

**A thesis submitted to the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy of  
Central European University in part fulfillment of the  
Degree of Master of Science**

**Emergence and Evolution of Environmental Movement in Georgia: Historical  
Perspective and Current Challenges**

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Marina ARABIDZE

# THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

## **ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS** submitted by:

Marina ARABIDZE for the degree of Master of Science and entitled: Emergence and evolution of environmental movement in Georgia: historical perspective and current challenges

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This particular research attempts to present the historical perspective of emergence and evolution of the Georgian environmental movement. Being the first study of this kind on Georgia the scope is broad attempting to construct the general picture without going too deep into detail.

Social movement theory is used as a theoretical framework for the analysis. Events unfolding in the course of the movement formation are analyzed through political opportunities and mobilizing structures.

The research roughly divides the timeline of movement existence into two periods. The environmental movement during the Soviet rule and after the regime change is analyzed separately. As the results of the study suggest the Soviet period environmentalism in Georgia mainly fits into the general description of movements active in post Soviet block. Distinct country specific characteristic is viewed in the lights of close ties with national liberation movement also active during that period. However, the independence fully altered the scene and with the influence of civil confrontation and ethnic conflicts the environmental movement followed the course of development different from the rest of the FSU and CEE countries.

The post war movement that emerged as a response to international assistance and cooperation and partly as an attempt to counterweigh the policy of the government oriented towards economic development only is not similar to the Soviet time movement in many ways. Unlike the predecessor, it no longer enjoys widespread popularity among the population. Troubled by lack of funding and internal divisions, the focus of modern Georgian environmentalists is directed towards the development projects that bring the issue of environmental protection back into the spotlight, but only for the limited period of time. Economic development model of the country's new government is emerging as a new challenge that the movement has to address.

**Keywords:** environmental movement, social movement, national liberation movement, FSU, Georgia, ethnic conflict, civil war, economic development

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## Abbreviations

BP	British Petroleum
BTC	Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CENN	Caucasus Environmental Network
EEA	European Environmental Agency
FSU	Former Soviet Union
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
HPP	Hydro Power Plant
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
REC	Regional Environmental Centre
SCP	South Caucasus Pipeline
SMT	Social Movement Theory
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WREP	Western Route Export Pipeline
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Environmental movement globally**

The roots of global environmental movement lead us to the industrialized countries of the West that were the first to address their attention to the issue of nature and environmental protection. This trend significantly grew after the World War II when the affluent western societies voiced serious concern about the state of the environment. The research and publications on the topic mushroomed and the idea attracted more and more popular support (McCormick 1995).

During the last several decades the world has experienced substantial rise in environmental awareness and consequent progress in development of the global environmental movement. However, the process has not been entirely smooth and went through number of twists and turns. The heart of global environmental problems lies in the historical division between the developing (the South) and the developed (the North) world. Although other implications can also be listed the general difficulties result from the differences between northern and southern agendas. These differences have mainly formed and evolved in line with the environmental movement itself. The global North-South divide can be also put as the economic development versus environmental protection debate that has been dominating the agenda since landmark event of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972.

Emergence of global movement was the outcome of reassessment of human values. Environment was no longer a problem of certain individuals or groups – it became a public issue, which required reviewing of existing social, economic and political models. This in its turn found its reflection in legal acts, policy mechanisms, establishment of environmental agencies (McCormick 1995). All individual national movements are different, having their unique characteristics, but their division and isolation is not positive for the progress of global environmentalism. They should all be viewed as separate parts of the common concept (McCormick 1995).



As global movement is made up of smaller regional or national elements they represent the core of environmentalism. The analysis of their emergence and evolution are therefore interesting for making the global scale assessments. Georgia as the country of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) represents an interesting example of Soviet and post Soviet environmentalism and can contribute to the research in that particular area.

## **1.2 Environmental movement in Georgia**

No comprehensive study has been previously carried out on the issue of the Georgian environmental movement. This work is the first attempt to analyze the emergence and evolution of environmentalism in Georgia with special emphasis on the sequence of key events and the identification of major challenges.

The nature of Soviet time environmentalism in Georgia generally fits into the overall description of environmental movements in the Union and also in the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) before the collapse of the communist rule. However, the so called eco-nationalistic nature is a dominant phenomenon in Georgian case. The term eco-nationalism was coined by Jane Dawson and actively used by other researches studying environmental movements in post soviet space (Peterson 1993; Dawson 1996). As will be further presented below, close ties with national movements enjoying huge popularity in the country in the late 1980s and the early 1990s were partial explanations of both the environmental movement's rise and its decline.

However, the post Soviet environmental movement in Georgia has been in a way different from other FSU and especially from the CEE countries. The reasons for that are mostly embedded into the recent history of the country. The civil war and two ethnic conflicts devastated the nation to such extent that formation of all civil institutions had to start over from almost from nothing. Therefore, in the face of military activities, the loss of popular support and leadership by the environmental movement that was the case in all other FSU and CEE countries (Pavlinek and Pickles 2000; Fisher 1993) did not look so damaging.

Revived movement elements that emerged after the wars were different and unlike its predecessors were not so actively engaged in public life especially in the beginning. They started their activities as institutionalized social movement organizations. Due to preoccupation with daily routine of managerial activities, interaction and relations with public were neglected and as a result active support and popularity were not restored.

Another specific feature of Georgian environmentalism is the mobilizations around and the opposition to the large development projects. Events and actions of the state and developers in the framework of these large projects quickly ignite the movement elements that are mainly in the periphery of decision making in the country's current policy scene with significant strength.

Presently, the general trend is the diversification and institutionalization of the movement and especially the movement organizations. The competition for funding sources aggravates the problem of the lack of unity among environmentalists. However, especially considering the instable political and economic conditions of the country the movement still has made an important progress, particularly in the direction of research and studies concentrated around problematic and popular topics in the field.

### **1.3 Scope of the study**

The aim of the research is to create a historical sequence of events in the life of the Georgian environmental movement. As no previous research is available on the issue chronology is established to identify the most important cases and make their in-depth analysis. Special emphasis is given to the landmark events that make significant contribution to the process of emergence and evolution of the movement. Therefore several development projects implemented in the country are analyzed in more detail.

Apart from describing the history of the Georgian environmental movement, the objective of the study is to also highlight some specific features that are unique to Georgian environmentalism

and are not present in the movements that were born in similar circumstances (mainly in the FSU and CEE countries).

Researching the interaction between the political situation in the country and the movement is also one of the important goals for characterizing the movement. Other factors, including public support, cooperation and networking, financial tools etc., that have a big potential to influence and shape the processes are incorporated into the analysis as well.

### **1.4 Outline of the thesis**

The study is structured with the purpose of gradually uncovering the issues of relevance. As the analysis of the events in the history of the Georgian environmental movement is performed through theoretical framework first the overview of this particular subject is provided. Social movement theory (SMT) and issue attention cycle are used to discuss the character of Georgian environmentalism. SMT with two principal factors, namely, political opportunities and mobilizing structures is a good overarching theoretical basis for the research that contributes to the analysis without imposing strict limitations. The chapter also provides justification on why these particular theories were chosen for the analysis and in what way they are relevant for the research.

Literature review discusses the sources available on environmental movements in the FSU and CEE countries. As has already been mentioned, no research has been conducted to cover the Georgian settings alone. Therefore environmentalism in the run-up to the breakup of the FSU and after the collapse is analyzed. For the movements under the new regimes, the issues like war and environment, civil society, education, awareness and policymaking are also covered as they are deemed important for the study.

Methods section describes the methodological framework used for the research and the process of data gathering and analysis. Due to high relevance of ethic and validity to social research special emphasis is given to these particular topics. Major limitations of the study are also outlined.

As has been mentioned, historical settings of the country are often major determinants of many aspects of social movements. Therefore, a short overview of Georgian history highlighting mainly 20<sup>th</sup> century, is regarded valuable for the research and therefore presented in a separate chapter.

Outcomes part tells the history of Georgian movement from the very first days till the present time. In the course of the discussion major development projects are also analyzed as they represent important part of the movement history. The discussion part is concentrating on evaluation of the events through theoretical framework and making generalizations and conclusions about the nature of Georgian movement. Recommendations for the development of environmentalism and also for the future research represent the parts of the above section.

Conclusion summarizes the main findings and results of the analysis presented in the research.

For visual illustration, thesis also includes the map of Georgia with the major development projects discussed in the course. List of respondents interviewed as a part of the research with their names and positions is also presented.

## 2. Theoretical framework

Previous century and particularly the second half of it saw the birth of many different social movements in various parts of the world. Not all of them retained their significance, but some are still maintaining strength and influence. The environmental movement is probably one of them (Staggenborg 2007). When analyzing something as complex and diverse as the environmental movement it is quite easy to overlook certain aspects that in the end may prove to have the decisive role in the formation and operation of the entire system. What is more, the nature of the movement greatly varies from country to country as some factors affecting the development, like culture or political situation, are unique for different locations. Therefore, it is probably impossible to come up with the development blueprint that would be applicable to the environmental movements all around the world explaining the role of all the different streams and events involved.

When analyzing the birth and progress of the environmental movement in Georgia, which was the part of the Russian Empire for more than 100 years, starting from 1800 and then the member republic of the FSU, it becomes obvious that the nature of the movement in this particular country will be significantly different from for example the US, where the organizational and ideological roots of the present movement can be traced back to as early as the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dunlap and Mertig 1992).

In case of Georgia, the turning point for establishment of social movements in general and the environmental movement in particular is strongly related to the collapse of the FSU. This particular event and the consequent end of the Cold War brought about many substantial changes for the world, but it also initiated important transformations on a lower level that are less significant in a global context, but play the crucial role at the regional and/or national level. As has already been mentioned, one of the outcomes of the end of the Soviet regime was the rapid development of different social movements throughout the republics of the former Union. Although, generally speaking, we can state that these processes of development and formation fall into the internationally established format, there are quite a lot of unique features and

characteristics that can be observed in different regions as well as in different newly independent states. Following the almost century long oppression, freedom of democracy that came relatively unexpected, resulted in the somehow chaotic processes that can be attributed to various factors and occurrences (Peterson 1993).

When analyzing the environmental movement one of the most appropriate approaches would be to view the processes through the framework of the social movement theory. There are three main broad factors that are largely mentioned with regard to social movements. Although sometimes referred to differently the main concept of them is generally the same for majority of social science scholars. Social movements are normally influenced, shaped and formed by political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing processes (McAdam *et al.* 1996). Due to its high flexibility and broad coverage area, this particular theory is used for analyzing the Georgian environmental movement. Its application enables to better understand various aspects of the movement emergence and its evolution, while retaining the freedom of studying all possible streams taking part in the process.

In the following chapters these aspects will be analyzed in more details emphasizing the relevance of their application to Georgian settings.

## **2.1 Social movement theory**

As has already been mentioned application of social movement theory for the assessment of the Georgian environmental movement has number of important reasons. Firstly, it provides quite a powerful ideological support and makes it possible to analyze events from multidimensional perspective. SMT integrates many different aspects that take part in the process of movement formation making it easier to explain different events and consequent results (Chandler 2005). Due to its flexibility and broadness, SMT does not act as a limiting factor when making the analysis. It allows to include various key aspects observed and to come up with comprehensive conclusions. Being descriptive as opposed to prescriptive enables the researcher to use other theories in the process of the analysis (Caplow 2005). In general, it is a good overarching

framework for investigating complex and diverse occurrences such as the environmental movement.

As underlined, three principal factors are considered crucial for the social movements, namely, political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing processes (McAdam *et al.* 1996). Their interaction and combination shape every social movement defining its unique character and specific features. Understanding these factors can help explain many important issues with regards to social movements. However, as framing processes is the widest and the most complex aspect among the three, which requires additional in depth research to ensure its full engagement in the analysis, for this thesis, the decision was made to utilize political opportunities and mobilizing structures only. Framing processes is mainly concerned with thoughts and feelings of the particular group of people that are widespread and serve as a uniting force for the collective action. It is of cultural origin and mainly socially constructed (McAdam *et al.* 1996). The scope of this study and the data obtained in the framework of the research were not considered sufficient to duly evaluate framing processes behind the Georgian environmental movement and therefore they were not included in the discussion. Additional research would be necessary to also incorporate this aspect of SMT in the analysis.

### **2.1.1 Political opportunities**

Any type of social movement is strongly influenced by the settings it operates in. Their emergence is mostly triggered by outside factors. International environment is an important aspect for movement formation. However, the features that generally shape them are mainly of national or local origin. Movement development is mainly a response to changes in social and political climate that serve as a push uniting and engaging large number of people under the same cause.

When talking about political opportunities it should be underlined that the concept mainly covers the relationship between official politics and the movement itself (McAdam *et al.* 1996). This is about how the movement responds to the activities of state and what are the consequences of this interaction. State policy can have both positive and negative effect on the development of a social

movement. It can either provide the possibility for further advancement or can on the contrary halt the process. Therefore, as it can be concluded, political opportunities are one of the most important defining factors for social movements and can have constructive as well as destructive effect.

The level of correlation between the direction of an official state politics and the changes in the character of the movements is quite high. The political space (formal or informal) that movement occupies is heavily influenced by this correlation (McAdam *et al.* 1996). Mostly, movements are sensitive to the events like change of government, alteration of state's policy priorities, appearance or disappearance of certain actors etc.

Researchers studying social movements identify number of different opportunities that can create favorable climate for social movements to emerge or develop further. They include:

- Possibility to participate in political decision making process;
- Instability and/or change of power distribution among the ruling elites (this may include conflicts for power and influence inside the elites);
- Finding support and allies among elite members;
- Weakening of state capacity and power (Meyer and Debra 2004; Mayer 2004).

The opportunities listed above can be comprised of number of other sub factors. Presence of some or all of the above listed aspects can trigger the rise of social movements if the opportunity is duly assessed and exploited. However, this does not necessarily imply that movements fade in the oppressive environment. On the contrary, oppression has the potential to mobilize with the same strength as provided opportunities do so (Polletta 1999).

The major approach utilized for researching the political opportunities is the study of political structures and the effect of their change on the movements. There is another popular method applied for the similar purpose, which is oriented at drawing conclusions based on the comparison of the same movements in different countries (McAdam *et al.* 1996). This enables to come up with the judgment regarding the effect of different political structures on the movement emergence and evolution.



Both methods can generate quite interesting and valuable results. While the first method is generally more oriented towards historical research of the movement emergence and evolution, the second one puts more emphasis on comparisons between different nations and the specific events that determine particular features of movements across various states (McAdam *et al.* 1996). A good example of cross national research would be the comparison between the electoral path of Green Party in Germany and in any other country. This would help define which political settings influenced the success in Germany and why the similar model was not applied elsewhere.

As will be further described below, in case of Georgia number of different opportunities emerged enabling the environmental movement to develop. However, the negative effect of unfavorable climate was also experienced resulting in weakening and consequent decline of the movement.

### **2.1.2 Mobilizing structures**

Mobilizing structures is yet another important aspect of SMT. It is quite a broad factor that covers the means that groups utilize in order to come together and undertake activities in line with their objectives. Mobilizing structures may include different types of resources such as:

- Material (financial aspects);
- Moral (support and solidarity);
- Organizational (networking, cooperation);
- Human (volunteers, leaders);
- Cultural (prior experience, knowledge of certain issues) (Edwards and McCarthy 2004).

Analysis of mobilizing structures are carried out based on two different approaches as was the case with political opportunities. Resources mobilization theory and political process model are applied for this purpose by different scholars initially assuming that they are rivalry approaches, joint application of which is impossible. However, the recent approach with this regard has been the utilization of combination of both approaches as the diverse settings in which social

movements operate can be better explored if as many factors are considered as possible (McAdam *et al.* 1996).

