

Commentaries

International Symposium: "The European Union and the Caspian Sea Region in Dialogue Sustainability, Environmental Policy and Caspian Region Development"

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Time and location:

From March 11 to March 13, 2002, the first International Symposium "The European Union and the Caspian Sea Region in Dialogue - Sustainability, Environmental Policy and Caspian Region Development" directed by Asad Mahrads, was held at the Main Building of the Faculty of Architecture, Environment & Society of the Technical University of Berlin/Germany.

Objectives and Initiation:

The objectives of the three days symposium were to bring together a great number of participants from the five Caspian Litoral States and the European Union of different academic, economic and political institutions related to the Caspian region.

The intention of such a conference held in a neutral territory was the result of different experiences like a steady co-operation between the University of Guilan, Iran (GU) and the Technical University of Berlin, Germany (TU Berlin) which lasted more than three years. The aim of the Caspian Project Guilan of the TU Berlin was to make better the relations between the European Union and the Caspian Sea states and the development within the region in Germany for the first time.

In addition to the strong support by the heads of these two academic institutions, the main works were done by the dean of the GU Faculty of Architecture Dr. Nooreddin Azimi in conjunction with the head of the Department of International Scientific Co-operation Dr.

Vahabi Moghaddam. The German contribution were operated by the "Caspian Project Guilan" (CPG) run by the Institute of Urban and Regional Planning (ISR) - Faculty VII "Architecture - Environment - Society" at the Technical University of Berlin/Germany under the steady supervision of Prof. Gerd Schmidt-Eichstaedt and Prof. Reinhard Breit and the support of the Dean Prof. Rudolf Schaefer.

Both sides came to the conclusion to explore the unaffected resources and open the potentials of the Caspian Sea Region for the local people in a sustainable way. A consensus was brought within the following and identified relevant issues:

The first chance to do so was given after the collapse of the Soviet empire in the early 1990/91 and the establishments of the New Independent States (NIS) that are now undergoing transformation processes. At this time, the number of countries bordering the Caspian inland sea increased from two to five including: Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, and Republic of Turkmenistan. The political change and new political and social conditions in the NIS have led to several problems such as environmental pollution, structural weakness, unemployment, and etc. But in spite of the dynamic economic and political development in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caspian Sea Region suffers economic hardship and stagnation (especially NIS). In view of the continuous environmental pollution caused by local industry, ecological catastrophes are imminent (as proved by the Caspian Sea's serious condition). Besides, the lack of both co-operation and agreements lead to high costs for everyone involved. The most important environmental problems are

inadequate and obsolete technical infrastructure and the lack of transport integration. The rapid deterioration of water quality among others is caused by the neglect of water cycles (especially in the Caspian Sea which has no outlet and into which mostly raw sewage is directly or indirectly discharged). The adoption of market economy mechanisms (efforts to gain access to the global economy) is not in harmony with the concept of sustainability - expansion increasingly reduces future potentials and the regional rivalry currently predominates over regional identity and strategies, leading to mutual blockades. One of the main aims of the co-operation of Guilian University and their German counterpart is to avert these dangers.

The Caspian Sea Region resources are not only based on the great mineral resources (specially the hydrocarbon resources), but also they are based on few others like the great natural heritage which is unique in the world. The hitherto ruthless depletion have had a negative impact to the environmental situation in the region. The agenda of the context is to find solutions to use the resources in a sustainable way. In that case it is the abandonment of the scholarship to find solutions. Politics and economy could give their support, but the real solutions could be only prepared by the science itself.

To establish a basis for a multilateral research network in the urban, regional and environmental planning sector by the two initiators TU Berlin and GU, the representatives of the "Council of the Baltic Sea States", the representatives of several international research institutions and the representatives of the host nation, the Federal Republic of Germany were invited for this symposium. These contributions were made to avoid possible counterproductive accusations about the current status of the territorial waters by the participants of the five member states. The potential for conflict caused by intended oil production in the Caspian Sea where borders are not defined under international law - disagreement on territorial claims. The rewarding task of the colleagues from Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea region who gave a brief outlook of the current implementation of measures they had done in their system of co-operation in the last 15 years.

