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Visions of Equity


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ProSus 2003

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The two years came to last very long. I wrote two books while on leave from the grant, I had a child, Oda, and in the end we moved from Oslo to Karlstad, where I currently hold a position as senior lecturer in Environmental Science at Karlstad University. This means that the project came to take much longer than expected, and that it was carried out in a more fragmented way than I had wanted. Dealing with both environmental and development assistance issues – the latter being a completely new field to me – has been a great challenge.

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Hilde Ibsen
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAB</td>
<td>Arbeiderbevegelsens Arkiv og Bibliotek</td>
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<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONNEP</td>
<td>Consultative Conference on National Environmental Policy</td>
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<td>CONNEPP</td>
<td>Consultative National Environmental Policy Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONTRALESA</td>
<td>Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa</td>
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<td>DEAT</td>
<td>Department of the Environment and Tourism</td>
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<td>DLA</td>
<td>Department of Land Affairs</td>
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<td>DWAF</td>
<td>Department of Water Affairs and Forestry</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>Environmental Action Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECON</td>
<td>ECON Centre for Economic Analysis</td>
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<td>GEAR</td>
<td>Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDRC</td>
<td>International Development Research Centre</td>
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<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for Conservation of Nature</td>
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<td>KVIM</td>
<td>Advisory Group to the Director General on Women, Environmental Affairs, Democracy and Human Rights</td>
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<td>LAPC</td>
<td>Land and Agricultural Policy Centre</td>
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<td>MoDA</td>
<td>Ministry of Development Assistance</td>
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<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of the Environment</td>
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<td>MoFA</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBI</td>
<td>National Botanical Institute</td>
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<td>NLC</td>
<td>National Land Committee</td>
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<td>NEMA</td>
<td>National Environmental Management Act</td>
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<td>NIVA</td>
<td>Norsk institutt for vannforskning</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NORAGRIC</td>
<td>Centre for International Environment and Development Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>NORAD</td>
<td>Norwegian agency for development cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOU</td>
<td>Norges offentlige utredning</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDP</td>
<td>Reconstruction and Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLAAS</td>
<td>Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies</td>
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<td>SACS</td>
<td>South African Communication Service</td>
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<td>Stortingsforhandlinger</td>
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<td>SOU</td>
<td>Statens offentlige utredningar</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPP&amp;CRLS</td>
<td>Surplus People Project &amp; Centre for Rural Legal Studies</td>
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<td>Grant for Sahel-Sudan-Ethiopia</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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<td>United Nations Conference on Environment and Development</td>
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<td>UNEP</td>
<td>United Nations Environment Programme</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>WCED</td>
<td>World Commission on Environment and Development</td>
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<td>World Conservation Strategy</td>
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<td>Women, Environment and Development</td>
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INTRODUCTION

A Ballad of Ecological Awareness

It's nice to be the drafter of a well-constructed plan,
For spending lots of money for the betterment of Man,
But Audits are a threat, for it is neither games nor fun
To look at plans of yesterday and ask, “What have we done?”
And learning is unpleasant when we have to do it fast,
So it's pleasanter to contemplate the future than the past.
If it's just the noise of progress that is beating in our ears
We could look beyond the turbulence and soothe our gnawing fears.
Man is drowning in his own success, and hapless is his hope
If our science and technology is but a rotten rope.
Infinity is ended, and mankind is in a box;
The era of expanding man is running out of rocks;
A self-sustaining Spaceship Earth is shortly in the offing
And man must be its crew - or else the box will be his coffin!
(Boulding 1972).

In 1987, Norway took a seat in the international firmament. The actual event was the release of *Our Common Future*, the report from the World Commission on Environment and Development, led by Gro Harlem Brundtland. The report confronted the world with pressing environmental issues such as climate change, poverty, deforestation and lack of global equity.

It came up with visions for an environmental policy which introduced ecological challenges to the political sphere. Even though the Report was a result of international consultative processes, decisions and compromises, at least in Norway Gro Harlem Brundtland herself got much of the honour for bringing sustainable development into policy-making and the public vocabulary. She was referred to as the world’s minister of environment (Slagstad 1998, p. 468).

At least since 1987, Norway's self-imposed role as an environmental forerunner has been strong. Not only does the Government refer to what is going on in national environmental policy, but it also refers to the international work with particular reference to development assistance policy. More than 15 years have gone by since *Our Common Future* was presented. What has the homeland of Gro Harlem Brundtland done to fulfil the visions of a global environmental policy? This study of the history of environmental concern in the Norwegian bilateral development assistance policy will provide some answers. There is no objective definition of the concept of environmental concern, but the concept contains various aspects of the Norwegian governmental intentions to include nature conservation, environmentally sound natural resource management and

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1 Boulding was one of the early economists with an interest in environmental issues.
environmental protection measures in development co-operation policy. In practice, NORAD’s environmental development assistance is aimed at direct support of the environment and/or environmentally oriented projects, and NORAD has been instructed by the Government to integrate environmental concern in all activities. This study concentrates on environmentally oriented development assistance.

**Plans of yesterday and contemplation of the past**

The prophecies of doom of a coming ecological crisis that would wipe out humankind spelled out a range of new problems to the international donor community when the notion of an ecological crisis was established in the late 1960s. Particular attention was paid to environmental degradation in the Third World and to transboundary pollution caused by the industrialized countries. The political recognition of environmental problems as global, and gravely affecting the developing countries, brought the UN system into the environmental assistance arena. Since 1972 and the UN Stockholm Conference, the UN has hosted mammoth conferences discussing how to reconcile environment and development. International legally binding conventions and programmes of action have been signed, but still, in the early 21st century, it is appropriate to ask with Kenneth Boulding: “What have we done?”

When Kenneth Boulding wrote his Ballad of Ecological Awareness in 1972, ecological awareness was peripheral in political and development planning. Countries in the North were influenced by technological optimism and the philosophy of economic growth. The main objective of official foreign aid was to improve human conditions in the newly independent but poor countries. The solutions were rooted in the belief system of the industrialised countries, which was dominated by a strong faith in technological solutions and in nature as an infinite resource base. The attitude to the environment was characterised by a technological environmentalism and the “high technology and material consumption which (was) achieved through this appropriation (was) regarded as the ultimate indicator of social ‘progress’.” (Pepper 1990, p. 37). Professionals, particularly in engineering, economics and agriculture, were highly trusted when it came to deciding about both development planning and environmental matters.

A new environmentalism followed in the wake of the political radicalism of the 1960s. It represented a shift from material values to concern for non-material needs and a conception of nature as a value in its own right (Pepper 1990; Eckersly 1992). This was a reaction against the economic and technology-centred development assistance practices, which had not diminished the gap between the rich and the poor world. Concern for environmental matters was part of a cultural criticism of modern society and of the idea that human beings could control nature by scientific and industrial means (Scott 1998, p. 1-6; Riddell 1987, p. 62).

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2 Environmental concern was the concept used in the Evaluation Report 5.95 on Integration of Environmental Concern into Norwegian Bilateral Development Assistance: Policies and Performance done by the Fridtjof Nansen Institute and ECON Centre for Economic Analysis. The concept relates to measures that aimed at environmental improvements in the field of nature conservation and environmental protection.

3 Environmental integration is discussed in depth in Skjønsberg 2000 and by Riksrevisjonen 2002.

4 For an overview of the notion of ecological crisis see White Jr 1967.

The environment-and-development discourse of the 1960s and early 1970s was dominated by apocalyptic predictions. The main theme, as Robyn Eckersly has identified it, was the understanding of the environmental problem as a crisis of survival. The neo-Malthusians, like Paul and Ann Ehrlich, claimed that rapid population growth was the core threat to human survival causing food shortages and environmental depletion. The metaphor of the earth as a spaceship, a closed system, illustrated the severity of the situation. Other natural scientists linked the crisis of survival to rapid industrialisation and to the transfer of Western technology to the developing world. Their message of doom was illustrated by shocking examples of the environmental costs of international development aid practices. A re-evaluation of development assistance was crucial in order to obtain ecological equilibrium and to meet both the material and non-material needs of human beings (Farvar and Milton 1972, p. xxi-xxix; Eckersly 1992, p. 36ff; Ellis 1995).

By the use of the metaphor of Spaceship Earth, the apocalyptic prophesy got the widespread attention that pushed environmental issues into a political priority in the international community in the late 1960s. The apocalyptic message was wrapped up in the political discourse of environment-and-development.

The notion of ecological crisis as a threat to human survival was criticised in the words of Magnus Enzensberger for being a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant enterprise formulated by an elite. This criticism was raised by Marxist intellectuals and scientists who did not reject the idea of the ecological crisis but who had strong objections to the neo-Malthusian theories. From a Marxist point of view, overpopulation has to be studied in relation to something. If overpopulation meant the existence of surplus people suffering from starvation, was starvation produced by some natural shortage or by the absolute inability of the earth to produce more food? Or was starvation the result of the capitalist system’s inability to distribute common goods? According to David Harvey, the overpopulation theory that gave credibility to the Spaceship metaphor was politically biased in order to maintain the existing order of society (Pepper 1990, p. 168ff).

At the UN conference in Stockholm in 1972, the international community set out to discuss the interrelation between environment and development. With the coining of the concept of ecodevelopment, the UN conference was a starting point for the intellectual history of sustainable development. Within a few years, research on ecodevelopment had developed in different parts of the world. Ecodevelopment offered an alternative to the neo-Malthusian approach to the ecological crisis. It represented a vision of the future, taking into account inequality and lack of redistribution, and the fact that the ecological crisis was greater in the Third World than in the industrialised world. The proponents of ecodevelopment assumed a revision of the present capitalist system and suggested a middle way between the prophets of doom and the zero-growth proponents. It was an “alternative policy and strategy of development (that took) care of economic, social, cultural, and environmental problems on the way to self-reliance - including the question of resources and appropriate use of technology.” (Farvar and Glaeser 1984, p. 169f.). In the strategy of ecodevelopment ecologically sound management of natural resources was a key element.

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6 Apocalyptic predictions were made by neo-Malthusians like the Ehrlichs and the Club of Rome and actors representing the systems ecologists at the Virginia conference on the Ecological Aspects of International Development (1968). Key actors were Barry Commoner, Mr. Taghi Farvar, John P. Milton.
From the late 1960s and until 1980 competing visions for dealing with the ecological crisis determined much of the international environment-and-development discourse. In the Nordic countries, however, environmental concern in development assistance did not become an issue until the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) was launched in 1980. The World Conservation Strategy established a new concept - sustainable development. This concept swept out ecodevelopment, which had obviously left the political aspects of the concept untouched. The World Conservation Strategy's use of the concept of sustainable development was the immediate source of inspiration for the later World Commission on Environment and Development.

In the early 1980s ecology came to be one of the core themes of development assistance not only in Norway but in all the Nordic countries. They set out to produce guidelines and practical directives which aimed at finding solutions to the ecological crisis. The Nordic effort was overshadowed by the work of the World Commission for Environment and Development and the release of the report *Our Common Future* in 1987.

The environmental issue in development assistance was reinforced by the Earth Summit in Rio, when also the notion of ecological crisis was “finally accepted and confronted politically around the world.” (Hajer and Fischer 1999, p. 1). In Norway environmental concern was declared as the means to direct development assistance policy in a sustainable direction. And what have we done?

**Five stories**

This research report offers five stories examining environmental assistance from different perspectives. The first story, *Environmental Awareness in a World of Crisis*, presents the international backdrop. It examines how the notion of an ecological crisis governed the international intentions in the 1960s and 1970s to direct development assistance in a more environmentally friendly direction. The second and third stories, *The Ecological Challenge* and *Environmental Concern and Sustainable Development*, turn our attention from the international scene to Norway. Our perspective is the national attempt to introduce the environment into development assistance policy and to link environmental concern to the UNCED process. The fourth story, *Working for Water: biodiversity and social upliftment in South Africa*, examines one project in the South African environmental programme that was established by the Norwegian and South African governments in 1996. Our aim is to analyse how an environmentally specific project was carried out in practice and get some indications about barriers and facilitators for the achievements of goals and priorities seen from both North and South. In the fifth story, *South Africa's struggle to achieve sustainable land reform*, we look at development cooperation from a poverty and capacity-building perspective. The story gives an overview of the policy process in South Africa that resulted in institutional cooperation between researchers in Norway and South Africa to increase the competence and capacity to handle the complex issue of land reform. Land reform is crucial to poverty alleviation in South Africa and to the consolidation of a democratic state.
Environmental assistance as a research theme: evaluation and discourse

The agenda of this report is to enlarge our insight into what Norway has done in the field of environmental assistance by analysing the national policy process and by exploring environmental assistance practices in South Africa.

Methodologically we draw on evaluative research method and discourse analysis. Both methods are relevant since the political arena of environment-and-development is characterised by strong rhetoric and symbolism. Evaluation method has a strong tradition in the USA, and has proved to be fruitful in studies in the field of political science. The point of departure for evaluation research is to trace good political intentions and to examine the follow-up of policy in specific areas. This is done after the policy process has ended, or while it is still active (Vedung 1998).

The report seeks to evaluate the consistency between the political goals or intentions and environmental concern in practice. The evaluation analysis is carried out according to a simple evaluation strategy that illuminates three levels of action: intention->implementation->reality. This means that we first examine the good intentions formulated by the international community and the UNCED process and discuss how the Norwegian Government set out to convert the good intentions into policy. Our external criteria for evaluation are relevant chapters in Agenda 21. Secondly, we describe the Norwegian governmental intentions to carry out a policy of environmental assistance, and make an evaluation of the means of implementation. Our internal evaluation criteria are major White Papers and other strategic governmental documents. Thirdly, we discuss operationalisation in NORAD. Fourthly, we study reality by analysing two illustrative cases from South Africa.

At the core of the analysis is the ambition to understand the results of the evaluation. Since the study of both text and practice are important, it is fruitful to develop a discourse analysis of environmental assistance. This is done with inspiration from recent literature in the field of political science. A paper published by Liz Sharp and Tim Richardson in 2001 on Foucauldian Discourse Analysis in Planning and Environmental Policy Research distinguishes between different levels of discourse (Sharp and Richardson 2001). The first level refers to conversation. Discourse occurs when people are talking publicly about how to plan policies or political programmes. Of more relevance to this analysis is the second level, discourse as text. In this case, discourse is what is written in policy documents like White Papers, speeches or statements about environmental concern in development assistance. This approach gives us insight regarding rhetoric and symbols used in specific policy processes, while at the same time elaborating a semantic understanding of the process as such. Researchers like Maarten Hajer and Bent Flyvbjerg have brought discourse analysis to a third level by drawing on the Foucauldian approach (Hajer 1995; Flyvbjerg 19). Their suggestion is to analyse policy processes more fully and go beyond the text itself. Flyvbjerg's study of spatial planning in Aalborg and Hajer's study of acid rain policy in England and the Netherlands are both studies in which the researchers have developed a discourse analysis that embraces both text and practice (Sharp and Richardson 2001, p. 195). According to Hajer, discourse then is “defined as a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and

7 I am particularly inspired by Hajer, Coenen, Dryzek, Sharp and Richardson, and Lindseth, who all set out to capture environmental policy in the field of acid rain, and Local Agenda 21 (Coenen and Lindseth).
transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities.” (Hajer 1995, p. 43f). This approach suggests that discourse is shaped by both power and knowledge. When applied to the study of environmental assistance policy, this approach reveals how the official discourse is controlled by the exercise of power and influenced by knowledge held by certain actors in the political and scientific spheres. The study of both text and practice helps us to understand how environmental policy was formulated in the intersection between the official discourse and the micro-powers in NORAD.

Key elements in discourse analysis are the concepts of story-line and discourse-coalition. According to Hajer, a story-line is an analytical tool that helps structure our understanding of environmental policies. It fulfils an essential role in “the clustering of knowledge, the positioning of actors, and, ultimately, in the creation of coalitions amongst the actors of a given domain.” (Hajer 1995, p. 56). Policies are formulated by coalitions that are attracted to specific ideas and interpretations. Specific actors form discourse-coalitions in order to create a discursive hegemony that keeps up with certain political practices. Thus, a story-line can be seen as the “discursive cement that keeps a discourse-coalition together.” (ibid. p. 65). The power of the discourse-coalition depends on trust, acceptability and argumentative credibility among people.

“Discourses everywhere and not a drop to drink”

At an international symposium on governance of natural resources in Southern Africa, held in Cape Town in October 2000, the heading of one paper was: “Discourses everywhere and not a drop to drink…” (Benjaminsen, Cousins and Thompson 2002, p. 231). Despite academic efforts to analyse natural resource policies and to find new and sophisticated methods, many poor people still face water scarcity. An immediate conclusion might be drawn: discourse does not matter in the real world and the gap between the intellectual approach and policy planning is still wide. However, there is good reason to believe that discourse does matter as a research strategy in environmental policy research (Lindseth 2001; Sharp and Richardson 2001). Sharp and Richardson argue that discourse analysis has some “appeal to researchers of planning and environmental policy because of the messy and complex interactions that make up the policy process with which ...(we) engage.” (Sharp and Richardson 2001). This is very much the case in a study of policy processes in the field of environmental assistance.

Firstly, the environmental discourse is characterised by controversies and contradictions. This is also evident in our empirical studies of Norwegian environmental assistance policy. The history of environmental assistance policy includes humans and nature; both are complex, complicated and non-linear (Merchant 1995). This means that a linear version of history putting why in the centre is less fruitful than asking the dynamic how, which might give us some understanding of the policy process of environmental assistance that we have evaluated (Lindseth 2001, p. 19). Analysing discourses enables us to understand what is being said, how things are being said and how change comes about. We will argue that this is crucial in the environment-and-development field in order to avoid just another fault-finding story about everything that goes wrong. Understanding is

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8 The necessity of investigating micro-powers was elaborated by Foucault in Discipline and Punish 1975. The discussion is further elaborated in Hajer 1995, p. 47.
the first step if one wants to be constructive and if real change is desired; and change for the better has been and is the prime concern in development assistance. Change is necessary since sustainable development is still not a reality for most people in this world. The search for understanding makes it fruitful to focus on actors as well as practices. Practices are materialised because people have to choose different semantic alternatives in search of the most effective policy discourse (Hajer 1995, p. 264; Lindseth 2001, p. 13ff.).

This study does not intend to come up with policy recommendations. As suggested by Sharp and Richardson, one should question if recommendations can be expected from Foucauldian discourse analysis. What is expected from the stories in this book, as in Hajer’s study, is that discourse analysis should contribute to critical thinking among researchers and practitioners about the operationalisation of concepts like ecodevelopment, environmental concern, ecological modernization and sustainable development (Sharp and Richardson 2001, p. 207). By introducing both an evaluative analysis and a discourse strategy, our intention is to better understand which policies give results and which constitute barriers to the goals and practices formulated in Norwegian environmental assistance policy.

Then let us go back to Kenneth Boulding and ask first what have we said and then what have we done?
1 ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS IN A WORLD OF CRISIS

There is a need to ensure an economic development process which is environmentally sustainable over the long run and which protects the ecological balance. (Miljö och bistånd 1982, p. 42)

In 1949, and more exactly on 20 January that year, the American President, Harry Truman, defined the poor countries of the world as "underdeveloped areas" (Sachs 1999, p. 25). The concept illustrated the main objective of development aid, which was to bring prosperity to the underdeveloped countries by bringing them into the global market economy. The motives ranged from political to moral, with the moral argument gaining weight in the debate after 1960. In the words of John F. Kennedy:

To those people in huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them to help themselves... not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we need their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.10

With the poor masses in mind and a growing feeling of international solidarity, donor countries set out to construct formal development schemes. They were designed and implemented by development professionals with a strong faith in economic assistance, science and technology. Development assistance was carried out in accordance with Western ethics and moral philosophy. This focus was strong in the 1960s and 1970s, and was part of the development discourse at the time. The social engineering project undertaken by the West in Third World countries runs parallel with the emerging welfare states in Europe aiming at economic growth and prosperity at home. This project gave great weight to basic needs like formal education, health, water supply, road construction, housing, etc. Development was equated with accumulation of "good things" and material consumption. Concern for the human relationship with nature was a non-issue (Nash 1989, p. 122; Scott 1998).

There was, however, an underlying environmental consciousness that successively challenged mainstream development assistance thinking in the 1960s and 1970s. Environmental problems were complex and embraced social and economic as well as natural and physical factors. The roots of the problems often lay in the mistreatment of natural systems, which in turn was a result of socio-economic factors such as poverty and inequality. Science and technology could offer important partial solutions, but more comprehensive approaches were necessary.

The reconciliation between the concerns of environment and development is likely to be found in the redesign of development objectives and strategies and in the fuller understanding of environmental systems. These in turn imply the need for new life styles, for closer study of nature and society and for experimentation with new types of institutions. (Ambio no 2/3 1979, p. 115).

9 The quotation is taken from Strategy adopted by the UN General Assembly for the United Nations' Third Development Decade.
10 President Kennedy's inauguration speech. Quoted in Riddell 1987, p. 6.
From a scientific point of view, a comprehensive approach would not be possible without better scientific planning. Ecology got high status in the planning process, and also in the shaping of development assistance guidelines in the North. Why did ecology get this prominent position?

Ecology had been an important part of scientific studies in the tropics for decades and more specifically linked to development planning in British colonies in Africa since the 1930s (Worster 1994; Grove 1996; Anker 2002). Ecology could provide data about the natural environment as well as being a model for how to properly control and exploit the environment. “Fundamentally, the problem of development was one of human ecology, the diverse people reacting with their varied environments.” (Adams 1993, p. 26). In the influential report, *Science in Africa*, the British zoologist E. B. Worthington stressed that ecology was a scientific tool aiming at the promotion of human welfare (Worthington 1938, p. 1).11 To obtain this goal, interdisciplinary studies of ecological and social processes were crucial.

Ecology did not achieve academic status until the early 1960s. Environmental historian Donald Worster explains this with reference to a climate that was favourable to scientific knowledge, and, which I will add, had evolved gradually since the 1930s, when social scientists and economists became involved in policy-making. In the 1960s “scientists of every sort were accustomed to appearing as society’s benefactors. They were expected to show nations how to increase their power and citizens how to increase their wealth.” (Worster 1994, pp. 340-350). As regards the role of the ecologists, Worster claims that they “emerged as the guardians of fragile life” and after the first Earth Day in 1970, the phrase “age of ecology” came into use. The science of ecology would offer a “blueprint for planetary survival”(Worster 1994, p. 340).

Ecological managerialism became a tool for future development planning offering an “apolitical” way of dealing with the environmental problems facing the developing world. Scientists with strong faith in technocratic solutions argued in favour of letting people outside the political circles, i.e. leading scholars, experts and business people take on more global environmental responsibility (Adams 1993, p. 26f.).

Ecological managerialism was not apolitical, however, and the ecologist was not a neutral social engineer. One leading ecologist, Eugene Odum, advocated particular policies when he defined human ecology as “a set of policies that should govern behaviour.” (Worster 1994, p. 368). By this he meant family planning, extensive regional land-use planning, measures to encourage both economic growth and an economy based on recycling of resources. Thus, the interaction between policy-making and science was essential when ecological awareness entered into the field of development assistance.

How did scientists seek to promote ecological concern and how did the international community respond to the scientists’ call for ecological orientation in development assistance?

**The Doomsday syndrome – fear of population growth**

In the development period of the 1960s, population growth was seen as the most serious global threat to development. “Whichever way one looks at the population problem -

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11 Worthington 1938, p. 1. Worthington was Director of the Freshwater Biological Association of the British Empire.
whether as a biologist, sociologist, theologian, medical doctor, industrialist, administrator or politician - it is obvious that it presents the greatest menace to the future of the biosphere.” (Worthington 1983, p. 98).\(^{12}\)

Among international scientists, Julian Huxley, Director-General of Unesco and biologist, was in the forefront in this respect. In a report from Africa he warned about a world that was ecologically out of joint.

“During the present century its ecological equilibrium has been radically upset and its balanced ecological pattern has been disrupted, owing to the drastic increase of its population and the equally drastic over-exploitation of its natural resources. This growing dis-equilibrium between man and his planet will become increasingly serious and will end in economic, physiological and social disaster unless we take immediate steps to check and if possible reverse the trend.” (Huxley 1960, p. 101f).

Huxley based his warning on studies of natural resource management in South-East Africa. Wildlife and natural habitats had diminished in the past and were now threatened by an increase in population, organised poaching and by political regimes giving priority to agricultural, technical and other "human" development schemes. The situation was critical and the next decade would be decisive to the future of African wildlife. According to Huxley native people were pessimistic about the future, while he himself saw ways out of a potential ecological disaster. Two features made the situation more positive - first the increased international interest in nature and wildlife, secondly the rise of ecological science. The former exerted pressure in favour of conservation of natural habitats, while the latter imposed a proper scientific approach to restore the disequilibrium between man and nature.

Huxley identified and understood the African situation in ecological terms. At the time, ecology focused on the balance in ecosystems and the climax community as an ideal state:

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\text{The ecological problem is fundamentally one of balancing resources against human needs, both in the short and in the long term. It must thus be related to a proper evaluation of human needs, and it must be based on resource conservation and resource use, including optimum land use and conservation of habitat. (Huxley 1960, p. 13.)}^{13}\]

The original ecosystems in South-East Africa suffered from severe human-made damage. The environmental problem was first of all identified as a loss of original ecological communities. According to Huxley, the losses had come about when the African continent was exposed to Western science, Western settlement and Western political, administrative and economic ideas. Long-term ecological planning, efficient management and offensive international conservation policy were important if improvements were to take place. "What is needed is a bold official conservation policy based on scientific research, backed by world opinion and furnished with adequate finance.” (Huxley 1960, p. 102; 14).

The key to conservation of wildlife lay in the creation of National Parks. This was not only a national matter in terms of legislative action, but also a matter of international concern. Members of the UN had already been asked to report about their National Park systems. There were two particular reasons to assist African countries in creating and

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\(^{12}\) Worthington is quoted in Adams 1993 p. 29.

\(^{13}\) Huxley and other biologists/ecologists of his time, e.g. Charles Elton, argued that simple ecosystems were less stable than complex ones and that simplification and instability might lead to extinctions. Their theoretical studies and understanding of environmental problems reflect a knowledge which has later been revised. See for example Pimm 1984, p. 321 and Leach & Mearns 1996, p. 10.
managing National Parks. It was the best way of preserving a "representative sample" both of Africa's natural and of its cultural heritage. The arguments used were of anthropocentric character. Preservation of the wilderness was necessary in the interest of future generations and of "lovers of solitude and of adventurous sports like mountaineering."(Huxley 1960, p. 60).

The conservationist thinking expressed by Huxley was ideologically rooted in North-American environmentalism. As in North America, the idea of wildlife conservation within National Parks met with strong opposition from indigenous people. However, from the white expert's point of view, there was an urgent need to change the attitude of "Africans to conservation in general and wild life in particular, and to help them to understand its value to themselves and their countries."(Huxley 1960, p. 92). Since most tribal Africans regarded wild animals as a threat, but at the same time needed the meat, poaching had a dual purpose. This attitude had to be changed and the only way would be proper management of wild life. The creation of National Parks also met with opposition from political circles in East African states. Some regarded the National Park and organised game-cropping as white colonial enterprises. Others would argue that the Western part of the world had already got rid of wild animals, and why should Africans preserve theirs? Did wild animals really belong to the modern world?

Apparently there was a strong opinion among the colonialists that wild life and National Parks would have low priority once African governments came to power. This was not in accordance with mainstream policy in the "modern world." "For an African territory to abolish National Parks already set up or to destroy its existing wildlife resource would shock the world and incur the reproach of barbarism and ignorance."(Huxley 1960, p. 94). According to Huxley, the authorities in African states struggled to build modern welfare societies. They wanted to give high priority to education and schemes of social betterment in order to raise the general standard of living.

Environmental issues were, on the one hand, generally absent in African welfare thinking, as well as in European. On the other hand, ecological awareness, understood as conservation of wild life, could be seen as a source of profit. Thus, wildlife conservation became a means to create an economic foundation for the building of modern welfare societies. An important task for the white expert was to persuade Africans that this was the case.

In the study made by Huxley in 1960, he recommended giving environmental assistance to Third World countries, and particularly to Africa, long before the concept existed. In order to influence African opinion in a conservation direction, the international community was given great responsibility. Financial and educational assistance was to be channelled through international organisations such as IUCN or the UN.

The neo-Malthusian trends

During the 1960s, international scientists continued to warn about the consequences of environmental degradation in developing countries. The discussions were dominated by the ecological crisis story-line that had been prevalent since Huxley's alarming report from Africa. The focus shifted from conservation of wild animals to population control as the discourse-coalition of neo-Malthusians came to dominate the scene. Influential scholars
considered the root cause of the environmental problems to be the growing population. “Spaceship Earth (was) filled to capacity and beyond and is running out of food”.\(^{14}\) One of the leading gurus of the neo-Malthusian dominated environmentalism, Paul Ehrlich, drew his argument in one specific direction. There was only one essential cause of environmental problems. “The causal chain of the deterioration is easily followed to its source...Too many cars, too many factories, too much detergent, too much pesticides...too little water, too much carbon dioxide - all can be traced easily down to too many people.”\(^{(Ehrlich 1968, p. 67; Ellis 1995, p. 261).}\) Thus, the biological “urge to reproduce” and “the year-round sexuality of the human female” was a great menace to all environmental problems (Ellis 1995, p. 261).

Neo-Malthusians, like Paul Ehrlich and his wife Ann, took part in the development assistance debate, which they centred round a story-line of population run amok. Development aid for the future, the Ehrlichs claimed in 1970, should concentrate on avoiding mistakes made by developed countries and required changes in value systems and practices. “By making the fundamental error of basing our standard of progress on expansion of the GNP, we have created a vast industrial complex and great mental, moral, and aesthetic poverty” \(^{(Ehrlich and Ehrlich 1970, p. 408f. and 418).}\) The Western world was overdeveloped and, according to the Ehrlichs, the new model had to encourage semi-development carried out “not in our image but in whatever way is most appropriate for your culture.”\(^{(Ehrlich and Ehrlich 1970, p. 418).}\)

The driving force behind the critique of current development assistance was of a scientific character. Natural science arguments were directed towards fear of losing ecological communities and further disrupting ecosystems and natural environments, while social science arguments supported the need to make a revision of Western values that supported industrialisation and consumption.