The major difference between the two models mentioned above is that the first one is more oriented towards formalized institutions taking part in movement formation such as social movement organizations. The second is exploring more informal grassroots environment that affects the movement and provides the back up or the starting point for the emergence (McAdam *et al.* 1996).

Mobilizing structures can have an important influence on the societal attitude towards the movement. Depending on the strategy used for mobilization, public formulates its position (negative or positive) and chooses to support or to oppose the movement. As the future progress can be largely defined by the public attitude, movements should be careful not to engage in activities that are not well perceived by ordinary citizens (McCarthy 1996).

Material and human resources are often among the most decisive categories from mobilizing structures. Altruism and voluntarism while present on certain stages are not considered as stable foundation in the long term, meaning that money and workforce is crucial and can greatly affect the nature of any movement (McCarthy 1996). This is especially true when the process of movement institutionalization starts as on this particular level voluntarism greatly fades away.

For the Georgian environmental movement, mobilizing structures is the issue of high importance and creates many problems. Material, organizational and cultural resources are the most challenging. The future of environmentalism in Georgia largely depends on positive resolution of these issues.

In brief, the birth of any social movement is defined by the combination and interaction of the above mentioned major factors. Their presence is essential for the movement to emerge. However, collective behavior that is the basis for any social movement is a quite complex phenomenon often affected by numerous different factors and events. The movements themselves

are not stable – they undergo constant alteration as they progress from the stage of emergence to the relative maturity (Marx and McAdam 1994). SMT provides substantially comprehensive theoretical foundation for understanding this complex occurrence, while leaving room for adjustment and modification. This is mainly the reason for using this particular theory to study the environmental movement in Georgia. The major factors of SMT can provide the grounds for understanding number of multifaceted events that have shaped and formed the character of the Georgian environmental movement from the period of emergence till the current days.

## **2.2 Issue attention cycle**

As has already been mentioned any social movement originates among ordinary people and is composed of them. Therefore, for mobilizing the movement, public attitude towards certain issues can be crucial.

Success of any social movement is closely linked with the public attitude towards the issue the movement advocates. Therefore, exploring what ordinary people think about the core values of the environmental movement and whether or not they are aware and interested in the problems can provide important information on the position of the movement in the society. Anthony Downs' issue-attention cycle is a good model for understanding the variations of the public attitude towards environmental problems (1972).

Just in the first years of increased environmental awareness, after the first Earth Day in 1972, Anthony Downs came up with the idea of applying social science model to researching public attitude towards environmental issues. As it is known, majority of social problems enjoy only short-lived popularity, meaning that gradually they are shifted backwards in the list of priorities (Dunlap 1992). Downs divided the issue attention cycle into five different stages stating that majority of environmental problems with certain exceptions all go through the given stages. The first one on the list is the pre-problem state during which much of the public is unaware of the issue and it only emerges in limited, mostly scientific circles. Given stage is followed by alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm, when public having realized the extent of the problem,

directs its efforts towards finding the solution highly confident of the positive outcome. As the history demonstrates, environmental problems are not easy to tackle. Therefore, the stage of realizing the cost of significant progress follows making it evident for people that solution might require major sacrifice from their side. This is not always positively received and as a result, gradual decline of intense public interest starts, when the issue is no longer widely debated and discussed. Finally, the post problem stage is reached, when the problem is almost discarded and no longer paid attention to (Downs 1972).

Of course there are cases, when the problem is no longer discussed because positive solution is found, but Downs argues that mostly this is not the case. With this regard, the role of mass media is specially highlighted, as they can easily bring something into spotlight or on the other hand, leave in the shadow due to the lack of attention (Downs 1972).

The influence and the strength of the environmental movement can easily be assessed by the status of environmental problems. The challenge for the movement activists is to maintain the high awareness among populations and to avoid the natural decline of attention towards environmental issues (Dunlap 1992). As will be further discussed below, the Georgian environmental movement has experienced ups and downs of the issue attention cycle, highlighting how important environmental awareness of ordinary citizens affects the overall progress.

### 3. Literature review

There are many different factors that can potentially play a role in a movement's history and its significance (Butterfield and Sedaitis 1991). Moreover, the same factors can often affect the same movements in different countries to a different degree. The questions discussed below are considered central for Georgian settings and circumstances, therefore a deeper perspective is provided on them.

The research on the Georgian environmental movement is quite scarce. No comprehensive study has been conducted to explore the issues related to this particular subject alone. However, due to close ties mainly with political organizations in the beginning of the 1990s it is possible to find quite a lot of interesting information about the environmental movement in historical and/or political publications of the corresponding period. They serve as a perfect baseline for the research enabling further progress by concentrating on the environmental movement alone and doing more in depth study and analysis.

Environmental movement is very complex and diverse. Therefore it is quite difficult to come up with an effective definition of it. However, it is curial to understand the concept before starting analysis and discussion. In a broad and simplified description Roger Scruton refers to the environmental movement as “concern for the environment ... when elevated into a political pursuit” (Scruton 1982, 150) This “elevation” is made possible only by the activities of individuals or groups that come together to achieve the same goal – the goal of protection and sustainable management of natural resources and human environment (McCormick 1995). The environmental movement is the union of these different groups that have the same overarching ideology and purpose, but differ in the methodologies used to reach the objectives. Some support the violent and sometimes even drastic measures to push through their ideas. Others are more diplomatic, following route of negotiations, confidence building and lobbying. Radical environmentalists, environmental skeptics, green anarchists, those advocating ecological modernization and many other groups of different believes make up the environmental movement all together (McCormick 1995). As the reasons that cause the emergence of environmental

movements in different countries vary so do the structure and the character. In one country radicals may be dominating the scene, where as, in the other ecological modernization may be more accepted (McCormick 1995). Therefore, the events and facts are important in the life of any movement. They can explain various features and characteristics better than pure theories can do.

### **3.1 Environmental movements before the breakup of FSU**

As has already been mentioned above, the birth of social movements in Georgia including the environmental movement is directly linked with the period before the collapse of the FSU and the following years of independence (late 1980s and early 1990s). Glasnost and perestroika initiated by Gorbachev resulted in the emergence of increased attention to ecological issues that often dominated and even shaped the entire process of democratizing the Soviet system (Ziegler 1991).

But what is also important to underline is the existence of relatively independent groups within the FSU working on issues related to nature. These were mainly grassroots student organizations that operated within the Universities. One was founded in Estonia back in 1958 and mainly included students from Tartu State University and the Estonian Agricultural Academy (Weiner 1999). The other operated at the Biology and Soil Science Faculty of the Moscow State University. This was basically the nature protection brigade (Druzhina), which still continues to exist today. There were number of other different organizations dealing with environmental issues in different parts of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and FSU that originated during or even before the Soviet time (Baker and Jehlicka 1998).

In those early days the state still maintained control over the developments in the field. Worldwide increase of concern on the condition of global environment affected the FSU also and as citizens voiced their alarm more and more often, the state responded by authorization of different societies and leagues that worked on the nature protection activities (Lipschutz 1996). Scientific circles emerged as important contributors to the process. Educational as well as voluntarily clean up or protection campaign became quite popular. However, pollution issues

were not raised during that period as it would challenge the economic model of the country (Steger 2004).

It is essential to analyze the factors that lead to sudden growth and expansion of the environmental movements in the Union that followed the gradual increase described above. There are various aspects that can be regarded as driving forces behind them. The major influence was made by the change in the state attitude towards the way the country was governed. Environmental tragedies and the overall state of the Soviet environment were the reasons that also had a key effect on the movement formation (Ziegler 1991). It can be argued that those republics that suffered the most from the total negligence to the environment mostly practiced in FSU had the strongest organizations throughout the Union. This is partly true with regard to Ukraine for example. Mobilized around the Chernobyl disaster the ecological association Zelenyi Svit (Green World) of Ukraine was one of the most prominent and influential (Marples 1991). This of course does not mean that other parts of the Union were far behind. Moreover, as it is proven by the research high level of environmental problems is not directly correlated with the strength of movement. Belarus is probably one good example of it. The country was impacted by the Chernobyl disaster more than Ukraine or Russia, but still had the weakest environmental originations around the region (Steger 2004).

What is extremely complicated with regard to the environmental movements in the period directly before the collapse is that the organizations forming these movements had very close ties with national liberation and ethnic groups making it difficult to assess whether it was the environment they mobilized around or if they were using it as a prelude to declare their other demands (Peterson 1993; Dawson 1996). The centrally planned system of the Union, with Russia playing the key role in the overall policymaking leaving the other Soviet republics in the position of simple performers of activities imposed from above resulted in “colonial and exploitative connotations” (Marples 1991, 117). However, it should also be underlined that a destructive attitude to the environment was pursued in majority of the republics including Russia. So, some argue that assessing this approach as colonialism cannot be justified. As the policy pursued was common for the center and the periphery alike, it will be fairer to attribute it to the Soviet economic model rather than to the colonialism (Arato 1991).

The fact that they were considered to be the safe subjects for debate not directly threatening the integrity of the Union was one of the reasons why environmental issues gained prominence during glasnost and perestroika (Peterson 1993). However, at this point environmental protection and nature protection come into the discourse. Nature protection was what Soviet government tried to limit the environmentalists with. It was mainly about the natural parks or reserves and monuments of archeological value (Steger 2004). Environmental protection on the other hand was concerned with the quality of air, water, soil that was directly challenging the economic model of FSU (Steger 2004). But in the light of ever increasing destruction of the environment and with the Chernobyl disaster acting as catalyst the environmental movement further expanded voicing demands affecting the industrial production process directly. The government was still more or less open to discussions when it came to nuclear power, waste problems or toxic plants, hoping to avoid confronting the ethnic issues or the requests of independence from the republics that was the challenge they feared the most (Peterson 1993).

As the some researchers state, Gorbachev's group didn't intend to start processes that would eventually go out of their control (Butterfield and Weige 1991). The newly emerging movements were supposed to be used as a tool for breaking the resistance of conservative groups in the government, but at the same time these movements should remain under the influence of the head of the state (Arato 1991). However, this was not always the case and the fact mentioned above regarding the blurred border between the environmental and nationalist movements makes the task of assessing environmental groups separately quite hard (Peterson 1993).

Another specific feature of the Soviet environmental movements is the fact that they emerged not in the period of economic prosperity, but on the other hand in the time when the situation with that regard was on the decline. This pattern directly opposes the so-called western post-materialist scheme, but Arato finds the justification of this in the Soviet "resource constrained" economic model, which proved to be more damaging than any other specific approach known (1991). The problematic thing with the environmental movements in the Soviet sphere is that no visible signs of conflict resolution between economists and environmentalists could be seen even back in 1991. As was agued, transition to market economy would not ease the stress on the



environment and what was more would not be able to remedy the ills done throughout the 70-year history (Arato 1991). What is more, as the first years of euphoria faded away it became increasingly evident that no overnight solution to the problems existed. With the aggravation of problems resulting from transitional period and first years of independence in newly emerged states environmentalist were no longer perceived as the heroes. Some even blamed them for current shortages of products and energy as it was them who campaigned for the closure of toxic plants producing necessary goods or against the construction of hydro or atomic power stations (Peterson 1993). Many prominent environmentalists later occupying high level state positions in newly independent states abandoned their environmentalist aspirations, becoming strong advocates of accelerated economic growth often at the cost of the environment. Moreover, public concern with this regard also dropped significantly (Peterson 1993). This pattern of movement development fits quite well into the issue attention cycle presented in the theoretical framework as the realization of efforts and costs needed to address environmental degradation often cause similar draw-backs in the public attitude.

### **3.2 Environmental movement after the breakup of FSU**

The environmental movements were one of those forces in the FSU that eventually lead to the breakup of the Union (Steger 2004). However, this huge event was not facilitated by the environmental movements alone. Environmental problems often had nationalistic coloring (Peterson 1993; Dawson 1996). What is more, in the light of severe economic crisis numerous new actor and groups united with the common goal of changing the regime (Steger 2004). This diversity and multiplicity of different actor in the end proved to be decisive for this transformation (Goldfarb 2001). However, breakup of the FSU did not decrease the problems, but in some case resulted in their aggravation. Newly emerged states had to confront different types of challenges that were completely new to them and that they had little or no experience to manage (Zurcher 2007).

### 3.2.1 Conflict and environment

Conflict and war is one of the challenges that almost all countries of FSU have gone through. It is enough to mention just some of them like Azerbaijani and Armenian conflicts over Nagorno Karabakh, Transnistria in Moldova, South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia, war in Chechnya. This issue is highly relevant as following the collapse of the FSU the first thing that happened was that the many post communist countries plunged into the long period of military activities, some resulting from confrontation between two independent countries, others from ethnic reasons.

There is a vast amount of literature available on economic, cultural, political etc. impacts of conflicts. However, not so many researchers have attributed their attention to environmental factors present in this context. Social movements that are born and strongly affected by the political, cultural etc. settings surrounding them undergo important transformations under the influence of military regimes present in the country. They can act as an important deterrent and often as restricting factors for movements. The conflicts in Georgia some leading to violent military actions no doubt had a major impact on the state in general and the nature of the national environmental movement in particular.

It is reasonable if we divide the effects of conflict on the environment into two distinct groups: those having a direct impact on the environment and those with an indirect effect (Mannion 2003). Direct impacts are easy to define and identify. They include damage caused by the preparation for and the process of warfare including ecosystem destruction, waste issues, pollution of water, air, soil etc. from military activities. Indirect effects are more complicated, long lasting and difficult to address. They include issues like increased pressure on resources resulting from influx of refugees or internally displaced persons from conflict regions, militarization of the state policy consequently restricting participation of ordinary people and civil society in decision making, limited or no attention to environmental issues etc. Based on the assessment, there are around 280, 000 internally displaced persons in Georgia that require special attention and assistance (Utkan 1996). While the direct impacts can serve as a reason that will spark the mobilization of the environmental movement, indirect effects are more likely to have a

profound negative influence on its nature. Militarization of the state policy and limitation of democratic aspects of governance is one of the examples of indirect impact on the social movements.

Effect of conflicts on the integrity and strength of civil society is deep. What is more, the process of its regeneration in the period of peace building is quite difficult, not always progressing in a straightforward manner (Pugh 2000). Keeping in mind the importance of civil society for democratic transformations and overall progress, conflicts can be largely destructive to any country. This is especially true when we are talking about Georgia in particular. With embryonic civil society present in the beginning of 1990s the conflicts mentioned above had an enormous negative impact and it will be later argued that the process of recovery has not been completed yet.

It is a well know fact that conflicts have a huge impact on economic conditions in countries. Economic hardship in its turn affects the state of the environment and the social welfare (Chkhartishvili *et. al.* 2004).

The nature of Georgian conflicts perfectly fits into the pattern of warfare dominating most of 1990s. Firstly it is internal, not involving other states, different actors take part and shape the process, their duration is quite long often ending in the so-called frozen conflicts and what is most important it is the civilians who suffer the most as a result (Berthelsen 1996).

What is probably most important with regard to ethnic conflicts and also civil confrontation is that they all seriously challenge the sovereignty and also the legitimacy of the state (Dale 1996). This is the situation when ordinary people turn to alternative institutions like non governmental originations (NGOs) or international organizations for care and protection. However, the issue here it is whether or not these organizations are capable of providing what people lack. In the Georgian case, with underdeveloped civil society and state power seriously challenged, the situation appeared to be extremely challenging.

### 3.2.2 Civil society

The strength of civil society and its involvement in environmental policymaking is an important aspect of any environmental movement. When a government is responsive to the concerns of the general public and the representatives of civil society in the decision making process it is obvious that the power and influence of the environmental movement is quite high. Some political analysts directly link the strength of civil society with the possibility of the positive outcome of ecological modernization or greening the state policy once again highlighting the significance of this particular group for the success of the entire process (Fisher and Freudenburg 2001).

