

BIOREGIONALISM

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Summary: The twentieth century, especially its second half, was one of unprecedented rapid change in the Earth's environment. Environmental problems have become global in their scope. Systemic and cumulative degradation has occurred on an unprecedented scale, causing geographically differentiated outcomes that threaten the whole Earth. The idea that the global environment is at risk due to anthropogenic activity, and that something must be done quickly to abate this, is accepted by a growing majority of people across the world. Environmentalist "worldviews" are now more or less mainstream in the academic literature. Environmental problems do not respect the artificial boundaries of nation states as is demonstrated by contemporary phenomena such as global warming and climate change. The emergence of the Green or ecology movement has resulted in attempts to refine or reformulate spatial organization of the world. Traditional conceptions of geopolitical order are statecentric but the green movements try to change our perception of spatial order arguing that country does not form the basis for the organization of social and political life but bioregions. Bioregion is defined in terms of the unique overall pattern of natural characteristics that are found in a specific place. The main features are generally found throughout a continuous geographic terrain and include a particular climate, local aspects of seasons, landforms, watersheds, soils, and native plants and animals. People are also counted as an integral aspect of a place's life, as can be seen in the ecologically adaptive cultures of early inhabitants, and in the activities of present day inhabitants who attempt to harmonize in a sustainable way with the place where they live. In the green political thought bioregions should be the basic unit of organization of global space.

Keywords: green political thought, green geopolitics, bioregions, environment

In the last decades of the 20th century the ecological aspects were introduced to the political *mainstream*, and the social movements referring in its ideology to the problem of ecology have become the crucial political actors – having a significant impact on the agenda of the political issues in public debates. Ecologism as an ideology - has proved to be an important force aiming at the political mobilization.

Along with the emergence of destructive effects of unrestrained industrialization, urbanization and technological development, an ecological awareness appeared and environmental issues became "political", mainly due to the so-called green movement, which introduced the issues related to the dangers caused by the destruction of the environment to the public debate. Along with the progressing industrialization, and the scientific and technical revolution - the awareness was growing that the scale of the use of natural resources at the same time leads to the devastation of the environment and affect its natural rhythm, and that the development of civilization in an increasingly visible way comes at the expense of the nature, or more precisely its devastation.

Study of the relationship between the development of scientific and technological revolution and the condition of the natural environment have provided data on a degree of the environmental contamination, water and air pollution, the dangers of flora and fauna, the sterilization of soils and deforestation. Since the seventies, it became clear that the real need did arise for the global environment protection. Sizes of the devastation forced, not only professionals, but also politicians and intellectuals, to deal with this threat. In the early seventies numerous warnings were widespread in the first Club of Rome's report - *The Limits to Growth* (1972), which drew attention to the threat of global ecological disaster. Gradually, environmental issues have become part of the public debate and increasingly began to shape the imagination of citizens in developed countries. The issues of environmental degradation and the depletion of the world's bio-resources have been permanently implemented into the directory of so-called global problems. The high popularity of ecological issues resulted that socio-political movements using the ideology of environmentalism have become an important political actors both local and global, affecting not only the regional (national) authorities, but also international institutions. The effectiveness of the movement for the protection of the environment, or its impact on cultural values and institutions - causes that it can be regarded as one of the prominent social movements in the modern history. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries - under the influence of propaganda activity of the Greens, the vast majority of Americans and Europeans consider themselves to be supporters of environmental protection. The right to live in an unpolluted environment was inscribed to the catalogue of the basic civil rights. Political parties and candidates for public offices have to relate to environmental issues in their political programs, governments and international institutions multiply the number of programs, special agencies and legislation to protect nature and improve the quality of life. Business entities incorporate environmental concerns into their own PR strategies, and the concept of development has been replaced by the concept of "sustainable development" in a public debate¹.

Ecological organizations have become an important participant in the contemporary political debate, able to influence the political agenda and decisions taken in the framework of the political system. Movements for environmental protection - as a new element in the political systems introduced new problems to political debates and new demands concerning the allocation of goods and directing them to appropriate sectors of social life. Movements for environmental protection also began to lay a claim of the appropriate organization of supporting surrounding area, as a result of specific perception of the relation human - space. Ecological movements are guided by a specific ideology, called ecologism which is the intellectual foundation of socio-political activity, providing them environmental reasons (legitimacy) and explaining phenomena in society and a sort of "map", which is used for its daily activity. Socio-political movements guided by the ideas of ecologism (environmentalism) strongly influence the nature of the discourse around environmental threats and ways to prevent them and thus may influence the formation of our ideas about the world around us, and in this way form a specific "green" geopolitical imagination that becomes the basis for the peculiar perception of the world - directing human political activity.

