

ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT IN POLAND AND ONE OF ITS 'GREEN FOREMEN'

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Historical Background

The lack of extensive research on the Green movement in the Central and Eastern Europe and particularly in Poland, might be a proof of its political insignificance. However, when describing new social movements in former Soviet block, one needs to acknowledge that although their origins were related to the student protests against *status quo*, the socio-political results of legendary 1968 in two opposite blocks were incomparable. For the Western societies it meant new opening; for the Central and Eastern Europe it was the end of contestation and revisionism (Ostolski, 2008: 26). The socialist countries had to wait until late 80s when the movements, among them the Green one, started to institutionalize.

Although the roots of the environmentalist movement in Poland date back to the XIX century, the first organization concerned with the preservation of nature - *League of Nature Conservation*¹ (hereafter LOP) was founded in 1928. Any forms of the environmental activism and emerging movement seen at that time, were soon curtailed by the Second World War. Communist regime that came after it, accepted only activities strictly related to the conservation of the nature and it was not until late 1970s when the independent scientists and journalists started to form green groups and think-tanks which nevertheless, had little in common with the grassroots, mass movement. (REC,1997:55).

Contemporary Polish Green Movement emerged with and within first independent trade union (the Free Independent Trade Union *Solidarity*) that was legalized in 1980. In fact, environmental activism was one of the few political areas tolerated by the communist authorities; therefore it attracted many opponents of the system and soon became a focal point of their resistance. Thus in 1980s, there were about 200 local groups, organizations and national networks of various backgrounds (e.g. scientific *Polish Ecological Club*² - hereafter

¹ In Polish: *Liga Ochrony Przyrody*

² In Polish: *Polski Klub Ekologiczny*

PKE, educational LOP, counterculture groups or the pacifist *Freedom and Peace* – in Polish “*Wolność i Pokój*) raising the issue of environment protection (Gliński, 1996: 155).

From the variety of examples, the Polish Ecological Club deserves a particular attention. PKE founded in 1980 is recognized as the oldest independent ecological organization in post-war Poland and in former Soviet block of Central and Eastern Europe, that openly protested against disastrous state of the nature affected by the heavy industry. The group of experts, scholars and lawyers, with most popular Radosław Gawlik, gathered in PKE, were also the first to promote the idea of sustainable development and treatment of environment as a common good³. With 16 branches around the country PKE gathered about 40 thousand people and was the biggest organization of its kind (Dulko, 2006: 49). PKE's significance was evident also in terms of political action - it managed to stall the construction of a nuclear power plant in Żarnowiec, and delegate 5 of its members to the group of twelve *Solidarity* representatives in the Ecology Subcommittee of the Round Table talks with the communists in 1989. Still, other organizations were also present. By the mid-1989, the green movement consisted of about 80 purely environmental NGOs and about 80 other organizations and groups that dealt with environmental issues (REC, 1997).

With the loosening of the authoritarian control, many Greens were shifting towards more political profile. Liberalizing system favored emergence of new political centers in the late 1980s, so that the existence of a green political formation was finally feasible (Żuk, 2001: 31). The first Polish Green Party PPZ established in Cracow in December 1988, closely linked with the PKE, was a pioneer in the region. However PPZ soon went through serious turmoil which ended up in schism and emergence of three, competing independent PPZs, that attempted to gain recognition through contacts with the leadership of West European Green parties and the European Federation.

The collapse of the regime in 1989 enabled numerous NGOs to reveal data about devastated environment, establish contacts with more experienced Western institutions, and contribute from international financial and technical assistance (REC, 1997). This has led to the unprecedented growth of environmental initiatives. It is during these years, when most of the existing environmental NGOs were created. The opinion polls from 1989/1990 showed, that environmental concerns were shared by many Poles (Greens' approval has reached up to 40 per cent) and the movement itself, was perceived as apolitical, thus free from the political games associated with other parties. This turned out to be Greens' biggest chance and obstacle at the same time.

The internal conflicts with the PPZ resulted in the Party's absence in the partially free elections of 1989 (Gliński, 1996: 143). The ruptures within the movement were growing and the gap between goals represented by *per se* non-political NGOs and green political formations, continued to widen. Green movement which didn't manage to agree on common agenda amid the neoliberal system was soon perceived as an obstacle on the way toward modernization. According to politicians, environmental protection was a luxury the country undergoing shock therapy, could not afford.

Due to the liberal Party Law³, introduced in 1990, by the 1995 there were about 250 officially existing parties, amongst which 17 represented environmental postulates (Gliński, 1996). However, these parties did not manage to attract substantial number of voters. To distinguish themselves from the mushrooming Green formations, before the first fully free elections, the members of PPZ registered a new party – Polish Ecological Party⁴ (hereafter PPE). As a result in elections of 1991 the numerous Green parties had been reduced to two contending lists. PPZ, allied with Polish Ecology Party (PPE) and Polish Ecology Party-Greens (PPEZ), that has brought together several smaller groups. Unfortunately, those two blocks shared a failure in achieving parliamentary representation⁵. To rescue themselves from the political agony green activists decided to join or enter into alliance with more significant political forces. In the parliamentary elections of 1993 PPZ allied with the post-communists Democratic Left Alliance⁶ (SLD) and its new leader was elected into parliament.