Development assistance during the 1960s had suffered from lack of ecological concern because of environmental “shortsightedness” among politicians and technologists in the industrialised and developed world. Projects permeated by Western values were carried out without any discussion of ecological or social alternatives in countries with different cultural traditions and value systems.

In Paul and Ann Ehrlich’s view, industrialisation was not necessarily desirable. The Ehrlichs focused on the idea that all people should have access to basic needs in a traditional setting regardless of the economic value of their productivity. In Tanzania for instance, development could be a combination of agrarian and recreation areas. “They, and some other African nations, can supply the world with a priceless asset: a window on the past when vast herds of animals roamed the face of the Earth.”\(^{(Ehrlich and Ehrlich 1970, p. 415).}\)

With this suggestion, the Ehrlichs were asking for recovery of the Garden of Eden. It was too late in the Western world, but perhaps possible in Africa under certain conditions. Restoration of pristine nature was fundamental, but in order to fulfil the basic needs of people, agrarian islands were necessary. In the efforts to bring back harmony between


\(^{15}\) This approach, however, was not new. It was featured by J. Huxley in his report from 1970 and was crucial to the criticism of development assistance in the 1960s.

man and nature, the Garden and the wilderness were twin partners. Here lay the challenge for future development assistance, but aid should not be given without conditions. According to the Ehrlich’s, those countries that “were worth saving” and that should get support from the USA should be forced to adopt population schemes designed by their donor (Ellis 1995, p. 262).

“Technology run amok”

Other participants in the debate on the ecological crisis came up with strong criticism of the neo-Malthusians and their story-line of population run amok. One of the leading opponents was Barry Commoner, a scientist with long involvement in the environmental movement. He was particularly concerned with the social and political implications of the neo-Malthusian population control policy, which he characterised as “faintly masked barbarism” and a programme for “political repression.”(Ellis 1995, p. 260).

Commoner and other fellow scientists pointed to a technological root cause of the environmental crisis. Their interpretation centred on a story-line of technology run amok and, unlike the doomsayers, they claimed that the crisis could be solved with quite different means than population control. One place to start was to discuss alternatives to the current international development assistance policy.

In 1968 around seventy scientists from twenty countries met in Virginia, USA, at a symposium on international development and environmental problems: The Ecological Aspects of International Development. The symposium took place in an environmental setting with a strong focus on mistakes and disasters in international development assistance. Investigation of international development aid projects made by the Centre for the Biology of Natural Systems in Washington had revealed that ecological aspects were more or less non-existent in development planning (Norderhaug 1987, p. 30). Harsh criticism was directed towards the industrialised countries for sacrificing environmental values in favour of short-term political and economic gains and for ignoring knowledge about natural conditions in the tropics (Norderhaug 1987, p. 32).

During the symposium, experts with ecological training and representatives of international development agencies were brought together to work out guidelines for an eco-centred approach to development assistance. One main goal was to provide a closer interaction between economic development and conservation. Ideally, economic development and conservation ought to have a common goal, namely: “the rational use of the earth’s resources to achieve the highest quality of living for mankind.”(Dasmann, Milton and Freeman 1973, p.a.) Actually, this was not the case. Economic development emphasised quantitative and materialistic aspects of human lives, while conservation emphasised more qualitative aspects. So far, the contradictions between the two had pervaded international development assistance discussions.

16 Ideas on the recovery narrative and Garden of Eden are elaborated in Merchant 1995, p. 154ff.
17 The expression “technology run amok” is borrowed from Ellis 1995, p. 262.
18 After a conference in Virginia in 1968, representatives of organisations with involvement in economic development and environmentalism were brought together: the World Bank, UNESCO, FAO, UNDP, IUNC, the International Biological Programme and the Conservation Foundation. During a meeting at FAO headquarters in Rome in 1970 the work was intensified and the result was a book edited by Raymond F. Dasmann, John P. Milton and Peter H. Freeman, Ecological Principles for Economic Development.
The participants at the symposium took a critical technological approach when raising the key question: “To what extent have the ecological costs of introducing technology affected the less-developed countries?” Evidence from different projects had shown serious environmental side effects and ecological mistakes. Reports from irrigation projects documented the spread of waterborne diseases, in particular schistosomiasis. Huge dams, for instance on the River Nile, had induced large-scale geophysical changes, which in turn reduced the agricultural potential. In the agricultural sector, the use of pesticides had stimulated the development of resistance and destroyed natural predators. Technological innovation to improve fisheries or animal husbandry caused ecological hazards by interrupting the food chain and affecting host-parasite relationships.

There was little discussion of positive projects. According to the British scientist E. Barton Worthington, success stories were not welcome. Worthington presented a more positive view on the control of the River Nile, focusing on benefits to both mankind and nature. He also suggested that a follow-up of the symposium should discuss the achievements of good planning, but "this was received somewhat coolly." Worthington (1982, p. 179).

Participants at the Virginia symposium pointed at different reasons for the lack of ecological awareness. One reason was the fragmented nature of development assistance policy and the dominance of single disciplines operating in separate spheres.

Much of the assistance which has been given to developing countries has used criteria found within the teacup perimeter of various single disciplines. Within this limited horizon decisions have often been well meaning and seemingly logical, but catastrophic in their ultimate effect on the environment. The danger comes from not realizing that the virtuous activity of giving outside advice often triggers the most profound effects on the environment extending far outside the scope of the single discipline responsible for the original advice. The decisions in fact quite often guarantee failure rather than success. (Farvar and Milton 1972, p. xxii.).

Another reason for the focus on failure was the systemic criticism inherent in the technology-run-amok story-line. When summarising the symposium, Commoner discussed the nature of the failures: Were they random and inevitable in the name of modernisation and progress, or were they consequences of the Western approach to development?

Commoner’s conclusion was that the ecological failures were not accidental or random. On the contrary, ecological misdevelopment reflected "a grave and systematic fault in the overall approach which has thus far guided most international development programs.”(Farvar and Milton 1972, foreword and p. xxii.). Generally the programmes were planned by experts, implemented by experts and sometimes closed down in failure without analysis of the ecological consequences. But why did this failure happen? Was it the "greedy accumulation of wealth" or the "machines we have built"? (Ellis 1995, p. 262). Commoner was convinced that the failure was inherent in modern science and technology. Underdeveloped countries were eager to acquire more of it, but by offering Western science and technology, the North provided “but a rotten rope to a drowning man”.(Farvar and Milton 1972, p. xxiii). The main problem was the reductionism approach taken by modern science, particularly biology. By the substitution of molecular biology for the biology of natural resources, environmental issues like pollution, the

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nitrogen cycle of soil and water, and the growth of algae blooms were pushed into the background.

To avoid environmental degradation and undesirable side-effects in the future, the scientists that met in Virginia in 1968 suggested interdisciplinary planning and integration of ecological considerations with technological, political and social factors. Probably it was possible to reduce the conflict between economic development and conservation if interdisciplinary approaches and methods were taken into account when exploring alternatives at an early stage in the planning for new projects. In this respect educational reforms were needed, for instance the breaking down of departmental barriers at the universities, and more efforts should be put into stimulating problem-oriented training. The underlying idea was to promote better environmental understanding and change the engineering mentality in favour of ecology and the biology of natural resources.

**Development planning: barriers and challenges**

There was consensus at the Virginia symposium on interdisciplinarity and the idea of scientists taking the role of ecological managers or planners. Proper use of science should be used not to conquer the world, but to make it better. What was needed was a holistic view of nature, and new technologies developed in harmony with the whole natural system (Farvar and Milton 1972, p. xxix).

When it came to implementation, the scientists realised that development planning faced barriers of a different character.

Firstly, the concept of development was imprecise and normative. A broad definition would be to describe development as a complex process “of purposeful change in the attitudes, behaviours, and institutions of human societies.” (Farvar and Milton 1972, p. 929). Traditionally, development was understood as economic and technical assistance carried out in the name of modernisation. This idea of development corresponded with the Western set of assumptions about the relationship of man with nature which had been dominant since the Age of Enlightenment. One severe weakness was that the needs of people in the South were neither defined in terms of ecological values, nor were they gendered. According to the scientists at the Virginia symposium, the most important aspect of development was probably to help people to make their own choices about the quality of their lives (Farvar and Milton 1972, p. 952).

Secondly, there were some organisational difficulties. Development assistance was described as a “labyrinth of bilateral and multilateral arrangements” with inadequate organisations and too much complexity (Farvar and Milton 1972, p. 927). To solve the organisational difficulties, international action in terms of coherent plans and support from the United Nations was demanded. International action was necessary to protect the global commons, find a rational use of the biosphere and change people’s attitudes.

Thirdly, there were professional difficulties to overcome. Scientists in the international development community were traditionally trained in disciplines like sociology, political science, economics and biology. They saw the development process through their disciplinary lenses. The means to development were chiefly prescribed by economists and the term ‘development’ was regarded as shorthand for ‘economic development’ (Farvar 20).

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20 See also p. 948 for discussions about a world government.
and Milton 1972, p. 930). The criticism of the dominance of economists was directed against the underlying idea of man as “economic man”. This idea would, hopefully, change. Scientists at the Virginia symposium claimed that “the explosive growth of human populations and technologies, and the new perceptions of man and his environment derived from the behavioural and environmental sciences, have made ‘economic man’ obsolete.” (Farvar and Milton 1972, p. 931). The scientists were in search of “ecological man”, guided by the science of ecology.

Fourthly, difficulties of the political and scientific structure of development should be solved. Criticism was voiced of the short-term development assistance policy thinking, which stimulated fast and visible results. Lynton Caldwell claimed that national leaders did not address the development problems until they arose. It was easier to achieve immediate cure than to support long-term prevention measures which in a short-term perspective seemed more costly (Farvar and Milton 1972, p. 935).

**Eco-centred solutions and international action**

Ecological awareness leads to questioning of goals;
This threatens the performance of some old established roles.
So to raise the human species from the level of subsistence
We have to overcome Covert Political Resistance.
So we should be propagating, without shadow of apology,
A Scientific Discipline of Poleconeology.²¹

The scientists that participated in the Virginia symposium did not question the goal of human betterment, but the traditional means of improvement. The challenge was how to implement development schemes following sound ecological principles. Caldwell claimed: “a premise of an ecological approach to development is that knowledge (facts) may reshape or redefine policy choices (values).”(Farvar and Milton 1972, p. 937). He saw a conflict between helping people to get what the politicians interpreted as necessary and ecological concern aiming at helping people to get what scientists understood as good. By interpreting development as “the application of science and technology to the physical and socio-economic betterment of human life” (Farvar and Milton 1972, p. 937) and stating that development was an ecological process, the way to go was through reconciliation of science and politics. Hence, the relationships between the sciences also had to be altered by turning the planning process upside-down, i.e. by beginning with ecological evaluation and ending with economic cost analysis. Commoner stated:

I suggest that we need to proceed from an evaluation of human needs and desires, and the potential of a given environment to meet them, and then determine what engineering operations, technological processes, and economic resources are needed to accomplish these desires in harmony with the demands of the whole natural system. (Farvar and Milton 1972, p. xxx).

Modern technology could not continue to intrude on nature any longer. In this process, it would be necessary to reconstruct international development assistance and shape new concepts and institutions, both in the North and in the South. In practical life, two strategies were required for implementing science-based policies: short-term adaptive strategies to deal with urgent problems and long-term reconstructive strategies to establish coherent development reforms.

²¹ Quoted from A Ballad of Ecological Awareness by Boulding in Farvar and Milton (ed) 1972, introduction.
The proposed solutions reflected a broad understanding of the world crisis. There was not only an ecological crisis, but also a crisis of belief that could not be met by existing institutions. Further, there were no political doctrines to guide the world out of the accelerating deterioration of the biosphere. However, international efforts to build up institutions outside the nation-state system of political organisation were in their infancy. Treaties, conventions, international law and conferences were under way. Some scientists even spoke of a “world government” - not only to be a planning institution, but above all to be a “world policeman” (Farvar and Milton 1972, p. 940).

International environmental control might be the best practice: “Other disasters will follow unless we recognize the need for international order.”(Farvar and Milton 1972, p. 945). This control could be executed by international organisations in the UN system, by international scientific unions or preferably by the IUCN. However, there would still be problems related to attitudes and values inherent in the concept of the nation states. Politicians were incapable of inducing reasonable behaviour in people and governments because political leadership was assumed to be irrational, in particular in the developing countries. A powerful international leader could be an alternative: “Given the limitations of human intelligence and adaptability, charismatic leadership may be necessary to bring societies through periods of social and technological transition.”(Farvar and Milton 1972, p. 943).

The Virginia symposium set the pace for the ecological crisis story-line in development assistance by its propagation of the alarming ecological situation in the world. One of the busiest figures at the Virginia symposium, Barry Commoner, argued that only ecological knowledge could heal the sick environment, in the developed and in the underdeveloped world. His message got widespread acceptance in a time of growing concern about environmental issues leading up to Earth Day in 1970.

Injustice

A third discourse-coalition emerged in the debate in the late 1960s and early 1970s over the root causes of the ecological crisis, which was also in opposition to the neo-Malthusian focus on population growth. A discourse-coalition of radical intellectuals and Marxist scholars argued that the neo-Malthusian approach suffered from theoretical inconsistency. They established a debate around a story-line of injustice. The German writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger, pointed at the origin of the overpopulation idea. This idea, he claimed, was born in a specific political context at the end of the 1950s when the liberation movements in the Third World became a problem for leaders in the North. The fear of demographic increase in Latin America, Africa and Asia encouraged neo-Malthusian campaigns supporting political ecology, which, according to Enzensberger, was “made in the USA”. The neo-Malthusian campaign suffered from a severe weakness since it did not consider radical interference with the existing capitalist system (Enzensberger 1974, pp. 7-31; Eckersly 1992, p. 130; Pepper 1990, p. 176).

Equity, redistribution and class conflicts were not discussed and without social theories on these issues the ecological crisis story-line and the global notion of “Spaceship Earth” was useless in the struggle for survival. Another serious problem was that discussions were

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22 Caldwell has listed international efforts to take global political responsibility since 1945. Quotation from p. 948.
dictated by fear and the potential dangers of the dying out of species, including the human being. It was still not clear what, from a scientific point of view, qualified as an irreversible environmental catastrophe.

Geographer and Marxist David Harvey had strong objections to the climate in which debates about development and ecology took place. He was critical of the apparently neutral method used by model builders like the Ehrlichs and other neo-Malthusians to analyse the population-resource problem. He claimed that their writings contained strong ideological and political limitations.

The projection of a neo-Malthusian view into the politics of the time appears to invite repression at home and neo-colonial policies abroad. The neo-Malthusian view often functions to legitimate such policies and, thereby, to preserve the position of a ruling elite. Given the ethical neutrality assumption and the dominant conception of scientific method, all a ruling elite has to do to generate neo-Malthusian viewpoints is to ask the scientific community to consider the problems inherent in the population-resources relation. (Harvey 1974, p. 276).

The concepts used by Malthus and adopted by the neo-Malthusians also caused difficulties by not challenging what was meant by subsistence and scarcity of resources. Malthus considered subsistence to be absolute and needs to be chiefly biological. Thus the metaphor of the spaceship followed logically. From a Marxist point of view, subsistence was relative and basic needs were determined socially and culturally. Subsistence changed over time and survival was not only dependent on resources, but on political priorities. Resources are materials in nature to be transformed into useful things, but can only be defined with respect to different stages in development, i.e. technical, cultural and historical. Scarcity is related to something inherent in nature, but another view is to see scarcity as being created by human activity and managed by social organisation. Scarcity has been necessary to keep up the capitalist mode of production.

With reference to these definitions, Harvey gave a statement that made the population-resource problem more complex.

There are too many people in the world because the particular ends we have in view (together with the form of social organization we have) and the materials available in nature that we have the will and the way to use, are not sufficient to provide us with those things to which we are accustomed. (Harvey 1974, p. 272).

On the basis of this statement, Harvey discussed several options. Firstly, it was possible to change the ends and alter the social organization of scarcity. Secondly, it was possible to change the technical and cultural appraisals of nature. Thirdly, received wisdom could be altered and fourthly efforts towards population decrease could be made. When focusing exclusively on the fourth, the neo-Malthusian solution was directed towards maintaining the social structure of a Western elite. From an ecological point of view a “real concern with environmental issues demands that all of these options be examined in relation to each other” (Harvey 1974, p. 273).

The environmental idea: a new turn in Stockholm

When the UN started to plan the international environmental conference in Stockholm in 1972, there were divergent ideas between the South and the North about how to
approach environment and development issues. The Western idea of global institutions to manage natural resources was highly mistrusted in the developing world. The developing-country representatives claimed that the conference (to be held in Stockholm) was being strong-armed into adopting a rich-country view of environmental problems, seeking to impose on them mitigation measures that would only add to the costs of economic development and slow it down.

To avoid a failure in Stockholm, a Preparatory Committee met in Founex in Switzerland in 1971 to discuss the matter with representatives from the South. The World Bank played an important role in the process of "allaying Third World fears about the economic effects of environmental protection policies" and to convince the developing countries that they should attend the Stockholm conference (Adams 1993, p. 37). In Founex the second step was taken toward the "marriage" between development and environment which had been at the centre of the Virginia symposium in 1968. By persuading the delegates from the South that further development should take place within a new environment-and-development discourse and with the promise of giving additional assistance to environmental concern, countries from the South agreed to participate in Stockholm.

In Stockholm, the right to a healthy and productive environment was of major concern. Hence, the conference reflected the environmental discourse of First World countries, namely how to solve environmental problems caused by industrialisation. Less attention was paid to Third World environmental problems. One exception was the session: Environmentalism in natural resource management. Development and conservation, where the participants discussed environmentalism from a development perspective. There were no suggestions as to how to avoid the conflict between environment and development. Only in general terms did the conference state that integrated development planning and rational planning should resolve the potential conflicts between environment and development. Importantly, development was crucial in order to improve the environment in Third World countries and this called for assistance from the industrialised countries, in particular money to pay for environmental protection (Adams 1993, p. 38; Ward and Dubos 1972; Clarke and Timberlake 1982).

There have been discussions about the outcome of the Stockholm conference. A general view has been that the environment-and-development discourse now entered international policy. UN members were forced to think about what they were doing with the environment in their respective countries. The most visible result was the institutionalisation of the environmental idea that took place by the creation of the United Nations Environmental Programme, UNEP, in Nairobi. In UNEP's working programme four issues were mentioned as being of particular importance: integration of environmental concern in the development process, development of environmentally friendly technology, the relationship between industry and environment, and programmes for how to managing natural resources.

Eco-development

The Stockholm conference also represented a new turn in ecological direction by the coining of a new concept. Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of the Stockholm conference and first executive director of UNEP, spoke of eco-development as a new development strategy based on the use of local resources and indigenous knowledge. Two years later, at the Cocoyoc symposium in Mexico on Resource Use, Environment and Development, the environmental debate was given a Third World profile and eco-development was specified as: (1) Local and regional development which follows the laws of nature and takes ecological precautions; (2) technology which takes social, environmental and cultural considerations (Sachs 1979, p. 11).24

The concept of eco-development was adopted as a guiding principle by the UNEP. The primary goal was to achieve ecologically sound development at the local level, followed by increased scientific understanding of ecosystems and stimulation of the creation of new development models.

After the conference in Stockholm and the symposium in Cocoyoc, the concept and the idea of eco-development also spread amongst scientists. Within a few years, research on eco-development had developed in different parts of the world (Sachs 1979, p. 15).25

One of the first proponents of eco-development was Professor Ignacy Sachs at Centre international de recherche sur l'environement et le developpement in Paris. In his book \textit{Stratégies de l'Ecodéveloppement} he formulated strategies for a new way in the development assistance field. The book reflected much of the concerns in environmental and development academic thinking in the 1970s. It has to be understood in a civilisation crisis context with reference to political economy and a story-line of maldevelopment (Sachs 1979, p. 15; Riddell 1981; Adams 1993, pp. 51-56). Lack of redistribution in the world created severe problems in both the industrialised and the non-industrialised world. Neither overdevelopment or overconsumption nor underdevelopment or underconsumption could provide for the well-being of all people. The consequence was lack of well-being for the affluent minority and the poor majority in both worlds. Well-being was understood as the right to enough food and proper nutrition, to live under a decent roof, to have access to education, work and health service and to have a clean and unspoiled environment.

The idea of eco-development emerged within the specific economic set-back of the early 1970s. In spite of rapid economic growth and increased prosperity, the world faced severe problems both socially and environmentally. According to Sachs, traditional development thinking had failed (Sachs 1979, p. 27). The experts in the development field had made methodological mistakes by using apocalyptic and zero-growth perspectives in analysing the development crisis. He rejected the metaphor of "Spaceship Earth", which did not take into account the meaning of outer limits. Limits were not given once and for all. They were political and they depended on how human beings were able to manage the Earth. The zero-growth thesis formulated by the "Club of Rome" was unacceptable in a

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24 Sachs 1979, p. 11.
25 A centre of ecodevelopment was created in Mexico and in Canada the development agency and the Environmental Department set up projects aiming at a deeper understanding of ecodevelopment. But first and foremost ecodevelopment was institutionalized in France with important research at l'Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, la Maison des sciences de l'homme et l'Institut National de Recherche Agronomique.
world dominated by inequality and lack of redistribution between the rich and the poor. Zero-growth would benefit the rich elite and leave the poor in poverty.  

Concern over neo-Malthusian influence in the development debate and the Zero-growth theorists led to alternative discussions on how to solve the development crisis in the Third World. The proponents of eco-development wanted to try to find the middle way between overdevelopment and underdevelopment. The idea of eco-development rested on three pillars: autonomy in decision-making or self-reliance, equity and ecological prudence, i.e. a new symbiosis of man and earth. On the basis of this ideological position the aim was to achieve development without imitating the Western growth model, which led to environmental destruction and kept up social and regional inequality.

Economic growth was necessary, but not in the traditional capitalist way. Eco-development represented "qualitative growth" which aimed at "harmonising social and economic objectives with ecologically sound management" (Sachs 1979, p. 34; Adams 1993, p. 52). This required modification of lifestyle, redistribution and equal economic concentration, resource recycling, conservation measures, new production patterns and planning based on ecological principles and appropriate technology. A main objective was to stimulate participatory planning. Hitherto the majority of people in society had not been able to influence changes in society. Thus participation was not only a goal, but also a means to eco-development: "... the notion of participation in a process of change is central to deeply cherished democratic values...In the world of the future, progress will depend critically upon a general acceptance of the program of change by ordinary people, because it is they who will have to implement it." (Glaeser and Vuasulu, p. 26).

The concept of eco-development did not last in the environment-and-development discourse. By 1980 IUCN, UNEP and WWF had come up with both guidelines for global conservation action and the breaking of new conceptual ground in the World Conservation Strategy, with the concept of sustainable development.

**The World Conservation Strategy**

When the World Conservation Strategy was released in 1980, twenty years had passed since Huxley first produced documentation on the need for better conservation in the tropics. Since then ecological awareness had entered the field of development assistance, but more concrete action was required.

The World Conservation Strategy was an answer to the international call for taking ecological concern in development assistance. Faith in global strategies was strong, as it had been since the Virginia symposium in 1968, but the World Conservation Strategy also saw the need for national participation. The strategy called "for global coordinated efforts backed by will and determination, for concerted action at national and international levels, and for global solidarity to implement its programmes." (WCS 1980, foreword).

As a product of a consultation process involving governments and non-governmental organisations as well as individuals, the strategy reflected compromises and global generalisations, which according to IUCN made it prone to error. However, these

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27 The WCS copy contains no side numbers. The references are made by chapters.
drawbacks were of minor importance, IUCN claimed, in a time when it was urgent to present a consensus of policy on conservation requirements and priorities within the development field. In this respect, the World Conservation Strategy represented a follow-up both of the Virginia conference and the debates about eco-development. To avoid further deterioration of the biosphere, it was urgent to stop the growing gap between a poor majority and an affluent minority consuming the world's resources. The World Conservation Strategy stated: "development and conservation are equally necessary of the resources of our survival and for the discharge of our responsibilities as trustees of natural resources for the generations to come." (WCS 1980, p. I).

The idea of eco-development was no longer valid. One main reason was apparently that the concept of eco-development embraced neither the real environmental problems and the practical politics of global resource management, nor the different theoretical ideas about development. William Adams has claimed that just because of this blandness, the concept was acceptable, but because of the blandness, it also remained marginal to debates about development (Adams 1993, p. 57).

The World Conservation Strategy launched a new concept, sustainable development, and saw conservation as a premise for sustainable development. Development was defined as the modification of the biosphere and the application of human, financial, living and non-living resources to satisfy human needs and improve the quality of human life. Conservation was defined as the management of human use of the biosphere so that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to present generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations (WCS 1980, introduction).

The core issues in the new framework for an international conservation strategy were integration of conservation with development, mixing cure and prevention and focusing on causes as well as symptoms. Every country should form a strategy at the national or sub-national level and focus on the requirements for conservation, take appropriate action and raise environmental consciousness among the public. Thus, the World Conservation Strategy called for policy making based on some agreed international principles, first and foremost by increased ecological attention and anticipatory environmental policies.

Policies that attempt to anticipate significant economic, social and ecological events rather than simply react to them are becoming increasingly necessary for the achievements of several important policy goals: the satisfaction of basic needs, such as food, clothing, sanitation and shelter; the development of a high quality environment; the optimum use of available resources; and the control of pollution and other forms of environmental degradation. (WCS 1980, chapter 9).

The ecological approach was a logical outcome of the environmental turn in the field of development. Scientists had a strong belief in ecological solutions to make the best use of available resources and avoid economic and social damage. The call for ecological concern in development assistance was now formally met by administrative and legislative means.

**Integral environmental planning**

Environmental planning was the key word in the process of taking ecological concern and was considered essential to sustainable development. Environmental planning should follow a scheme including ecosystem evaluation and assessment of environmental effects.
By focusing on ecosystem evaluation, the World Conservation Strategy emphasised the importance of assessing the characteristics of ecosystems. Assessment was important to identify, predict and interpret environmental effects and to ensure that ecological and social information was included with physical and economic information. Further, it was important to make environmental assessment an integral part of the planning process, in line with economic and socio-political assessment, and examine alternative solutions to proposed development projects (WCS 1980, chapter 10).

Theoretically the focus on environmental planning and assessment would lead to better conservation, but a major constraint as regards implementation was the lack of expertise in many developing countries. There was urgent need for more knowledge, in particular in fields such as ecology, hydrology and environmental planning. This could be achieved by giving assistance to training at university level or at other centres of higher education at three levels: professional, technician and user. As regards the expertise, the World Conservation Strategy called for both specialists and generalists with interdisciplinary approaches. Courses should be given to students by Northern expertise, preferably in the students’ own country. At the technical level, it was necessary to give overseas assistance and train people to do field work and to build up cadres of trained personnel in specific countries. Finally, the users in different sectors needed training by extension workers to obtain sustainable and more productive methods. This would probably not be possible without a fight, and the World Conservation Strategy pointed at the importance of explaining to “the more responsive members of the community” the purpose and expected results of conservation measures (WCS 1980, chapter 12).

The World Conservation Strategy took a top-down approach to development planning and blamed the poor people for causing environmental degradation. “In their struggle for food and fuel, growing numbers of desperately poor people find themselves with little choice but to strip large areas of vegetation until the soil itself is washed or blown away.” (WCS 1980, chapter 14; Mugaas 1997, p. 23). The result was degradation of life-support systems and ecological processes. The World Conservation Strategy suggested conservation measures that aimed at restoration of overexploited and degraded living resources. To formulate and implement rehabilitation plans, the Northern expertise should take positions as advisors and demonstrators, but the World Conservation Strategy recommended that traditional knowledge should be revived (WCS 1980, chapter 14). Rural communities had detailed knowledge of the local ecosystems and species, which was necessary when planning for conservation and a sustainable development.

To cope with the global challenge to the environment and development, the World Conservation Strategy recommended legislation measures and international conventions to secure conservation of common living resources and resources located in areas beyond national jurisdiction. At national levels development assistance agencies should also contribute to nature conservation by supporting environmentally sound projects. Three priority areas were set up: reforestation, restoration of degraded environments and protection of critical habitats for marine resources and genetic resources. The development agencies should assist governments in the South by designing cross-sectoral ecologically appropriate policies and by helping the recipient countries to carry out conservation strategies (WCS 1980, chapter 15).
Summary

The environment had become a topic in international development assistance at the end of the 1960s. Scientists representing conflicting discourse-coalitions were in the forefront. Some of them represented neo-Malthusian positions blaming population growth for being the root cause of the ecological crisis. Others blamed Western technology for causing environmental degradation, while a third coalition centred round global injustice. All the three discourse-coalitions saw the ecological challenge facing development assistance policy.

The discourse-coalition representing the story-line of technology run amok led the way in bringing the ecological challenge onto the international development assistance agenda. During the Virginia symposium in 1968 they considered the challenge to be of an institutional character. It was well known in the scientific community that the developing countries faced environmental problems, but there was still lack of political solutions. There were neither institutions to deal with the ecological crisis, nor political doctrines to reverse the deterioration of the biosphere. According to scientists present at the Virginia symposium, the ecological crisis could not be solved without supra-national intervention, like a "world government", or a charismatic leadership.

The report from the Virginia conference, The Careless Technology. Ecology and International Development, was published in 1972 and received much international attention. The same year the first UN conference on the environment took place in Stockholm. In this year the ecological challenge in development assistance was politicised internationally.

In Stockholm the new concept of ecodevelopment was introduced to meet the ecological challenge. The concept gained immediate momentum when environmental issues reached a peak in 1972, but after the 1973 oil crisis environmental issues were pushed into the background. Large aid agencies like the World Bank did little to set a political agenda for analysing environmental problems in the developing countries. The countries in the South still saw environmental assistance as a pressure which might be an obstacle to economic growth. Ecodevelopment principles were difficult to implement and demanded structural changes and political will to break "with Northern insistence to compete on Northern terms." (Adams 1993, p. 56).

The concept of ecodevelopment was replaced by the concept of sustainable development in 1980 when the World Conservation Strategy was published. The World Conservation Strategy was a strategic answer to the ecological challenge in development assistance. International scientists asserted that the ecological crisis would increase if no action was taken. Behind the principles in WCS lies awareness of the complex relation between ecosystems and human intervention as outlined at the Virginia symposium and in similar formulations from the Founex meeting and the Stockholm conference.