There has been a difference of opinions between scholars studying social movements in the Soviet period regarding the timing of the emergence of civil society in the Union. While agreeing that the civil society concept is crucial for studying the system, some argue that its emergence is dated to the period right after Stalinism (Lewin 1991). This means that throughout the time since then the society was recovering at a slow rate, finally reaching the climax during glasnost and perestroika. Even the fact that these events [glasnost and perestroika] occurred can be attributed to the development of civil society (Lewin 1991). Those opposing this point of view on the other hand state that political institutionalization of different movements and initiatives was non-existent in the period before Gorbachev, thus claiming that it was glasnost and perestroika that led to their formation not visa versa (Arato 1991). However, the two independent environmental organizations that originated during the late 1950s and early 1960s demonstrate the opposite.

As has already been mentioned, the shattered sovereignty of Georgia in the light of several conflicts should have led to the increase in the strength and influence of civil society and NGOs in particular. However, this has not been the case. What has often been stressed by the representatives of NGOs is the harassment from the Government and the existence of the Soviet model of top-down administration, when government organized NGOs absorb all available resources leaving independent NGOs without sources for existence (Berthelsen 1991).

As civil society is largely advocating the ideas that are important to the general public and seek to push their issues into the state agendas, public attitude can sometimes be decisive. Engagement in

civic action and obtaining support from people is yet another necessary factor for the development of civil society. The interaction between civil society and people is a complex issue, especially in the turbulent Georgian settings, where multiple actors are involved in the processes all affecting the outcome.

### **3.2.3 Environmental education and awareness**

Strong public commitment and high level of environmental awareness of ordinary citizens can in many cases define significant aspects of a country's policy in the environmental field (Fisher and Freudenburg 2001). These particular factors are often highlighted by various environmental organizations and are seen as a prerequisite for policy formation and/or transformation (UNEP 2007). The objective of any environmental movement is to have a stronghold in the population to be able to influence the state policy and the decisions made (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999). Another important thing is that core of any government's policy is clearly defined well in advance often forming some type of program. Making alterations to this program on a voluntary basis is highly unlikely meaning that "significant perturbation external to the subsystem" is required (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999, 124). One of the most common forms of perturbation is public opinion, formation of which can be directly linked to education and awareness. This leads us to the idea that environmental education is also an important aspect of the successful environmental movement in a country.

Environmental education has been widely promoted in many countries of the world by the majority of international organizations. It can even be stated that Georgia has special relations with environmental education as the very first Inter-governmental Conference on Environmental Education organized by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1977 was held in Georgian capital Tbilisi (back then part of USSR). The Tbilisi Conference was mainly about defining the general framework for implementing environmental education and underlining the importance of awareness among ordinary people, providing opportunities for knowledge acquisition and creation of new behavioral patterns (UNESCO 1997). Yet another landmark document in the history of environmental education is probably IUCN's World Conservation Strategy that stresses the issue of sustainability as a necessary

prerequisite for the development and in this regard points to environmental education as the possibility of attitude formation and behavioral change (IUCN 1980). Many other international treaties emphasize and promote widespread application of environmental education as a tool that can be used for overcoming many of the environmental problems that exist currently.

Some researchers however argue that educational activities are mostly ineffective if no individual commitment and personal concern is present (Palmer 1997). Engagement of the general public mainly happens through huge environmental disasters that are much publicized by the media. Furthermore, what you know doesn't always define how you act (Palmer and Neal 1994). But the challenge in this case is how the commitment and concern develops. It is obvious that without education and awareness a person will not be troubled by the condition of the environment. It is also possible that even after receiving the necessary information, attitudes will stay unchanged, but studies confirm that the majority of those people who attended courses of environmental education demonstrate higher consciousness levels (Stanisstreet and Boyes 1997).

Approaches with regard to educational practices also vary. Environmental education in the Soviet sphere was mainly concerned with the scientific side of the issue like offering courses in pure biology, chemistry, physics etc. Little or no attention was paid to human interaction with the environment, resulting problems and the options necessary for the solution. As many modern researches argue nowadays it is the human dimension of environmental change that should become the core of environmental education (Palmer 1997).

Even though the exact approach that should be used for implementing successful environmental education system is still widely debated, there's a worldwide consensus related to the importance and necessity of environmental education in general (Palmer 1998). While some argue that certain nations or segments of population have natural awareness and concern about the environment, systematized education is still necessary in order to let them know about what their personal contribution can be in pursuing the goal of improving the state of the environment.

### 3.2.4 Environmental policymaking

Environmental policymaking worldwide is characterized by many different challenges. In the broader context we can talk about the North-South divide and the implications related to power distribution and the developed world versus the developing world. While bridging this gap is crucial for the global progress it can be stated that for the particular Georgian settings the issue has only recently acquired significance.

While being part of the FSU any type of policymaking was centrally managed, with little if any space for the decision making at the local level. However, even after the transition to democracy, policymaking has not become fully open and transparent.

Public and civil society participation in policymaking is probably one of the essential prerequisites of democratic transformation. Dryzek distinguishes several different ways of civic involvement. He divides countries into passive and active states with inclusive or exclusive policies towards external forces, thus developing four different models: passive inclusion, passive exclusion, active inclusion, active exclusion (Dryzek *et. al* 2002). Public opinion does not always affect or change political opinion. There are cases when an issue is quite high on public agenda, but does not enjoy a similar status among politicians (Hunold and Dryzek 2002). However, the involvement of public and civil society in policy formation is crucial for ensuring that ordinary citizens are heard and their standpoint is considered. It can be argued which of the above mentioned models is more successful, but one thing is certain: inclusive attitude of the state is always more democratic. What is more, when the inclusion is passive, meaning that a government does not intervene with the internal processes going on in civil society the outcome is always superior (Dryzek *et. al* 2002). Lack of control and freedom in decision making among the various parties within the civil society provides an opportunity that the most significant ideas are adequately voiced and lobbied even if government is not fully supportive (Farrell 2003).

Changes in policymaking occur in relatively poor, transitional countries more often because of the overall instability of the political system and the wide variety of external drivers. Economic concerns are also more acute in these very countries. The implications arise when the economic

growth and environment conflict with each other. If that is the case, the environment will always be left in the periphery of decision making (Janicke 2008). The task is to decouple these two from each other when economic growth does not progress on behalf of environmental degradation or visa versa (Janicke 2008). It is the task of civil society to communicate this idea to those in the governments and to legitimate the approach.

Development is mainly associated with economic growth whereas imposing strict environmental regulations is seen as an obstacle. In order to soften the burden almost all declarations and reports stress the importance of assistance to the developing world in the form of direct financial aid or technology transfer as for example United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Basel Convention, Vienna Convention on Protection of Ozone Layer and others. The reality has however demonstrated that actual aid has been quite limited and directed neither towards the areas that are of key importance for developing countries nor to the countries that really require them (The South Center 2002). Another key problem is that rapidly developing countries are currently emerging as influential players on the world market and their interests more and more resemble those of developed countries. This increases the tension between the North and the South as developed countries are concerned with power redistribution on the global market and developing countries fear that the North will use environmental issues against them (The South Center 1999). Assistance and aid together with the global North-South confrontation have emerged as a new setting for the Georgian environmental policymaking scene. Its influence on the country has become quite significant lately, especially when we talk about aid. Another important thing is the well known problems with poverty, development and environment. The Georgian environmental movement has been caught up in these multi dimensional streams all making their contribution to the process of its formation.

These four aspects that are discussed above with regard to the environmental movement after the breakup of the FSU can be seen as factors of major influence on further progress of the environmental movement in Georgia. The general trend, especially in CEE countries was that after the regime change the environmental movement significantly declined (Steger 2004). The reason for that was mainly decrease of public attention to the issue due to new economic and



political challenges emerging (Pickvance 1998). The major figures and influential people of the movement switched to more active political life, depriving environmentalists of extremely valuable human resources (Pavlinek and Pickles 2000). Public support was lost also due to strong linkages between environmental problems and soviet domination. As Communist block fell apart, people somehow assumed that environmental problems would disappear together with communism (Fisher 1993). As society was long living under the oppression and state dictatorship with little experience in support mobilization environmentalists were unable to newly mobilized public with environmental problems alone (Fisher 1993).

Policymaking arena was also lost by the greens. Although at some extent important achievements were made in the start the newly formed Green Parties faded away quite quickly (Pavlinek and Pickles 2000). Education and awareness often seen essential prerequisite and the remedy to all problems did not prove to be so effective either. Behavioral change is not so strongly correlated with what people know (Palmer and Neal 1994).

Georgian movement somehow fits into this general trend of the post Soviet environmental movements, but it has its important unique characteristics. Path of country's political development is the major determining factor for this exclusiveness. These issues will be further explored in the outcomes and discussion sections of the thesis.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Outline**

When designing the methodology the principal things that it was tailored it to was the aims and objectives of the research. As the intention is to study the emergence and evolution of the environmental movement in Georgia with special emphasis on events that played the most important part in shaping the process it becomes obvious that no strictly defined common blueprint can exist that can be applied in this case. This factor served as a guiding principle when choosing the methodological theory for the study.

There's quite a strong stream in modern qualitative research that strongly opposes application of the methodological theory. The proponents of this idea often argue that distinct separation of theory from obtained evidence is not helpful. Therefore they advocate discarding methodological aspects altogether (Avis 2003). However, it can be suggested that having the theoretical guidance is quite helpful and can provide assistance in planning and conducting the research itself. From available methodological theories this particular study used certain aspects of ethnomethodology. Ethnomethodology is against the strictly defined research programs arguing they serve as a limiting factor creating the obstacles for progress. It is basically about using practical issues as a background for empirical research. Theory is mainly concerned with human understanding of events in more real and practical aspects (Garfinkel 1967).

The basis for the research is mainly the qualitative data collected via interviews with representatives of Georgian environmental movement. Coding method and categorization of concepts was applied of interpreting the interview results. The research was also supplemented by the documentary data obtained from various sources. The chapters presented below will describe the techniques utilized in more details.

## 4.2 Procedure

### 4.2.1 Data collection

As has been underlined the research is mainly concentrated on qualitative data. It provided the opportunity to assess something in a holistic and understandable manner, without being deterred by its complexity. Qualitative research in comparison with quantitative enables the researcher to obtain the insights of the context of an issue (Punch 1998). The principal attention was directed towards interviews as suggested by ethnomethodological theory. Interaction with people that are directly involved in the processes going on inside the environmental movement can provide the insights that many documents often fail to present. However, there is of course the issue of subjectivity as judgments are made based on somebody's personal understanding. However, this can be partly solved when making comparisons between points made by different respondents on the same subject. This issue will be further explored in ethics and validity chapter.

Apart from interviews documentary data was also collected to supplement the areas where information was relatively scarce. They were collected from various sources. This included the state library, the archives, regional environmental center etc. The nature of documents varied greatly. Archives provided the information related to the environmental movement during the 1990s, the first years of independence, the civil war and the two wars resulted from ethnic conflict in breakaway regions. Other sources presented different type of information. Having such sources is important for triangulation as will be further discussed.

Semi structured interview approach was used for the research, as more flexible, but at the same time providing the opportunity to obtain at least the basic things of interest. The respondents for the interview were mainly the NGO representatives, state officials, scientist, academia, journalists and also others that were suggested by those interviewed. This means that snowballing technique was used, when future interviewees were recommended by respondents. In line with methodological theory no strict structure was prepared for the interview, but some outline was still there. Interview protocol covered the following main issues:

1. Introductory remarks
2. Historical overview of the environmental movement
3. Important events effecting the environmental movement
4. Cooperation between member of the environmental movement
5. Financial aspects of the environmental movement
6. Effect of political situation on the environmental movement
7. Issues brought up by respondents

Interviews were conducted with 20 respondents. They took place mainly in the offices of the interviewees. This gave a good sense of the operational settings and somehow contributed to the research. Most of the interviews were recorded electronically only after receiving the consent of the respondents. When they had certain objections to that the note taking was employed.

As has been underlined the theory and methods used for the research were quite flexible enabling to collect vast amount of data and help avoid blindly following certain preconceived ideas.

#### **4.2.2 Data analysis**

Both types of data obtained, documentary and interview, was subsequently analyzed. As documentary analysis is relatively easy and straightforward, interview analysis requires more effort.

The interviews were mainly recorded. When it was not possible due to objection of respondents or any other similar reasons filed notes were made. Recorded interviews were later transcribed. In order to categorize huge amount of information obtained method of thematic analysis was employed. This is basically a procedure when qualitative data is encoded. When performing the activity specific codes are assigned based on different issues as deemed necessary by the researcher (Boyatzis 1998). According to Boyatzis five essential aspects are necessary for a code to be effective. They include:

1. A label
2. A definition of what the theme concerns

3. A description of how to know when the theme occurs
4. A description of any qualifications or exclusions to the identification of the theme
5. Examples, both positive and negative, to eliminate possible confusion when looking for the theme (Boyatzis 1998, 31).

Boyatzis himself defines three main approaches for coding: theory driven, prior data or prior research driven and inductive (from the raw data) or data driven (Boyatzis 1998). The latter was applied as the first two were not relevant.

Codes themselves can be divided into three main types: descriptive, topic and analytical. Descriptive codes are probably the simplest as they group data based on general attributes. Topic codes are more complex making separations based on themes. Analytical codes involve themes and concepts behind the data and create different classes based on that (Richandrs 2005). Due to the large amount and high diversity of the data collected all three types of codes were utilized. This enabled to better understand, classify and interpret information obtained.

As has been suggested by Punch coding is a data labeling activity that enables the researcher to start analyzing the material, but it is an uninterrupted process that continues throughout the analysis (1998). This means that new classes of data may come up during any research phase. This implies that coding is a basic and one of the most important parts of the research in general.

### **4.3 Validity and ethics**

Issue of validity in social science research results is often heavily debated. As Kirk and Miller argue “the assumptions underlying the search for objectivity are simple. There is a world of empirical reality out there. The way we perceive and understand that world is largely up to us, but the world does not tolerate all understandings of it equally” (1986, 11). No doubt it is essential to be objective, but it is not always an easy task to accomplish.

There are basically two main approaches for validating the results of qualitative research: triangulation and respondent validation. Triangulation is quite an interesting tool advocating comparison of the results from different types of research like qualitative and quantitative or interviews and archival research to try and find the confirmation of the claim in more than one source. Respondent validation advocates checking the results of the findings at the source in order to obtain more confidence (Silverman 1993).

Ethical issues in a social research are probably one of the most problematic and controversial. “How may or should we decide or determine what is morally right for a certain agent... to do, or what he morally ought to do in a certain situation?” (Frankena 1973, 12). As every individual has its specific understanding of the subject there is a big chance that implications might arise.

There are three basic ethical principals that should serve as guidance for every research. They include: respect for persons, beneficence and justice. While they address interconnected, but different issues like protection of person’s autonomy, avoidance of harm and fair distribution of benefits and burdens of research, relevance of each of these points vary based on the type and nature of the research (NCPHSBBR 1978).

In order to materialize the three basic principles mentioned above the following practical applications are identified: informed consent, assessment of risks and benefits and selection of subjects (NCPHSBBR 1978). The principal aspect in this is probably the first issue considered to be the guiding norm when establishing relationship between the researcher and the respondent. Implications mainly arise when the obligations defined by the given aspect are violated. Another interrelated issue is the protection of privacy and confidentiality, which is also central to majority of respondents (Kimmel 1988).

As the research included quite contentious issues of recent past of the country with majority of people referred to still active in different areas and the issues still maintaining importance and often also controversy the decision was to avoid mentioning particular names as requested by the respondents. When having their approval citations were also made. Respondents were informed in details concerning the nature and aim of the research and the role of the interviews for the

entire process. Upon their appeal some of the statements were removed from the interview or as agreed presented without specifying the source.