The ideology of ecologism constitutes a collection of specific interpretations of the world around us, which are in opposition to the dominant, modern ways of perceiving the world. Ecologism is characterized by individuality - because it concerns every human being; by globalism - as it relates to the entire planet and

¹ M. Castells, *Siła tożsamości*, Warszawa 2008, p. 157, P. Macnaghten, J. Urry, *Alternatywne przyrody*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 281-289.

humanity living on it; holism - as it does not confine to the man placed in the society, but also situating human in the natural environment, romanticism - because expresses the revolt against the enlightenment, rationalism, faith in progress². To a great extent, ecologism has been formed in opposition to modernity and above all - on the ground of criticism of distinction between "nature" and "society" and the characteristic of the modern idea of control and subordination of nature combined with consumer attitudes. Ecologism criticizes anthropocentric and human-oriented traditional doctrines and ideologies. Ecologists believe that the human (only)-oriented philosophy has distorted and damaged the relationship between the human species and its environment. Ecologism proposes a new understanding of the natural world and the place of humans. According to this vision of the world of nature, part of which is also a man is made up of a complex network of ecosystems, the largest of which is the global ecosystem. It is therefore considered that the delicate network of relationships, which has so far been ignored, sustains the life of every human society, and in fact the entire mankind³.

We can define ecology as a set of beliefs, theories and projects that treat humanity as a component of a broader ecosystem, so be sure to keep the balance of the system in a dynamic, evolutionary perspective. One of the components is therefore specific environmentalism perception of space, in which social activity of human beings is embedded. It is characterized by a holistic view of human nature and consideration of human societies as part of the biosphere, from which one can derive the resources necessary for survival. Ecologism, understood as an ideology, is to a greater or lesser extent, the basis for the formation of spatial representations of all movements working for environmental protection. Political actors, groups, organizations, institutions, movements, often use the ideas of the surrounding space in their political activity. These ideas form the basis of political programs and demands concerning the organizations of public space. Politics, understood as the human social activity, is strongly embedded in space. Political actors in their activities are often based on notions of socially produced space, which is an important part of their self-identification and identity. Ideas about space, how it is organized and its use - are important part of any political ideology supporting the political activity.

The concepts of spatial ideas were introduced to the geography and social sciences by French scholars of the social sciences, such as Henri Lefebvre, or Yves Lacoste. The latter believed that the analysis of spatial perspectives should become an important part of the political sphere and knowledge on dynamics of group conflict. He believed that analysis of power rivalry should also be conducted in terms of space. Geopolitics should be a research discipline dedicated to extracting and systematic confrontation of observations and beliefs of each political group concerning space perspectives, introduced a category of "geopolitical imagination." Through its use one will be able to show the symbolic value of these areas that are torn by rivalry and confrontation between the various social groups. Spatial (geopolitical) perspective - as part of the ideology of the group, is at the root of its activity and has specific consequences that may materialize in the organization of the territory. The confrontation of ideas relating to the area helps to understand the conflicts that occur between the various actors who have different ideas about the organization of surrounding space. For example, the global economic actors see the world as "open", with no boundaries, where the entire global space is open to capital flows, commodity and human. They attempt putting pressure on the

² R. Tokarczuk, *Współczesne doktryny polityczne*, Kraków 2002, p. 523.

³ A. Heywood, *Ideologie polityczne*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 276-277.

institutions and structures of the political system, through appropriate regulatory decisions and realize their vision. While Islamic fundamentalists refer to the idea of the Islamic umma, or the vision of a world Islamic caliphate. Right-wing political and social movements in Western Europe are trying to work to prohibit the public space of symbols associated with the religion of Islam (eg placing ban on building mosques) treated as an extraneous element in European culture. Any non-governmental organizations, political parties, social movements, terrorist and criminal organizations, international corporations, as well as groups of people, immigrants, ethnic minorities, classes, clans, tribes, refer in their activities to various ideas of local and global space.

