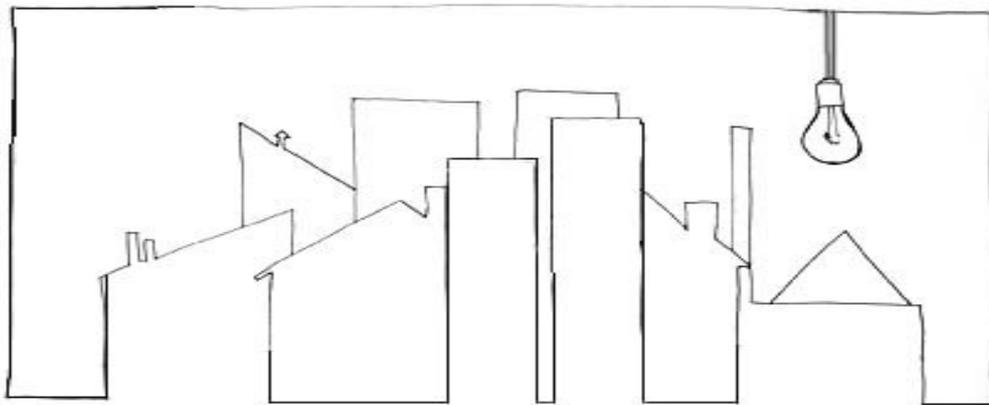


# Energy and Development

Ecological modernisation in Sida's energy policies 1996/2005

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# **Abstract**

Ecological modernisation has together with sustainable development reached a hegemonic status in the current environmental discourse. In the 1970's, the environmental crisis was blamed on modernity and technology and environmental protection was a prioritised area within the environmental movement. Today, it is believed that the crisis is to be solved with technical innovations and keywords are (economic) development and education. As energy is crucial to human survival, the author found it appropriate to study in what direction the energy and environment discussion is moving. This is mainly carried out by the comparison of the two latest energy policies of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). What can be concluded is that ecological modernisation still is an ongoing process where the word sustainability has a central position. During the 1990's Sida embraced environmentalist ideals (within the discourse of ecological modernisation) but now the aid is performed on traditional development principles with poverty alleviation as its main goal. The message in the 2005 energy policy is that a good environment has its roots in development, but development must come in a "sustainable" package.

## **Keywords**

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, ecological modernisation, energy, energy policies, sustainable development, and environmental discourse.

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# Introduction

Whilst surfing on Swedish aid organisation Sida's<sup>1</sup> homepage, I found that "Energy" was not mentioned as a headline among other main topics such as health, education etc. To find out about Sida's energy policy, I had to take another way and go through other links. This made me think that energy was not a prioritized area and I started to wonder why. After some e-mail correspondence I realised that energy *is* prioritised, but categorised within the sector of infrastructure. But the fact that energy was not among other hot topics like poverty, water, and education signals that it is not in everybody's mind in these days even though it is a resource that we are growing more and more dependent on in every part of the world. Being a human ecologist, I am interested in the relation between nature, society, and man. This relation is clearly visible, yet often complicated, in the use of energy. Energy is a natural resource, used by persons within the framework of society. The decisions on how to use and extract energy profoundly affect society, its people and the nature in which we all dwell. Nevertheless, in these days energy is often neglected and seen as a matter of course. This is partly why I want to compose this thesis – I want to make my contribution to the energy discussion.

## Background and relevance

In a world where paroles like "sustainable development" are chanted through the halls of nearly all public institutions and referred to in almost every written booklet, policy or guide I find it extremely important to examine how this idea is carried out in practice, especially in national aid organizations, whose work and money have an enormous influence on the receiving countries in the South.