According to Adams, the WCS failed to recognise the political nature of the environment-and-development discourse. Like previous documents and documents to come, the WCS was a result of compromises and generalisations, and this often gives them a pragmatic character. However, the WCS established the concept of sustainable development, which came to be the emblematic issue of the environment-and-development discourse for the 1980s. The WCS was also the most concrete answer to the call for ecology in development assistance so far. The ecological challenge was met by administrative and legislative means. It stated that environmental planning was to be the
key to ensuring ecological concern and to making environmental assessments an integral part of the planning process. In this way, the WCS became a catalyst for the ecological awareness that was introduced into development assistance in Norway during the 1980s.
THE ECOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

Development assistance must be directed to an increasing degree towards solving existing environmental problems. A minimum requirement for all development assistance projects, irrespective of the prime objective, is that they do not cause unacceptable degradation of nature. (Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek 1999).

The environmental dimension was absent in Norwegian development assistance until the late 1970s. This was also the case in the other Scandinavian countries, despite the fact that international debates about ecological concern had gone on for more than ten years (SOU 1987, p. 28). The prime concern of development assistance was to give economic and technical aid, and assist in building modern welfare regimes in the developing world. (NORAD 1972, p. 3; Riddell 1987, p. 86; Marglin and Marglin 1990; Villumstad 1995, p. 507). In the 1980s, which have been labelled the crisis decade, the environment was introduced into development assistance planning.

This story attempts to describe how ecology or environmental concern was introduced into development assistance policy in Norway. One simple question will structure the analysis: How did the Norwegian government and NORAD respond to the international call for ecological orientation in development assistance?

Development cooperation and ecology

A decisive step in the history of environmental assistance was taken in 1978. During a visit to Norway in February that year, the Executive Director of UNEP, Mustafa A. Tolba, asked Norwegian authorities about environmental concern in development assistance projects. Did the government inform the recipient countries about the ecological consequences of different projects? Tolba got a negative answer, but the government stressed that from now on it would pay attention to environmental concerns.

The Norwegian Minister of Environment, Gro Harlem Brundtland, rapidly took up the challenge. When speaking to UNEP in October 1978 about the lack of environmental qualities in both planning and implementation in international development assistance, she claimed: “There is still no satisfactory concern for the environment in the planning process. Measures are mostly introduced after damage has already been done.” (NORAD/MoE 1980, p. 3). Brundtland emphasised that in order to achieve a “balanced eco-development process..., integration of environmental-and-development concern” was an important political issue. She proposed to improve legal and regulatory instruments and to discuss environmental considerations at an early stage in the planning process, both in bilateral and multilateral assistance.

The first concrete step towards environmental assistance was taken at a high political level when in 1979 the government decided to establish co-ordinating meetings between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), the Ministry of the Environment (MoE) and NORAD. The meetings resulted in a policy note to the government. The MoFA and the MoE stressed the need for increased environmental activity in development assistance in order to combat environmental degradation and to improve the social and economic
conditions in the poorest developing countries. Thus the two political discourses, environment and development, were linked together. Active Norwegian participation internationally and better Nordic co-operation was to trigger the integration process (NORAD 1981g).

The government approved of the principles and recommendation from the Ministries and formulated a directive with relevance for environmental concern in developing countries. Norwegian development assistance aid policy should concentrate on some key mechanisms:

- stimulating international understanding of the serious global environmental situation
- taking an active part in competence building and increasing administrative capacity to secure long-term natural resource management in the recipient countries, in particular in countries within the bilateral agreements
- giving advice to private enterprises to avoid environmental side effects (NORAD 1982b, p. 37).

The next step in an environmental direction was taken when the MFA, the ME and NORAD decided to develop a study on development assistance and environmental concerns. The report was prepared by forester Arne Dalfelt (NORAD) and biologist Magnar Norderhaug (ME) in 1980 and titled: Development Aid and Ecology: a Statement on Environmental Concerns in Norwegian Assistance. The report was very much influenced by international work like the American governmental report “The Global 2000 Report for the President” and in particular the WCS.28

**The scientists’ tale**

Like many other international scientists, the authors of Development Aid and Ecology were convinced of the important role of ecology in development assistance. An ecological understanding of the interrelation between the natural environment and the human environment would improve the qualitative aspects of assistance projects. “The science of ecology would be the most important science to give the primary explanation of why damage to resources and nature occurs and how it can be prevented.” (NORAD 1981e). Norderhaug had long been concerned about the lack of an ecological way of thinking and had found inspiration in the scientific conclusion at the Virginia conference. Development assistance policy did not seem to realise that natural resource management could have serious long-term environmental effects.

In the Development Aid and Ecology report the concept of ecology was given a status above nature conservation. Conservation in development assistance was directed towards natural resource management and not related, as was usual in the North, to tourism, wilderness and conservation of pristine nature. “Nature conservation has to be part of development assistance politics, not to give a minority recreation facilities, but to secure the basis of existence for the majority”. (NORAD 1981e, p. 41ff.; NORAD 1981k). This conclusion supported the relevance of using the concept of ecology and of accepting the idea of close interrelation between man and his natural surroundings.

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28 Dalfelt was at the time on leave from NORAD and was Secretary General of the World Wildlife Fund. Norderhaug was a biologist working as a nature conservation inspector in the ME.
Dalfelt and Norderhaug constituted a discourse-coalition of scientists that saw technology as the root cause of the ecological crisis. The use of modern technology had changed ecosystems to an extent that the natural system could break down and cause “the so-called eco-catastrophe.” References were made to traditional Norwegian development assistance sectors such as agriculture, forestry, industry, fishery, construction, health and energy. Technological effects had hitherto affected ecosystems in the temperate zones more than in the tropics, but Dalfelt and Norderhaug claimed that this was more bearable in the North than in the South, where the ecosystems were presumed to be more fragile. Technical assistance from the North was transferred uncritically, often because the donors did not have sufficient knowledge about ecology and the natural environment in the tropics.

An overview of projects in the tropics revealed severe environmental effects. The Development Aid and Ecology report gave examples of destruction of local fisheries off the coast of Egypt caused by a reduction in the transportation of nutrients after the construction of the Assuan dam. Cases of malaria in Panama had increased considerably after the construction of the Bayano dam as the new and more productive species of fish ate the indigenous fish that lived on the mosquito larva (NORAD/MoE 1980, p. 65).

With ecology as the guiding star, Dalfelt and Norderhaug recommended general guidelines in order to single out projects with possible negative effects on the environment. The guidelines prescribed evaluation of predictable direct or indirect environmental effects by using environmental assessment. By suggesting environmental assessment the Norwegian experts followed a procedure which had occurred internationally since the U.S adopted the National Environmental Policy Act in 1969. Gradually environmental assessment was put forward by international research and adopted by development agencies like the World Bank and USAID. Obviously the main purpose was to find win-win solutions favouring both environmental protection and the financial costs (NORAD 1982c, p. 17; Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning 1999, p. 189ff.).

Environmental problems, however, could not always be predicted. The Development Aid and Ecology report concentrated on how to register effects on natural ecosystems caused by development projects. A challenge was to decide if damage was acceptable or if alternative solutions would reduce the negative effects. In order to avoid conflicts between the donor and the recipient the report suggested stronger expert participation. Experts with specific ecological competence should assess both local and global ecological consequences before conclusions were made about the achievements of certain projects (NORAD/MoE 1980, p. 65ff.).

According to the Development Aid and Ecology report, NORAD and other development planners involved should follow up and make a continuing evaluation of projects according to principles agreed upon by donors and recipients. Data could then be collected for later use and serve as sources for long-term environmental assessments (ibid. p. 71ff.). Ecological integration was to follow certain principles (see below) and to be a concern for all development agents in Norway, not only NORAD. The principles were rooted in the eco-development ideal of reconciliation between the environment and development.
Principles for a new orientation in development assistance:

1. In the future, qualitative aspects regarding social progress and long-lasting welfare must be assessed.

2. When planning and doing feasibility studies it was important to build upon knowledge about the vulnerability of tropical ecosystems. Transfer of experience from temperate climate zones was irrelevant in the tropics.

3. Many developing countries experience over-exploitation of natural resources and ecosystems. Understanding of the natural limits and the nature of ecosystems in the recipient countries was necessary.

4. Environmental assistance should be directed towards both the natural and the human environment.

5. The donors must break the principle of non-interference and take responsibility together with the recipient when discussing environmental effects in developing projects.

6. Ecological integration in development assistance was crucial if Norway was to maintain responsibility for a sensible global natural resource management.

7. Norwegian business and trade in the Third World must avoid depletion of natural resources and take environmental responsibility (ibid. 82ff.).

The Development Aid and Ecology report went further than proposing principles and implementation measures such as competence building and integration of environmental concern. According to Dalfelt and Norderhaug, the “recipient orientation” might be an obstacle to environmental assistance and their report introduced a modification of the “recipient orientation” principle in the direction of co-responsibility.

Despite the suggested principles for an environmental orientation in development assistance, the main challenge was to find practical organisational solutions and to avoid ad hoc treatment of ecological matters. Routines and systematic work adapted to the structure of NORAD were recommended. With the seven principles as a backdrop, the Development Aid and Ecology report gave practical advice about how to integrate ecological concern within the NORAD system. It was important first to encourage closer co-operation between the ME and NORAD by giving the ME the role of expert agent with obligatory comments upon ecological aspects of projects. Secondly, NORAD had to work out a policy document that should serve as a guideline for environmental assistance. Thirdly, Dalfelt and Norderhaug recommended adoption of new administrative measures, and suggested the establishment of an expert department within NORAD to develop environmental policy guidelines, to ensure the quality of the work and to give necessary internal and external advice. Practical tools for revealing local and preferably also global environmental damage would be checklists and environmental assessment.

“Norway May Tighten Its Rules on Foreign Aid”

The Development Aid and Ecology report was a starting point as regards the official debate on environmental concerns in development assistance. The debates, however, were closely related to Norway’s wish to arouse international environmental consciousness. From a global perspective, Norway was in the periphery, but Norwegian authorities and experts held the necessary competence that could be relevant to natural resource
management in developing countries. Competence was important since most countries in the Third World had neither adequate environmental nor administrative knowledge. On the other hand, Norwegian development assistance was rooted in the principle of recipient orientation and might be in conflict with the recipient countries' own priorities. As we have seen, environmental concerns had not been a priority in most developing countries (NORAD 1981f; Sachs 1999, p. 28f.).

In order to avoid mismanagement of natural resources in the South, the Norwegian government suggested avoiding participation in development aid projects that could harm the partner country's environment. “In the future Norway should not participate in projects which could cause comprehensive or long-lasting damage to the environment and natural resources of developing countries.” (The New York Times 1981; NORAD 1982c). The suggestion of non-participation received international attention. In the United States, a note in the New York Times, “Norway May Tighten Its Rules on Foreign Aid”, gave a brief summary of the Norwegian discussion.

The idea of taking environmental concern aimed at curing the general effects of global foreign aid-supported projects in the less-developed countries. From the Norwegian government’s point of view, the problems were related to the concentration of new industries around the cities. A result was accelerating rural poverty. The suggested policy was also related to the official wisdom that considered environmental degradation to be a result of poverty. Damage to the environment and natural resources hit the poorest countries and the poorest population groups hardest (NORAD 1981k; NORAD 1982b).

At a follow-up of the Stockholm conference in Nairobi in 1982, the Norwegian Minister of Environment, Wenche Frogn Selloeg, stressed the importance of giving assistance to build up environmental competence in the developing countries. Competence building could be an appropriate way to reduce the number of environmentally unsound projects.

The focus on competence was in accordance with priorities in the developing world. Ten years after the Stockholm conference in 1972 that revealed conflicts due to the controversies between the rights-of-nature focus in the North and the focus on social justice in the South, the developing countries demanded environmental action and wanted to know how to conserve their natural resources. In a speech held during the Nairobi conference, the president of Kenya, Daniel Arap Moi, appealed for help from donor countries to avoid depletion of unused natural resources. It was the responsibility of the international community, he claimed (NORAD 1982c, p. 5).

**A Nordic initiative: a joint report**

The Norwegian focus on environmental assistance around 1980 reflected the UN environment-and-development discourse. Both the population pressure in developing countries and the way industrialised countries used technology caused over-exploitation of natural resources in the South. This situation forced the donor countries to discuss their assistance models. In the 1980s the great challenge was to develop the qualitative aspects so as to assure sustainable economic and social development. Norway ought to actively contribute to seeing that ecological concern got the required attention and priority in the international community. To be heard internationally, Norway suggested that the Nordic
countries should co-operate in preparing a joint platform on ecology and development issues for the UNEP special session in Nairobi in 1982 (NORAD 1981k; NORAD 1982c).

After a Nordic meeting on environmental assistance held in Copenhagen, Norway made a note on how to approach the other Nordic countries in this matter. The Norwegian government recommended the setting up of a Nordic working group. The group should be organised by the Joint Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Development Assistance Questions. During the meeting in Helsinki in October 1981, the committee members agreed upon the Norwegian recommendations. They established a Working Group with members from the Nordic development agencies, the Ministries of Environment and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The Swedish Agricultural University provided secretariat facilities (NORAD 1982c, p. 36f.; NORAD 1981j).

The task of the Working Group was to make a draft of the state of the environment in some developing countries with specific reference to core environmental problems as outlined by the UN system. The core problems were regarded to be damage to the tropical forests, overgrazing, soil erosion, desertification and pollution. In order to improve the social and economic conditions of people in developing countries, it was crucial to ensure better long-term natural resource management that was founded on ecological principles.

The understanding of the state of the environment in the South made by the Nordic Working-Group were more or less in accordance with views presented in the Norwegian Development Aid and Ecology report from 1980. According to the Working-Group there was substantial pressure on the environment in the Third World today and it was increasing in a disquieting manner. The environment in tropical and sub-tropical areas was ecologically vulnerable and far more vulnerable and often far more sensitive than in the temperate areas. Long-term environmental protection and commitments aimed at improving fundamental human needs were regarded to be two sides of the same issue. There was a close interrelation between the environment and development. If the environment was neglected, the very basis of further economic and social welfare was undermined. Assistance to the developing countries was a question both of quantity and of quality (SOU 1982, p. 61).

During the preparation of the report the Norwegian government suggested that the Group should follow recommendations from the OECD and its Environmental Committee, which had already prepared a working paper on global environment and resource problems. From USAID experiences it was stressed that:

- Environmental assessments should be concise and analytical, rather than long and encyclopaedic.
- Secondary environmental impacts and long-term effects of assistance projects should be analysed.
- Environmental assessments ought to be carried out with participation from the recipient country.
- Environmental analysis and monitoring should be integrated into the project implementation phase.

Further action should include:
The Ecological Challenge

- the provision of special technical and other assistance to help developing countries evaluate their own resource and environmental problems and develop effective policies, strategies and institutional capacities for dealing with them

- the development of general criteria to assist in designing specific types of environmentally sensitive projects in order to eliminate or minimise environmental impacts

- the convening of seminars and training courses for the staff of aid agencies both on environmental problems and on procedures for solving them (NORAD 1981m).

The Nordic initiative did not represent any radical changes in the Norwegian development assistance, but continued to stress the importance of competence, environmental assessment and capacity building, which only had minor implications vis-à-vis the recipient orientation. If the recipient countries did not make the environment a priority, at least the donor could try to influence them by providing environmental knowledge. In most developing countries lack of competence was a primary obstacle for identifying environmental problems and for finding adequate solutions to them.

The Nordic report followed an international trend by focusing on the interrelation between the environment and development. The issue had attracted scientists and policy makers, but not sufficiently to influence practical development work. There was consensus in the group about how to integrate environmental considerations into development activities, but difficulties arose when development agencies were to convert principles and guidelines into concrete work. Practical measures suggested by the Working Group comprised checklists for different types of projects, environmental assessments, control and follow-up during the project period, and activities aiming at direct improvement of the environment (SOU 1982, p. 59p.; NORAD 1982c).

Ecologically responsible management of the Earth

The Nordic effort to encourage an ecologically sound assistance policy continued in the 1980s and went parallel with the work going on in the World Commission on the Environment and Development (Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek 1999). Senior officials from the Nordic development and environment authorities worked out a consultative report to the WCED on environmental assistance. The work was coordinated by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The objective of the report was “to contribute towards an ecologically responsible and future-oriented management of the earth’s natural resources and life support systems, as a basis for positive social and economic development.” (ibid., p. 1). The world still faced mismanagement of natural resources and in spite of ten years’ efforts global environmental problems had become more serious. From a Nordic point of view too little attention was paid to the interrelations between ecological, social and economic systems.

The Nordic officials saw the WCED as a political expression of a process that had gone on since 1972. The WCED challenged the way problems relating to the environment and development had previously been solved. Further, the commission asked for co-operative changes at the global level and better individual and institutional understanding. Thus, to the Nordic officials the suggestions made by the WCED seemed

29 One Nordic report that dealt with environment and development was written in 1984: "The Nordic countries and the global environment".
promising and constructive, but it was of great importance to continue to be precise and action-oriented. Previous reports suffered from lack of practical significance, like the Brand Report from 1969 and the World Conservation Strategy in 1980 (ibid., p. 3).

The Nordic countries gave high priority to environmental assistance and wanted to present different aspects of the problems dealt with by the World Commission. They strongly supported the ongoing work, which they hoped could turn the development process away from the traditional development thinking that was too oriented towards economic growth and technological solutions to environmental problems. At present the “balance in natural systems, ... was out of balance” (ibid. p. 14) and “If the natural resource base is destroyed, purely technical and economic assistance will never be anything more than temporary solutions.” (ibid. p. 2).

The Nordic senior officials drew up three objectives for their work:

− First, to re-examine the critical issues of environment and development and to formulate innovative, concrete and realistic action proposals to deal with them.

− Second, to strengthen international cooperation on environment and development and to assess and propose new forms of cooperation that can break out of existing patterns and influence policies and events in the direction of needed change.

− Third, to raise the level of understanding and commitment to action on the part of individuals, voluntary organizations, institutions and governments. (ibid. p. 3).

When discussing the nature of development, the Nordic officials adopted the understanding of development that was expressed in the World Conservation Strategy. Social and economic development was essentially a question of ecology and biological productivity. “The maintenance of the functions of the biological systems and the naturally determined conditions for biological productivity should be one of the main issues for international politics and cooperation in the years to come.” (ibid. p. 5).

This argument was related to three dangers. Two of them had been debated for some years, while the third was new. (1) Population growth occurred at the expense of biological productivity; (2) over-exploitation of natural resources was in conflict with the basic-need strategy laid down in the international development community since the 1970s; (3) the pressure on natural resources was related to consumption patterns. Nations with low population growth and high consumption could cause greater ecological damage than nations with high population growth and a low consumption pattern.

The focus on material consumption revealed a comprehensive understanding of environmental and development problems that broke with the story-line of population run amok. When discussing consumption patterns, the Nordic senior officials demanded new strategies and solutions and questioned the traditional growth model. The truism of economic growth, understood as short-term profit maximisation, should be examined in a new context. Knowledge about the extent of the complex problems and the consequences had revealed the need for long-term thinking to better understand the relation between causes and effects. However, day-to-day problems apparently got more attention, and political priority was not given to environmental matters until the negative effects were urgent or irreversible. Two issues of particular relevance were how consumption of scarce natural resources directly and indirectly caused environmental problems and how pressure on natural resources due to specific consumption patterns influenced and were influenced by different countries’ social, economic and administrative systems (ibid. p. 9).
Environmental integration

One important question raised by the Nordic development officials was how to implement appropriate strategies for taking environmental concern. In the developing countries an obstacle was lack of institutions to deal with environmental problems. This fact made it difficult for the recipient countries to identify needs and strategies and for the donor countries to integrate environmental concern in development planning without breaking the principle of recipient orientation. Other difficulties were lack of coherent international strategies in development planning and insufficient scientific competence in environmental disciplines and management. According to the Nordic senior officials, the solution in the years to come was to integrate environmental concern into all levels and sectors of planning and intensify competence building (ibid. p. 11f.). The Nordic countries had years of experience in management of their own natural resources and had learnt lessons which could be transferred to developing countries. Key mechanisms would be environmental planning and regulation.

The Nordic development agencies were advised by the senior officials to integrate environmental consideration in their policy. If not, assistance might be a waste of resources and, even worse, have serious negative environmental effects. “A minimum requirement for all development assistance projects, irrespective of the prime objective, is that they do not cause unacceptable degradation of nature.”(ibid. p. 15). Several principles were outlined. Firstly, development assistance should support the administrative and professional capacity in natural resource management and assist in preparing national strategies. Secondly, it was necessary to provide support for scientific projects aiming at prevention and cure of environmental damage. Thirdly, assistance should encourage environmental impact assessment and evaluation measures. Achievement of environmental integration in development assistance involved participation of several actors. The grass-root, national agencies and global institutions had to work actively at different levels to make their ideas about environmental concerns work in real life.

Nordic scientists and bureaucrats responded to the ecological challenge in a realistic and pragmatic way and came up with policy mechanisms aiming at international cooperation, better planning, regulation and management of natural resources. Operationalisation aspects stood in the background. At the policy level the Norwegian and Nordic reports influenced the debate among politicians and development bureaucrats. The Nordic countries gave priority to environment-and-development matters in the years before the Brundtland-Report was released.

Objections and adjustments – the case of NORAD

The Development Aid and Ecology report and the Nordic report, Environment and Development Assistance, were decisive for the ecological orientation in NORAD.30 They were met with some objections, however. In general NORAD did not have the necessary administrative capacity, competence or routines for taking environmental concerns. Another problem was related to the “recipient orientation”. It would be difficult to impose environmental assistance on countries that did not make the environment a priority. A third objection was related to the international notion of a coming ecological crisis.

30 The following paragraphs are based on NORAD (1981b) and ibid. (1981c).
NORAD representatives were critical of the crisis narrative that dominated international ecological reports and argued that it was difficult to predict if and when a serious environmental catastrophe would occur. Due to this difficulty NORAD would not know what kind of environmental assistance was to be given.

Despite some objections, NORAD considered the Development Aid and Ecology report to be valuable for the future work. NORAD representatives were positive to the Norwegian report for having avoided the apocalyptic pitfall, and for the description of the state of environment in the developing countries that focused on fragile ecosystems, rapid population growth and lack of environmental concerns when building up modern industries. NORAD representatives agreed with the conclusion in the Development Aid and Ecology report that NORAD ought to pay much more attention to ecological concern.

When it came to the recommendations for incorporating ecological aspects into the NORAD administration of assistance, more discussions were needed. Dalfelt and Norderhaug launched ambitious and in some cases detailed suggestions, which were too extensive and could not immediately be transferred to the NORAD organisation. NORAD was particularly sceptical to add-on processes, like the suggested establishment of a separate ecology/natural resource management unit. According to Dalfelt, ecology was the only science to give genuine explanations of how environmental damage occurred, and the only science to say how damage could be prevented. If a separate unit was impossible, NORAD should at least employ one ecological expert to screen project proposals. NORAD did not want to go that far either, but wanted to leave the ecological responsibility with each executive officer (NORAD 1981g).

Even if the Development Aid and Ecology report was too ambitious at the time, ecology was NORAD’s “bad conscience”. Bilateral assistance of an environmental character was limited. NORAD referred to plantation of forest related to rural development in Sri Lanka and Kenya. In Sri Lanka the aim was to restrict the flooding and silting of power plants in two rivers and to reconstruct eroded areas. In Kenya forest plantation was part of a research project for the conservation of vegetation and for the information and reconstruction of forest plantation schools. In the early 1980s there were no other plans for additional bilateral assistance to environmental protection, but ecological concern was to be integrated in ongoing planning processes in the relevant departments in NORAD. In bilateral assistance, the environmental factor should be on an equal footing with economic, social and administrative considerations (NORAD 1981d; NORAD 1981d; NORAD 1982g).

The advent of the Nordic report gave even more weight to the debate on environmental concerns in development assistance. NORAD supported most of the recommendations in the Nordic report. The recommendations comprised checklists, environmental assessment, follow-up procedures, environmental strategy work, competence building and direct environmental activities like combating desertification, recovery of forests and conservation of genetic resources. The Nordic report also led to a focus on closer co-operation between the development sector and the environmental sector.

One recommendation, however, broke radically with one of the core principles in Norwegian development assistance policy: the “recipient orientation”. The Nordic report recommended mutual responsibility between donor and recipient for taking
environmental concern. At this stage in the environment-development process, NORAD did not want to urge the recipient countries to apply for specific environmentally related projects. This was in accordance with the governmental view. Environmental assistance should not conflict with the priorities in the recipient country. Assistance should be limited to support strategies and competence building in accordance with the recipient’s own needs and policy. Competence building had become a priority in many developing countries after the UN conference in Nairobi in 1982 (NORAD 1982e; NORAD 1982f).

Environmental concern in practice

NORAD responded to the governmental signal to take environmental concern by discussing of administrative and organisational adjustments in close co-operation with the MFA and the ME. A Reference Group with actors from both ministries and NORAD set out to prepare the strategic work for taking environmental concern (NORAD 1982g). Since most of NORAD’s activity would have consequences for the natural environment, the prime and direct aim of environmental assistance should be to make qualitative improvements of development assistance by minimising the negative environmental consequences. The long-term aim would be the recovery of the natural environment in developing countries and the focus would not only be on economic and social factors.

The strategic work towards environmental assistance was carried out step by step. Firstly, environmental concern should consistently be integrated in all development planning. During the initial phase of environmental assistance planning, NORAD's work was concentrated to the Reference Group for environment and development. When integration of environmental concern had been achieved in the different NORAD departments, the Reference Group would be closed down. Then external resources should be involved to analyse the environmental consequences of assistance projects. Secondly, there was a strong focus on how to build up competence among NORAD staff, both on the intellectual and on the practical level. Thirdly, it was important to increase the environmental competence in the recipient countries in order to ensure demand for environmental assistance understood as improvements of natural resources.

In order to increase their internal competence, NORAD first established a short course that aimed at increasing the general knowledge about environmental problems and illuminating how development projects could have severe effects on the environment. A second course had a theoretical focus on problems related to different ecosystems and to sectors where Norway traditionally held high competence, like forestry, agriculture, water and energy. Internal and external experts gave introductions over three days. Among them were Dalfelt and Norderhaug, researchers from the University of Oslo, the Agricultural University of Norway and the Norwegian Institute of Water Research (NIVA).

There was a positive response to the course for giving better understanding of environmental problems in general, but the NORAD participants were sceptical as regards the theoretical approach. What was needed was a practical approach and knowledge about environmental work in developing countries and their management routines, and better knowledge about the environmental work done by international organisations.

In NORAD’s view, all staff in Oslo and at the representations should have training in identifying environmental problems that generally affected countries in the developing
world. The best way of doing this was by internal seminars followed by relevant literature. In the long run, environmental training ought to be part of the preparation course given to all staff going abroad. A general environmental orientation could be given to newly employed people. The next step would be a course with focus on operative aspects like methods for analysing environmental consequences, checklists to follow when planning assistance projects, the making of terms of reference, and training in working groups. This model aimed at stimulating the staff's ability to implement environmental concern in specific projects (NORAD 1983).

Besides finding methods to increase competence, NORAD saw two other alternatives for directing environmental assistance in the future: either to set aside a certain amount for environmental issues or to incorporate environmental concern in development assistance. In the end NORAD chose both, and still does (NORAD 1982e).

The Special Grant for the Environment and Development was introduced in 1984. “The ultimate objective was to integrate environmental considerations into ordinary existing aid channels, and the Grant was meant to have a catalytic effect towards this aim.” (ECON 1995, p. 69). Evaluation of the Special Grant has revealed that the Grant succeeded in supporting projects aiming directly at environmental improvements, but did not stimulate cross-sectoral integration. Since a large share of the fund was allocated to IUCN or multilateral assistance, the Grant stimulated neither learning nor competence building within NORAD.

Another specific grant that was also established in 1984 was the Grant for Sahel-Sudan-Ethiopia (the SSE programme). The programme was motivated by environmental concern from the beginning. The SSE programme was put into operation by the Ministry for Development Cooperation, which NORAD was part of as an internal directorate from 1984 to 1989, but the administration was handed over to non-governmental organisations. The immediate background for initiating the SSE programme was the famine in Africa. The Sahel was also ravaged by famine in the early 1970s, but even though experts had then identified the main causes to be drought, poverty and environmental degradation, the crisis hit even harder 15 years later. The advice given by the North had not been the right advice. As admitted by the World Bank: “we...have failed in Africa, along with everybody else.” (Timberlake 1986, p. 8). Norwegian development assistance set out to improve local food production, and to build up ecological natural resource management systems (ECON 1995, p. 73ff; NORAD 1991; Villumstad 1995, p. 519p.).

Incorporation of environmental concern more generally was done by including descriptions and analysis of environmental challenges in all country programmes and regional programmes. Until the mid 1990s, however, these descriptions were not coherent. One obstacle was lack of environmental priorities, particularly in the poorest recipient countries.

The political discourse of environment-and-development

The political decision to take environmental concern was officially formulated in White Paper 36 (1984-95) by the Kåre Willoch Government. There was consensus about the future direction: to ensure economic, social and political welfare in developing countries, primarily in the poorest countries, and in the long run minimise dependence. New
priorities were environmental or ecological matters, and women (MoDA 1984, p. 3104ff; Villumstad 1995, p. 509; Stokke 1995, p. 527).

The immediate background to taking environmental concern was the ecological crisis as outlined in international, national and Nordic reports. 31 The crisis scenario was a threat to international stability and peace, and in the early 1980s the crisis was reinforced by the near collapse in Africa. 32 The driving cause behind Africa’s crisis was, according to experts such as Lloyd Timberlake and Lester Brown, “environmental bankruptcy.” The breakdown could “only be repaired by development which is ‘sustainable’, which takes from the land only as fast and as much as the land can provide, which puts back into the land as much as it takes from it.” (Timberlake 1986, p. 10).

From Spaceship Earth to Patient Earth

Much has been written about the African crisis, its causes and effects. According to a spokesman for the UN Office for Emergency Operations in Africa, “Africa’s biggest problem is too many people going around the continent with solutions to problems they don’t understand. Many of these solutions are half-baked...”, or as stated by other critics, “Africa is dying because in its ill-planned, ill-advised attempt to ‘modernise’ itself it has cut itself in pieces.” (Timberlake 1986, p.8f).

