



**THE FRIDTJOF NANSEN INSTITUTE**

## **‘Doing Good’ in Murmansk?**

**Civil Society, Ideology and Everyday  
Practices in a Russian Environmental NGO**

**Pål Skedsmo**

**FNI Rapport 14/2005**



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**Abstract**

In this report I investigate the relationship between an ideology of civil society and everyday practices in a Russian environmental youth NGO called PiM. Data for this report was gathered in 2004 during fieldwork conducted in Murmansk, Russia. The term civil society is a common reference in development aid programmes directed towards Russia, and is as such part of a process of constructing 'the other', e.g. the recipients of development aid. A general description of the concept 'civil society' in development discourse is followed by a discussion of everyday practises in PiM. In order to discuss the relationship between ideology and everyday practices, three empirical levels are separated and analysed: (i) individual strategies and perceptions; (ii) internal organisational practices and cooperation between PiM and its Norwegian partner; and (iii) external organisational practices as PiM advocates for change in environmental policies.

I find that among members of PiM, the possibility of gaining personally from voluntary work is imperative, hence that accumulation of individual social capital is significant as PiM provides a platform in which members can access valuable capital, maintain networks and the like. Nonetheless, members involve themselves in and voice an altruistic ideology. Thus, I find that self-interest and altruism seem to dialectically reinforce each other. Social capital may also enhance PiM's operational skills, but as individuals compete for scarce resources, individual accumulation may be parasitical. PiM is to a significant degree subject to governance, and contributes to its own self-governance by adjusting to the demands of its Norwegian donor and partner. Thus, a relationship of dependency is created, where PiM is the weaker part. When PiM members try to advocate change in environmental policies they are considered by their adversaries (such as politicians and industrial managers) as ignorant persons, and treated as intruders in a field perceived as belonging to experts. Finally, I elaborated upon the term habitus in order to suggest that negative experiences of the past form practices at present in NGO life.

**Key Words**

civil society, Russia, NGO, environmentalism, anthropology, social capital, discourse

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Lysaker, December 2005

Pål Skedsmo



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# 1 Introduction, Region and Methodology

Ideology may be explicit and deliberately worked out as a philosophical system, or it may be – at most – intuitively understood even by its instigators as an aspect of their general perspective, and expressed through everyday practices. (Hannerz 1992:104)

## Main Objective of the Report

In media, development organisations and in politics, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was followed by a perception of a spread of a new world order, and this was widely perceived of as capitalism's and democracy's victory over communism and totalitarianism. Part of this image, although depicted in many ways, was to help foster democracy by way of developing a *civil society* in the former communist states, as it were claimed that Russia has no tradition for a civil society to draw upon, neither under communism nor prior to the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. The production of images of a backward Russia and Eastern Europe is profound and abundant, and reflected in book titles such as *Developing New Rules in the Old Environment* (Munteanu and Popa 2001). How then, should one proceed to 'build' civil society in Russia? This was one of the things that puzzled me, and as such pointed out the direction of my investigation.

As western organisations head east to develop civil society, implicitly they believe that their objective is to 'do good'. Likewise, many of the recipients of western aid think they 'do good' as they indulge themselves in various activities within civil society. The main loci where this process take place is within NGOs, perceived as neither entangled in political infighting, nor influenced by market greed (Fisher 1997:442). However, civil society and NGO activity is not an island, rather it is deeply entrenched in and dependent on politics and the market. These processes influence everyday practices in NGO life. The aim of this report is to show how ideology and everyday practices is interrelated and is played out in an environmental NGO in Murmansk, Russia. In the trajectory composed of structural post-socialist change and the spread of market reform – where ideologies and representations gain influence and flow – ideology and everyday practises are interrelated in profound and often in seemingly disturbing ways. Thus, ideology is regarded as embedded in social practices.

I conducted fieldwork in an environmental NGO named *Priroda i Molodëzh* (PiM) in Murmansk. Based on this fieldwork I seek to investigate how young environmentalists relate everyday practises to abstract ideological awareness. Everyday practices will be investigated as including: (i) individual strategies and perceptions; (ii) internal organisational practices and cooperation between PiM and its Norwegian partner and; (iii) external organisational practices as PiM advocate for change in environmental policies. I believe that behind a range of NGO activities one may find and identify an ideology, which is more or less consciously applied. The ideology that may – or may not – be 'intuitively understood

by its instigators' (Hannerz 1992:104) is by and large imposed upon the environmental NGO from the abroad. Thus, I will try to describe throughout this report how the NGO in question through its everyday practices embodies and redefines this ideology. Ideology is relevant as the organisation in question receives a significant amount of financial support from several Norwegian donors, not only in order to improve the environmental situation, but also in order to strengthen greater democratisation processes, including grass-roots democracy and civil society. This is also reflected in official Norwegian policies towards Russia (Odin.dep.no 2003). Thus, since the concept civil society is important to western donors, I wanted to investigate the degree to which it is important to those who receive financial support from the West. The environmental organisation under scrutiny in this report receives financial support from Norway via the NGO's Norwegian partner. Although the latter is eager to underscore that this relationship is a case of partnership, it nevertheless is an example of Norwegian development aid with its implicit ideology and assumptions heading east.

### **Outline of the Report**

In the rest of this chapter I will present general background information about the region where I conducted fieldwork. I will describe the specific historic context in which the NGO operates, and provide a brief presentation of the NGO. In the last part of Chapter 1, methodological issues will be discussed. In Chapter 2, I will describe the intellectual history of the term civil society and a description of trends within western development projects heading east. These characteristics will be followed up by anthropological perspectives on postsocialism and the period of transition. Thus, Chapters 1 and 2 will function as a general introduction to the particular field of study in the subsequent chapters. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 relate to the three forms of everyday practices as sketched out above. Thus, Chapter 3 investigates how members of the NGO relate their work to self-interest and altruism, and this is analysed as an attempt among members to accumulate social capital. In Chapter 4 the organisation as such will be discussed, focusing on its internal practices and techniques, social capital as a group asset, but also on its relation to its Norwegian partner. In Chapter 5 I will describe the NGO's role and influence in society when advocating for change in environmental politics. Although the three empirical chapters will focus on various aspects of involvement from private to public, they are interrelated and therefore these relations and possible conflicts will be discussed throughout the report. Based on the preceding discussion, Chapter 6 will discuss civil society with regard to 'Soviet legacy', since this 'legacy' is a common frame of reference explaining the opportunities open to a civil society, or perhaps not.

When transcribing from the Russian I have used the transliteration system developed by Library of Congress (Loc.gov 2005), though I refrain from the use of diacritics<sup>1</sup>. Most interviews were conducted in English.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> However, apostrophe is used in order to denote the Russian soft sign [ь]. This sign denotes that the preceding consonant should be pronounced palatal.

However many of the statements referred to in the report was stated in Russian, and all translations from the Russian are mine.

## **Region: The Russian BEAR**

### *Murmansk – the Designated Location for Barents Co-operation*

The geographical locus of the fieldwork was the city of Murmansk. Located on the Kola Peninsula, Murmansk is situated in the north-western part of Russia. The administrative unit which is more or less congruent with the peninsula, is Murmansk *oblast'*, where currently Iurii Evdokimov is the governor.<sup>3</sup> The population level in the *oblast'* is at approximately 1,100,000 (Blakkisrud 1997:116). In conjunction with four other federal entities, e.g. the Komi Republic, the Karelia Republic, Nenets Autonomous *okrug* and Arkhangelsk *oblast'*,<sup>4</sup> the Murmansk *oblast'* entails the Russian part of the Barents Euro Arctic Region (BEAR). In addition to regional authorities in Russia, Sweden, Finland and Norway, BEAR consists of a council of national authorities from the same countries. Cooperation in BEAR was formalised through the Kirkenes declaration on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 1993. The historical link that functioned as the main constituent of a common identity for the region, was the *pomor* trade.<sup>5</sup> In existence from approximately 1740 until 1917, it fostered not only a common identity, but also gave form to a region covering the area between north-western Russia and northern Norway (Pomor.no 2005). The *pomors* lived around the White Sea in Arkhangelsk *oblast'*, exchanging fish and grain for Norwegian goods (Watts 2002:55). The *pomor* trade is in the Kirkenes declaration and on festive occasions pointed to as proof of 'the long-standing aspirations of the peoples in the Barents Euro Arctic Region for friendship and cooperation' (Barentsinfo.org 2005). However, it would appear as though the principal reasons for regional co-operation after 1991 were governed by the fact that Russian authorities wanted economic development, while the Nordic countries sought to ameliorate the environmental situation. This linkage is stated in various official declarations (Stokke 1994). The heritage arising from the *pomor* trade in Murmansk *oblast'* may well be somewhat exaggerated in significance as a factor in the resuscitation of cooperation in the region, since the *oblast'* was barely populated when the *pomor* trade took place.<sup>6</sup> However, in nearby Arkhangelsk *oblast'* *pomor* is a more significant symbol of north-Russian identity, since

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<sup>2</sup> See discussion of language proficiency and consequences for methodology in the language section later in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> *Oblast'* refers to an administrative level in the Russian Federation. The same applies to autonomous *okrug*, albeit this has a somewhat different legal status within the federation.

<sup>4</sup> PiM co-operates with an environmental organisation in Arkhangelsk, thus I also took part in some activities here.

<sup>5</sup> *Pomor*: coastal areas in the north.

<sup>6</sup> In the federal entities making up the Russian part of BEAR, the population level today is at approximately 4,4 millions, compared to 400.000 in the Russian census of 1719 (Hønneland 2005:24-28). Out of these entities, Murmansk *oblast'* has seen the most marked influx of immigration during the Soviet era.

Russian settlements here are much older, and as this area was indeed the heart of the *pomor* trade. Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Russians living in the north, e.g. in Arkhangelsk *oblast'*, were considered by nationalists to represent the most authentic and independent of all Russians. This functioned as a delineation of Russia both from the West and the East. During Communist rule – especially under Stalin and Brezhnev – the *pomor* way of life was condemned as backwards and primitive (Watts 2002:55-57). Watts concludes that today the *pomor* heritage is relevant in as far as it influences the way Russians of the north view entrepreneurship and *novyi russkii* (new Russians). *Novyi russkii* are those who have been able to make huge profits during the years following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As they very publicly enact in 'conspicuous consumption', they are mocked as primitive, although targeted with a lot of envy. In the case of entrepreneurs, a delicate balance must be maintained between achieving financial success while refraining at the same time from appearing to challenge the ethos of economic equality which Watts argues are deeply entrenched in *pomor* values (Watts 2002:70-71). The ideal of equality is not an exclusive *pomor* value, but it nevertheless demonstrates how values and moralities influence how Russians regard the new economic and political situation.

Founded in 1916, when it was known as *Romanov na Murmane*, Murmansk is a relatively young city, situated on the eastern shore of Kola bay on the Kola peninsula. It was founded due to Russia's need for an all-year round port in the north-western territories. During the Second World War most of the city was reduced to rubble, but since Murmansk was of vital strategic importance it was soon rebuilt, and as a proof of this, Murmansk was awarded the title *Gorod Geroi* (Hero city) in 1985. Murmansk *oblast'* attracted workers from all over the Soviet Union because of the above-average salaries which could be earned and the more liberal policy on vacation time compared to elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Although the *poliarka*, i.e. the additional payment (Hønneland 2005:24), is not part of Russian politics any longer, the average level of wages lies at 148% of the federal average, and similarly, the cost of living is at 131% of the federal average (Blakkisrud 1997:116). Murmansk is the world's largest city north of the Polar Circle, with a population of approximately 400.000<sup>7</sup> (Hansen and Tønnessen 1998:27). In the course of the political and financial turmoil of the nineties, the population declined, but it is difficult to assess exactly how much since prior to 1991 the population scattered in the closed towns around Murmansk were subsumed into the city statistics on population size.<sup>8</sup> However, it is undisputed that there has been a decline in the level of the population due to migration, declining rates of life expectancy, alcoholism and reluctance among mothers to

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<sup>7</sup> Figures from 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Closed towns: Due to their location around or nearby naval bases or other strategic locations, these towns had status as closed during the Soviet era. Today, six towns on the Kola Peninsula are closed under the CATF-regime – Law on Closed Administrative-Territorial Formations – which regulates these towns' special status within the Russian Federation (Hønneland and Jørgensen 1999:137). Some other cities, such as Poliarnye Zori, close to a nuclear power plant, in practice carries a semi-closed status, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.

have more than one child (Hansen and Tønnessen 1998:27). In the case of migration, the level has always been high in Murmansk. However, during the nineties people emigrated rather than immigrated. An indication of the great migration in Murmansk is that I noticed that most of my informants' parents had moved to Murmansk, thus their grandparents live elsewhere. In times of recession people want to move back to the *materik* (mainland)<sup>9</sup>, and in 1997 almost 30% of the residents in Murmansk had plans to move to another location (Hansen and Tønnessen 1998:33). In addition to one's native country of origin, the metropolises of Moscow and St. Petersburg are viewed as attractive options for resettlement. In a newly conducted survey among students in Murmansk, only 30% listed Barents Russia as their favourite place of residence, whereas almost 70% listed Barents Russia as their most likely future place of residence (Brunstad and Persson 2004:4). This discrepancy between hopes and expected outcome among the respondents suggests that – in general – dissatisfaction is wide-spread, whereas future prospects are regarded as limited.

Murmansk's location near the borders to Sweden, Finland and Norway makes Murmansk a fairly international city by Russian standards. Joint stock ventures, Scandinavian development aid and the like are important to the city. According to an official at the Norwegian consulate in Murmansk, the consulate receives no less than 15000 visa applications per year, and this makes it the biggest visa office at any Norwegian consulate. Cross border relations and interactions thus affect a large number of Russians.<sup>10</sup> One of the most significant cross border interactions is the flow of Russian fishermen to Norway. Crossing the border, fishermen arrive in Norwegian ports in order to work in the Russian fishing fleet which is based there. Indeed Kirkenes, the Norwegian border town is now truly a bi-cultural town with even street signs in both Norwegian and Russian. However, cross-border cooperation is not always the easy and smooth operation as was initially expected. The somewhat overly optimistic views of the early nineties which dominated the policies and practices related to cross-border regional cooperation, have now led to a more moderate and realistic view among Russians and Norwegians alike. In 1996, an evaluation of projects financed over the Barents Programme thus far, concluded that western actors tended to overlook specific Russian circumstances, while at the same time being more focused on their own agendas and interests than those of the recipients. Further, it is claimed that projects tended to ignore knowledge and resources already existent in Russia and lacked sufficient determination to take this into account (Castberg and Moe 1996:16).

The Kola Peninsula offers a harsh polar climate, with temperatures in Murmansk ranging between – 8°C to – 13°C in January and 8°C to 14°C

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<sup>9</sup> *Materik* – mainland, derived from *mat'* – mother. Russians often refer to their country as a motherland, rather than a fatherland.

<sup>10</sup> The numbers given stem from a Norwegian official working at the consulate in Murmansk. 15000 applications are received annually. Only residents in Murmansk *oblast'* can apply for a visa at this consulate. The total level of granted visas is unknown, but this is probably much lower than 15000.

in July (Berkmoes 2000:420). However, the peninsula has an abundance of natural resources. Mining is the main industry in such cities as Monchegorsk, Apatity and Nikel, while another population centre, Kirovsk, is an important skiing venue. Others still, such as Severomorsk and Sputnik and other cities subject to the CATF-regime, are dominated by the armed forces. There is one nuclear power plant on the peninsula, *Kol'skaia Atomnaia Elektrostantsiia* (Kola Nuclear Power Plant), which is located about 15 kilometres away from the city of Poliarnye Zori. Opportunities for oil and gas extraction in the Barents Sea are now under exploration, and it is expected that this will become a principal industry in the future. The prospects for gas extraction above all in the Stokhman field is very much anticipated also in Norway, as reflected in the last White Paper submitted to the Norwegian parliament on Norwegian policies in the North (Odin.dep.no 2005). Environmentalists in Norway and Russia alike expect these prospects to be of great significance in their upcoming environmental projects.

#### *Environmental Situation*

Around the cities of Nikel and Monchegorsk there are substantial areas of dead forests, the result of high levels of emission from the Pechenga-Nikel plants. In Norway, smoke clouds that are the by-products of these plants were known as 'the death clouds from the east', and this fostered a popular movement (Hønneland 2005:17). The PCB level on the peninsula is high. These factors pave the way for uneasiness not only with regard to the local environmental situation but also for international, and especially, Scandinavian concern. The Norwegian government has provided financial support to the nikel plant mentioned above in order to effect a reduction in emissions. Additionally, the government installed a Norwegian developed security surveillance system (Scorpio) at Kola Nuclear Power Plant (KNPP). Although two of its reactor had passed its supposed life cycle of 30 years, recently KNPP decided to prolong the use partly with reference to the Scorpio system. Later in the report, this will be elaborated upon, as PiM opposes the prolonged use of the old reactors at KNPP.

#### *Civil Society in Russia*

When the Iron Curtain fell, Russia and Eastern Europe were by enthusiastic politicians in the West welcomed back into the 'European family', as entities that were expected to soon be proper European nations. Nevertheless, profound historical differences extant prior to the communist era are significant and must be emphasised as such. In the case of Russia, feudalism and serfdom existed until 1861, much longer than in Western Europe. Thus, as Russian landlords accounted for their wealth by the number of 'souls' they possessed, e.g. how many serfs they had, compulsory vertical ties of loyalty may have played a larger role here than in other parts of Europe. This is quite different from the association of free individuals advocated by liberals in Western Europe where horizontal loyalty and a strong civil society were supposed to minimise the government's chance to abuse its power. It is important to bear in mind, that Russia and Russians have only a modest tradition of an institutionalised civil society to draw upon prior to the Bolshevik Revolution. This is not

to imply, however, that a civil society did not exist at all before 1917, as informal networks may be understood as part of civil society and as long as some political parties and various organisations existed. Further, the Russian tradition of *mir* is an example of how horizontal ties of solidarity and organisation existed under feudalism. According to the principle of *mir* individual farmers were supposed to deliver their harvest to communal storage. In return everyone received the supplies they needed (Nistad 2004). However, as the repressive tsarist regime of Nikolai the Second sought to hinder free flow of information, freedom to establish organisations and allow free speech, civil society as such faced great obstacles also prior to the Bolshevik revolution. The major intellectual divide between ‘slavophiles’ and ‘westernisers’ (*slavianofily* and *zapadniki*) in pre-Revolutionary and to a certain degree present-day Russia, is of relevance when seeking to understand Russian perceptions of civil society. The former underscored Russia’s Slavic tradition and in particular its Eurasian destiny; many perceived of Russians as God’s chosen people. The author Fiodor Dostoevskii was counted among those latter, a theme which appears in his late literary production in which the Russian farmer is depicted as the Christian persona per se (Waage 1997:74). On the other hand, the ‘westernisers’ emphasised a new path for Russia, one that followed Western Europe and its development, and thus regarded it as important that Russia seek to establish closer ties to the west. Not surprisingly, ‘westernisers’ more readily adopt the idea of civil society than ‘slavophiles’.

During the Soviet era the state monopolised the right to establish organisations. While there were some opportunities for individual initiative inside organisations such as *Komsomol*,<sup>11</sup> opportunities to express opposition were restricted: official politics could only be discussed and debated, and since opposition was illegal the outcome had to be support in favour of the regime. Given limited organisational freedom, a focus on economic growth and the arms race of the cold war, environmental concerns received limited attention. This to a certain degree continues to be the case as environmentalism is still regarded by some to be a ‘soft and emotional’. Hence, emphasis is still on economic growth, while the environmental situation to an extent is considered to be irrelevant, or at least rather insignificant, as will be elaborated in Chapter 5.

The Soviet administration established local scientific centres, most probably in order to enhance the possibilities of an effective exploitation of various natural resources. A by-product of this was that knowledge of natural resources and categorisation of local species was, and still remains, extensive. Soviet authorities protected large areas of nature, while they concentrated production in specific zones, such as around Nickel (Hønneland 2005:141). Government-issued magazines such as ‘*Iunii naturalist*’<sup>12</sup> taught respect for nature, its diversity and insisted on human actions which demonstrated the expected respect. On the one hand, it is possible to ridicule the government’s line as rather dull propaganda with-

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<sup>11</sup> *Komsomol* – All-Union Lenin Communist Union of Youth (VLKSM or KOMSOMOL)

<sup>12</sup> ‘Young Nature Explorers’, issued every month.

out critical potential, but it nevertheless shows that present-day environmentalism is not an entirely new area of interest, at least not in the sense of preservation. This issue will be elaborated later in this report since in my view it was a mistake to view Russia as a *tabula rasa* in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Rather than regarding the present situation as a vacuum after the regime collapse, empty of old values and systems of meaning, the old systems of meaning still work as a reference to which the present situation is evaluated and compared.