Energy, in its different forms, has always been crucial to the survival of man. In pre-historical time, and still in some cultures today, energy is carried in little more than food and human or animal power. Animal power is added to human power and fire is used for different purposes. The more complex a society grows, the more types of energy are used. In early industrialisation the energy sources became mechanised and the use of wind and water power was introduced. When wood scarcity became a fact in 18<sup>th</sup> century England, coal combustion was introduced to replace wood. This was the entrance to the new era of industrialisation. Richard B. Norgaard presents the interesting idea of the coevolution of modern societies. Coevolution is a concept mostly used in biology to describe the joint evolution of two species

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<sup>1</sup> Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

that have mutually evolved to benefit maximally of each other. Coevolution is a positive feedback process<sup>2</sup>. For example, as insects grow tolerant to pesticides, new, stronger pesticides are invented, which in turn result in resistant insects and so on. Norgaard uses the term coevolution to describe how society and nature have always formed and affected each other – that “people and their environment have coevolved” (Norgaard 1995:39). Whenever people have affected nature and nature provides new conditions, humans have changed their behaviour to fit in and survive, but at the same continued to transform their ambience. Within his coevolutionary theory Norgaard argues that the introduction of fossil fuels resulted in a break in the feedback relation between man and nature:

With industrialization, social systems coevolved to facilitate development through the exploitation of coal and petroleum. Social systems no longer coevolved to interact more effectively with environmental systems.[...] Hydrocarbons freed societies from immediate environmental constraints but not from ultimate environmental constraints (ibid:44.)

His point is that industrialisation and the use of fossil fuels resulted in a disregard of the environment. There is no longer an immediate need for humans to interrelate to their surroundings and to have a feed-back relation with nature. For example, a farmer would not need to think of planting nitrogen fixing plants or intercrop to avoid weeds, but could instead use artificial fertilisers and pesticides (ibid:45). Nonetheless, in the long run this acting will have consequences, but the use of modern methods has the ability to postpone them and therefore results in this distance between man and nature. Similar to Norgaard’s coevolutionary ideas is the human ecological perspective, where nature, society and person are inseparably related to each other. By combining three parts instead of the more common two, classic dichotomies such as nature-culture, subject-object and mind-body can be over-bridged. In these interdisciplinary studies natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities are united to form a holistic view of the world (Hornborg 2001:191ff).

As society is growing more and more dependent on reliable high-qualitative<sup>3</sup> energy it is important not to forget, but rather highly prioritise energy in the discussion of sustainable development. We are now facing an era of electrification where millions of people will be granted electricity. If no attention is paid to the type of energy source, we risk an overuse of

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<sup>2</sup> Positive feedback is when two components in a system are mutually enforcing each other.

<sup>3</sup> Within thermodynamic theory energy is rated in different levels depending on how “concentrated” it is. Electricity is highly qualitative energy whereas heat has very low quality, which means that it is easier to extract power from electricity than from heat. The quality of energy can also be referred to as *exergy* (Hornborg 2001:42).

irreplaceable energy sources such as fossil fuels. Electricity is often considered to be “pure” energy, probably because it is neatly delivered through small holes in a wall, far away from the place of production that can be other than clean.

In the industrialised parts of the world, where energy consumption is also the highest, least attention is paid to it. Nearly unlimited access to electricity and other modern energy is taken for granted and there are no real worries for the consequences of the use of fossil fuels. . In the 1970’s there was a vote for the winding-up of nuclear power in Sweden and energy was discussed everywhere and by everybody, but ever since then, the debate has been down.

Jean-Claude Debeir is co-author of *In the servitude of power: Energy and civilization through the ages*, a book that discusses the relation between energy and society, using expressions like energy system<sup>4</sup> and energy-chain. The authors explain historical events from an energy perspective, for example how British economy could take advantage of the disparities between the price of coal and wood during the industrialisation in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was this unequal exchange that provided the necessary energy requirements for an industrial revolution (Debeir et al. 1991:96). Debeir and his co-authors are now hoping for the world’s energy system to change. They want to distribute the access to energy equally over the world and decrease energy use with 50 %. The most difficult obstacles to overcome are cultural, political, and social, which is why energy needs to be deeper incorporated in the development discourse (ibid.).