#### **4.4 Limitations**

Major limitation of the research was the narrow timeframe available as the schedule of the program itself is quite tight. Three weeks were not fully enough to talk to all representatives of the movement as some of them had quite busy agendas. In some cases telephone interviews were used when it was not possible to meet the interviewee personally. Due to time limitation it was not possible to explore the rural part of the Georgian environmental movement in depth. This can be quite a good option for the future research as will be recommended below.

Another problem was the fact that the research period directly coincided with the parliamentary elections in Georgia. This is always quite a busy time in the country's life and a lot of people are involved in campaign activities and rallies including those of interest to the research. What is more, following the announcement of the preliminary results of the elections, dissatisfied with the outcome opposition parties held a big protest demonstration affecting the overall situation in the capital.

In a conclusion it should be underlined that due to cooperation and assistance of the representatives of the Georgian environmental movement large amount of data was gathered. Usage of the flexible and comprehensive combination of theoretical and practical aspects of methodological research enabled to come up with interesting outcomes and results.

## 5. Historical overview

In order to better understand the nature of the Georgian environmental movement it is important to review the recent history of the country. No details will be covered as it is not relevant for this particular study, but the attempt will be made to highlight some of the aspects that are considered important for the emergence of social movements.

Georgia is a small country in the South Caucasus, with the area of 69,700 square km and the population of 4,630,841 (CIA 2008). It is worthwhile to note from the very beginning that country's history for more than 2000 years of existence is mainly the struggle to retain the identity and to basically survive. Country has suffered from almost all major conquests and wars that have taken place on the continent throughout the centuries. Situated on a strategically important area and serving as a natural bridge between east and west the country has always been hugely important for any empire or conqueror in order to progress further (see Appendix: Map of Georgia). This specific aspect is underlined in order to emphasize the fact that due to permanent struggle with different enemies the political, economical, social progress in the country was significantly behind compared to its western counterparts. It can even be stated that the fact of loosing the sovereignty in the beginning of 1800s and becoming the part of Russian Empire had some positive linings with this regard. It is clear that forceful unification with other country is a tragedy for any nation state, but for Georgia it meant the commencement of the relatively peaceful period, when it became possible to concentrate the attention on social, economic and political issues including education, healthcare etc. As a result by the end of 1800s quite strong Georgian intelligentsia emerged, promoting progressive ideas in the country and advocating country's independence (Vachnadze and Guruli 2006).

This period is also highlighted for one additional reason. Second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century is the period when a prominent Georgian writer and poet Vazha-Pshavela was active on Georgian cultural scene. He is by all means the very first writer who made nature the central part of his work (Vachnadze and Guruli 2006). Even today, more than a century later environmentalism in Georgia is still somehow associated with his name. Many



quotes from his poems or stories are posted in the institutions that deal with environmental issues. They were observed in the Forestry Institute or Environment Protection and Ecological Engineering Sub Department of Georgian Technical University during the interviews. He was definitely the first Georgian who tried to draw people's attention to how humans exploit and greedily consume components of nature. Plants and animals in his works all have the same feelings of happiness and sadness as humans do. As he was living in the mountainous region of the country, which is one of the most beautiful and untouched areas, he himself was well aware and familiar with the things he wrote about. His influence is especially big on the younger generation, as some of his stories and poems are part of the educational program and young Georgians think about the human and environment interaction for the first time only after reading them at school. Therefore, the name of Vazha-Pshavela somehow serves as a justification for ordinary Georgians to proudly state that the nation has long been concerned with destructive effect people have on the environment and that love of nature is embedded in each of them. However, quite a few examples can be provided from the recent history of the country that can easily prove the opposite.

20<sup>th</sup> century was a turbulent period in the world history in general. Georgia in particular went through many different and mainly hard times. The sequence of events moved in a type of a circle: the century started and ended with regaining the independence first in 1918 and then in 1991. The first independent Georgian state was short lived. The country was annexed to be made the part of the FSU for almost 70 years. Then, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Georgian state reappeared on the political map again (Vachnadze and Guruli 2006). These are the landmark events, but there were other important occurrences in between. The country suffered heavily from both World Wars, but what should be specially underlined are the events of collective action that can be perceived as the pre stage of social movement emergence. The fact that in spite of oppressive Soviet dictatorship, people managed to unite and to express their anti government ideas, highlights that quite viable democratic concepts existed in the ordinary population. One of these events was the protest demonstration of 1956. It was triggered by the strong and often insulting criticism of Stalin that was promoted by the new Soviet government. The discontent of Georgians resulted from the fact that this criticism and all other negative things of his political career were mostly attributed to Stalin's Georgian nationality. Soviet government severely punished the

participants of the demonstration. They were attacked by the military forces and as a result around 150 people were killed. The following crackdown on participants increased the number of victims, which the government hid and deliberately did not publicize (Vachnadze and Guruli 2006). This event is also important because it is largely viewed as the starting point of national liberation movement in Georgia and due to close ties with the environmental movement it is relevant for the research. Another event that should be mentioned in line with the protest of 1956 is the demonstration of 1978, when again Georgian students gathered to this time express their discontent because of the fact that new Soviet constitution deprived Georgian the status of the state language. The situation resembled that of the 1956, but luckily this time Soviet government decided to avoid military intervention and agreed to return the disputed status to the language (Vachnadze and Guruli 2006). This points out that the strength of civil society elements in Soviet Georgia was gradually increasing.

By the end of 1980s Georgian national liberation movement was probably one of the strongest in the entire FSU. Various new political organizations emerged mostly advocating separation from the Union and restoration of independence. Unstable political situation and the elite manipulation also sparked ethnic problems in the autonomous republic of Abkhazia. Abkhaz separatist demanded separation from Georgia and unification with Russia. Georgian students and political parties once again took to the street to protest against these activities. Their major demand now was country's independence. The event ended up with bloodshed in April 1989 as Soviet army once again used force against peaceful protestors (Vachnadze and Guruli 2006).

However, the processes in the Union were already irreversibly leading to its collapse. In 1991 Georgia was among the frontrunners between the republics to declare its independence. Nevertheless, the new government had huge problems from the start. Ethnic tension was increasing. Apart from Abkhazs South Ossetians also declared their intention to separate from Georgia. There was no integrity within the country as well. Many forces were accusing existing heads of the state in totalitarianism, when opposing ideas were violently rejected increasingly resembling the Soviet rule (Zurcher 2007). This civil confrontation finally resulted in civil war that lasted for several months and in the end the first democratically elected government of the country was overthrown. The new government inherited all of the problems that its predecessor

faced. It had to manage military activities in three different locations: South Ossetia, Abkhazia and the civil confrontation that still continued in several rural regions of the country. Even though the latter ended up by the defeat of the supporters of the former government the two separatist regions broke away from the country (Slider 1997). Both conflicts are still unresolved serving as the major deterrent for Georgia on its way to further progress and development.

The final event that should be mentioned in the historical overview is the so called Rose Revolution of 2003. Fortunately, this time the change of government was peaceful. Following the parliamentary elections thousands took the street of the capital to protest against the results that were widely recognized as rigged. The existing government stepped down and was once again replaced by the new (Vachnadze and Guruli 2006).

As the overview presented above clearly demonstrates that Georgia has undergone many problematic events throughout its history. The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been one of the most dramatic with this regard. During the last 15 years the country has changed its government three times and these changes haven't always been nonviolent. What is more, two ethnic conflicts are still unresolved creating the atmosphere of fear and instability, especially in the regions of the close proximity. These are the settings that Georgian environmental movement emerged in and continues to operate. It is undisputable that all of the events described above had their huge influence on the nature and character of the movement and this influence has not largely been positive.

## 6. Outcomes

In an attempt to present the evolution of the Georgian environmental movement in a historical perspective more information is provided on the events that played important role in the process. As it is possible to argue based on the study specific feature of Georgian movement is that it is more event oriented rather than concentrated on the idea of environmental protection. Certain cases spark the wave of protests that result in increased attention to the environment and the consequent revival of the movement. The general trend, however, is that following the huge popularity and support of the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s the movement is declining with relatively chaotic signs of revival, which are mainly responses to certain activities of the state or other parties.

### 6.1 How it all began

Georgians have long developed special relationship to the nature. The reason for that is mainly the feeling of pride every citizen has because of the natural beauty of the country. This is not the perception of Georgians only. Caucasus, including Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and the republics of North Caucasus, is one of the 25 biodiversity hotspots, emphasizing the fact that value of the region is internationally recognized (Zazanashvili *et.al* 1999). Prominent Georgian poet of 19<sup>th</sup> century Vazha-Pshavela and his career is still often cited to backup the claim that environmentalism is embedded into every Georgian. This, however, can be challenged. What Georgians do to preserve this precious gift can become a topic of a heated discussion and that is where the environmental movement and the idea of nature protection come into the discussion.

When asked about the beginning of the environmental movement in Georgia majority of the respondents interviewed in the framework of the research all as one went back to 1989 and the event when following the protest leaded by the emerging Green Movement the construction of the large hydro power plant (HPP) of Khudoni was stopped. This and other events of the smaller scale attributed to the same period are largely regarded as the first successful steps that rising the Georgian environmental movement took.

The history of Khudoni and the controversy that still surrounds the issue will be further discussed below a bit later, but now the Geographical Society of Georgia should be mentioned. Some of the respondents named this particular organization as the very first group in Georgia that was dealing with things that at some extent have quite strong links with the environment. Established back in 1850 as the Caucasus branch of Russian Imperial Geographical Society it continued to exist throughout the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century persisting the turbulent changes in the country's government and the wars (Buttimer 2000). The group gained the prominence right from the establishment back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most famous events of the early days were the two expeditions on Mkinvartsveri (the highest mountain peak in Georgia) in 1923, with active involvement of women, which was rare at that time. The event is widely seen as the birth of alpinism in the entire FSU. The contribution of the Society in increasing the scientific knowledge about Georgian nature in general is truly significant. This is acknowledged by the fact that majority of its members have been granted awards and prizes at many different levels and the Society itself became the member of International Geographical Union (Gigineishvili 2000). However, what should be noted about the Society is that it has been a typical scientific entity mainly concerned with geographical and cartographical studies and not with human environment interaction as has been the trend throughout the FSU. The current direction in geography in general is putting more emphasis on environmental research (Buttimer 2000) and the Society is evolving in that direction, but its input is mainly scientific publications and educational programs among school children and university students. However, this particular Society, the Department of Biology of the State University of Georgia, Institute of Geophysics and many other scientific institutions of the Soviet period made an important contribution to the movement mainly by raising the generation with sufficient educational background and practical experience (Simonidze pers.comm.).

By the end of 1980s several events took place that resulted in mobilization of environmental activists in Georgia. First was the big demonstration of Georgian State University students in 1988 who were demanding the relocation of military polygon of Soviet troops from the neighborhood of the Davit Gareji museum/reserve (Vachnadze and Guruli 2006). Davit Gareji is a monastery complex dated back to the first millennium established by one of the Syrian Fathers who had an important influence on the cultural and religious life of Georgia. The polygon was

severely damaging the monument that is one of the most valuable and important sight in that particular part of the country (Vachnadze and Guruli 2006). As historical and cultural heritage is an extremely sensitive topic to every Georgian the young student did not have difficulty finding sentiments among ordinary population.

Another issue of big importance regarding the mobilization of green groups inside the country was the mass protest opposing the construction of the Trans Caucasus Railway line that would link Russia and Georgia by going over the Greater Caucasus Range. In the same 1988 the government abandoned the plan as the pressure from people was too high (Jones 2006).

One of the respondents, Mr. Revaz Arveladze the President of Georgian Academy of Energy recalled another event when construction of 500 kV electricity transmission line was stopped in Abkhazia that would link Enguri HPP to Adleri Station. The background for the opposition was the harmful influence of the magnetic field from the lines. But as Mr. Arveladze stated all these was considered by the project and the necessary distance from the residential areas was maintained. The move was somehow associated with the separatist aspirations of Abkhaz ethnic groups that did not want additional economic ties with Georgia as they were aiming for independence. The line that was very important for the stability of Georgian energy system was never constructed. The attitude was destructive and violent, neglecting any attempt of negotiation. As Mr. Arveladze recalled: “When we arrived and tried to talk with them [Abkhazs opposing the construction], we had to literally flee. We hardly managed to get into the helicopter. They were almost chasing us with wooden clubs”.

The Khudoni HPP is on the other hand a completely different story. First of all the scale of opposition in this particular case was much bigger and what is more problematic the construction had already been in progress for around ten years by the time the protests climaxed. A lot of controversy still surrounds the case and more insights will be provided.

The construction itself started in 1979. The plant was designed to be located on the Enguri River, which is one of the biggest in Western Georgia. The plan of Khudoni also included the construction two other HPPs of a smaller scale upstream of the river. By 1979 another hydro

power plant (Enguri HPP) was already completed and operating downstream of the river. The overall plan was to fully utilize the hydro potential of the Enguri River (MOE 2008a).

As has already been mentioned both HPPs (existing Enguri and planned Khudoni) are located on the same river, which flows from high mountain of Caucasus (Samegrelo – Zemo [Upper] Svaneti region of Georgia). Svaneti is a unique place in the country. People of Svanti - the Svans - are quite different from the rest of Georgian population. They have their own language and traditions of the old times are quite well preserved there. The architecture and the nature of the region are also unique. People there already had negative attitude towards HPPs due to the completed Enguri HPP complaining that the great river [Enguri] was turned into the huge pool greatly increasing the humidity in the entire region. The crops and the health of people suffered a lot as a result. Svans were confident that Khudoni would be another huge disaster and if the other two smaller HPPs were also built this would mean wiping out the Svanti altogether (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2007).

Construction of large dams in Georgia was quite intensive throughout the entire Soviet period. The country is quite rich in hydro resources and this makes the HPPs and also large irrigational or drinking water dam establishment quite attractive. Thus, by the end of 1980s there were quite a few sites in Georgia that suffered due to large dams. These problems are not unique to this country, many regions of the world have experienced similar difficulties, but in this particular case it was the Soviet regime that emerging green groups blamed. As Mr. Anzor Chitanava the former Director of Hydroproject (the entity responsible for the design, feasibility studies and the construction of the dams in Georgia, including Enguri and Khudoni) noted the groups were protesting against all hydro facilities, but as Enguri and others were already completed, their major focus was oriented towards Khudoni. What he specially underlined was the Soviet construction attitude – the attitude of conquering and taming the nature. This often meant selection of sites that were of high risk due to complex geological conditions and accessibility. It was exactly the case with Enguri. He even stated: “All western specialists that I have visited the HPP with openly stated that they would have never dared that [construction of Enguri]. It was possible due to incredible concentration of labor only doable in the FSU.” Landscape around Khudoni is no less complex.

The construction of the HPP was stopped due to the big protests from the students, intelligentsia, population of Svaneti and other groups. The leaders of the protest were mainly the representatives of the group that later became the Green Movement of Georgia. However, the protest demonstrations were also widely used by the national liberation movement representatives to voice their political requests. To better understand the situation with regard to the Khudoni HPP the representatives of energy sector of Georgia were also questioned to compare their standpoint to attitude of environmentalists. They all stated that Khudoni was the reason to mobilize around as the environmental movements were generally on the rise in the entire FSU (Chitanava pers.comm.). What people from energy sector specially underlined was the aggressive and destructive attitude of those opposing the construction. They simply rejected every attempt of the designers and the energy specialist to negotiate and to try and come up with the solution acceptable to all parties. When they tried to address the crowd on one of the demonstrations the reaction was quite negative and even violent (Arveladze pers.comm, Chitanava pers.comm). The problem with Khudoni was that the construction was already in progress by the time protests climaxed and the stoppage without proper conservation activities would result in huge environmental damage that became the case in the end. However, the opposition was so strong that the state officials had no choice, but to consider it. What they did was to stop the construction until the additional research was completed that would further support the idea that construction was reasonable and mitigation measures were adequate. However, as the strength of the Green Movement of Georgia increased they finally achieved the adoption of the state decree permanently closing down the construction (Chitanava pers.comm).