Today as NGOs pop up all over Russia one may wonder: what is the state of Russian civil society today, and what does it do? According to *Goskomstat* there was in 2000 almost 490,000 registered NGOs in Russia. However, various sources regard only 20-25% of these to be counted as active (Barandova 2004). To get an impression of the state of civil society in Murmansk *oblast'* we may take a look at the list of organisations from the *oblast'*, that participated at the annual conference for youth NGOs in Murmansk in 2004. The list of participants was granted me by a representative of the conference co-ordinator, The Barents Youth Cooperation Office<sup>13</sup> in Murmansk. Mainly organisations from Russian BEAR participate, whereas NGOs from other parts of BEAR participate only to a lesser extent. The list of Russian participants may serve as a partial indicator of the state of youth civil society in the region. When the 70 local participants were asked to describe their range of activities it emerged that the most common activity seemed to be *grazhdansko-patrioticheskoe vospitanie* (civic-patriotic education), as 30 out of 70 organisations listed this. International co-operation were listed by 19 NGOs as one of their activities, and seven organisations listed both of these categories (Smirnov 2004). Obviously, such categories are rather ambiguous, but these figures nevertheless suggests that even though international cooperation is deemed as important among many Russian NGOs, others still does not necessarily oppose the authorities, as patriotism indeed is important for Russian authorities as well. A well-known example, however, of one that opposed the interests of the Russian state is the environmentalist Aleksandr Nikitin. Nikitin was arrested for alleged espionage as he had co-authored a report on nuclear security in the Russian Northern Fleet, but he was never convicted. The Nikitin, and the somewhat similar Pashko, cases (Bellona.no 2005), are something PiM activists are well aware of when considering their abilities to advocate change, and oppose state interests.

### **Priroda i Molodëzh**

The name of the organisation which served as the focus of my fieldwork is *Priroda i Moledëzh* – Nature and Youth. Little wonder that their Norwegian partner is *Natur og Ungdom* – Nature and Youth. Thus, the similarity of names signifies that there are close ties between the two organisations. Later in the report, these two organisations will be referred to as PiM and NU respectively. PiM was established as an NGO in 1999, but prior to that it had existed for a few years as an affiliate for youth adults of another Norwegian-funded environmental NGO. PiM has its

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<sup>13</sup> *Ofis sodeistviia molodëzhnomu sotrudnichestvu v Barentsevom regione*



main office and main member base in Murmansk, but has local affiliates based in the cities of Monchegorsk and Apatity, all situated on Kola Peninsula. Its members are pupils or students, aged 15 to 25. PiM has reported to have approximately 80 members in total. However, this number is not reflected in the participation at the weekly meetings in Murmansk, where the number of participants did not exceed 20 when I conducted fieldwork there. A board, on which all the affiliates are represented, is elected at the annual general meeting. PiM's activity ranges from meetings where focus is on local and national environmental problems, implementation and running of a variety of projects dealing with such issues as nuclear energy and the recycling of waste. As any voluntary organisation, PiM discusses on which issues they should concentrate their efforts, how PiM should work with these and what kind of goals the organisation want to achieve. Hence, applied environmentalism ranges from refuse clean-up operations within the city area, to the planting of trees and all the way to anti-nuclear work. On another level, it deals with the kind of strategies PiM should apply in order to strengthen its position within civil society, how to achieve respectability in order to become a relevant and knowledgeable actor concerning environmental issues, and consequently; how to reach out to decision-makers and the wider public.

When the schools are in session, the local group in Murmansk organises a weekly meeting. Additionally, members work with their various projects. The organisation receives its financial support from different public funds in Norway channelled through NU. In 2004 NU received financial support aimed at NU's projects in Russia, from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Environment, the Norwegian Youth Council (LNU) and The Barents Programme administrated by the Barents Secretariat in Kirkenes. This secretariat is a permanent secretariat established by Norwegian authorities as part of the BEAR cooperation. In total, this support to NU amounts to approximately NOK 1,1million, out of which approximately 170.000 were re-directed to PiM. In addition NU finances seminars and other joint activities (Selboe 2005). *Otdel po delam molodëzhi goroda Murmansk* (The City Committee for Youth Affairs in Murmansk) has provided an office for PiM. Apart from this, local support is meagre. The office in Murmansk is manned by a part-time secretary. When I conducted fieldwork, the individual who worked as PiM's secretary was also its elected leader. PiM cooperates with other local and regional environmental NGOs, most notably Aetas in Arkhangelsk which also has close ties to NU, environmentalist groups in St. Petersburg and Moscow, and with NU.

Although PiM on its internet-site refers to *ekologiia* and *ekologicheskii* (ecology and ecological), see appendixes 1 and 2, I have chosen to use the terms environment and environmental instead, as I believe PiM members to be environmentalists, i.e. persons that are 'concerned about and wants to change and protect the environment' (Cowie 1989:403) rather than ecologists with a deep-rooted ecological ideology.

## Methods Applied

### *Data Gathered*

The fieldwork lasted for approximately four months, from the end of January until the end of May 2004, but I also participated at PiM's summer camp in July of the same year. The summer camp turned out to be one of the most inspiring and intense experiences of my fieldwork. In addition, I took part in a seminar in Murmansk held by the Norwegian People's Aid's Murmansk office in November 2004. This provided me with a fuller understanding of how 'civil society' is used as a buzzword as development organisations head east to promote democracy and civil society. I collected data primarily in the following ways: participation as a member and observer of PiM's activities and meetings, conversations with members and other people I met, and finally semi-structured interviews with PiM members. In general, this enabled me to compare practices with different statements made by my informants. Since I participated as a member and observer I was able to get a more profound view and a better understanding of the context in which the organisation works. This, in turn, equipped me with the ability to ask more focused and detailed questions in the interviews. I interviewed members of the board in PiM, as well as former members and a former leader. Apart from data gathering among the environmentalists I chose to supplement my data by interviewing a representative of the local affiliate of a countrywide NGO advocating soldiers' rights, *Komitet Soldatskikh materei* (The Soldiers' Mothers Committee). I also chose to be an international observer in Apatity at the combined president, governor and mayor elections in March, which gave me valuable insights on Russians view on democracy. Further, I collected data by reading newspapers, finding information on the Internet, and basically attempting to extend my participant observation to various everyday fields and arenas in which I participated.

### *Anonymity and Informants*

I have chosen to use the name of the organisation I conducted fieldwork in as it is. This applies also to organisations with which PiM cooperates. As I will discuss PiM's everyday practices and ideology – a subject the organisation is open about – there is no reason to 'protect' the organisation by giving it a fictitious name. Had I done so, I would have had to invent a broad array of other characteristics as well, and omit others which are imperative to my analysis. In the Murmansk region there are only a few environmental organisations for youth people, and among them the one I have studied is one of the best known. Thus, to conceal the identity of the organisation I have conducted fieldwork in would have been virtually impossible. However, I have chosen to give my informants pseudonyms, as this is a means to provide at least a minimum of anonymity for the individual members. Members of PiM tend, as is normal in Russia, to use colloquial and friendly diminutives derived from their friends' names. Thus: Volodia is a diminutive of the full name Vladimir, Nadia of Nadezhda and so on. Hence, I will also use diminutives. On fieldwork I did not to any particular degree associate with others than PiM members, and those I met through PiM's activities. Thus all in all there were not more than 20 people I met frequently, although, of course,

the total number of people I met is significantly higher. My main informants were:

*Anna:* 25-years-old and PiM's leader and secretary. Started in PiM as secretary, was then elected as leader after a year.

*Sonia:* 25-years-old and a former member of PiM. For a year she sat in PiM's board, and she also headed some of PiM's projects. Sonia is educated as a teacher in ecology and English. At the time of my fieldwork she worked as a secretary for a Murmansk-based scientific institute, and planned to go to Norway to study tourism.

*Nadia:* 24-years-old and member of the PiM board. She worked part-time as a private teacher in English, and a yoga instructor. Planned to move with her fiancé to Kaliningrad, a Russian region situated between Lithuania and Poland.

*Vania:* 24-years-old and member of PiM. Vania was currently unemployed after he had worked for a while in Moscow. Half-way into my fieldwork Vania started to work as a teacher in order to keep his certificate valid.<sup>14</sup> He was the informant I got to know best, and with whom I spent most time.

*Raisa:* 25-years-old, from Apatity. Raisa was among the founders of PiM's group in Apatity, but is no longer a member. She has been a student of project management and development in Helsinki, Finland. Now she works for a Finnish consultancy group in Murmansk.

*Boris:* 25-years-old, from Apatity, and member of the board. Works as a teacher and is responsible for PiM's anti-nuclear project.

*Kolia:* 35-years-old, and a Moscow-based environmentalist who founded an organisation in Moscow during *perestroika*.<sup>15</sup> The organisation Kolia heads works with a range of issues from environmentalism to election observation, and co-operates closely with PiM in the anti-nuclear project.

*Sonia, Nadia and Vania* were recruited into PiM at the same time, as they were fellow students. *Mitia, Tatiana* and *Ilia* are other environmentalists mentioned in the report.

### *Language*

I have studied Russian for half a year at the University of Oslo, and while in Murmansk I took private lessons in Russian for a short while. Although limited in my knowledge of Russian, I was able to practice in everyday situations, and thus enhance my skills. But, it is nevertheless an

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<sup>14</sup> Russian teachers need to get work as teachers within a year after graduation in order to keep their teacher's certificate valid.

<sup>15</sup> *Perestroika* – derived from the verb *perestroit'* – to rebuild and to change course, and thus is the name of the political restructuring in the Soviet Union during the eighties.

entirely different matter to engage my informants in a discussion on theoretical and philosophical models, issues of motivation and self-identification and to enter a shop for a loaf of bread. Fortunately, most of my informants are quite skilled in English and thus I chose to conduct most of the interviews in English, or in both English and Russian. However, the working-language at meetings, seminars and so on were Russian. Had I spoken Russian fluently, my opportunity to gain access to valuable data would have been enhanced, but as matters stood I was in many ways excluded from arenas or data. I tried to compensate for the lack of skills in Russian by talking extensively with members after meetings and so on, in order to clear up whatever misunderstandings I may have had.

### *Entering the Field and Positioning*

When entering the field I undoubtedly made an impact on the field. However, PiM's co-operation with NU implies that the members of PiM are quite used to Norwegians staying for a shorter or longer period of time. Hence, as far as PiM was concerned, I was just another Norwegian who had come to stay for a while. But it was important for me to let them know that I was not associated with NU, and that I was there in order to conduct an anthropological fieldwork, rather than merely hanging around. The reason I got in contact with PiM was that NU wanted an evaluation of the work the organisation has carried out in Russia (Vitenskapsbutikken 2005). Although this report is not a complete evaluation of NU's work in Russia, it will hopefully prove worthy when NU will consider its future strategies. NU helped me establish contact with PiM, and let me stay in the apartment NU rent in Murmansk. Thus, members in PiM to a certain extent affiliated me with NU, but I sought to counter this by stressing that I neither had no particular obligations to fulfil, nor was under any kind of instruction with regard to emphasis in my investigation. I do not regard this as an obstacle that restricted my data gathering, as members in PiM certainly felt free to utter frustrations with regard to the co-operation with NU, and as long as members in PiM knew that I am not working in or on behalf of NU, I do not think members' venting of views was part of a strategy to influence NU either.

Immediately upon my arrival I joined PiM in their activities, attending meetings, seminars and taking part in demonstrations. I tried to join their activities simply as an ordinary member, but obviously I could not escape from the fact that I was an outsider. Every so often, I was asked to help with tasks such as translation and proofreading of various documents, which enabled me to understand a range of PiM's activities better.

My own positioning in the field is of course relevant, and throughout the fieldwork I experienced how my informants attributed to me some attitudes as a westerner. As I was labelled a westerner, I fitted a prescribed role in many ways. In interviews and conversations with a few of my informants, I sensed that we seemed to enter a moral landscape concerning democracy and the preferred way of government in a country. However, what troubled me was that the terms I sought to discuss and analyse positioned me in a way I did not feel entirely comfortable with. Probably, this stems from the type of questions I asked, and that I, became a

representative of western culture, and thus also some of the symbols and concepts I sought to analyse the meaning of in PiM. This was thought-provoking as it signified how the 'pure' analytical framework of the anthropologist might turn out to be contested, both for the anthropologist himself/herself and for the informants. As will be elaborated in the following chapter, the term *civil society* and terms related to it may have profound normative aspects associated with it. Thus, when I posed questions about civil society, politicians or broached similar topics it may have seemed as if I was naïve and orientalist in my view of Russia (Said 1995). As it turned out, some of my informants had clear-cut images of 'the occident' as well. As we will see in the following chapter, the construction of 'the other' is immanent in development discourse.



## 2 Civil Society and Development Discourse

Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo – eto amorfnyi  
Civil society – it's amorphous (Raisa, a former PiM member)

The crucial binary opposition between civilization and barbarism assigned Eastern Europe to an ambiguous space, in a condition of backwardness, on a relative scale of development (Wolff 1994:360).

In this chapter I will provide a brief description of the intellectual traits of the term civil society, development practices within the former Soviet Union (FSU) and the anthropology of transition. Hence, emphasis in this chapter will be on how civil society is talked about and represented, and thus making up a discourse forming views and perceptions on societies, in particular those on the other side of the now gone Iron Curtain. As practices are thus generated, the mechanisms of this discourse are important to understand. Civil society is a term that over the last decade has seen a vogue among social scientists, developers, businessmen and NGO-activists alike. This have happened despite – or maybe due to – its complexity and incoherence. One reason for the extensive use of the term may well be that the term is perceived among East Europeans to be uncorrupted, compared to the word democracy, although it is used to denote many of the same values such as free speech, freedom to form organisations and the like. Democracy was by many perceived of as misused in such phrases as the Democratic Republic of *Germany* (*Deutsches Demokratisches Republik – DDR* ) and the like (Seligman 1992:203-04).

The term civil society is difficult to grasp. Civil society could be understood as an 'organized network of interests' (Kelly, Shepherd, and White 1998:395). A fuller understanding may be reached by elaborating upon the working definition of civil society deduced by the Centre for Civil Society of the London School of Economics, since this definition embodies the complexity and uncertainty related to the term:

Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy group (LSE 2004).

I will argue that this definition does not enable us in any significant way to delineate civil society from other parts of society, as it embodies a degree of ambiguity with regard to this. However, the definition does not only show us the moral and normative aspects often ascribed to civil

society, but also the sense of actual practices and institutions it may include. Thus, one may well wonder where the line is to be drawn between civil society and that which is not part of civil society. The blurred and complex relations are manifest in many fields. Firstly, the state is not part of civil society, but state-sponsored NGOs are.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, the family is not part of civil society, but networks and community groups are. Thirdly, the market is not part of civil society, but trade unions are. Fourthly, some social movements are part of civil society, despite their *uncivil* appearance and ideology. This may be the case for groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, neo-nazis and the like which operate within the field of civil society, although their ideology and practices are often in opposition to the plurality recognised as an important aspect of a civil society (Kopecký 2003:10). In Russia, organisations that may be regarded as uncivil by some are organisations advocating the rights of gay and lesbians.<sup>17</sup>

Seligman identifies three ways in which the term civil society is used: (i) civil society as a celebrated slogan; (ii) civil society as an analytical term in the social sciences and; (iii) as a normative concept (Seligman 1992:201-03). These three aspects adhering to civil society are often confused, as the normative aspect is addressed implicitly in the two other categories, since it signifies a discussion of a preferred way of organising society, and that analysis of civil society risk being tangled up in a normative discussion rather than a descriptive one. I will include in the first category the actual practices of various development aid programs arising from the use of civil society as a slogan, and call this the development discourse on civil society.

### **Civil Society's Historical Roots**

In the following I will limit my discussion of the term civil society to anthropological and historical interpretations of the term, thus omitting elaborations from philosophy. However, certain aspects from political philosophy will be mentioned. Within the social sciences, civil society is used to signify a given society's ability to bottom-up organising, to create horizontal networks, stable institutions and a certain normative system. As such, in its final form, this structure both individual and collective adaptation to societal challenges (Gerner 1997:22). Thus, civil society mediates particular and universal interests in the sense that civil society is a means to an end, e.g. striking the right balance between the selfishness of individuals and the need for a type of collective solidarity in society (Hann 1996:4). However, 'to reassert a sense of shared communality in the face of what is perceived as an individualism defined in terms of self-interest' (Seligman 1992:205), is a tremendous challenge. The term's

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<sup>16</sup> One may argue that Government-sponsored NGOs – 'GONGOS' – are not free and part of civil society, at least in countries regarded to be rather authoritarian. However, this is beyond the scope of this report and thus not necessary to discuss at any length here.

<sup>17</sup> Homosexuality was illegal in the Soviet Union, but was granted legality in 1993. Today, the Russian Orthodox Church opposes it, and prejudices among the population are wide-spread.



intellectual history reveals how various philosophers have struggled with this tension, and why the tension is implicit in the first place.

Early theorists on civil society might be accused of a ‘naïve anthropology of moral sentiments’ (Seligman 1992:59), as they did not distinguish between the descriptive and normative aspects of social life. Thus, as John Locke, Adam Smith and other principal figures of the Scottish Enlightenment that lasted from approximately 1740 till 1800 wrote about moral sentiment – e.g. instincts of affection, kindness and recognition – as an axiomatic property of man, they did not describe society as it played out in front of them. Rather, they described it with reference to God’s will. But the ‘Copernican turn’ and the renaissance provoked changes in philosophical thought since the world turned inward, and (European) man became his own reference for metaphysical speculation (Lund, Pihl, and Sløk 1993:171-72).<sup>18</sup> Since God – and God’s ultimate will for mankind – was distanced from human affairs in philosophical thought, this called for directing attention towards the interplay of self-interest and altruism (Seligman 1992:27-29). These two concepts may be understood respectively as the ‘principle of considering the welfare and happiness of other before one’s own [...]’ (Cowie 1989:33), and self-interest as ‘(concern for) one’s own interests or personal advantages’ (Cowie 1989:1148). Thus, benevolence was placed in the human world, and the distinction between the private and the public became more important than ever before, since civil society as a moral vision and not only a neutral sphere for exchange was now situated in the midst of humanity (Seligman 1992:30-31). One of the better known discussions on the relation between private versus public in the field of economics dating to this period is Adam Smith’s notion of the *Invisible Hand*, in which private vices are, in sum, transformed to public benefits. Part of the following discussion will resonate with Smith’s notion, as I will try to show how self-interest and altruism, and individual and collective accumulation of social capital are related to one another. The Scottish Enlightenment philosophers mentioned above show how processes related to civil society involve a kind of Weberian instrumental rationality in human actions. Social order and life were now perceived as shaped by human actions, to a degree, out of self-interest, rather than as a result of God’s providence. Thus, mankind is regarded as maximising profit or various sorts of capital within the social order.

Another aspect that ought to be discussed is civil society’s relation to the state. Weber’s notion of rational instrumentalism and methodological individualism is relevant with regard to self-interest and altruism. However, we must turn to another key figure within the social sciences, Emile Durkheim, for a description of society’s relation to the state. The state to him was a ‘social fact’, e.g. ‘abstractions external to the individual that constrains that individuals actions’ (Wikipedia 2005). Durkheim claimed that the relation between state and society was organic, although in the

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<sup>18</sup> The reference to ‘European man’ is made as the concept of civil society adheres from a specific modern European conception of man, in man’s relation to God and the universe. Whether civil society has universal significance or is a particular European idea is another discussion.

end the relationship tended to be despotic, as the state gained more and more control over society (Durkheim 1992). The earliest theorists on civil society such as Hobbes and Locke did not treat it as being in opposition to the state, but from the German philosopher Hegel onward, the relation between state and society was regarded as a dichotomy. This notion is dominant among modern theorists as well (Hann 1996:5). One of the first to follow Hegel was Marx, who saw civil society as an illusion that ought to be unmasked. In his view, civil society could first and foremost be equated with economic interaction in the market (Hann 1996:4). Thus, as an inherently economic phenomenon, civil society contributed to class exploitation. A more liberal perspective on civil society also regards society as in opposition to the state, and this perspective follows in the steps of de Tocqueville. He emphasised how citizens associate actively in order to engage in matters of government and power (Hann 1996:5). Thus, the liberal position advocates individuals' right to be free to organise themselves and this way work as a counterbalance to state power. The link between liberal individualism and civil society's potential to oppose state interests makes it a potent idea full of symbolism when liberals look towards countries in the former Communist bloc, as the fallacy of authoritarian regimes may be explained to be a result of the suppression of civil society, and that one need a strong civil society to prevent totalitarian regimes from rising once again.

In order to understand civil society closer one need not only to delineate the term civil society from the state on the one side, but also from the private sphere on the other. In a strict definition of civil society, private networks which involve exchanges of goods and services are not part of civil society. The system of *blat* that will be discussed in Chapter 3 is an example of a network-based system that truly has its base neither in the state, nor solely in the private sphere. *Blat* involves impersonal relations to a certain degree, but is not structured as a sort of formal organisation. Thus, it is not self-evident whether or not *blat* is part of civil society. Another example would be the distribution of *samizdat* and *magnitizdat*,<sup>19</sup> which one might refer to as part of a civil society in opposition to the state, and as a result of the Soviet State's suppression of civil society. In the aftermath of 1991, NGOs have been seen as one of the 'driving forces' within civil society. In one way, this makes it much easier to define civil society, as it has to do with well-defined free associations, rather than ill-defined ad hoc networks. However, it loses sight of more informal networks that is neither part of the state nor the solely private sphere. As such, networks like *blat* are imperative to identify in order to understand complex societies. As NGOs may be considered as less ambiguous than for instance *blat*, this may contribute to the identification of NGOs as the 'magic bullets' (Fisher 1997) in civil society development projects when western donors seek to legitimise their activity. Although networks and NGOs might overlap and resemble each other, NGOs are legitimate targets for development aid whereas networks are not (Sampson 1996:141). By focusing on NGOs, civil society looks more lucid, and it is thus easier for donors to identify their targets. However,

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<sup>19</sup> *Samizdat* and *magnitizdat*: Literature and music respectively that were unofficially distributed among dissenters during the Brezhnev era.

the equation of civil society with NGOs is a problematic one as it excludes a lot of activities that may be naturally understood as belonging to civil society. In practice however, it is understandable, as NGOs are one of the key actors, as they are in this report.