Themes discussed

First day:

The first day of the conference started with the opening plenary given by the dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Environmental & Society of the TU Berlin Prof. Dr. Rudolf Schaefer and the Head Director of Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development of Germany (BMZ). It followed by a discussion dealt with "Dialogue between the European Union and the Caspian Region" moderated by the German Parliament member, Christoph Moosbauer (SPD). The opening plenary which was part of the supporting program "Politics & Practice"

Presentations given in this session included a discussion paper presented by MP Gernot Erlar: "Prospects of Development Co-operation between Germany, the European Union and the Caspian Sea Region". The following paper presented by C.F. Wittebrood, Acting Director (Directorate E, Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asian Republics, European Commission) on "The EU and the Caspian Region towards a closer partnership". The next paper was given by Dr. Sajjadpour, Institute for political and international studies (IPIS) on "The Iranian view of a mutual cooperation". After that, Viyatcheslav Gizzatov, Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan presented his paper entitled "Peaceful solutions and mutual co-operation in the Caspian core for a bright economic recovery".

Referring to the opening event the first technical lectures were given by Hans Georg Babies on "Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe (BGR)", Hannover on "The actual state of the occurrence of raw materials in the Caspian Basin" which followed by Dr. Razavian's, Shahid Beheshti University Tehran-Iran paper on "Globalisation and the Caspian Region"

After that Dr. Axel Krohn, CBSS Secretariat presented his paper on "The CBSS: Fostering economic co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region".

In the afternoon, field papers were presented in two different sessions. Papers

presented in the first session chaired by Welf Selke (Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing Germany), dealt with "The Caspian Transport Network". This session began with the presentation of Papajewski, Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau- und Wohnungswesen (Ref. Internationale Investitionsprogramme) on "Die Deutsche Position zu den Euroasiatischen Transportnetzen". The following paper presented by Ismailov, Baku State University, Azerbaijan on "New conditions of Caspian Region transport infrastructure development".

The next paper presented by Allahverdiyeva, Baku State University, Azerbaijan about "The role of Baku sea trade in the development of regional transport system". Then, Jan Kuligowski, Head VASAB Secretariat, Gdansk, Poland presented his paper on "MATROS – Maritime Transport in the Baltic Sea Region from a spatial development perspective".

During the second session, "Nature conservation in the Caspian Sea Region", Chaired by Claus Siewert, TU Berlin, presentations began with prof. Makhdoum's paper (University of Tehran, Iran) on "Environmental Pollution due to the Caspian Basin Development and The Role of Circum-Caspian States". The following paper was presented by prof. Alexey Kosarev (Lomonossov State University Moscow/MGU, Russ. Fed.) on "Sustainable economic use of the natural resources in the Caspian Basin". The next paper was presented by Prof. Succow (University of Greifswald) on "The biosphere reserve – an instrument for nature conservation". Vasily Teterkin (Eurasian National University) gave his presentation on "Intensified sewage disposal in the Caspian Sea Region", followed by Mieczylaw S. Ostojki's (HELCOM) paper on "New HELCOM Convention, new situation - new challenges".

Second day:

The second day of symposium held in three different sessions. The following subjects were addressed in the second day:

In the first session, "Regional Planning and Networking in the Caspian Sea Region", chaired by Reinhard Breit, (TU Berlin) the following paper were discussed:

Professor Taghi Rahnamai (University of Tehran, Iran) presented his paper on "Urbanization Process in Guilan Province and its Spatial Problems". The next presentation was given by Seyed M. Ziabari (Guilan Planning Board, Iran) on "Introduction to the residential areas of the Southern Caspian Region". Yiklas Nogaev (Department of Environment, Mangistau Province, Kazakhstan) was the one who discussed about "Development potentials in Aktau Region". Then, Dr. Bernhard Heinrichs (Chairman VASAB, Schwerin) discussed on "Integrated Coastal Management ICZD – BSR Project Proposal for Interreg III B – Phare – Tacis". The presentations continued by Jan Kuligowski's (Head VASAB Secretariat, Gdansk, Poland) paper on "Spatial planning and development – from vision to action". Nooreddin Azimi (University of Guilan, Iran) was the next one who presented his paper on "Urban development process and its environmental impacts in Southern Caspian Region". The other paper in this session was Bo Lwendahl's (BSR Interreg Common Secretariat) paper on "Transnational co-operation on spatial planning and regional development around the Baltic Sea". The last paper presented by Christine Kern (Social Sciences Research Centre Berlin) on "The development of cities and communities and their interrelations with the surrounding areas as key factors for the success of sustainable transition".

