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11 may 2007
TAM/Euromasters
Dimensions of Sustainability
Word Count: 3947**

Essay Topic: Critique the ways in which concepts of sustainability have been appropriated and exploited by social, economic or political actors.

Title: Dimensions of Sustainability: An Evolution of Sustainable Development and its Implementation in Central and Eastern Europe.

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Introduction: Dimensions of Sustainability: the Evolution of Sustainable Development and its Implementation in Central and Eastern Europe.

The collapse of communism presented an array of challenges to European actors on both sides of the Iron Curtain. One challenge was to the views and modes of implementation of sustainable development (SD). While this concept has been slowly gaining support for decades, the Central and East European (CEE) states suddenly offered unprecedented possibilities for improvement and implementation of an array of dimensions of SD.

This essay seeks to examine the ways both Western and CEE actors have institutionalized and implemented certain dimensions of SD. A challenge to their effort is the evolving definition of SD itself. This term has been evolving for decades, possibly beyond a useable definition or mandate by 1989 for ensuring that "development" continue *sustainably* in the East. If SD is the latest in a series of political neologisms, how might this be manipulated by political elites? Post-communist "transition" has wrought many ills upon the hopeful populations of CEE states. But how has the concept of SD been manipulated both by actors in the West as well as within national political spheres of the East for gain at the expense of their own populations? These questions are central to understanding the use of SD in the post-communist transition and integration with EU and Western norms since 1989.

Below I will describe the history and development of SD. I begin by explaining that it has evolved out of a long tradition of eco-pessimism and expanded into a multitude of dimensions. Further, I will examine how key Western actors have adopted certain SD concepts and applied them in their policies towards CEE states. This will be followed by an examination of how SD is considered and implemented among selected CEE states themselves. The result of this analysis indicates that SD has been high on the priority of Western actors but low on the priority of CEE states. Why? SD is a political tool in Western policy towards CEE while the CEE states simply lack capital resources to consider aggressive implementations of SD norms.

Broad description of theories on sustainability: an overview of evolving concerns for Sustainability and the formulation of the concept "sustainable development".

The foundation of SD, both as a political concept and a change agent, can be identified in a long tradition of eco-pessimism. Around the end of the 18th Century, Thomas Malthus (1798) aptly addressed the problematic relationship of food supply to population growth. His argument holds that food supplies grow at a constant absolute rate while population has a constant growth rate; therefore food supplies should grow scarce as population rises (Blüdorn 2007a).

Subsequent seminal arguments on the problems facing growth and the environment have helped to shape the current use of sustainable development. *Limits to Growth* from 1997 explains that "exponential demographic and economic growth in a world of finite resources would soon lead to collapse" and the 1972 United Nations Convention on the Human Environment, in Stockholm, emphasizes the way humans interact with the world (Szarka 2007).

Burgeoning concerns for growth and sustainability culminated in the Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development to the UN. The report explains that SD implies "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Report 1987: 1) His application of "intergenerational equity" can be seen as a means of compatibility and "systematically linking environmental problems and development issues" (Szarka 2007).

The concerns of the Brundtland commission were given further attention in 1992 during the Earth Summit in Rio where 170 heads of state proposed *Agenda 21*, an ambitious attempt to combine societal concerns, economic expansion, general well-being of the world's population and progeny, with care and preservation for our environment (Sacquet 2005: 8). *Agenda 21* primarily addresses implementation and *transition* to sustainability through political support and institutional (O'Riordan and Voisey 1998). *Agenda 21*, like its predecessors, broadens the scope of SD; Describing the results of Rio, O'Riordan and Voisey (1998: xv) posit, "sustainable development starts from various points on the economic and social compass and will surely end in a huge variety of outcomes at many levels".

La Comité 21 (Sacquet 2005: 5-9) expands SD to include a motley array of development and sustainability concerns. Established in 1994, the committee was created in response to France's participation at Rio in an effort to implement *Agenda 21*. Subsequently their work has been concerned with coordinating some 300 member organizations under the headings of "four groups representative of civil society:

business, regional authorities, associations, and public such as Local Agenda 21s" and has been striving for more interaction among international initiatives to promote SD (2005: 5). The committee has published a summary of collected SD statistics in *World Atlas of Sustainable Development* (Sacquet 2005). With charts spanning the fields such as "Social Malaise" (28), "Natural Disasters" (34), "Desertification" (40), to "Ecological Footprint" (52), "Energy Production and Consumption" (58), "Inequality and Poverty" (66), and "Corruption" (70), to name a few, this volume, in its own words, "proposes an unprecedented 'reading' of the global situation" (84).