At the same time other activists, affiliated with the Polish Ecological Club, had approached the post-‘Solidarity’ movement. In 1991 Radoslaw Gawlik became a leader of newly founded Ecological Fraction that was a part of centro-liberal party Democratic Union⁷ (hereafter UD). When in 1994 UD along with the Liberal-Democratic Congress created the Freedom Union (UW) the EF served as a lobby group trying ‘to green’ political agenda in its host party. After the parliamentary elections of 1993, 8 out of 74 seats won by the UD, were given to the members of the Ecological Forum. However, their impact remained limited until the next term, while UD, and later UW, stayed in the opposition.

The 1997 elections saw the decrease of UW parliamentary representation to 60 seats, and the number of Forum members elected, lowered proportionally – to 4. UW's participation

³ Officiel: Dz.Ust.1990. nr 54 poz 312.

⁴ In Polish: *Polska Partia Ekologiczna*

⁵ Source: <http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexCountry.asp?country=POLAND&opt=elc>

⁶ In Polish: *Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*

⁷ In Polish: *Unia Demokratyczna*

in the government as the smaller coalition partner of the post-Solidarity alliance Solidarity Election Action (AWS) meant the real breakthrough. The long-standing, prominent Forum's leader, Radosław Gawlik was appointed a Secretary of State and Deputy Minister for the Environment; this opened a new chapter in the history of Polish green parties. Even though the role of the resort was limited, Gawlik has managed to elaborate a framework of the cooperation between government and non-governmental sector. In spite of the small parliamentary representation, FE significantly influenced the shape of the current Polish Constitution. By campaigning for "Ecology in the Constitution" FE managed to incorporate sustainable development into constitutional text as a basic principle for environment protection. The European Federation of the Green Parties (EFGP) acknowledged FE efforts and as a proof of its endorsement in 1999 granted FE a position of member-observer. This has encouraged Polish environmentalists to establish a Green representation on the Polish ground.

As the next election campaign was approaching in 2001 it became obvious that the efforts 'to green' UW from inside were of no avail, and the Ecology Forum was facing alienation. At that time there was still no political structure that could embrace all green claims. The Green movement became more dispersed and threatened by the likelihood that other organizations will take over its electorate. On the other hand, UW did not find ecological postulates appealing for electoral competition. With opinion polls showing that UW will struggle even to reenter parliament⁸, some of the FE members became reluctant to its host party and inclined towards newly emerged Civil Platform (PO) founded by the activist associated with the post-solidarity movement, including AWS and UW members. PO however, as it turned out later, pursued more liberal vision of economy to which green profile simply did not fit.

Latest Development Within the Green Movement

September 2003 officially opened new chapter in the Polish Greens' struggle for recognition and representation on the political scene. Diverse formations like Ecological Forum of the former UW, people related to various NGOs (PKE, LOP, Gaja Club, Amnesty International, Women Foundation eFKA) and individuals identified with the political left as: feminists, artists and LGBT representatives gathered in Warsaw during a convention to officially set up

⁸ The disastrous 3% result didn't ensure UW parliament representation

a new political party – Greens 2004 (Zieloni 2004)⁹. The national council and the board were elected following a strict 50% gender quota. The first chairwoman was Magdalena Mosiewicz and chairman Jacek Bozek (currently those posts are held by Agnieszka Grzybek and Dariusz Szwed). The program was outlined in the Green Manifesto that focused on such issues like civil society; gender equality; non-violence; subordinating the market to public good; information society; ecology; space for minorities and international policy¹⁰. This guiding document showed significance of the change in the movement, whose postulates 20 years earlier were mostly of the environmental nature. Although Greens 2004 as a modern, progressive party was warmly welcomed on the European scene (as a member of the European Green Party, cooperates also with the European Free Alliance in the European Parliament) it did not meet applause on the national political scene (Grzybek, Szwed, 2008: 52-54).

So far Greens 2004 have neither managed to access European nor national parliaments. In the first European Parliament election, they received only 0.27% of the votes. Before the 2005 Polish parliamentary elections, the Greens formed a coalition with the Social Democracy of Poland (hereafter SDPL). Their common list achieved 3.89% of the votes and did not pass the threshold of 5% (the Greens themselves achieved no more than 0.17% of the votes). Recently in February 2009 the Party formed common list for European Parliament elections, within coalition called Alliance for the Future with Democratic Party and the social democratic SDPL. Again the result didn't bring them political representation in EP.

Its low popularity among Polish society might have two reasons. On one hand, its progressive, feminist and anticlerical programme does not find many supporters in the largely conservative and still fairly religious society. On the other hand, Greens 2004, founded on four pillars, such as: (1) sustainable social and economic development, (2) respect of human with emphasize on the women rights, (3) opposition towards war and military conflict resolution and (4) participatory democracy, *per se* are more radical and demanding than other parties (Grzybek, Szwed, 2008: 56). Those postulates do not seem to find neither acceptance nor understanding in the country where the main political cleavage is around issues of settling accounts with the past.

⁹ Formally registered in February 2004. Amongst the notable members of the Greens 2004 have been since then R.Gawlik, J. Bożek, K. Dunin, O. Tokatczuk, J. Kochan.