The Polish anthropologist Michal Buchowski distinguishes between two aspects of civil society: *civic* society as the institutionalised and organisational framework in a society ‘capable of acting as a kind of countervailing force to the state’ and civil society as a moral community (Buchowski 1996:82). Thus PiM is a representative of civic society as an NGO advocating policy-change, while the moral community that PiM is part of is the civil society. Buchowski’s definition of civic society reveals that he lends himself to the perspectives of de Tocqueville, whereas his emphasis on civil society as a moral community points more in the direction of Durkheim. I find Buchowski’s delineation adequate in order to demarcate different aspects of civil society and NGO life, and his delineation is rather similar to one Seligman introduces, as he identifies two different analytical aspects of civil society: Civil society might be understood ‘as an expression of an institutional order’ (Seligman 1992:203), and this Seligman believes is more or less the same as already existing theories on democracy and civic practices. It could thus be compared to Buchowski’s civic society. The other aspect is comparable to civil society as a moral community as it encompasses ‘values, beliefs or symbolic action’. As this last usage points in the direction of both individual moral and universal rationalism, hence both Durkheimian and Weberian approaches are included. However, here one once again risks entering a normative landscape (Seligman 1992:204). Seligman seems to suggest that civil society as an analytical term has little value, but the term and the practices that stem from the use of the term is nevertheless something that ought to be analysed.

As the previous discussion has made clear, civil society has a moral and an institutional aspect. The moral aspect, I suggest, could be understood in light of self-interest, altruism and accumulation of social capital. The institutional aspect, e.g. civic society, will be treated as a discursive phenomenon including perspectives on power, flow and governmentality. These concepts will be introduced later in the report. Thus, the model I will apply in the following analysis is threefold, and corresponds with the empirical levels in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, as sketched out in Chapter 1.

### **Development Discourse**

In his book *The Anti-Politics Machine* James Ferguson has analysed a development project in Lesotho (Ferguson 1994). A central aspect in his book is to describe what he calls the development discourse in which “‘development’ institutions generate their own form of discourse, and this discourse simultaneously constructs Lesotho as a particular kind of object of knowledge, and creates a structure of knowledge around that object’ (Ferguson 1994:xiv). Further, Ferguson argues, the ‘development’ apparatus suspends politics by way of expanding bureaucratic state power, and thus an ‘anti-politics machine’ is the outcome (Ferguson 1994:xv). Although Ferguson’s case is a huge development project I will argue that a certain type of development discourse is dominant also in the

case under scrutiny in this report. In this discourse, rhetoric concerning civil society and democracy is profound and dominant. Another aspect with development practices is that they often are 'remarkably uniform and standardized from place to place' (Ferguson 1994:258). Thus, although not universal, in the various formulas for how to 'develop' Russia, civil society and democratisation have been imperative. The point I wish to underscore here is simply that development discourse is by and large produced by outsiders, and as such risks ignoring and simplifying local particularities that ought to be considered. Simultaneously, a standard discursive practice and 'devspeak' often gain hegemony (Ferguson 1994:259). Thus, as a discursive practice spreads, knowledge and representations are produced. Development is closely linked to the term 'third world' which perhaps could first and foremost be understood as a discursive construction, which 'has been the central and most ubiquitous operator of the politics of representation and identity in much of Asia, Africa and Latin America in the post-World War II period' (Escobar 1995:214). I will argue that the 'second world', e.g. the countries in the former Communist bloc, are at the receiving end of a discursive practice that in many ways are analogous to that of the third world. However, one should be careful not to re-produce an image of the weak, underdeveloped East polarised from the West (Wolff 1994:360), in analyses such as this one. Rather, I will seek to explore and elaborate how a discursive practice are negotiated and adjusted into existing understandings and life-worlds in the east.

Thus, I adhere to a discursive understanding of the phenomenon of development practices, i.e. the actions and practices which are the result of the benevolent interventions by humanitarian organisations and development aid programmes. Hence, I hold that within the development discourse, the production of knowledge is in constant flux (Neumann 2003:153). However, this flux should not be understood as being in 'free flow', as there are institutions and interests governing and directing this flux. Whether among foreigners, locals or in mixed groups there is no such thing as a fixed meaning once and for all time; over time and among people, knowledge and meaning change. An aspect further complicating this is that different groups with competing interests use the concept of a civil society for various purposes (Cohen and Arato 1995:89), most notably perhaps as a slogan, 'combating a demonic state' (Hann 1996:7). Thus, as a phenomenon including various sorts of development aid, changes in economic system and the like, a whole lot of knowledge, and arguably uncertainty, is produced.

From 1991 and onward, a significant part of western development aid to Russia has been earmarked for the development of civil society, to 'build democracy' (Odin.dep.no 2003) or promote an open society (Soros.org 2005). 'Civil society', has become a buzzword along the line of such terms as 'empowerment' and 'democratisation' (Fisher 1997:455). Thus, 'civil society' is a key symbol and a key phrase in development aid programmes, but also for the transition processes as a whole. Due to this, Katehrine Verdery has called for anthropologists to inspect such concepts and categories as possessors of ideology (Verdery 1997:716). Development projects tend to view democracy as a prerequisite for development proper, rather than the outcome of it, which earlier was the dominant

paradigm (Mandel 2002:280). Hence, developing a civil society has been regarded as imperative, in order to safeguard democracy as such in the countries in question. The anthropologist Janine R. Wedel has described development aid as going through three phases during the years following the dissolution of the Soviet Union: ‘triumphalism’, ‘disillusionment’ and ‘adjustment’ (Wedel 2001:7). With these phases Wedel seeks to account for the general climate that the relation between East and West has undergone. Regional co-operation in the Barents region has been described by Hønneland as going through rather analogous phases: In the first years after the Kirkenes declaration was signed, it was conceived of with enthusiasm, visions and optimism, but as many of the projects encountered serious problems, a new way of talking of co-operation emerged: that of disappointment and regret (Hønneland 2005:123-29). A central point here is how one conceive of and construct ‘the other’, e.g. how Westerners perceive Eastern Europeans and vice versa. The adjustment following the phases of triumphalism and disillusionment, is a phase in which key actors on both side were forced to take a fresh look at its partners and learn by past mistakes.

In a report submitted to the US Congress, Wedel summarises the general trend within development aid programmes with regard to civil society:

Under communism the nations of Eastern Europe never had a ‘civil society’. A ‘civil society’ exists when individuals and groups are free to form organizations that function independently of the state, and that can mediate between citizens and the state. Because the lack of civil society was part of the very essence of the all-pervasive communist state, creating such a society and supporting organizations independent of the state – or NGOs – have been seen by donors as the connective tissue of democratic political culture – an intrinsically positive objective (Wedel 1994:323).

As various development aid programmes have tried to follow this ‘intrinsically positive objective’, several became aware of the problems and challenges of development projects present in Eastern Europe and the FSU. This have made anthropologists question whether the concept civil society was useful at all, suggesting that it ‘is riddled with contradictions and the current vogue predicated on a ‘fundamental ethnocentricity’ (Hann 1996:1). In order to counter ethnocentricity Hann calls for anthropological contributions where the task would be:

...to particularise and to make concrete: to show how an idea with its origin in European intellectual discourse has very different referents, varying significantly even within European societies. This agenda would also be concerned with [...] the interaction of these specific cultural ideas with the putative universalism of civil society as this idea is exported across the globe. Ethnographic research would focus on how these ideas are manifested in practice, in everyday social behaviour (Hann 1996:2).

This is a guideline I intend to follow in this report, i.e. show how everyday practices in PiM is related to currents of ideologies which are Western European in origin, and which dominate development programmes at present. One issue at stake when investigating what civil society ‘looks like’ to people used to live under socialism, would be to try

to understand the role the state played in everyday situations, substituting the civil society which Wedel, in the above quotation, claimed did not exist:

The Benevolent Father Party educated people to express needs it would then fill, and discouraged them from taking the initiative that would enable them to fill these needs on their own. The promises – socialism's basic social contract – did not go unnoticed, and as long as economic conditions permitted their partial fulfillment, certain socialist regimes gained legitimacy as a result. But this proved impossible to sustain (Verdery 1996:25).

The regimes' promises became impossible to sustain, since even the most basic demands such as toilet paper were every so often not provided. Partly due to this, the regimes lost whatever legitimacy they may have had (Drakulic 1995). Thus, the populace were tired of endless queues in an economy of shortage, while they became increasingly aware of the gap between western and eastern material living standards. However, this longing after the West was not necessarily followed up in political and ideological attitudes, as defenders of the idea of Europe and civil society struggled to 'constitute its symbols as meaningful objects of political action', for village residents in particular (Verdery 1996:127). Since development agencies have often entered the 'second world' with an eagerness and drive to modernise, all too often no one bothered to ask the population, tired after 70 years of social engineering. That such modernisation projects have become grounds for contention may in fact be rather obvious. Furthermore, as Verdery points out, civil society is first and foremost a symbol, rather than a political reality both in the East and the West.

I will argue that development aid programmes heading east bears a similarity to the picture drawn by Ferguson with regard to how the development of Africa were perceived as '...a process of hooking citizens up into a national – and ultimately universal – grid of modernity' (Ferguson 2002:137). This may be even more the case in Central European countries 'returning to Europe' and now members of the European Union, than in Russia. However, I think the rationale behind exporting civil society to Russia has a degree of resemblance to the experience Ferguson describes from Zambia (Ferguson 2002), as Russians in the receiving end experience how Westerners endorse a special mode of organising society. This is ultimately perceived of as a means guiding Russia to be a proper European nation. However, Russia may never resemble France or England, not only because of its divergent history, but also because Russians do not want it. This should be taken into account by developers heading eastwards. According to a survey conducted among Russians by VTsIOM<sup>20</sup> in 2001, 71% of the respondents 'agreed with the statement that Russia belonged to a "Eurasian" civilization and, therefore, the Western model did not suit her, and only 13% accepted that their country was a part of European and Western civilization' (O'Loughlin, Tuathail, and Kolossov 2004:6). Furthermore, within the confines of social anthro-

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<sup>20</sup> *Vserossiiskii tsentr izuchenia obshchestvennogo meninia*: All-Russian Centre for Research on Public Opinion

pology we risk reproducing the image Ferguson described from the copper belt, as we write of societies in transition, e.g. on its way from a socialist past, via the present *liminal* phase of postsocialism to its expected return to Europe. Thus one risks passing a moral judgement (Bar-segian 2000:122), overlooking Russia's specific history and possibilities, and last but not least that the so-called transition may resemble more a permanent situation than a transition *per se* to its inhabitants. This is relevant to my field of study as the idea of 'exporting' civil society in itself is a moral judgement passed on Russian society, while my informants – as we will see – may experience a certain continuity between the past and the present.

### **Social Anthropology Headed East**

When the Iron Curtain fell, social anthropologists faced new opportunities and challenges. Obviously, these challenges were far more humble than those faced by the population in the affected countries, but nevertheless the new situation called for new perspectives. How should one explain social processes in an area where social science had not even been able to foresee the regimes' sudden collapse? One of the first and most prominent to analyse these processes was Katherine Verdery. In her book *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Verdery 1996), she criticises the dominant paradigm of transition and the euphoria of the early nineties which was well-intentioned but seemed to imply that Eastern Europe and FSU was a *tabula rasa* in which transition were perceived of as occurring rapid and swift, though often brutal. One of the other aspects that appears to have been left out of the equation was that among the inhabitants of the area, the old regimes may well carry at least some legitimacy as it actually fulfilled many of the needs of its inhabitants as previously mentioned, although the regimes failed in some imperative fields as well (Verdery 1996:25). Verdery also charge that transition theory is often rather teleological, as a given outcome, e.g. liberal democracy is presupposed. Rather, she calls for an open-ended approach where social scientists investigate the transformation they are observing as empirical facts, without teleological bias. Many of the terms used to analyse post-socialist societies, such as democracy, civil society and private property, say much about Western identity, but may have little value in analysis (Verdery 1996:15-16). Verdery's observation is plausible and relevant, as this field is full of symbols and buzzwords, as the previous discussion of civil society shows. However, the term civil society is central in this analysis as it is an ideological reference, but also offers a way to see how private and public are interconnected in profound ways. Jordan Gans-Morse, a political scientist, has recently criticised Verdery, among others, for her claim of a dominant paradigm. Gans-Morse argues that there is no dominant paradigm of teleology which has led to an erroneous analysis. Rather, he counters Verdery's call for an open-ended analysis with the claim that such approaches do not necessarily provide better insights than closed-ended frameworks (Gans-Morse 2004:323). However, I believe that the latter, with a given ideal type, in this case a liberal democracy, is more likely to lend itself to a certain bias when analysing, and as such is more prevalent in development practices than in anthropology or other social sciences. As a political scientist, Gans-Morse is probably more concerned with regime types than with the every-

day lives of ordinary people. Thus, he may not focus on how inhabitants in these countries both experience profound change and at the same time continuity with their not so distant past, as they relive it through memories and comparisons with their present situation. I will return to this perspective in Chapter 6 where I discuss nostalgia, ‘Soviet legacy’ and Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*.

#### *Anthropology from North-western Russia*

Anthropological descriptions from North-western Russia are not abundant. Soviet authorities were sceptical of foreign ethnographers, perhaps more than anywhere else this applied to the highly militarised areas on the Kola Peninsula. In recent years, however, several studies have been carried out in North-Western Russia, including St. Petersburg: The Sámi people living on Kola peninsula (Øverland 2000), while anthropological studies from north-western Russian cities have treated such phenomena as identity (Nielsen 1987; Olafsbye 1998; Byrløkken 2000), and gender and sexuality (Frostedstad 2004; Hellum 2001). These studies will not be elaborated further upon in this report, but are mentioned in order to show the variation in issues and investigations that have been conducted.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter we have seen how altruism and self-interest are implicit aspects in the term civil society, and that these aspects as such are relevant for an analysis of civil society. This is due to how civil society came to be perceived of as an arena situated between the private and the public spheres. Undertaken was a delineation between the institutionalised forms of civil society able to confront and oppose the state, known as civic society, and civil society understood as a moral community of shared values and ideas (Buchowski 1996). This delineation was introduced because it will enable us to better understand different aspects of practices in PiM. The development discourse was discussed, and highlighted how development projects and practices is part of a discourse that constructs the ‘other’, the recipients of foreign aid, and forms knowledge and perceptions on civil society and democratisation. These are all aspects important to bear in mind when I now turn to the particular field of study, i.e. the notions of self-interest and altruism as related to individual strategies and perceptions to be discussed in the following chapter, whereas internal and external organisational practices will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.



### 3 Individuals in PiM – Network Agents

I believe that in actual, lived NGO life, self-interest and altruism dialectically reinforce each other, and often, from the actors' point of view, become virtually inseparable. Even so, in public political rhetoric this dynamic must remain unexpressed: The more formal and public the occasion, the more people will idealise their NGO activism as if driven by nothing but the desire to do good (Linnet 2003:198).

#### **Voluntary Work in an NGO – between Altruism and Self-interest**

In this chapter I will focus on how individual members of PiM regard their activity, and give a description of the nexus made up of altruism and self-interest. The term social capital will be elaborated upon, in order to achieve a better understanding of the relationship between self-interest and altruism in everyday practices.

Through participant observation in PiM I studied how self-interest and altruism are relevant aspects of NGO life, although self-interest and altruism are voiced to varying degrees in differing contexts. I will elaborate upon these aspects as social facts observed in the field situation, without resorting to psychological speculation of my informants' 'genuine reasons' or ulterior motives for joining PiM. Following from my observation that self-interest and altruism operate simultaneously, is the fact that I do not regard them as being in ontological opposition. Rather, a premise for the further discussion is that these elements are regarded as aspects linked to almost every action where voluntary work takes place, and as such are constantly present. Jeppe Linnet writes about his fieldwork experiences in a Latvian NGO:

...the public self-idealization of NGO's presenting themselves as self-organizing bottom-up forces of enlightened voluntarism is countered by the empirical observation that people enter these organisational structures because they see them as relations of reciprocity through which they can access certain resources that they desire (Linnet 2003:206).

The implication of understanding these as 'relations of reciprocity' is that it enables us to grasp how members in PiM 'give away' voluntary work, while they in return gain access to some valuable resources. For most of them the individual aspect is important, as it may enhance their job opportunities:

I am an individualist, a citizen of the world. I care only about myself, and am responsible only for my own actions. These are my values and it is difficult to link to such a thing as Russian citizenship. [...] Well, I'm Russian and I can see the problems, I don't know how to solve them, but I'm not complaining. Most people complain. I regard myself as empowered to a certain degree. And my job I have partly thanks to my time in PiM.  
[...]

*Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo – eto amorfnyi* (Civil society – it's amorphous [with no definite shape]). I know what it is about, but it's hard to describe and recognise. I'm not born into a civil society... It's a matter of values. To check the power, who does it serve? We don't have a civil society, but we're not monkeys either! (Raisa, a former PiM member)

While civil society, as Raisa puts it in the above statement, is a matter of values, as in Buchowski's notion of civil society as a moral community (Buchowski 1996:82), it certainly also encompasses material interests and self-interest. As related to everyday practices and ideology, the relationship between altruism and self-interest is relevant. My own fieldwork experiences in Murmansk indeed suggest this: After the interview with Nadia was finished, Vania joined us, and we were strolling in *Pervomaiskii raion* (The First of May District). Vania asked what we spoke about in the interview. Nadia replied: 'Well, we talked about all kind of things related to PiM, PiM's goal, what I have learnt as a member and my motivation'. 'Oh, so you told about the trips to Norway and Sweden then?' Vania asked, laughing. Nadia replied: 'OK, well I deserved them.' Only an hour or so earlier Nadia had talked about how she liked to work for PiM in order to try to educate the populace about environmental problems and as a contribution to the protection of the environment. Thus, working in an NGO involves both hard work, and what one might call a luxurious lifestyle, that occasionally enables you to travel abroad. Nadia's justifications for her working at PiM switched between altruism and self-interest, and this may serve as an example on how an interview was regarded as more public than a late afternoon stroll, which was more private and relaxed. Hence, the more truthful confession while strolling, admittedly provoked by Vania's questions. There is nothing extraordinary about this episode; rather it was one of many where my informants tended to make different, and somewhat contradictory, statements in different settings. This can be referred to as frontstage and backstage (Goffman 1971); where Nadia's informal 'admission' occurred backstage. However it is important not to treat backstage and frontstage as being mutually opposed, in which a backstage statement is perceived as the more genuine, or honest, than one made frontstage. Rather, they are both aspects adhering to all social actions, because they provide guidance on how people seek to re-present themselves. However, self-interest may be in disagreement with the ethos and norms of civil society: civil society as an ideal is first and foremost a collective and altruistic corrective to state power. On the other hand, collective self-interest, e.g. of trade unions, is considered to be legitimate within civil society. Thus, a distinction should be drawn between the normative aspect in which self-interest is not communicated in the same manner, and the descriptive level, in which self-interest and altruism are both manifest.

### **Altruism Among Youth and Their Socio-economic Background**

Most of the members in PiM are students or pupils who live with their parents. As Sonia's statement below points out, the members of PiM seem to be less altruistic in their attitudes towards NGO work after a while:

You see, PiM is made up of very idealistic young people. I believe that young people are not so interested in money. This is the reason people stay in PiM, and they leave as soon as they understand the realities of life. I, for one, am less idealistic now than just a few years ago. Anyway, it is a great advantage that PiM from the start got into the hands of very idealistic and clever persons. It was a powerful team, I was second generation in this group. So, in the end the result will be that maybe 50 or so have learned 'democratic values' from PiM. (Sonia)

While telling me this, Sonia's facial expression signalled that she did not think the level of 'environmental education' – a phrase often invoked by members in PiM to denote the organisation's main goal – affected a significant number of people. Sonia further believes that idealism normally has a short life-span, as idealism is something relegated youth, something which will be left behind upon reaching adulthood, by necessity. Sonia quit working in PiM when she graduated from the local university, i.e. at the same time as she had to find a job which would enable her to be financially independent from her parents. Although Sonia stated that young people are not very interested in money, when judging from their cellular phones and clothes, it seems clear that they are eagerly awaiting the newest model of this or that item, and as such participate in the global economy as consumers. Most probably, it is correct to claim that these young people most of whom still live at their parents' place while they study, are economically relatively unencumbered compared to many other Russians. The fact that their parents can afford to let them study instead of working while they live at home, shows that they are relatively well off. In this respect they have better opportunities than many others to participate in voluntary work, as long as it 'does not hinder my studying', as one of my informants explained. Thus, altruism is a relative, rather than absolute, quality, related to activists' overall situation and adjusted in accordance to what is deemed to be acceptable in given situations.