Mr. Chitanava also noted the fact that the Khudoni HPP has become quite prominent outside the FSU. He recalled his visit in Austria to attend the Large Dam Congress where the green NGOs while expressing their negative attitude towards the dams held the posters highlighting the stoppage of Gabčíkovo - Nagymaros and Khudoni HPPs construction together. The writings on the poster were in Georgian also. Mr. Chitanava noted that this event was a kind of a demonstration that all green uprisings that took place in the FSU and the Central and Eastern Europe were quite similar in character.



Khudoni was stopped with no money issued from the central government of the FSU for conservation purposes as they thought it would be a waste of resources. They proposed to fund the continuation of the construction, but refused to give anything for conservation. The Union shortly collapsed and the beautiful area of Svaneti is still on the brink of ecological catastrophe as nobody came back to abandoned Khudoni site because of lack of funds and many other problems that emerged in the newly independent Georgian state. Mr. Chitanava also noted that even those people who were strongly complaining against the construction changed their minds quite soon. As he recalls the two of the most prominent leaders of the national-liberation movement visited the Hydroproject to try to find possibilities to renew the construction. They openly stated that Khudoni was a reason to mobilize the people. They needed it to fight the communist regime in the country. Even the most important representative of Georgian Green Party and the true leader of the environmental movement in the country Mr. Zurab Zhvania, later the Head of the Parliament of Georgia and the Prime Minister openly stated in the televised interview that Georgia suffered a lot because Khudoni was not completed and stopping it as it happened was a mistake (Chitanva pers.comm.).

The issue still retains the controversy. The most problematic with regard to the Khudoni HPP has been the disappearance of the village Khaishi often referred to as the gate of Svaneti. It is the administrative center of the area and if the village is flooded around 10 other smaller villages will also be forced to resettle as they are closely tied to the center. Older generation is extremely sensitive to the issue as the area has been the home of their ancestor over many generations for several centuries. Giving up their homes, religious sites and the cemeteries of their fathers and grandfathers is totally unacceptable to them (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2007).

Speaking of energy potential of the HPP and the possible benefits to Georgia, it should also be mentioned that the plant was designed and planned to fit into the energy system of the FSU. It is the so called peak plant meaning that the electricity generated was intended mainly for export in the North Caucasus republics of the FSU and not for the local consumption. The reason is that for the period when the electricity generation on the Khudoni HPP is the highest Georgia already has necessary electricity from existing sources (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative

2007). However, economic potential of the plant is quite big as it can generate important revenues by exporting electricity into the neighboring countries.

The Soviet attitude to the projects as Khudoni was to master the nature, to tame it and bring it under control. The slogan on the construction site erected by the Communist Party officials is a good demonstration of the above mentioned. It reads as follows in Russian: “Enguri, we will once again conquer you”. What is seemingly interesting is the inscription that Svans made after the construction was stopped: “Enguri, break irons and enjoy your century old way” (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2007). And the sentiments of locals are probably the easiest to understand among difficult political and national twists in the story. They suffered the most as were resettled from the mountainous region to the semi desert. The accommodation they were provided was far worse compared to what they expected. And after the stoppage many of them returned to rebuild their old homes (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2007). Now they are in a very awkward situation. The government of the country once again revisited the idea of finishing the HPP. Number of international organizations including the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) are involved in the research and preparation of the construction. Svans are complaining that they have neither been informed about the intention nor asked of the standpoint. Having experienced the hardship of resettlement they no longer want to go through the process again. The Ministry of Energy is however following the plan and the recent news has been the commencement of the public hearing of Environmental and Social Impact Assessment of Khudoni HPP (MOE 2008b).

NGOs closely watching the development of the events with this regard are quite skeptical about the outcome. Frequent changes of possible investors and international partner organizations, reluctance of the Ministry officials to be transparent and to cooperate makes them think that Khudoni will once again turn into a big problem for the country (Kochladze pers.comm). No matter how the events unfold, there is no doubt that up till now this particular HPP has already left a significant footprint on the Georgian environmental movement. It can even be said that it mobilized and connected different green groups around the country. After talking to both sides – those supporting and opposing the construction – it becomes obvious that mistakes have been made by them all. The biggest of them was probably stopping the construction without ensuring

that conservation activities were carried out. Former head of Hydroproject even argued that 18 year of negligence brought more harm to the region then the completion of the plant would have caused. He is strongly convinced that unless the HPP is completed it will not be possible to avoid the natural disaster in the region as many irreversible processes have been started due to the unfinished construction. The lack of cooperation and often authoritarian way of decision making still widely practiced in the country created the barriers that would have been easy to overcome if the information was freely available and people, civil society and the government cooperated more. It is easy to effect sentiments of ordinary Georgians by reminding them the cold and dark night of the 1990s, when no gas was supplied from Russia, country's energy system was collapsed and Khudoni was often remembered. However, as has already been mentioned this is more a commercial plant oriented at export in current Georgian conditions, which does not necessarily mean that once Khudoni is there country's internal demand will be duly met. Thus, those still opposing the construction claim that huge amount of money that is needed for the completion of construction can definitely be better utilized by promoting cleaner sources of energy like wind, energy efficiency activities or others (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2007). The story of Khudoni is by far not finished yet. It has been dubbed as the never ending or the permanent by the CEE Bankwatch Network and the Green Alternative report and this is true. It can also be suggested that Khudoni has the potential to play an active role in the revival of fading the Georgian environmental movement depending on how the preparation and the construction process itself runs.

## **6.2 First years of independence**

All the events that described above took place in late 1980s before the collapse of the FSU. As has already been noted in 1991 Georgia officially declared its independence and the newly emerged country had all the inherited problems, but also many opportunities to start a new chapter in the history.

Hopes of green future of Georgia were truly high and so were the expectations. The Green Movement of Georgia was the first non governmental organization that was founded in the

country in 1989. As Ms. Rusudan Simonidze Executive Director of the Greens Movement of Georgia/Friends of the Earth Georgia recalls Ms. Tamar Chikovani German of Georgian origin and the representative of German Greens advised the Georgian colleagues to get more actively involved in the politics. As a result the Green Party of Georgia was founded in 1990. The party became involved in the political life; where as the Green Movement of Georgia retained its NGO status and was oriented towards civil activities. However, the ties and cooperation between the Party and the Movement have been and are still close (Simonidze pers.comm.). They even have offices in the same building – their very first office that they were forced to live and the current headquarters.

The Green Party was well accepted due to their popular protests and their leader Mr. Zurab Zhvania that was mentioned above was emerging as an important and influential political figure. The motto of the party is also interesting. They have been advocating ecology, democracy and non-violence. The Green Party participated in the very first elections held by the first government of Georgia in 1990 in the block "Freedom", but did not have a representative in parliament. However, the party was gaining strength and in 1992 after taking part in the elections alone they won 9% of votes and 12 parliamentary seats. This was probably the single major electoral success of the party. In 1995 they participated in the elections together with Citizen's Union and had 4 representatives. Since then the party has been on the decline, mainly because the leader Mr. Zhvania and the key members like Mr. Zubar Nogaideli, Mr. Gia Baramidze and others left the Greens to join the presidential party the Citizen's Union. Ms. Nino Chkhoadze long time Minister of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia (between 1995-2005) started her career from the Green Party also being one of the members of the party's political committee. She also left the party to join the government (ICCC 1998). To better understand the scale of loss that the Green Party of Georgia suffered as a result of losing these key players it is worthwhile to provide short information about their consequent careers. Mr. Zhvania is one of the most prominent figures in Georgia's recent history. He was an influential person throughout his entire political career. Some of the key positions he held include the Head of the Parliament, the State Minister and before his tragic death in 2005 the first Prime Minister of Georgia. Zhvania is widely known as a person who contributed the most to the democratic development of the country especially supporting civil society institution and free media (GOG 2008a). Mr.

Nogaideli should be noted as well. He held quite important state positions as well including the Deputy Head of the Parliament, the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister of Georgia (the last state post he held before retiring in 2007 due to health reasons) (GOG 2008b). As for Mr. Baramidze he has been the State Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration since 2004. Before that he was the Member of Parliament several times and the Minister of Defense of Georgia (GOG 2008c). All these people were the core of the Green Party before and their successful political careers after leaving the Greens highlights that the loss was very serious and it immediately reflected on party's popularity.

There was no Ministry of Environment in Georgia during Soviet times. All that existed was the Nature Protection Society and the Nature Protection Committee that at some extent dealt with nature protection issues. What should be underlined here is the fact that many different governmental entities had overlapping duties with regard to the environmental protection. All this in the end resulted in complete negligence from every side as everybody responsibility turned out to be nobody's responsibility in the end. The first government of independent Georgian republic established the Ministry of Ecology and Mr. Davit Nakani was the first Minister. As Mr. Revaz Chagelishvili the former Deputy Minister recalls the period was not easy. The old Soviet serotypes were destroyed and the new foundation was built. The major attention at the Ministry was directed toward the formation of legislative basis as it was largely seen the starting point. The other priorities included introduction of fees on usage of natural resources, incorporation of environmental aspects into planning of economic, industrial, energy etc. activities and creating stable control mechanisms. The most problematic was dealing with the Soviet mentality deeply rooted in the understanding of individual citizens. As Mr. Chagelishvili emphasized: "In Soviet times all that was not created by human labor was regarded as free. Therefore, nature and natural resources were largely seen as something that one can use without any limitations". Special attention was paid to the creation and expansion of protected areas. One of the significant steps in that direction was the commencement of works aimed at establishment of Borjomi-Kharagauli Nation Park. International organizations as for example World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) were actively assisting all these processes. The newly established Ministry identified all major problems that country's environment was facing and started to develop necessary mechanisms to overcome them. The key priorities for that time included the protection of forests, biodiversity,

water, soil and air, technical modernization of operating plants/factories, management of natural disasters, raising awareness among population etc. (MOEANR 1993).

However, the events that followed had a huge negative impact on the developments planned by the Ministry and the environmental protection in Georgia in general. Firstly, the newly elected government of the country started to move away from its democratic aspirations. Even though they actively used the civil society concept for their struggle against the communist regime, after coming to power pursued the policy that was equal to dictatorship thus suppressing and slowing down the development of civil society (Parrott 1997). In Georgia it was only the political parties that quickly mushroomed following the independence. Other elements were lagging significantly behind with some positive trends emerging only in the new millennium (Slider 1997).

The negative developments continued. The civil war and the ethnic conflicts that broke out one after another distracted the normal process of building the state. For the Ministry of Environment for example it had two major effects. First and probably the most devastating was that the building of the very first Ministry with all the documents and the materials burned as a result of the military activities in the center of Tbilisi during the civil war. It was almost impossible to rescue anything from the building (Chagelishvili pers.comm.).

The entire 1990s especially the first half of it is mainly associated with war and destruction in Georgia. The old Soviet system was no longer there and before anything new could be created fight for power and for separation began. Economic crisis, high rate of crime, weak or non existing law enforcing bodies, widespread corruption, that is what Georgia got together with independence. Everything in the state was in hands of military or insurgents. Talking about the environment and nature protection was useless as state was unable to serve its basic functions like protection of human lives and rights (Zurcher 2007). Illegal logging became a huge problem of that time both for commercial and for individual purposes. Severe energy crisis left nothing else to population but to go out into the forests and cut trees of enormous ecological importance. Due to lack of control some were selling timber abroad. There is really nothing much to be said about the environmental movement of that period as everything in the country was about the survival only.

War itself directly affected the state of environment. Military activities, especially in Abkhazia, were quite intensive. Forest and vegetation cover were significantly damaged mainly by the bombardment and shelling. What is more, even after the ceasefire the minefields still remain in number of areas representing potential hazard for humans as well as for fauna. Noise and pollution resulted in habitat destruction and consequent change in traditional ways of dwelling and migration of species (UNEP 2002). As the breakaway republics are still outside the control of Tbilisi the state of environment there is also not regulated and researched by Georgian institutions. Based on unofficial information the situation is very serious especially in Abkhazia. Due to lack of control and enforcement illegal logging of important and valuable sub tropical forests is flourishing. What is more, due to construction activities the sand mining along the seashores is carried out with total negligence of environmental concerns threatening the beautiful beaches of the Black Sea in that areas (Simonidze perss.comm).

War devastated country's economy and the negative effects are still felt. Some argue that the unresolved status of these conflicts is continuing to influence not only the economic status of the country, but also the social aspects in the state. Only after the final and peaceful settlement can Georgia think about the other issues including the formation of democratic civil society (Chkhartishvili *et. al.* 2004). To sum up, the years of war and conflicts devastated the country so much that everything had to be started over, including the formation of elements of the environmental movement.

### **6.3 Revival**

Even though both ethnic conflicts ended up with an unresolved status and the regions are up till now de facto independent meaning that Georgian central government is unable to control them and as a result of the civil war the first democratically elected government of Georgia was violently overthrown those who came to power tried to normalize the situation and to bring the country back to the road of democratic development. The second half of the 1990s saw the relative normalization of situation and certain positive signs emerged.

As a result of the activities undertaken by the state some economic revival was observed and the development projects started to emerge. The country was still in severe economic crisis and any opportunity of attracting foreign investments was seen as crucial. Consequently, environmental considerations slowly became the second priority. Interestingly, this particular approach of the state and the controversial projects that were started caused considerable revival of the environmental activities and the movement in general. Of course what also helped was more or less stable situation in the country when the disputes were no longer settled using force as was the case before. The mobilization of the movement mainly happened around the development projects seen as potentially harmful for Georgian environment. Two projects considered to be the most important ones from economic as well as from environmental perspective will be analyzed in more details in order to better understand the specific features of the movement revival of that particular period.

The first case is the construction of Kulevi Oil Terminal. Generally speaking, oil developments were identified as a priority by the country's government to ensure the maximum utilization of Georgia's potential to serve as a transit corridor between east and west (Kochladze 2002). Providing the intensified interest of the western countries and companies to the Caspian oil reserves Georgia found itself in quite a good position to get involved into the projects linked with transportation of oil and gas from Azerbaijan to the Europe. The very first project of this type was the so called Western Route Export Pipeline (WREP) and the Supsa Oil Terminal on the Black Sea coast. These facilities were designated to transport the early oil from Caspian oil fields to the west. The construction activities on WREP and the terminal started in 1996 and were completed in 1999, when the first tanker was filled with oil at Supsa. The WREP is mainly the refurbished old Soviet time pipeline that required rerouting and replacement on some sections (Bayatly 1999). Many concerns have been voiced about the terminal and the pipeline since the announcement of the project. However, the major problem with that regard was related to the security and the capability of Georgian Government to ensure the protection of the pipeline from possible terrorist threats (Aladashvili 1998). Environmental concerns were expressed a bit later, when number of other similar developments emerged and the public became increasingly



confident that the state system, still weak and severely affected by corruption, was hugely unprepared to control and avoid the negative aspects that such huge projects always bring.

After Supsa, Kulevi Oil Terminal became a priority. There still are many unanswered questions about Kulevi. The construction was sanctioned by presidential decree of 1999 and the works started in 2000 with no Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in place. What is more, the site for the terminal was chosen right inside the Kolkheti National Park and in one of the Ramsar sites, without prior notification sent to the Convention Secretariat. The terminal seriously threatens the entire territory of the national park as it requires many different types of activities including creation of transportation infrastructure. The construction of railway that will be used for shipment of oil to the terminal is one of the most problematic aspects of the development as is the expansion and deepening of the marine part of the port to ensure that it can serve larger vessels (Gachechiladze and Staddon 2007). The problem with the Kulevi Terminal is that it infringes number of international and national regulations and puts under question the implementation of projects planned, started and funded by international organizations like the World Bank and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) long before Kulevi Terminal issue was even brought up. Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) financed by the World Bank and the GEF is one of the largest environmental projects of the World Bank with the objective to promote sustainable consumption of resources and protection of the environment. More specifically the program is aimed at expansion of protected areas to ensure the restoration and proper management of wetlands by capacity building of Georgian professionals and development and implementation of master plans (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2001). However, Kulevi Terminal endangered everything, including the up till then successful ICZM project.