¹⁰ For more information about the Greens 2004 see their official website: <http://www.zieloni2004.pl/news.htm>

Second Life of the Movement

In spite of the failures in achieving parliamentary representation and relatively small support, the Green movement in Poland has its second life – in non governmental organizations sector. According to the Polish NGO' platform¹¹, there are over 4,5 thousands officially registered organizations, that deal only with nature conservation, ecology and animal rights protection. Although many of these institutions are very local or temporary, there is a growing tendency to initiate networks or mobilize different centers, normally working separately, by building *thematic coalitions*. In 2009, for instance, the two big coalitions were launched: *For the Climate (Dla Klimatu)* and the *Fair Trade Coalition*. However, the largest action taken by the movement in recent years were campaigns against the construction of the ring road in *Rospuda Valley* - the territory protected within the framework EU Nature 2000 and regular actions against the construction of nuclear power plant in Poland. The presence of international NGOs such as WWF¹² and Greenpeace¹³ is of great importance on how the discourse within the movement is shaped. WWF was one of the first in Poland that has launched a significant campaign on climate change, popularized the *ecological footprint calculator* and inspired many native organization to follow its example. WWF and Greenpeace act actively against the catches of the protected fishes (egg. Cod fish). Many Polish Green NGOs support social economy while others engage in education on sustainable development (egg. Polish Green Network, Ziemia na Rozdrożu) or support animals rights (Gaja Club). One of the first and most popular campaign across the Poland, was the *Clean up the World Day* organized by the Our Earth Foundation since 1994.

Instead of Conclusion

Although Poles complain about the old political elites and wait for new ideas and personalities to appear on the scene, the Green postulates are still rejected by the majority. As the research carried out by Henrich Boll Foundation in 2008 showed to none of the existing

¹¹ Source: <http://bazy.ngo.pl/>

¹² WWF's first involvement in Poland started in 1990 in the river Biebrza area and resulted in establishing the *Biebrza National Park* (1993). After ten years of its presence – in 2000, WWF opened an office in Warsaw. The WWF Poland has been involved in the following projects: *Green Belt Oder-Nysa* (1994-2000), *Vistula Project* (2000), *Climate & Energy* (2001), *Go for Kyoto* campaign (2002).

¹³ Greenpeace opened its Polish office in 2004. Its most famous campaigns are: STOP GMO, Climate Change, Tour de Baltic, No War.

Environmental Movement in Poland

Green organizations is ascribed a significant political role¹⁴ (Sadura, Kwiatkowska, 2009: 10). The poor condition of the movement can be explained by the character of public discourse shaped in Poland after 1989. Under neo-liberal shock therapy strategy, applied by the first democratic government, which featured a liberal doctrine of systemic transformation based on full-scale marketization, there has been little consideration given to environment protection. Along with newly introduced free market reality that had enriched some, and marginalized others¹⁵, Green postulates had faded away, being considered as too costly for those who suffered from the radical reforms and for those who viewed them as an obstacle to economic growth. Accordingly, in a nationwide survey from 1992, only 1 per cent of Poles cited the environment as the country's 'most serious problem', while 72 per cent pointed out economic issues.

In such atmosphere it was easy for politicians to undermine political position and drown out voice of the movement. Green activists who indeed in 1980s, were associated with counter-culture and displayed a general opposition towards regime, were labeled as anarchists. Ewa Charkiewicz – feminist and eco-activist, explains how the discourse that legitimized the systemic transformation distracted attention from the environmental concerns by referring to the Eden myth. In this myth Polish society frees itself from the communist hell, and through the transformation phase finally enters capitalist Eden. Within this discourse all unmitigated evil came from the past and transformation is a necessary period to achieve the level of wealth, without which no Green postulates would be taken into consideration. According to Charkiewicz this approach, widespread amongst Poles only proves their weak awareness of alternatives towards neo-liberal model of development (Charkiewicz, 2008: 38-40). But one should acknowledge that this reluctance towards modern, Green discourse is more complex. The post scarcity society has experienced little reflection on thoughtless industrialization and consumption. Also the state-church relations, equity of sexes (however illusory) or right to abortion in the communist Poland was always a top-down decision, not

¹⁴ The Polish Peasant Party (in Polish: Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe) that has little in common with the green movement, was rated the top place.

¹⁵ As a result of radical neo-liberal reforms introduced in 1990 by the new minister of finance - Leszek Balcerowicz - the industrial output declined significantly, what led to unprecedented increase in unemployment rate. Although the economic stabilization was accomplished and in 1996 Poland became a member of the OECD, unemployment remain an issue – when in the 2000-2002 growth dropped off, unemployment reached 20%. Source: http://www.ae.katowice.pl/images/user/File/katedra_ekonomii/J.Szczapa_Bezrobocie_w_Polsce_w_latach_1990_-_2007.pdf

discussed till the 1990s (Ostolski, 2008: 29). Therefore there is either no knowledge or will to focus on those issues and the belief in the *invisible hand of the market*, that would solve all problems is still present. Sociologist's - Piotr Żuk – criticism goes even further by pointing out that 'Poland backwardness does not concern only economy and infrastructure, it's chiefly of cultural, mental and social nature. Intolerance, the 19th century nationalism, fear of new ideas, social censorship, resistance to new social solutions (...), a poor and restricted shape of public debate in Poland, no explicit state-church relations – these are just a few signs of the counter-reformative atmosphere which prevails in Poland and increasingly diverges from the standard of the contemporary Europe' (Żuk, 2007: 16).

