Explaining Environmental Policy in Central Eastern Europe

The environment poses a crucial challenge to the Central Eastern European (CEE) countries. First, while the CEE countries have made progress in alleviating the worst environmental legacies of the past, the level of pollution often remains higher than in Western Europe and in some cases creates serious externalities for the current European Union (EU) member states. Second, the candidate countries for EU membership strive to catch up with the level of economic growth of EU member states. Environmental harmonization with EU standards is costly and may be perceived as an obstacle to economic development. Third, some of the more recent EU environmental policies promoting new instruments are fundamentally at odds with the traditional policy styles of the CEE countries.

The major aim of the workshop therefore is to continue the analytical debate in comparative politics on environmental issues in CEE. Given that, the workshop does not focus on environmental issues per se but on analytical comparative work in the field. Reference to analytical concepts such as patterns of democracy, state capacities, advocacy coalitions, resource mobilization, party politics, diffusion theory, etc. are essential for potential papers.

Papers which analyze a country’s environmental policy and environmental outcomes in a comprehensive perspective by referring to an analytical framework are welcome. In particular, the submission of papers which have an explicit comparative perspective (of several or more countries) is encouraged. In addition, papers which do not only focus on cases of a particular policy in only one country or region but have a rather comprehensive view are especially valuable.

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Outline of the Topic: The socio-political and economic development of Central Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Eastern enlargement of the European Union (EU) has received tremendous attention in politics and political science. In this context it is surprising how little attention environmental aspects received in the debate. This is the more astonishing considering that the state of the environment in Eastern Europe is of great importance to Western Europe. Closer economic cooperation, for instance, leads to imports of Eastern European agricultural products which must meet the standards of Western Europe. Air emissions and water pollution in Eastern Europe have a direct impact on Western European countries. In this context the Austrian debate on the Czech nuclear power plant is only one case in point for the mutual dependency between Eastern and Western Europe.

For the European Union, environmental issues in Eastern Europe are important. There are some guidelines and support for the harmonization of environmental regulation. However, despite the existence of an environmental acquis, environmental issues has so far received only very little attention in the enlargement negotiations (Carius et al. 2000).

Environmental issues are complex and must be seen in the context of other areas. Therefore the workshop addresses the triad of economic, political and environmental development in CEE and its consequences for EU enlargement.

From an analytical point of view, it is important to ask what the general conditions are for environmental improvement in CEE. Can we work with similar categories and hypotheses in that region as we do in the West European context? And what role does globalization (including EU enlargement) play in this context? How do the CEE states cope with building up regulatory structures and harmonizing their environmental policies with EU requirements? What roles do societal actors play in the Europeanization of environmental policy in the CEE countries? Do new policy instruments facilitate or hinder the adoption of the environmental acquis in the applicant states? The workshop aims to collect basic information about the state of the environment, the policy instruments and the general political conditions for environmental issues. This information is
needed in order to develop a theoretical framework which may explain, on one hand, the different outcomes and policies and, on the other hand, the potential for future environmental policies.

Even if we do not believe in strict historical determination, a study of environmental issues in CEE should take as a starting point the explanations which have been developed in other contexts. To give some examples, we wish to refer to some theoretical approaches of comparative environmental policy and politics. The most comprehensive approach has been developed by Arend Lijphart (1999) in his “Patterns of Democracy”. His conclusion is that consensus democracy leads to a “kinder, gentler” democracy with advantages in the field of environmental issues (p. 295-297). Can we discover similar relationships between the political system and the environmental performance in CEE?

Another sophisticated analytical approach has been provided by Martin Jänicke and his Environmental Policy Research Unit team at the Free University of Berlin (Jänicke, 1997). He starts with the capacity of states to handle environmental problems. In this context several aspects are important, such as actors (advocacy coalitions), structures, instruments and situational factors. These aspects, in turn, may explain different environmental policies and outcomes. The question is whether or not we can distinguish different environmental capacities for the countries in CEE.

