

Earth System Governance

People, Places, and the Planet

Report on the Roundtable Consultation with 2007 Amsterdam Conference Participants from Central and Eastern European (CEE) Countries

25 May 2007, 17.45 – 19.00

Chair: Maria Falaleeva, *Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*, The Netherlands

Rapporteurs: Maria Falaleeva, Ieva Oskolokaite and Michal Tvrdon, *Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*, The Netherlands

Participants: Ckees van Oijen, Piotr Matczak, Zsuzsanna Flackner, Livia Bizikova, Ruben Zondervan, Olga Gavrilova, Falk Schmidt, Matteo Roggero, Michal Tvrdon, Romana Gaspirc, Klemen-Risto Bizjak, Ieva Oskolokaite, Vendula Rajdlova.

1. Background

The session was opened by *Maria Falaleeva*. She presented the program of the round table and the agenda of the meeting: to discuss the perspectives and possibilities for the scholars from CEE to be involved in the planning process and future activities of the IHDP Earth System Governance Project, including:

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- What research areas/themes related with Earth System Governance are the most important for the CEE region and, therefore, need to be prioritized by the new IHDP research initiative?
- What expertise CEE scholars can contribute with to multi-disciplinary Earth System Governance projects?
- How can the participation of the CEE scholars be promoted in the future Earth System Governance research initiatives at the national and global levels? (e.g. possibilities for young scientists from CEE working in the related area).

2. Introductory Speeches

Frank Biermann as a chairman of the IHDP Earth System Governance Scientific Planning Committee introduced the concept of the earth system governance and its potential implications in the geographical and political space of Central and Eastern Europe. He pointed out for necessity to involve Eastern European community in governance issues. Different perspective by Eastern European research community could enrich governance debate. Another important issue is to build and extend research network towards the CEE research community. Poor participation of the researchers from CEE countries in Amsterdam conference indicates weak integration of CEE scholars in the international research community. Moreover, IHDP has interests to wide its scopes in CEE countries and this round table has a potential to provide a base for discussion how to increase research integration.

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Oran Young, IHDP SC chair, and University of California at Santa Barbara, United States of America, introduced International Human Dimension Program (IHDP) as a research program and international network, sponsored by international research funds and also by the UN. He mentioned the fields of interests and activities of IHDP, e.g. innovative research in the field of enhancing social aspects of environmental studies and developing capacities for multi-disciplinary environmental research. There is a potential interest of the program in CEE countries. Moreover, the interests are not purely oriented toward aca-

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demic debate but also to application in real world. He mentioned several core projects executing by the IHDP.

Participants shortly introduced themselves during the introduction round.

5 *Lívía Bizíková, UBC, Environment Canada*, gave a presentation “State of sustainability and multidisciplinary research in Central and Eastern Europe” (also based on the experiences of her PhD research). She investigated process of democratization and participation in the countries in transition. The presentation outlined several issues which can be referred as typical for the countries in transition.

10 Drastic changes in formal institutions significantly corrupted the trust into the official structures and informal institutions (e.g personal relationships), processes of institutional changes are slow. As a rule, studies on human dimension of the mentioned process are neglected; applications of policies are delayed.

Apart of the problems inherited from the era of communist governance, there are many problems emerged during and as a result of the transition processes. Thus, important and necessary research focus is on the causes and historical roots of these problems: are they related with the transitional processes or appeared before; what are the power structures; how to link new institutions and legislations with the opportunities which the CEE countries already have?

15 As the examples of such “problem domains” the following can be mentioned: “Europeanization” of CEE and implementation of the EU legal system; adaptation policy under the EEA; changing of economical variability, etc.

20 Short time for execution of mentioned changes does not allow the political, economic and institutional processes to stabilize in its new forms. This situation provides new challenges for academic communities which often does not able to response the changing conditions with adequate research: there is the gap between research and policy implications, low level of interaction within the national research communities, policy-makers and public; integration of the CEE scholars into the international research communities remains poor. There is a strong focus on agriculture amongst the sustainability research; risks related with changes in property right. Narrow focus on the local and disciplinary studies does not provide sufficient information to study general tendencies in the region. On the other hand, broader studies at the level of ministries are too general. Methodological recommendations for the researches are mostly based on the previous experiences. Access to information remains an important issue.