Similarly, movements and political parties which refer in their activity to the ecologism ideology, form a specific nature's vision⁴ then moving it to the public discourse, as well as in to the sphere of political competition. Discourse dedicated to the nature's devastation and the effects of human activity, is now a political discourse, or geopolitical, as it relates to the problems of both - local as well as and global organization and management. Environmentalists argue that it is impossible to ignore the fact that all people live on the planet Earth, they are together, inextricably linked by the air which they breathe, through the atmosphere and the temperature level at which they are dependent, food they eat, the water they drink. This interdependence is due to the use of the same planetary ecosystem, and its devastation is one of the most important existential threats to the modern man. According to ecologists, size, speed and range of environmental damage has become an unprecedented challenge for the whole world, because it destroys the foundations of our existence as a species.

Regardless of the fact that such views may seem controversial, they strongly influence the imagination and the political activity of citizens, and thus become an important part of the description of the modern world. Our idea of the global space are largely shaped by the discourse of the problems associated with the hazards and environmental protection, such as the issue of global warming, deforestation of rain, loss of biodiversity, genetically modified crops, etc. It is a very important part of the discourse devoted to globalization and changes contemporary human civilization. This discourse also applies to the problems of political organization of the world, as more and more under the influence of environmental organizations, it is assumed that the risks associated with the destruction of the environment, as well as the ongoing climate change, require a different approach to problems of national sovereignty and global resource management bio-environmental.. Movements for environmental protection are trying to spread the belief that environmental threats, which are a byproduct of the functioning of human civilization boundaries and are devoid of explicit territorial location. Not restricted in time and space. They create an existential threat to the entire international community, showing both the existing contradiction between their cross-border nature and national structure of the international organizations⁵. The fact of recognition that environmental problems are global problems, abolish the functionality of existing socio-political organization, and calls for the reorganization of political decision-making methods and changes in the organization of international space. In this perspective, environmental problems are geopolitical problems, since they relate to the organization of the international environment. Putting the problems of ecology and sustainable development in the center of the political debate has changed the perception of the relationship between the various

⁴Comppare P. Macnaghten, J. Urry, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-90.

⁵ See M. Pietras, *Bezpieczeństwo ekologiczne w Europie. Studium politologiczne*, Lublin 2000, pp. 143-145.

political parties by imposing a common vision of the connected world environmental problems. In 1992, during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit) it was emphasized that the problems of environmental protection and sustainable development are to play a key role in organizing the post-Cold War international order. That it is important to understand that in order to solve the problems that all humanity will be forced to face, the world should be seen as a set of resources that allow humanity to exist, and at the same time as an object of damage and devastation, which is caused by the activity of that humanity. The way in which environmental issues are presented in the discourse around environmental threats makes it is the nature of geopolitical discourse, ie, on the ways of socio-political space organization.

It is believed that environmental changes affect the whole world, and therefore understanding of its the importance requires a holistic view of the human and social activity. People in their political activity have created territorial political unions called states. In the modern era - each state was identified with a nation that claims to sovereign rights to the fragment of the globe, through dedicated state borders. For ecological movements such a division means the ignorance of the common ecosphere, which is used by all communities living on the Earth. From this point of view we are not members of particular ethnic communities, but the elements of the universal, common ecosphere. This awareness makes national policy becomes obsolete, and it becomes necessary to introduce a new paradigm, in which the global space will not be seen as divided into separate from each other and relatively independent political entities but as a system of related to each other parts functioning as a wholeness. In this case the wholeness dominates over the individual parts, which are not able to function in a manner distinct from the whole.

For followers of ecological movements - environmental degradation changes the nature of the relationship between man and his natural-geographical environment, which affects the political activity and associated demands concerning organization of space. For ecological movements the most important issues are not competing powers or seeking out appropriate geostrategic policy, but above all - security of holistically understood human life, preserved from the negative consequences of natural resources exploitation. What is important in discussions on issues of environmental degradation and ways to prevent the negative effects of this phenomenon, one can see that the movements for environmental protection are trying to prove that the division on what is global and local no longer exists. In other words, local environmental problems have become global and vice versa. In this sense, we are dealing with questioning the existing barriers and political borders⁶. If the global warming and the ozone hole are really consequences of industrial pollution (risk produced), rather than natural processes, there is no doubt that from the point of view of human interests - environmental degradation in the country turns out to be important for all regions. In this context, analyzing the often repeated ecological slogan "think globally - act locally", which shows that, regardless of changes in the scale of thinking (holism and globalism), and the internationalization of environmental issues, environmental problems are still rooted locally. "Global Civil Society" or "third world" does not exist. Changing the scale of thinking from the local (national) into supranational does not invalidate the role of national and local movements, which are the primary form of activity in

⁶ To some extent, the ecological contestation of distinction between what is global and what is local resembles similar challenge distinction between what is private and what is political in feminist thought. Both ideologies - feminism, and environmentalism put themselves in opposition to what is modern, calling in question the divisions introduced by modernity and materialized in the sphere of politics.

favour for environmental protection. Slogan "think globally, act locally" is a reflection of such way of thinking.