But it is not only citizens who are not interested in seeing Greens having political power. Still most of the non-governmental organizations prefer distance themselves from politics and remain 'neutral' from the political struggle. Eventually the Greens with only few politically engaged (Greens 2004) and lacking social support seem to be doomed to the *limbo* state.

In the current unfavorable conditions for the movement there seem to be only two scenarios. One is a temporary suspension of the activities which would enable the ideas evolve within elite and exclusive group of intellectuals (Sadura, Kwiatkowska, 2009: 19). The second is mimicry, which means adopting the strategy of surrounding political bodies and focusing more on struggle for power than realization of the political ideas.

My interviewee's opinion on the situation in the movement confirms its weakness. He claims – 'the postulates of Green movement in Poland are of minimal importance to ordinary people'. As long as the economic dimension of sustainable development is not emphasized, people will treat environmental protection as an expensive luxury that they cannot afford.

The profile presented below sheds some light on the condition of Polish Green movement and people who are part of it.

Andrzej: The Green Foreman and His Brigade

When I got interested in the Green movement and wanted to collect some information and literature for my Bachelor thesis, Andrew was the first person I went to. I remember his office – on the third floor in an old tenement by Cracow’s Market Square. Not too big, but cozy and colorful, with posters and calendars all around. There was also a shelf loaded with tons of various publications – about climate change, biodiversity, alternative energy sources, and social economy, but among those one could also find Science Fiction's authors: Pratchett and Orson Scott Card and Starhawk's *The fifth Sacred Thing* or Stieg Larsson’s *Millennium*. After a fruitful conversation I remember being given copies of *Green Brigades* – ecologist paper – which is still laying in my closet. After that time we have met on several other occasions. He helped me to promote the eco-campaign I conducted at my University in 2007 and answered some of my questions. Not surprisingly, I’ve found him the most suitable person in Krakow who could tell me about the environmental movement in Poland and his longstanding engagement with it. When I came to his office again, he was sitting in the same place, working in front of the computer.

Andrew appears as an unpretentious and rather modest person. He does not like to talk too much about his achievements and behaves as if all what he has done was ‘normal’. He considers himself neither a rioter nor a successful political advocate. He did not mention during the interview any of the awards he had received in the past. And in 1993, when he was invited to join the Ecological Committee – an advisory body for the Polish president Lech Wales a– he did not accept the offer, not feeling qualified enough and preferring to stay where he was and continuing to work at the grassroots level. He does not like to be in the spotlight or playing a star. He is kind, rather calm person with a positive expression on his face, and together with his casual clothing it gives the impression that he is a quite easy-going person. Indeed he is.

Family

Andrew was born in 1968 in hospital in Wadowice - a town in the Southern Poland. It is a destination of many pilgrimages, since it is the birth town of the Pope John Paul II. However, he spent his childhood in neighboring Zator – small, green town with around 4.000

inhabitants, situated about 50 km from Cracow. He comes from a decent, Polish, catholic family - model 2 plus 3. Although his family never experienced poverty, he led a very simple and modest life. His parents completed their education at the vocational level: his mother is a farmer and his father used to work as a driver. However, since he retired he has taken on wickerwork, which used to be his hobby for a long time. As Andrew says: 'now as he got much more time he teaches others how to make wickerwork. Recently, he was invited to the neighboring town, where he led workshops in a squat--'Imagine, my father in the age of 65 has been sleeping with squatters!' The career paths of his siblings vary: while his sister became a cook, his brother graduated from Cracow University of Economics with a diploma in Economics. Their relations within the family are very correct; however his contact with them is not as intense, as when he was single.

His family lifestyle is different from his own, but still very close to his nature, even if not consciously, 'I came from a very tiny town and people there, lead more villages like lifestyle. As a young boy I preferred to spend my time by the lake or in the meadows instead of playing football. With other kids we often played Indians, but I enjoyed my own company as well'. Asked about perception of his job, he confirms: 'Yes, my parents respect what I've been doing. They got interested more in ecology since I got engaged in the movement, but they always displayed a big respect to environment'. His parents have always showed interest in Andrew's occupation, and he has often shared information with them or has given them advice. He mentions that contact with nature was a part of each day, and respect of the environment was somehow natural but never had any deeper or ideological meaning – 'it was a very ordinary attitude, not supported by any ideology or worldview'.

He is a bit puzzled by the question about his personal transformation that led to an emergence of the Green activist, but then he starts talking how for the first time he heard about some movements related to ecology. It was in the high school. However, he doesn't mention any significant moments of childhood that could be crucial to his actual state. The oldest recollection of his engagement he has, comes from the primary school, 'It was evolution that started in very ordinary way. At the age of 13-14,' he says, 'as much as other boys I was fascinated by movies with Kung Fu and Bruce Lee. With the Far East Martial Arts came very basic information about alternative medicine, meditation and the spirituality of the East. Everything was very mysterious and different from the reality we had in Poland at that time, and I felt very attracted to it'. Although this young boy's interest seemed to have little to do with the Green movement, it actually laid a foundation for his future activity.

