organisation, produced a varied array of ENGOS by 1998, and generated a need to construct alliances to build the effectiveness of the movement. These developed from opportunistic alliances, like the one between HD and JČM against Temelín, towards more complementary and formalised arrangements, including one recognised by the EU.

A typical local case in the Czech Republic was the collaboration between Plzeňská ekologická nadace (Plzeň Ecological Foundation; PEN), which raised funding abroad and worked with a network of Plzeň groups, including the branch of DZ, but had the reputation locally of professionalism and responsibility - *'they (DZ) do unpopular work, PEN can get representatives to official places'* (Interview 21/1/99).

Another common arrangement was a link between local or regional NGOs and a national one, for example, PP worked closely with ČSOP against the Malé Březno dam on

the Elbe river and with DZ against the Dresden-Prague motorway, using a division of labour where the national organisation handled the Prague links and PP handled the local dimension. Hence pressure could be put simultaneously on national and local government, and local public opposition could be represented at the centre.

Not all alliances were locally rooted: some brought together bodies with complementary interests and contrasting styles. Greenpeace Slovakia collaborated with other ENGOs concerned with energy to increase its effectiveness, as described by its 1998 director:

'We are a campaigning organisation targeting the general public. Energy 2000 is an expert organisation pursuing its goals solely by using expert arguments and political lobbying. People from Ponická Huta (i.e. CEPA) advocate more horizontal approaches, NGOs that work in a certain network and aim at raising the general public's environmental awareness and education, so we prioritise different aspects in our anti nuclear campaign.' (Interview 17/9/98)

CEPA were also instrumental in putting together an alliance of complementary groups to obtain international recognition as the Slovak affiliate of FoE. To complement its own professionalized and low key style, it brought together the anarchic and oppositional membership of ZMZ and the more sophisticated repertoire of SPZ into a triple alliance. In so doing it combined organisations whose activities were focused on Bratislava and Košice, which could conveniently be coordinated from its own location in the centre of the country.

Many Czech organisations found it necessary to formalise collaboration. Greenpeace, HD and DZ, plus ten other groups, were subscribers to a linking organisation Zelený kruh (Green Circle, ZK). Originally set up by five people as a green oppositional group two days before 17 November 1989 (Interview 12/4/06), it attempted to construct an umbrella organisation to represent all ENGOs. Because of the fragmentation of the movement, this has never been achieved and the 1998 director stressed that ZK was a service organisation, using overseas links to obtain funding and information, lobbying MPs and Ministers and co-ordinating responses to multi-strand issues, like the territorial plan for Prague, transport policy and development issues.

A successful collaboration between local state and ENGOs succeeded in creating a new space. Carmin *et al.* (2003) have shown in a detailed case study that local initiatives on both sides of the Czech/Slovak border in the White Carpathians were able to operate even in

the difficult conditions in the mid 1990s because of their peripheral location and uncontroversial activities. Post-1998, these initiatives have been taken up by regional and local organisations of both states and, encouraged by approaching EU accession, formally constituted as a cross border Euroregion. This is the most explicit of the new spaces constructed by ENGO activities in these two countries, though built from the same set of components, including community action, networking with other activists in different places, and lobbying of state bodies.

It can be seen that the 1990s were a particularly uncertain space-time for both governments and ENGOs, since the collapse of the USSR and fragmentation of the Soviet bloc opened up a huge range of possible futures for the Czech and Slovak republics. While it seemed likely throughout that the Czech Republic would join the EU, this seemed much less certain in Slovakia, where strong groupings favoured nationalism, possibly underpinned by links to the east. In that uncertain context, political parties with clear visions of where they wanted the country to go were much more effective in gaining public support than environmentalists. However, a movement nurtured in the face of authoritarian governments was well able to survive and test out a variety of strategies.

Overall though, ENGOs in both countries continued to be marginalised until the late 1990s when their standing was transformed by political opportunities and resources made available by a powerful external actor – the European Union. Hicks (2004, 216) argues that the EU strongly influenced the development of CEE environmental movements on two levels: (1) it set significant portions of the issue agendas addressed by environmentalists; and (2) it helped to shape the means and conditions of activism itself. This phase of the development of the Czech and Slovak environmental movement lies beyond the scope of this article, but we can be confident that it will differ significantly from the earlier space times we have analysed here.