Social and political movements relate to the idea of environmentalism which proposes a new kind of universalism, based primarily on the assumption that all people living on the planet are interconnected through a common residence and usage of the same biosphere. Environmentalists believe that the human species is currently facing environmental disaster as a result of unrestrained industrialization and the blind pursuit of achieving material goods. Environmental degradation has reached such a scale that has ceased to be a local problem, and has become a global problem. It is assumed that the environmental risk has become global and applies to all states and nations. Hence the necessity occurred to act together, with common forces in order to restore biological qualities of the natural environment. The solution of problems requires cooperation between various political entities and a policy of breaking old paradigm of national policy and the transition to the "cosmopolitan politics"⁷.

Globality of problems related to environmental protection calls into question the claims of industrial societies and the framework of nation-states to exercise political control over a defined territory defined by the boundaries of nation-states. This is because - institutions and the standards developed and refined in an industrial society- fail. Secondly, the decision-making patterns of socio-economic and global nature of the cumulative side effects come from two different epochs. Ulrich Beck in his works pointed out that the current decisions related to the dynamics of the development of science, technology and economics, according to the logic of modernity, are taken at the level of the nation-state, or a single company, while their consequences make us all members of the global risk society. At the level of the nation state, in developed industrial era threats, it is impossible to ensure the safety and health of citizens. This is a "cosmopolitan moment", which means that at a time when environmental discourse has dominated discussion on the future of the world is challenging categories such as "foreign policy," "the internal affairs of another country" or nation state ⁸.

Discussion about the Amazon rainforest conducted in the early nineties was an example of such a contestation of modern social and political order. In 1989, Brazilian President José Sarney in his speech entitled "Our Nature" declared that "the Amazon is ours", "it is situated in our territory". He directed these words, as he pointed out, to the great powers and organizations that "want to dictate us how to protect what is ours." That was a clear expression of sovereignty, and was associated with the perception of political space from the perspective of a sovereign state, which controls or has controlled political and social processes taking place on its territory. Tropical rainforests belong to Brazil because they are geographically located in its territory, appointed by national borders. The consequence of this situation is the fact that the sovereign governments of Brazil are the only decision-makers on the use and future of tropical forests. President of Brazil in his speech referred to the traditional way of understanding sovereignty. His intention was to underline the fact that Brazil is a sovereign state and thus the interference and pressure from international organizations and other countries in the internal politics of Brazil should be reduced.

However, in the context of the threat of ecological and holistic perception of the Earth as a great biosystem consisting of interconnected ecosystems, such an understanding of the concepts of "sovereignty", "territory", "our", it was far from

⁷ U. Beck, *Władza i przeciwność w epoce globalnej*, Warszawa 2005, s. 19-25, 46-50.

⁸ U. Beck, *Na ile realna jest katastrofa klimatu?* (in:) *Ekologia. Przewodnik krytyki politycznej*, Warszawa 2009, p. 95.

obvious, especially in the face of the need to build a "planetary politics." Therefore, José Sarney's attitude has been questioned by other international actors. Brazilian sovereignty over tropical forests has been and is still being undermined both by activists to protect the environment, as well as by politicians questioning the modern concept of sovereignty from the perspective of the need to protect the environment and ensure global environmental sustainability. It is pointed out that, regardless of the fact that Amazon forests are Brazil's national territory, their importance goes far beyond its borders. The importance and function of tropical rainforests, which are located in the Amazon basin, is to produce oxygen, absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and generally to regulate the climate on a global scale. The impact of the Amazon rain forest extends far beyond the borders of Brazil and their global importance makes the Amazon forests do not belong exclusively to Brazil. If you will follow the process of cutting the rain forests, the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere can grow rapidly, and the consequences of this phenomenon are not limited to the territory of Brazil, but will have global consequences. The importance and impact of the rain forest just above the limits of the territorial space of the ecosystem and Brazil, which means that the concept of "sovereignty" within the meaning of such politicians like José Sarney has become highly questionable. The physical effects of actions taken in the sovereign territory beyond the boundaries define the boundaries of the country and have an impact on the sovereign space of another country. The question therefore arises whether, in making self-relying on its own does not violate the territorial sovereignty of the territorial sovereignty of others at the same time as other entities and that this may have consequences for international relationships⁹.