Of relevance to us is that what the North learnt from the crisis undoubtedly made a strong impression on the Willoch government. The visualisation of the crisis in the media and written documentation of the failure of donor schemes revealed a huge gap between political visions and practical reality. The ecological crisis was no longer a political or scientific notion that governed policy-making. It was given a face by the media of hungry and dying children in Ethiopia, Sudan, or other hard-hit countries. A visit to Sahel made by the first Minister of Development, Reidun Brusletten, was also decisive (Ruud 2002).

The ecological orientation in development assistance reflects the environmental discourse at the beginning of the 1980s. The metaphor changed from Spaceship Earth to Patient Earth. The Earth was like a sick man who needed urgent treatment to be cured. The metaphor was used to illustrate an ecological catastrophe with reference to drought in Sahel, flooding in Bangladesh, desertification, logging in the rain forests and erosion. Evidence of a very serious situation was shown by the media and by experts. Action was needed to restore the ecological equilibrium and to save the global commons before it was too late (NORAD 1982c, pp. 2-7).

The ecological crisis that hit the Earth, and Africa in particular, directed the governmental understanding of environmental concerns. The core issues of development assistance with environmental relevance were: desertification, deforestation, water scarcity, reduction of species and toxic chemicals. The government stated that in order to solve these problems, “Norwegian development assistance must contribute to restoring the ecological balance and creating new livelihoods.” (MoDA 1984, p. 115). The mechanisms to be used would be the development of natural resource management

31 See for instance Independent Commission on International Development Issues which published

"North-South - A Programme for Survival in 1980. The programme demanded a reassessment of the notion of development and called for a new economic relationship between North and South.

32 Timberlake 1986. (Africa in crisis)
strategies, competence building, environmental assessments and integration of environmental concern at an early stage in all relevant projects. (ibid., p. 104).

The ecological focus was reinforced by the Brundtland government in the supplement White Paper 34 (1986-87), which was highly influenced by the ongoing work in the World Commission on Environment and Development (MoDA 1986). The Brundtland government announced a shift in environmental assistance policy from a story-line of conservation to one of sustainable development.

The supplement White Paper was discussed in Parliament in January 1987, and the *Our Common Future* was published in April. White Paper 34 represented continuity in core issues, principles and the political direction already taken in Norwegian development assistance. The Brundtland government stressed that environmental and resource issues should now be given more weight. The objective would be to ensure economic growth in the recipient countries, but growth should be rooted in the principle of sustainable development (NORAD 1986, p. 30; MoDA 1986, p. 72p). The Brundtland government set out:

− to support national and international strategies aiming at ecologically sustainable development
− to consider long-term natural resource management and environmental concern in projects and programmes concerning economic and social development, particularly within the energy, agricultural and water management sectors
− to find funding for institutions and competence building in Third World countries
− to integrate environmental concern in development projects and programmes
− to set up special projects within environmental protection and natural resource management and focus on pilot projects that can give the necessary experience and create synergy effects
− to link natural resource management, assistance for women, culture, health and family planning, and support for research on tropical and sub-tropical eco-systems and to pay attention to the interplay between human beings and their natural environment (MoDA 1986, p. 73).

A study of what was actually said about mechanisms to achieve environmentally sustainable development shows that the suggested means of implementation had not changed since the early 1980s. The government continued to declare the need for competence, environmental strategies, long-term management of natural resources and integration.

However, the integration mechanism was given more weight and more concrete content. The ambition to integrate environmental concern in development assistance called for increased cross-sectoral co-operation. A Contact Committee was established with representatives from the Ministry of Development Cooperation and the Ministry of the Environment. In 1986 the Committee presented a strategy called *Environmental Protection and Development Assistance - A Strategy for Norwegian Environmental Protection Work in Developing Countries*. (Skjønsberg 2000, p. 13). It listed four basic guidelines, which were basically in line with governmental recommendations: the integration of environmental concern in projects with possible ecological impacts, the
systematic use of environmental assessment, the development of particular environmental programmes, and internal competence building.

The *Environmental Protection and Development Assistance* document was well received by some key actors in the development field. Some even spoke of the Strategy as a milestone or a breakthrough for the ecological dimension, and a necessary platform for further work. However, what was to be seen in the future was how to implement the guidelines. Magnar Norderhaug pointed to a lack of more concrete ecological guidelines. Practical follow-up guidelines were crucial to the fulfilment of environmental integration. Evidently these did not materialise, apart from the first environmental assessment manual being completed in 1988. In general the status of the *Environmental Protection and Development Assistance* document was unclear and it does not seem to have been applied as an action-oriented strategy (NORAD 1984; ECON 1995, p. 41).

**Summary**

In 1969 the biologist Mangar Norderhaug pointed out the need for ecological concern in development assistance. The Norwegian government did not pay attention to ecology until ten years later. Ecological awareness was partly raised as a result of the green radicalism that took place during the 1970s, and partly because of the direct request that came for the UNEP in 1978. Gro Harlem Brundtland, then Minister of the Environment, made a quick follow-up. She stated the need for legal and regulatory instruments. The government involved two scientists, Magnar Norderhaug and Arne Dalfelt, who were well informed about the ecological challenge and the international discussion about taking environmental concern in development assistance. They came to constitute a minor discourse-coalition that centred on the story-lines of population and technology run amok framed within the apocalyptic discourse of a coming ecological crisis.

The report made by Dalfelt and Norderhaug, *Development Aid and Ecology: a Statement on Environmental Concerns in Norwegian Assistance*, was the first document dealing with this topic. It was followed by Nordic initiatives involving not only scientists, but also development practitioners. The discourse-coalition asking for environmental concern was then extended to include development practitioners or professionals. Their core suggestions for implementation measures were better planning and environmental management. This could be effected by introducing environmental assessment, increasing environmental competence and raising capacity in the South. In addition environmental integration in all development activity was considered to be a long-term goal.

NORAD followed the discussions stimulated by the Norwegian and Nordic work. The environmental competence within the organisation was weak and NORAD agreed that environmental concern should be taken. Despite some objections, amongst others the objection to establishing a separate environmental unit, NORAD set out to increase its internal environmental competence. In addition, specific environmental measures like the Special Grant for the Environment and Development and the SSE programme were introduced.

The political decision to take environmental concern was officially formulated in the mid-1980s. The government's intentions and implementation measures were elaborated in two major White Papers, No 36 (1984-85) and No 54 (1986-87). The politicising of environmental assistance was reinforced by the crisis in Africa, which also strengthened
the impact of the apocalyptic or environmental catastrophe discourse that had influenced the environmental debate since the 1960s. The political intentions formulated by the Willoch government were directed towards classical conservation matters such as desertification, deforestation and water scarcity. All these environmental problems were considered to be acute in the Sahel area. The suggested means of implementation were meant to solve the most acute effects of the ecological crisis. According to the Government, relevant measures would be to develop environment-friendly resource management strategies, to introduce environmental assessments, and to build up competence.

After the shift of government from Willoch to Brundtland, the political aim of including environmental concern in development assistance was reinforced. The political intentions were influenced by the work going on in the WCED. The government stressed that environmental concern in development assistance should support ecologically sustainable development. In this way the Brundtland government took a more comprehensive approach to environmental assistance, and treated the issue on a more aggregated level than the previous government. By taking a wider approach than the conservation story-line, the government presented environmental assistance as part of the new discourse of sustainable development. The suggested means of implementation did not differ from those of the previous government, but the Brundtland government gave more weight to environmental integration as the ultimate goal of environmental assistance.
3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Over the course of this century, the relationship between the human world and the planet that sustains it has undergone a profound change. The rate of change is outstripping the ability of scientific disciplines and our current capabilities to assess and advise. It is frustrating the attempts of political and economic institutions, which evolved in a different, more fragmented world, to adapt and cope. It deeply worries many people who are seeking ways to place those concerns on the political agendas. (Hinrichsen 1987 p. 4).

In our collective memory, the Brundtland Report represents a milestone in environment and development matters. The Brundtland Report was not an innovative agent, but it made the idea of sustainable development become the central goal of environment-and-development politics. It gave weight to the political process of taking environmental concern in development assistance. Philosopher Arne Næss has claimed: “Thanks to the Brundtland Report, the eco-political argumentation has been raised to a higher level…Now, when ‘all’ politicians claim to have (moderately) green colours, the debate can be made more efficient.” (Lafferty and Langhelle 1999, p. 217).

We now turn to the Norwegian debate about environment and development in the 1990s. Our aim is to evaluate the consistency between political goals or intentions and environmental concern understood as policy measures and practices that followed from the UNCED process. The UNCED process entailed a new focus on the role of development assistance in that developing countries should participate in solving environmental problems. They should now become active partners rather than passive recipients. Again, the interrelation between environment and poverty was emphasized, as it had been by the WCED.

The UNCED process focused strongly on the necessity for an integrated approach to environmental and developmental problems, which meant that the guidelines in all 40 chapters of Agenda 21 are relevant to development assistance policy (MoFA 1993). We will limit this analysis to four chapters of Agenda 21: Chapters 2, 3, 34, and 37. This is in accordance with the governmental approach to environment and development, which we find in major documents on North-South relations and development cooperation (ibid.). Environmental priorities for the 1990s were: to increasing competence in national planning, institutional cooperation, assistance for environmentally sound natural resource management, and transfer of sound environmental technology (MoFA 1992b: 165-165; MoFA 1995: 31-34).

In Chapter 2, International Cooperation to Accelerate Sustainable Development in Developing Countries, environment and development are identified as two sides of the same coin. A new global partnership should commit the North and South to engage in a dialogue about how to make trade and the environment mutually supportive. It was

33 The term “environmental concern” refers to the Norwegian “miljøhensyn”. Environmental concern was the concept used in an evaluation carried out by the Fridjof Nansen Institute and ECON Centre for Economic Analysis (ECON 1995). The concept relates to measures aimed at environmental improvements within the field of nature conservation and environmental protection.

34 See also Worster 1993, O’Riordan 1993.
emphasised that an open, multilateral trading system, supported by the adoption of sound environmental policies, would have a positive impact on the environment and contribute to sustainable development. Chapter 2 lists a wide range of activities that serve as propositions for how international cooperation could make trade and the environment mutually supportive. One core idea affecting North-South relations was to ensure that environmental regulations did not constitute a means of arbitrary trade discrimination.

Chapter 3, *Combating Poverty*, suggests how to enable the poor to achieve sustainable development. This chapter follows the conclusion from the WCED that poverty and the environment are inseparable (WCED 1987: 10). To tackle the problems of poverty, development, and the environment, one should simultaneously focus on resources, production, and people. The donor countries should assist in promoting both environmentally sound resource management and economic growth.

In Chapter 34, *Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technology, Cooperation and Capacity-building*, the focus is on environmental protection. Transfer of environmentally sound technologies should aim to reduce pollution, increase recycling, and improve waste management. Chapter 34 is closely linked to Chapter 37, *National Mechanisms and International Cooperation for Capacity-building in Developing Countries*. This chapter deals with how to increase competence in developing countries. The donor should assist in making developing countries able to implement Agenda 21. This means, for instance, helping them identify environmental needs, by providing institutional support and increasing capacity-building. Core activities would be to evaluate the capacity and capability for the integrated management of environment and development, including technical, technological, and institutional capacities and capabilities, and facilities to assess the environmental impact on development projects.

**Norwegian follow-up: governmental intentions**

With the UNCED process as a backdrop, the first half of the 1990s saw a flurry of official documents on North-South relations. In Norway two fundamental white papers on these issues were produced in 1992: *On major trends in North-South relations and Norwegian development cooperation* (MoFA 1992b) and *On the UN conference on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro* (MoE 1992). They provide information regarding the government’s own expression of intent and will be discussed with relation to the external criteria laid down in Chapters 2, 3, 34 and 37 in Agenda 21.

With Chapter 2 as a starting point the government did not formulate any intentions regarding how to make trade and environment mutually supportive in bilateral assistance. This issue became part of the government’s work on the development of multilateral regulations within the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and, later the World Trade Organization (WTO). Norway, together with the other Nordic countries, was a member of a working group on environment and international trade within GATT.

The aim of reducing of poverty, in Chapter 3 of Agenda 21, was in accordance with the overall goal of Norwegian development assistance policy. In both White Paper No 51 (MoFA 1992b) and White Paper No 13 (MoE 1993) the government highlighted the necessity to use financial means to follow up the UNCED process and Agenda 21. The government intended to continue financing the Special Grant for the Environment and Development, but stressed that environmental measures should also get funding from
other financial sources. The Special Grant was established in 1984 and proved to have positive effects on both the environment and poverty reduction, particularly in the drought-affected countries in the Sudan-Sahel-Ethiopia belt in Africa.

Transfer of sound environmental technology, Chapter 34 of Agenda 21, was understood by the Norwegian government to be an important aspect of showing environmental concern in bilateral development assistance. The need for environmentally sound technologies was listed as a priority area. White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b) gave some indications regarding how to follow up the UNCED process on this matter. The government intended to increase support to research on environmentally sound production methods, to strengthen the institutional cooperation within environment and technology, to increase support for new, renewable, sources of energy, and to introduce environmental assessments in all hydroelectric power projects.

Chapter 37 of Agenda 21 was briefly discussed in White Paper 13 (MoE 1992). Capacity-building, on the other hand, was presented as a governmental priority area in White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b). With reference to the weak environmental capacity in developing countries, the government intended to support the building of environmental institutions, continue the creation of national resource management strategies, support environmental law and increase the capacity within the field of environmental monitoring.

### Implementation measures

Although White Paper 13 (MoE 1992) is a direct statement of the government’s intent for follow-up of Agenda 21, it is White Paper 51 (MoFa 1992b) that serves as the core reference for our evaluation of environmental concern in development assistance. It was published a short time prior to the Rio Conference, and contains a range of essential follow-up measures:

- preparation of a coherent strategy for the operationalisation of environmental concern in bilateral assistance
- statements regarding how activities should contribute to sustainable development in country strategies and country programmes
- environmental plans to be made for each partner country
- brief environmental profiles for each partner country
- training in use of environmental assessment in Norway and partner countries
- cooperation with external expertise, both Norwegian and international, in the field of the environment

The government appointed an expert commission to further analyse how to implement the major political goals or intentions in development assistance.\(^3^5\) The main results were presented in White Paper 19 (MoFA 1995). Environmental concern was to be concentrated on four major issues: (1) sustainable production systems and management of

natural resources, (2) the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, (3) reduced pollution of soil, air, and water, and (4) preservation of cultural heritage and management of the cultural values of the natural environment. The government also proposed one implementation measure in bilateral assistance: the establishment of a new programme for extended environmental cooperation, particularly in Asia and South Africa. “Some of the countries acknowledge that they need environmental assistance, and they also have the capacity to use the environmental competence and technology that are offered by Norway” (ibid.: 33). The countries in question suffered from severe pollution problems and problems related to natural resource management. Most of the implementation measures suggested in White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b) are related to the evaluation of the differences between intentions and reality when studying the practical work carried out by NORAD. In this section, we will briefly describe and evaluate the government’s implementation measures, which served as guidelines for NORAD after 1997. White Paper 51 (ibid.) recommended that the government develop a strategy for further work regarding environmental concern in development assistance. This recommendation was followed up by the MoFA with the preparation of A Strategy for the Environment in Development Cooperation in 1997. The overall idea was to integrate environmental concern in all development assistance activities. Implementation measures were largely repeated from earlier documents dealing with environmental concern (listed above). In general, the strategy did not provide any indications regarding how to fulfil the government’s intentions, nor how to operationalise implementation measures. Another problem was that the strategy suffered from a lack of historical wisdom. There were no discussions regarding the achievements of previous strategies, and recommendations were produced without analysis of previous experience or weaknesses. An evaluation made by Statskraft Engineering in 1998 stated: “the environmental strategy is not well known…It is drowned in the number of other strategies” (Skjønsberg 2000: 21).

As an instrument of implementation, the strategy carried little authority. Only one year after the publication of the strategy, a change of government took place and the new Minister of Foreign Affairs approved a memorandum On Political Priorities in Environmental Assistance 1998-2001 (NORAD 1998a). The government’s conclusion was that the memorandum should serve as the guideline for environmental assistance in the future.

Practical consequences had to be discussed in cooperation between the MoFA and NORAD (Skjønsberg 2000: 23; NORAD 1998a).

The Political Priorities memorandum listed four political guidelines: (1) Support for the institutional capacity within the environmental field in the recipient country and the creation of integrated environmental management, (2) research and competence building, (3) integration of environmental concern in all development projects, (4) thematic focus on the nature of environmental problems as a starting point, the recipients’ priorities, and Norway’s particular competence. Priorities that should guide the implementation of environmental concern and which are relevant to the follow-up of Agenda 21 were the focus on poverty alleviation and clean production. In order to combat poverty, the Bondevik government announced the stepping up of assistance in the field of environment and natural resource management. Assistance should be directed towards the rural poor

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36 Biodiversity and cultural heritage were also mentioned.
and food security. Clean production and pollution reduction were pivotal in the global efforts to take care of common resources such as water, soil, and air. The government wanted to concentrate on environmentally friendly energy management, effective use of energy, and renewable energy sources, such as bio energy and solar energy (NORAD 1998a).

NORAD and environmental concern in practice

When the notion of environmental concern was first launched in 1979/80, NORAD admitted its lack of ecological awareness and competence. Bilateral assistance of an environmental character was limited. During the 1980s, environmental concern gradually became part of development assistance practice in NORAD. Environmental concern was further developed as a consequence of the work carried out by the WCED and the UNCED process, prior to the Rio conference.

In the following section, we will describe and evaluate a number of major elements in the practical work performed by NORAD. This work will be evaluated with reference to the internal criteria from White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b), which were confirmed in A Strategy for the Environment in Development Cooperation (MoFA 1997), White Paper 19 (MoFA 1995), and the memorandum from the MoFA, On Political Priorities in Environmental Assistance 1998-2001 (NORAD 1998a). Environmental concern or environmental assistance was understood by NORAD as: "combinations of measures aiming at optimal use and management of natural resources, at limitation of waste production and pollution, at creating better conditions for recycling, and at developing technologies to take care of hazardous waste and emissions." (NORAD 1995).

Strategies for bilateral development assistance

Environmental concern was established as part of a NORAD strategy in 1990, and presented as NORAD in the 1990s (NORAD 1990). Two years later, NORAD launched another strategy: Strategies for Bilateral Assistance – Part II (NORAD 1992b). This second part of the strategy was a direct follow-up of White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b). It is appropriate to ask: Why did NORAD present its own strategy? According to recommendations in White Paper 51 (ibid.), the government had been asked to formulate a strategy. Obviously, NORAD operated in a political vacuum, since the MoFA had not put forward an environmental strategy or any guidelines since White Paper 34 and the very general White Paper 13 (ECON 1995: 55). In addition, in the early 1990s, NORAD was heavily criticised for not showing concern for the environment, and it was an urgent matter to make some visible manifestation of a will to make environmental concern a priority.

Criticism of NORAD came from the grass-roots, from people involved in development issues. Reactions came in answer to NORAD’s own initiative of raising a debate in the media after the presentation of the NORAD strategy, NORAD in the 1990s. The strategy was criticised for being fragmented and for not being concrete. Even more serious was the systems critique and the characterisation of assistance as a charitable humanistic-bourgeois enterprise. The core issue in assistance ought to be the global structure of power and to discussing how to solve poverty and global environmental problems. In the case of
NORAD, the agency wanted to cure the symptoms but was not able to cope with the political implications of the international economic system.

One main problem is that NORAD and NGOs concentrate on curing symptoms. Pain-killers might ease the pain when suffering from cancer, but cannot stop the growth of the cells. The main cause behind underdevelopment is not rooted in the Third World, but in the global structure of power and in the international economic system. (Dagbladet 1991; ibid.1992).

With reference to the criticism from experts and grassroots people and to the North/South Commission, Grimstad, suggested an all-out effort for environmental assistance. The second strategy was launched in 1992. The main objective of Strategies for Bilateral Assistance – Part II was well known from statements in major government documents: “Environmental concern and sound natural resource management shall be integrated in all Norwegian development cooperation” (NORAD 1992b: 5). The strategies for bilateral assistance provided general guidelines for the integration of environmental concerns. The implementation measures, however, were of relevance to specific environmental projects. These included measures to ensure that environmental concern was taken into consideration in planned activities, to support environmental pilot projects, to support the development and transfer of environmentally friendly technology, to support the development of environmental institutions, and to support environment-related information activities. Furthermore, there was a strong emphasis on the introduction of environmental assessment.

In the absence of supervision from the MoFA, NORAD continued to discuss strategic work and prepared a number of draft documents to guide environmental activity. Such initiatives were not popular at the MoFA, and in 1994 an agreement was made to rename NORAD’s strategies and call them “operational guidelines”. In future, the MoFA should be responsible for strategies (ECON 1995: 55). When the MoFA had completed A Strategy for the Environment in Development Cooperation in 1997, NORAD presented an appendix which aimed to operationalise the government’s strategy. The guidelines did not contain any new elements compared with the governmental strategy. The appendix was replaced by a strategic document in 1999: NORAD Invests in the Future – NORAD Strategy towards 2005 (NORAD 1999b). This time, the controversy over terminology was obviously no longer an issue. Environmental concern was only mentioned in general terms, with the traditional focus being on environmental assessment, competence, and capacity-building (NORAD 1999a: 21).

Of all the strategies mentioned, it is Strategies for Bilateral Assistance – Part II (NORAD 1992b) that gives the most concrete recommendations for how to develop environmental projects and environmentally oriented activities. A number of the implementation measures were put into practice during the 1990s.

**Environmental assessment**

The first recommendation, to introduce a system for environmental assessment, can be found in the report on ecology and development produced in 1980. This recommendation was confirmed in White Paper 36 (MoDA 1984). NORAD was then instructed by the government to introduce environmental assessment. The process of creating such a system started in NORAD in 1984. The system consists of a range of handbooks for assessing projects that may have environmental impact. The first handbook was completed in 1988.
and the last one in 1994. The main objective is to recognize potential environmental consequences in an early phase of the project cycle.

The environmental assessment system consists of a three-step procedure: initial screening, rough analysis, and full environmental impact analyses. The screening follows a checklist of 13 different categories of projects that might have severe environmental impact. They are: agriculture, livestock keeping, forestry, fishery, aquaculture, hydropower construction, water supply/irrigation, transport, industry, mining, waste treatment, developing central areas, and use of chemical pesticides. If a project is not regarded as having environmental impact, NORAD approves of the project without further environmental assessment. A rough analysis, which is more detailed, follows if a project is regarded as having environmental impact. The rough analysis consists of 13 sector manuals, identical to the project categories. If the screening and rough analysis identify serious environmental impact, a full environmental impact analysis is carried out. This requires detailed investigation carried out by fieldwork, collection of new data, and, for instance, cost-benefit analysis. Hydropower has a separate system for environmental assessment. The process requires that environmental assessment should be applied routinely to all hydropower projects. The final decision as to whether a project should be implemented is left to the government in the recipient country (ECON 1995: 61-63; Skjønsberg 2000: 44).

According to White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b: 166), the implementation of environmental concern was to be performed through training in the use of environmental assessment in Norway and the partner country. When the system was introduced, all NORAD officials attended a one-day course. When the NORAD Training Centre for Development Cooperation was established in 1992, it was given the responsibility for further training. The centre extended the training facilities by introducing economic and socio-cultural aspects into environmental assessment training, and the course was extended from one day to three. The course aimed at giving basic knowledge of environmental assessment methodology, concepts and definitions, and was to enable NORAD officials to use the system in practice. In 1995, a two-day course was established in “Environmental Impact Assessment” as a substitute.

Two evaluations of the environmental assessment system have been carried out, the first one in 1995 (ECON 1995). The evaluation concluded that the three-day course was often cancelled. NORAD officials were generally overloaded with work and did not find time to participate. When introducing the two-day course, the target group was limited to managers and leaders in Oslo and local embassies. The evaluation carried out in 2000 revealed that NORAD staff found the environmental assessment system to be useful, the checklists in particular (Skjønsberg 2000: 44). The handbooks were well known, but were not used in practice. An evaluation of environmental concern in Tanzania from 1994-1998 revealed that only half of the 18 projects had been assessed (Valvatne 1998). There was a severe lack of evaluation systems and follow-up of results.

A study on environmental concern, using hydro-electrical projects as case studies, revealed a number of problems related to the use of environmental assessment. In the projects that have been studied, environmental assessment was used, but follow-up by executive officials occurred randomly and took place too late in the project cycle (Toppe 2001: 94-105).
Competence-building

When environmental concern was introduced into development assistance in the early 1980s, NORAD set out to increase internal competence through administrative and organisational measures. The first practical step taken was the setting up of a short course to increase general knowledge regarding environmental problems and how development projects could have severe environmental effects. A more theoretical course was then given on problems related to different ecosystems and to sectors where Norway traditionally held high competence, such as forestry, agriculture, water, and energy.

In 1989, a decisive organisational change took place when NORAD was established as an agency outside the Ministry of Development Assistance (MoDA). In order to increase environmental awareness and competence, environmental advisors were recruited to the Advisory Group to the Director General on Women, Environmental Affairs, Democracy and Human Rights (KVIM) (NORAD 1989: 40-41). The Group reported directly to the Director General. The main objective of the Group was to stimulate an overall internal policy debate on environmental issues and natural resource management in developing countries. KVIM was an obvious innovative agent in NORAD, but its practical functioning suffered from organisational contradictions. KVIM did not have decision-making authority. The Advisory Group acquired the double role of being both advisor and watchdog, and the members of the Group were only asked on request of the Director General. After five years, the advisory group was dissolved, and environmental expertise was concentrated in NORAD’s Technical Department.

An evaluation of the Technical Department in 1995 revealed that no satisfactory organisational solution had been found for environmental issues. In order to increase NORAD’s environmental capacity, the Director General decided to establish an environmental unit for a period of three years. Capacity-building at home was necessary in order to increase the environmental capacity in the partner country.

Members of the unit were recruited from amongst the environmental expertise that already existed in NORAD, experts working within the Norwegian environmental management sector, and other external consultants. They constituted an interdisciplinary group, with natural and social science backgrounds. By the time of the establishment of an environmental unit, environmental experts constituted 25 per cent of the technical staff (Skjønsberg 2000: 40).

The unit was established on a project model basis. From an organisational point of view, this was regarded by the NORAD administration as having many advantages, by being limited in duration and not interrupting the ordinary lines in the organisation. However, the experts were given neither responsibility nor any authority to control or follow up the environmental work performed by NORAD officials at home or abroad. Another problem was the time frame. Three years was not much compared to the environmental unit of the Swedish Agency for Development Assistance, which was given ten years to come up with institutional changes for the benefit of the environment.

The environmental unit was closed down in 1998. By that time, NORAD had made some adjustments in the direction of environmental assistance. The project had generated environmental projects and increased environmental awareness within NORAD (NORAD 1988). Ten environmental advisors had been recruited to the Technical Department, and there was apparently an increasing demand for their competence. On the other hand, the advisors were only used on request and had no responsibility vis-à-vis
implementation procedures. The organising of environmental advisors on the fringe had been a tradition in NORAD since the establishment of KVIM in 1989.

**Institutional capacity in the partner countries**

According to White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b), environmental concern could not be taken in practice without increasing the institutional capacity of the partner country. As a means of implementation, White Paper 51 (ibid.: 166) recommended that environmental plans should be made for each country. They should contain a description of the environmental status and contain a policy in accordance with priorities set by the partner country's own government.

In 1992, NORAD drew up guidelines for how to prepare Environmental Action Plans (EAPs). According to NORAD, the EAPs should “be prepared and formulated as detailed, concrete plans for the implementation of NORAD’s environmental strategy” (NORAD 1992a). An EAP should be prepared for each partner country and region by NORAD’s’ Resident Representation and in collaboration with local authorities. Assistance from NORAD in Oslo could be provided on request (ibid.).

During the 1990s, NORAD’s Resident Representations in some partner countries made attempts to develop EAPs and environmental profiles in accordance with the political signals given in White Paper 51. The plans were generally broad and lacked focus on the state of the environment in the respective countries. One exception was Sri Lanka, and this plan, published in 1989, has been characterized as a pioneering work. The Sri Lanka plan has been the only plan that has contained real policy guidance for how NORAD officials should take environmental concern (ECON 1995: 56).

Strengthening institutional capacity has also been directed towards the development of national conservation strategies in Asian and African countries, and NORAD has funded the establishment of environmental databases in Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (MoFA 1992a).

**Environmental programmes**

One important part of NORAD’s support for environmental projects has been the creation of specific environmental programmes. Such programmes directly relate to the government’s intentions stated in White Paper 19 (MoFA 1995). Environmental programmes were developed during the 1990s in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Uganda, Mozambique, South Africa, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Pakistan, China, Indonesia, and Nicaragua (NORAD 1999b: 27-28). The programmes cover a wide range of practical measures, such as the development of geographical information systems, development of expertise on pollution and industrial emissions, the handling of dangerous chemicals, investigation into the effects of acid rain, and training centres in sustainable agriculture.

One extensive environmental programme that might serve as an illustrative example is the environmental programme in South Africa, established in February 1997. After three years, the programme was extended until 2004 (see chapter 4).

The programme was the result of an agreement between Norway and South Africa on bilateral development cooperation. The content of the programme was determined by South
Africa’s own priorities. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) in South Africa addressed the promotion of conservation, development of natural resources, the protection of the environment, the promotion of responsible tourism, and the promotion of accessible environmental and tourist information for sound planning and decision-making.

With the South African priorities as references, the Norwegian government stated seven relevant issues: climate change and energy, environmental coordination and management, cultural heritage and tourism, environmental rights and justice, biodiversity and water, pollution, and waste. Several Norwegian institutions are currently engaged in collaboration projects with South African authorities, amongst them some of the expert centres that will be discussed below.

It may be too early to evaluate the results of the environmental programme in South Africa, since several of the projects are still running. Results from one project are available and give some indications concerning how poverty reduction might be linked to environmentally oriented bilateral assistance.

Following a visit made by the MoFA, the MoE, and NORAD in 1996, environmental assistance was immediately granted to three projects, amongst them the Working for Water Programme, to combat alien floral invasion and poverty. Invading species are a severe problem to water-deprived South Africa, since they drink much more water than the indigenous species. South African authorities started to fight the invading species during the apartheid period, and the fight has been continued with great intensity since 1995. In brief, the South African government has developed the Working for Water Programme to clear invading species and give the clearing assignment to the poorest people. The Working for Water Programme exists in most of South Africa, but is most strongly concentrated in the Western Cape, which is home to one of the world’s six floral kingdoms.