Finally, we can also ask the classical question from other research areas: does politics matter in the context of environmental policy in CEE? In order to raise this question we have to compare the political aspects with economic, structural and institutional ones. Again, we can also benefit from research in this tradition from industrial countries in the West (Crepaz 1995; Jahn 1998, 2000; Scruggs 1999). However, one important aspect for CEE is the trade-off between economic and environmental performances which may be different from those in Western industrialized countries (Jahn 2001).

All the above-mentioned approaches are state-centered. However, European integration and globalization are factors which may undermine the impact of states on policies (Zürn 1998). This aspect will be added to each analytical perspective and we will try to estimate the impact of international trends, such as EU enlargement, on domestic environmental policies.

It is the lack of theoretical approaches in the field of environmental policy and politics in CEE that is the most pressing for future research; this proposed workshop intends to elaborate on existing endeavours in this area. Therefore, all papers should have a clear analytical framework for comparative research.

There is an urgent need for this workshop. In the context of the ECPR-workshops, the development of Eastern Europe is still underrepresented. This is true despite the fact that there are more workshops covering this area in recent years than ever before. However, no workshop has
focused on the consequences of economic and political transition on the environment. Therefore, this proposed workshop may fill a research gap and concentrate research efforts on this important issue.

**Relation to existing research:** The workshop relates to the broad area of research of Eastern European transition on one hand, and on European Integration on the other. These two areas are very well established in political science and researchers from these areas who are interested in environmental issues are especially invited to participate in the workshop. Furthermore, the workshop is also of relevance to researchers working on environmental issues.

The existing research in these areas is characterized by unsystematic case study research without sufficient reference to analytical categories. This is due to the highly fluid character of transition societies. However, there are some serious efforts to improve this state of affairs (Baker and Jehlicka 1998; Baker 2001). More analytical research in the area, referring to Western democracies, often does not take CEE into account. It is an aim of this workshop to bring these different research traditions together.

**Participants:** Potential participants shall be mainly political scientists working in the field of environmental issues, transition of political systems or the area of social and economic development of CEE. It is in fact a basic interest of this workshop to bring together researchers from all the above-mentioned areas because of the importance of interplay between economic, political and environmental issues. Even if the environment is the focus of the workshop, it is not meant to be an exclusively environmental workshop.

The group of researchers which is potentially important will be above all PhD students working in the above-mentioned areas. The applicant has contacts to such researchers through participation at different conferences, for instance at the European University Institute (Börzel 2001) and the Science Center in Berlin (Jänicke 2000). However, the workshop is of course open to other potential participants.

**Type of paper:** Papers should be either comparative or comprehensive. Papers which do not deal with only one specific environmental issue or policy are encouraged. Since research in this field is dominated by single case studies, there is an urgent need to have more comprehensive information on individual countries of CEE. Therefore, papers which give an overview of the state of the environment (air, water, soil, waste, nuclear, etc.), relevant policy instruments practiced in the country, proponents and opponents of environmental interests (including advocacy coalitions) are
especially suitable. There is also a need for explicit comparative papers which explain systematically the relationship between different analytical variables from the above-mentioned approaches.

**Funding:** The workshop may be funded by research grants from the European Union or the German Research Society (DFG). Appropriate steps to receive funding will be undertaken as soon as there is a positive statement from the ECPR.

**Biographical Note:** Detlef Jahn is professor of comparative politics and head of the political science department at the University of Greifswald. In the past, he has worked as a research professor in Nottingham (1996-1999) and as a research fellow in Göteborg (1993-1996). He obtained his PhD in 1991 from the European University Institute. His research lies in the fields of comparative environmental policy and politics, among others. Currently he is conducting a research project, sponsored by the DFG, on the environmental policy of the OECD-countries. He also works on environmental issues in the Baltic Sea Region. Also of relevance to this workshop is his participation in a research project on the consolidation of political systems of the countries in CEE.

**Mentioned Literature:**