The second session of the second day was about "Economic Development / Case studies of the petrochemicals industry" chaired by John Ostergaard (International Maritime Organisation, London).

This session began with the presentation of Andrei Mechtcherine on "Njefegasowaja Vertikal", Magazine for Oil and Gas, Russ. Fed on "Oil and gas prospects of the Caspian Basin". It followed by Nurlan Sirazhev's (Environment Department Kazakh Oil) presentation on "Sustainable oil exploration in the Kazakh part of the Caspian Sea". Hans-Georg Babies (Bundesanstalt f. Geowiss. und Rohstoffe, Hannover) was the one who presented his paper on "The hydrocarbon reserves of the Caspian Basin". Reza Farmand (Institute for International Energy Studies Tehran, Iran) discussed his paper on "Assessment of Caspian Oil Transit via the Southern Route" which followed by the presentation of Rustam Mamedov

(Präsidentamt Aserbaidschan) on "The viewpoint on the problem of correlation among the public-legal status and ecological safety of Caspian Sea". Ismailov Myrzabek (Chief specialist on ecology KazTransOil CJSC, Kasachstan) was the next one who presented his paper on "a brief outlook of the Kazakh oil industry". Then, Zhanburshin (Karagandy State University, Aktau, Kazakhstan) discussed on "Improving of oil-gas producing companies activity in Kazakhstan zone of Caspian Sea under intensive oil exploration and production".

The third session chaired by Burghard Rauschelbach (Society for Technical & Development Co-operation) was about "Environmental Planning Ways of Implementation-Environmental impact Assessment (EIA). These persons presented their paper under the following titles: M. Moghaddam (University of Guilan, Iran) discussion on "Acidic Deposition Concern for the Future of Caspian Region". Gulzhanar Ablaikhanova was the next one who presented her paper on "A case study of nature conservation – North Caspian-KAZ". Then M. Makhdoum (University of Tehran, Iran) presented his paper on "Environmental impact assessment of bypass road through Anzali wetland system". The next paper was presented by Kaveh (University of Guilan, Iran) presentation on "Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) – The Role in Preserving the Environment and Decreasing the Environmental Pollutants in Southern Part of Caspian Sea". Zaira Pachmetova (Head of Monitoring Atyrau Environmental Office) presented her paper on "Establishing and operating an environmental assessment center" which followed by Ghaffarzadeh (UNDP-CEP, Deputy Coordinator Baku) presentation on "The Caspian Environment Programme – Road Ahead". Mahyar Sakari, (Guilan Environmental Provincial Office, Iran) was the next person who presented his paper on "Lack of South Caspian Habitat Conservation Network, A Serious Treat on Biodiversity (A Case Study in Guilan Province, North Iran)".

Third day:

The last session, "Taking the necessary steps", chaired by Asad Mahrad (Tu Berlin) were held on the following topics:

Malekian (Ministry of Science and technology, Iran), discussed on "The Caspian Sea Database". Dr. Vladymir Vladymirov (CEP Baku) discussed thoroughly on "The organization scheme of the CEP data-collection". Then, Juha-Markku Leppönen, (HELCOM) presented his paper on "The methods and system of the Baltic environmental data-collection". The last in this session was Hazel Jeffery (INTAS, Brussels) which presented her paper on "INTAS - Achievements, Networking and Future Activities".

The third day of conference was over by the conclusion of the study groups including a panel discussion on results obtained in the sessions. The plenary sessions were framed by a poster session from province of Guilan (Iran), small-scale, environmentally relevant projects set up and carried out by "Council of the Baltic States".

It should be notified that the symposium's success were based on the support of the co-organizers: European Academy of the Urban Environment (EAUE), Berlin, the German-Kazakh Society, and the logistic support of the German Embassy, Tehran, Iranian Embassy, Berlin, Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Berlin, Embassy of Kazakhstan, Berlin and the Embassy of the Russian Federation, Berlin.

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The main objectives of the three days symposium were better than those which were desired. Steady presence of most participants during the sessions and the constructive and field-specific discussions are indications for the need of further scientific and cultural exchange between all participants. Despite the current regional competition, there was a chance to develop a common supra-regional interest if co-operation could be established to expound common problems and potentials. The symposium was a basis for mutual trust and a basis from which trans-national networks can be initiated with the purpose of achieving institutional and material integration.

It is a special demand of the organizers that the aims of the conference generate positive effects as well as academic discussions to make an active sustainable development of the Caspian Region.