Back in School

In 1983, he went to technical college with chemistry profile, situated in Oswiecim (Auschwitz), about 20 km from his home town. This decision seemed to facilitate the processes of finding out more about the world's complexity and getting to know more people who would share the same interests. He recalls the moment which probably decided the path his life would take. In the third year of school, a friend invited him to attend a camp which gathered together people inspired by the philosophy of the Far East. He was supposed to meet there 'the real master of Zen' and learn more about philosophy and people from the movement. Being told so, he was excited by the opportunity to explore more about unknown and fascinating culture and thought, so he decided to join. However, it turned out that the Zen master was not even meant to be there, and the whole event had a more ecological than spiritual profile. So instead of meditation, there were many discussions, workshops and lectures where he got to know more about relation between human and the nature as well as about disastrous state of the environment in Poland. 'They recruited me there,' he says, 'and it went in a quite surprising direction. Normally people say that some members of the ecology movement end up in sect or something, and I've sort of started with the focus on spirituality and later became environmentalist'. Organizers - people from the group *I prefer to be (Wole byc*¹⁶), inspired him and encouraged to become more active at his school-- successfully. He soon started to arrange various discussions and meetings, where he displayed leadership and talent to gather people around an idea.

Since that camp, he has been labeled an *environmentalist* for good. His engagement allowed him to get to know new people and deepen his knowledge about ecology through reading scientific publications and participating in many discussion forums which were popular at that time. Over the next years, he remained in contact with the pacifist and ecology movement *I Prefer To Be* and established a couple of local branches as well as inspired and helped to organize others to do the same. The movement *I prefer to be* was a mass movement, active in the years 1984-1993, which at the climax of its popularity, had around 30 local groups, called *lobby*. It organized meetings with experts from the establishment as well as from the opposition groups, invited professionals from abroad and organized eco-pacifists

¹⁶ This peace and ecology movement was established in relation to the famous Polish scouts' magazine 'Na Przelaj'. Short after the series of articles titled *Wole byc (I prefer to be)* got into papers in 1984, many readers spontaneously started to discuss issues concerning human rights, environment protection, etc. After the first meeting in 1985 they decided to create a non-formal group, which was named after the article's title.

happenings, such as an exhibition with military toys called 'generals and kids – don't play war,' etc. Andrew confesses that the name *I prefer to be* was related rather to its pacifistic character, and therefore the slogan meant 'I prefer to be, than not to be' instead of 'to be or to have'. Although in the years of poverty and scarcity, in Polish society anti-consumerist ideas were barely present, they certainly inspired many people in the movement. 'Anti-consumerism in 1980s was quite an abstract idea'. Andrew was also cooperating with other organizations, among them with anti-establishment group called *Freedom and Peace (Wolność i Pokój)*.

After graduating from technical college in 1988, he was accepted at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow to continue his education as a student of Chemistry. Moving to Cracow, one of the biggest cities in Poland and known from the students' life and various kinds of activism opened a new chapter in his life. Although he had followed his educational background, studying was not that exiting at the time when situation in the country and especially in Cracow had become restless and increased number of social initiatives were gaining power. At the very beginning of his short academic career, he became a member of Chemists Scientific Club¹⁷ at the University, where he found more people to share interests with. He soon became a member of a group called *Ecology and Peace*, which together with other organizations founded a *Green Federation*¹⁸. He has been a member of *Cracow Group of the Green Federation*¹⁹, since its foundation. The new form of participation had been so attractive that he attended regularly meetings with the *Green Federation, Polish Ecology Club* and many others. Engagement in the movement and time consuming activities did not go well along with the studies. In 1988, he gave up Chemistry studies, and reentered the University as a student of religion, which likewise he did not complete.

¹⁷ Jagiellonian University's Chemists Scientific Club is an example of many students' groups that in the late 80's has performed many kinds of civic initiatives. In 1987 they organized a research project called *Students for Vistula River* and international seminar *Students for Environment* (1988). It was then, when the idea to create a newspaper for the Green movement was launched. Some of the most active people Piotr Rymarowicz, Artur Wiśliński i Piotra Grzegorzczak, among them Andrew, has taken up the idea and devoted a lot of their time to it.

¹⁸ *The Green Federation* includes over 60 groups scattered all over Poland. It serves as a national communication network since the early 90s. In the beginning it acted as the REFA - *St. Francesco of Assisi Ecological Movement*, but after merging with the *Wole byc* movement participants in the end of 1991, it took the present name. The Federation activities focus on many problems, including animal rights, vegetarianism, sustainable transport, waste management etc.

¹⁹ *Cracow Group* is focused mainly on transport issues and alternative economy issues.