As definitions expand and institutional implementation grows, the impetus of SD weakens and its value to mobilize diminishes. SD runs the risk of falling victim to the latest trends of similar political neologisms such as "human security", "global security", etc -- strong in broad declaratory generalizations, weak in firm mandated implementations. Despite this risk, as I argue below, the chimerical SD has facilitated the accession of CEE states and produced awareness in sectors desperate for reform. Yet I have intentionally delineated the history of SD above to illustrate that this term has now been appropriated by elites and transformed into a tool for accomplishing their interests.

Conceptual Orientation and Implementation of Sustainable Development within the Institutional Framework of Western and CEE Actors

Today the variegated concepts of SD are often divided into three general dimensions: economy, society, and environment. These dimensions might be called *aspects*, for certain interest groups align themselves with and expand upon one or another concept of SD and formulate definitions and categorical analysis; subsequently political elites use these concepts to meet their strategic interests. In short, actors establish a position within the myriad concepts attributed to SD from which they view the world: aspects. By identifying aspects of SD, I argue that SD itself can be manipulated to serve the determined interests of a given actor in the CEE region. By this logic, one must first consider the interests of the actor and determine how that actor appropriates certain concepts of SD to achieve their objectives before analyzing their practices. Since SD lacks a legally binding international mandate and means of implementation, one could argue that all actors include SD in their Eastern influence, even if not overtly identified as such.

The literature on SD in the CEE region lacks extensive assessment. This is surprising because CEE states pose unique threats to the efforts of Western states to achieve fulfill their objectives in SD. But this should not cause alarm. The three dimensions of SD have received treatment even if indirectly. The environment, for example, has preoccupied the EU, for the legacy of Soviet industrialization will continue to plague Europe beyond the foreseeable future. The new economies of CEE states, as well, have been a primary concern for both the EU and the individual states themselves, for their integration with Western liberal markets has borne fortune and poverty at once inspiring and crushing. In this sense the sustainability of the environment and economy in CEE has been the sole objective of the EU. Clearly an exhaustive survey of each dimension and its regional implications is well beyond the scope and limitations of this paper. Rather, I will focus on two vital dimensions vital to CEE states: economy and environment and illustrate in a limited way how these dimensions have become integral to the policy towards CEE.

Agendas, conceptual orientation, and implementation of SD by Western actors

Below I will discuss involvement in the CEE region by key Western actors. This analysis begins by identifying the actor's agenda and conceptual orientation of SD, followed by a look at the means by which that actor implements that conceptual orientation.

The EU has an economic interest in the CEE region. Therefore the vital aspect of the EU's conceptual orientation of the economic dimension should reflect its model of multi-lateral institutionalism in the form of liberal market institutionalization and promotion of civil society through PHARE and TACIS. The environmental dimension, additionally, clearly bears significant influence. The combination of reports on acid rain and the destructive force of Chernobyl launched theories of "risk society" in Western Europe, and risk became normalized in both public opinion and policy (Blüdorn 2007b). Further, economic interest mingles with the environmental as Europe grows dependent on the convenience of burning Russia's oil. The legacy of Soviet industrial policy, as visible as Chernobyl or invisible as mercury deposits, clearly bears a strong influence in both Western and Eastern policy. In an article on the development after Chernobyl, Irina Gukalova (1998: 244) observes "a decade has passed since the even occurred, sufficient time conceivably to have overcome the

"Chornobyl syndrome" but not the social consequences. Moreover, according to many scientists, the worst is still ahead -- the long-term effects of the catastrophe on health are, together with other negative developments, already making themselves felt". The EU has implemented its SD objectives in CEE states mainly through pre-accession treaties and the *acquis* as in Chapter 22 of the 5th enlargement, for example, which delineates environmental requirements.

Traditionally the US has held a security interest in the CEE region. While that interest has morphed dramatically since 1989, today the US appears especially keen on establishing allies for staging positions, cooperation with airspace, and, still, a shield against Russia. The US has motivated military cooperation through economic stimulation and democracy promotion. Yet conversely the institutional emphasis of the EU, US interests have relied on bi-lateral agreements and direct investment. USAID stands as the fundamental channel for US assistance, and their investments fund local NGOs, community projects, etc.