NGOs started to mobilize in order to oppose the development and turned to the World Bank with the expectation that they would influence the government and protect the valuable ecosystem of Kolkheti lowland. The Bank did not intervene into the internal affairs of the state. This was widely seen as the Bank's uncovered support for oil development at the expense of environmental degradation and NGOs issued number of official letters to the International Financial Institutions operating in Georgia with the given accusation and the request for action (CEE Bankwatch

Network and Green Alternative 2001). But some see the story from a different perspective. As Mr. Mamuka Gvilava former Director of ICZM project underlined: “The World Bank or any other international donor organizations will never demand something from a state. They just diplomatically smile at the events like Kulevi and try to find the compromise”. The Ramsar Secretariat used the similar approach. The Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia officially informed them of the infamous events only following the revelation of the case at workshop on “Wetlands Conservation in Caucasus” held in Kobuleti, Georgia (Gachechiladze and Staddon 2007). Justification provided by the Ministry was “urgent national interest” as the Convention allows to delete or to restrict the boundaries of wetlands proving it is of vital importance to the country (UN 1971). Urgency of the issue has been seriously questioned as the project was stopped for around two years from 2002 to 2004 due to lack of funds (Kreebs and Joosten 2006). When a development of such a big scale is planned the first priority is to secure source of financing, which was obviously not the case with Kulevi. Project has changed its owners several times and majority of names associated with it are not from the list of well known international oil and gas corporations. However badly planned and implemented the terminal is almost completed and a lot of problems are still there urgently requiring the solution. The most important of them is probably the settlement of relations with Ramsar Secretariat. Even if we assume that the Terminal was of “urgent national interest” the loss should be compensated by designation of another site or by some other method. Compensation package is under development, but the progress is slow. Some argue that it is impossible to find the areas in Georgia that can substitute the one that was lost as all wetlands in the small country are already included in the Ramsar list (Gachechiladze and Staddon 2007). Apart from that secure operation of the Terminal should also be ensured by the development of detained management plans, which is also lagging behind (Gachechiladze and Staddon 2007).

The Kulevi Oil Terminal has demonstrated to Georgian authorities that country’s international obligations should be duly considered before sanctioning similar activities. There no clearance up till now how Ramsar problem will be solved. The negative publicity and the constant attention from NGOs and population affected by the development also showed that unilateral decisions will not always be tolerated. The promises of economic growth and employment made to local communities were mainly exaggerated leaving people with lost livelihoods and nothing in return.

Although Kulevi is largely a lost case for environmentalists that were unable to prevent the terminal from being constructed in the middle of the national reserve it still brought together and revived the environmental movement that back in 1989 was strong enough to stop implementation of the Khudoni HPP. The next large project discussed is probably a good example of problems that a weak and small developing country confronts when facing large multinational corporations and international pressure supporting the oil developments again.

WREP and Supsa Terminal were the so called pilot projects that were aimed at testing the possibility of implementing larger scale developments in the South Caucasus region. Early oil would soon be followed by main export. Therefore the new infrastructure was needed to cope with increased amounts of oil. Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) were planned with the given objective. Both were basically launched after the WREP and Supsa terminal started operation. The first step in that direction was signing of Intergovernmental Agreement in November 1999 between presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey on BTC. What is particularly important and perfectly highlights the huge interest of western especially US government in the project is that the signing was witnessed by that time President of the US Bill Clinton. The agreement mainly confirmed the dedication of each country to the development, construction and operation of the pipelines on their territories. This very agreement was ratified by the Parliament of Georgia in 2000 giving the green light to the commencement of practical aspects of project implementation (Green Alternative 2002). It is hard to argue against the strategic and economic importance of the pipelines for Georgia. BTC/SCP was intended to and had indeed established the country on the energy map of the world. With the estimation that Caspian holds 3-4% of world's oil reserves the interest to the development doubled (Smith 2005). Georgian state officials saw number of possible profits from the projects. While direct revenues were not expected to be huge in the short run, the employment opportunities, international involvement and experience and setting the example of successful investment would all mean a lot more for the country than just cash.

The problems with BTC started in 2002, when the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) of the project was submitted to the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources to obtain an environmental permit. The major concern with this regard was the

Borjomi zone. The pipeline route was selected so that it crossed this ecologically important and fragile area. In case of an oil spill Borjomi Gorge, Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park buffer zone and number of the other existing or planned protected territories will come under threat (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2005). And there's Borjomi mineral water, the largest export of the country that originates in this very region. To leave the revenues coming from Borjomi's 7% share in country's total exports (for 2003) alone the drink is the trademark and the symbol of Georgia especially in the FSU countries. Even the existence of the oil and gas pipelines in the vicinity is already a negative event for the reputation of the drink. An oil spill would mean the end of it altogether as no marketing strategy can sell mineral water coming from oil contaminated underground aquifers (Smith 2005).

The process of fight for Borjomi was really intense. It mobilized many NGOs and representatives of public. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Georgia was among the staunch critiques of the route that would cross Borjomi. They commissioned independent studies of ESIA that were all quite negative. Most criticism was voiced due to the unilateral establishment of the pipeline route and improper exploration of possible alternatives. Assessment of potential damage to Borjomi did not look comprehensive either (Smith 2005, CEE Bankwatch 2006). The Minister of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Ms. Nino Chkhobadze, one of the founders of the Green Movement in Georgia as mentioned above, was severely critical to the selected route and openly stated her discontent. In one of the televised interviews in late 2002 she directly stated that she would never give her permission (Smith 2005). However, the pressure was too high. Turkey and Azerbaijan were already on board waiting for Georgia to give green light. Georgian government had put a lot at stake to withdraw or to start bargaining at that point. US allies in Washington were also negatively perceiving country's hesitation. As witnesses recall the late night or early morning meeting at President Eduard Shevardzade's office settled everything. Ms. Chkhobadze had to give in (Smith 2005). However, the environmental permit issued for the construction was granted only with special conditions. The long list of conditions included all major problematic issues that the Ministry wanted to specially highlight. Ensuring special protection of the Borjomi section was one of the major demands. The negotiations for the permitting procedure and the elaboration of the conditions were also heavily pressured by BTC

Pipeline Company (consortium of companies responsible for the projects) (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2005).

In spite of protest the project was approved and the construction started. Georgian government was determined to do everything it could to secure the 1 billion USD foreign investment and other benefits BTC/SCP was supposed to bring. And as has been mentioned international pressure was too high. This particular development was openly seen as a strategic action of the US government to switch from heavy reliance on Persian Gulf reserves to alternative sources of supply. Azerbaijan, the FSU republic, was an ideal option as the new pipeline would bypath both Russia and Iran (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2005).

It may seem that BTC/SCP is another lost battle for Georgian environmentalists. But this was not the case. The scale of publicity the project attracted and the level of public involvement in the process should be duly assessed and it would be correct to say that the development played an important role in reviving and uniting civil society and the environmental movement in Georgia. The leaders of the campaign against the oil giants were Georgian NGO Green Alternative and its founding member Ms. Manana Kochladze. Her efforts and hard work was duly appreciated as in 2004 she received the Goldman Environmental Price for Europe (GEP 2004). The scale of interest and the corresponding research of the BTC Pipeline Company operations were truly impressive. All its activities were closely monitored. NGOs carried out meetings with effected population in order to help them understand the situation, raise their awareness and educate them on how they could defend their rights. Ms. Kochladze was often announced as the enemy of the state or the Russian spy (a very popular expression in Georgia one can pin to almost anybody if his/her actions are disliked). What is especially remarkable about the Green Alternative is the staunch opposition to the US backed development project. In a country with immature civil society, where funding usually comes from the US agencies, the move was truly courageous (GEP 2004). Even though several law suits of the Green Alternative including the one that questioned the legitimacy of environmental permit issued by the Government of the country, were rejected and the violations of 173 counts of the World Banks lending procedures revealed by the NGOs did not stop the pipeline from crossing Borjomi gorge the campaign conducted was one of the most important and probably the biggest in the history of a young Georgian democracy

(GEP 2004). The nature of the problem itself was also new and unprecedented for Georgia. “Our society is poor and traditional, and was completely unprepared for this”, as Ms. Kochladze said. “Now, suddenly, a big multinational company comes in, handing out jobs, and all kinds of new problems seem to grow out of the thin air” (GEP 2004). With the help of this big civil campaign people got aware of their rights and the obligations of their government has before them. Soviet obedient mentality of ordinary, mainly poor communities was strongly transformed with the effort of the Green Alternative and other NGOs active in the project. As Ms. Kochladze put it herself, the major achievement of BTC/SCP was the substantial increase of public awareness regarding such huge development projects. Based on the obtained experience people in Georgian poor, rural communities are now more aware how to protect themselves and how to deal with the problems that emerge as a result of big projects (GEP 2004).

Protests and activities of the civil society attracted the attention of the new government of Georgia that came into power following the popular Rose Revolution in 2003. Justified by the nonfulfillment of the condition of environmental permit related to additional protective measures for Borjomi area the construction of the pipeline was briefly stopped in July 2004. The event was highlighted with increased pressure on the new government of the country that included the visits of number of high ranking officials from the US and the representatives of the BTC Pipeline Company itself. President of Georgia while acknowledging the importance of the pipeline for the country stressed the priority of health and safety of his people and urged BTC Pipeline Company to comply with the requirements. However, the construction resumption was still sanction in August of the same year without reliable proof that BTC Pipeline Company would adhere to the conditions set forward by the Ministry (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2005).

And there were number of other controversies around the projects. The major issue was the problem with faulty coating that emerged into an international scandal for BP. The new technology utilized by the company for the coating purposes proved to be unsuitable and 26% of welded and coated pipes in Georgia had defects. The information about the problem spread around from media and NGOs that again brought BTC Pipeline Company under attack, especially for the negligence of its obligations before host government. Representatives of the civil society are skeptical about the methods company employed for eliminated the faults. However, the issue

was closed after BTC completed repairing works (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2005).

Other problems with regard to the project implementation included violations of tree felling procedures, threats to cultural heritage, infringements of resettlement policies and compensation for the lost land, grievance mechanism and access to justice, faulty waste and waste water treatment procedures and others. Corruption cases were also frequent (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2005).

However, those who were actually involved in the project talk about the possibility of learning and acquiring experience from the methodology this huge project was managed by the company. As Mr. Anton Goguadze former environmental officer of Amec-Spie Capag s.a./Petrofac International Ltd., joint venture that was contracted by BTC Pipeline Company to actually carry out the construction activities, recalls that no other project in Georgia has ever been carried out with similar high level of organization and planning. “I am not undermining the critique that has been voiced against the projects. All I am trying to say is that even though many international and national obligations were violated BTC/SCP is still a huge step forward compared to the general practice of construction that exists in Georgia. Maybe it was not the best available practice, but it was surely the best that Georgia has seen so far” (Goguadze pers.comm). His colleague, environmental filed officer of the same projects Mr. Archil Dekanosidze continues: “I have personally learned a lot from the projects. It was the best capacity building for me. Most of the people that were employed during the project are now working for the leading construction companies in the country. What Georgia lacks is the experienced and trained professionals – BTC/SCP project provided both for its employees” (Dekanosidze pers.comm).

Despite all the struggle and problems faced on May 25, 2005 BTC was officially inaugurated with the presidents of all three participating countries and many other high ranking officials, including BP president, present at the Sangachal Terminal in Azerbaijan (Socor 2005). In September 2006 BTC was followed by SCP officially marking the completion of the construction phase of the long disputed pipelines (BP 2006).

With the construction completed questions on BTC/SCP still remain. Integrity of the pipeline is under threat due to numerous geohazards observed in number of locations along the route. Security and protection from terrorism and sabotage is also an issue. Environmentalists in Georgia look ahead and already talk about the end of life of the pipeline. Designed for 40 year lifespan BTC/SCP becomes the property of the host governments after the term expires unless otherwise agreed by parties. Georgia with current capacity will be unable to cope with maintenance of the pipeline or its decommissioning (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2005).

However controversial and problematic BTC/SCP wrote an important chapter in the history of the Georgian environmental movement and brought it to another level. Ms. Kochladze's Goldman Price is the international recognition of environmentalism in Georgia. There is a long way to go, but the fact that it is possible to mobilize people in the country for the greener future gives hope that a lot more is possible.

#### **6.4 The latest trends**

Since BTC/SCP no project of similar scale has been planned or implemented. Therefore currently environmental NGOs are mainly concentrated on multiple smaller scale issues actively trying to influence the economic minded governmental officials.

Following the change of government after the popular Rose Revolution the priority of the heads of state gradually, but increasingly became the economic development of the country as quickly as possible. So the new confrontation, namely environmental protection versus economic development acquired more and more significance.

What is mostly criticized by the representatives of the environmental movement and those observing the events that are going on is the attitude of the government that seeks to obtain profits from selling all that is available, including the natural resources. The trend was especially well visible before the November 2007. In November a huge demonstration was organized by the



opposition that was objecting to the changes in the Law on Elections. This demonstration ended up with clashes between the participants and the police and Special Forces. Public attitude was quite critical of the events and the way the government handled them. Therefore, as Journalist Elene Partsvania underlined, state is now trying to limit pushing through unpopular decisions. “Before November 2007 almost daily the press center of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources would announce new auction on some mine, or parcel of forest or anything else that could be sold. Many NGOs mobilized to oppose this, especially alarmed due to the lack of coherence in the activities of the Ministry. Necessary requirements to ensure that the potential investors will not damage the environment and cause depletion of valuable resources are never present in the auction documentation. After November events it has stopped, but I think it is just for a while”, continued Ms. Partsvania.

What is also noted with regard to the new policy of the government is the softening and often even elimination of environmental laws in order to make it easy for businesses to operate. For example water abstraction/discharge permit has been canceled and certain activities like gold mining and oil exploration has been freed from the mandatory EIA (Kochladze perss.comm.). What it also specially underlined is the limitation of public participation in decision making and solving important issues that affect large number of people at a low administrative level unilaterally. Polluter pays principle has come under heavy critique from the economic block of the government with the claim that it is an additional burden for industries (Kochladze perss.comm.).

The case that caused serious confrontation between the government and the environmental NGOs was the auction on logging licenses in forest parcels around the country. Forestry sector, legislative acts around it and the issues with logging have long been among the problematic topics in Georgian environmental sphere. Collisions in laws creating possibilities for corruption to thrive, lack of enforcement capacity and will all have long been cited as the major weaknesses of the Ministry (Green Alternative 2006). However, auctioning the licenses for logging caused a real upheaval. The Green Alternative, the Green Movement of Georgia and Caucasus Environmental Network (CENN) all held a protest demonstration in front of the Ministry building on the day of one of the auctions (NewsGeorgia 2007). The Green Alternative filed a

law suit against the Ministry and issuing of licenses was stopped until the court makes a decision (Kochladze perss.comm.). The case acquired such publicity that even the Public Defender of Georgia made a statement that auctioning the parcels was illegal due to high value of those forests for Georgian biodiversity and it also contradicted the recommendation of WWF Caucasus (NewsGeorgia 2007).