Cracow and Activism

Back in 1988-89 there were many forms of social contestation: strikes, rallies, and manifestations performed in the cities like Cracow. The *Polish Ecology Club*²⁰ was still very popular, and lots of ideas emerged and organizations with pro-environmentalist profiles established regular meetings within the newly-founded *Green Federation*. Someone from the activists came up with a proposal to open a magazine that could put all the ideas together and represent the joined voices of the green movement. The information note was posted by the University's Chemists Scientific Club. For Andrew, the chance to spread postulates of the group he had identified with to broader society was appealing, and thought that it could be additional source of income. He took the opportunity. Being the most active in the group - working even 12 hours per day - he soon became the Chief Editor of the paper entitled *Green Brigades*. Working long hours, he was completely devoted to his job; however it was different from typical occupation at least for two reasons. First, the movement gathered people passionate about the same ideas who soon became friends, and all the social life mingled with the professional. 'We didn't need more people around, people from *Federation* were working together and after not much time we became friends. We had worked and had fun together. There were many festivals, manifestations that really brought people from the movement together'. Secondly, it was a freelance job rather than a typical post in an editorial section. He himself was writing, collecting and editing articles from friends and groups presenting a wide range of opinions (mostly anti-military, pro-environmentalists, and occasionally feminist). Eventually he edited the series the *Green Brigades Library* (about 40 books and brochures) and compiled many other publications at the *Green Brigades' Publishing House*. Additionally he assisted in writing the paper called *Island (Wyspa)* and the paper of Polish Association for Mental Health *STOP*. Nevertheless, leading *Green Brigades* remained his main activity for several more years. In the beginning, the paper was financed mostly from the international sources – Swedish and Dutch. The money was limited but enough to cover print and coordination, but nevertheless everything was at that time provisional. He recalls one time he went to the bookstore offering to sell *Green Brigades at the beginning of 90s*. He was truly surprised when the owner asked him for an invoice. He realized that reality has changed and more activities needed to be formalized. Luckily, the same had occurred to people from the

²⁰ Andrew used to attend PEC plenary sessions, but have never been its member.

Green Federation who decided to establish a foundation with the *Green Brigades* as its project.

The Green Brigades

The beginning of the Polish transition was probably the most intense phase of his professional life. Different kinds of protest and rallies had been taking place in Poland. Along with people from *Ecology and Peace*, in 1988 he joined the antidam protest, intended to block the building of the nuclear power plant in Poland, and took part in traffic and antimilitary campaigns. However, as he claimed, these forms of action were not his favorite. ‘If something happened in the country, we would have gone but it wasn’t that political at that time. It was more about supporting people in different regions of Poland. But when you have many people protesting you never know where their emotions will lead you. I remember when once I was on a bus going with some young people to an anti-racism music festival. The way they were behaving after alcohol, the songs and shouts, appeared very troubling for me. Another time, I remember, we joined some friends protesting against the nuclear plant in Żarnowiec²¹. It was Sunday. Someone told me to go by the church, collect people and lead a demonstration from there, which I did. But after some time when the demonstration had started, I realized that people were screaming ‘*get rid of Walesa*’ instead of ‘*get rid of Żarnowiec*’’. He mentions another episode that happened on the Market Square in Cracow. ‘I was bypassing occasionally some groups of football fans and hooligans watching the game on the large outdoor screen. Somehow I mixed with the crowd to see who was playing. I was there just a couple of minutes, but I realized that that their emotions infected me, even though I was barely interested in the match. It was strange and disturbing. I don’t like any kind of crowds’.

Nevertheless, the early 90s were full of spontaneous as well as planned activities, he had taken part in. Transportation was a big issue at that time. ‘Bicycle Critical Mass in Cracow was enormous in comparison to what we have today²²’. Andrew admits, ‘we helped people to organize actions and sometime we inspired them’. There were also many

²¹ The Żarnowiec Nuclear Power Plant was supposed to be the first nuclear power plant in Poland, located in the north of the country near the Baltic Sea, 50 km northwest of Gdansk. As a result of public protests in the late 1980s and early '90s, escalated by the wake of the Chernobyl disaster, as much as due the economical and political changes after 1989, construction was cancelled.

²² Critical Mass (the first took place in San Francisco in 1992) is a bicycling event held on the last Friday of every month in over 300 cities in the world. In order to draw attention to difficulties that bike riders face in the city, they meet up together in a certain place and cycle as a group through city streets.

manifestations related to the local heavy industry. For instance, when the authorities decided to modernize the steel mill in Cracow (Nowa Huta) – ecologists were demanding to shut it down. ‘The postulates were very radical (...) but they have rightly changed. One should consider also people and economy in the system and look for an alternative, instead of just calling for shutting it down’. This is a remarkable shift in activists’ awareness. They need to find a way to compromise when it is feasible.

It is intriguing how he perceives himself back in 1990s. When he casts his mind back to this period, he claims: ‘it just went on and on, a daily routine. ‘Sometimes my job was very boring, sitting behind a desk, editing and correcting articles. Nothing really special nor rebellious’. He had taken part in some courses and seminars about management in the non-governmental sector, editors’ trainings that had helped him to improve his skills. He had also actively supported many local initiatives. No matter how reticent he is in talking about results of his work, his achievements were appreciated by different groups. In 1996, he was awarded silver prize of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Forestry for working for the environment, became a member of the Programme Council of the *Workshop for All Beings*, and in 1997 became Nominee of Honour of the *Ashoka-Poland Foundation*. In 1998 he was appointed to the Team of Experts on Financing Environmental Education by the Minister of Environmental Protection and awarded a medal for contributing to nature preservation and shaping the environment by the *League for Nature Protection (LOP)*. In 2001, Andrew attended a course for web-masters, and since that time he runs the server for many ecological organizations from Cracow and other places in Poland. His professional life experienced a big acceleration after May 2004 when Poland joined the European Union. New sources of funding, new cooperation, networks, and contacts have brought innovative ideas and new attitudes towards organization and management of projects and events. ‘I was told that nowadays no one will give you funds just for printing paper and if I want to collect some money to publish Green Brigades, I should organize some events, happenings, etc.’ That was mental change, and since that time he turned into more ‘project approach’. In 2005, together with the Municipalities the *Green Brigades Publishing House* and the *Foundation for the Support of Ecological Initiative*²³s Andrew organized the *Local Food Festival*. Currently, he is responsible for the program of the *Green Economic Initiative*, which aims to promote the