The Norwegian government gave support to a local community, Elim, in the Western Cape for three years. Elim is a small and poor village located in an area extremely rich in rare and endemic species. Norway’s funding was aimed primarily at giving support to wages, running expenses, and cash flow, while smaller amounts were spent on herbicides, protective clothing, transport, and equipment.

A summary of the results from the Elim project shows that ecological restoration and social improvement have genuinely been achieved. Invading alien species have been removed from large areas, which has led to improvements in water supplies. A better supply of water is important for the future of small farm development and was also a priority for the alien plant-clearing project in Elim. Environmental awareness has clearly been strengthened. The social aspects were related to income for the poorest people and capacity-building. Work training gave the people participating an official certificate to use when looking for future employment. A social gain resulting from the project was the increase in community spirit amongst the Elim community (NORAD 1999a).

Assistance to the Working for Water Programme in Elim might serve as an example of best practice and gives indications concerning various factors that facilitate an environmental project (Grimstad 2000). Firstly, the project was in accordance with South Africa’s priorities. Secondly, the Working for Water Programme was an efficiently organised national programme with strong supervision and management. The Board of the Programme had been appointed by representatives from a range of ministries and
gained wide support from the government. Efficient management facilitated institutional cooperation between Norwegian and South-African ministries and agencies. One might say that institutional cooperation made South Africa more of an active partner than a passive recipient. Thirdly, the Working for Water Programme was aimed at both ecological restoration and social improvement. Thus, Norway’s assistance to Elim was in accordance with NORAD’s overall goal of poverty reduction and the UNCED process that took an integrated approach to environmental and developmental problems.

**Environmentally sound technology**

In White Paper No 51 (MoFA 1992b) and White Paper No13 (MoE 1992), the transfer of environmentally friendly technologies was prioritised by the government. Of relevance to our evaluation of how NORAD should take environmental concern in practice are the signals given to NORAD by the MoFA. The Bondevik government sent signals related to environmental assistance and environmentally sound technology to NORAD: “There should be more emphasis on the development and use of environmentally friendly energy” (MoFA 1998: 2). These signals were reinforced in the following years in the memorandum *On Political Priorities in Environmental Assistance 1998-2001* (NORAD 1998a). The MoFA advised NORAD to concentrate on cleaner production strategies and to support new renewable energy sources such as solar and bio energy. This advice was followed up in the National Budgets of 1999 and 2000: “More priority should be given to alternative energy,” and “Priority should be given to more holistic water management and environmentally friendly energy management. The work for cleaner production should be continued” (MoFA 1999: 3; 2000: 7).

The Stoltenberg government continued this work and made energy a priority in development assistance policy. “We must place a stronger focus on energy, environment, and development” (MoFA 2001b). According to the government, Norway should contribute to a dialogue on new renewable energy sources with partner countries. One way of doing this would be for NORAD to incorporate new renewable energy into existing environmental programmes with countries such as China and South Africa. In the National Budget for 2001, the government advised NORAD to implement the specific recommendations given for environmental cooperation or programmes with China and South Africa, which included new renewable energy (MoFA 2001a).

During the Stoltenberg government, the Minister of Development, Anne Kristin Sydnes, appointed a working group with representatives from the MoFA and NORAD, with a mandate to make a plan for increasing assistance to energy activities and giving new renewable energy sources higher priority. The work was part of an effort to raise Norway’s profile at the forthcoming Johannesburg Summit.

So, what was the status two months before the Johannesburg Summit? The level of direct investment in renewable energy was still low, but there had been a shift in the level of awareness. The principles of NORAD’s policy in the energy sector, which were outlined in 1994, stated that commercial energy should be generated from traditional sources, but that new renewable energy sources could be a potential basis for energy

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37 There was a shift of government from Bondevik to Stoltenberg (Social Democrat) in March 2000
38 The following paragraphs are based on an interview with Geir Hermansen (NORAD), since the report from the working group on energy is not official (Hermansen 2002).
production if conditions were appropriate. The main constraints were lack of competence and capacity in Norway (NORAD 1994).

The principles from 1994 are no longer valid, and there is a greater awareness in NORAD regarding the need to pave the way for new renewable energy sources. The working group appointed by Sydnes claimed that new renewable energy sources would have a positive effect on development, since poor people on the periphery would get access to energy. Production of energy locally would thus, hopefully, have positive economic consequences.

At project level, we find some evidence that NORAD has increased assistance to new renewable energy sources since 1999 (NORAD 2002; Ibsen 2003). One illustrative case, which employs new renewable energy sources as a means to promote positive rural development, is found in the cooperation between NORAD and South Africa.

Dialogue on this issue began in 1999 between SolEnergy AS and NORAD. SolEnergy saw a potential market for solar energy amongst poor rural households and small enterprises in rural areas far from the electricity grid in South Africa and other countries in southern Africa. From NORAD’s point of view, solar energy had proved to be a reliable energy source that took into account environmental as well as socio-economic concerns. Solar energy might provide enough electricity for lighting, refrigerators, and televisions. In addition, new renewable energy sources were a priority area in South Africa. The South African government has developed a national strategy for electricity in which solar energy plays an important role. Solar energy will primarily be used in remote areas (MoE 2002).

The Norwegian energy company, Renewable Energy Corporation, of which SolEnergy is part, has received funding from Norwegian authorities in cooperation with the South African government. NORAD is a partner in this cooperation. So far, SolEnergy has been granted a licence from the South African authorities to produce 50,000 solar cell panels for rural households (ibid.).

**Environmental assistance centres**

In White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b), and subsequently in White Paper 19 (MoFA 1995), the government suggested that NORAD should initiate closer cooperation with external expertise. A reference group, with representatives from the MoFA/NORAD and the MoE, was appointed in 1998. NORAD already had some cooperation with external institutions and consultancies, but it took place in an *ad hoc* manner, and NORAD needed more specific expert assistance.

The signal given to NORAD from the MoFA and the MoE was to pay more attention to environmental concern. This was crucial for two reasons. Firstly, and according to the UNCED process, one important part of development assistance would be to assist partner countries in implementing global environmental agreements and conventions. Secondly, more specific environmental expert assistance should contribute to full implementation of *A Strategy for the Environment in Development Cooperation* from 1997 (NORAD 1998a).

By 1999, NORAD had signed agreements with four environmental assistance centres, while two more were signed in 2000. External competence is provided from the centres covering fishery, agriculture, pollution, cultural heritage, and natural resource management (NORAD 2001). The centres cover a wide range of environmental assistance
measures relating to priority areas of support that were outlined in A Strategy for the Environment in Development Cooperation (MoFA 1997). The first priority area is development of sustainable production systems, while the second is conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Two environmental assistance centres, the Centre for International Environment and Development Studies (NORAGRIC) at the Agricultural University of Norway and the Directorate for Nature Management, have high competence in both priority areas. The centres provide environmental assistance in terms of environmentally oriented projects or environmental programmes in areas such as integrated mountain, coastal zone, and wetland management; the management of wildlife; dryland management; food security; land tenure; forestry management; and environmental law. In addition, they assist in the implementation of global environmental conventions and agreements. The Institute of Marine Research and the Directorate of Fisheries aim to offer assistance in the same priority areas, but in relation to fisheries (MoFA 1997).

The third priority area is reduced pollution of soil, air, and water. This area lies under the Norwegian Pollution Control Authority. Environmental assistance can be given in terms of pollution control regulation, waste minimisation and recycling, and handling hazardous substances. Since 1997, cultural heritage has been defined as part of Norwegian environmental assistance. The Directorate for Cultural Heritage provides environmental assistance in areas such as implementation and follow-up of commitments under the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, management of cultural heritage, support of sustainable production and consumption systems, sustainable use and development of historical cities, and sustainable tourism.

Summary

When referring to the follow-up of the UNCED process in general, Norway has been described as “reluctantly carrying the torch” (Langhelle 2000). This is valid when reviewing both the government's sustainable development performance in general and when analysing environmental integration within the development cooperation sector (Skjønsberg 2000). Our evaluation of environmental concern in bilateral assistance indicates that Norway has been less reluctant than other countries to introduce environmental projects.

Environmental concern in development cooperation was brought into the political arena by the Social Democrats in 1979, when Gro Harlem Brundtland was Minister of the Environment. There was consensus among the major political parties, however, that environmental concern should be elaborated as part of development cooperation policy. During the 1980s, the government's intention to take environmental concern was confirmed in two White Papers (MoDA 1984; MoDA 1986). From 1987, the Norwegian government regarded environmental concern as being crucial to achieving sustainable development in the developing countries. Environmental concern included the protection of soil, action against deforestation and desertification, environmentally sound natural resource management, and management of genetic resources (MoDA 1986).

The UNCED process that followed from the WCED reaffirmed the importance of taking environmental concern in development cooperation, to which Norwegian development cooperation had attempted to contribute solutions for some years. The
The government’s intentions and means of implementation were further elaborated in several White Papers during the 1990s. They were directly related to the Earth Summit in Rio and Agenda 21. With Chapters 3, 34, and 37 in Agenda 21 as points of reference, we have found that the Norwegian government formulated a policy for development cooperation that was directed towards poverty reduction, competence and capacity-building, and institutional cooperation. Main guidelines for how to take environmental concern were presented in *A Strategy for the Environment in Development Cooperation* (MoFA 1997) and a memorandum *On Political Priorities in Environmental Assistance 1998-2001* (NORAD 1998a).

Governmental intentions and means of implementation serve as guidelines for NORAD. To what extent has NORAD managed to follow up such directives and suggested means of implementation in practical work?

At the strategic level, there have obviously been a number of difficulties. The strategy produced by the MoFA in 1997 had little authority in NORAD. Apparently, it drowned in the number of other strategies and guidelines that were produced during the 1990s. Another reason might have been the struggle between NORAD and the MoFA over their specific roles in formulating environmental strategies.

At a more concrete level, we have found that NORAD has introduced different means to support environmentally oriented projects. Of relevance to us are the elaboration of a system for environmental assessment, the recruitment of environmental experts, the preparation of EAPs, specific environmental programs, support for environmentally friendly technologies, and the agreements with six environmental assistance centres. All the initiatives reflect good intentions with regard to taking environmental concern.

In practice, the means of implementation show negative and positive signs. Specific studies of environmental assessment have revealed that the system is well known but that assessment often starts too late in the project cycle. The introduction of environmental experts to the NORAD organisation has increased environmental awareness and the total environmental portfolio, but the advisors have little authority since they are only asked on request. One result is that the environment is still not part of the “spinal cord” of NORAD. The governmental signal to NORAD to support new renewable sources of energy has induced little progress. Traditionally, NORAD has supported Norwegian competence within the energy sector, which has been, and still is, hydropower. Regarding new renewable energy sources, there has, until recently, been a lack of competence in Norway. Another barrier has been the substantial expense related to the production of, for instance, solar and bio energy. In 2002, there were some indications of change, which are reflected in the increased focus on the export of solar energy to countries in southern Africa.

NORAD has established two concrete environmentally oriented initiatives that may serve as examples of best practice: environmental programmes and the establishment of environmental assistance centres. They both aim at giving support to solving environmental problems related to natural resource management, biodiversity, pollution, and cultural heritage, which are the four core areas listed by the Norwegian government as being the most important. By doing this, NORAD has taken a technocratic approach, favouring planning and management, which does not call for reform within the existing political system. Characteristic of both initiatives is a focus on solving environmental problems without fulfilling the goal of fundamental reshaping of decision-making.
Changes in decision-making, however, are crucial to achieve the overall goal of Norwegian environmental assistance policy, which is the integration of the environment into all projects and programmes.
4 WORKING FOR WATER: SOCIAL UPLIFTMENT AND CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Where you stand the grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil. It holds the rain and mist, and they seep into the ground, feeding the streams in every kloof. It is well-tended, and not too many cattle feed upon it; not too many fires burn it, laying bare the soil. Stand unshod upon it, for the ground is holy, being even as it came from the Creator. Keep it, guard it, care for it, for it keeps men, guards men, cares for men. Destroy it and man is destroyed… (Paton 2002, p. 38).

Apartheid legislation distorted access to natural resources, denying the majority of South Africans the use of land, water, fisheries, minerals, wildlife and clean air. South Africa's apartheid policies combined with the underregulated activities of local and transnational corporations, contributed to the degradation of environmental resources, including soil, water and vegetation…Poverty and environmental degradation have been closely linked. In general, existing environmental policies allow inefficient and wasteful use of water, energy and raw materials, and high levels of air and water pollution (RDP 1994, p. 25).

The focus of the current story is the cooperation between Norway and South Africa with respect to the Environmental Programme that was formally established in 1997. One project that immediately became part of the Environmental Programme was the Elim Working for Water Project embracing both biodiversity and poverty. Our point of departure is the external criteria as listed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 15 in Agenda 21 and the follow-up of the Norwegian Government regarding environmental assistance practices. The objectives of Chapter 3, Combating Poverty, are to enable the poor to achieve sustainable development, while the objectives of Chapter 15 are to improve the conservation of biological diversity and to support the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Chapter 3 in Agenda 3, Combating poverty, corresponds to the overall strategic goal of Norwegian development cooperation, which is to reduce poverty. Both elements are present in this case study, which illustrates how an environmentally specific project was implemented. In a White Paper, On the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (MoE 1992), the Government made statements on how to follow up the specific chapters in Agenda 21. With respect to biodiversity, the Government intended to develop bilateral projects and to help the partners to follow up the Convention on Biological Diversity. Biological diversity was included as one of four major issues in development cooperation.

This story will be divided into four parts: First, we will present the background information on the South African Government's reason for making the environment a priority area for partnership with countries in the North. We outline the major changes in South Africa's environmental policy and the change of discourse from conservation to sustainable development. Secondly, we make a presentation of the governmental Working for Water Programme, which intended to solve both an ecological and a social problem. Thirdly, we move on to analyse how the establishment of the Norwegian-South African Environmental Programme came about, and evaluate how environmental assistance was carried out in real life. Finally, we evaluate the results. According to the South African Government and NORAD, environmental assistance as carried out within the framework of the Working for Water Programme has been an overall success. Our hypothesis,
however, is that the degree of success of the Working for Water Programme varies according to the discourse under which it is presented.

**Environment and reconciliation**

South Africa is a land of beauty and diversity, covering 1.2 million square kilometers at the southern tip of the African continent. It has a remarkable biological diversity and is ranked as the third most biologically diverse country in the world. Six "hot spots" have been identified including one entire floral kingdom, The Cape Floral Kingdom, with over 6000 endemic species. In addition the country has great diversity of mammals, birds, insects, reptiles and amphibia.

Generally soils are thin and moderately fertile and only 11% of the land is arable. Less than 3% is highly productive. Despite this, South Africa is a rural country and about 80-85% of the surface area is devoted to agriculture, which means that the country has developed an economy based on primary production and extraction of natural resources. The climate is without great extremes; it is warm and dry with temperatures rarely falling below 0 degrees C and rising up to 40 degrees C in certain parts. The average annual rainfall is less than the world average. Thus, fresh water is a scarce natural resource while the country has a good supply of other natural resources, including coal, iron, gold and other minerals (DEAT 1999, p. 6; Wilson 1991; Mountain 1998).

From a biophysical point of view, South Africa is a rich country, but the country has undergone environmental changes over hundreds of years causing what today is labelled ecological destruction or environmental crisis. In particular the former homelands are characterised by poor soil, overpopulation and poverty. During apartheid influx control did not allow black people to migrate to the cities and rural black people were forced into overcrowded bantustans or homelands, and later accused of poor farming practices and environmental misbehaviour. In the early 1980s, droughts and land deterioration affected the homelands as much as parts of Sahel. From an UNEP point of view, apartheid was the killer of both people and the environment, causing, according to Timberlake, "the legislated environmental bankruptcy of the South African 'homelands'." (Timberlake 1986, p. 184).

The most serious environmental problems in post-apartheid South Africa are held by many scholars and politicians to be soil erosion, deteriorating vegetation and, not least, water scarcity. "As the population grows, and demands on a finite resource increase, water is set to become the crucial resource limiting South Africa's future growth and prosperity." Action is urgent. "Water crisis: It's not about when or how much you can water your garden. It's about how ongoing mismanagement and environmental damage have ruined resources." (DWAF 1998; Mail & Guardian 2000).

One easily becomes dazzled by the natural beauty of South Africa. When arriving in the Western Cape, flying over Table Mountain and the Cape of Good Hope it is hard to imagine that the country is facing severe environmental and social problems. But post-apartheid South Africa faces both an environmental and a social crisis. If water scarcity is one of the main ecological challenges, poverty is one of the main social challenges, and the two cannot be treated separately. They are linked together and form the basis for the fulfilment of the national commitment to sustainable development.
Historically, environmental issues in South Africa were synonymous with conservation, reflecting the interest of the white minority to save endangered species within the borders of national parks. Little attention was paid to the negative impact of conservation programmes on poor black people, such as forced removals and social dislocation. Individuals and institutions donated millions of Rand to save endangered species, while next to nothing was spent to improve the livelihoods of poor people (Ngobese and Cock 1995, p. 264; Beinart and Coats 1995; Carruthers 1995).

Environmental policy during apartheid was rooted in the nationalist conservation story-line that appeared in the early 1900s. Environmental protection became an integral part of the white minority’s strategy of natural resource management, which culminated with the National Parks Act of 1926 and the creation of the Kruger Park. Conservation was a consolidation of white interest, elitism and capitalism that was imposed on the Africans. For the Africans it became difficult to continue their traditional lifestyle in the conserved areas. They were portrayed as intruders and ignorant poachers to be kept out (Carruthers 1995).

In the 1930s, South African scientists kept the nationalist approach alive, but they went further than the conservationists. One of the most important figures in South African history, Jan Smuts, made ecology an ideal for how to shape a holistic policy for South Africa. From an ecological point of view there was need for "an evolutionary synthesis based on holism ... thus important for finding a uniform racial policy for the country." (Anker 1999, p. 161; Steel 1939, p. 272). Smuts used analogies to plant ecology when indicating that pioneer men, like pioneer plants, developed into "climax types of men". This had happened in South Africa and could explain why the small white population in South Africa "had produced more than its fair share of able men."(Anker 161f.). The political implications of Smuts' philosophy or grand theory of human ecology was to find a way to develop segregated biotic communities, and avoid people with different biotic backgrounds living together (Anker 1999, p. 211). In this case ecology became a tool for planning apartheid, which in turn excluded the Africans from the environmental discourse until the early 1990s.

In the early 1990s there was thus a paradigm shift in South African environmental policy. The driving forces behind the shift were of both national and international origin. After the shift of government, focus on environmental issues became part of the reconciliation process. Environmental policy came to constitute one element in South Africa's fight to become a democratic state. As stated by Nelson Mandela, "Environmental concerns can unite South Africa, going beyond racial, political and economic barriers." (IDRC 1994 1994, p. 8). While South Africa was excluded from the world community, international environmental work included the signing of conventions and agreements. Over the years the international community had focused on the global character of environmental problems. By making the environment a core political area in South Africa the country would be more integrated in the world community. This was pivotal if the vision of an African Renaissance was to come true. "That renaissance must...address the critical question of sustainable development which impacts positively on the standard of living and the quality of life of the masses of our people".(Malegapuru 2000, p. xvi). By 1999 South Africa had signed 17 international environmental conventions (DEAT 1999, p. 2).
In order to promote an equitable environmental policy and to fulfil international obligations, South Africa was in need of human and financial resources. In the early 1990s donors were queuing up to give assistance to South Africa, Norway included.

The greening of reconstruction and development

In the new democratic South Africa, environmental policy became a development priority. The country was the first in the world to include environmental rights in the Constitution as one of the fundamental rights of citizens.

Everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing; and to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that prevent pollution and ecological degradation; promote conservation; and secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development. (Bill of Rights Article 24)

By including environmental rights in the Constitution, South Africa took a new approach to state welfare. The country found a way to modernisation of the welfare state by including not only political and social rights, but also environmental rights. To understand the close link between environment and welfare, we have to dig into the history of South Africa. For decades the country was dominated by colonialism, racism, apartheid and repressive labour policies. The result was a systematically enforced division in every sphere of society into underdeveloped black homelands and well-developed white areas. Environmental degradation and poverty existed side by side and by the end of the apartheid regime South Africans were confronted by serious problems in every sphere of society - economic, social, political, moral, cultural and environmental.

In the struggle for justice and equality in the North, political rights for men were introduced as a first step towards democracy more than a hundred years ago. Social rights came next, while the environment did not become an issue until the transition of the classical welfare state after 1970. Problems related to poverty and inequality were of another dimension in South Africa. Political rights, basic needs and common goods had been denied the majority of the people. A victory for democratic forces was the basis for effective reconstruction and development, and last but not least, for the restoration of peace. However, "no political democracy can survive and flourish if the mass of our people remain in poverty...without tangible prospects for a better life." A programme was required that was "achievable, sustainable, and meets the objectives of freedom and an improved standard of living and quality of life for all South Africans" (RDP 1994, p. 4). Hence a clean and healthy environment was pivotal to the reconstruction and future democratic development of South Africa.

A new environmental paradigm

The ANC and its Alliance partners met the environmental challenges by initiating a number of reconstruction processes. The core of the processes was the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of 1994, and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) of 1996. The content of the RDP was rooted in the tradition of the Freedom Charter from 1955 stating that:
South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and ... no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all people...and we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won. (The Freedom Charter 1955).

The RDP, however, went beyond the Charter and intended to be a programme of government. It was drawn up by experts, grassroots organisations and ordinary people after a long consultation process. Through the RDP the government created a sustainable development vision. It was important to ensure that management of development corresponded with the principles in Agenda 21 (DEAT 1996, p. 1).

One of the core political and philosophical principles behind the RDP was that reconstruction and development were parts of an integrated process. Economic growth alone could not build the new nation. “The RDP integrates growth, development, reconstruction and redistribution into a unified programme.”(RDP 1994, p. 6). In South Africa development was defined as a "process for improving human well-being through a reallocation of resources that involves some modification of the environment." (DEAT 1997, p. 17). Focus was on the quality of life rather than the quantity of economic activity.

However, growth understood as increasing the size of the economy was still a basic goal. The RDP set out to establish a mutually reinforcing dynamic between basic needs and economic growth. Crucial to economic growth was how growth was distributed, to what degree it contributed to building long-term productive capacity and human resource development, and what impact growth had on the environment. To integrate reconstruction and development, the government set out to provide an infrastructural programme that included electricity, water, health, telecommunications, transport, education and training.

The main purpose of the RDP was to redress the injustices caused by colonialism and apartheid.

South Africa's apartheid policies...contributed to the degradation of environmental resources...They encouraged the misuse of fertilisers and pesticides. Poverty and environmental degradation have been closely linked. In general, existing environmental policies allow inefficient and wasteful use of water, energy and raw materials, and high levels of air and water pollution. (RDP 1994, p. 25).

The RDP launched five key programmes: meeting people's basic needs, upgrading human resources, democratising the state and society, and reorganising the state and the public sector, and implementing the RDP. This was to be achieved by macroeconomic measures such as deficit reduction, tariff reduction, privatisation, and productivity-linked wage rates (Lodge 1994, p. 114f.).

Of relevance to us is the link between the reconstruction process and the constitutional commitment to environmental rights. The new environmental policy was to ensure that the RDP and the GEAR would enable the people of South Africa to live in "spiritual, cultural and physical harmony with their natural surroundings" (DEAT 1997, p. 16), and improve the quality of life of the poor masses. Environmental considerations were to be taken at all political levels and incorporated in development strategies and planning. With this statement, environmental matters were understood within a development paradigm. Measures such as land reform, housing, rural assistance and the maintenance of food security would reduce the pressure of people on the natural environment.

Environmental success, however, was dependent on two important factors: first, the programmes' ability to incorporate sustainable development principles into economic and social planning, and second, the RDP's ability to adapt to the guiding principles for the
new environmental policy. Some of the guiding principles for environmental policy were to:

- promote reconstruction and development that is environmentally sustainable, and maintain the integrity of South Africa's ecosystems, which support all life systems; facilitate integrated natural resource management and avoid a fragmented approach, alleviate poverty, reduce inequities, particularly in access to natural resources be based on the participation of civil society. (IDRC 1994, p. 18).

In order to achieve integrated sustainable development, environmental matters cut across departmental boundaries, but the key actor in South Africa's new environmental policy was the Department of Environment and Tourism (DEAT). According to the DEAT, the current environmental problems had six root causes:

- the failure of environmental regulatory institutions to work together to manage environmental problems holistically
- unsustainable levels of exploitation of natural resources
- unequal access to natural resources
- human migration and overcrowding
- damaged social structures and poor, dispossessed people
- uncontrolled and often inappropriate development in most sectors (NORAD 1996b, p. 8).

The DEAT launched an environment-and-development discourse which was rooted in the understanding of South Africa facing an environmental crisis. The ecological balance was disturbed because man had taken too many good things out of nature and put too many bad things into it.

According to the RDP, the reconstruction and development process should be people-driven i.e. there should be active involvement and growing empowerment. The Consultative Conference on National Environmental Policy (CONNEP) that was held in August 1995 was a response to this. Soon after this first initiative, CONNEP convened a national forum, which agreed to establish a consultative process to develop a national environmental policy under the name of the Consultative National Environmental Policy Process (CONNEPP). CONNEPP was the first step in the drawing up of a Green Paper on environmental policy. This culminated in a draft White Paper on a National Environmental Management System, later turned into the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) (DEAT 1999, p. 3).\(^{39}\) In the process, people were invited to assist with the writing of the Green Paper and experts as well as representatives of stakeholder interests were involved. The consultative process was of crucial importance for strengthening environmental awareness and letting ordinary people's voices be heard.

The consultative process represented a paradigm shift in South African environmental policy. Post-apartheid environmental policy changed from conservation to the sustainable development story-line, including not only environmental but also social and economic factors. There was a shift from blaming the poor black people for environmental degradation to the recognition that environmental degradation was a function of

institutional failures. The new environmental policy set out to initiate a broad framework for an integrated and holistic approach to environmental management, which was based on “principles, structures, processes and mechanisms to integrate environmental governance and enable the development of policy, strategy and action to address specific issues and sectors.” (DEAT 1996, p. 4). The policy was visionary and declared that the quality of life of all citizens should have improved significantly within five years. In order to achieve these goals, it was important to achieve reconciliation between economic development and sustainable development. Sustainable development required the use of resources in a way and at a rate that did not lead to their long-term decline. It also required participation by all people in the social, economic and cultural life of the community (ibid. p. 17).

Since 1987 and *Our Common Future*, the most common definition of sustainable development has been development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. The definition has been given a wide range of interpretations, but there is no single model for achieving sustainable development. To the South African government it was obvious that the country had to develop the concept in relation to the specific environmental situation in South Africa. The government took a regional approach by adopting objectives set by the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Sustainable development was meant:

− to accelerate environmentally and economically sustainable growth with greater equity and self-reliance.
− to improve the health, income and living conditions of the poor majority.
− to ensure equitable and sustainable use of environmental and natural resources for the benefits of present and future generations. (ibid. p. 5).

This approach echoed the democratic vision of equity laid down in the Constitution. Firstly, all citizens were supposed to have equal access to natural resources and they also had responsibility vis-à-vis future generations to avoid impairing their ability to meet basic needs. Secondly, equity redressed apartheid’s environmental injustice, in particular to ensure that disadvantaged members of society did not bear a disproportionate burden of environmental degradation. Since women constitute the majority of disadvantaged people, women’s role in all aspects of environmental management had to be fortified. This included recognition of women’s rights of access to water and land (ibid. pp. 14; 16).

By the mid-1990s it was a widespread view that environmental issues had low priority and suffered from fragmentation, ineffective legislation, uncoordinated planning, lack of competence, and limited capacity and participation (ibid. pp. 1-3; 8). The structure of environmental governance had little capacity to address environmental problems, specifically those with regional and international implications.

Towards partnership: Norway and South Africa

Norway started to give financial and political support to the ANC and other liberation movements in exile, to church organisations, trade unions and NGOs more than 20 years ago. The fall of apartheid encouraged renewed and extended support for South Africa. From NORAD’s point of view, inclusion of South Africa in the ongoing SADC co-
operation was not only politically correct, but also an efficient way to increase assistance to the region.

The regional approach corresponded with South Africa’s self-imposed role as an engine in the African Renaissance that wished to be in the forefront as regards economic and social upliftment in the region. Assistance to South Africa, however, had to be structured differently from most other partner countries. South Africa was institutionally at an advanced level and had access to highly educated people to take on operative assistance. It was vital to South Africa to get close contact with institutions in the North in order to get new input and advice, and to get financial support for development programmes directed towards the poor black population.

After the first democratic election in 1994, it was decided by the Norwegian Parliament to include South Africa in its bilateral development assistance. The main objective of the support was to assist in consolidating and strengthening democracy and human rights, to help create political stability and to support education, small-scale industries, housing and environmental affairs. Support was given in accordance with the basic principles of the official Norwegian development policy: the recipient’s responsibility, poverty alleviation and sustainability. The Norwegian principles were coherent with South Africa’s overall development priorities: democracy, sustainable development, economic growth, and poverty alleviation.

When Norway decided to include South Africa in assistance co-operation, the environmental sector was singled out as a core area. Environmental concern was now a priority of development policy in both Norway and South Africa. Environmental matters should be integrated in all activities, with special attention to natural resource management, protection and sustainable use of biodiversity, pollution and cultural heritage. The target group was the poor black masses.

The character of environmental assistance to South Africa was different from that of most ordinary co-operation projects within the environmental sector. As a country standing with one foot in the developed and one in the underdeveloped world, South Africa faced environmental problems similar to those found in industrialised countries, like pollution of air, soil, water and loss of biodiversity due to pressure on non-renewable resources. However, unlike the industrialised countries, South Africa did not have the same capacity to solve the problems. As an underdeveloped country it had weak infrastructure, overcrowded areas, lack of environmental consciousness and inadequate institutional capacity. This situation was favourable to giving assistance according to the principle of the recipient’s responsibility. On both sides, the idea of mutual co-operation was strong (NORAD 1997b). Thus, South Africa came to be a test case for principles and strategies of environmental sustainable development assistance in Norway.