### **Advantages Stemming from NGO Work**

My informants offered some reasons for why they joined PiM, and these will now be listed. The list stems from reasons given in interviews and conversations, and although it should not be treated as conclusive statistical data, it nevertheless reveals trends and attitudes regarding what seems to be reasonable justifications for NGO work. The reasons given below are not necessarily stated by all, but they are nevertheless representative and rather uncontested among my informants. Further, they are listed without any regard to priority. The members of PiM list the following as advantages stemming from their voluntary work: (i) enhanced English language skills; (ii) the possibility of making foreign acquaintances; (iii) foreign travel; (iv) acquiring knowledge of environmental issues; (v) enhancing future job opportunities; (vi) acquiring competence in project management; (vii) being socially responsible and last, but not least; (viii) the desire to help improve the overall environmental situation. The first six reasons are directly relevant on an individual level and, indirectly, relevant on a group level since competence in language skills and the like enhance PiM's overall operational skills. However, my

informants related them to *personal advantages*, and not organisational ones. I believe that this and other aspects mentioned so far in this chapter may be elucidated with the concept of social capital and *blat*, to which I will now turn.

### **Social Capital and *blat***

In order to deal with the relationship between altruism and the pursuit of self-interest, the theoretical concept of social capital will now be explored. 'One may define social capital in the simplest terms as the value of significant social connections to one's career in school, business and politics' (Lampland 2002:35). The simplicity of this definition is, in a way, dangerously disarming as it does not to a satisfying degree make it clear to whom these 'social connections' are valuable. As we will see in the following chapter, a conflict may arise from the accumulation of social capital on the individual level and the group level. This focus is one of the primary differences between the two most prominent traditions connected with the term social capital, e.g. that of Pierre Bourdieu and Robert D. Putnam. I will start with Bourdieu's utilisation of the concept, whereas Putnam's approach will be discussed in the subsequent chapter. Bourdieu defines social capital as:

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu 1986:248-49).

Among the key elements here is network, which Bourdieu understands as a product of individual or collective strategies, and through these investments actors seek to establish or reproduce relationships deemed as valuable. These relationships encompass various arenas, for instance, the neighbourhood, workplace and kinship (Bourdieu 1986:249). Thus, Bourdieu is concerned with the interest that individual (or collective) actors invest in the establishment and maintenance of a valuable network. Individuals need access to the collectively owned capital, and this is relevant for why people join NGOs such as PiM. Put directly, the NGOs are arenas where social capital is available. Bourdieu emphasises that economic capital is at the root of all other types of capital, but at the same time social capital is necessary in order to gain access to goods and services, as one might need to manipulate one's network through symbolic power (Bourdieu 1986:249).

In her book *Russia's Economy of Favours*, the anthropologist Alena V. Ledeneva has described *blat*, a phenomenon related to social capital. Ledeneva defines *blat* as: '...the use of personal networks and informal contacts to obtain goods and services in short supply and to find a way around formal procedures' (Ledeneva 1998:1). Following this definition of *blat* given above it may seem like it bears some resemblance to corruption and services given *na levo* (with the left hand, e.g. a 'dirty job'). The meanings of *blat* change, and among youth *blat* is now associated more with its pre-Soviet criminal meaning, than with its Soviet meaning

(Ledeneva 1998:175). However, my informants still referred to the term in everyday situations, although in a somewhat ironic tone. Ledeneva seeks to delineate *blat* from interpretations implying a criminal exchange as *blat* in Soviet time was associated with positive aspects such as friendship and kinship (Ledeneva 1998:39). Hence, *blat* is indeed related to social capital, and with regard to the specific tradition of *blat* one may argue that social capital was more important for instance in Brezhnev's Soviet Union, than it was in Norway at the same time, as *blat* permits access to goods and services that are not available through the use of economic capital alone. The Soviet economy has been described as an economy of shortage, and people were thus necessitated to find alternative ways in order to get access to goods and services. *Blat* provided such an alternative path, and although the economy of Russia is no longer an economy of shortage, *blat* may still be relevant as Russians try to navigate the deep waters of bureaucracy as well as gaining access to goods and services that are available only in principle, as it is a fact that the decline in living standards have made some goods and services virtually inaccessible. Every so often, my informants referred to doing things by *blat*, such as when one of them arranged travel insurance through a friend working in an insurance company rather than investigating what company had the product that best suited his needs and financial situation. As this example illustrates, *blat* may involve quite everyday and mundane situations and exchanges of services. However, as the notion and knowledge of *blat* is widespread, I believe that it has ramifications for how my informants may view PiM as a potential platform for *blat* exchanges. To them, PiM may be regarded as a hub through which potentially attractive services, objects and persons flow. Thus, access to PiM is attractive in its own right. Quite analogous to *blat* in its functioning is the Chinese *guanxi*, e.g. connections, because *guanxi* give 'order and form to Chinese governance and to what passes as both administration and politics' (Pye 2002:47). In much the same manner as *blat* contributed to the maintenance of the Soviet economy with its subversive and unofficial exchanges, *guanxi* as a more or less 'unofficial' system, structures everyday politics. One of the hallmarks of *guanxi*, is the need to be introduced by someone, and this is analogous to *blat*. As *blat* is situated between a gift and a market exchange (Fürst 2004:182), one could argue that it is surrounded by an aura of ambivalence. Ledeneva argues that *blat* relations creates reciprocity by way of 'a mutual sense of "fairness" and trust' (Ledeneva 1998:142). Thus, as *blat* services of various sorts are repeated within a given relationship, trust is thus established, as both parties know that both have interest in the maintenance of the relationship. I think that PiM can be regarded as an arena for *blat*, through the reciprocal relationship between individual members and PiM. Whereas members invest time through voluntary work in PiM, PiM offers them a platform for accumulating social capital and network-building. Thus, one may perceive of the relation between altruism and self-interest as a form of barter or trade-off wherein reciprocity is firmly situated. My impression is that members in PiM accept this reciprocity as part and parcel of NGO life, thus they relate their work to the reciprocity described by Linnet (Linnet 2003:206). However, the distinction drawn between *emic* and *etic* representations of 'reality' and existence is here of considerable importance. *Emic* refers to how members of a given society themselves undertake to interpret and describe their existence and practices with their own terms,

whereas *etic* refers to the conceptual apparatus of the analyst.<sup>21</sup> Thus, as the anthropologist set out to analyse a given society his or her task would be to combine knowledge of a local reality with a comparative analytical apparatus (Eriksen 1998:45-46). Linnet's model above is but one analytical abstraction one may use to interpret NGO life. Further, one should be careful not to imply that the model or term of the anthropologist is somewhat more correct than the one used by the people themselves (Holy and Stuchlik 1981:9). Simultaneously, since young Russians have a somewhat ambiguous understanding of the term *blat*, this implies that I should be careful to claim that *blat* is a relevant term to apply, and assert that PiM is an arena for *blat* although this is indeed tempting. However, there is little doubt that members conceive of PiM as a valuable platform. Hence, I find the concept social capital to be less ambiguous, while at the same time analytically more satisfying than *blat*. On the other hand, it is informative to take into account the tradition of *blat* in order to better understand how my informants regard networking and access to limited resources.

I would assert that my informants are more skilful and successful at manipulating their social capital in order to gain personal benefits than they are when pursuing and achieving results on behalf of PiM as a group. This probably has to do with the context in which PiM operates, where PiM has limited possibilities to raise its concern as PiM's policy are contested and resisted. PiM has encountered substantial obstacles in gaining the status of a valid opponent by its counterparts, be they government officials or the management of commercial corporations, and this will be discussed in Chapter 5. Thus, PiM members are left with few other possibilities than accumulating and maintaining social capital for their individual needs. As we saw in the list of advantages above, my informants regarded most of the advantages as individual ones. Thus, individual accumulation of social capital is of great importance, although as Bourdieu pointed out, social capital is collectively owned. However, PiM members do have the ability to utilise this collectiveness of their social capital for personal benefits, for instance when acquiring jobs.

### **Collectivism and Individualism**

I have previously discussed the relationship between altruism and self-interest among members of PiM, and thus argued that these are aspects adhering to the accumulation of social capital. These two aspects are closely linked to collectivism and individualism, a relation formed partly by socialist ideology:

In view of the need to encourage the development and growth of feelings of solidarity, it should above all be established that the isolation of the 'couple' as a special unit does not answer the interests of communism. [...] The interests of the individual must be subordinated to the collective (Kollontai [1921] 1977) in Ashwin (2000:6).

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<sup>21</sup> A parallel distinction is that of *folk models* versus *analytical models* (Holy and Stuchlik 1981).

Whereas self-interest/altruism and individualism/collectivism are inter-related, it should not be treated as being the same thing. Self-interest may be both individual and collective, as can altruism. The end of the Soviet Union and the rapid introduction of market liberalisation paved the way for profound changes in the perception of Russians of their relation to the collective. As Alexandra Kollontai – a central figure in the Bolshevik party – clearly states above, the subordination of the individual was of great importance in Communist ideology. Although this was closely linked to Soviet interpretation of Marxism and socialism, it could also be in agreement with long-term traditions within Russia's peasant culture, e.g. the principle of *mir*. However, my informants have grown up in a time of turmoil in Russia, where the collective is no longer praised as superior to the individual. What are the ramifications of the changes with regard to solidarity and communal thinking; and to what extent do the members of PiM invoke the profound changes when explaining how they view and evaluate voluntary work in a NGO?

#### *Apathy in Apatity – a Story-line*

I often heard the phrase '*Chto delat*'? ('What to do?') among the Russian elderly when they referred to an everyday situation perceived of as hopeless, and thus giving an expression of apathy. Apathy may be understood as a lack of concern, or perhaps indifference, as a result of a perceived absence of opportunities. Such attitudes were apparent for Kolia, when he travelled around on the Kola Peninsula distributing literature on environmental issues to local libraries. At the same time he gave lectures at the libraries and presented the literature he brought with him. One of the towns he visited was Apatity, a few hours drive from Murmansk. Since Apatity is located quite close to Kola Nuclear Power Plant (KNPP), issues concerning nuclear energy and wastes should be considered as relevant to its citizens. At least, Kolia thought so as he gave the lecture. When introducing the environmental literature he had brought with him, Kolia felt that the audience in the library was passive, because he had a hard time convincing the audience that nuclear matters were of importance and on which they could make an impact – and should – for the sake of future generations. When he retold this to me later, he invoked story-lines of apathy and passivity due to 'the Soviet legacy'. A story-line is within discourse theory something that 'catches certain aspects of a problem complex in a simple and understandable manner', and that 'play a key role in positioning subjects in a discourse' (Hønneland 2003:10). I experienced the same adherence to the use of clear-cut story-lines when I conducted an interview with a representative of The Soldiers' Mothers Committee in Murmansk: she blamed passivity, alcoholism and illiteracy among parents and soldiers alike as challenges with regard to raising awareness among this group. Their opponents, the military brass, were described as careless. Her interpretation is informative as it reveals how she understands the present situation, and how she invokes common story-lines of passivity and alcoholism as explanatory factors. Obviously, this 'fact' is not applicable to each and everyone. Nevertheless, this is her justification of the rather meagre results the Soldiers' Mothers achieve in some respects.

How inhabitants identify themselves with problems around them, and their relation to a collective may well be explained differently, as Nadia's interpretations of the changes of the past years, with respect to this, shows:

In the future, next generation, there will be more ecologists. You, know... five till eight years ago, to be a friend of nature, wasn't cool. In the Soviet time, we had young pioneers. In the start just the best became pioneers, after a while all became pioneers. To be a pioneer was good. But five years ago it became good to be a hooligan, to reject everything from the soviet time. It was anti-sovietism, and anti-nature. (Nadia)

According to Nadia the turmoil of the nineties with the general upheaval had devastating effects on communal thinking and collectivism. In the beginning of the nineties the most positive thing to do, apparently, was to be an individualist, hence it was not regarded as interesting and important to work with environmental problems and other collective issues. She is hopeful about the future as she thinks that these attitudes are now on the decline among people, and especially among young adults. At any rate, it offers a somewhat differing explanation from the common story-line invoking the image of life under Soviet socialism as a life characterised by passivity and individuals leading atomised lives with no relationship with their next-to-door neighbour, except for one marked by distrust. Anna invoked this type of explanation, which seems to be the more common:

It's due to the Russian mentality. We are not logical, we're irrational. The Soviet time changed our minds. Before, we had great souls, and a great experience. Now we need to become a new people again. We are afraid to be free.

The implication of Anna's statement is that the Soviet period had devastating effects on Russians' mentality, and counters Nadia's view that the end of Soviet socialism marked the end of collectivism. This according to Nadia positive quality of Soviet society was replaced with individualism in its perverted form. As Nadia joined PiM she also joined an organisation that in many ways embodies her ideal of collective thinking. This example with Nadia and Anna show us that despite the basically similar historical experiences the two have, it may be utilised to explain either a break or a continuation of qualities which belong to the past. Furthermore, Nadia's interpretation shows how the imagery of a total break with the Soviet past implied that everything labelled 'Soviet' was regarded as backwards. Of course this is not an attempt to claim that everyone thought that they could break with the past in its entirety. But as Soviet and Western propaganda alike had treated socialism and capitalism as opposites, perhaps it should come as no surprise that the break, in some ways, was represented as absolute. In this respect there is a parallel between foreign development aid practices in Russia, as described in the previous chapter, and some of my informants' own story-lines, although the latter group soon became more sombre and realistic as everyday life turned out to be replete of challenges.

The manner in which individuals regard their relation to the collective is significant when trying to identify how the term civil society is under-



stood. A *politolog*, i.e. a political scientist, in Murmansk told a parable which he felt encapsulated Russians' attitudes towards civil society and societal responsibility:

Imagine a ship. This ship is Russia, and on it ordinary Russians work as crew, whereas the captain comes from the elite. The crew only cares about the next meal. If the captain dies while the ship is still at sea, what will the crew do? They will just continue to think about the next meal, and won't be able to decide who should be the new captain. The crew simply do not care. No one will bother to navigate; no one knows where the ship is heading. This is how Russians react. *Ia ne liubliu liudei kotorye tol'ko khotiat est'* – I don't like people who just want to eat.

And to the *politolog* that is how he thinks Russians are all about. They only think of the next meal, rather than planning for the future, or taking an active part in forming their own future. This rather grim picture resonates with something Anna said in an interview, claiming that Russians' attitude to life was by *avoc'* – e.g. at random, haphazardly. According to Anna many respond to challenges with a shrug: 'I am able to do something with this, but I won't. *Po zhivëm – uvidem* (The one who lives – will see)'. Thus, the implication of the interpretations of Anna and the *politolog* regarding Russians' attitudes towards the collective and civil society is that they think Russians do not feel like being members neither of a moral community nor an empowered civic society capable of advocacy. Similar views were shared by other of my informants:

A Russian citizen does not possess a feeling of his or her own power and capabilities. Lack of information and vacuum in media strengthens this feeling. The deputies already live in Moscow, and they don't care about us. (Sonia)

When people feel unable to provoke change, they may want to seclude themselves from the outside world: Vania and I are sitting in his room eating crab salad and drinking tea. Our conversation touches various issues, and while talking about what kind of future he dreams about he says: 'I want to have an apartment where I and my family will be happy together, away from all the problems of the world outside. This shall be our little fortress.' Earlier that evening we had talked about why he had joined PiM, the overall political situation and related issues. He had stressed the importance of taking responsibility for the environmental situation and the like. I will claim that this discrepancy shows how different dreams and perspectives operate simultaneously. The American sociologist Christopher Lasch has described in his book *Haven in a heartless world: The family besieged* (Lasch 1979) how individuals tend to withdraw from a threatening external world, encapsulating themselves as a last resort in the home and with the family where love and decency still exists. He argues that as public life has increasingly become a 'war scene', individuals seek refuge at home, and that the history of modern societies is a history where state and society have gained control over activities that earlier belonged to the private sphere (Lasch 1979). This is to some degree a valid interpretation of the Soviet society and strong state control, as the state, through the 'benevolent Father party' exerted control and power as a patron over its clients. At the same time, the party was remarkably weak as party policies were opposed in creative and sub-

versive ways on its periphery, e.g. by its clients (Verdery 1996:20-22). Returning to the case of Vania and his 'little fortress', this may be explained with reference to Lasch's theory. At the time of our talk, Vania was unemployed and was insecure about his future prospects regarding where he would live and what he should do. Thus, he complained about Murmansk as he felt there was an absence of opportunities for him there. His discomfort was expressed in various ways, such as when he said while we were strolling in the city centre: '*Smotrii! U nas vsë govno* [Vulgar form]!' ('Look! Among us everything is just shit!') Considering his discomfort, it is not strange that he dreamed of a safe haven at home. Simultaneously, he was a PiM participant and thus got the opportunity to access collectively owned capital.

### **Environmentalism and Gender**

Issues concerning gender in PiM are a topic that deserves a brief examination. Although not something my informants talked about at great length, gender issues were commented on by some. In the quote below, Sonia talks about one male environmentalist in particular, and uses this as an example to make a generalisation: 'He cannot be motivated as a volunteer, money is what motivates him. Women are more socially active, men are lazy.' Sonia believes men are both lazier, and more inclined to be driven by money than women. I believe this reveals as much about expectations directed towards men and women respectively, than with regard to how lives are actually lived out in everyday practices. Although legislation in the Soviet Union treated males and females as equal, profound gender inequalities persisted. Most likely, the aim of the Soviet leadership when encouraging women to seek employment was to ensure a plentiful labour force for the massive industrialisation which the Soviet Union underwent, rather than advocating women's rights on its own merit. Another aspect of Soviet authorities' gender policies was that they acknowledged that 'future generations of communists was in women's hands and because women played an important role in the Soviet symbolic system' (Ashwin 2000:3). Thus, gender relations were part of the individual's service to the Soviet State. As women went to work outside the home, they nevertheless continued to carry the same burden of work in the private sphere. Today there is still a widespread notion among Russians – or at least the ones I have met – that men should be the main breadwinners. Such attitudes were clearly displayed on occasions when we went out to eat in restaurants or the like: Men were expected to pay the bill. With this in mind, Sonia's generalisation makes more sense as it fits smoothly into the wider gender perspective with regard to division of labour. As men carry more financial responsibility in public, maybe it is not so strange after all that they are 'driven by money', and that this influence how they evaluate the potential benefits of joining an NGO. Whether or not women are more inclined to social activism is of course related to this too, but also interesting in another perspective, as statistics tend to suggest: In a survey conducted among students in Murmansk in 2003, Brunstad and Persson find that men are more inclined to prioritise material wealth and heading an organisation, whereas women are more inclined to engage in entrepreneurship and international work. At the same time however, only two out of the 204 respondents listed social responsibility as an important priority (Brunstad & Persson

2004:10). However, as the categories used in the survey mentioned above are somewhat ambiguous and overlapping, one should exercise care when making an attempt to arrive at conclusive judgements on this matter. But as women according to this survey are more inclined to participate in international work than men, e.g. by joining organisations such as PiM, one may argue that women seek to accumulate more social capital in this respect. But this is countered by the fact that the survey also indicates that men seek to head organisations, and thus this could be understood as a means to accumulate social capital. In PiM, I found participation from both genders to be rather balanced, although women were slightly overrepresented in the board compared with men. As the composition of the board will vary from year to year, I will refrain from being conclusive based on the composition of the board one particular year.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In the statement in the start of this chapter, Raisa stated outright individualism and self-interest, but simultaneously knowledge of an abstract altruistic ideology. The ability to keep two different thoughts in mind simultaneously should obviously not be treated as unique. However what should be stressed is that it seems as though, for Raisa, and the other informants, there was no sense of a discrepancy between altruism and the pursuit of self-interest. Altruism and self-interest may be more in opposition in analysis than as references in everyday life. As Linnet argued, self-interest and altruism for NGO-activists seem dialectically to reinforce each other (Linnet 2003:198), as far as NGO-activists are concerned, and as such they are both inescapable aspects in NGO work.

Although voluntary work within civil society seems to have no place for vested self-interest – at least not publicly stated – as self-interest in itself might challenge the ethos of civil society as a moral community, the ongoing dynamic between altruism and self-interest seems to be that members voice and handle the relationship differently in different contexts, as it is more or less socially acceptable to utter self-interest according to changing contexts. The more informal the setting, the more NGO-activists were prone to reveal personal ambitions and self-interest, while situations where PiM as a group voiced its concerns, the focus shifted to altruistic, voluntary work for the sake of environmental protection. Self-interest probably emanates from the feeling of living rather marginal lives, in terms of opportunities for political impact and individual economic prospects. In this respect members of PiM enjoy a measure of success individually, partly due to the time they have spent in PiM. Raisa, for instance, attributes the acquisition of her present job partly to what she had learned at PiM. The concept of social capital enables us to see how this can both strengthen actors' pursuit of self-interest and as a means for the organisation to achieve its goals, in this case enabling PiM to co-operate with other organisations at home and abroad. In this manner, altruism and self-interest may be regarded as aspects linked to social capital itself and which thus may work in concert from time to time. However, members of PiM still seem to be more successful at manipulating social capital into other forms of capital individually than as a group, as they enhance their individual skills in English, project management and the like, while PiM faces severe difficulties in terms of

converting this capital into political impact, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. Thus, organisational life can be understood as a response to the peculiarities of the present-day situation, as members combine individual and collective strategies of capital accumulation – where the individual accumulation is often parasitical to the collective one – with network building and sociality.

## 4 Internal Practices in PiM – Flow and Partnership

Despite all the talk of partnership and cooperation, the relationship is inherently unequal (Sampson 2002).

In this chapter, I will describe internal organisational practices in PiM, as I understand PiM as a hub through which resources – financial, personal and social – flow and mediate. PiM's relation to NU will also be discussed as part of the internal practices because their cooperation is very close, and influences PiM in profound ways. The concept of social capital will be elaborated upon in the end of this chapter, this time understood as an aspect of group interests, rather than individual interests as in the preceding chapter.