²³ *Foundation for the Support of Ecological Initiative* (Fundacja Wspierania Inicjatyw Ekologicznych) is Polish non-governmental organization established in 1989, which represents Green Brigades in legal matters, as its project.

environmental effectiveness of small business (including small and micro-enterprises) in the Cracow region by reaching about 40 actors (firms, NGOs, educational and scientific institutions and public administration), and building a cross-sector partnership. However, there was a quite serious breakdown in Andrew's work. In 2008, prints of the *Green Brigades* (first a monthly paper and later quarterly) were withheld. He says: 'yes, I could take it as my failure. I've been working and developing it for many years and now we don't even have money to print it out. But I guess people don't miss it and don't need it that much. There was simply no demand. Just recently I've got some calls from people asking for future activities that might happen in cooperation with other organizations from the region. Local sustainability, local initiatives – is something he keeps trying to promote. Responsible consumer education is another area close to his heart and mind. He has some plans to devote more time to these issues in the future. 'Alternative economy and ethic consumer education those two should be integrated. Eco-education is an important tool, but it is certainly not enough – it might create frustrated demand. For instance, when you teach people in Poland about Fair Trade, but there is no place where they could purchase those products. There are people who would behave more ethical in their consumer choices, but they just need to have means, infrastructure for it' – he says.

Green Brigades

Becoming a Chief Editor of *Green Brigades. Ecologists paper* in 1989 was probably the most meaningful experience in Andrew's career. Although, this period came to an end in 2007 due to the financial difficulties, the *Green Brigades* remain a symbol of Polish Green movement and his personal engagement.

The paper was initiated by University's Chemists Scientific Club in March 1989, as a monthly paper, with episode when it changed its status into biweekly paper. The last number was printed in 2007. For couple of years the *Green Brigades Publishing House* had been releasing also English quarterly in order to inform the international ecological community about the activities of the ecological movement in Poland, and to present the ecological problems in the country

The main idea of the paper was to create a space where various groups and individuals could independently exchange views and share information about problems concerning environment protection, animal rights issues, sustainable lifestyle, peace, human rights protection – regardless of worldview, denomination or political preferences. It was also thought to be a platform where representatives of public administration could express their opinions and stands. Therefore one could

find in the paper plenty of space for discussions, polemics, etc from different groups – including feminists. *Green Brigades* for many years had played a role of national paper for all those organizations, which did not have its own bulletins, place or means to contribute to the Green discourse. What became characteristic, editorial staff had been very open to all individuals, including amateurs, believing that bringing new ideas will facilitate and encourage to engagement in the movement. It should be mentioned that the editors did most of the work as a public service.

When *Green Brigades. Ecologist paper* was gaining popularity in 1990s, editorial staff decided to expand its work and in 1994, by releasing international quarterly *Grasshopper. Environmental NGO's Quarterly East Carpathians Region*'. In the paper, which was devoted to the matters of the East part of Carpathian Mountains, one could find articles published in many national languages including Ukrainian, Romanian, Polish, and Esperanto. With some more initiatives, books, bulletins and occasional publications released, *Green Brigades* has soon transformed into small publishing house that till now is located in the office nearby Cracow Market Square. Till recently its office was accessible for all those who wanted to use computers and internet free of charge.

Private Life

Although Andrew has not completed education at any university, he would classify himself as a *working inteligencia* – 'I'm certainly not peasant nor a worker'. His material status is more dynamic issue. Asked about his life standard, he confesses: 'it has changed, according to situation. For many years it didn't really matter for me. I could rent a small room in the city, I didn't have a proper bed, just a mattress, some shelves and wardrobe, but it was proportionate to what I needed'. For long period he used to live almost ascetic lifestyle – 'I didn't even need refrigerator, though I had TV'. He led this voluntary simple life for most of his mature life, not worrying to much about money and the future. His life just went, day by day. Till recently. The major change has occurred in his life since his first child was born a couple months ago. This has modified his attitudes. As he says, 'when you have family, you need to think about more practical things, you need to be more organized and provide more stable income'. But it would be a great exaggeration to say that he has turned into materialist and it is certainly not the way he wishes to bring up his son. Listening about his private life, one can easily notice that, the expression 'my family' in his mouth, sounds somehow new. He confirms that now, since there are three of them, he really feels that he has 'own family'. Before that time he was in relationship for 6 years with his partner who is more than 10 years

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younger than he. She is also a *Green activist*, working for the *Polish Green Network* – a popular and influential organization that promotes sustainable development in Poland - and is a member of international NGO networks including *CEE Bankwatch Network*, *ANPED*, *the Northern Alliance for Sustainability*, and *SFteamCE*.