Cooperation and mutual understanding

The process of identifying areas of future environmental co-operation started after a visit to South Africa by the Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland. In a Memorandum of understanding between the ME and DEAT, both countries recognised the global nature of environmental issues and that the goal of sustainable development set at the Earth Summit in Río should be recognised by all countries. The main objective of the environmental co-operation was:
During 1996 and 1997 meetings were held with representatives from ministries both at national and provincial levels, and with non-governmental organisations, the National Parks Board and scientific institutions. South Africa’s environmental priorities were based on the White Paper on Environmental Policy with sustainable development as the guiding principle. To achieve environmental sustainability and integrated environmental management, the DEAT set out strategic goals related to legislation, management, planning, participation, empowerment and education, and international co-operation.

In the Norwegian authorities’ view, priority should be given to projects which had a positive impact upon the black poor and which aimed at empowering the less privileged and strengthening the institutional capacity. Assistance at the institutional level was crucial if South Africa was to be able to adopt the RDP programme and implement it according to the principles of sustainable development.

One way of strengthening the institutional capacity was by offering scholarships to students from less privileged communities; another was to start environmental education at all levels in school. The focus on institutional strengthening and education, in particular at the provincial or local level, was highly relevant and corresponded with South Africa’s own priorities. Executive power for environmental matters was assigned to the provinces, but due to lack of human and financial resources, environmental issues were still identified as nature conservation. Support for environmental NGOs and CBOs was part of the institutional co-operation offered by Norway. The aim was to raise environmental awareness among all groups and empower less privileged people to get control over and access to their own environment.

When discussing the concrete environmental challenges, representatives from Norwegian authorities outlined important key areas for assistance: air pollution, climate change, energy use, biodiversity, sustainable development, agriculture, forests, water use, coastal zone, and cultural resource management. After the Norwegian Fact-Finding Mission to South Africa, agreement on environmental co-operation between the two countries was reached in four areas: capacity building and awareness raising, institutional strengthening, support for environmental non-governmental or community-based organisations, and research. Immediate assistance should be given to three projects: waste management, cultural heritage and the Working for Water Programme, which aimed at combating alien floral invasion and poverty. All the projects corresponded with the goals and priorities outlined in the strategy for environmental co-operation directed towards

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40 Details from the Mission are found in Archive of NORAD, box BSA 0029. Fact-Finding Mission to South Africa to Identify Areas for Future Co-operation, 21-28 May 1996. Minutes of Meetings.

41 In the following I draw on Archive of NORAD, box BSA 0029. Fact-Finding Mission to South Africa to Identify Areas for Future Co-operation, 21-28 May 1996.

42 A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on February 12, 1996. Two lead agents were appointed, the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage in Norway and DEAT in South Africa.
Invasion of alien plants: a threat to biodiversity

More than two hundred million years ago, all continents were jammed together in one continent, Pangaea, but about 180 million years ago the super-continent began to break up. On the new fragments, life forms developed independently, and often uniquely. The world as we know it came to consist of specific faunal and floral regions. There are six floral regions in the world and the Cape Floral Kingdom constitutes the smallest (Crosby 1986, p. 12).

Biological expansion has gone on for hundreds of years, and new species have invaded the continents together with human invasions. Sometimes the plants become invasive and cause environmental problems, as is the case with many alien plants in South Africa.

Invading alien plants have been introduced from different parts of the world, but the plants from Australia are the most invasive and 45 per cent of them have become pests, in particular trees such as black wattle, pines and eucalyptus. They can drive out the indigenous vegetation and replace the natural vegetation with dense infestations of alien trees.

South African scientists have examined the plants and found some characteristics which explain why they become invasive. Firstly, they come from parts of the world with similar climates and soils and adapt well to their new environment. Secondly, they come from places with similar ecology and are pre-adapted to certain conditions. Thirdly, they produce a large number of viable seeds, they grow fast and mature quickly. Fourthly, their seeds are spread by wind, birds or water, and fifthly, the plants are not threatened by their natural enemies, such as insect predators and other pathogens. Invading plants need to meet most of these criteria, which makes it possible to identify them and to provide solutions (WWP 1999).

Environmental impacts

Usually trees and plants are good for the environment. They prevent erosion and keep the soil moist. This does not apply to the invasive alien plants and trees in South African ecosystems. Alien plants are an environmental threat. A core problem is that the invasive plants in general use more water than grass or shrubs and cause loss of water. There are severe consequences when alien evergreen trees replace seasonally dormant vegetation. This is the case when grassland or fynbos are invaded. During the dry season the grasses use little water, while the invading plants or trees continue to use water and to transpire. The consequence is that the water table will recede below the invasive tree, and the next rainy season this water needs to be replenished before water can flow into streams.

Research has gone on for a long time to examine the size and significance of the problem. Experiments done in different provinces have shown drastic reduction in stream flow and the total drying up of streams. Case studies from riparian zones revealed that invasive alien species use twice as much water when growing close to a river as when growing at some distance. In addition, local communities have experienced decreases in conservation of biological diversity, reduction of pollution and management of nature's cultural values (NORAD 1996; MoFA 1997).
ground water and stream flow. Some of the invasive plants have deep tap roots that extend down to as much as 53 meters below the surface and consume water from underground sources (ibid. 1999; ibid. 2000, p. 52f).

Invasive alien species have devastating ecological impacts. Alien species constitute a fire hazard due to their large biomass and the fires, which are natural in many places, are more intense and hotter than those of the natural vegetation. Hot fires alter the physical environment and the result is damage to the soil and large-scale erosion. The higher intensity of fires also kills seeds, preventing vegetation regeneration. In addition, invasive alien plants destabilise riverbanks, and blockage of the river flow by fallen trees increases flood damage. Thus, rural communities dependent on the soil and rivers are threatened, as well as the functioning of ecosystems.

Biodiversity is high in South Africa, but invasion of alien plants threatens to replace the diverse flora with mono-specific aliens. Loss of indigenous flora, in turn, has impact on the animals adapted to it. The Cape Floral Kingdom provides an example of the negative impacts of alien invasion where alien plants have invaded 30% of the known localities of endemic, rare and threatened species. Alien plants spread because of disturbances caused by fires, and because of increasing levels of agriculture, road construction, forestry and urbanisation. Loss of biodiversity has both socio-economic and ecological consequences. Tonnes of indigenous plants, such as erica, are exported and also eco-tourism is dependent on the diverse flora and fauna (ibid. 1999).

The Working for Water Programme

South Africa is a water-poor country and prone to unpredictable extremes in the form of droughts and floods. Water is most abundant along the eastern and southern coastlines, far from the densely populated centres. The country gets most of the water from rivers, but only 9 per cent of rainfall reaches the rivers. One solution to water scarcity has been to construct large storage dams to regulate the natural variations of flow, and to facilitate transfer of water between catchment areas. The water run-off ratio is low and further reduced by unsustainable land use such as commercial aforestation, sugar cane plantation, and by evaporative losses from storage dams (DWAF 1998). Another major water problem is related to the invasive plants. Alien infestation spreads rapidly. It uses 7 per cent of South Africa's mean annual runoff, which is equivalent to over 200 litres per person per day. If dense infestations continue, the result can be a loss of almost 70 per cent of the water in South African rivers (WWP 2000, p. 51).

Unequal water distribution started with the 1913 Land Act, which gave the black population less than 10 per cent of the land. After the Second World War and during the long history of apartheid, water was used as a tool of human suppression, and the control of water went along racist lines. According to the Water Act of 1956 exclusive use of private water rested with the owner of the land on which the water was found. By the mid-1990s 12 of the country's 43 million people did not have adequate access to clean water supply. In addition, there was a shortage of water for domestic users, irrigation, nature conservation, industry, forestry, power generation and stock watering.

When coming to power, the ANC government called for a coherent overhaul of South Africa's water law. “This will call for brutal honesty”, the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry stated. “I know that we are touching one of the sources of power and wealth in
the country as we look at water rights but, from both a technical and moral point of view, this must be done..." (DWAF 1997, p. 9). The ANC government set out to develop a multidisciplinary and people-centred approach to water management, and the Constitution proclaimed that every person had a right of access to sufficient water. According to the Constitution, the national and provincial government was obliged to support and strengthen the capacity of local government to provide water services. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry had responsibility for planning the optimal and equitable use of water, while local authorities were encouraged to carry out their own water development plans. This was a significant break with water policy during apartheid.

Responsibility for water management rested primarily with the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. Traditionally the Department had been like a “secret society” led by white men. The main interest of the Department was engineering and large dam-building which served the water needs of the white minority. Huge numbers of South Africans were excluded from water delivery, even if they lived in communities close to dams serving large white farms (ANC 1998).

Water management in the new democratic state was delivery-orientated and had three main goals: "meeting every person's health and functional requirements, raising agricultural output, and supporting economic development." (RDP 1994, p. 19). These goals illustrated the shift from the conservation story-line to the sustainable development story-line. Water management aimed at conservation of water and social upliftment for the disadvantaged groups, and thus took both a justice-to-nature and a social justice approach.

Initiatives and performance

The fight against invasive plants started during the apartheid period. The governments used regulatory means, and weed control was regulated by the Agricultural Resources Act (1983). Invasive species were declared as weeds or invaders. Other Acts with relevance to invasive plants were the Agricultural Pest Act (1983) and the Forest Act (1984). The Forest Act controlled the planting of alien trees and required that riparian zones and wetlands should not be planted. This act was replaced by the Water Act of 1998.

Action was also taken when South Africa signed the Convention of Biodiversity in 1992. The country was obliged to "prevent the introduction of, control or eradicate those alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats or species." (WWP 1999, p. 5).

The fight against invasive species continued with force after the fall of apartheid, and was part of the new water recourse planning for South Africa. In 1995 the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Professor Kader Asmal, launched the National Water Conservation Campaign. With reference to the over 12 million people without access to potable water, every drop had to count. "There will be costs. However, either we pay now, or we pay more later. The National Water Conservation Campaign is an investment in our long-term water security. It is a programme of hope."(DWAF 1997, p. 15).

One of the best known achievements of the campaign is the Working for Water Programme. It was initiated in September 1995 "to achieve a marriage of conservation and social upliftment." The broader mission of the Programme was to "enhance water supplies by empowering local communities to carry out catchment management projects that focus on the control of alien invasive plants."(DWAF 1996, p. 3). The clearing
strategy would run for 20 years. Furthermore, the Programme set out to promote sustainable use of natural resources and invest in the most marginalised sectors of South African society.

The Programme was a multi-departmental public-works programme, which involved the DWAF and the Department of Welfare and Population Development. It had a dual nature being both a technical initiative to combat environmental threats, i.e. alien invasive plants, and a developmental initiative to combat poverty. In this way, the Programme was a commitment to the intentions behind the RDP, which specifically set out to integrate social and ecological matters. In this case, water and environment, and quality of life were interlinked. Invasive species were threats with economic and social consequences: “in terms of our water security, the productive use of land, the intensity of fires and floods, and ultimately the ecological integrity of the natural systems upon which we all finally depend.” Further, its work addressed “the social conditions that confront the poor and the marginalised in our country, and is of critical importance in these still early days of democracy.” (WWP 1999/2000, p. 2).

The Programme got much attention in the media and was awarded several conservation prizes. “As a model Reconstruction and Development Programme initiative, its achievements have been recognised in its being awarded.” (The Working for Water Programme 1996/1997). From an ecological point of view, the success was a sign that the Programme worked according to its intentions. By clearing invasive species, water run off was significantly improved and biological diversity was restored. Measurements from the Northern Province showed up to 120 per cent increase in streamflow after clearing of pines and wattle from river banks. A small catchment area in Jonkershoek (Western Cape) resulted in a 44 per cent increase in streamflow per 10 per cent of the cleared area (DWAF 1996, p. 2).

What turned out to be a surprise was the immediate social gains of the Programme with regard to creation of jobs and also to gender equity and empowerment. More than 50 per cent of the employees were women single heads of households and all employees were given the opportunity to receive comprehensive training in a variety of fields.

The Programme had positive social and economic side effects. The trees cut down were used for creating skill among the craft workers who made toys for children in the crèches set up by the Working for Water Programme. The toys were sold in nature reserves. The wood from fallen trees was converted into charcoal and eco-bricks for personal use, road-side sales and barbecues in the Kruger National Park. One benefit which had particular social and ecological advantages was the making of wood-chips that were mixed with cement to create panels for building houses. The panels were good insulation for thermal regulation, they were fire-proof, inexpensive and would “please the conservationists in the carbon-fixing use of the wood.” (WWP 1999/2000, p. 3f.).

Other secondary industries grew out of the natural conditions of the country, as for instance in the Western Cape. The cut-flower industry in South Africa is profitable, but threatened by invasive species. However, the Working for Water Programme assisted local communities to set up flower-picking initiatives in areas where the plants grew back after clearing of the aliens.

Working for Water meant also working for tourism, which was one of the core areas for bringing South Africa into the global economy. Tourism was a catalyst for building a sustainable nation including both economic growth and nature conservation. The
“strategic objectives for tourism in South Africa (were) growth, conservation and nationhood. This is our contribution to the renaissance that must flourish on our continent for Africa to claim this century.” (DEAT 2000). One big challenge for the 21st century was to redress injustices caused by apartheid which neglected the needs of communities living around nature parks and game reserves. It was of crucial importance for South Africa as a future tourist nation to link tourism to rural economic development and contribute to empowerment of disadvantaged rural communities.

By the end of the 1990s, South Africa was a growing tourist nation, but still lacked strategic planning. The goal, however, was well defined. Eco-tourism should give the tourists a total experience of the natural and cultural attractions of the environment, the professionalism of the tourism operator, the resources and hospitality of the local communities and encourage responsible and conducive behaviour on the part of the eco-tourist.

Invasive alien plants threatened the expanding eco-tourism, which was regarded as one of the Working for Water Programme’s big claims to fame. The focus on tourism corresponded with the aim of giving credit to the RDP. With reference to the rich wildlife, flora and scenic beauty of South Africa, the new environmental policy linked the conservation of biological diversity to sustainable tourism. The rich biological diversity was one of the country’s chief tourist attractions. Since eco-tourism was a growing market among international tourists, the government committed itself to ensuring that all tourism initiatives were sustainable. They should “help to meet the basic needs of the poor, and help to preserve and protect our natural heritage.”

From an ecological point of view, the Working for Water Programme met great challenges despite the thousands of hectares of land being cleared. Invading plants spread over the country and the Programme had not been able to reduce the extent of the invasive species. Ecological awareness, however, had been raised and knowledge about water use and the threat from invasive species spread over the country (WWP 1998/1999, p. 4).

Another hazardous spread was that of HIV/AIDS. As an integrated development initiative, Working for Water took on a campaign against HIV/AIDS in co-operation with the Department of Health. A pilot project was carried out in Mpumlanga and condoms were distributed to all workers in every project in the province. The health hazard of HIV/AIDS was linked to the ecological hazard of invading plants. The Working for Water Programme pointed at the parallels between “the spread of HIV/AIDS, unplanned pregnancies and the spread of invading alien plants.” All members of Parliament were given a condom with a pine seedling inside, with the caption, “Keeping invasive seeds at bay.” (ibid. 1998/1999, p. 11). The campaign was controversial, but if South Africa was to develop in a sustainable manner, the fight against HIV/AIDS and increased population had to come first, even if that meant that fewer trees were cut down in the short-term.
Multipurpose assistance and the case of Elim

As a public works programme, Working for Water was started with funding from the RDP, but got additional funding from the Forest Owners' Association and industry. But there was need for extra support from donors and industry. In the long run water users themselves should pay for water and the benefit of well managed catchment areas through water tariffs.

The Working for Water Programme was considered to be highly relevant to the Norwegian-South African environmental co-operation programme. It was ranked as priority area four in the Multi-Purpose Business Plan. By giving support to Working for Water in Elim, the Norwegian government set out to fulfil three of the core principles guiding environmental assistance policy. The Norwegian government gave priority to assistance that could follow up the Convention for the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage, and development models for sustainable tourism according to Agenda 21. Support for the Elim Working for Water Programme went hand in hand with this priority. In order to maintain development of sustainable production systems and management of natural resources, assistance should be given to institution building. This was the case in the Working for Water Programme since the DWAF wanted to get support to strengthen capacity within the water sector. Conservation and use of biological diversity was crucial to the donor countries in their efforts to meet the global environmental challenges. In this context, support for Working for Water was a logical outcome, and would strengthen the self-imposed role of Norway being in the forefront of international environmental assistance policy. Preservation of cultural heritage and management of the cultural values of the natural environment were a basis for sustainable development.

The Working for Water Programme also met the development priorities, both environmental and social, in both Norway and South Africa. Clearing of alien plants was part of the government's new environmental policy focusing on biodiversity and empowerment of communities and people, which would reduce poverty. In this respect, the support was in accordance with the overall principles of Norwegian development assistance, i.e. the recipient's responsibility and poverty alleviation.

The right to water was crucial in the building of a democratic South Africa. In the new Water Law the ownership of water was replaced by the right of all people to use it: "all water, wherever it occurs in the water cycle, is a resource common to all." (The Working for Water Programme 1999, p. 10). In order to maintain water resources on which humans depended, the law recognised the need to protect ecosystems, in particular catchment areas and their habitats. The control of alien plants was basic to the elaboration of catchment management and would form an integral part of a Catchment Management Agency.

Prospects

Elim is situated on the Agulhas Plain in the South Western Cape, in the Southern Overberg region. It is a small and poor mission village located in an area extremely rich in rare and endemic species. The typography of the area is undulating to flat and much of the land has been converted to wheat cultivation since a large part of the area has fertile soil. The two major vegetation types are fynbos and renosterveld. The land in and around the

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town is communally owned and managed by the Elim community, under the auspices of the Moravian Church. Thus, the village people are the custodians of one of the last remaining areas of the rare Elim *fynbos* and of the cultural and religious heritage of the mission station. The rich floral heritage makes Elim suitable for tourism and the wild-flower industry, but the natural vegetation has been invaded by alien plants such as Australian acacia and hakea trees. As a consequence, the biodiversity of the Elim area is in danger of local extinction, and both water supply and social uplift are threatened.

The population in Southern Overberg is rural. Approximately 52 per cent of the population are formally employed while unemployment in certain areas reaches up to 58 per cent. Education and health levels are poor, causing high rates of infant mortality and TB.

Both the ecological and social conditions made Elim a suitable project within the Working for Water Programme. If it got funding for 3-5 years, this would also provide the poor community with job facilities. The residents were to a large extent unemployed or migrant workers, but an alien-plant-clearing project would give work close to town and improve the local economy.

By 1998 a management plan for the area had been compiled, and start-up funding was provided by the South African government's Poverty Relief Fund, but implementation was dependent on donors' money. Elim was chosen by the South African government to be submitted to the Norwegian government as part of the environmental programme. Annual support was estimated at Rand 1.25 million (NOK 2 million) for 2 years. The funding from the Poverty Relief Fund was directed towards equipment used for technical removal of the alien plants, such as chainsaws, brushcutters and vehicles. The Norwegian funding aimed primarily at giving support for wages, running expenses and cash flow, while smaller amounts were spent on herbicides, protective clothing, transport and equipment (NORAD 1996b; ibid 1998c).

**Empowerment and reduction of poverty**

The Elim Project took a strong community approach. The ultimate aim was to create jobs for the unemployed and a situation where empowered people within disadvantaged communities could form viable business units that could tender for work resulting from the Working for Water Programme. The training within the Working for Water Programme would, hopefully, give people the possibility to find ordinary work (NORAD 1998c, p. 2).

In the case of Elim, the natural and cultural aspects of the project were closely interlinked. The project was not possible if one of the two components were left out. The community would not survive without ecological rehabilitation, and ecological rehabilitation could not be achieved without participation from the community. To be a vital and viable community, Elim depended on social upliftment, water conservation and environmental benefits simultaneously.

Water conservation and ecological restoration by control of alien plants came to serve as a platform to train people in a range of skills, such as machine operation, teamwork, supervision, management and entrepreneurial skills. Part of the training in managerial and entrepreneurial skills was linked to the wage system and the daily tasks within the programme. In the first stage, the labourer was paid on a daily wage basis. This method of
payment was used for people who were trained under strict supervision in the identification of alien plants species, methods of control, basic equipment handling, safety and environmental awareness. During this first stage, the programme leaders identified candidates for advanced training in management and leadership skills. In the second stage the payment was given according to a daily wage contract, but the workers were encouraged to assist in defining the daily tasks in co-operation with site managers. The daily task was directed towards development of managerial and entrepreneurial skill in order to select candidates suitable to become team leaders. The third stage involved a change in payment methods from daily wage to piecework. This method involved the setting of targets for an area to be cleared within a specific time period. When the clearing was done, the team was paid an agreed amount. However, workers were still on a labour contract with the Working for Water Programme. The training involved knowledge about how to estimate costs in piecework and managerial training in order to achieve the most important objective of the programme: to empower people with the skills needed to be independent contractors on open contracts. This method corresponded with the RDP goals and principles as set out in the GEAR strategy, efficiency and commitment to market liberalism.

The social part of the Elim project was conducted according to the overall Working for Water principles aiming at job creations and empowerment. During the three years of support from the Norwegian government, training in entrepreneurial skills, business and supervision was one of the most important activities undertaken. Many of the courses that were supported gave a certification, which meant that for future employment, the people got an official certificate of the training they had received. In addition training was given to assist the supervisors in the process of going from stage one and the daily wage system to the contractor system.

One important human resource base was development of Elim as a tourist community.

Tourism in South Africa was not only about wildlife or national parks. Tourists also came to explore the culture and history, and in the Western Cape the diversity of the natural fynbos. In Elim, all these aspects were available. In addition, the Elim project was supposed to create opportunities for the development of secondary industries. Potential industries included the manufacture of firewood, charcoal and furniture, and the cultivation of wildflowers. The industrial part of the project was also directed towards the constitutional commitment to gender equity. More than 50 per cent of employees would be women and women should be equally represented at management level. To facilitate women's access to work and participation, the project supported the setting up of crèches.

There is good reason to state that the Elim Working for Water Programme has served the social upliftment of the community. Not all the inhabitants agreed with the idea of removing alien plants, but after being informed about the importance of the work, they saw the win-win situation that would result from the programme. According to the assistant daily manager, Alliston Appell, the Elim community has benefited not only from an economic, but also from a social and ecological point of view. Self-reliance and community spirit have increased, and people have got new knowledge about nature and their history (NORAD 2001b, p. 12f).
Environmental benefits

After the Working for Water Programme had run for four years, national and international research showed significant increase in water runoff in areas cleared of alien invasive vegetation. This result was also expected in the Elim area, both in overland water flow and in groundwater. The most invasive alien plants in the Elim area were pines, hakea and Australian acacias. The clearing procedure in the Elim area followed general principles laid down by the Working for Water Programme. Branches in the river courses would be burned to prevent damming during winter floods. Light infestations would be treated first because they have the biggest invasive potential and are less cost-intensive than denser areas. Clearing work started at the top of the catchment then moved down towards the floodplain. Follow-up work had the highest priority.

Different eradication techniques applied to different species. To clear pines the workers would use a simple mechanical method: fell the plants and then leave them for 12-18 months. During this time the seeds are released and a vast number of seedlings grow up. Before these young plants start forming seeds, the whole area should be burnt. Follow-up work is done when the veld has recovered for 18 months to two years. Then the area will be treated the same way again and a third follow-up will take place 8-10 years after the initial clearing.

Clearing of *Australian acacia* was more complicated and the only way to get rid of it is to use an integrated mechanical, chemical and biological method. When the plants have been felled, they are left to dry and the seeds to germinate, but before the seeds are formed the area is burnt. After the fire, seedlings are treated with a chemical treatment three times at 18-24 month intervals. The stems of the *Acacia* plants are treated with herbicides.

Follow-up work was pivotal to the success of the programme. In the Elim area a monitoring system was used to detect changes in vegetation and biodiversity after the removal of aliens. The system consisted of fixed-point photographic monitoring and permanent plots were established in *fynbos* areas that were lightly-invaded and densely-invaded. Workers from the Elim community received training in order to understand the systems and to do the monitoring.

According to the Biodiversity Convention, the danger of invasive alien plants or other organisms is recognised globally as the second most important threat to the long-term preservation of biodiversity and ecological stability. Certain aspects of the problem are of particular importance to the Elim area, "since the Elim community is currently involved in an upliftment effort by developing their area as a destination for tourists." (NORAD 1998c p. 4f.) The destruction of biodiversity by invasive plants causes economic as well as ecological losses. "The control of alien plants and active restoration of the environment are thus of paramount importance in preserving the resource base upon which the Elim communities depend." (ibid.).

Support from Norway was initially given for two years. It was extended by one year and was terminated in spring 2001. However, the ecological invasion is not completely under control. The Norwegian funding was a stepping stone for ecological restoration and social upliftment in Elim, but in accordance with the idea of minimising dependence, follow-up work is left to the community itself (NORAD 2001, p. 12f.). This is also in accordance with the community spirit that has created the need to find development paths for the future that are independent of donor assistance.
A success story?

"The Working for Water Programme is the most effective and efficient poverty relief instrument of Government ... and ... it is the world's leading initiative to combat invading alien plants." (The Working for Water Programme 1999/2000, p. 3). This statement was the official conclusion in the Working for Water Annual Report 1999/2000. At first glance, the Working for Water Programme seems to be a success story from both an ecological and a social point of view. It has been described as an "overall success". The programme has won 22 awards since the start in 1995, among them the WWW Green Trust Best Conservation Project and former Minister of DWAF, Kader Asmal, was awarded the Stockholm Water Prize for 2000. Other awards have been given for achieving social upliftment results.

From an organisational and administrative point of view, the success concerned improved quality of management and high productivity due to a move to closed contracts and increased funding from the Poverty Relief Fund. The funding gave the programme financial security for the coming three years. The success also concerned the creation of environmental awareness, the strengthening of community pride and dignity, and the increase of job opportunities.

The Working for Water Programme aimed at creating development opportunities for impoverished rural black people. This policy had a social, but also a biological reason. Most large and dense areas infested by alien species were located near poor communities. The dual function of Working for Water, ecological restoration and social upliftment, gave weight to the Programme by being part of the sustainable development storyline of the new South Africa. In order to achieve both ecological and social results, it was crucial to build up secondary industries that were generated from the clearing enterprise (WWP 2000, p. 191).

From the Programme's point of view there have clearly been social achievements. The Programme employed close to 60 per cent women, which meant that empowerment of the most marginalised took place. A shining example of success as regards poverty reduction was a statement from a field worker. "Today, my child no longer goes to school barefoot. Now she has shoes and a warm jersey." (ibid.). When looking at the fate of individuals in a short-term perspective, the Programme can certainly claim to have achieved successful results.

There is another side of the coin, however, and there have been criticisms as well as problems regarding the ideals and goals of the programme. Critics have pointed out that it is not only income that is the sum total of a livelihood, and lack of income is not the only factor responsible for poverty. In an early phase, the Programme established a traditional employer-employee relationship. The Programme only employed people on short-term contracts, and when these ended the employee did not necessarily get more work. What was needed was not only short-term income, but also saving schemes or the provision of loans.

In 1998, the Programme was organised according to a contractor model to train people as entrepreneurs. This model was in accordance with the empowerment objective and took a long-term approach to employment. However, the model conflicted with the broad objectives of the Programme – poverty alleviation and the development of demand-driven business. The contracting worker had to wait a long time for payment because of
communication problems within the local level and between the local-level structures and the DWAF.

The Working for Water administration had high ambitions as regards the socio-economic impact of the Programme. From an empowerment perspective the results were positive. At least a lot of women got an income and opportunities to advance within the contractor system. To be more successful the Programme had to set up more crèches and ensure that women were not abused when working in the field alone. Skills training was a fundamental stepping stone to get people out of chronic poverty. Training constituted the basis for success, and good results were achieved at least as regards getting technical skills which could be used in the ordinary labour market. The results were generally modest with regard to other tasks, such as plant identification, HIV/AIDS, and economic management (Golding and Adato 2000, p. 52; WWP 2000, p. 202).

Despite problems, “success-story” might be appropriate when looking at the Working for Water Programme solely as a public works programme. South African public works are unique because of their attempt to create sustainable development at both a community and an individual level. There were visions not only of giving people an income, but also of creating productive assets, enhancing human resource capacity and generating a wide range of social development.

The Working for Water Programme in Elim was also part of the success story. According to Norwegian and South African authorities the project was well managed. “It has succeeded in meeting its targets and contributing to the objectives of the RDP and sustainable development. The project's contribution to community upliftment and its focus on preparing the community for future business enterprises is especially commendable. Congratulations to the people of Elim.”(NORAD 1999a).

There is another story to be told, however. The Programme is not only considered to be a successful RDP initiative, but it has also been criticised for nurturing exclusion and racism by using nature as an alibi in the building of the new South Africa. In an article written by Jean and John L. Comaroff, the authors ask: “How is it that plant 'invaders' can become an urgent political issue, and what might this reveal of the shifting relations among citizenship, community, and national sovereignty under neo-liberal conditions?” They claim that the “obsession” with aliens – both plants and people – “come to embody core contradictions of boundedness and belonging; and alien-nature provides a language for voicing new forms of discrimination amidst a culture of “post-racism” and civil rights”. (Comaroff J and Comaroff L 2000).

**Nature in the building of a democratic state**

The European settlers that came to South Africa imported “exotic” plants to be used commercially, or to bind soils, provide screens and enable dune formation in flat areas, such as the Cape Flats. In the late 1800s the government distributed millions of seeds from the “new” exotics and awarded prizes for the greatest land planted. The plants spread to gardens and plantations, and to what is now the Cape Floral Kingdom. A hundred years later these desirable exotic plants had become enemies of the new nation.

The discourse of invading aliens appeared in the 1970s and 1980s and aliens came to be a botanical category. Botanists concluded that the invading aliens had “outgrown” any merits they might have had in the fynbos region.” (ibid. p. 20). When the ANC came to
power, the Working for Water Programme was launched as the flagship of the RDP. The conquest of invading alien plants became an urgent matter for the state and the political ecology of the Working for Water Programme was soon incorporated into the building of the new South Africa.

The Programme first met with some scepticism among land-owners, the public and the provincial authorities, but the public anxiety over invasive species gradually grew. One reason might be the war and science-fiction metaphor used by the government propaganda that nurtured the vision of apocalypse if the alien plants were not destroyed.