### PiM – Daily Life

PiM's office is located in the *Pervomaiskii raion*, in the southern-most part of Murmansk. The PiM headquarters is an apartment that consists of office, meeting room, storage room, toilet and a small kitchen. The Murmansk branch of PiM meets once a week, usually on Sundays. Although PiM arranges meetings on a weekly basis, they are quite often rescheduled at short notice. Meetings are informal, the agenda is decided upon by Anna, and not handed out to the other members. While waiting for the rest to show up, the youngest members – at around 15 years of age – wait in the meeting room for the group of older members, consisting of Anna and other members of the board, to enter the room and for the meeting to commence.

Members of PiM are stratified according to age and interests, but this is probably best summed up in the distinction between what is referred to as active and ordinary members. The logic seems to be that when you not only take part in PiM's regular meetings, but also participate in, or head a project you are perceived as an active member. Obviously, members of the board are also considered to be active. In PiM's Murmansk branch, probably 7-10 out of the nearly twenty members normally attending meetings will be counted as active, based on their membership in the board, that they are responsible for a project, or both. Specific projects are normally assigned a leader. The project leader is responsible for writing applications, feasibility assessment, realising targeted objectives, reporting and evaluation. A project commences when financial support has been granted, with the money quite often handed over in cash to the person in charge. This is a moment of high symbolic value as the money signifies some sort of trust and importance. One of the issues frequently debated and discussed at meetings, was the replies to applications for financial support from NU and various other sources in Norway. This characterises the activity in PiM in profound ways, as will be elaborated later.

### PiM's Strategic Goal

In order to reach an understanding of what is perceived to be PiM's ideology and principal goals; one may turn to various sources. First, an

investigation of PiM's ideological platform as it appears on their internet site gives us an initial clue (PiM 2005):<sup>22</sup> It states that PiM aims at unifying people with similar views, that are not 'indifferent to the problems of the surrounding environment', at the same time raising awareness about the endangered environment through education and information, directed both at its members and the wider populace. Through publications and the support of scientific studies, PiM aims at suggesting solutions to environmental problems. PiM also wants to take part in general youth politics. However, PiM do not refer to *grazhdansckoe obshchestvo* (civil society) explicitly, although I will later argue that PiM's external practices reveal that it embodies many of the practices related to civil and civic society. Furthermore, as PiM seeks to provide suggestions and solutions, and to inform and educate, this could well be regarded as an implicit reference to civil society. Another aspect of PiM's strategy document is that it is neither particularly operational nor quantifiable, but rather the organisation's general outline of PiM's goals. This is reflected in that this platform is not used frequently, and that at present PiM is working on devising a new platform which will be more adaptable to everyday work and implementation of projects.

A rather similar picture of PiM's objectives emerges when examining members' evaluations and statements:

While I was in PiM I formulated the most important work PiM could do: environmental and ecological education. This has a lot of impact because it influences people's minds; they're then able to make a better informed choice in their lives. (Sonia)

Sonia's statement resonates with what most of my other informants said about the same topic. However, views differ slightly on evaluations dealing with the extent to which PiM is successful. Some of the informants argued that PiM has not developed and learned from past mistakes. According to such statements, in cases of failure to meet an objective there is no follow-up in the form of a sound assessment. Other informants seem to believe that PiM does not need to change, hence ought to work in the same manner as before. This is reflected in the project applications PiM submits, as the formula for how to succeed frequently remains largely the same from project to project. Another reason for this could be that once a certain style in the applications have proven to be successful, there is little reason to change the content, although the projects applied for may be significantly different. Raisa sums up her view and frustration:

I quit because PiM didn't develop. PiM still works with democratic issues, but nobody understands what this is about, because of our negative experiences the last 15 years. Two years after I quit I joined the administrative seminar.<sup>23</sup> During one of the discussions I asked each of the participants if they could explain PiM's main goal. Well, guess what? Nobody could answer. I think that people don't care about results; you should just do something with

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<sup>22</sup> A translated version and the Russian original are available as Appendixes #1 and #2.

<sup>23</sup> The administrative seminar is an annual seminar in which PiM, Aetas and NU come together to discuss strategy and policy options for the following year.

environmental colour. PiM still works at the same level. You know, I have studied and worked with international project management, and I know what they should do. When they finish a project, they should evaluate. They don't. They need an ideology behind, a common mission, otherwise it will suddenly stop. (Raisa)

Raisa thinks there is a lack of progress in PiM's work. According to her, PiM risks losing sight of its overall goal, preferring to focus on ways of acquiring financial support. I find it instructive to return to Hannerz as quoted in Chapter 1: he emphasises that ideology do not need to be more than intuitively understood as related to a general perspective and stated through everyday practices (Hannerz 1992:104). Thus, one may argue that when PiM's members run into trouble while trying to state the overall purpose of PiM's activity in a clear manner, in practice they nevertheless can be able to act according to it. On the other hand, NGO life risks being reduced to the technique of how to obtain financial support rather than focusing on objectives and results, as Raisa seems to suggest. However, the ideology as identified above, and given PiM's practices, make it possible to state that PiM's platform encapsulates such assets as the advocacy of free access to information on environmental issues to all interested parties; awareness raising among politicians of their role as the servants of the people; an insistence that politicians must be available to the people whose concerns they need to hear; the encouragement of the freedoms of speech and organisation. I believe that this ideology is in significant ways shaped by NU, and PiM's relationship with NU I will now turn to.

### **PiM and the Relation to its Norwegian Partner, NU**

PiM is to a significant degree financially dependent on its Norwegian partner. I noticed throughout the time I conducted fieldwork PiM's preoccupation with how to obtain financial support from NU. At nearly all meetings, this was discussed, as well as NU's reply to applications. At the same time NU urges PiM to seek alternative sources for financial support. Thus, the cooperation between PiM and NU is not only political and organisational, but since NU is PiM's main financial sponsor, the relationship is one of extensive dependence, in which PiM is the 'weakest' party. NU exerts power on PiM directly and indirectly. In discussions at for instance seminars and the summer camp, representatives from NU attempted subtly to influence the policy options PiM was in the process of discussing. Although NU stresses that PiM is free to choose its own political platform and policy, it is self-evident that NU, as the main provider of financial support will be heard. Another way in which NU exerts control on PiM is in the way it decides which, if any, of PiM's projects will be funded. PiM is thus subjected to governance. Michel Foucault's concept of *governmentality* elucidates this phenomenon. Foucault understood power as an aspect adhering to relations between individuals, or between groups of individuals, rather than a substance or special quality (Foucault 2002:113). Governmentality denotes a power relation that is reflexive, as the governed subject thus governs itself (Neumann 2002:14). Hence, when power is decentred, subjects to governance play an active role in their own self-governance,

since *governmentality* denotes a mentality not only for the governing party, but also of the governed party. When PiM adjusts its practices according to what is likely to gain financial support from NU, PiM governs itself. Even though PiM depends almost solely on financial means acquired from, or through, NU, PiM has an advantage compared to many other NGOs because the cooperation is long-termed, and has proved to be stable. Ultimately this means that PiM together with Aetas have privileged access to NU, and that they do not compete in the same race as many other NGOs, who may be related to various donors and have to adjust and govern themselves accordingly. Still, the relationship between PiM and NU is based on inequality rather than equality.

As PiM is indeed formed by its relationship with NU – as is also seen through the close resemblance in names and related phenomena – PiM could be classified as a donor-organised NGO – e.g. a DONGO. Although PiM has obtained the status of an NGO according to the Russian registration requirements, the organisation is inherently and inescapably shaped by its relationship to NU. Not only does it receive almost all its money from NU, it is a replica of NU's organisational structure. PiM has copied such paraphernalia as its Norwegians counterpart's name and logo. In the year PiM was founded, in 1999, some members actually copied the old NU logo from a t-shirt. PiM has increasingly organised itself – and partly been instructed to do so – in the same manner as NU, holding elections and annual general meetings, since this is regarded as part and parcel of being a truly democratic representative of civil society. PiM has in many ways become more or less isomorphic to NU, e.g. as an organism with the same structure and form as another. At the same time, PiM contributed to its own self-governance when taking as its model the organisation on which PiM depends so heavily. Although the similarities are important, there are also important differences that need to be stressed. One of the most evident, but sometimes forgotten when discussing common strategies, is that PiM is a regional NGO, whereas NU is a countrywide NGO. This has wide-ranging consequences for the two organisations since very different opportunities are present when advocating change in environmental policies on a national level. In fact, PiM may resemble one of NU's local groups more than it resembles NU's central administration. As will be elaborated in the next chapter, PiM's ability to advocate change is limited for other reasons than the fact that it is only a regional organisation. Furthermore, PiM does not want to become a countrywide NGO, as among Russian NGO activists there is wide-spread scepticism towards countrywide NGOs which have a central administration in Moscow. As Kolia believes, such organisations will be undemocratic, with the leader acting as a prince over his principalities. Hence, PiM seeks to cooperate with other organisations on an ad hoc basis, rather than seeking to establish a country-wide environmental NGO. The nature of PiM's dependency on NU – as this relationship is neither mutual independent, nor mutual dependent – shapes PiM in profound ways. In the following chapter, I will show that in present-day Russia it is not necessarily an advantage, in terms of political impact, for NGOs to be funded from abroad, although it is a financial necessity.



*Flow of Ideology and Benevolent Colonialism*

Civil society, democratisation and other concepts and buzzwords may be understood in terms of flow. The flow metaphor is an inspiring image to utilise in order to grasp how not only concepts such as democracy and civil society, but also ideologies, practices and resources flow between spheres and localities, and furthermore to see how processes of globalisation and centre-periphery relations are affected. Financial, social and human resources can be viewed as flowing within and between localities, and as such tell us something about world-wide dissemination of culture. I will apply the concept of flow in order to achieve a fuller understanding of PiM's relation to NU

Flow is a concept that may enable us to better grasp the above mentioned, but simultaneously we may risk overlooking power relations. If everything is viewed as flow, where does power and distribution come into the relationship? Drawing on the imagery of an overflowing river which forges new paths through the terrain, Tsing points out that the flow itself shapes the surrounding environment and leaves traces behind. However, the flow metaphor may not give a sufficient answer to what makes flow possible, and the traces flows leave behind (Tsing 2002). In the case under scrutiny, flow is nurtured and facilitated by NU, as NU has financial means to support PiM as a result of Norway's political objectives for the Barents region (Odin.dep.no 2003). Flow has consequences, and is not necessarily free, since someone has power to decide what is allowed to flow where. From Oslo to Murmansk there is a flow of resources such as money, personnel, concepts, ideas regarding mode of organisation and perceptions of which environmental issues are the most significant, while applications and from time to time personnel flow the other way around, i.e. from Murmansk to Oslo. In this relationship of flows, PiM is for the most part at the receiving end.

In his article *Weak States, Uncivil Societies and Thousands of NGOs*, Steven Sampson describes how dependent Albanian NGOs have to receive and utilise while Western donors have gained the upper hand by giving away, and ultimately deciding who will receive and who will not, receive support. Thus, 'donors and their personnel are by and large well-intentioned, and the most suitable term for Western intervention in the Balkans would be *benevolent colonialism*' (Sampson 2002). Sampson underscores that the stress should be on benevolence, rather than on colonialism as he thinks it is important to understand the nature of 'Western good will'. However, as benevolence may be the guiding principle behind development aid, some sort of colonialism may be the outcome. State-sponsored Norwegian development aid, in the form of NU's financial support to PiM, is the product of a world-view that regards Norway as suited to help 'the others'. As such, Norway's implied moral superiority to 'less developed' countries needs a closer examination. Norwegian development aid could be understood as a guardianship in which states at the receiving end of Norwegian aid are understood in terms of pathology, e.g. as sufferers of a sickness that Norway may cure (Nustad 2003:104). This is but one example of the 'perpetuation of the hegemonic idea of the West's superiority' (Escobar 1995:8). Although strengthening grass-root democracy and civil society in itself may not be

considered to be controversial, the practices and processes that are the result of such a policy option may be controversial. As for the relationship between PiM and NU there is little doubt that NU believe that the organisation 'do good' when involving itself in Russian environmental politics, but the effects of the unequal relationship between PiM and NU, are nevertheless profound. This dependency is expressed through such phenomena as the isomorphic structure and PiM's self-governance. In project life, power may be understood as consisting of concentric circles of power. Sampson's argument is that these two perspectives, flow and power as circles, explain different aspects of project life (Sampson 2002). The flow metaphor enables us to see how a flow of resources facilitates members' ability to accumulate social capital as valuable resources, and access to arenas are granted through PiM as a 'postsocialist hub' (Kalb 2002:318). Members gain access to a variety of valuable resources, enabling them to practice English and to learn about project administration and the like. Sampson's power perspective on the other hand is relevant to understand that the centre is made up of Western donor organisations and specialists, while the outer-circles consist of recipients, most of which are weak, and often muted, groups such as children, women and minority groups are in the most peripheral circles. Specialists from the West define the situation at PiM, for instance in the case of a visit by a Norwegian environmentalist who, based on NU's Norwegian experiences, teaches PiM about the media situation in Russia and explains how PiM should respond to this. Although, there may be good reasons for the lecture, it nevertheless demonstrates the power of 'outsiders' to define the agenda in an area that PiM members themselves probably know better than an 'outsider'. All the while my informants were eager to underscore that cooperation with NU worked well, every so often they revealed how differing perspectives and ideas are resolved in practice. One such issue is that NU is urging PiM to establish closer cooperation with Aetas, although PiM feels the present level is adequate. Aetas is based in Arkhangelsk a 28 hours' trip by train from Murmansk. If the distance between Murmansk and Arkhangelsk is regarded as reasonable from the vantage point of Oslo, it is viewed as unnecessary hardship to PiM activists who would be required to make the journey.

A problem that Western donors face as they enter the Eastern development scene, is that they risk to be 'bearers of a "fixed" identity (Verdery 1996) and perceive themselves as going into a country with a fluid, confused identity in need of shaping' (Bruno 1998:173). Thus, as NU involves itself in Russia, it may be exerting more power than it understands; indeed its good intentions may blind the organisation to the extent of its powers. Local participants of seminars funded by Western donors all too often find themselves playing what Bruno has dubbed the 'game of co-operation', because this is the only way to attract funds. At the same time, the seminars tend to deal with issues of limited relevance to local activists, as they are full of symbolic buzzwords far from relevant to the reality as experienced by locals (Bruno 1998:180). However, this may be less the case with regard to PiM as NU, despite the dominant position NU has gained over PiM, has not exhibited an overt ambition to impose a specific mode of organisation upon PiM, although PiM's self-governance guarantees a certain level of isomorphism. On the other hand, Bruno's comment that Western representation of reality through 'experts' might

seem odd and irrelevant for locals, is nevertheless relevant as a reminder of the contentiousness of the field in which Western developers and NU alike operate.

### **Writing of Applications and Everyday Practices**

One day, when I was in PiM's office, I was asked to proof-read an application PiM planned to send to an official Norwegian institution. While reading it, I realised that the discourse on civil society and development was more apparent here than in any of PiM's regular activities. Thus, PiM made use of story-lines such as 'passive youth', and a tradition of non-involvement, all what PiM wanted to change, at least were PiM to be granted the requested funding. After finishing my proof-reading of the application, I attended the meeting which was already in progress. Here members debated PiM's regular activities, with far more substantive and weighty challenges than 'passive youth', or the celebration of democratic values. Admittedly, I believe that as a means to attract funds, the writing of applications has a style of its own and the required level of abstraction in all organisations. In fact, there is such a thing labelled 'project-speak', a form of technique and resource to draw upon in project life (Sampson 1996:123). I took up with some of my informants the fact that NGO life is abundant with project administration, writing of applications, leaving little time for environmentalism. Some referred to these technicalities and the need to acquire special techniques as a reason for why they did not bother to work at PiM any longer. In this respect, one may argue along the line of Ferguson that PiM is becoming an 'anti-politics machine' (Ferguson 1994:254). Although Ferguson refers to a larger development project aimed at developing the Lesotho state apparatus, NGOs may also be regarded as centres for micropolitics and antipolitics as well (Fisher 1997:454-455). As technicalities and the writing of applications are increasingly becoming a time-consuming activity in PiM, some members find this hard to cope with.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the way members and PiM voice altruism and self-interest may appear to be contradictory. In the particular case with the application above, it struck me that there is a discrepancy between what members normally voice, e.g. in our conversations and interviews, in which there was no attempt to conceal that my informants regarded self-interest as important and as a reasonable justification in itself. The possibility of exacting personal gain was viewed as legitimate; indeed some informants thought that adults felt this was the only legitimate reason for working in the organisation:

Concerning response, you see, if I tell people that I'm member of an environmental NGO that co-operates internationally everything is fine. People understand why, and they think it can give me some benefits. But if I'm a member in a local organisation that let's say hands out food to people on the street, the response will be more like: Why don't you take care of your own children instead? Isn't that good enough for you? (Sonia)

Although Sonia just presented the above as an example, her statement nevertheless conveys what kind of response she expects. Hence, her assumption is that people's perception with regard to reasons for joining

NGOs is that they may provide a platform which will permit members to gain access to limited resources. Thus, Sonia wanted to explain to me what is viewed as a plausible justification for doing voluntary work. In other words, if you take care of people living on the streets as part of work in an organisation with no international links or funding, this may be regarded as a waste of time, and as such it is regarded with scepticism. At the same time, as personal gains may be regarded as the only legitimate justification for voluntary work, this truism may not appear on applications. In sum, the case of the writing of the application in question, illustrates that PiM knows what kind of story-lines to draw upon, in order to secure financial support.

### **Social Capital and Group Interest**

In the previous chapter personal advantages adhering to membership in PiM were listed. Pursuit of these advantages was explained with reference to individual investment strategies, network-building and capital accumulation. What was not elaborated at any length, however, was to what degree this accumulation may serve other interests than individual ones. Robert Putnam's utilisation of the concept social capital is of relevance in order to understand this phenomenon (Putnam 1993). Although he is a political scientist and more concerned with the overall level of social capital and trust in a given society than with individual strategies, his work is useful for an analysis of how social capital works within PiM as a group. Studies related to the transition processes taking place in Eastern Europe have quite often drawn upon the term social capital in order to measure such 'qualities' as public trust and legitimacy (Badescu and Sum 2005; Kluegel and Mason 2004; Sil and Chen 2004). Such studies rest on the supposition that it is possible to identify a general, public level of social capital, and this is often regarded *a priori* as having an intrinsically positive value. These studies follow in the tradition mostly identified with Putnam. I find that such an approach is problematic as the implicit use of an ideal type conceived to be universal – Western democracy – may produce a certain bias in analysis. At the same time, accepting the model without modifications, we risk ignoring specific cultural practices. With these precautions in mind, I nevertheless find that Putnam's model may tell us something of interest, as it offers a way to investigate how civil society and NGOs could strengthen trust in democratic institutions and processes. Such an understanding is explicit in the quote below, since it 'explains' what happened under communist regimes:

First we cannot underestimate the impact that communist regimes had on social capital. [...] These include cultural characteristics associated with the concept of social capital such as social trust, efficacy and institutional trust. Likewise, the communist regimes attempted to destroy social networks and usurped most forms of civil society (Badescu and Sum 2005:130).

Furthermore, this direction is relevant when studying social capital at group level. In his book *Making Democracy Work*, Robert Putnam defines social capital as: 'features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, which can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-ordinated actions' (Putnam 1993:167). Putnam clings to a

cumulative approach concerning trust: ‘Social networks allow trust to become transitive and spread: I trust you, because I trust her and she assures me that she trusts you’ (Putnam 1993:169). According to Putnam then, a high level of social capital implies a high level of trust and related phenomena. In Russia where the level of trust in politicians and the state apparatus may be found to be low (Sil and Chen 2004), does this imply that the level of social capital is low as well? Putnam regards voluntary associations as sources of trust, and my data suggests that as members in PiM accumulate social capital and expand their network, they generate a form of trust *within* the group, and more importantly, they learn to have confidence in themselves:

For many years we just had leader courses, and no really projects. Any results are exciting and give adrenaline. Gives a feeling of importance... I was not sure of myself, but in PiM I got positive response and I started to believe in my forces. I think this is common among other members as well. (*Nadia*)

It seems as though Nadia evaluates the fact that PiM achieves something at all as being more important than whether or not PiM’s objective is achieved. Thus, if trust and confidence do not serve any organisational purpose in PiM, it is open for grabs whether or not this improves the ‘efficacy’ of society as Putnam seems to imply. A completely different matter is if it is expedient, or even possible, to measure any given society’s efficacy at all. Nadia added to her comment above that her mother, born and raised in Moldova, was sent by the authorities to Murmansk to work as a doctor there. According to Nadia, her mother does not feel herself empowered and capable of influencing her own future. Probably partly due to her experience at home, Nadia deems it as relevant that members of PiM see that it is possible to achieve something, as she thinks this leads to empowerment.

However, conflicts over accumulation of social capital may occur. As networks must be kept ‘fit’, e.g. continuously be maintained with exchange of resources and services, it seems clear that social capital, which according to Bourdieu is collectively owned, may be distributed disproportionately within a group such as PiM. Command of foreign languages is an attractive and limited resource, and it is unevenly distributed among members of PiM. It has great impact on how members are able to establish contact with visiting Norwegians. As a key element in maintaining an international network, command in English is imperative at meetings, summer camps and seminars, and those who are able to operate in two languages, are obviously in a far better position to mediate and maintain their own relationships with foreigners than those with limited command of English. Partly in order to counter this, PiM arranged an English course for a time, simultaneously providing Vania with the opportunity to practice as a teacher.

