

**„Challenges of Sustainable Development”**  
**Mogilany - Zawoja 2002**  
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**Here we go...**

We first met on June 31, 2002 in the building of the Faculty of Geology, Geophysics and Environment Protection of the University of Mining and Metallurgy in Crocow, from where we went by bus to the PAN's (Polish Academy of Sciences) Conference Center in Mogilany. We were to spend the next three weeks there. In our twenty - seven - member team there were students, graduates, Ph.D. students and scientific workers from the whole of Poland. Although most of us specialized in the environmental protection or civil engineering, our group was also comprised of a few biologists, biotechnologists, economists, lawyers, sociologists, psychologists, an architect, town and country planner, geographer, specialist in marketing, in agriculture, student of English philology and journalist - all were individuals, i.e. people having interesting personalities who met in order to jointly get to know about the idea of sustainable development...

**Tough beginnings**

The first week of the course appeared the most difficult. Every day was filled with a tight schedule of lectures being given by the founders of this course: Gisela Bosch, Jan Sendzimir, Charles Kibert and by guest lecturers. They aimed to provide us with basic knowledge of ecology, economics, management and ethics, which was essential for understanding the idea of sustainable development. We had also an opportunity to play some strategic games which not only integrated our six groups (into which we were divided) but also taught us how the market functioned. The integration of our groups was not always *a piece of cake*, considering that after we had run a psychological test aimed to determine our temperaments, it turned out that most of us appeared to have a dominant personality.

We had a chance of meeting employees working for institutions and companies from the Małopolska region which enabled us to familiarize with their activities in terms of sustainable development and identify their problems and needs in this field as well as suggesting some possibilities of improving the way they were functioning in their surroundings.

**Magical Zawoja**

After five days spent in Mogilany we left for Zawoja - where we were supposed to work on a project concerning the sustainable development of Babia Góra National Park and its surroundings - which was a real turning-point during the course. We were accommodated in a monastery run by Discalced Carmelites in Zawoja-Przyslop (the highest located part of Zawoja), which was called “Gubałówka” by the natives. Father Wilk, the prior, was an unusual personality famous for his ecological initiatives such as a wind turbine or solar panels. Silence and serenity that reigned in this unique place together with breathtaking views - which

you could admire through the windows of our rooms - and meals had by one table - this all contributed to our integration. Hiking Babia Góra was felt as the most challenging event during our stay at Zawoja. It was guided by Maciej Mażul (from Babia Góra National Park) whose thorough knowledge of the region as well as open-mindedness and cordiality we were deeply impressed with.

Nevertheless, apart from an active rest in the mountains we had to carry out the task of surveying the local people, the representatives of the local authority and important personages from the region. This allowed us to get a general idea of the quality of their lives and to identify their problems, needs and some conceptions of the sustainable development of that splendid place in Poland they lived at.

We will surely treasure in our memory an uncommon person of Jacek Bożek - the founder of the Gaja Club in Bielsko-Biała - a charismatic ecologist who while accompanying us during the mountain trip taught us how to find a metaphysical bond with nature, how to feel being part of it, how to listen to its sounds and read its signals. A silence walk at night that we all took part in together with Jacek will remain one of the most exciting experiences in our lives.

After these four days filled with hiking, surveying and singing together by a bonfire as well we - now full of new ideas and impressions - unwillingly had to bid farewell to Zawoja.

### **Project on sustainable development**

We had hardly returned to Mogilany when we got down to work on the data we had managed to collect in Zawoja. It resulted in draft versions of chapters - each prepared by one group - which were to make up a project we later called "Babia Góra".

The second week of the course finished with presentations of the results of our work done in particular assignment groups. Furthermore, for the second time we had an opportunity to talk to the employees of companies and institutions from the Małopolska region which was to help us improve the projects on their sustainable development.

Our free weekend during which some of us decided to stay at an eighteenth-century manor-house surrounded by a park while the others went home or devoted time to visiting the monuments of Małopolska (especially of nearby Crocow) turned out to be an indispensable breathtaking space after two weeks of hard work.

### **All's well that ends well...**

The third week of the course was filled with a number of lectures, guest ones in particular, as well as work on the projects for the assigned institutions and companies to which we were to propose some ideas of improving their activities according to the concept of sustainable development. Simultaneously, we prepared together the final version of the "Babia Góra" project.

An acoustic concert called "The Magic Carpathians Project" organized specially for us added variety to one of our last evenings spent in Mogilany. A visit to an ecological farm in Stryszów allowed us to believe that what we had been taught during the course could and should be brought into effect.

On Friday, July 19, we showed the effects of our three-week-long work which resulted in the projects on sustainable development done for the local community of the Babia Góra region as well as for the institutions and companies from Małopolska. Just after the

presentations a solemn award ceremony took place during which we were awarded certificates of successful completion of the course (also signed by the University of Florida) and presented with T-shirts made of organic cotton.

The day before we left we had had a chance of meeting the participants of previous courses. This enabled us to meet many interesting people and, moreover, we could see what they had been doing in aid of sustainable development and how they had been inspired thanks to the course.

On July 21 in the middle of hot summer 2002 we had to part company after three weeks of working, resting and having fun together combined with reciprocal inspiration and disputes. It was not easy for the people to say goodbye to each other, taking into account shared passions and experiences, curiosity about the world and a burning desire to learn both the laws of surrounding nature and ability to derive power from it and from people around. It seems impossible to estimate how much we have learnt from each other, how much inspiration the discussions and working together have given us, not to mention the necessity to learn to cooperate within a group and to reach compromises.

Needless to say, Gisela Bosch, Jan Sendzimir, Charles Kibert, Tomasz Bergier - the organizers and lecturers - played a major role in creating a pleasant atmosphere during the course. They were perceived as authorities who linked with us by bonds of friendship.

We parted having hopes of meeting soon. After all, we have effectively been “infected” by the idea of sustainable development according to which we will surely perceive the world from now on...