The origins of the OSCE might be interpreted as an SD organization with respect to the economic dimension. Soviet concerns for its lagging technology and desire to cement borders prompted co-operation with the West. This plea was met in the form of the Helsinki process. Western actors took the opportunity, however, to inject standards for human rights, in the form of social sustainability, as a requirement for technology transfers.

The IMF and World Bank as well have included certain dimensions of SD within their practices. For example, the IMF has focused on an economic and "financial" aspect of SD; specifically, in the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, the IMF contributed a pamphlet entitled "Fiscal Dimensions of Sustainable Development" (IMF 2002). In this pamphlet, the IMF declares "economic growth is essential for sustainable development and improving social outcomes" (IMF 2002: 2). As such, for the IMF, the economic dimension of SD ensures the social dimension, therefore it should have priority.

In a response to the efforts of foreign aid in effecting SD in CEE states, György Hajnal (2007: 201) argues that after 1990 donors increasingly recognized the correlation between rule of law and fulfillment of SD goals. He writes, "Hard-earned experience showed that inadequate institutional capacity can be a major hindrance to the sustainable development of underdeveloped nations" thus "public administration technical assistance...started to flow increasingly into the [CEE] region." Again

dimensions of SD are seen to mingle and distinctions disappear as certain dimensions depend on other dimensions for their success.

The question remains: how has SD been used as a political tool by these actors in the West to influence certain developmental stages or encourage certain compliances in the East? For the West, SD has preoccupied their concerns for long term growth. Their views on SD have become internalized within their economic, environmental and social policies, and sustainability has found itself overtly expressed and politicized as well as embedded in the management and growth models. In a critical essay on the use of dimensions of SD by international actors, specifically IMF and World Bank, Bradlow and Grossman assert that "the international community has not agreed on the concepts of a successful environmentally sustainable development strategy, or on an operationally useful theory concerning the indivisibility of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. In addition, the international community needs to fully identify the institutional characteristic for international organizations, which are designed to effectively deal with a range of intertwined problems" (Bradlow and Grossman 1995: 2). Without meeting these challenges, the various dimensions of SD pose problems as well as present solutions.

Agendas, conceptual orientation, and implementation of SD by CEE states

For the CEE states, SD frankly has fallen short on their priority lists. These states have faced profound challenges after their dissolution of communist regimes and ties with Moscow, and title waves of economic and social change have distracted policy makers as well as public opinions. Several periods of interpretation shape the way one must consider SD within a CEE context such as early transitology, watershed periods, post-transition, association agreement, pre-accession, accession, or for some ENP, etc. The way a state views itself and its relationship to the Western powers influences the way it perceives SD, which in turn effects its ability to implement SD concepts and projects.

I argued above that two important aspects of SD for CEE states are the environmental and the economic dimension. These two dimensions often function together within the institutional framework of a given international actor and for the CEE states, for the degree of Western co-operation can hinge upon one or the other

element. First I will discuss the environmental dimension followed by a correlation of that with the economic dimension.

In 1992, Czech Republic hosted a conference on Energy and Environment in European Economies in Transition, sponsored by the OECD. The conference sought to "address questions of environmental priorities in the energy sector and the way the economic transition will affect these priority areas" with priority given to "financial and technical assistance programmes" (OECD 1992: 1). The report evaluates mainly current situations, projected trends, and feasibility of meeting national goals as well as compliance to Western standards during so called transition periods. "The question is particularly relevant for air pollution requirements, which are meant to reach European Community levels in the medium and long term" (OECD 1992: 143). In Poland, for example, to meet EC standards of SO₂ emissions would cost around \$260 billion (OECD 1992: 143).

The report curious avoids addressing sustainability as such and instead concentrates on prospects for integration. For example, in a summary report on Hungary, the state of the environment is described as a major source of concern similar to other countries of the region (OECD 1992: 124). Like other countries, Hungary's priorities include "vehicle emissions, emissions of sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) in highly industrialized areas, and emissions of SO₂ and NO_x from coal-fired power plants (OECD 1992: 124).

The report urges post communist states to adapt long term policies to "clean up the environmental problems left from the former centrally planned economic system, to improve air and water quality, to eliminate the soil degradation, and to relieve the current pressure on the environment and natural resources" (OECD 1992: 127). These areas represent the environmental dimension of SD. The report continues to suggest diversification in the oil, gas and electricity sectors as a means of achieving these goals (OECD 1992: 129).