What number of respondents underlined was the lack of understanding among top government officials that this approach is destructive and environmental protection is not only a burden, but can also be profitable. Ms. Neli Verulava, director of the center “Energy Efficiency – 21. Georgia” is actively lobbying the widespread implementation of energy efficiency measures around the country. She is currently working on the Construction Code of Georgia that has come significantly late as many cities around the country, especially the capital are severely suffering due to ill planned new housing developments. “All that we are trying to push though is the inclusion of mandatory energy efficiency requirements in the Code. It is really a very simple modification to the design that does not cause significant increase of construction prices, but generates truly huge profit in the long run. Construction companies are not against it, but refuse to introduce the innovation on a voluntarily basis as they are afraid to lose customers. The government is reluctant to incorporate our demands. One official in the Ministry of Economic Development even said that energy efficiency is an outdated concept (!). I don’t understand why a country that almost totally depends on import of energy carries especially in winter is literally throwing the money out of the window.” (Verulava perss.comm.). The estimations suggest that saving potential from energy efficiency measures can be as high as 600 MW, which is an important figure for a small country like Georgia (Energy Efficiency Center Georgia 2001). Energy and environment interaction still mainly dominates the agenda, with environment and industry probably coming second (Verulava perss.comm).

It is not often perceived as the environment versus economy. Ms. Manana Kochladze thinks that what the government is mostly doing now is good neither for environment nor for economy. If the current trend continues there is a high chance that Georgia will end up with degraded environment and nevertheless poor economy. What governmental officials need to understand is

that sustainability is essential for ensuring long term growth, otherwise all profits will be short lived (Kochladze pers.comm.).

Governmental direction with that regard is different. When looking through the report titled “Main figures and direction for 2009-2012” the only thing that can be found about the environment are three lines stating the importance of improving nature protection system, monitoring and forecast system and implementation of river basin management. Financial, defense and economic issues occupy the rest of the document (GOG 2008d).

With increasingly high emphasis on the negative side of environmental issues in Georgia it would be worthwhile to note some positive developments that are also present in the sphere. What should be specially underlined is the active participation of the country in international treaties and conventions. Georgia is the part of almost all major intentional environmental agreements. The problems with environmental legal system in the country are related to the non existence of sub laws that would ensure implementation of the obligations undertaken by signing of the treaties (UNDP 2005). The most popular topics among the environmentalists include biodiversity related issues. Several big and popular NGOs specialize in that area only, like for example NACRES. Biological farming association Elkana is also linked with nature protection activities by promoting sustainable agriculture among Georgian farmers. Climate change and Clean Development Mechanism projects are also often discussed together with all possible carbon dioxide mitigation measures like energy efficiency, renewable energy etc. A lot of research has been done in the framework of the Second National Communication of Georgia to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). However, as Ms. Manana Shvangiradze, Manager of the Second National Communication of Georgia to the UNFCCC, outlined the NGO sector in that particular area is quite weak.

Some of the major environmental problems in Georgia mentioned by the respondents include first of all loss of biodiversity, water issues including contamination of water bodies, waste water treatment and others, air pollution, waste disposal, land use and soil contamination etc.

The Black Sea is also under increased attention from environmentalists. ICZM Program that has been mentioned above is one of the most influential projects in that area. The National Strategic Action Plan for the Rehabilitation and Protection of the Black Sea is another example of state support to the conservation of this particular marine system (UNDP 2005).

Civil Society and specially NGOs are gradually gaining power. Based on the Regional Environmental Centre (REC) for Caucasus directory there are around 200 NGOs registered in Georgia that operate in the field of environment (REC Caucasus 2004). This is quite a big number providing that Georgia is a small country, but the problem is that not all of the organizations registered are active or represent significant value to the civil society. Major problem is funding as resources are quite scarce and difficult to obtain.

It is worthwhile to briefly mention some of the biggest environmental NGOs that are operating in the country. Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN) should be specifically underlined. Established in 1998 CENN has greatly contributed to the development of the environmental movement in Caucasus in general. Their major contribution is the active involvement in building independent civil society in the countries of the region and promoting cooperation. The mailing list of the Network already has 14 000 subscribers that receive useful information on activities going on in the region. Environmental research and policy, resources management, compliance management, communication and environmental are among the key programs that CENN conducts (CENN 2006).

Aarhus Centre Georgia established in 2005 is another important institution. It is a joint initiative of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia. Centre mainly specializes in the activities aimed at improvement of public participation in decision making and access to environmental information. Aarhus Convention in Georgia faces number of important challenges and the major objective of the center is to facilitate implementation of the Convention (Aarhus Centre Georgia 2007).

REC for Caucasus is another influential organization operating on the regional scale. Apart from local importance, REC provides unique opportunity of networking and cooperation with regard to

transboundary issues. Established within the framework of “Environment for Europe Process” in 2000 it provides unique tool for Georgia to fulfill its objective of European integration. The major programs of the Centre include Information Program, Public Participation Program, Environmental Policy and Local Environmental Action Plan Program, Mountain Program, Education Program, Water Program, Sustainable Development Program. REC Caucasus is one of the major drivers of the development of civil society and NGO sector operating the field of environment with many different types of programs and funding opportunities (REC Caucasus 2007).

International organizations are actively involved in Georgian environmental life. They are the major sources of funding. Greater part of research projects planned and implemented is financially supported by them. Some of the international organizations operating in environmental field include: GEF, UNEP, World Bank, UNDP, European Environment Agency (EEA), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), WWF, European Commission, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), OSCE, EBRD and many others (MOE 2005).

Education and awareness is the part of every report or the plan on the issue of environment in Georgia. But there is nothing especially positive that can be said with this regard. The State Programme on Environmental Education and Action Plan were jointly elaborated in 1999-2000 by the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affairs, but the implementation progress is quite low (UNDP 2005).

There is a considerable interest from the new generation towards the issues related to the environment, especially at the university level, but the capacity of educational organizations is limited. There are no specialized literature on the topics and no coherent programs (Chubinishvili perss.comm). Several NGOs are trying to promote environmental ideas among ordinary citizens, but overall public awareness is very low (Chagelishvili perss.comm.).

As can be observed, the environmental movement has been gradually gaining diversity and changing the tactics from protests to negotiations and lobbying. As the number of NGOs also is steadily increasing and their area of activity widens, more and more issues are paid attention to and researched. However, lack of governmental support and understanding is creating serious barriers for the implementation of environmentally friendly ideas around the country.

## **7. Discussion**

Based on the events that are described with regard to the Georgian environmental movement and the theoretical framework used for the study it becomes possible to define some of the distinctive features that are unique to Georgian movement compared to others operating in the region and in the post Soviet block. The movement in Georgia has gone through multiple events that resulted in its transformation. The process is still continuing. Social movements are constantly one the move, changing characteristics and features as a response to the outside factors (Marx and McAdam 1994). As Georgian state is still largely in the developing stage with significant transformations constantly altering the political scene the movement is also shifting, adapting to the new circumstances.

### **7.1 Social movement theory**

#### **7.1.1 Political opportunities**

Political opportunities are among the most crucial defining factors behind the Georgian environmental movement. It has affected the movement in several different ways throughout its relatively little time of existence and still continues to be the major driving force of ongoing changes.

If we start right from the beginning the emergence of the movement was largely the response to the provided opportunity – the change of the Soviet style of governing the country. The government allowed more and more freedom of expression and the formation of independent environmental organizations throughout the entire Soviet block. The justification behind this was the perception that environment was not a political issue (Steger 2004). The establishment of the Green Movement of Georgia as the first NGO in the country was the reaction to this opening. However, what should also be mentioned is the correlation between the level of tolerance from the government and the power and influence of the movement elements. First the activities were limited to the scientific and academic circles as Geographical Society of Georgia, the Department of Biology of the State University of Georgia, Institute of Geophysics and other similar

institutions. When possibilities emerged, namely the dictatorship softened and more and more democratic elements were tolerated by the state policy, the environmental groups started to voice their concerns more openly. First it was Davit Gareji – a historical monument – that had nothing to do with politics or economy. This was followed by more challenging demand requesting the abandonment of the plan to construct the Trans Caucasus Railway. High voltage electricity transmission line was blocked by the Abkhazs in autonomous republic of Abkhazia. As popular protests were accepted and requests satisfied more and more new issues emerged. For Georgian settings it looks like the public was testing the patience of the government. The requests became more and more ambitious and when the environmentalists managed to stop the construction of the Khudoni HPP that was already in progress for 10 years with lots of investment made and efforts taken their confidence significantly increased. However, when it came to the demands for dependence Soviet response was violent. Attack of military forces on peaceful protestors demanding Georgia's independence in front of the parliament building ended in bloodshed in April 1989.

The compromises the Soviet government made were directed towards the restoration of its popularity among the citizens and restructuring the system without threatening the integrity (Butterfield and Weige 1991). Georgia had a very strong national liberation movement. The popular protests of 1956 and 1978 that mobilized significant number of people highlight that support for independence in general public was quite strong. Starting from 1976 dissidents actively engaged in various activities, but central government was not tolerating their aspirations to separate Georgia from the Union. As a result many of them were jailed (Vachnadze and Guruli 2006). Environmental issues served as a good cover and were powerful tool for mobilization. Therefore, eco-nationalism is probably the best term that describes the nature of the movement of late 1980s and early 1990s. This statement can be further justified. Firstly, it should be mentioned that Georgia by far was not the country with the worst state of environment in the FSU. No major catastrophes occurred in the country as were the cases elsewhere in the FSU (for example disappearance of the Aral Sea or the Chernobyl disaster) (Peterson 1993). Industries represented the major sources of pollution in several large cities of the country, but no big protests have been recorded with this regard. Overuse of pesticides was also problematic, but not to a degree that would spark the public discontent (UNEP 2002). So, the environmental problems were not so



aggravated that would implicitly result in expression of discontent as soon as the possibility was provided. However, as has already been mentioned state of environment is not the sole factor that predefines the mobilization of the movement. In Georgian case it was the national liberation movement that had more influence on rallying the environmentalists than the environmental factors themselves. Protest demonstration to defend Davit Gareji or to oppose the construction of Trans Caucasus Railway or Khudoni HPP were used as a perfect platform by the former dissidents and the leaders of national liberation movement to voice their demands (Chitanava perss.comm; Arveladze perss.comm). For example, mobilization of the opposition to the Trans Caucasus Railway was carried out in the framework of All Georgian Rustaveli Society – the group that later on actively contributed to declaration of Georgia's Independence (Peterson 1993).

If we analyze the Khudoni case separately it becomes clear that it was an event that came under attention due to favorable circumstances. As Peterson underlines, Georgian politicians used it as a “bid for power ... that helped cement their opposition to the local communist leadership” (1993, 225). After occupying the leading posts in the government, these people started looking for the resources to complete the HPP opposition to which brought them to power (Peterson 1993). As the construction was already in progress for 10 years and plant was to be completed in around 3 years most of the damage to the environment was already done. Little attention was paid to the issue of construction conservation. The site was simply abandoned leading to even more damage (Arveladze perss.comm, Chitanava perss.comm, Chagelishvili perss.comm). This points out that it was not only about the environment. Later on even Mr. Zhvania, leader of the protests from the Green Movement of Georgia and strong critique of the very first government of the country for misuse of environmentalism to come to power (Peterson 1993), questioned the correctness of the decision to stop the construction.

It was not only national liberation movement that used the environment for their objectives. Environmentalists also voiced liberation requests as the combination of both was quite effective and powerful. “We believe that the ultimate resolution of all problems is possible only after the full restoration of state independence.” stated Zurab Zhvania. “Georgia ... must always exist independently, in a situation of real equality.” (Peterson 1993, 216).

It should also be underlined that for Georgian settings national aspirations were dominant. Political path of the Green Party of Georgia is one of the highlights of this. As environment and nationalism decoupled after the country regained its independence the popularity of the Green Party steadily declined. This development path is not unique to Georgia. Similar trend was observed all around the FSU and CEE (Pavlinek and Pickles 2000). Loss of key figures to other parties or organizations has also been the general trend (Pavlinek and Pickles 2000). But in Georgian setting disappearance of national aspirations played the key role. Nobody opposed country's new government when they resumed talks on completing construction of Khudoni HPP. People trusted national liberation movement leaders more than other forces that were active on political scene during that period (Chitanava perss.comm, Arveladze perss.comm).

But for Georgia the rapid decline of the movement was also caused by the civil confrontation and the wars in breakaway republics. Even before the war the political settings in the newly established government of Georgia were not open to public participation and civil elements. This attitude has been partly blamed for the civil war and overthrow of the first democratically elected government (Zurcher 2007). In other words the opening that was provided by glasnost and perestroika and the trend of softening the state control on civil society suddenly reversed after the independence and finally disappeared with the military activities. So, Georgian decline in environmental movement is in a way different from what has been observed in CEE or the other states of FSU that have not experienced violent conflicts. Militarization of the state policy and almost 5 year long state of emergency that Georgians lived in, quickly washed away the perception of freedom of speech and right to voice the concerns over the events going on the country that people began to slowly believe in after glasnosts and perestroika.

However challenged the state sovereignty and legitimacy was during the time of those events, the civil society was not capable of serving as an alternative source of power as has been the case elsewhere in similar situations (Dale 1996). The small possibility provided by the Soviet regime was not enough to form a strong civil society. Opening was quite successfully utilized by the national liberation movement for their bid to power. After receiving this power they tried to maintain the control by eliminating all possible sources of opposition. Thus, in the face of all other general factors mentioned above like loss of leadership or the support, it can be assumed

that the first decline of the Georgian environmental movement was more resulted from the lack of tolerance to opposition openly expressed by the first government of Georgia and secondly by military activities that preoccupied every aspect of country's life.

The years of war and severe economic crisis were serious setback to the country and the civil society suffered the most (Chkhartishvili *et. al.* 2004). Nobody would dare to voice the concern on the biodiversity conservation or water pollution because basic human rights were violated daily. Economic hardship and struggle to physically survive made all other problems a low priority. So, the environmental movement firstly lost the support after breaking close ties with national liberation movement and secondly due to war, instability and economic decline.

This was probably the very first stage in the life of the Georgian environmental movement that went into the periphery of country's policy scene until another political opportunity emerged.

Another opportunity was provided after the political situation in the country normalized and positive trends like improvement of national security, relative economic stabilization began to emerge. After peace was restored the unilateral, almost dictatorship management style was no longer necessary and therefore was abandoned. It created yet another opening, similar to what was observed in the run up of the breakup of FSU. However, the environmental movement was unable to revive with the same strength as it once did back in Soviet times. The factors underlined above played the key role there – support and popularity among population was lost and leaders were gone. So, the comeback of the movement was not so powerful and triumphant. “They no longer had a true leader and an excellent manager as Zhvania used to be. His personality greatly contributes to the success of the movement.” (Chitanava perss.comm).

Those who made up the revived movement were mainly new faces, not well known and popular among general public. The leaders that they knew were now engaged in totally different activities. So, the second stage started not with popular protests and mobilization of public, but with activities aimed at movement institutionalization. NGOs revived and started to learn how to live in a democracy rather than fight against communism. Concepts of fundraising, project work etc. acquired importance as was the case elsewhere in CEE and FSU, but a little earlier (Steger

2004). Modern environmentalism was no longer directed towards the loud street protests only. Transformation was progressing and social movement organizations were born from the movement itself (Steger 2004). However, with the increase in number and the lack of funding opportunities the relations between different newly emerged NGOs significantly worsened. This threatened the integrity and unity of the movement and resulted in decrease of its strength and influence.

At that point the opportunity emerged in the face of the popular Rose Revolution. The new government had the potential to restructure its policy and incorporate environmental concerns that were largely discarded by its predecessor. However, the opposite happened. Economic lobbies outcompeted the environmental considerations and the new economic development model of the country mainly focuses on accelerated growth. This is also not unique for Georgia. Economic block and interests are stronger, have more support and are far better organized all around the world (Pickvance 1998), but for Georgian case economic activities and government's full support to them help rally the movement with new force.