Issues of national sovereignty in the face of environmental threats have become in the early nineties an important part of the discourse about the principles of international environmental organizations and relationships between actors, and thus an important part of post-Cold War rivalry with the nature of the geopolitical order. Brazilian President defended the idea of Brazil's territorial sovereignty, but Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland during the environmental conference in Hague (1989), brought up the problems of climate change and the pollution of the earth's atmosphere, called the relevant institutions to give the United Nations the power to enable them to become a real 'keeper of global atmosphere, "and had the opportunity to force action to reduce emissions. Norwegian Prime Minister took a different point of view than the President of Brazil. Assuming that the problem of pollution of Earth's atmosphere extends beyond the boundaries of the nation state decided that it should be a redefinition of the existing concept of territorial sovereignty. Given the importance of the Earth's biosphere to the existence of the human species must take into account the needs of the political activity and planning decisions and actions taken. The existence of the nation-state beyond the common area of ecological changes the nature of the relationship between international entities¹⁰.

Adoption of the thesis about the existence of a common environmental space and its dissemination in the public opinion allows to put pressure on selected countries of the world (legitimized by international public opinion). Thus, environmental problems are problems of geopolitical issues relating to the development of the international order and the dominance of certain actors and policies. As long as the politicians will be able to present the state space as a closed, static wholeness, their understanding of sovereignty will allow them to avoid problems arising from ecological approach. If, however, the environmental aspect is

⁹ Ibidem, p. XI.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. XI.

taken into account, then the fact that diverse ecosystems are outside geopolitical boundaries established by man will be present in the public awareness. In this case, the imposition of a particular vision of the socio-political space: the world divided into sovereign nation-states vs. the world as a global ecosystem can achieve political objectives, or in other words, the geopolitical.

Guided by the vision of the world as a whole vast complex composed of closely interrelated and interdependent elements - earth, air, water, plants, animals and humans¹¹, ecologists demand constraints of the current status of other political actors, particularly the state and international corporations. Challenge the existing international political organization in which the basic units and major political actors are territorial, sovereign nation-states. This organization is not the "natural" from the point of view of environmentalism thoughts or increasing functional for solving environmental problems. Environmentalism seeing nature as an integrated whole, suggests a specific vision of the global space as a whole interdependent of each other (the biosphere) consisting of a variety of interrelated parts (ecosystems). The space of human activity is therefore a heterogeneous whole, and therefore the organization must take into account both all its diversity and its comprehensive nature. Every other division would prevent the implementation of the idea of co-existence of man and nature and sustainable development, which aims to stop the negative effects of the development of human civilization.

Regardless of the differences among ecological movements - a general perception of space (spatial and geographical) is similar. Ecologism sees a nature as an integrated wholeness, proposes a specific vision of the global space as a interdependent wholeness. Due to the fact that, according to ecologism, man is an integral part of nature, and cannot afford to ignore this fact because it would result in global environmental disaster, any spatial divisions introduced by human as a result of the social (political) activity - should be revised taking into account the relationship human-nature. Ecological movements, guided by these spatial ideas, are working out a specific geopolitical vision of organizing social and political life which becomes an important part of political activity.

What constitutes the specificity of the "green" geopolitics? First of all, the assumption that the effects of environmental degradation are not limited to traditional administrative boundaries and, therefore there is a requirement of new forms of cooperation between the various entities of the international order. Ecologism attributes great value to the formation of democratic, autonomous, self-government structures in the whole globe, and to ensure direct participation of local communities in the exercise of power. In this approach, global space would be a kind of "patchwork" made up of autonomous local / regional units, which would be the basic elements of the world geopolitical structure. Each geopolitical structure consists of particles which are referred to as basic elements (which can be defined in different ways). It is assumed that during the development of industrial societies, an essential element of the geopolitical structure of the world have become sovereign, territorial compounds known as nation-states. Majority of current discussion and analysis of the international environment is carried out from the perspective of the nation-state - considered as a natural and "eternal" socio-political element of human existence. Due to the fact that in times of gradual globalization all countries, even those most powerful, act in a sovereignty limited by a network of bilateral, regional and global relations, they are conceived not as a separate and fully autonomous entities, but rather as a point of concentration of communication networks, interests and forces.