The summary chapter ends with a hortative remark (OECD 1992: 243):

"climate change is a global problem; thus it makes sense to consider investments in other parts of Europe...to diminish global greenhouse gas emissions. Investment in Central and East Europe offers several advantages: substantial reductions in local emissions at low costs; small but not significant reductions in acid deposition in Western Europe; the refurbishment and improvement of power generation capacity in

Central and East Europe; and West-to-East knowledge transfer. Additional results will be a quicker transition to the market economy and significant world-wide emission reductions both of SO₂ and CO₂. This approach calls for global thinking and the exploration of investment policies far different from those currently followed."

Yet the report does not state what those "far different" policies should be. While dramatic changes, uncertainty, and the lack of capital resources have proven to be stumbling blocks in the process of re-orientation, however, CEE states have assimilated some of the embedded views on SD as discussed above.

In 1993 pursuant to the conference, the responsibility for the EU's concepts on its eastern border fell to the Czech Ministry for Economic Affairs and the German-Polish Regional Planning Commission (Roch 1998: 83). Further, "relevant ministries of trade and industry commissioned the elaboration of plans of action and operational programmes. Each of the neighbouring countries commissioned their own experts to elaborate border region concepts" (Roch 1998: 83). Roch points out that this division established certain regional priorities. For example, for the Germans, long term transnational goals, listed in order of priority, included economic development, settlement, culture, science, tourism; for the Czechs, transport, technical infrastructure, environment, economic development, agriculture (Roch 1998: 84). These priorities clearly reflect their point of view with respect to dimensions of SD while transnational co-operation plays an increased roll in establishing and implementing SD.

Roch criticizes trends in the implementation of SD policies in CEE by pointing out that current projects in Europe's "border regions are being very strongly weighted according to their fundability and that focus has been very much on finding suitable programmes for urgent cases, with a systematic tackling of all cases requiring action viewed as a more distant objective" (1998: 85). Still as late as 1998, SD remained a low priority among CEE states and Western actors in the region. She lists several "barriers to project implementation", such as "different sets of interests", "inadequate resources", "political imponderables", "insufficient expertise", "lack of attractiveness of a project vehicle", etcetera (1998: 85). These impediments analogously characterize problems in development and economic integration across the spectrum in most CEE states.

Alternatively, the implementation of some SD concepts has been accomplished in limited ways in infrastructure, economic integration, demographic development, and civil society (1998: 84). While a Roch credits for the successes "high personal input", "good bilateral contacts", "direct responsibility of the state", "link-ups between those in office and project managers", "presence on European committees", and so on (1998: 85). Similarly, these indicators for success span multiple dimensions of development and economic integration. The common thread between the failures and the success is cooperative efforts. Where CEE and Western actors agree to work together, project implementation stands a better chance of achieving its goals.

The significance of the economic dimension of SD for CEE actors cannot be overstated. In the early states of transition, economic integration with the West was held preeminently as a symbol for new freedoms, quality of life, and the means to happiness. The problem is that economic integration was not viewed by all as a dimension of SD as such. The literature on the economic integration of the East since the late 1990's scarcely includes sustainability in its analysis. It would appear that, as with the Western actors, SD has become embedded into the discourse. CEE states necessarily implement economic reform that from their view is sustainable. It follows that the economic and environmental dimensions of SD have been concomitantly regarded and integrated into the post-communist transitions of the CEE region. Many states have adopted the policies of the West that were already shaped by previous views on SD or explicitly define SD in a given dimension or sector.

Conclusions

The evolution of sustainable development and its various dimensions has affected both actors in the West as well as in the CEE region. International actors have been shown to adopt a certain aspect of view of SD, embracing or defining a dimension that suits their priorities and interests, and explicitly or implicitly helped to shape their policies towards CEE. Lacking a legal international mandate, these actors are at liberty to interpret the dimension of SD that aligns with their objectives. SD has grown to be an effective political tool for producing a certain effect or influence in the West. In the CEE region, in contrast, SD has been avoided explicitly because of several constraints including capital power to change energy sources as well as the

social disturbances caused by economic swings during transition. However, SD has still been achieved in the CEE region, for it has become embedded in the policies of the West that the CEE states has assimilated or been striving to implement. As such, SD remains a term with wide and various interpretations, and therefore the strength of or weakness of SD lies in the hands of the actor itself and its own definition. Without an international legally binding mandate and means of implementing explicit dimensions, the trajectory of SD in the CEE region appears subjugated the interpretation of a given actor intent on using it as a political device.

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