Another attractive asset in PiM is the limited possibility to travel abroad. For each and every individual such a trip means an opportunity to strengthen his or hers social capital by networking and establishing possible enduring relations with foreigners. In a discussion of who should represent PiM abroad, the most persuasive contender, but not necessarily the best, will go. These types of issues raise tense debates within PiM and

personal motivations for travelling abroad are manifest, although what is stated publicly is what is thought to benefit PiM. It seems clear, however, from what informants revealed in private, that personal ambitions and motivations are the most relevant for foreign travel. Thus, there is a possible conflict between individual accumulation of social capital and the acquisition of what suits PiM best.

As mentioned, my informants do not try to conceal that they pursue individual goals such as to practice their English, acquire international contacts and so on. But every so often the ulterior motives are stated with such bluntness as to be jarring, if one regards NGO work as purely altruistic. However, neither in analysis nor in practice should one evaluate NGO work in such an idealised way, as the discussion in the previous chapter has demonstrated, self-interest is also part of NGO practices. Skills in networking and mastering foreign languages are scarce resources, flowing within the sphere of international NGO work (Sampson 2002). Through active networking and maintenance of their organisational and personal networks members enable themselves to obtain these scarce resources, and thus maintain and expand their social capital. The same applies to knowledge of ideology, as it seems evident that some members are more ideologically aware than others. Age and organisational experience enable some members to utter PiM's practices and ideology with greater precision than its younger and inexperienced members are capable of. Access to scarce resources is perceived as valuable, in much the same manner as Linnet noted from his fieldwork in a Latvian NGO (Linnet 2003:193). Sampson writes about 'project life' in Albania:

Many pursue individual career skills (with languages, computers, or office administration) which they will use to pursue more rewarding careers, often emigrating abroad. In my experience East Europeans have proven themselves to be both more dedicated to their public projects, *and* more ruthless in exploiting their private agendas than westerners can readily appreciate (Sampson 1996:128).

Whether or not this accumulation of social capital involves ruthlessness and ulterior motives or is simply voiced in outright honesty is not to be an issue for discussion. Nor is there any point to an exchange of general views about 'East Europeans', in the manner Sampson does here. However, he highlights the extent to which the area is contested, when self-interest and altruism are understood as being in opposition. As the quote above by Sampson indicates, competition and organisational infighting may be the outcome of everyday life in NGOs. Competition over control and domination may surface at annual meetings as it did in Aetas, when members from the group in Severodvinsk, a town near Arkhangelsk, were not allowed to vote in the slated elections for new board members. The majority of the members in Aetas argued that since members from Severodvinsk did not know all the new candidates for the board, and already had one of 'theirs' in the board, they should not be allowed to vote. Most probably, the motive was to prevent the group from Severodvinsk to gain control, or even influence.

Although trust and social capital may be generated within PiM or within a group of organisations, I do not think this necessarily can be converted into a context consisting of representatives of competing interests. One such case is PiM versus the management at Kola Nuclear Power Plant, which is one of PiM's adversaries in PiM's anti-nuclear project, as we will see in the following chapter. Hence, I think Putnam's model is unsatisfying in this respect, i.e. of external practices and relations, but it may help to explain processes within relatively well-defined and homogenous groups such as PiM. Furthermore, while the chain of trust Putnam refers to has some resemblance to *blat*, in that it too assists the members of the network to access resources through relations which go beyond friendship, it does not take into account what happens when distrust is generated. This might be the by-product of conflicts between environmentalists, officials and different decision-makers. Thus Putnam's model may be utilised to explain how trust is generated, but is less able to explain individuals' accumulation of social capital out of self-interest, or the social production of mistrust. Since present day Russia may be perceived of as a society that is more subject to generalised distrust than to generalised trust, I believe Bourdieu's concept to be more applicable. As it is fairly accurate to view resources such as language and networking as limited, I think Bourdieu's perspective reflects the Russian reality better than Putnam's positive generative approach. A model of social capital that also grasps personal strategies and invested interests is thus better suited to analyse the situation within PiM. Bourdieu's emphasis on 'how sociocultural relations are built, lived and embodied' (Lampland 2002:40) is more appropriate for an investigation of the contested nexus of self-interest and altruism, and the ensuing accumulation of social capital. Furthermore, as I am not interested in measuring the total accumulation of social capital in Murmansk, and then pursue an analysis in order to decide the degree of democratic values there, Putnam's model seems to be less useful. Rather, Bourdieu's notion of social capital is helpful in the analysis to better understand how individuals within an environmental NGO strive to manipulate social capital into other forms of capital, or at least maintain their networks in order to 'keep the door open' for the future. Some members in PiM have, as mentioned previously, been able to get a job partly due to their experiences from NGO work in PiM. These experiences include knowledge of project management, networking and other aspects of social capital they have acquired by doing voluntary work in PiM.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter I have demonstrated how organisational life can be regarded as epicentres of flow, through which attractive resources flow and are mediated. As such PiM is a 'postsocialist hub' (Kalb 2002:318), a result of western aid which enables members to access resources deemed to be valuable. The relationship between PiM and NU is unequal as PiM is heavily dependent on financial support from NU, although the two organisations strive to be equal partners. From a wider perspective, PiM is an example of what Sampson has called benevolent colonialism, with Norway benevolently seeking to help and develop what is perceived to be Russia's underdeveloped civil society. One way to enhance the possibility for PiM and NU becoming equal partners may lie in encouraging PiM

to apply for financial support directly from various Norwegian funds, rather than via NU. This process has already begun, but needs to be continued if PiM and NU should be able to form a relationship based on equality. At present, however, I found that PiM is subject to governmentality.

Trust may be generated within PiM as members work together, acquire knowledge of project administration and the like, and thus Putnam's theory on social capital and trust is relevant in this respect. Obviously, the oldest members with the most experience and best command in English are in a better position to strengthen their own and PiM's social capital. However, a closer inspection showed that whereas trust might be generated within PiM, conflicts may well arise over access to the collectively owned social capital. Thus I found Bourdieu's notion of social capital to be more fruitful than Putnam's as the former has developed a model that both comprise individual and collective interests. With regard to the public manifestations and results of social capital, we can see how these are related to civil society as a whole, since social capital at group level as well as on an individual level might enhance the impact of civic society. Nevertheless, a group accumulating social capital still consists of individuals with their own more or less competing strategies. I thus hold that Bourdieu offers the most consistent model that enables us to study the above mentioned aspects.



## 5 PiM as Environmental Whistleblowers

“Gosudarstvo eto ia!” reshila rossiiskaia biorokratia i tem camym *fakticheski obiavila voinu sobstvennomu narodu.*

“I am the State!,” decided the Russian bureaucracy and thus declared war against its own people (Noputin.com 2005).<sup>24</sup>

In this chapter I will analyse PiM’s embodiment of abstract ideological awareness by describing PiM’s public practices. A discursive understanding of how PiM attempts to voice its environmental concerns will be applied; as shown through the practices of various PiM members regarding anti-nuclear work, PiM’s encounters with bureaucracy and how the organisation in the end look abroad, addressing supra-international agencies and a foreign head of government in order to gather support.

### Requesting Information from the Kola Nuclear Power Plant (KNPP)

Drawing on an incident which occurred in the security zone surrounding the KNPP, I will discuss how PiM’s demand for information security measures – as part of PiM’s anti-nuclear project – and KNPP’s lack of compliance with these demands, lead to an incident of civil disobedience. How the KNPP management handled this will be elaborated as I will argue that this is an example of how KNPP strives to disallow contested issues to be part of any public debate. This will show the way in which environmentalists’ role as civil society activists is contested.

#### *Facts about KNPP*

The Kola Nuclear Power Plant is located just outside the town of Poliarnye Zori, some five hours drive from Murmansk, along the federal highway (M18) to St. Petersburg. Approximately 6,000 of Poliarnye Zori’s 18,000 inhabitants are employed at the KNPP. The plant is administered by *Rosenergoatom*, a department within the Russian Ministry for industry and energy<sup>25</sup> (Government.ru 2005). Until March 2004, the ministry was named Russian Ministry for Atomic Energy, in Russian abbreviated into *Minatom*. I will use this name throughout the report as my informants kept on referring to *Minatom*, also after the governmental reform that led to the change of name. The plant operates four nuclear reactors, the two oldest reactors have operated since 1973 and 1974 respectively (Hønneland 2003:27-28). The latter two are of the WWER-40 type, the same type as the reactor type that melted down in the Chernobyl disaster on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 1986. Arguably, the link between the Chernobyl and the Kola NPPs has contributed to Norwegian fears of a nuclear meltdown close to the Norwegian border, some 300 kilometres away. The two NPPs are linked not only with regard to technological

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<sup>24</sup> From the resolution of the newly formed NGO *Izdushchiie bez Putina* (Walking without Putin.)

<sup>25</sup> *Ministerstvo promyshlennosti i energetiki Rossiskoi Federeatsii.*

specifications, but also on a more personal level: In Kandalaksha I met a woman that suffered from injuries caused by the Chernobyl catastrophe. She now lives in Poliarnye Zori, apparently because her husband had found a new job there since the Chernobyl NPP has been shut down. She was eager to underscore the dangers connected to the nuclear industry in general, but more specifically to advocate the rights of sufferers from the Chernobyl catastrophe. This is but one reminder of the relation between the two NPPs. *Minatom* and the management at KNPP recently decided to prolong the exploitation of the oldest reactor at the NPP although it had passed its supposed life cycle of 30 years. This decision was taken, partly with reference to the enhanced security provided by the Scorpio system, and due to this, environmentalists in Norway and Russia alike blame Norwegian authorities of being indirectly responsible for the prolongation of the reactors' continued operation. The decision to continue operations preceded the incident described below, and is one of the reasons for PiM's request for information on security measures from KNPP, since PiM was under the impression that some sort of security assessment would have been considered by the authorities:

#### *In No-man's Land Outside KNPP*

PiM had sent a letter to KNPP asking for a permit to visit the power plant, while at the same time asking questions concerning security at KNPP, the security zone and the like. KNPP are obliged by law to answer such letters, however they did not answer it. In a response to this, PiM decided to put up banners along the federal highway (M18) running through the security zone. The banners read slogans such as: '*Reaktor 1. Zapushchen 29.06.73. Upotrebit' do 29.06.03. Prosrocheno!*' ('Reactor 1. Launched 29.06.73. In use until 29.06.03. Overdue!') Thus, the text on all banners was related to the prolonged use of the reactor and the dangers PiM think is connected with this. A group of five members drove in advance to put up the banners at the intersection, while the rest arrived later by bus. Police, journalists, guards from KNPP and environmentalists gathered around one of the banners.

From the road leading to the power plant two cars arrive in a few minutes interval. From the first, KNPP's spokesperson and a female subordinate walk towards us. The latter, with PiM's letter in her hand, asks for the leader. Anna replies, and Boris joins her (as he had also signed the letter). The subordinate bursts out: '*Vy nazyyaete cebia ekologami i dolzhny cami vse znat', i poetomu my ne stamen vam otvechat*' ('You call yourself environmentalists, and should have known better. That is why we didn't answer your questions.') From the other car the NPP's scientific director and one of his subordinates enter. They join the argument: 'We are scientists and we know what we are doing.' This was his only argument, and he was neither able nor willing to show any kind of documentation of the security measures and considerations upon the prolonged use of the reactor. In order to counter this, or at least to be listened to, Kolia emphasised that he is a physicist, hence that he has considerable knowledge concerning radioactivity, and thus could not be rebuffed as just another ignorant and fanatic environmentalist. However, they did not listen to him.

Suddenly we get the message that KNPP's guards have detained Ilia, who was some 500 metres away while he was trying to put up another banner. The whole group enters the bus and drives off heading for Kandalaksha for a follow-up rally to be held there, with banners such as: '*My khotim znat' pravdu! Kogda atomshchiki eto skazhut?*' ('We want to know the truth! When will the nuclear scientists tell us?') Meantime, Kolia and I find Ilia sitting in a car filling out a form. While waiting for Ilia, Kolia and I talk with the security chief at KNPP. After a while they let Ilia go, and we head after the others. In Kandalaksha a sense of relief and victory spread among us. After the rally in Kandalaksha we eat lunch and toast '*Za pobedom!*', (For victory!). The same night, this incident is covered on two different local news channels.

### *PiM – Marginalised Environmentalists*

The fact that several local TV channels broadcasted the protest, was in itself a victory for PiM, as it proved to PiM that environmentalists are able to reach the wider public and setting the agenda. However, it seems like the KNPP management regards PiM as an utterly suspicious organisation and not much trouble is taken to disguise the hostility directed at PiM. It is possible to argue that PiM, which is attempting to elucidate the safety measures in place for nuclear plants, is operating within a hostile context with governmental and industrial officials going to some lengths to rebuff the organisation's arguments. Probably, this stems from a deeply rooted perception among Russian decision-makers, and ultimately among the wider populace as well, that those who have been designated as experts should be allowed to deal with the matter at stake without being interrupted by environmentalists or concerned citizens. One important dogma in Russian politics is that environmental policies will hamper economic development, and that an overarching environmental policy is irrelevant. This may be illustrated in the high-handed way Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, shut down the State Committee for Environmental Protection in 2000.<sup>26</sup> The agency has now been replaced by the Federal Service for Ecology, Technology and Nuclear Control and a Ministry for Natural resources<sup>27</sup> (Government.ru 2005). Critics claim that the latter ministry is more concerned with exploitation, than preservation, of natural resources; and that the Federal Service is regarded as being too weak and not entirely independent of the other governmental entities. As the political scientist Bang has shown, environmental protection also in Western countries is significantly formed by economic factors, thus environmental policies depend more on what is regarded as affordable, than what is perceived as exigent (Bang 2004). Hence, the notion that environmentalism is a cost is widespread. Clearly, there are differences in the way countries and regions address environmental challenges, but the differences are probably a matter of degree rather than a matter of active obstructionism on the parts of governments. The outcome, however, varies significantly. However, as will be elaborated in this chapter, in the case of Russian BEAR, I think one can claim that environmentalism as such is considered

<sup>26</sup> *Gosudarstvennyi komitet po ekologii.*

<sup>27</sup> *Federalnaia sluzhba po ekologicheskemu, technologicheskemu i atomnomu nadzoru and Ministerstvo prirodnykh resursov Rossiiskoi Federatsii.*

to be irrelevant, possibly even threatening to economic progress and therefore environmentalists have profound difficulties making themselves heard, as they are denied any voice in the dominant discourses. In fact, environmental concerns are commonly rebuffed as ‘emotional’ and unrealistic: ‘In Russia, for example, which is currently searching for a strategy for survival, the “new ecological paradigm” is perceived as one more Utopia’ (Yanitsky 2000:12). At a seminar in Arkhangelsk, an incident which took place may serve as an illustration of this view.

#### *A Scientist’s Monopoly on Rationality*

At the administrative seminar in Arkhangelsk with participants from Aetas, PiM and NU, a local scientist was going to give a lecture. He arrived at the seminar while halfway into another lecture held by an Aetas member on pollution resulting from oil exploitation and accidents. After several interruptions in which the scientist contested the lecturer’s claims, a heated debate followed.

*Norwegian environmentalist:* The best Norwegian equipment will only be able to clean up a small percentage of the oil spill. To what degree will Russian equipment be able to clean up after accidents?

*Scientist:* This is typical. You always believe that you have the best equipment. Had you been from Finland you would have said ‘The best Finnish...’, had you been from Switzerland: ‘The best Swiss...’. It’s always like that; people believe they have the best equipment themselves!

*Norwegian environmentalist:* But how much can you clean up?

*Scientist:* 100% No problem.

*Aetas-member:* 100%? Well, here in this article (pointing to an article in a scientific magazine), you have written that it is only possible to clean up around 50 %. What about that?

*Scientist:* Well, we have learnt by past mistakes. Now we know better ways.

*PiM-member:* Have you heard of the site in England where... (the scientist interrupts him)

*Scientist:* I don’t have time to go to England. We’re sensible people! Listen to us. You shouldn’t be so emotional.

Anna: You treat us like a kindergarten!

Scientist: No, I don’t. Listen, we’re sensible. Come to us. Visit our centre. Write theses at our place. We’re sensible and we’re knowledgeable!

At this point many of the participants are bored; they start to send text messages and look disinterested, while a handful continue the discussion. After a while the discussion dies out, the leader of the seminar thanks the scientist for coming, and he receives applause. Thus, the lecture he was going to give did not take place. As a group of us smoke cigarettes on the outside, the scientist joins us. There he repeats his mantra: ‘*My real’nye liudi.*’ (‘We’re sensible people.’) At this point no one bothers to argue with him, and finally he leaves. Inside, they talk about the scientist’s behaviour. I talk with Tatiana, who organised the seminar. She says that she invited him in order to show NU, but also members in PiM and Aetas, what kind of people and attitudes environmentalists are up against, and how difficult it could be to conduct discussions with them.

The scientist's answer regarding Norwegian versus Russian equipment might be considered as inadequate as he ignores the question he was asked. However, in this particular case it probably is more accurate to interpret his answer as an unmasking of his arrogant attitude towards the young environmentalists. Although one cannot be too careful about arriving at generalisations from a single incident with one scientist, it must be said that the statements made by my informants after the lecture indicated that the scientist's attitudes came as no surprise to them, e.g. this is what they are used to and what they expect from 'experts' in general. Furthermore, when the environmentalists' arguments are dismissed as irrelevant this is a reflection of the experts' position that the environmentalists are not knowledgeable. What is at play here can be regarded as a struggle of influence over a given domain, where young environmentalists, in most cases, are treated as inexperienced intruders.

### Environmental Discourses

The study of environmental discourses may be described as the study of 'how we talk about the environment, why we talk about the environment in a certain way, and some of the effects of doing so' (Hønneland 2003:127). Applying insights from general discourse analysis and extensive knowledge of environmental cooperation – or, some may say, the lack of cooperation – between Russia and Norway, Hønneland defines a whole range of environmental discourses. Most relevant to the empirical data presented above are those he attributes to nuclear issues: the 'nuclear disaster discourse', the 'Barents euphoria discourse', the 'nuclear complex discourse', the 'Cold Peace discourse'<sup>28</sup> and the 'environmental blackmail discourse' (Hønneland 2003:98-109). According to the author, the first two discourses are dominant in Norway, the next two in Russia and the last one has emerged in both countries (Hønneland 2003:130). With significant legacies from the Soviet past, the 'nuclear complex discourse' is a key element in understanding PiM's encounters in the attempt to make itself heard, as the response to the environmentalist by the management at KNPP is formed by: '...the prevalent Russian "nuclear complex discourse" whose main assumption is that issues of nuclear safety should be left to the experts, not charlatans, environmental fanatics or the general public' (Hønneland 2003:130). The relevance of the Soviet era continues to cast a long shadow in this respect since Russia is a state with strong corporate interests, and where *Minatom* runs the NPPs. Hønneland further shows that the unchallenged sanction of the role of experts apparently is wide-spread among the population, with many supporting the idea that the 'experts know what they are doing' (Hønneland 2003:101-02). On the day PiM commemorated the Chernobyl catastrophe, PiM held a rally in Monchegorsk. As part of this rally PiM arranged an informal survey, asking people strolling by for their views on the nuclear industry. *Ne znaiu* (I don't know), was the most common

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<sup>28</sup> In Russian political science – *politologiia* – relations between states are perceived as a zero-sum situation. Thus, well-intended Norwegian financial support – as discussed in the previous chapter – to different projects on the Kola Peninsula carries some ambivalence, and thus might be analysed as hostile strategic interference, hence 'cold peace'.

answer, as most of the people asked apparently thought that this should be left to the experts to take care of.

Summarising his main findings regarding discourses on nuclear safety Hønneland mentions the Norwegian Bellona Foundation as an organisation that has succeeded with certain issues, because it managed to exercise influence on the Norwegian political agenda, exploiting the two discourses of 'Barents euphoria' and 'nuclear disaster' (Hønneland 2003:111). This relative success of a Norwegian environmentalist group compared with what PiM has achieved is probably related to the kind of discourses and representations that are deemed valid among Norwegian and Russian authorities, including corporate management, respectively. However, Bellona's proficiency and experience are indeed relevant factors, as Bellona contrary to PiM has a professional staff rather than members whose work is voluntary. As we have seen, the hegemonic discourse in Russian BEAR is that of the 'nuclear complex', disqualifying environmental groups as relevant actors.

An aspect within discourse analysis that ought to be explored is that of a subject position, as this may enable us to better understand why PiM activists have such profound difficulties within the above mentioned discourse:

...a 'subject position' refers to a person's location in a specific discourse, a position he or she cannot go in and out of as desired. Actors can make sense of the world only by drawing on the terms of the discourses available to them [...] Hence, persons are *constituted* by discursive practices (Hønneland 2003:10).