The concern over invasive alien species culminated into an obsession after the great fires in the Cape in January 2000, in which the media played an important role. Particularly in the English-speaking press, the discourse of blaming the invasive aliens was dominant. The Afrikaans media took a different approach, blaming irresponsible landowners for allowing aliens to spread and putting “our natural heritage at risk”, and the ANC regime for inefficient governance and for neglecting the Cape (Comaroff J and Comaroff L 2000, p. 4; 21). The different approaches went along party political lines and gave voice to a tension that has been prevalent in South Africa since the first democratic election: the tension between regionalism and national governance. The debate never discussed the importance of invasive alien plants to poor people like the many squatters in the Cape metropolitan area, as a source of income and as a natural resource, namely wood. As one wood vendor exclaimed, a lot of people cut wood from invasive species “…and now there won’t be enough to go around. Our hearts are sore because of this fire…This is our only livelihood and now we hardly have any left.”(ibid., p. 22).

Thus, the discourse of invasive aliens had its limits, but not to the government. The “catastrophic” consequence of the blaze was raised to the highest political level. Aliens threatened the prosperity of the country, would disturb global trade and tourism, and they even endangered the African Renaissance (WWP, p. III). The notion of African Renaissance has been a theme among African leaders since the end of the 1990s. It is a process of releasing the African continent from its colonial and neocolonial shackles, once and for all. The African Renaissance aims at raising a discussion about where Africa is going in the global community and how to find development paths that will benefit the poor masses. In other words, it "aims to place the continent at the forefront of human development and progress."(Malegapuru 1999, 117).

In most African countries global concern is primarily directed towards environmental and social problems. South Africa, however, is unique by being one of the world’s ten big emerging markets heading towards global markets and market liberalism. The country seeks to take the lead in the African continent and meet great challenges regarding effective use of South Africa’s human resources within the framework of equality, democracy and egalitarianism (ibid. p 274). The Working for Water Programme was established as a major effort to mobilise human resources and to stimulate market liberalism. By removing invasive plants "alien-nature was to become the raw material of communal rebirth." (Comaroff J and Comaroff L 2000, p. 24). But it did not include "alien” elements like the squatters, whose ways of creating a livelihood did not fit in with

the vision of the African Renaissance. Thus, the success-story of the Working for Water Programme has a darker underside as also representing the politics of exclusion.

The politics of exclusion, Comaroff and Comaroff claim, are part of the politics of estrangement in the postcolony. The people of the postcolonial state struggle to find true identity and belonging in a transitional period, standing with one foot in the traditional world and one in the modern. In the case of South Africa, the legacy of apartheid has left an obsession with the question of who is a citizen and who is not. To be part of the global community means to leave racism and head towards equity and democracy or towards ubuntu, a common African humanity. But South Africa’s hostility towards newcomers is one of the highest in the world. At present there are contradictory policies dominating the South African development and the obsession with alien plants is an allusion to a phobia about foreigners. There is a sublime racism underlying the biological and social arguments for getting rid of alien plants, and the liberal press even spoke of an "ethnic cleansing" of the countryside which is reminiscent of apartheid practices.

It is alien-bashing time again. As an alien...I am particularly prickly about criticisms of aliens even if they are plants...Alien plants cannot of course respond to these accusations. But before the Department of Home Affairs is dragooned into investigating the residence permits of these plants I, as a concerned fellow alien, wish to remind one and all that plants such as maize...soybean, sunflower...originated outside of the continent of Africa. In any case, did the fire-and-flood-causing alien plants cross the borders and establish plantations...by themselves? (ibid. p. 26).

The ecological dimensions of removing invasive species, and the social implications of that work, should not be underestimated, however. There is an urgent need to improve people’s access to water, to prevent the severe environmental effects of invading plants, and to reduce poverty. The Working for Water Programme is constructed in accordance with the Reconstruction and Development Programme, aiming at sustainable development and the fulfilment of the African Renaissance. But it is controversial since nature is used to construct a democratic nation with reference to a rhetoric of exclusion and apocalypse (ibid. pp. 30-35). Invasive species have been highly politicised with the help of the "neutral" science of botany and environmental science.

The Comaroff and Comaroff article thus gives good indications that the Working for Water Programme has a darker side that makes us agree with Hajer’s statement that environmental discourse is fragmented and contradictory. The Working for Water Programme revealed an environment-and-development discourse held together by the sustainable development story-line, but there is a sub-discourse that came to the surface, particularly after the great fires in the Cape in January 2000. The environmental discourse showed a tendency to reveal the story-line of exclusion, which used ecology as an argument for segregation. Historically this was the case, and the tradition from Smuts might even explain why the Cape fire nurtured the media debate on aliens. Scientists were already concerned over loss of biodiversity at Table Mountain in the inter-war period, and to Smuts, who spent much time defending the endangered species, Table Mountain was a love affair and the symbol of the white man’s domination. It was at the foot of Table Mountain it had all started, when Jan Riebeck arrived at the Cape in 1652. In the year 2000 exclusion occurred in the language with the use of strong symbolic connotation, and it struck people as a reminiscence of apartheid practices.

The debate is unfinished, but it sheds a more varied light on the idea of the African Renaissance. Arguments about outsiders in the biotic community of the floral kingdom might be translated into discrimination of human beings. In this process nature might be
used as an alibi for marginalizing those that do not contribute to the African Renaissance and the entrance of South Africa into the new global order.
Today we are entering a new era for our country and its people. Today we celebrate not the victory of a party, but a victory for all the people in South Africa...The South Africa we have struggled for, in which all our people, be they African, Coloured, Indian or White, regard themselves as citizens of one nation...In the 1980s the African National Congress was still setting the pace, being the first major political formation in South Africa to commit itself firmly to a Bill of Rights, which we published in November 1990. These milestones give concrete expression to what South Africa can become. They speak of a constitutional, democratic, political order in which, regardless of colour, gender, religion, political opinion or sexual orientation, the law will provide for the equal protection of all citizens (Mandela 1994).

The UNCED process focussed strongly on the necessity for an integrated approach to environment and development problems in order to achieve sustainable development in Third World countries. This focus was in accordance with the Norwegian governmental approach to environment and development during the 1990s, and with the ambition to follow the guidelines that were drawn up in Agenda 21. Of particular relevance to Norwegian development cooperation with South Africa are, as mentioned previously, Chapter 3 on poverty reduction, Chapter 24 on global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development and Chapter 37 on capacity building. All three issues are highly relevant with regard to environmental assistance and to the specific theme of this story, which is the South African struggle to achieve sustainable land and agrarian reform.

Support for the governance of land and agrarian reform has been included in the Norwegian-South African development cooperation since 1999. NORAD collaborates with the Norwegian Institute of Human Rights in funding institutional cooperation for capacity building in both countries. The funding is administered by the Institute of Human Rights, which also has the responsibility for following up projects. The Norwegian partner is the Centre for International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric) at the Agricultural University. This centre is one of the six environmental assistance centres which have signed agreements with NORAD to provide external environmental competence. The South African Partner is the Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the Western Cape.\(^{44}\)

We seek to explain why South African partners sought support from Norway in land and agrarian reform matters. We will explore the political history of the land reform process during the Mandela presidency and in the period shortly after the change of President in 1999. Our research questions are: How did the government address the objective set by the ANC of developing a sustainable land reform that sought to integrate both gender and environmental issues? How did the government’s land policy relate to the constitutional commitment to social and environmental equity? Has there been consistency between the governmental intention to include gender and environmental concerns in the land reform process, and its practice?

\(^{44}\) Land reform is also included in research done by for instance the Department of Administration and Organization Theory in Bergen and conducted by Thorvald Gran. The Department has got funding from NUFU and collaborates with researchers in South Africa.
Theoretical considerations

The questions raised will be discussed by analysing the triangular relationship between land reform, environment and gender. It might have been easier to deal with the environment and gender separately, but there are arguments in favour of a linkage between these two aspects.

From a comparative methodological point of view, there are certain interesting parallels. Firstly, both environment and gender have traditionally been marginal political issues, but in the making of the new democratic South Africa, policy makers put profound stress on the importance of the integration of environment and gender perspectives at all political levels. Secondly, environment and gender issues were both linked to poverty. Sustainable land practices and women’s access to land were supposed to improve poor people’s livelihoods.

In development studies, the linkage between environmental and gender concerns has been discussed in different discourses (Agarwal 1992, p.152). The women in development (WID) discourse which arose in the 1970s, aimed at the integration of women into all sectors and levels of society. Western donor agencies implemented specific women-targeted projects based on the idea that women were not participating fully in the development process. Another dominant approach has been the somewhat static focus on women, the environment and development (WED), highlighting the idea that the empowerment of women in environmental issues is crucial to continued subsistence because women have a special relationship or affinity with nature as users of natural resources. However, in order to stay alive, women may have to participate in unsound environmental management. The result is that women are regarded as victims of environmental degradation and ill-conceived scientific and development processes.

Both the WID and the WED discourses evolved parallel with the documentation of the alarming negative impact on the environment in the tropics in the 1970s caused by Western donor activities. Scientists and development experts offered solutions to the crisis based on reconciliation between environment and development, which in turn implied the need for new lifestyles and new institutions. Hence, this process called for an integrated way of thinking about both the environment and women in order to achieve a development process rooted in ideas of self-reliance, equity and ecological prudence.

In recent years the eco-feminist school has dominated debates on the environment and gender. The eco-feminist discourse highlights some kind of ‘female essence’ in women and views women as being closer to nature than men, who are associated with a suppressive patriarchal culture and technology, suppressing women as well as nature. Women are seen as active participants and efficient environmental managers engaged in rehabilitation, protection, tree planting and grassroots movements combining environmental and feminist activism (Agarwal 1992; Johansen and Svarstad 1998). Since both the feminist movement and the environmental movement represent egalitarian, non-hierarchical systems, women’s empowerment and ecological activism must act together in order to combat suppression. The message that women are caring, non-violent and the best fitted to save the Earth was proclaimed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

Eco-feminists oppose the nature/culture and male/female dichotomies which have arisen in Western culture. These values have in turn been imposed on people in Asia and Africa by the development processes of the industrialised world. The traditional balanced relations between men and women, nature and culture, has to be restored. According to
Vananda Shiva, Third World women have the key to recovery. The nature/culture
dichotomy has been regarded as false by Carolyn Merchant, for instance, who sees it as a
patriarchal ideological construct used to maintain gender hierarchy (Deshingar 1994, p.4;

Many scholars in the development field have had difficulties with the WID, WED and
eco-feminist approaches and have adopted alternative categories and concepts. Their
most sustained criticism has been against the idea of presenting women as a category in
their relationship to the environment, or the idea of presenting women’s interests as
uniform. Experience has shown that all women do not experience or perceive nature in
the same way, nor do they act as a unit as if class, ethnicity, age and material position do
not count (Leach 1994).

Environmental perceptions, values and priorities differ between men and women, but
they should not be accounted for on the basis of an a priori universal notion of a female
essence or of women as custodians, real managers of natural resources, or anything else.
One needs a materialist approach; the focus should be on material relations and on their
structuring by gender relations. Melissa Leach has termed this a “micro-political economy
of gendered resource use” aiming at a “detailed unpacking of differences and divisions in
activities, responsibilities and rights in processes of natural resource management and use,
and an examination of their interaction with gender relations” (Leach 1994, p.4).

The feminist environmentalist approach adopted by Bina Agarwal goes in the same
direction. Agarwal suggests a political economy perspective on environment-gender
relations in order to understand the material realities in which women act. Such an
approach “would concern both how gender relations and relations between people and
the non-human world are conceptualized, and how they are concretized in terms of the
distribution of property, power, and knowledge, and in the formulation of development
policies and programs (Agarwal 1992, pp.123,153).

The gender and development approach taken by Leach and Agarwal, amongst others,
is helpful when analysing the relationship between land reform, environment and gender
in South Africa. When studying how environmentally sound land-use practices can be
achieved, it is crucial to understand how both men’s and women’s interaction with their
environment is influenced by economic, social and cultural determinants of control and
ownership of resources. If women-nature links are found, they need to be analysed as part
of processes of ideological construction linked to power relations and not as part of the
notion of a female essence (Deshingar 1994, p.4). However, a WID analysis is not without
relevance as long as women do not have individual rights to land and are not able to
participate in decision making. In this case, women must be special targets until they have
been fully integrated into the development process.

**Land reform and sustainability**

From the mid-seventeenth century onwards, black people were gradually dispossessed of
most of their land through armed conquest and economic pressure. This pattern was
formalised in the Land Act of 1913, which restricted African land ownership to 7 per cent
of the total land. At a stroke the indigenous black people became aliens. The new law
made it a crime for any but servants to live on white farms and ordered the eviction of
squatters. At the time, the black writer Sol Plaatje wrote in his book *Native Life in South
Africa: "South Africa has by law ceased to be the home of any of her native children whose skins are dyed with a pigment that does not conform with the regulation hue.” (Platje 1916, cit. in Sparks 1997, p. 136).

In 1936 land allocation to black people was extended to 13 per cent under the Native Trust and Land Act. A rational land-use policy called "Betterment" planning was introduced to combat erosion, conserve the environment and to develop agriculture in the homelands. Betterment schemes were designed to transform land use patterns and involved a range of measures, such as fencing off grazing areas and construction of contour banks. Rural locations were divided into residential, arable and grazing units, and homesteads were grouped together into village-like settlements, forcing people onto smaller units of land.

The results were dismal. In most areas people affected by the process came to associate the schemes with reductions in the availability of arable land and loss of livestock. Nor did the "Betterment" planning relieve the pressure on the land. The scheme was too uniform and inflexible, and coupled with land pressure already existing, it "had a predictably negative environmental, economic and social effect." (McAllister, p. 1989; De Wet 1989, pp. 326-345; De Wet 1994, p. 362; Mohahmed 2000, p. 165).

Substantial resettlement of black people took place after World War II. When institutionalising the policy of apartheid in 1948, the Nationalist government created "bantustans" or self-governing "homelands" for the black African population. During the next three decades massive forced removals took place. It has been estimated that between 1960 and 1985 more than 3.5 million people were forced to move from their native land to overcrowded "homelands." (Ramphele 1993, p. 5).

The ecological consequences of the apartheid land policy have been severe. The responsibility, however, was attributed to the black population, who were accused of causing environmental degradation due to bad farming practices. The human consequences are well known. African people, and women in particular, have been at the receiving end of environmentally unsound policies.

Since the fall of apartheid, a large number of actors have been committed to the restructuring of South Africa, ranging from the government to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), and individuals. They took as their logical point of departure the same point at which apartheid once started, namely land reform, and proposed various land reforms in order to redress the injustices of the past. The land reform programme was the cornerstone of the African National Congress (ANC) rural reconstruction programme.

At the opening of Parliament in 1990, President FW de Klerk announced the abolition of the Land Acts. From that moment environmental concern became a political issue in a much broader context than authoritarian apartheid conservation policies and presented a major challenge to the new South Africa. This was to a large extent due to the fact that maldistribution of natural resources and environmental degradation occurred in many rural areas (IDRC 1994, pp. 30; 36; NLC 1995, p.27).

The land reform programme began when the ANC government took office in 1994. The programme was directed towards land restitution, land redistribution and tenure reforms. In restitution matters the government was to register all claims within three years and restore land to people dispossessed by racially discriminatory legislation. With regard to redistribution, the main objective was to redistribute 30 per cent of agricultural land to
small-scale black farmers within five years. As regards tenure reform, the aim was to achieve security of tenure for all. Even though racially discriminatory land laws had been removed, many South Africans still experienced insecurity, particularly women.

Women face specific disabilities in obtaining land. The land redistribution programme must therefore target women. Institutions, practices and laws that discriminate against women's access to land must be reviewed and brought in line with national policy. In particular, tenure and matrimonial laws must be revised appropriately. (RDP 1994, p. 11).

By providing tenure security, the Government intended that all South Africans should have the right to hold their land without fear of it being taken away arbitrarily by any authority. It was argued that tenure security would contribute to more sustainable use of land when people had a clear definition of their rights and obligations (DLA 1995, p. 8).

The White Paper on South African Land Reform was tabled in April 1997. One environmental challenge to the land reform process was to relieve land pressure without increasing environmental degradation. An attempt was made to give people more control over their lives and their environment by involving land owners in the planning process. To get a land acquisition grant from the Department of Land Affairs (DLA), the applicants were required to prepare feasibility studies, including assessment of the environmental consequences of the planned project or production system. Of crucial importance was local participation and knowledge about what the applicants themselves believed would improve their living conditions (DLA 1997, p.12).

Land reform is a complicated process touching conflicting interests. To make a robust platform for how to organise the reforms, the ANC made land reform policy part of the RDP. Further, the ANC played an important role in the establishment of a land reform "think tank", the Land and Agricultural Policy Centre, which came to work closely with the DLA. In 1996 the principles for land reform were laid down in the Constitution and the White Paper on land policy was presented in April 1997 (Turner and Ibsen 2000, pp. 7-11). Concern over environmental issues was immediately recognised and reflected in the White Paper. Land reform aimed at reducing poverty and giving people control over their own lives and their environment. This could not be achieved without awareness of the environmental risks related to how people should maintain their land.

There were severe problems in land redistribution related to landlessness and land occupation. Environmental conditions around informal dwellings and illegal occupation close to urban areas were bad, and people had minimal control over their surroundings. In rural areas land was needed for cultivation. For a great majority of them, cultivation was a means to secure access to food, whilst a minority wanted to produce a surplus. When implementing the redistribution programme, it was important to find solutions which took into account the diverse conditions under which people lived and which could help to alleviate poverty and stimulate economic growth.

Environmental issues related to tenure were even more complicated. Until the 1990s Africans could not own land. This apartheid practice resulted in chaotic and inefficient land management. People who were de facto owners of the land might find that they were not de jure owners. Many communal areas were occupied by groups or "tribes" which regarded themselves as owners of the land, while the land was registered de jure as state property. This situation created legal insecurity, and poor people in particular were vulnerable to powerful chiefs taking control. Another problem was related to the different tenure systems existing in an overlapping way. One group might claim ownership because
they had owned the land for generations, another group because the government had awarded the land to them (DLA 1997, p. 17). How then should a policy of sustainable environmental land reform be formulated?

Towards environmental integration

During the Mandela presidency a number of Green and White policy papers from various departments were published in order to establish an effective and integrated environmental management system. In order to improve the quality of life, the government searched for win-win opportunities that could promote both environmental integration and economic gains (DEAT 1996, p. 6). Of importance to the land reform process were the requirements of participation, equity and sustainable use of natural resources in accordance with the Rio conference and Agenda 21. The political challenge was to give local people possibilities of cultivating their land according to the philosophy of sustainable resource management. Sustainable agriculture was to be achieved through the introduction of a Land Care programme.

Shortly after the presentation of the new government’s environmental objectives, the DLA decided to investigate to what extent environmental concern was integrated in the land reform process. A study was carried out by the Land and Agriculture Policy Centre in Johannesburg on the assumption that environmental concern was insufficiently integrated in the process (Turner et al:xiii, p. 8). Why then was this the case?

First, there were institutional constraints related to the integration process. The legislative and management responsibilities for land resources were spread over different national and provincial departments.  

45 The DLA itself admitted that the institutional framework and the legal system did not seem to have a way of integrating these functions:

The Physical Planning Act, the Environment Conservation Act and the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act assume integration of environmental management in land use planning. However, at the Administrative level, environmental management practices remain sectoral and fragmented. (Turner et al 1997, p. 18).

Secondly, at least during the early transition period, there was a lack of capacity and alternative agricultural thinking to implement environmentally sustainable land-use practices. During the long history of oppression and lack of access to land for black people, white farmers built up large-scale commercial farming. Conventional agriculture was supported by the apartheid regime through the passing of Land Acts, and commercial farming was accepted as the most effective and productive model. Thus agriculture in South Africa followed the Western science-based and high-yield model, which has led to pollution, loss of genetic resources and soil degradation (Mohamed 2000, p.168). By the early 1990s there was no tradition of organic or biological farming to encourage thinking about sustainable agriculture within the different departments.

The land reform process, however, was part of the vision to build a new country where people would live in harmonious coexistence with the natural environment and cultivate land, while at the same time conserving South Africa’s biological diversity. Nelson Mandela stressed the close relationship between nature and people. “Each one of us is

45 Departments involved in implementation of environmental legislation are the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Tourism, Water Affairs and Forestry, Health, and Mineral and Energy. The fragmentation was also stressed in the mid-term review of the Land Reform Pilot Programme 1997, 12-13.
intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country... Each time one of us touches the soil of this land, we feel a sense of personal renewal... We are moved by a sense of joy and exhilaration when the grass turns green and the flowers bloom." (Mandela 1994).

Thirdly, there are conceptual difficulties concerning the interpretation of the concepts of environment and development among the actors committed to land reform. The Environmental Conservation Act of 1989 defines environment as "the aggregate of surrounding objects, conditions, and influences that influence the life and habitats of man or any other organism or collection of organisms", while the authors of the report on Environment and Land Reform restricted the definition of environment to "the natural resources and life forms which surround South Africans in their biosphere" (Turner et al. 1997, p. 5). The authors adopted a people-centred approach and suggested an environmental policy in a much broader context than nature conservation and protection. Environmental concern in land reform was about the preservation of people and an improvement in their standard of living; in other words, environmental concern was ultimately a political issue of social justice.

This statement leads to a consideration of what development is about. In South African policy, development was seen as a process towards improved quality of life through a reallocation of resources, but without depletion of natural resources. In this way a reconciliation between the environment and development would be possible. If environmental concern was to have any effect on land reform, the land reform process had to be integrated into the development process and not only seen as a means to redress injustices of the past: "Treating land reform as development will dispel the too common impression that land reform is just about redressing the politics of the past, without looking carefully enough to the economics of the future". (ibid. p. 69).

A fully integrated view of environmental issues also called for a shift in the view of environment as something on the margins, something to be taken care of in order to avoid negative consequences and in order to follow mainstream rhetoric. In order to achieve integration, it has been suggested that the environment should be considered to be an opportunity, not only a troublesome cost. Creative environmental planning should contribute towards raising the standard of living for poor people and form the basis for “any viable rural development programme" (ibid. p. 167).

The recommendations set out by Turner et al. sought to balance trends in thinking about the environment among land reform workers and those living at the grassroots level.46 In scientific debate there are two dominant views as regards who holds the necessary expertise. The top-down approach has focused on rural poor as being ignorant and environmentally destructive and therefore in need of expert help, while the more recent bottom-up approach devotes much attention to indigenous knowledge and rural people’s own expertise about their local areas. In this case women play important roles as keepers of knowledge and managers of natural resources. In South Africa both paradigms have been relevant, but more arguments from both sides still have to be tested. Apparently the dominating view is the need for participatory approaches and people-based development.

46 I have drawn arguments in the following paragraph on Turner et al 1997: 5-8.
Gendered perspectives of women’s rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed in Paris on 10 December, 1948. Article 1 states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The National Party came to power in South Africa in the same year and, over a short period, institutionalised the policy of apartheid. “South Africa parted company with the world and chose to articulate racism as a national philosophy at precisely the moment that the rest of the world began moving in the opposite direction” (Sparks 1997, p. 183).

The adoption of the Freedom Charter at the Congress of the People in 1955 was a turning point in the history of the country. Through this charter, the ANC articulated an all-embracing vision of a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. The charter states that "the rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour or sex". When the Constitution of South Africa was adopted on 8 May 1996, these principles constituted its core elements. In the founding provisions it was stated that the Republic of South Africa is "one sovereign, democratic state founded on...human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms, non-racialism and non-sexism." (Constitution of South Africa, 1996, p. 1). A long struggle for human rights was coming to an end.

When the ANC came to power, the party urged action on gender issues. President Mandela stated that:

freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression. All of us must take this on board that the objectives of the Reconstruction and Development Programme will not have been realised unless we see in visible and practical terms that the condition of the women of our country has radically changed for the better, and that they have been empowered to intervene in all aspects of life as equals with any other member of society. 

African women have traditionally been disadvantaged by lack of property rights and control over natural resources, as have black people in general, but African women are regarded as more disadvantaged compared with men of the same race and class in access to land, employment, labour and training (Machel 1997). In the words of Samora Machel “women have been triply oppressed as they have been exploited on the basis that they are black, women and workers” (ibid, p.1). Being both African and female, they have less control over natural resources and less authority and involvement in decision-making. Due to the complex tenure systems in the homelands, only male heads of household were granted usufruct rights for cultivation by the chief. These rights were inheritable only by men. In the new democratic South Africa changes in property rights were pivotal. The Bill of Rights clause on property (Section 25 of the Constitution) makes clear that “no one may be deprived of property except in terms of law of general application, and no law may permit arbitrary deprivation of property” and the state “must...foster conditions which enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis.” (Bill of Rights, 1996).

During the period of policy formulation, mechanisms for ensuring women’s participation were under national debate. Most ministries held workshops with NGOs and CBOs in order to get people’s input. Civil society organisations in turn lobbied government to adopt their positions. Several organisations, such as the Women’s Charter for Effective Equality, developed through local-level consultations with women, while the

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DLA set up a Working Group on Women’s Rights in order to investigate what steps needed to be taken to promote equal rights in land, to develop better financial services and to give women control over natural resources. Although women, being responsible for the household, had long been involved in environmental management as they collected fuel wood, food and water, their voices had not previously been heard. Government was committed to facilitating greater access to decision-making and managing environmental programmes (Zuma 1995).

Dr. Nkosazana Zuma, leader of the South African Delegation to the Fourth World Conference in Beijing on women, concluded that the government had “taken dramatic strides in the 16 months since elections, and intend to keep up this pace so that, at long last, South Africa can become a beacon of light in the international movements for women’s human rights” (Zuma 1995). The government made several efforts to follow up and advance gender equality after the Beijing Conference on Women, and after ratifying the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In a Cabinet memorandum, plans on land reform were set out to evaluate equality in access to power sharing and decision making for women and to ensure that women constitute at least 30 per cent of local water committees (SACS 1995).

The White Paper on South African Land Policy addressed gender inequities and stated that specific attention had to be devoted to meeting women’s needs and concerns. Gender-neutral land reform policies in other countries had failed to have any positive effects on gender equity. Since leadership has traditionally been dominated by men, and male governmental officials did not know how to handle gender issues, there was a lack of women’s participation in the land reform programme. The White Paper did not formulate concrete reforms, but set out to devise specific strategies and procedures to ensure women’s participation in planning and implementation of land reform projects (DLA 1997, Chapter 3).

**Gender equality and the patriarchal tradition**

Lack of specific reforms meant that concern for gender issues in the land reform process remained talk. Mainstream political rhetoric in South Africa urged that gender issues receive attention, but the real challenge for the government would be how to practise the principle of gender equality within the patriarchal tradition of the ANC, beyond merely changing the law and uttering fine words.

Gender inequality within the ANC has long historical roots. When the Bantu Women’s League was affiliated to the ANC in 1913, women were denied voting rights. Neither the ANC Women’s League (ANCWL) in 1943 nor the Federation of South African Women (FSAW) in 1954 challenged the authority of male leadership. This trend did not end when the liberation organisations were unbanned in 1990. Women’s issues within the ANC continued to have the status of appendages, and after the relaunch of the ANCWL in 1990 the rally was dominated by men: “There were men speakers encouraging women, some men performers entertaining the crowd, lots of ANC fashion clothes, drum majorettes, and women doing their usual thing - cooking…” (Marais 1998, p. 218).

Cherryl Walker has argued that there is a tension between the ANC’s commitment to gender equality and its attempts to retain tradition and old customs:
Given the limitations on the way in which gender equality is perceived within the ANC, as well as the absence of a politically powerful mass women's movement on the ground, it is likely that, in seeking to manage this incompatibility, the ANC-led government will compromise or delay its commitment to gender equality. (Walker 1994, p. 347).

According to Walker, there are serious institutional obstacles to achieving gender equality, including, amongst others, the chief and tribal authorities, customary law and polygamy. Traditional leaders represent an "official rural patriarchy" and they say that they will not give up their traditions and give women equal rights with regard to inheritance, ownership of land and representation in local government.

The notion of tradition makes the process of attaining equality difficult as long as men and women do not agree on the significance of practices or values within household or community. Historically male cultural values have been dominant and women have been caught between those values and their own needs. To avoid conflicts, women have often assisted in their own subordination by showing stronger loyalty to male-dominated political organisations than to women activists challenging the patriarchal domination. However, within the Rural Women's Movement there are signs of radicalisation among women. There are voices arguing in favour of getting "women under the tree" and letting them take part in decision-making (Marais 1999, p. 219). Custom has always been part of a dynamic process and has to be refashioned according to the new visions of gender equity (Walker 1994, p. 348).

Other researchers have pointed out the difficulties for women to obtain credit and raise funds to buy necessary inputs. Since the ANC has now become market-based in its land policy and proposes that transactions in land should be on a "willing seller" basis, poor black women will not be able to purchase land (Deshingar 1994, p. 8).

Challenges related to women's equal access to land have been met outside of ANC-circles. The National Land Committee (NLC) was established as a networking forum of NGOs with their own Gender Task Group. The main objective was to integrate gender into the NLC programme and shift the emphasis from the government's assumption that legal and technical solutions are adequate means to address gender inequality. The NLC's land reform proposals focused on changes in common property and legal systems, in essence saying that women should own and hold land in their own rights. To enable them to do that, women should be treated as a specific interest group and be given a special role to play in land administration and local government (NCL 1995, p. 27).

Shamin Meer has said that it is crucial to avoid simplistic solutions based on assumptions of homogeneity within households and communities. The beneficiaries of land reform are diverse. Women do not constitute a homogeneous entity, but in one way or another they face common problems due to the gender division of labour. Women are responsible for cooking, cleaning, child-care and fuel and water collection. To fulfil these responsibilities and to improve their reproductive labour, access to land is necessary. Without land rights, women will remain dependent on a man, husband or chief, to secure their livelihood. This situation is incompatible with the Constitution and fundamental human rights.