6 Conclusions

The research reported in this paper was originally conceived, under the influence of Jamison, as a comparative study of Czech and Slovak environmental movements in the 1990s, and duly found significant differences between them. However, to explain these contrasts we found we had to investigate earlier times and both larger and smaller spaces. Rethinking methods and findings under the influence of Miller (2000) and Massey (1999) transformed our interpretation of changes in the movements. In particular, Massey's view of space as

made through interrelations, both external and internal, drew our attention to the changing external pressures on these states, notably the tightening and loosening of Soviet control, which guaranteed significant change over time. However, national governments reacted differently to external pressures, sometimes defying and sometimes embracing the roles indicated for them. As a result, the political opportunity structure for environmental activism changed over time, as did their organisational response. We now see the development of the movement as a series of space-times, roughly conforming to the decades 1948-57, 1958-68, 1969-79, and with the decades of 1979-89 and 1989-98 divided into two. Each space-time was influenced by its predecessors as well as by its new context, and saw significant, sometimes surprising, changes in movement size, organisation and effectiveness.

The space-times were useful ‘laboratories’ in which we could observe the full range of explanatory factors of social movements provided by Miller. In our case studies, grievances, political opportunity structure, resource mobilisation and movement identity all mattered, but to different degrees at different times. Political opportunity structure, as expressed by party control of government, initially seemed to be the dominant periodisation, but itself changed because of the interplay of grievances, resources and the contending agency of different movements. In these two countries, like many others, environmental values seem to be less appealing to broad publics than economic and nationalist arguments, except where health, and perhaps survival were part of the appeal.

Finally, and perhaps crucially since this set out to be a study of an environmental movement and not just of its context, it seems to us that at times the Czechoslovak environmental movement has performed much better than the political opportunity structure would have indicated. The building of a large movement by Tis in the 1960s required skilled use of expertise to legitimate itself, reach out to a significant membership and build international links. In the different circumstances of the late 1980s, environmentalists, allied with other critics of the regime and influenced by events in other countries of the Soviet bloc, contributed to a regime change that had seemed unthinkable a few years before. However, during the ‘brief moment of hope’ around 1990, the movement can now be seen to have underperformed. Having defeated their initial adversary, contributed leaders to the new government, and with faith that democracy and a free market would automatically solve environmental problems, they became preoccupied with grant funding and organisational development so the movement was outperformed by new political parties that were better able to persuade voters to pursue their visions of the future.

Throughout this long period, the identity of the movement, with its preference for working in small groups of trusted colleagues and reliance on technical expertise, has been a key influence on its effectiveness - positive in times of difficulty, since it allowed survival, flexible in times of lesser pressure, including an ability to access available funds (whether from the Socialist Union of Youth or neoliberal donors) but ultimately ill suited to reaching out to a broad public and building a self funded movement. Although contexts will change, these preferences will have to be overcome if the environmental movement is to be more than a minor player in the Czech and Slovak Republics.

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¹ Pavlínek and Pickles (2000, 42) juxtapose massive environmental degradation and the state-sponsored strong environmental ethos of citizenry manifested in the high proportion of protected areas (30 per cent) and a network of outdoor recreational and environmental groups. Both state policy and movement experts were influenced by distinctive Russian and Soviet cultural and scientific traditions, as documented for a later period by Oldfield and Shaw (2002).

² The National Front was an umbrella organisation of political parties and other associations that were regarded by the regime as advancing the cause of socialism within the society.

³ One of the findings of a major international research project Project Teplice conducted in the 1990s in the 'Black Triangle' region of Northern Bohemia was that the link between outdoor air pollution and the state of human health was tenuous.

⁴ As Snajdr (1998 52) observed in the mid-1990s, 'Slovakia's vibrant Green movement of the 1980s has now taken a back seat to issues of independence and market reform'.