## **Objective**

This paper aims to study the relation between energy and development and how the discourse of ecological modernisation is visible in Sida’s two newest energy policies. It also contains a comparison on the view on energy sources like fossil fuels and hydropower. How has the attitude changed between the establishing of the 1996 policy compared to the 2005 policy? Under these circumstances it will be interesting to chart the links between modernity, energy and environment. This is also an attempt to make a survey over the role of energy in Swedish development cooperation and to see what sustainable development means in this context.

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<sup>4</sup> Debeir et al.’s definition of an energy system is the connection between ecological and technical factors and the social structures that provide and administer the energy sources and converters (1991:5). The World Energy Assessment has a somewhat different definition: “The objective of an energy system is to deliver to consumers the benefits that energy use offers (Goldemberg & Johansson 2004).

## **Research questions**

- 1) In what direction are the energy politics moving and how is this represented in the differences between the Sida energy policy from 1996 and the one from 2005?
- 2) How are the principles of ecological modernisation manifested in these documents?
- 3) How are Sida's energy policies related to "sustainable development"?

## **Method**

In order to find out in what direction the energy discussion is moving, I will plunge into the theories of ecological modernisation and discourse analysis, since Sida recently changed and revised the organisation's energy policy. I will analyse the latest energy policy (from 2005) and the one before that (from 1996), compare them and draw conclusions about the contemporary discourse on energy, environment and development aid. The text analysis is complemented with a semi-structured interview with the energy specialist at the Division for Infrastructure and Financing (IF), a sub-division to the Department for Infrastructure and Economic Development (INEC) of Sida, and also an improvised interview with the head of IF. The supporting<sup>5</sup> questions for the semi-structured interview are annexed to the paper. More details on the methods used for this paper are to be found in the next chapter.

## **Limitations**

What characterises this study is that it analyses the energy policies of a development agency from an interdisciplinary starting point. The thesis contains a comparative analysis of two energy policies, a discussion on ecological modernisation and sustainable development and a critical approach to the Swedish development agency, Sida. I doubt it that exactly this kind of study has been carried through in recent years. Nevertheless, similar research was very much performed in the 1970's when the energy debate was still boiling. Today's energy politics (in the North) are deeply influenced by ecological modernisation: the idea of joining environmental objectives with economic development appeals both to politicians and voters.

When it comes to the theoretical elements of this paper, Maarten Hajer, author of *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process*, must be the closest to the issues treated here. A number of books and articles have been written

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<sup>5</sup> Since the interview was semi-structured, not all the questions were used at the interview. Instead others came up and formed the conversation.

about ecological modernisation, many of them very critical. The same can be said about sustainable development. Despite that energy is not widely discussed in media, and in particular not in a sustainability context, there are some academic writers on the subject: Wolfgang Sachs, Richard B. Norgaard, and Alf Hornborg, to only mention a few. To make this study complete, it would be necessary to follow the development of Sida's energy policies from the 1970's until present time. In this case, such an extensive study was not completed, but I still hope that this thesis can add something new to a debate that hopefully will take more space in the future.

### **Disposition**

The thesis begins with a theory chapter that contains definitions of key concepts, presentations of ecological modernisation and sustainable development and an examination of adequate theories. Thereafter the methods are introduced and evaluated. After the theoretical chapters there is a section containing an introduction to Swedish development aid and the significance of an energy policy. To provide the reader with a substantial background on energy sources, electricity and their function in development aid, this chapter anticipates the comparative analysis of Sida's two latest energy policies. The paper is ends with a concluding discussion..

## Theoretical frames and method

As aforementioned, energy needs to be discussed in the sustainability context. How are energy, sustainable development and ecological modernisation linked together? One way to find out in what direction the energy discourse is moving is to examine policy documents on energy, which is what will be carried out in this thesis. Ecological modernisation has gradually replaced the former environmental discourse, which was more concentrated on environmental protection, and together with the concepts of sustainable development it has reached a hegemonic position. The ecological modernisation theory has been repeatedly criticised by various authors, especially from a third world perspective, and therefore adds interesting dimensions to the discussion. The two concepts ecological modernisation and sustainable development have much in common, but they also differ. Ecological modernisation is the field in which the discussion is kept, i.e. the “discourse” but with hardly anyone referring to it as such. Sustainable development, on the other hand, is rather used as a parole, as much by politicians as by enterprisers, and its sense is ever changing.