At the time we were talking Andrew was looking for a flat on the real estate market. He wants to move with his family to their own place. However, accommodation is not the only change he faces. Along with material status, the way he works and the time he spends in the office are changing as well. He used to be sort of workaholic, but now he contributes more time and energy to his son. Of course, he does not want to quit his activities but he admits that now he focuses on different things and pursuing such an on-the-go lifestyle will not be possible anymore.

Asked about turning points in his life, he says that moving to Cracow in 1988 and the birth of his son in 2009 were both important. But between those two events there is a 20 year gap in which he cannot recall any crucial moments. He mentioned instead one quite important episode. In the beginning of the 1990s with some friends, he spontaneously burned his military service paper as a sign of protest. ‘We didn’t rebel against anything in particular. It was just general protest against compulsory conscription’. Soon after that, his passport expired and he could not apply for new one without those burn papers. He accepted this fact and for about 10 years he did not even try to leave the country. He stayed continuously within Polish borders, until he realized in 2002, that the law had changed and he could apply for new documents. Having the chance to move freely was definitely a significant moment. ‘It’s not like I’ve felt completely trapped, but it was strange feeling knowing you cannot cross the border at any time’. However, long before that event, as a high-school student he had traveled several times to countries like Estonia, Slovakia, where he attended various ecological summits and conferences.

When thinking about some kind of summary of his life he admits – ‘I’ve spent my life differently than most people’. It’s not typical biography. He did not plan his career, most of what he did and what he does its just current activity. He had not thought that after 20 years his life would look like this. However, he did not have any expectations or big plans. Sometimes during meetings with friends from his childhood he feels that what he has been doing for years is not taken seriously or considered as a ‘real life’. ‘You need to be strong and sure about your choices, to explain others what you are actually doing. But however strong my arguments would be, eventually most of the people will see that in the age of 40 I

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have so little. Not even apartment. Maybe, that is true. But on the other hand I was at the meetings with different high-authorities, ministers, etc., and many times I had real influence on something'. Nevertheless, sometimes he feels that he works in a niche and that what he does has not always been successful.

The Movement

'I don't think we can talk about the movement. It is more like a trend or niche'. He claims that the Greens are weak in Poland and he is quite pessimistic about their future. He claims that talking about separate initiatives and calling it Movement is itself a big overstatement'. The structures barely exist, and the cooperation between different centers is weak. He appreciates the efforts of the Green 2004 political party, but he thinks that those postulates are not of big importance to normal people, 'they should be more related to economy'. They are a bit abstract and 'don't meet peoples' needs'. According to him, citizens need someone who would advise them if they, for instance wanted to install solar panels or build sewage treatment plants. These kinds of information centers would be of great usefulness. However it is not very noticeable but expensive, so eventually everyone is disappointed – people demand from ecologists some interventions every time environment is involved, not understanding that they also should be paid for their service. On the other hand, he says that a poor organization discourages activists from staying within the movement. 'Those people who were so active and eventually resigned did not change their ideas. It's just that the movement had nothing to offer them'. According to Andrew, there is really no structure that would keep members within. People should pay participation fees and be given chance to take part in decisions. Without more democratic solution and great support for its members, the movement will not exist, because it cannot rely only on administrative employees. The social basis is necessary. In the 1980s and the beginning of 1990s the number of people engaged to some extent, was much bigger than nowadays. And the perception of Greens was different. When someone was given a brochure or leaflet, he or she would read it and maybe get involved. Since there is so much contradicting information coming from all around, the ability to understand it is limited. People do not show interest, everyone is more skeptical.

Worldview

He confirms that most of his opinions are shaped by books and reflections. 'Of course in the beginning, they were leaders who would show directions, like Dr. Janusz Korbel [President

and a Founder of the *Workshop for All Beings*²⁴], Grzegorz Peszko and others. Although Andrew takes some interest in religious sciences – from Far Eastern through American Indians Religion to Slavic – he is not a believer of any. He has never had an idol or icon to follow and never felt like he needed one, nor wanted to join a party or sect. As a principle he claims he tries to stay free from any kind of ideology. ‘I don’t want to identify with any kind of *ism*’. Therefore he finds the Green movement (in his view situated in the centre of the political scene) suitable for him. ‘Values like freedom, tolerance are very fundamental to me, but it does not mean that I would never agree with right-wing politicians’. If they lobby for the right things he would give them his support. If he had to describe himself a couple years earlier, he would identify with anarchy movement at the first place. This predilection was reflected in the kind of music he used to listen to: punk and folk in addition to work of Jacek Kaczmarski – considered as a voice of anti-communist *Solidarity* movement. Nevertheless it seems like his attitudes has changed a bit. ‘We live in such a system and we cannot easily reject it. So it’s important to let into as much freedom as just possible’. He prioritizes also locality and finds simplicity and openness very important. That is actually what he would like the world, or rather Poland, to be more like – filled with open and kind and trusting people who would aspire to reducing the complexity of the world that creates artificial barriers between human and nature.

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²⁴ ‘Workshop for All Beings’— aims to protect the environment of Poland by helping local communities become knowledgeable about their local environment. It is building a broad grassroots environmental movement by different activities, for instance: preparing maps of ‘Wild Poland’ and of existing and possible problems and conflicts, organizing training programs about Poland’s environmental laws, ways of social, political and scientific cooperation and participation, and ways of creating groups of lobbyist. “Wild Nature,” is its monthly magazine.

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