The practices PiM take apart in, consists of story lines that position subjects such as PiM within a discourse. According to this, we have to identify common story lines, their production and re-production, as well as the subject position available to environmentalists. Within the dominant discourse of the nuclear complex, environmentalists seem unable to represent their views within a representation and a subject position that is deemed as valid by its adversaries. Rather, the other participants within the discourse, that is scientists and political decision-makers, label PiM's subject position as that of ignorant persons, and constitute environmentalists as ignorant persons. The story-line of ignorant environmentalists is certainly reproduced in the contested context in Russian BEAR. As we saw in the above described incident close to KNPP, Kolia tried to reposition himself by changing his subject position from environmentalist to physicist. He did not succeed in this, apparently because the KNPP management first and foremost regarded him as a troublesome environmentalist. This implies that although some environmentalists try to reposition themselves – and have appropriate knowledge to do so – they are not free to alter their subject position, as they are the weaker part. Thus as PiM within the 'nuclear complex' discourse seems unable to take up any subject position except for the one ascribed to ignorant persons and outsiders, PiM is subject to governance by those able to define a hegemonic discourse. *Minatom*, for instance, is certainly an actor able to define, or at least contribute to the maintenance of, such a hegemonic discourse. Is this a case of a reinvention of Soviet tactics? As Robert Darst has noted, the Soviet authorities:

...manipulated international cooperation in order to combat domestic environmentalist opposition. In other words, it was the Soviet nuclear industry, not its critics, that benefited most from the transnational (as opposed to internal) expansion of the scope of environmental politics in the USSR (Darst 2001:157).

Darst's description of how the Soviet authorities resisted environmentalists after the Chernobyl catastrophe is relevant in the present situation as well as resembling what Hønneland dubbed the 'environmental blackmail discourse' (Hønneland 2003:103). Although environmental blackmail is largely a phenomenon that occurs over national borders, as when Russians tended to force foreign actors out when a given company became profitable (Hønneland 2003:104), it as Darst argues above has significance also in internal matters. As PiM tries to gain access to information which PiM believes ought to be available to the public, the organisation faces a hostile context, as it is rejected as being too ignorant to be granted information. Probably, the opposition *Minatom* offers to the environmentalists is reinforced in part by the fact that *Minatom* is able to legitimise its policies as it is financially supported from abroad, enabling *Minatom* to claim that local environmentalists do not only oppose the ministry, but as a consequence are also opposing various foreign governments as well. Due to this side effect of support, the issue is highly contested among environmentalists: in Norway's case the aid is intended to ensure security of nuclear facilities operated by *Minatom*, but this may in fact contribute to prolonged operation of the same nuclear facilities.

Members in PiM are sceptical when it comes to politicians and bureaucrats, and from various statements it would seem as though my informants do not want to be entangled in politics. Some informants state that they are not interested in politics, just in environmentalism. Although they confront politicians when they try to change environmental policies, and thus de facto take part in politics within an environmental discourse, the interest in politics lacks vitality. Most probably this has to do with the perception of PiM members' of politics as a game involving corruption and positioning, rather than a way of advocating change. Thus, to be disinterested in politics implies resistance towards the political elite, as seen through PiM members' negative story-lines, irrespective of how inherently political and contested environmentalism and PiM's advocacy may in fact be, when PiM tries to provoke changes in environmental policies. The discussion of PiM's activities in terms of an approach seeking to influence decision-makers of various sorts may be understood with Victor Turner's *troika* of 'ideology', 'situational adjustment', and ultimately 'performance', as part of a social drama (Turner 1986:72-74). Through their social practices PiM members try to embody the organisation's ideology, and as such bring social practices and performance in agreement with its ideology. This involves a tremendous effort in 'situational adjustment', as the uncertainties members face are frequently there.

### **Hindering Distribution of Environmental Literature**

I will now turn to an incident that occurred when Kolia travelled around on the Kola Peninsula distributing literature about environmental human rights, and was detained by the police and interrogated by *Federalnaia*

*Sluzhba Besopasnosti*, the FSB,<sup>29</sup> in the city of Poliarnye Zori. In a bar in Murmansk a few days later Kolia, told me about his *rendezvous* with FSB:

I arrived in Poliarnye Zori in the morning by train from Kandalaksha. As I had not been there before, I killed some time by walking around in the city centre. After a short while a police car came up to me. They asked to see my passport.<sup>30</sup> Of course I presented it to them, and they asked why I was there, where I came from and all sorts of stupid questions. For some reason they wanted to bring me to the police station, I had no choice but to follow them. Well...[sipping beer] at the police station they repeated all their questions, and asked me about the literature I carried. I showed it to them. And you know, they were really interested: anti-nuclear! They looked at the page listing the contents. Then, an officer from FSB was brought in. He started all over again. I interrupted him and asked, 'Is it all right for you if I take notes, as you are doing?' Well, that was ok for him, so I started taking notes. It is written in a law that an officer has to present himself by name, number and rank while showing his ID. I asked the officer to do that.

He just gave salute and showed me his ID for a second in front of my eyes. I said, 'Sorry, I didn't get your full number and name. Please show it to me once more.' I had to repeat this three times before I had everything I needed. This annoyed the officer, but it is my right. Well, so he asked; where I was from, what I was doing there, and asked about my literature and so on. Just stupid questions! The officer said that they had to look for possible terrorists and that it was a special situation here in Poliarnye Zori, since it is so close to the nuclear power plant. So, I mean, what is this? They talk with me instead of looking after terrorists! I'm just an environmentalist. And so I told them: 'You're wasting your time; go out into the streets instead!'

Since they were so interested in the literature I had, I gave them a copy of one of the reports Boris has written, you know which one don't you? They claimed that some of the pictures of KNPP in a brochure were illegal. At one point the police even suggested to download the address book on my mobile phone. Anyway, I believe that it is written down in the constitution or in some law that the police cannot interrogate anyone for more than three hours without giving the suspect some formal declaration of his status. I mentioned this since I had almost been there for three hours, and asked them to declare my status: 'Was I suspected or not? Would they hold me in custody?' 'No, no', he said. This was just a conversation, I was free to go. So I left.

Out on the streets again I bought a local newspaper, and you know what I found? On the front page, in the corner, there was a small note from the police. It said something like: 'If you see any suspicious persons, strangers walking in the streets, call the police on this or that number.' It even offered anonymity and small rewards if the tip proved valuable! That's when I realised that a guy I had asked for directions had actually followed me for a while, and I think he called the police. The scary thing is that he probably thinks he is doing his duty as a responsible citizen!

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<sup>29</sup> FSB: The Federal Security Service, formerly known as the KGB.

<sup>30</sup> All Russians carry a domestic passport, used for identification and for buying train tickets and the like.



Kolia argued afterwards that the rationality behind the treatment he got by the police was to embarrass and harass environmentalists on behalf of the government, KNPP and others. In other words, he does not believe that FSB had a plausible reason to suspect him of planning to commit any kind of terrorist act. The scepticism and hostility directed towards environmentalists are thus experienced as significant. As environmentalists experience resistance, and thus feel marginalised when they advocate for change on issues they believe are significant for the future of humanity, this probably supplements and enforces their already existing story-lines of careless politicians and wide-spread apathy.

### **Bureaucracy in Kandalaksha**

Bureaucracy is one major obstacle for environmentalists. The student NGO *Iduschiie bez Putina*, (Walking without Putin) formed in St. Petersburg in the spring of 2005 has characterised the way bureaucrats act as patrons in relation to clients as a war-like. Although this description is quite subjective I will argue that it could act as an example of the general distrust between the bureaucratic apparatus and the wider population. An incident which took place as PiM prepared a rally in Kandalaksha, located on the north-western shores of the White Sea, is illustrative:

Together with representatives of other organisations, PiM wanted to protest against the prolonged use of the old reactor at Kola Nuclear Power Plant (roughly a 30 minutes drive away from Kandalaksha). The protest would also be directed toward a planned oil refinery in Kandalaksha. In advance of the summer camp, PiM had sent an application to the city authorities in order to get a permit for this rally, intended to be held at three places around the city at the same time. However, PiM's request was denied. In order to solve this problem, and to promote the rally, PiM decided to send a group to Kandalaksha. I joined this group.

In Kandalaksha I join Kolia heading for the city administration, while the two others start putting up posters about our rally. Inside the city administration building we found the bureaucrat that had denied the rallies to be held, and we eagerly awaited her explanation. We were well prepared with a printed copy of the new law regulating demonstrations, rallies and the like. First of all she would not accept a rally to be held near the railway station. 'Ok, let's drop it', Kolia says. Under the new law railway stations are regarded as potential targets for terrorist acts. Then, the bureaucrat will not accept one of the signatures: 'I don't know; who Anna K is! And who are you?'

Kolia: 'I'm a citizen of Russia, so I have the right to protest.'

Bur.: 'Show me a letter that confirms that Anna K is the leader of PiM, and that she is a living person!'

At the time we could not prove it. The discussion goes back and fourth between the bureaucrat and Kolia, both of them quite angry. At one point she starts to complain about how we were dressed. Not proper enough it seems like. I leave the office, and Kolia plays a trick on her: 'Why do you make such a disgrace of our country in front of this foreigner? He's a journalist and makes a record of everything you just said!'

Kolia walks out of the office heading for the secretary's office. There he asks for a copy of the application PiM sent. While waiting for it he tells the staff there about our meeting with the bureaucrat. The tone is friendly and quite humorous, until the bureaucrat enters the scene once more. She asks what we were just talking about, and sets out: '*Molodoi chelovek, slushajte* (Young man, listen here).' This provoked Kolia, aged around 35, and he replies: 'Ok, you started this: Old woman...' After this intermezzo we head for her superior. He invites us in, Kolia presents me for him, and sets out to explain the situation. He wants his subordinate to join. She enters and asks her superior: 'Have you been presented to this foreigner? Do you know he tapes everything on a recorder?'

Kolia: 'I didn't say tape, just make a record. He writes down... (illustrating with his hands) That's something different.'

Superior: 'Ok, ok. Tell me what you want.'

After listening, he says he will allow two rallies to be held. It seems like we have achieved what we wanted. On the way out Kolia says to me: 'You know what, Paal?! Russia is full of those. You can write your whole report on bureaucrats like her. She tries to protect her superior by exercising more authority than she actually has. Write an article or whatever. Name her, use this!' Kolia is furious, but not surprised. Afterwards, I join the other two, hanging up posters about the rally and drinking *kvas*.<sup>31</sup> In the end, PiM is quite happy with the result as they have managed to persuade the bureaucrats.

This incident shows that Kolia, due to his knowledge of law and a long training in handling bureaucrats was able to achieve what he wanted. Thus, his possession of social capital strengthens PiM's abilities to succeed. Bureaucracy in Russia is well-known for its lack of transparency, its dubious and seemingly random way of decision-making. In a case study of bureaucracy in Murmansk, the political scientist Tord Willumsen describes some relevant characteristics of the Russian bureaucracy: the bureaucrats' distance to average people and how interaction with bureaucrats is in itself played out in a way enabling the bureaucracy to protect itself from the people it originally is set to serve (Willumsen 2004:470), to which the organisation cited at the beginning of this chapter also points. In the example above, the bureaucrat applied a rather arbitrary law interpretation – she mixed paragraphs from the old and the new law – as a method to deny PiM the right to hold rallies. In Kolia's interpretation immediately following the incident, the bureaucratic resistance is due to the reclusive character of Russian bureaucracy; the bureaucrat saw her role as her superior's protector, i.e. keeping annoying environmentalists away from him. This may also be interpreted with reference to *blat* as discussed in Chapter 3. The bureaucrat may have enforced her role as a gatekeeper, e.g. one that controls access to a superior or certain resources, expecting favours and flattery from Kolia in return for permitting access to the superior (Ledeneva 1998:125-127). As PiM's secretary and leader, Anna spends significant portions of her time dealing with the Russian bureaucracy, and her education in official administration is a great help to her in

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<sup>31</sup> A Russian speciality: fermented rye bread water, mildly alcoholic.

this respect, enabling her to navigate through the myriad of official agencies and departments. Thus, she also possesses social capital that is imperative for PiM.

### **Expertise and Domination**

Hitherto, responses to PiM have been described as authoritarian and reclusive, and in interpretations that may make it seem as though the hostility is intentional. However, one may regard it otherwise, as a throw-back to long-term practices among Russian experts and bureaucrats who unintentionally provide a context perceived to be hostile by environmentalists. When PiM asks for information from KNPP, this can be viewed as a sort of exchange, in which KNPP exercises power upon PiM as the management withhold information which KNPP is obliged to distribute on request. According to the rationale laying behind the discourse described by Hønneland as the 'nuclear complex discourse', the KNPP sees no reason to inform PiM, as PiM are not experts, and thus regarded as unworthy of proper information. This is part of what Hannerz refers to as 'unfree flow': how governments, the military, journalists and scientists can withhold, hide and lie, and consequently manipulate information in such a way that what ought to be free and accessible to all, no longer is. This he refers to as 'the alignments of distributions of meaning with power and material interests through ideology, secrecy and censorship' (Hannerz 1992:100-102). Of special interest to me is how experts and technocrats exert power upon laymen. Hannerz distinguishes between two types of professionals exerting their expertise over laymen, that is technocrats and professionals. Although he admits that both could be labelled professionals, the difference is the degree to which support and services are given to laymen, e.g. to which degree contact with laymen is extensive: technocrats exert power through generalists, such as politicians and bureaucrats, whereas professionals such as clergymen, lawyers and the like offer professional advice to laymen and businesses (Hannerz 1992:119). The management at KNPP is for the most part made up of technocrats with extensive knowledge of the nuclear industry and its operation. Thus, the technocrats' first priority is to run KNPP as rational and safe as possible in compliance with ministerial requirements from *Minatom*, rather than assuming a political stance on nuclear safety and the industry as such. Hence, they may feel that PiM's political agenda should not be addressed to them at all, since they are only experts doing their job, and merely following orders. Since they label themselves as knowledgeable experts, they delineate themselves as being separate from laymen, such as PiM, on one hand and those with political responsibility, on the other. Of greatest interest to me, however, is their delineation from PiM and others whom they perceive as entertaining 'irrational fears', as the scientist in Arkhangelsk accused the environmentalists of. In complex societies with an extensive division of labour, people must depend on experts. In such a relationship people may find themselves seeking and receiving professional advice, or they must accept their dependency, and 'surrender' to authoritative bureaucrats or others. Within a type of society where division of labour implies an extended division and specialisation of knowledge, communication may be hampered because the actors may possess very different degrees of knowledge, have different attitudes and representations, as in the 'nuclear complex discourse'. Although I label-

led the relationship between PiM and the management at KNPP as a relationship involving exchange of information, it should be clear by the preceding example that this is in no way a reciprocal relationship. PiM depends on KNPP managers' willingness to inform, whereas the KNPP does not need, nor want, anything from PiM. Although PiM feel dominated and ignored by the KNPP, one should not necessarily induce that KNPP managers want to dominate, or really believe that they are dominating. Technocrats who are used to delimit fields of competence and knowledge may not even recognise how much power they are exercising (Hannerz 1992:121). It is possible that this situation stem from the fact that to them, an expert-client relationship is a matter of routine, legitimising their own competence. On the other hand, one could argue that bureaucrats and other professionals enforce administrative rigidity and reproduction of obstacles due to self-interest, to compensate for power lost, or in order to be gatekeepers (Bruno 1998:182).

A broader perspective on this issue may be reached by elaborating upon some of the insights from James C. Scott's book *Seeing Like a State* (Scott 1998), which followed his much cited book *Weapons of the Weak* (Scott 1985). In the latter, Scott described resistance and strategies among people under severe domination, whereas he in the former offered a more abstract description and analysis of the rationality behind various modernisation processes of states, social engineering and the like. As hinted at by his subtitle – *How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* – his aim is to pinpoint a few hallmarks of 'high-modernist societies' (Scott 1998). Scott's examples vary significantly in terms of geography, historical context and political system, but I assume that his insights are of great relevance to the topic in question, as most of present-day clergymen, bureaucrats and technocrats in Russia received their professional training under the Soviet Union. Thus, they represent the remnants of the Soviet *nomenklatura*.<sup>32</sup> In the Soviet Union, the belief that the state could engineer society and dictate what the populace needed (Verdery 1996:25), and suffice it to say, adherence to authoritarian state planning, was rampant. Scott identifies four elements that, when combined, he believes pave the way for 'a full-fledged disaster'. These are (i) 'an administrative ordering of nature and society'; (ii) 'a high-modernist ideology'; (iii) 'an authoritarian state'; and (iv) 'a prostrate civil society that lacks the capacity to resist these plans' (Scott 1998:4-5). And Scott continues:

In sum, the legibility of a society provides the capacity for large-scale social engineering, high-modernist ideology provides the desire, the authoritarian state provides the determination to act on that desire, and an incapacitated civil society provides the leveled social terrain on which to build (Scott 1998:5).

The Soviet Union possessed these capacities: legibility, desire, determination and a weak civil society to a significant degree. Furthermore, I be-

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<sup>32</sup> *Nomenklatura*: Originally it meant a list of names of higher responsibility positions needed to be approved by the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, but it is also used to designate the people who effectively occupied these positions within the Soviet Union.

lieve that present-day Russia, as the prime heiress to the Soviet regime, still possesses at least some of these capacities. Thus, Scott's perspective is fruitful in at least two ways; firstly, it offers an interesting backdrop and a way of understanding of Russia's specific history; and secondly, it might enable us to better understand the attitudes prevalent among present-day clergymen and technocrats. Russia is in many ways a risk society, willing to risk and disregard human safety and environmental concerns, when favouring exploitation of natural resources or in the extensive use of NPPs (Beck 1992; Yanitsky 2000). Thus, the role of experts and technocrats set to implement and administer the policies approved by politicians eager to restore Russian economy needs attention. I think Scott's model is still valid to the situation in Russia at present, as Russian civil society continues to be rather weak in terms of capabilities to influence decision-makers – e.g. a weak civic society – whereas the three other elements in his analysis are also applicable to the present situation. Although hindered significantly by corruption and other subversive elements, the Russian state, and consequently the president, is in firm and authoritative control. As the political elite have ambitions of restoring Russia to its former position as a military and economic super power, the modernisation drive gains momentum. Thus, PiM's role is rather marginal, and from the perspective of the Russian authorities, this is how it should be.

### **Internationalised Environmentalism**

In order to gain support for its view PiM turns to the outside world, sending letters asking for support from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Norwegian Prime Minister and the like. In the following, I will discuss two such letters since they provide us with an example of internationalisation processes within PiM, while at the same time pinpointing exactly what PiM regards as the main problem of the Russian authorities and corporate interests, as well as the lack of sufficient information. I will focus on what kind of support PiM seeks, while the reasons why should be apparent in light of the previous discussion. In the letter to IAEA it is quite evident that PiM feels ignored by the management at KNPP:

We understand that the mandate of the IAEA does not assume monitoring of all and every projects in the member countries. But we think that the Agency recognizes the importance of public participation and that the opinion of a Russian youth NGO can be interesting for you. [...] Administration of the Kola NPP failed to follow the legal requirements of information openness and collaboration with NGOs. For example, in their letter of 05.07.2004 they refused to answer all our questions on the NPP operation and safety. They even refused to inform what is the "special sanitary-protection zone" and what is the "monitoring zone" – areas with special regime have to be established at each nuclear installation by the law. This essential and legal information is open for public and KNPP has no reason to keep it in secret from the people. We will try to get this information from other sources, but why Kola NPP does not want to talk to us, people living in 30-40 km from the NPP? (PiM 2004)

As events unfolded, however, PiM received a reply concerning the practical enforcement of the protection zone which is cut across by a federal highway. During the rally described previously in this chapter, one of PiM's activists was detained by the KNPP's own security service, and the security chief explained why:

You see, this federal highway runs through the security zone around our power plant. That means that we have to stop everyone who enters the zone, because it is illegal to be here. In principle the zone has a radius of 30 kilometres, but in practice the zone stops here, he says pointing at the road. Whenever anyone enters the zone on this side of the road we have to write a report, and send it over to the local judge. It's unfortunate, but I have to do it like this.

The security chief's pragmatic answer is characteristic: rules are one thing, but enforcement is a completely different matter. Returning to the letter once more, apparently the idea behind the letter was to inform the agency of how KNPP violates laws with regard to their duty to inform the public, or at least respond to requests. The letter further reveals a frustration at the KNPP's behaviour. But of greater significance: it illustrates how PiM attempts to gain international support for its work. This is probably a reaction to the unwillingness to cooperate which the KNPP management does not hesitate to display. As another source reveals in a letter, referring to this episode: 'looks like they [KNPP] want to demonstrate ignorance of NGOs and absence of good will' (Ozharovskii 2004).

A letter sent to the Norwegian Prime Minister follows the same style as the one sent to IAEA, although on a different matter, namely the prospects for future oil and gas exploitation in the Barents Sea:

The way the Russian Government manages the country's oil and gas resources today can not be considered to be democratic and environmentally conscious. Environmental control of oil and gas extraction is extremely low. The access to information is limited. Norway, as a democratic country, should not support this kind of policy. [...] The intension [sic] of the Norwegian oil and gas company Statoil to invest in the Shtokman field is considered by us as an attempt to make profit but not to help Russia to provide the necessary level of ecological security in the Barents Sea (PiM 2004).

Apparently PiM puts greater store in addressing the Norwegian government given that the Norwegian state is a major shareholder in Statoil, than to try to influence Russian companies. Invoking an image of Norway as a democratic country, in contrast to Russia, PiM hopes to gather support and understanding. On another occasion, PiM bluntly stated that they do not see a likely alternative to further exploration and exploitation in the Barents Sea, but that it demand openness and information. This the organisation is doing on behalf of the people which PiM believes that they have the right to know what is going on in areas adjacent to theirs.