What has already been underlined with regard to Georgian movement is its characteristic to mobilize around the new development projects rather than for example clean up activities, restoration or around the idea of environmental protection. That was the case with Khudoni, Trans Caucasus Railway, BTC/SCP, Kulevi Oil Terminal. BTC/SCP was a good catalyst and as the scale of the project was huge affecting wide range of population, the representatives of the movement found it easy to obtain popular support. But this was a different battle – totally different from Khudoni and people fighting it were also different. Although protests and demonstrations were still widely used the major tool in case of BTC/SCP and Kulevi Oil Terminal was the research, monitoring and legal mechanisms, which was a completely new level for Georgia. With Khudoni and the Railway there was only the violent rejection that was not backed up by proper arguments. With time the movement obtained the capacity to first explore and study the issue and then express the concern. What is more, in case of BTC/SCP there was no wild rejection demanding the cancellation of the project. The requests that were voiced aimed at pushing through the adjustments that would make it more environmentally acceptable. This particular project united the civil sector, the government (the Ministry of Environment Protection

and Natural Resources) and the general public. They were all opposing the Borjomi section of the route. However, movement of that time did not represent such threat to Georgian government as it did to the Soviet power, which agreed to waste 10 years of investment and effort at Khudoni just to keep the Greens quiet. So, Borjomi became a victim of economic considerations.

It can still be stated that BTC/SCP was a good opportunity and a perfect capacity building for the Georgian environmental movement on how to deal with big multinational companies and huge development projects. People and civil sector obtained the confidence that they can make a change if they work together with the common goal (GEP 2004). BTC/SCP brought up many interesting problems and concerns that were central not only to that particular projects, but for the country level in general. BP and its construction contractor were heavily criticized for waste management and waste water treatment practices and other similar issues (CEE Bankwatch Network and Green Alternative 2005). However, nobody mobilized to demand review of state's waste management or the waste water treatment policies. Rise of environmental concerns in the country especially in the recent history has always been a response to some action or event. As a result the periods of activity of the movement lasted for quite a short time and faded as soon as the action or event lost their significance.

The new challenge that the movement is currently facing is the relationship with the new state policy and the attitude towards environmental protection. Clear marginalization of the environmental issues in favor of accelerated economic growth is emerging as a new problem. However, this attitude can provide an opportunity for divided movement to unite and pursue the common goal of bringing the environment back to the state's policymaking agenda. Communicating the idea of decoupling environment protection and economic growth as conflicting notions can serve as a key driver in resolving the crisis. At this very stage problems of Georgian environmentalists increasingly resemble those faced by the rest of the world's greens. Addressing it would require combined efforts of many different stakeholders.

### **7.1.2 Mobilizing structures**

Depending on the timing and the stage of development the means utilized by the environmental movement of Georgia for operation varied. No well planned organizational structure, networking or financial tools were used for the activities in the early days. Although there was a close contact with scientific circles, national-liberation movement and sometimes with colleagues outside the country, this relationship was mainly spontaneous, chaotic and did not last for a long time. Financial tools were mostly non existent, especially in the face of economic crisis first in the FSU and later in the independent state. The activities were mainly based on voluntarism.

With the decline of public interest to the movement and the hardship of war alternative ways of existence had to be found in order to ensure the survival. International organizations were mainly seen as an opportunity to guarantee the necessary means for existence. They would provide assistance that was so desperately needed. The importance of networking also became clear and local environmental organizations started to seek contacts outside the country's borders. Regional opportunities were also explored and exploded. Georgian capital houses head offices of number of environmental originations that cover the South Caucasus like CENN and REC Caucasus that largely contributes to improvement of networking.

The Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources, environmental NGOs and international institutions make up the core of movements organizational structure. Scientists and academia are quite weak and often marginalized as they did not fully adapt to the new setting established in the country following the independence. However, their integration into the system is progressing as the research and studies require credible scientific backup.

What should be underlined with regards to organizational structure of the movement is the disappearance of grassroots activities and especially the division between urban and rural environmentalism. Rurally the situation is quite problematic. Only few NGOs have regional offices like for example Greens Movement of Georgia and CENN. People in regions that are mostly in direct contact with nature are seriously limited due to lack of basic awareness. BTC/SCP was a clear demonstration of this fact and only following the active work of civil

organizations in became possible to engage poor communities living along the pipeline route in decision making process.

Grassroots support and activism totally disappeared together with the communist rule. It used to be the basic foundation of the movement in yearly days. However modern environmentalists have lost that direct and active contact with ordinary people. Based on that, some even question the legitimacy of the fact that the NGOs not being close enough to general public represent them on higher levels of decision making.

Financial support is the key issue in the environmental life of Georgia. As the major donors are international organizations and they prefer to fund projects according to their institutional preferences certain issues that are of big local importance area left neglected. Lack of governments support and heavy reliance on foreign assistance further increases the gap between the actual problems and the issues that receive the attention. That was one of the positive sides underlined with regard to the Green Alternative's active campaign against the BTC/SCP pipeline. All the major donors and funding bodies inside the country were in favor of the development, but the NGO still dared to openly voice its concern (GEP 2004).

Financial issues create integrity problem inside the movement as well. When resources are scarce it becomes necessary to compete for them and that establishes the atmosphere of rivalry. While it is good for progress and advancement as the organizations are constantly trying to improve in order to outcompete their contestants it diminishes the idea of cooperation and teamwork. With the powerful economic lobbies and the development minded state policy divided movement elements have tougher time pushing through their ideas and standpoints.

It is obvious that during this 20 year period the movement has come a long way and gradually develops and acquires the clear shape. Some basic principles of the global environmental movement are being incorporated into the Georgian reality, but focus remains narrow and the gap between the movement and the public is not growing smaller.

To generalize the two major aspects namely political opportunities and mobilizing structures have changed throughout the movement history. The distinct differences can be observed between the Soviet and post Soviet movements. As the movement expands and diversifies it becomes increasingly complicated to follow up the trend and make generalizations. This is especially true due to the fact that the civil society and democratic institution in the country are still largely in the process of formation and undergo constant changes. Taking of more consistent trends will be easier as the movement moves to the state of relative maturity.

## **7.2 Issue attention cycle**

As the historical perspective of the Georgian environmental movement has been presented it becomes possible to review the events through the Down's issue attention cycle (1972). The decline of public interest towards the environment has been experienced number of times during the period of existence.

The rise of environmentalism in Georgia was preceded by increase of concern among the scientific and academic circles about the problems that were faced. This is the so called pre-problem stage of Down's, when the concern emerges and the problem is identified (1972). Afterwards sudden eruption of public interest followed, fueled by the overall condition in the FSU and the engagement of other movements active in the country, especially national liberation movement.

The very first decline occurred right after the country declared its independence. Some of the major reasons have already been mentioned above. One of the most important was the separation of national liberation and environmental movements. The national liberation aspirations were achieved, Georgia became independent. Environmentalists had serious difficulties with finding their place in the newly established state, as it was economy that became the priority, not the environment. Euphoric enthusiasm that Down's sees as characteristic feature of the state when the problem is high on the agenda faded quickly as economic consideration strongly prevailed (1972). As has been mentioned this was the case throughout the CEE and FSU after the regime



change (Pickvance 1998), but Georgia experienced sudden drop due to the erupted conflicts that absorbed all public attention and all available resources.

After the revival the events are unfolding with similar scenario. Firstly, as the gap between the public and the environmental movement has increased during the period of relative inactivity environmentalism started to develop among the limited circles. This is the return to the pre-problem stage of Down's – developments before the general public is engaged.

With the exception of BTC/SCP the engagement of public to support the environmental campaigns has not been the case. Most of the movement representatives complain about the low level of awareness (Verulava, perss.comm, Chagelishvili perss.comm, Makharoblishvili perss.comm), but little is done to address the problem.

Currently environmental degradation only comes into the spotlight when some natural disaster is publicized by the media. People start to questions the state's environmental policy, but the issue quickly becomes neglected as soon as some other attention grabbing case appears on TV screens (Partsvania perss.comm). As Dunlap underlines the major attention of movement activists should be directed towards maintaining the high level of awareness among population in order to avoid the lack of attention to environmental issues (1992). This is surely not the case in Georgia and can be one of the reasons why environment is marginalized during the decision making process.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

When assessing something as complex as the environmental movement it is really hard to come up with a recipe that will remedy all the challenges that these diverse social structure faces. However, several general issues can still be outlined and addressed that can potentially play the positive role for the future progress of the movement.

First and one of the most important problems is the decline or even the disappearance of grassroots activism in the movement. This is quite an important basis that has a big potential to

ensure the popular support and the development of environmentalism. During the Soviet times newly established nature protection associations or leagues used to encourage the creation and expansion of voluntary nature and monument protection activities in the country (Steger 2004). Staring the process over can contribute to popularization of the movement among the public.

Another issue is the narrow scope of the movement organizations. As has been underlined above focus is mainly made on particular events and policy decisions and organizations, mainly NGOs, respond to outside factors. There has rarely been the case when certain issue was raised by movement activist without preceding activities from the government officials or businesses. Increase in initiatives and more active engagement in environmental policymaking can be helpful to both government and the civil society.

Rural-urban divide should also be mentioned. As majority of international funding organizations are headquartered in the capital the environmental decision making is totally limited to Tbilisi. Underrepresentation of rural communities and the overall gap between the general public and environmentalists should be addressed. Lack of public participation is also the problem of the state and the issue of successful implementation of number of domestic legislative acts and international conventions like Aarhus Convention.

In order to better explore the subject of rural-urban differences in environmental life of Georgia it would be recommend to conduct further research in that direction. This particular study was limited to analysis of general picture of the environmental movement in Georgia highlighting some of the major events throughout the history. Time limitations did not permit to direct the attention to that specific issue. Quite interesting topics for further research would also include the environmental conditions and problems of the breakaway republics in the contexts of the war and environment. But due to very tense relations and highly unstable situation in the regions personal communication with people there can be risky and dangerous. Obtaining information from other sources is problematic as the contact between Tbilisi and the republics is almost non existent. The analysis of modern environmentalism versus the economic development model of the country's new Government can also be of big value, especially within the sustainable development discourse.

This present study attempted to present the general historical outline of the movement development in Georgia and highlighted some landmark events. As the previous research on the issue is absent, this work can serve as a baseline for more detailed analysis for selected specific topics. The Georgian environmental movement while having the major characteristics common to the FSU and CEE movements demonstrates some particularities that are unique to country's settings. This are mainly resulted from the political and social circumstances that have occurred in Georgia and are not present elsewhere.

## 8. Conclusion

The present research attempted to present the historical perspective of the emergence and evolution of the Georgian environmental movement. Considering the broadness of the topic and the fact that previous research was not conducted in that direction, the study focused on drawing the general picture highlighting some important events in the course.

With the lack of previous research the thesis mainly used the interview results as the data source. Interviews conducted with representatives of the movement and people involved in environmentally important events provided insights to many key issues. As certain events described still retain the controversy standpoints of different actors were obtained to exclude the subjective interpretation. Special attention was attributed to the analysis of Georgia's recent history as it still has great influence on the character and nature of the movement.

Social movement theory was used as an overarching theoretical framework for the analysis. As SMT is a broad concept, that does not limit the research and allows considering all important and influential factors in the life of the movement, it provided a good possibility to characterize this complex and diverse phenomenon. Political opportunities and mobilizing structures that represent the key aspects of STM enabled to make assessment of interaction between the movement and the outside factors influencing it.

The research roughly divided the lifetime of the Georgian environmental movement in two different periods. The first was the Soviet time environmentalist, namely the movement before the collapse of the FSU and the second was the environmentalism in the independent Georgian republic. The analysis of the Soviet time movement revealed many similarities with the like formations operating in most of FSU and CEE countries during the same period. The path of evolution was very much related. Gradual, but steady increase in popular support and seriousness of demands was experienced in all other countries also. All started in scientific circles, firstly limited to studies and the organizations active were the Geographical Society of Georgia, the Department of Biology of the State University of Georgia, Institute of Geophysics and other

educational and research institutions. Gradually public mobilized round the issues of concern, firstly voicing nature and monument protection concerns like saving Davit Gareji Monastery complex and then switching to more ambitious demands like the abandonment of the plan of construction of the Trans Caucasus Railway line and finally the stoppage of the Khudoni HPP. Another important characteristic of the Soviet time environmentalism in Georgia is the strong eco-nationalistic coloring. The ties between environmental and national liberation movements were so close that sometimes it was difficult to make separations. Their demands overlapped and they fought hand in hand. However, those advocating country's independence were still stronger and this effected the environmental movement seriously after the two notions decoupled.

Environmentalism in the independent republic of Georgia had to struggle with various problems right from the very beginning. Firstly, the separation from national liberation movement that came to power affected its popularity. The attitude of the new government was no longer friendly to opposing groups and the idea of economic growth started to emerge as a priority. However, it was the war that had a tremendous effect on the movement and resulted in sudden drop of support among population. This makes the Georgian environmental movement under the new regime different from other FSU and CEE movements that also experienced decline, but mainly due to loss of key figures to other organizations and businesses (Pavlinek and Pickles 2000) or lack of public attention that became extremely preoccupied with new economic and social challenges (Steger 2004).

Loss of leaders was experienced by Georgian movement as well, but the effect was not as devastating as were of the wars and civil confrontation. Majority of very first Georgian environmentalists and the founders of the Green Movement of Georgia, the first NGO in the country, were and still are among the key figures on Georgian policy arena. As a result of their departure to other institutions the popularity of the Green Party seriously suffered and it no longer enjoyed the support of the population.

The post war environmental movement in the country was quite different from what was the case previously. It emerged in the form of social movement organizations that were founded party in response to international assistance and cooperation and partly as an attempt to counterweigh the

economic development policy of the government that was often destructive for the environment. However, the ties with population and their support were no longer as strong as back in the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s. This gap has been negatively affecting the movement ever since. Limitation of decision-making to the capital is another distinct phenomenon that further marginalizes the rural movements and aggravates the existing rural urban divide.

Another important feature of the Georgian environmental movement is the mobilization around the large development projects. These projects serve as a catalyst resulting in unification and active engagement of movement elements. Consequently, the environmentalism becomes a popular topic in the country and attracts the attention of the public, but it only lasts as long the development projects are in the spotlight. After the issue loses significance movement also returns to the periphery of country's social and political life. BTC/SCP was one of the cases that resulted in huge increase in activities of environmental organizations and the consequent rise of public interest. It also contributed to empowerment of poor rural communities living along the pipeline route, but after the project ended the attention declined significantly.

The modern environmental movement in the country more and more resembles its counterparts elsewhere in the world. Important attention is paid to the research and studies, networking opportunities and close relations with organizations outside Georgia are given a high priority. However, the tension is rising due to strong influence of economic block in country's new government. Decisions in favor of accelerated growth are often undermining basic environmental requirements that are perceived as serious threat by the movement organizations. With the lack of funding opportunities and heavy reliance on international organizations the unity inside the movement is weak. Competition for limited resources although contributes to development, but affects cooperation and coordination of activities. Another important problem is the gap between the population and the movement mentioned above. This is reflected in disappearance of grassroots activities and activism in general that limits the possibility of engaging the ordinary citizens in actions aimed at protecting the environment.

Generally, in a young state as Georgia that has been going through many significant changes and facing problems with breakaway republics, weak economy and civil unrest the environmental

movement is heavily affected by outside factors. These effects are not always positive. Some important steps have been made, number of NGOs has increased significantly, involvement in international treaties and environmental policymaking is also high, but overall the movement is still in the early process of formation and has not reached the state of maturity. Certain period of peaceful, stable development is required in order to finally institutionalize the environmental movement in Georgia.

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## Appendix



Map of Georgia with major development projects discussed in the thesis (source: author)