¹¹ See J. Lovelock, *Czym jest Gaja?* (in:) *Ekologia. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej*, Warsaw 2009, pp. 132, 446.

Ecologism, negating modern division of political space into nation-states is trying to offer an alternative, to the state-centered, vision of global space organization. In a geopolitical vision of ecologism one can often find a reference to the idea of a region as an essential element of the organizational structure of the geopolitical world. And it is believed that a region (not nation-state) could be a primary item of the geopolitical structure of the world. The concept of the region often occurs in discussions on the contemporary transformation of the international environment, and regionalism is a term appearing in considerations of theorists and researchers seeking to understand the processes concerning a relatively new phenomenon. It is believed that the period from the end of the eighties is a time of rebirth of regionalism in world politics, and regionalism and efforts to strengthen the regionalist solutions were the significant issues of debates about the nature of post-Cold War international order. For many researchers, the requirements of the formation of a global information society and knowledge-based economy, cause that regionalism is an inevitable process¹².

At present, we can see more and more signs of unification of the world above the existing borders of nation-states, and also aspirations for emancipation of local communities and the division of existing political units into smaller local ones. One may see the political and economic unification of the world - manifested in a growing number of international and supranational organizations. Regional integration is an important factor for the global international balance of power. Regional cooperation results in larger common markets, coordination of economic activity and exchange becomes easier, international conflicts are reduced, and cooperative systems are expanded contributing to the growth of trust. Regional integration aims to create strong economic and political organisms that are able to compete with other entities and defend their own interests. Another layer of the processes taking place in the modern world creates an emphasising of multiculturalism and diversity, especially in connection with a sense of identity and autonomy of national and ethnic minorities. Global unification induces opposing reactions, aimed at the protection of national cultures and local values. Together with the increasing role of local communities - goes decentralization and deconcentration of power and the weakening of national identity in order to build local ties. It is characteristic for the modern world - to move away from hierarchical and centralized structures towards creating smaller structures - decentralized, with transfer of decision-making - from the central to the local level.

The idea of region has become particularly significant as a result of simultaneous processes of unification and differentiation of the global socio-political space. The idea, to which refer both - supporters of macro-regions (that is political and economic systems of many countries), as well as advocates of the emancipation of local communities and creation of smaller political units that are "closer to the citizen" and allow for the realization of the ideals of direct democracy, self-governance and protection of cultural diversity and local identity. Regionalism is considered as an alternative to the current geopolitical order based on nation states, that are no longer structures in which one may effectively achieve its objectives in conditions of global information society and its increasing interdependence and complexity.

Ecologism refers to the idea of regionalism. However, taking the idea of regionalism means the region understood in a specific way. The traditional concept of a region consists of geographical proximity and economic interdependence, as well as historical experience, cultural, social and ethnic traditions, ideological and political preferences. It means that the most common category of regions mainly

¹² P. Drucker, *Beyond capitalism*, 1998, p. 137.

refer to the category of being a product of human social activity. Ecologism is an ideology which assigns a high value to the forming of democratic, autonomous, self-governmental structures in the scale of the whole globe and to ensuring a direct participation of local communities in the governance and management of natural resources. The main assumption is that local, democratic community will care about the environment in which they are rooted, preventing its destruction. Therefore, the realization of sustainable development requires the transfer of responsibilities from the central to the local authorities and empowerment of smaller communities. It is specific for environmental movements, apology of small local communities, as more democratic, being "closer to the citizen" and more conscious about their environment¹³. The movements for the protection of the environment are characterized by decentralist, local and anti-hierarchical approach to life and politics and therefore their vision of a new arrangement of the global space uses the ideas of regionalism, in accordance with ecological values¹⁴.

All these political features are to merge the regions, but region understood in a specific way. In the literature concerning regionalism and its development in the modern world, there are four basic ways of understanding the concept of region: 1) the region in political and legal category, 2) historical region, 3) the social area, and 4) cultural region¹⁵. All of these classical ways of understanding regions we can find in the contemporary research on the problems of regionalism but environmentalism goes beyond the orthodox division of regions - proposing new perception of the region as a bio-region. The dominant factor of regional integration is not so much the complementarity of the economies or cultural, religious and historical ties, but first of all - common life and usage of resources in specified ecosystem.