25 Several case studies which have been recently made mostly reflect local conflicts and perspectives and do not represent the whole CEE region. Therefore there is necessity for integrated research that would reflect the similarities and differences in the past and on-going transition processes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

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3. Discussion

Zsuzsanna Flachner: communication between scholars within CEE and at the international level is necessary. Newly emerged and transforming institutions, their legitimacy and accountability are important research issues.

5 Recently, there were number of research initiated by international (Western) research communities and international organizations in the CEE countries. However, the level is often not very high. In some cases, national legislation has been on a higher level before implementation of EU legal system; nowadays national and EU legislations are sometimes contradicting; there is lack of research to study comparisons and evaluate changes.

It is important to initiate and to conduct the research on transitional processes: what happened and which lessons might be learned.

It is important to improve links and communicate five “A” of Earth System Governance within CEE scientific community.

Piotr Matczak: It is important to study transitional processes both from “internal” and “external” (non CEE scholars) perspective. It is difficult to expect the institutions to change according to western standards as the time for such transformations was too short.

Ckees van Oijen: The research challenge is how to apply the western experiences in CEE countries; to find out what was going wrong in previous research and policy cooperation; to set up mutual learning process.

Zsuzsanna Flachner: CEE community is very diverse and it has to be taken into account when doing research for the region as a whole. The political and social processes in the region are mostly driven by economic concerns; EU accession and EU regulations strongly dominate over other principles; research part is mirroring the policy processes.

Falk Schmidt: Economic and political processes in CEE are going from transformation to adaptation; CEE region, including transformations of formal and informal institutions, is becoming interesting arena for case studies for international research community.

10 *Livia Bizikova:* Capacity building either in term of enhancing and researching transformational processes are important; potential for policy and research networks are currently underestimated in the region.

Vendula Radlová, Ieva Oskolokaite: Experience from student projects: state administration is very reluctant in providing of information for environmental research.

Matteo Roggero: Transitional conditions provide avenues for change; there is big potential for development in CEE countries.

Klemen-Risto Bizak: Societies in transition are mostly driven by economic incentives; the level of environmental awareness remains low.

Other participants: comments to discussion.

15 *Zsuzsanna Flachner:* obtaining and utilizing of information is still being an important issue; experience in policy analysis is missing. Research and political challenge is to link economical development with sustainability. There are very poor resources available for CEE scholars for conducting multidisciplinary research and to joint international scientific events.

Frank Biermann: IHDP it is not “western” project, the program itself and Earth System Governance initiative has a global focus; a lot of research is done by the researchers from Eastern Europe and the program aims to increase such cooperation. How can participation of CEE scholars be improved?

Amsterdam conference shows that, at present, integration of CEE scholars in international scientific events remains low, thus, capacity building is an important issue.

Another promising topic is to study how the architecture of governance differs from country to country and within the region. What are the traditional and novel approaches to environmental policy-making in CEE countries? What is the disciplinary structure of these researches: are they mostly driven by natural or social science?

Zsuzsanna Flachner, Livia Bizikova, Piotr Matczak, Maria Falaleeva, other participants: suggestions to initiate CEE research initiatives within the Earth System Governance program to address the topics mentioned in the discussion: e.g. transitional processes and their influence on institutional structures, interplay of multi-scale (environmental) governance structures in new EU and non EU members, social and institutional specifics of the region and how it can be taken into account when designing and implementing research and policy processes; differences and similarities in the transitional processes in CEE. It is necessary to look for new effective forms of cooperation to enhance multi-disciplinary studies in the region and to contribute in the research at global scale.

As a follow-up of the round table, it is needed to consider the possibilities of joint research initiatives (e.g. workshop for CEE scholars).

Maria Falaleeva: final word, thanks for all the participant and presenters

It was a good chance to “formalize” discussion on the similarities and differences in CEE countries. There is a hope that the round table will be a starting point for further cooperation. As the one of the follow-ups of the round table, the list of the contacts of young and more experienced scholars of the region will be created.

All the participants will be informed about further initiatives related with the follow-ups and results of the round table and future activities of organizing committee.