The internationalisation of PiM should be understood in light of the resistance and hostility it encounters at home. As PiM is heavily dependent on Norwegian funds, one may argue that PiM has been an international organisation the entire time. PiM's policy options are, as discussed in the

previous chapter, decided upon and restricted to a significant degree by foreign donors, and what these donors deem as relevant to support financially. However, what is significant to understand about this is that PiM orients itself toward the outside world because the environmental discourses within which it operates in the Russian part of BEAR is rife with distrust. Thus, PiM wants to get hold of information that ought to be public, but that is withheld by the KNPP or others. Furthermore, PiM regards decision processes which result in oil exploitation in the Barents Sea to be neither democratic, nor taking sufficiently into account the profound environmental challenges oil and gas exploitation may represent. As a result of this PiM feels forced to internationalise. At first sight, it may appear as though gathering international support will empower PiM. However, as NGOs receiving financial support from abroad is treated as being highly suspicious by Russian authorities, PiM needs to exercise caution with regard to its acceptance and the support it secures abroad, since this may hinder their domestic political advocacy. The Russian president has even declared a 'crackdown' on such organisations. In practise, this will affect most of Russian NGOs, as they rely significantly on international funding, as PiM does. Despite the fact that NGOs which receive international financial support are regarded with utter suspicion, *Minatom* also receives significant funding, but this is apparently conceived by Russian authorities to be an entirely different issue.

### **Concluding Remarks**

My main aim with this chapter has been to show in what way PiM strive to act according to its ideology, and how, at the same time, it is hindered by various actors: bureaucrats, experts and the KNPP management. In this chapter I have tried to also show how PiM is marginalised in the manner environmentalists are treated by scientists, bureaucrats, and by the management at the KNPP. Together, these reactions deny PiM a role in any public environmental discourse as PiM is actively resisted and strives to be accepted as a discussant in environmental discourses. Although on some occasions PiM achieve its goals, and from time to time receive media coverage, it is fairly accurate to claim that its overall role is largely marginal. However, as PiM in case after case requests information and openness it embodies the ideals of a civil society, or the tradition following Karl Popper that sees among others bureaucracy as an obstacle to an open society (Notturmo 1999:52-53).





## 6 Concluding Chapter: Civil Society and the ‘Soviet legacy’

In the start we thought democracy meant that everyone could do just as they wanted. (Pensioner at a volunteer centre, Murmansk)

[Inhabitants in the former communist bloc are] isolated, amoral, cynical individualists-without-opportunity, skilled at double-talk and trimming within the system, but incapable of effective enterprise (Gellner 1994:5).

### Social Production of Mistrust and Nostalgia

In this chapter the preceding discussion will be summarised with reference to what is dubbed the ‘Soviet legacy’, as I think this is an underlying theme in most of the issues discussed in the previous chapters: Accumulation of social capital as important to individuals, partly with reference to the Soviet *blat* tradition (Chapter 3); social capital as a common asset in PiM and PiM’s subservience to NU (Chapter 4); and that the role experts have and the resistance environmentalists face are deep-rooted in Russia (Chapter 5). Invoking a negative image of the population behind the now gone Iron Curtain, Ernest Gellner’s verdict above resonates in a world wherein the ‘Soviet legacy’ is an important explanatory factor among development agencies, analysts and the population in the FSU alike. The ‘Soviet legacy’ might refer to the social-psychological impact left upon the population in FSU, and to the economic, cultural and structural consequences of the Soviet ‘experiment’.<sup>33</sup> Thus, as it proved to be more difficult than expected to export ‘civil society’ and the like eastwards, the ‘legacy’ is applied to explain these difficulties:

...the assumption that western models reflect western realities, that things in the west somehow work according to the way they are depicted on project documents, tables, charts, plans and management diagrams [...] Failures [of development aid programs in Eastern Europe] are then often explained in terms of ‘legacies’ of the past, ‘socialist mentality’ or ‘resistance’ by those being affected. In fact, many ‘system export’ schemes fail because systems or units are exported without their western context (Sampson 1996:125).

Sampson calls for a more cautious approach as most actors within development organisations should acknowledge the differences between ideal and reality, since the same organisations often seem to forget this with regard to ‘system export’. One may ask, do we have a civil society that reflects its normative ideal in Western Europe? When representatives from various Norwegian NGOs with projects in Russia attend seminars on civil society, they tend to leave the impression upon Russians – most

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<sup>33</sup> A wide variety of different terms have been used to describe this ‘post-communist syndrome’. Some examples of not necessarily very informative categories could be: ‘captive mind’, ‘civilizational incompetence’ and ‘Soviet mentality’ (Klicperová-Baker 1999:5).

likely unintended – that everything works according to the plan in Norway. Not much is said about infighting and competition between NGOs over public funding. Thus, Norwegians with good intentions risk reproducing a divide between East and West that they themselves want to overcome, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Although the ‘Soviet legacy’ is being utilised as an explanatory factor, the category remains somewhat ambiguous and thus it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what are the characteristics of this legacy. However, this legacy certainly has to do with a perceived or real indolence. I think that nostalgia and social production of mistrust can be regarded as manifestations of this legacy. Nostalgia may be expressed in many ways, and I found it to be profound among my informants. During one of my conversations with Vania, where he for some reason had got the impression that I could not understand why he was not a patriot, Vania’s mother entered the kitchen, and Vania told her that ‘Paal doesn’t understand that we’re not patriots.’ To this, she responded:

Earlier we were patriots, but then we got something! When Vania’s father finished his studies he got a job. Look at Vania now, a whole year without a proper job. Drugs! Immorality! Bandits! Oh, I’m worried about the elderly and the young. Old people are on their knees [she kneels down on the kitchen floor], and young people have no opportunities. And this is democracy!?! Humph. Just survive, not to live.

The post-Soviet generation, as my informants are part of, in some areas experience more opportunities than their parents did when in the same age, but also more insecurity with regard to job opportunities and the like. Most of my informants were under the age of 25, thus they had all lived through their childhood and teenage in a time often depicted as tumultuous and disintegrative. In light of this nostalgia I think it is easier to understand the relative weak standing of democratic values: Having experienced stagnation during the seventies and eighties, followed by turmoil, uncertainty and broken promises through the nineties, Russians tend to view their overall decline in their standard of living as more profound and negative than their gains in constitutional and democratic rights:

Although there is indeed a consistent general preference for ‘democracy’ in the abstract, this preference is not accompanied by a high value placed on specific attributes of liberal democracy [...] when it comes to trade-offs between these attributes and substantive outcomes encompassing public order, economic security and social justice. It is the association between these highly valued collective goods and Russian understandings of ‘democracy’ that accounts for the continued support for democracy alongside declining state legitimacy and rising nostalgia for the Soviet regime (Sil and Chen 2004:353).

Thus, Russians still support democracy, but they will be sceptical to new promises. At the same time, democracy may seem to resemble more a game for pretenders than a political reality. As an election observer in Apatity during the presidential elections, I registered that many were convinced that the election results had been decided beforehand. The committee leader at a polling place warned me sarcastically: ‘I won’t

allow you to file any complaints, since all possible wrongdoings have already been done before Election Day.' Apparently she would not let an international observer spoil her day by filing complaints about the way procedures were, or were not, followed, as long as she thought that the result was more or less fixed. Of importance to her was that she was doing her job and pretending to partaking in the 'game of democracy', and made it look real. In sum, such negative experiences may lead to a social production of mistrust as:

The social production of mistrust is based on the specific practices that necessarily stem from past negative experiences, which are reactivated in the present through the group's collective memory. [...] The ruled have reacted to the rulers' projects by following an intuitive sociology of their own, which has led to strategies quite unlike those expected by the legislators. The ruled voice their mistrust openly, often in a lapidary phrase that was the *Leitmotiv* of most of our interviews: 'Politicians are all alike; you can't trust them' (Giordano and Kostova 2002:75-76).

The same *Leitmotiv* as mentioned above was widespread among my informants: 'It is difficult to work with politicians because they're not servants of the people. It's rather the opposite. But, it's getting better', says Raisa. She hopes that the future will bring politicians who care, and politicians who do not just pretend to care. According to her, merely dissembling is the worst legacy of the Soviet Union, affecting all social strata. On the other hand one should be careful to present this view as the only one, which prevails. According to Mitia:

It is too easy to just denounce them [the politicians] as not interested. Some of them could have worked harder, but [...] it's too easy just to blame them and claim that they don't care. We tried to contact some politicians from time to time, but, you know, they were quite often busy.

Of course politicians are multi-levelled performers, as are environmentalists according to Sonia, and they cannot always give everyone their full attention. At the same time, the existence of distrust of politicians should not be treated as something particularly Russian, e.g. exotic. But the feeling of not being heard, of being ignored is wide-ranging in Russia as have been discussed in Chapter 3. Suffice it to say, similar views are widespread among members of PiM, as well as a more general view in Russia where 80% are dissatisfied with the political system, and distrust of their political representatives is both profound and far-flung (Sil and Chen 2004:351). Such statements may well be regarded as formative story-lines. Thus, they may end up as self-fulfilling prophecies being both the reason for and the product of a lack of dialogue:

We cannot influence them. It's a waste of energy; they think we're too young. Like when we met with representatives from the Department of Forestry. They decided to meet us, just because a NU representative was there with us. The scientists said that everything was ok. It's like having an interview with deaf people. No, we have to work with the population instead. (Nadia)

According to Nadia, there is no use for PiM speaking with bureaucrats because the former do not want a dialogue, unless a Norwegian turns up.

As I have previously discussed in my report, members in PiM feel empowered to a certain degree, although they more often than not, encounter negative reactions. Thus, their experiences may lead to a social production of mistrust. The *doxa* – a type of knowledge that is taken for granted, and thus never questioned (Bourdieu 1977:164) – will influence participants' practices as they plan their activities and responses. As most of my informants already seem to know, e.g. their *doxa* tells them that there is no use in talking with politicians and bureaucrats; this has profound consequences for how they seek to work with environmental issues. For instance, this may lead to organisations putting more stress on seeking international support than on domestic achievements. However, PiM's quest for international support is a response to domestic hostility, and part of a strategy to attempt to exercise influence on domestic environmental policies by taking a detour of foreign agencies and governments. The story-line about passive politicians may turn out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy and thus prevail. In other words, when environmentalists believe from the start that there is no use in trusting politicians and decision makers and adjust your practices accordingly, e.g. 'We cannot influence them...', it should come as no surprise that slow change is the outcome. The relation between environmentalists and decision-makers in various fields is characterised by mutual distrust, and as we saw in Chapter 5, environmentalists are not regarded as able to take up any subject position within environmental discourses, except the one assigned to ignorant persons. As this is a field of indolence and slow change I will now turn to the concept labelled *habitus* to try to elucidate this process.

### **Habitus and the Soviet Legacy**

Bourdieu define the concept of *habitus* as:

The *habitus*, the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977:78).  
[...]

In short, the *habitus*, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history. The system of dispositions – a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured according to its principles, [...] – is the principle of the continuity and regularity which objectivism discerns in the social world without being able to give them a rational basis (Bourdieu 1977:82).

Thus, *habitus* is a generative principle embodied in each and everyone as a disposition that both *limits and renders possible* a range of practices simultaneously. Although *habitus* is subjective, Bourdieu does not regard it as individual as the internalised structures reflects perceptions and conceptions that are more or less common to the same group or class (Bourdieu 1977:86). Consequently, different groups and classes possess different *habitus*. Arguably, Russian bureaucrats and other representa-

tives of the Soviet *nomenklatura* have different *habitus* than young environmentalists trying to function as whistleblowers within an open society.<sup>34</sup> One cautionary reservation needs to be taken, as it is imperative to stress that although *habitus* offers a way to understand how the past survives into the present, this should not be understood as if individuals are completely at will of the *habitus*, as if the *habitus* directed each and every action of humans. However, *habitus* shows how embodied knowledge is a part of the resources individuals act upon '...in a world inhabited by essentially *social* actors, made through practices and embodied in *habitus*. Enduring cultural ideas and a history of practice constitute the foundation of Bourdieu's analysis...' (Lampland 2002:35-36). Individual or collective accumulation of social capital is entrenched in *habitus* as part of the repertoire that one could draw upon, whereas practices are the product of such an accumulation. Thus, PiM's ultimate performance is formed by members' *habitus*, wherein social capital is firmly planted. At the same time, the learned NGO practices and ideology is a culturally produced repertoire 'imported' from Norway, and may be in opposition to knowledge adhering from members' *habitus*. For instance, as a result of past experiences many PiM members do not believe that promoting a dialogue with politicians serve any purpose. This repertoire of NGO practices might change the *habitus* over time; however, I think it should be conceived of as rather different from the *habitus*. Another interesting aspect of *habitus* is how it demonstrates that change will take time, as the 'past survives in the present' (Bourdieu 1977:82), and thus forms practices in the present. This reproduction of past practices may explain some of the observed indolence and difficulties in Russia's, and consequently in Russians', 'transition' to a postsocialist world.

As I have argued in Chapter 4, Putnam fails to answer what will happen if, more often than not, one has negative experiences. The same applies to the dominant development discourse in which civil society is perceived of as spreading through grassroots initiative, positive experiences, and that these will work generatively, that is, involvement will grow in strength and substitute apathy. A *doxa* and *habitus* with experiences from previous conflicts with decision-makers, and thus the feeling of a lack of capabilities to actively influence these will then, in a sense, be reproduced or reinforced. As *habitus* both enables and limits our range of actions, this will affect our understanding of PiM in two ways: a possible reproduction of a negative *habitus*, and that any change is bound to be hampered by indolence. My informants' *habitus* and *doxa* regarding how they understand politicians, their work and practices makes it hard for them to really believe in such a dialogue as promoted as important in liberal perceptions of the term civil society. *Doxa* and *habitus* may be reproduced, for instance, with regard to members' attitudes towards politicians, and as such I will argue that this is one of the many problems that occur when the transition from state socialism to a developed civil society in a liberal democracy is perceived to be swift. It does not to a

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<sup>34</sup> This does not imply that all individuals of the *nomenklatura* have the same, as in identical, *habitus*. However, as they belong to the same class, trained under the same system, I believe that within the scope of this analysis their *habitus* can be treated as quite congruent.

satisfying degree take into account what negative experiences within civil society might mean for the activists.

Since the members of PiM and the latter's policies are significantly resisted, members have limited possibilities to convert their various forms of capital into political results. This may influence members' *habitus*, as their internalised knowledge of how officials are, but probably also on their view of capital conversion and manipulation. Thus, one may say that the 'Soviet legacy' is reproduced. In this regard, the legacy should not be viewed as a static quantity, but more as part of what contributes to the *habitus* of various groups and classes. As part of *habitus*, past experiences survives into the present, and form practices among environmentalists and the *nomenklatura* alike. From this vantage point, the 'Soviet legacy' is relevant.

## Conclusion

In this report I have set forth to describe the interplay between PiM's ideology and everyday practices. Before proceeding with this aim, the specific geographical and historical context was outlined. Murmansk and the Russian part of BEAR is a scene for benevolent development aid and cooperation, imperative to Norway in an environmental and economical sense. Further, I dealt with the intellectual aspects of the term civil society, which were sketched out, highlighting central issues such as self-interest, altruism and civil society's relation to the state. I have relied upon Buschowski's theory delineating the institutional aspect of civil society, i.e. civic society, from civil society understood as a moral community (Buchowski 1996). Thus, whereas life in PiM as external practices aimed at advocating change in environmental policies takes place within civic society, the moral community is also relevant with regard to ideology, the nexus of self-interest and altruism, and accumulation of social capital. The analytical value of the concept of civil society may be disputed as it is a huge category containing many different views and practices both in the private and the public sphere. Thus, I have suggested to investigate civil society and ideology in a NGO in relation to everyday practices at three levels: (i) individual strategies and perceptions; (ii) internal organisational practices and cooperation between PiM and its Norwegian partner and; (iii) external organisational practices as PiM advocate for change in environmental policies. Hence, three levels of organisational life in PiM have been described accordingly; the individual, the group and the societal level. Through these descriptions I have clarified how accumulation of social capital adheres to individual motivations rather than to collective ones, while at the same time having profound effects on PiM as a group. The accumulation of social capital and networking enhances PiM's opportunities to achieve results, but may also obstruct its attempt to become a well-functioning environmental NGO, as individual competition over access to privileged resources may turn out to be an exhaustive exercise. Furthermore, I have discussed, by elaborating on environmental discourses, the way PiM, and consequently other environmentalists, seem to be positioned in environmental discourses as ignorant persons. PiM members seem unable, although they try, to alter their subject position within the environmental discourses. Another aspect with environmental discourses is that expert knowledge is deemed

to be superior to 'common sense' and involvement by locals. Environmentalists face profound challenges when voicing their concern for the situation affecting the environment. The negative treatment meted to PiM is not limited to experts, but also encompasses bureaucrats and politicians. This can be perceived as a conflict between the *nomenklatura* and professional class trained in the Soviet Union, and young environmentalists eager to embody the ideals of a civil society. Since the transition from a socialist planned economy to market liberalisation in a democracy has proven itself to be painful and impeded by indolence, the 'Soviet legacy' is often invoked to explain this. I believe this to be an unsatisfying explanation, as it is neither precise nor particularistic enough. By referring to the 'Soviet legacy' as a rather general explanation, one risk to ignore what should be explained and analysed. Thus, I finally elaborated upon Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to try to explain this process. *Habitus* explains to us how perceptions of the past not only survive into the present, but also how practices are thus produced, practices that inevitably will form Russia and the relations between environmentalists and their opponents, in profound ways. In this respect, PiM as a representative of Russian civil society will have to try to surmount this challenge, first and foremost by changing their own attitude to their opponents, instead of continuing to adhere to negative story-lines constructing 'the other' as an enemy. Development projects headed east should take notice of the observed indolence in which changes occur slowly, and not as swiftly as is often expected. Thus, they may want to reconsider the implications of the notion of 'doing good', as NGO life is a stage where self-interest, dependency and powerlessness are at display, perhaps more so than altruism, equality and empowerment are.





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## Appendixes

### Appendix #1

Description of PiM's goals and proposed solutions. Translated from the Russian version as it appears on <http://pim-murmansk.narod.ru/> and in appendix #2

#### *NATURE AND YOUTH*

The public youth environmental organisation 'Nature and Youth' was founded in Murmansk *oblast'* in December 1996, aiming at unifying people with similar views, aged from 15 till 30 years, who are not indifferent to the problems of the surrounding environment.

At present, members of the organisation includes older school pupils and students from various educational institutions in Murmansk *oblast'*. The organisation has affiliates in Murmansk, Monchegorsk, Apatitiy, and is represented in Severodvinsk (Arkhangelsk *oblast'*.)

#### *Our objectives:*

- To form an ecological identity and consciousness;
- To help in solving ecological problems, secure the well-being and health of the generations through increased quality of the environment, and form environmental culture;
- To attract youth to the organisation through practical activities directed at providing advanced solutions to environmental problems.

#### *Tasks:*

1. Implement ecological education directed at all social strata of the population:
  - Form adequate ecological statements;
  - Form attitudes towards nature through rational and emotional education;
  - Form abilities and skills in interacting with nature;
2. Assist in providing ecological information to the population;
3. Organise and pilot publication measures that do not contradict the aims of the organisation;
4. Organise and hold seminars, conferences, lectures to promote the achievement of the organisation's goals.
5. Take part in scientific investigations and preparations, form and realise program, projects, plans in the sphere of ecology, guard the surrounding environment, health of the populace and youth politics;
6. Take part in Russian and international rallies in the sphere of ecology and protection of the environment;
7. Assist in protecting surrounding environment and nature, increase ecological security and maintenance of the ecological balance.

## Appendix #2

### **ПРИРОДА И МОЛОДЕЖЬ**

Мурманская областная молодежная общественная экологическая организация "Природа и Молодежь" (Пим) создана в декабре 1996 года, с целью объединения единомышленников, в возрасте от 15 до 30 лет, которым не безразличны проблемы окружающей среды.

Сегодня членами организации являются старшеклассники и студенты различных учебных заведений Мурманской области. Организация имеет свои отделения в Мурманске, Мончегорске, Апатитах, а также представительство в г. Северодвинске (Архангельская область)

#### *Наши цели:*

- Формирование экологической личности;
- Содействие решению экологических проблем, благополучия и здоровья поколений через повышение качества среды обитания и формирование экологической культуры;
- Привлечение молодежи в организацию для активной практической деятельности, направленной на комплексное решение экологических проблем.

#### *Задачи:*

1. Осуществление экологического образования всех слоёв населения:
  - формирование адекватных экологических представлений;
  - формирование отношения к природе через обращение к чувствам, эмоциям;
  - формирование систем умений и навыков взаимодействия с природой;
2. Содействие обеспечению населения экологической информацией;
3. Организация и проведение публичных мероприятий, не противоречащих целям организации;
4. Организация и проведение семинаров, конференций, лекций, способствующих достижению поставленных целей;
5. Участие в проведении научных исследований и разработок, формировании и реализации программ, проектов, планов в области экологии, охраны окружающей среды, здоровья населения и молодежной политике;
6. Участие в российских и международных акциях в сфере экологии и защиты окружающей среды;
7. Содействие защите окружающей природной среды, повышению экологической безопасности и поддержанию экологического равновесия.