According to ecologists and eco-politicians, the world should consist primarily of bioregions, which are a natural division of the world joining a human and his environment. Bioregions would be the entities designated by natural boundaries of economically self-sufficient ecosystem. In this arrangement, all other sub-national and international boundaries of divisions would lose its importance. Residents of bioregions would keep loyalty to each other, without need of government participation. Reduced role of the state would be limited to forecasting and planning the eco-development of demilitarized societies, which would not affect the internal peace and international relations. Bioregions or eco-regions are perceived as natural geographical, environmental and cultural units, which constitute natural area of human communities' activity. The concept of bioregions refers to the idea of decentralization and self-governance of society (so important for Greens), therefore their main function is the implementation of the ideals of direct democracy, as well as environmental protection and harmonic coexistence of humans and nature¹⁶.

Followers of thinking in terms of ecology - point out that in order to protect the environmental resources we need to learn to live in the logic of the functioning of the biosphere, and our activities should not disturb a biological balance.¹⁷

¹³ This idea is derived from a rejection by all ecological movements of megacorporations' rationalism which, in the assessment of the Greens, use natural resources guided by economic rationality, and not the common good of local community and the environment protection.

¹⁴ See. J. Rensenbrink, *Poza polis i kosmopolis: zielone drogi ku nowemu uniwersalizmowi*, (in:) *U podłoża globalnych zagrożeń*, J. Danecki i M. Danecka, Warszawa 2003, pp. 127-134.

¹⁵ *Kompedium wiedzy o geografii politycznej i geopolityce*, M. Baczworow, A. Suliborski, Warszawa 2003, pp. 149-154.

¹⁶ K. Sale, *Dwellers in the land: the bioregional vision*, San Francisco 1985, p. 56.

¹⁷ J. Rajeswar, *Development beyond markets and bioregionalism*, „Sustainable Development”, No. 10, 2002, p. 213.

Organization of the socio-political space into bioregions would allow for harmonious coexistence with nature of people organized in a natural, small communities, in which they could care for surrounding space along with realizing the ideals of sustainable development. According to bioregionalists - decentralization and delegation of control over local resources to small communities would improve the ecological situation. Communities organized in bioregions would better administer entrusted areas and therefore affect in reduction of bio-sources consumption and environmental pollution. Moreover, such a spatial arrangement of the world could provide global balance and lasting peace and would contribute to the formation of a global civil society. Such a project of global space organization is for bioregionalists a real alternative to the division carried out, taking into account almost exclusively the interests of global capital and big business corporations which do not care about the interests of local communities, consume resources and transfer profits outside the borders¹⁸.

The vision of bioregions is composed mainly of ideological postulates of required changes, to a large extent not being confirmed by empirical observations. This is primarily normative vision but it is also a vision that is used by the environmental movement in competition with other political actors for primacy in a globalized and interdependent world. Proponents of environmentalism promote their vision of the global organization - as the one that offers people the way to achieve agreement between what is local, regional and global; between the indigenous (tribal) and the point of view common to all mankind; between the self-help business and the world trade; between patriotism, and the sense of living on the planet Earth¹⁹. Based on their geo-political ideas, environmental movements turn against modern states built on ideas of nationalism and national sovereignty, drained of the idea of the unity of the global space and the commonality of the global ecosystem, which is divided with artificial political and legal barriers. Ecological movements also turn against the multinational corporations - symbol of global capitalism and consumerism, which give priority to economic goals over social and environmental issues. Movements for the Environment endeavour to promote a new, global, civic, "green" universalism, which may become a political alternative to the dominant so far, values in the socio-political space. Due to an increase of the so-called ecological awareness, the ideas that guide the environmental movements are important area of research interests related to the issues of political rivalry in the social space and imposition of a new vision for the organization of human activity.

¹⁸ See M. Carr, *Bioregionalism and civil society: democratic challenges to corporate globalism*, Washington 2005, p. 332.

¹⁹ See J. Rensenbrink, *op. cit.*, p. 122, E. Laferrere, P.J. Stoett, *International relations theory and ecological thought*, Florence 1999, p. 66, 158.