A discourse analytical approach has been used in the comparative text analysis and also to some extent within the theoretical framework. This chapter will thus present the ideas of sustainable development, ecological modernisation and shortly introduce discourse analysis.

### Definitions

*Development aid* and *development cooperation* are both used here to describe the same thing. In today’s rhetoric, *cooperation* is the preferred word in order to put more emphasis on the responsibility of the receiving country. *Development aid* in some way implies that help is forced upon one country by another. Despite this, I personally have made no difference between the two words but used them as equivalents.

As explained in the following section sustainable development is more difficult to define since it is more or less commonly known as a phrase tending to shift meaning both according to the user of it and depending on the era. The two documents that are analysed in this thesis are *Policy for Sida’s Assistance to a Sustainable Energy Sector* from 1996 and *Sustainable Energy Services for Poverty Reduction* from 2005. To avoid to write out the whole titles whenever they are mentioned, they are usually referred to as the (energy) policy of 1996 respectively the policy of 2005.

To perform a comparative text analysis, I have applied a discourse analytical approach. The theoretical starting point is that there exists an *environmental discourse* which used to be dominated by environmental preservation and green ideals. This discourse together with the objectives of economic development formed a *discourse coalition* in the shape of *ecological modernisation*, which has now reached a hegemonic status. A discourse coalition does not imply that the actors have actually met and agreed upon common goals or strategies, but means that agents from completely different groups have a concept in common that represents something to everybody. With the words of Maarten Hajer, a discourse coalition unites people around certain *story-lines* (Hajer 1997:13). Within the discourse of ecological modernisation, sustainable development is such a story-line. The concept is very open and can signify various things, but it helps sustaining the story-line, thus keeping the coalition together. Another discourse analytical term is *nodal point*, a concept around which other ideas are organised and acquire meaning.

### **Sustainable development**

A search on the internet search-engine google.com gives 252 000 000 results for “sustainable development”. The three first results are “[United Nations Division for Sustainable Development](#)”, “[International Institute for Sustainable Development](#)” and “[World Business Council for Sustainable Development \(WBCSD\)](#)”. That is three different entities with completely different aims and goals, although with one they have in common – sustainable development. But what is sustainable development and why is it such a popular phrase?

The phrase “sustainable development” was popularised by the Brundtland commission, who released the report *Our common future* in 1987. The term was then implemented at the UNCED (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992. Ever since, the term has been widely used and therefore also criticized for being too weak and too broad a term to have any real power ([www.ne.se](http://www.ne.se)). In the Brundtland report it is stated that “Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable – to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987). The dilemma with “sustainable development” is that it both opens the area of discussion and allows everybody to join, but also that the meaning of the phrase is different depending on the speaker. This means that sustainable development is both a weak *and* a powerful tool at the same time. It differs from “traditional” environmentalism by focusing not only on environmental protection, but also on social and economic

development (Carter 2001:198). What is very much underlined in the question of sustainable development is the link between poverty and environment. The poorest countries are the ones that suffer the most from the world's environmental problems and the poor in these countries are often forced to live on ecologically fragile lands which may cause even more environmental degradation. Hence, one of the key issues is poverty reduction through economic development (ibid:203 ff). Economic development, and a change towards a more westernised/modernised living, implies environmental degradation to some extent, even though it is now widely considered that natural resources and technology are needed to combat environmental problems.

Critics, like Wolfgang Sachs, are not so happy about the all-in-one word sustainable development. He puts the questions: "Whose needs and what needs are supposed to be met?" and "whose development and of what?" (Sachs 1999:160). These are important questions to ask – should the needs be defined according to the standards of the wealthy minority (in the North) or of the poorer majority (in the South)? And further, what does development really mean and what are the consequences?