There are, however, important constraints. A law does not necessarily reflect practices and as long as women's access to land in their own rights is contested by male tribal

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48 Reaffirmation of indigenous culture has, however, been strongly evoked among traditional leaders and their organisation CONTRALESA i.e. Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa.
authorities who are devoted to traditional practices. Not even the Constitution as supreme law of the land is able to alter this kind of tradition in a short time. Another problem is the understanding of gender within government circles. As outlined in the theoretical section in this paper, there are different approaches to gender: a women specific approach and a gendered specific approach. Another approach is gender-blind. The ANC has verbally subscribed to a gendered perspective by using expressions such as "non-sexism", but both the gender-blind approach and the women-specific approach can be seen in various government documents. Samora Machel claims that gender blindness is evident through the silence on the impact of gender relations. The women-specific approach singles out women as targets and a homogeneous category, deserving special treatment by the state. This view maintains the system that oppresses women. Creating opportunities for women to enter the circles of power does not necessarily change ideas and values, but only increases the numbers of women going into leadership (Machel 1997, p. 2; Meer 1997, p. 5-6).

How then can the government take a coherent approach to gender issues? Shamin Meer (Meer 1997, p. 7) has outlined some suggestions. First, the discussion on gender has to be framed within a broad sustainable development discourse focusing on rural development redressing the injustices created by apartheid. Both men and women need to participate and be active in all aspects of political, social and economic life. For women, rights to land would serve as a catalyst. Secondly, there is a need to take an empowerment approach and see the beneficiaries as active participants and agents in the reform process. Thirdly, the land-reform process has to go beyond the women-specific approach and focus on gendered perspectives in order to challenge patriarchal social relations and the traditional gender division of labour in the family. Reforms are not possible if women are not given time to organise outside the household sphere. Thus a gendered perspective is a real challenge to the democratisation process and the transformation of the status quo. Policymakers have to elaborate a coherent gender strategy that addresses practical gender needs at the level of household, communities and in all relations between men and women.

**Intentions and reality**

In 1998 the DLA produced a ‘Quality of Life Report’ to measure progress towards the intended objectives of the land reform process. The report was based on a set of indicators of success:

Land reform will have succeeded if it establishes security of tenure for the millions of South Africans living under insecure tenure (farm workers, labour tenants and squatters), if it distributes or establishes access to land and reaches rural people, especially disadvantaged groups like women. (Hargreaves & Meer 2000, p. 269).

This statement reflects the women-specific approach within the government, treating women as a homogenous category and a special target group. Power relations remain in the background and there was no analysis carried out to examine how benefits were distributed within households or how decision-making was structured. Further, and probably for technical reasons, information was drawn from genderless categories such as “households”, “families” and “communities”. The DLA articulated a notion of gender equity which was mainly built on the idea of registration of land rights in the name of all
family members, but that idea gave women the status of equals only in relation to other family members or members of the community. In order to fulfil the objectives of land reform, democracy, human rights and poverty alleviation, the crucial point would be to give women independent land rights. To do this, it would be necessary to take a less legalistic approach to land reform policy. Legal rights by themselves were not adequate since traditional social structures and the division of labour generated unequal power relations in practice. Other means would be to find systems for monitoring the impact of land reform within households, families and communities. Thus, equity was understood as not only equal participation and equal access, but also equal control and transformation of unequal power relations (Hargreaves & Meer 2000, pp. 1-8).

Neither gender nor women are discussed in other DLA publications, for example, the 1998 annual report. From this Hargreaves and Meer have concluded that “land reform is not substantially advancing the state and societal goal of gender equity” and "gender is not regarded as a core business of the DLA" (ibid., p. 271). The same conclusion has been drawn by Sharmila Govender-van Wyk in an article on gender policy in land reform (Governnder-van Wyk 1999, p. 24).

Gender issues are difficult to deal with due to the power of customary and social practices in rural areas. A study done by the DLA in Makuleke and Mashashane in the Northern Province (now Limpopo) has revealed that women participate in planning and decisions on land-use only at a very low level. They were excluded from decision-making on production and identification of land. Men explicitly used arguments about women being disrespectful and lazy; thus they should not be included in decision-making (ibid. p. 67).

**Restitution of land in Riemvasmaak**

A case study from the community of Riemvasmaak in the Northern Cape has investigated the politics of resettlement, who returns and how women’s needs are being met. In May 1994 the people of Riemvasmaak returned to their land after having been dumped in Namibia and the Eastern Cape under one ”black spot” removal exercise. The people of Riemvasmaak continued to plan for their return even while they were displaced, and when the state and the occupiers of the land refused to move, they organised, campaigned, protested and marched in order to persuade the authorities to act until the Commission on Land Allocation approved of giving most of the land back to the original inhabitants. Planning was done by all relevant stakeholders at central, provincial and local level. The process showed that restitution entailed more than just the acquisition of lost land (Lund 1999, p. 49).

In the celebration of return to the land, former Minister of Land and Agriculture, Derek Hanekom, presented an optimistic vision:

> Good planning, the resettlement of people, the provision of infrastructure and services, economic support programs, sustainable development and (very important) community institution building, are essential elements of a program of restitution. (Hanekom 1994).

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49 The people were of Xhosa origin and some were of Nama/Herero/Damara origin. When the forced removal started in 1974 the Xhosas’ were sent to the Ciskei, the others to Namibia.
Hanekom stressed that the Government’s policy on land restitution was that this had be
done quickly and effectively, but the communities were also responsible for taking control
over their own future.

Seen through the Minister’s eyes, restitution of land in Riemvasmaak was a success
story. But studies done in the area after five years show a gap between the rhetoric on
gender equity in state documents and the reality experienced by the women there. Francie
Lund points out that the lack of a comprehensive socio-economic survey of households is
an obstacle in addressing women’s needs in land restitution (Lund 1999, p. 49). There was
no information about who came back and who did not, about household structures,
sources of income, and people’s skills. Lund found that a typical female household was a
de jure household consisting of widows as heads, several children and grandchildren.
Those who did not come back were often male members of the family, notably fathers of
the children, who did not contribute financially, or children in high school.

The case study from Riemvasmaak supports the criticism of the government for being
gender blind. The notion of household as a neutral concept has been a hindrance to
promoting gender equity in land reforms. The household paradigm has roots in Roman
Dutch law and old assumptions about the paterfamilias being responsible for wives,
children and slaves. However, the same assumptions about household relations are also
found in African customary practices. The chiefs, headmen and homestead heads were
males with the same role of guardians as the paterfamilias. Using the household as a unit
has sustained patriarchal practices and reinforced the assumption that men are the
breadwinners and the heads of household, even when they abandon their homes and a
female is de facto head. Thus women’s rights to apply for a land acquisition grant in their
own right are overridden by this practice and women’s needs are subsumed into
household needs.

Paulshoek: constraints on sustainable land reform

South Africa’s constitution is ambitious, which makes it prone to tension between the
multiple commitments. As concluded in a status report on land and agrarian reform
(Turner and Ibsen 2000), environmental concern in the land reform process in the period
we have investigated suffered from tensions between distributive justice and
environmental protection. There was tension between the models of tenure, freehold or
communal, between commercial farming models and small-scale agriculture, and between
environment as a driving force in the land reform process or something to hem land
reform. All these tensions have made it difficult to achieve real integration of
environmental concern in rural development planning and to implement all the good
intentions on paper in the poor communities.

As indicated, much fieldwork has been done on land reform in South Africa. One such
area is the municipality of Leliefontein in southern Namaqualand in the Northern Cape,
which consists of nine small villages.50 To understand why much attention has been given
to Leliefontein, the poverty problem is crucial.

50 The following paragraphs have all references to interviews with people in Paulshoek and Garis done by
Thorvald Gran, University of Bergen and Hilde Ibsen, November 15-16 2000. Reference is Minutes from visit
to Paulshoek November 15-16 2000.
The area is poor, it has weak infrastructure, there is lack of water and to a great extent electricity. It is obvious when visiting the area that the environmental and gender aspects of sustainable development of the land reform process need to address a broad range of land use, and not be limited to farming practices.\textsuperscript{51}

Paulshoek is one of the nine villages in Leliefontain. There are approximately 800 people living there and at least 70 per cent of the population are living off welfare pensions. Farming had been the livelihood for people in the village for generations, but gradually land had been abandoned due to overgrazing. For some years there had been some progress in the village to overcome the problem of overgrazing and to find a viable way of living. One serious problem was that overgrazing was difficult to solve as long as the collective interests were overridden by family interests. Another problem is the tradition of keeping donkeys. They are not used as part of creating a better livelihood, but are free riders causing severe overgrazing.

When starting research in Paulshoek, the National Botanical Institute (NBI) in Cape Town addressed environmental issues. One of the front figures, Tim Hoffman, established the Land Care Project in an abounded area. In the Land Care Project the NBI was experimenting with different grazing plants and involved the community by giving representatives of the Development Forum the responsibility for a nursery. Plants from the nursery were spread or planted in the overgrazed areas by workers from Paulshoek. There was a windmill driving a water pump, and an irrigation system was in place. The ambition was to bring some animals into the area after three years. The project had received 3-400 000 R from the government to be used for labour, buying seeds and for some administration.

The status report (Turner and Ibsen 2000) has pointed at difficulties as regards efficient communication and coordination in the land reform process. This was also the case in Paulshoek. When we visited Paulshoek in November 2000, there was no work going on in the overgrazed area. Some of the problems were of administrative character creating difficulties in the efficient transfer of funds to Paulshoek. The bureaucratic constraints are also evident when looking at other development plans for Paulshoek. The inhabitants have been waiting for 40 new houses to be build, only 10 are in place. The question of electricity has been urgent since 1994; the authorities promised that it would soon come, but nothing happend.

There had been little discussion of environmental issues before the NBI took on research in Paulshoek. This should not come as a surprise, since environmental education had only been given to white people and the environment had been synonymous with white conservation practices. The NBI, however, took an initiative to involve children and hold work shops on environmental issues. Since Paulshoek and the municipality of Leliefontein are farming areas, attention was paid to training in sustainable agriculture. Children were trained in the natural sciences through practical work, like being given seeds to grow vegetables and taking responsibility for what they were growing. One serious hindrance, however, is the water scarcity in Paulshoek.

From the Paulshoek study it is obvious that the women centred gender discourse announced by the government have limitations. It was both said by our informants in both Paulshoek and the town clerk in Garis that women have a strong formal position in

\textsuperscript{51} This conclusion is also found in Turner and Ibsen 2000, p. 31.
the municipality of Leliefontein, and also in Paulshoek. They are members of the Development Forum and other committees, they do the traditional work in the home and they control the money. From this case then, and from the story told by our informants, a broader analysis should be made that gives us some understanding of how both men’s and women’s interaction with their natural surroundings is influenced not only by ownership of resources, but also by economic, social and cultural factors. In Leliefontein and Paulshoek both men and women are poor. The reasons might be found in the tradition of being non-commercial farmers, the scarcity of natural resources in the area, and living in an isolated area.

To prosper in the new South Africa, sustainable development is crucial to poverty alleviation. In Leliefontein and Paulshoek, land reform is one of several means to achieve this. To avoid overgrazing and environmental depletion, the people need better land use methods and management models that take environmental concern into account. But they need not only viable farming systems, but also help to create jobs that give people training to get into markets. To create viable farming systems, it is crucial to develop cooperation between communal and commercial farming. Even the commercial farmers in the Leliefontein areas have environmental difficulties. One possible interaction would be transfer of knowledge about overgrazing and about marketing. One way to go would be to develop eco-tourism. In some places the donkeys could be integrated into tourism, and become positive factors in the sustainable development process instead of being an environmental problem. Other activities might be related to industry. Some positive work has gone on for some time. One of the mines producing granite had huge waste disposal problems, but after some pressure from the municipality, the mine now uses the waste to produce new products.

What apparently is some hindrance to sustainable development is inadequate planning and the long distance from the authorities in Pretoria or Johannesburg, via the provincial authorities in Kimberley and down to Leliefontein. This makes planning insensitive to local values and conditions, and without an understanding of rural livelihood, it is difficult to ensure a sustainable land reform process.

**Voices to be heard**

From an institutional point of view, the government responded to the constitutional commitment to gender equity during the Mandela presidency. Progressive legislation and signing of conventions created an environment for developing relevant programmes and policies. Much attention was given to establishing effective machinery to further improve the status of women. However, such improvements depend on political will, adequate resources, an appropriate legislative and administrative framework, and the involvement of civil society. Gender equity will not be achieved if implementation does not succeed.

At the turn of the millennium, the land reforms had apparently failed to change social relations of power and the "unequal social practices and perceptions about men and women's roles in society will continue to shape the benefits accruing to men and women.

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52 We did not get any information about the women as managers of natural resources. But there are some limitations to our work done in Paulshoek, since we spent only two days there, and since our host preferred to speak to us alone, our with other members of the Development Forum. We were never able to get in touch with the ordinary women.
through titling, inheritance and control over resources" (SPP & CRLS 1998, p. 5). The relationship between individual rights and the interests of the household also reflect a tension between the Constitution’s protection of individual rights and customary law, which primarily promotes communal interests, traditionally the interests of men. Land reform projects have tended to be biased towards communal land holding, but the assumption that communities wish to own land communally has caused problems related to gender. Problems have occurred when people set out to establish a legal entity, something which is necessary before the state can sign a contract to hand over land to a group (ibid., p.4). These legal entities, the most common forms of which are communal property associations (CPAs) and community trusts, must be established to manage property and natural resources on behalf of a defined group of beneficiaries. The members must draft a constitution to set out the rules of membership and "conform to public standards of due process, democratic accountability and equality" (ibid., p. 39).

From a gender perspective there is a crucial question about how individual rights and interests are promoted or protected within the communal management structure and within the household. Does the legal entity have the capacity to fulfil the visions of equity contained in the land reform programme?

There are difficulties at different levels. Firstly, it is important to ensure that women as well as men are listed as members when establishing a legal entity. Secondly, there is the question of the nature of membership, which, in the case of a CPA, may be on an individual or household basis. If the household option is chosen, males will generally represent the family in the CPA. Thus women's individual rights and interests are made subordinate to those of the household and women are excluded from decision-making. Even if a community has chosen individual membership, women often do not see themselves as applicants for land and leave men to attend decision-making processes. Women themselves often use arguments like "somebody has to stay at home", "I can't read - so I don't go - I send my daughter who reads" or "We women, we can't plant" (ibid., p. 40). After studying five communities, the general findings of a Surplus People Project and Centre for Rural Legal Studies household study were that patriarchal structures are still dominant and that men are dominant because of the economically low status of women.

There were, however, exceptions. In one community specific methods had been used to encourage participation of women and one project worker commented that "Women appear to be participating more and more equally; there is no specific provision to promote participation of women, youth and pensioners, but their rights are recognised" (ibid., p. 42). Thus, given the right support, community-based natural resource management might be beneficial for women since women are vulnerable to the loss of their individual private rights (Deshingar 1999, p. 9). At the institutional level, there have also been increased efforts to promote implementation. In 1999, the DLA came up with arguments for giving women rights to land:

- **Welfare.** Land is security against poverty.
- **Efficiency.** Women's access to land can be a basis for them to move beyond subsistence production to economic production.
- **Equality.** The distribution of land reflects huge gender inequalities in terms of access to resources.
- **Empowerment.** Land rights command respect within the family and society at large.
The DLA set out concrete measures to intensify its commitment to gender and land reform. Firstly, it undertook to examine legislation and policies that hindered women’s position on land. Secondly, the DLA supported the Khula Trust to provide financial assistance for women who wished to go into productive farming. Thirdly, the Department designed and facilitated a training and capacity-building programme on land-related matters for women living in rural areas. Fourthly, the gender policy aimed at providing mechanisms in project planning and project appraisal in order to ensure that both women as a group and individual women would benefit from land reform programmes (Turner and Ibsen 2000, p. 30). Fifthly, efforts were made to ensure security of tenure for women.

"Yesterday is a foreign country - tomorrow belongs to us"

In post-apartheid South Africa environmental issues and gender equity came to be governmental priorities and part of a broad political agenda. Environmental rights were included in the Constitution, as was gender equity. Both issues should be integrated at all political levels, and development towards an environmental and socially sustainable future should involve and empower people irrespective of class, race or gender.

The strong focus on environmental issues was a response to the environmental crisis facing South Africa. Without a democratic approach to the environmental crisis, people would perish together. The strong focus on environmental issues was therefore a critical part of the reconciliation process in South Africa. Sound environmental management was a prerequisite to achieve improved quality of life for the poor majority, most of whom are rural black women. They were the key guardians of the family and targeted as victims of unsound environmental policies. Environmental degradation meant "greater poverty and fewer rights for women; when streams become choked with pollution or dry up; when soils gets eroded, it affects poor women first and most. Sound environmental policies translate into greater equality for women."(IDRC 1994, p. 9).

However, environmentally sound policies do not emerge simply because a democratic system is in place. Historically, there have been conflicting demands for economic growth on the one hand, and for environmentally sound development on the other. This was also the case in South Africa in the early 1990s.

During the Mandela presidency the government met challenges related to environmentally sustainable development by presenting a large amount of policy paper and by involving NGO’s, CBO’s and people at grassroots level in the policy-making process. There was a strong position about the need for land to be used in accordance with the principle of sustainable development. The government stressed the importance of stimulating small-scale subsistence agriculture to achieve the goal of land reform. Women were supposed to be the key to the recovery of land (Ramphele 1992).

As regards environmental concern in the land reform process, there have been achievements, but these are mostly visible at the institutional level. There has been lack of capacity, planning and support for land reform beneficiaries to carry out environmentally sustainable practices (Mohamed 2001, p.172). Sustainable, small-scale agriculture was a

53 The Constitution says: Every person shall have right to an environment which is not detrimental to his or her health or well-being. This statement gave the citizens certain rights, but also an important role to play in empowering themselves to manage their own environment and natural resources.
controversial issue within the government, but there was little debate about this among people outside government.

Gender rhetoric prompted strong words about the importance of giving women access to land and of letting women’s voices be heard. Women form the majority of the rural poor, hence they were an important target for the governmental objective of poverty alleviation. The challenges were to mainstream gender within the day-to-day activities of government departments, agencies and programmes, and to implement the policy in the areas where poor rural women made their living.

By the end of the Mandela presidency in 1999, the land policy was no longer legally discriminatory. Progressive legislation and conventions had created an environment for enabling programmes and policies. Much attention was devoted to establishing effective machinery to further improve the status of women. In the early transition period this WID approach was necessary to make women visible. Further improvements will depend on political will, adequate resources, an appropriate legislative and administrative framework, and the involvement of civil society. Gender equity will not be achieved if there is no implementation of the sentiments expressed by the government. Women’s practical position has not changed much. There is a need to discuss the appropriateness of institutional instruments. The Constitution gives landless people access to their rights, but, as has been pointed out above, there is a tension between the ANC’s commitment to gender equality and its concern to respect tradition and customs.

As long as women are targeted as one homogenous group who have the key to recovery of the land, and as long as there is confusion over what gender equity is all about, the traditional power relations will be maintained. Actors in land reform policies must take into account the gap between policy and reality, and discuss whether they should take the legal or the social route to fulfil the vision of gender equity set out in the Constitution.

At the start of the new millennium, neither environmental issues nor gender equity had been integrated in the land reform process (Samset 1991, pp. 1-5). This lack of integration was the result of an ideological shift within the ANC which altered the direction of the land reform process (Samset 1999; Lodge 1999, pp. 6-8). Along with the passing of the presidency from Mandela to Thabo Mbeki came a conservative macro-economic policy with a strong focus on liberalism as the driving force in the development process. Priorities in land reforms changed after the new president appointed Thoko Didiza as Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs in place of Derek Hanekom. During his period as minister, Hanekom created a framework for land reform, environmentally sustainable agriculture and gender equity. His objective was to direct state resources to the rural poor and the landless, and to focus on reform at the grassroots level.

There might be several reasons for the change of minister. One view is that Hanekom was replaced because he is white and because he was not the choice of the ANC’s national working committee or of Mbeki. Hanekom’s attempts to make poor black people the beneficiaries of land reform did not correspond with Mbeki’s vision of making South Africa the engine of the African Renaissance and of building up South Africa as an economic centre in the African continent (Samset 1991, pp.1-5). Another explanation might be opposition to the priorities of Hanekom from the (predominantly white) South African Agricultural Union and the (predominantly black) National African Farmers
South Africa's Struggle to achieve Sustainable Land Reform

Union. Both of these want to foster a black commercial farming class, a priority they share with Didiza but not with Hanekom (Business Day 1999).

It was not problematic in itself that Didiza wanted to introduce a grant to full-time black farmers, who had not benefited well from the programme during Hanekom's period of office. The problem lay in balancing resource allocation between relatively well-off farmers and the millions of poor living in former bantustans or on commercial farms, many of them women. To address the needs of the poor majority, a redistribution of land to part-time farmers operating under communal tenure systems is crucial, and if this were to be combined with the development of better infrastructure and services, there would be improvements in both the local and the national economy.

One major challenge was to find models for redistribution of state-owned agricultural land, which had been leased out to commercial farmers in early 2000. Suggestions had been made to transfer land to black commercial farmers and to tribes under control of unelected chiefs. However, none of these alternatives can improve the situation for the poor majority.

Preventing poor people from expanding their land base outside the overcrowded bantustans would make a "mockery" of President Mbeki's recent commitment to "reverse a century-old legacy of white minority rule according to which millions of our people were confined in poverty stricken areas described as native reserves..." (Cousins 2000). Preventing the black majority from expanding their land holdings would also not be in accordance with the new South Africa's commitment to sustainable development, understood as ecologically sound environmental management, which from 1994 was part of the rhetoric and visions for the future. Under Didiza it was proposed that communal land be given to tribes, giving chiefs de facto power and enabling them to rule according to custom, however discriminatorily. Thus, the state would leave the responsibility for protecting the rights of community members to chiefs; their rules, normally interpreted by elderly males, would make a mockery of constitutionally-guaranteed rights for women. Women have to raise their voices in land and environmental matters, not because women as women are inherently better natural managers, but because they need land for survival and improvement of their livelihoods and human rights.

At the start of the 21st century, there were constraints on the visions of equity set out by the first democratic government in South Africa. As long as the land reform process is not sufficiently integrated in South African policy for sustainable development, formerly marginal issues are in danger of remaining marginal. This will mean that ruling elites continue to dominate access to land, and the poor masses, especially women, remain left out. While the focus of land reform is currently on racial inequities in land ownership, it is likely that its focus will shift from race to class and leave the poverty problem unsolved.
CONCLUSIONS: AND WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

This study of environment and development cooperation in Norway was completed a few months after the Johannesburg Summit, which was probably the last UN conference of that kind. The conference also represents the completion of this report, starting in Stockholm in 1972 with the international insistence on strengthening the ecological concern in development cooperation projects. Thirty years after Stockholm, ten years after Rio and with Johannesburg just behind us, we turn again to Kenneth Boulding and ask: What have we done?

Has change taken place which reflects the intentions of the international community in the early 1970s? How has the Norwegian Government pursued the vision of taking environmental concern in development cooperation? Are there any patterns to be identified regarding the degree of implementation measures?

In the early 1970s there was widespread expectancy among international scientists and within the UN system that there would be an increased focus on ecological concern in development cooperation policy. The backdrop guiding the new expectations was the common understanding of the world facing an ecological crisis. The leading scientists who brought the notion of an ecological crisis into international debate constituted different discourse-coalitions and they did not agree about the root cause of the crisis. Despite competing scientific views, the scientific focus on the lack of environmental concern in development planning was brought into the UN system and the ecological challenge was politicised internationally. The conceptual significance of this was the coining of the concept of ecodevelopment, which was expected to generate practical devices for taking ecological concern. Between the Stockholm conference in 1972 and the publication of the WCS in 1980, implementation measures were presented within the discourse of ecodevelopment. Implementation of ecological concern should in essence be achieved by more autonomy in decision-making amongst people in the South and by economic growth harmonising with social and ecologically sound natural resource management. Scientists and particularly the ecologists were given a key role to play. The expectations deriving from the ecodevelopment discourse were vaguely formulated, however, and proved difficult to implement.

In 1980 the WCS was published as an answer to the ecological challenge that faced the world and coined a new conceptual framework: sustainable development. It declared administrative and legislative reforms to be the core means of implementation for the future nature conservation in both North and South. Particular attention was paid to environmental planning and the creation of environmental assessments in development cooperation projects.

The work done by the WCS served as a source of inspiration among Norwegian scientists, who expected ecological concern to get more attention within the government and NORAD. Like international scientists, they emphasised the role of the ecologist and like the WCS, suggested means of implementation directed towards better planning and environmental assessments. Their ideas were followed by another group of actors, the development practitioners or professionals. Notably, the pressure on the politicians now...
came from both scientists and practitioners constituting a discourse-coalition that saw the need for ecological concern as a means to regulate the world’s environmental crisis and conserve its natural resources. In the early 1980s, then, the claim for ecological concern was brought to the political arena.

The Norwegian government presented intentions and implementation measures for its environmental assistance policy in two White Papers (MoDA 1984 and ibid.1986). The first was presented within a conservation discourse focusing on desertification, deforestation and water scarcity as the core environmental problems in the South. The supplementary White Paper (MoDa 1986) was presented after the shift of government from Willoch to Brundtland, and was influenced by the work done in the WCED. The Brundtland government presented environmental assistance within a discourse on sustainable development. Included in sustainable development was means of implementation focusing on better management, planning and competence, which had also been the focus of the previous government. The Brundtland government, however, came up with a new expectancy, namely the goal of integration of environmental concern in all development cooperation activities. Integration, or cross-sectoral policy, constitutes the core of the discourse of sustainable development. Thus, to be expected in the 1990s were more environmentally oriented projects and environmental integration.

The first half of the 1990s saw a flurry of documents concerning North-South relations and environmental assistance. They reflected the good intentions formulated by the government to follow up the UNCED process. During the 1990s the government came up with a policy for implementing environmental concern in development cooperation. The main guidelines were presented in A Strategy for the Environment in Development Cooperation (MoFA 1997) and a memorandum On Political Priorities in Environmental Assistance 1998-2001 (NORAD 1998a). They were the most concrete guidelines produced during the 1990s, but they contained no indications regarding how to operationalise implementation measures.

Coming down to the practical level, our focus is on NORAD, which during the 1990s got much criticism for not taking environmental concern. This evaluation does indicate, however, that NORAD has achieved practical results regarding environmentally oriented projects in bilateral assistance. They reflect the governmental goal of strengthening environmental assistance in order to reduce poverty. The means were directed towards increased competence, capacity-building and institutional cooperation. The concrete Norwegian-South African environmental programme reveals that in this particular case environmental assistance has turned out to be a success, at least from a governmental point of view. Support for the Working for Water Programme succeeded in meeting the targets set by both the Norwegian and the South African governments. The programme both created jobs and contributed to ecological restoration in the Elim community. It is more difficult to assess the results of the Norwegian support for South African land reform. The land reform process has not been completed, and it changes rapidly. There are some positive features, on the other hand, regarding the three means mentioned above: increased competence, capacity-building and institutional cooperation, and in addition the gender aspect and global action for women. The Norwegian support for pursuing the land reform process in a sustainable direction indicates that the government has taken the UNCED process seriously and given support to research projects that stimulate closer cooperation between Norwegian and South African researchers. Concrete
results have been several meetings and conferences that keep the dialogue alive in the
difficult land reform process. It is the government of South Africa, however, which holds
the key to the implementation of advice and suggested reforms deriving from Norwegian
development cooperation programmes.

In sum, our evaluation reveals that change has taken place since the environment was
first introduced as an issue of relevance to development cooperation. The environment is
a major concern to the Norwegian government, but the reforms reveal different degrees of
implementation. As in other evaluative studies of the follow-up of the UNCED process, it
is fruitful to make a differentiation between three benchmarks: process, policy and
product (Lafferty ed 2001:268). Environmental assistance as a process was strong in the
1980s when the ground was prepared for an environmental assistance policy. The process
was characterized by creating awareness and training facilities for the development
practitioners within NORAD. Environmental assistance as policy was developed during
the 1990s and was characterized by the publication of governmental documents,
guidelines, strategies and plans for taking environmental concern. When looking at the
product, then, we have found some significant initiatives like the creation of
environmental assessments, environmental programmes and environmental centres. The
weak point has been that the overall governmental intention to integrate the environment
at all levels in development cooperation planning and projects had not been achieved
when entering the 21st century (Skjønsberg 2000). A recent publication by the Norwegian
Riksrevisjonen comes up with the same result. There is a lack of follow-up regarding the
integration of the environment in Norwegian development cooperation (Riksrevisjonen
2002).

With the three benchmarks as points of departure, we might reveal some patterns of
interest to the discourse analysis of environmental assistance. Norway has taken
significant steps when we evaluate environmental assistance as process and policy, but the
Government has been weaker on product. Characteristic of environmental assistance
process, policy and product is the strong focus on planning and management instruments,
and technocratic solutions. This reveals that environmental assistance was framed within
a discourse of ecological modernisation, rather than within the sustainable development
discourse.

The distinction between ecological modernisation and sustainable development has
been focused on by political scientists since the release of Our Common Future (WCED,
1987). According to Albert Weale, ecological modernisation is based on the following
assumptions:

- environmental problems could be dealt with adequately by a specialist branch of the machinery of
government; that the character of environmental problems was well understood; that environmental
problems could be handled discretely; that end-of-pipe technologies were typically adequate; and that in
the setting of pollution control standards a balance had to be struck between environmental protection
and economic growth and development. (Weal 1992, p. 75).

Hajer is also in line with this definition when describing the core idea of ecological
modernisation. Ecological modernisation “does not call for any structural change, but
is...basically a...technocratic approach to the environment that suggests that there is a
techno-institutional fix for the present problems” (Hajer, 1992:28).

Ecological modernisation is necessary, but it is not a sufficient condition for sustainable
development. It relates more to the traditional experience of western industrialised
societies and does not touch upon global environmental problems, or social justice issues. We cannot say that the global aspect or social justice issues are left out of the environmental assistance policy, but in general the Government sets out to take environmental concern within the framework of the “workings of the main institutional arrangements of society”, which is also characteristic of the ideology of ecological modernisation (WP46 1988-89:152; Hajer 1995:3).

Having discovered that environmental assistance has been formulated as a discourse of ecological modernisation, we better understand why it has been difficult to achieve the overall governmental goal of environmental integration in all assistance activities. Integration calls for structural changes in policy-making and reshaping of decision-making. Traditionally, the Norwegian answer to contradictory goals and complexity has been planning (Langhelle 2000:205p). Planning is used to achieve sustainable development, hence also environmental integration in the development cooperation sector. This is illustrated by all the guidelines, strategies and directives that have been produced. There is then a contradiction between the official story-line of sustainable development guiding the overall governmental development cooperation policy and the mechanisms chosen to achieve environmental integration.
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