Sustainable *development* insinuates that economy is the cure for environmental problems. Economic development is still the main goal, but it should be sustainable, thus development that lasts. This is the paradox of sustainable development. Some even call the phrase a contradiction in terms because economic growth implies resource depletion and, consequently, environmental degradation. Alf Hornborg argues that "As long as the concept of development continues to hinge on growth, the notion of 'sustainable development' remains an oxymoron" (2001:9).

### **Ecological modernisation**

In the environmental discourse of the 1970's it was widely argued that modernity and development were the roots of the environmental crisis. Energy was an important and central issue, a word on everybody's lips. Today, the situation is different. There is no common or widespread interest in energy and the causal links have been turned upside-down. Within the discourse of ecological modernisation, modernity and development are the cure of the environmental crisis. Where and when environmental problems occur, the reason must be underdevelopment or lack of modern technology (Mol 2003:199). The Swedish government strongly expresses the core of ecological modernisation by stating that "the modernisation of

our societies will help the resources of our earth to be enough for everybody”<sup>6</sup> (www.regeringen.se /det gröna folkhemmet, my translation).

Ecological modernisation is a mainstream theory within the environmental social sciences. The term ecological modernisation is mainly used by academics to describe the discourse coalition of the former environmental discourse and the discourse of economic development that together formed the concept of sustainable development. The actors in the ecological modernisation process – politicians and decision-makers - are not the ones who coined the term, and are often not aware that this is the discourse in which they are acting. According to Maarten Hajer, “ecological modernization is essentially an efficiency-oriented approach to the environment” (Hajer 1997:101). In 1984, an international conference on environment and economics was held in order to discuss the challenge of ecological modernisation. Hajer further states that “The major conclusion of the conference was that ‘the environment and the economy, if properly managed, are mutually reinforcing; and are supportive of and supported by technical innovation.’” (OECD 1995:10 as quoted in Hajer 1997:99). Interestingly, “modern environmentalism emerged as an element of the counter-culture of the 1960s and this counter-culture was above all a critique of many of the technocratic institutional arrangements that are now associated with ecological modernization. [...] The choice of ecological modernization was partly made for strategic purposes.” (ibid:102). Hajer describes the discursive paradox of the new environmentalism as the situation when the participants of the environmental movement in the early 1980s aimed to be seen as “the right kind of people, as realistic, responsible and professional, avoiding being positioned as romanticist dreamers”. Instead it “became increasingly difficult for radical groups to control their definition of the issues” (Hajer 1997:102-103). By trying to institutionalise the environmental movement it was weakened at the same time as it was starting to be taken serious by politicians and decision-makers. For society, ecological modernisation functions as a new, radical way of thinking and incorporates environmental concerns in institutions that formerly were believed to have nothing to do with environmental issues. For the radical parts of the green movement, ecological modernisation rather meant a step backwards, an alteration towards the principles of power of modern society (Lisberg Jensen 2002: 197).

Ecological modernisation tries to join two main goals: economic development and environmental conservation. Within ecological modernisation, economic growth and environmental protection are not opposed to each other, but a positive-sum game (Mol 1997

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<sup>6</sup> ”Moderniseringen av våra samhällen ska bidra till att resurserna på vårt jordklot räcker till alla!”

in Revell 2005:345). The ones arguing for ecological modernisation mean that environmental protection is in fact a source for economic growth as it provides a new market for environmental products and services and opens up for new environmental-friendly technology. Throughout, it is based on a market-view, with the state rather acting as an adviser rather than a ruler (ibid.). As technology and the free, self-regulating market are the tools to achieve these goals, many critics raise their voices.

A critique is that the starting point of ecological modernisation is today's society, with all its institutions and markets, and that it is possible to continue to have the standards of living that the rich minority in the North is enjoying today. Andrew Jamison (2003:82) argues that the environmental responsibility is diverted throughout the society which means that projects risk competing instead of being mutually reinforcing. Within the discourse of ecological modernisation the word eco-efficiency is frequently used, especially by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. Eco-efficiency indicates that much of the responsibility for sustainable development rests on the companies and the main goals are to increase efficiency and reduce pollution, but preferably with as little changes as possible. The risk with eco-efficiency is that the increased efficiency leads to increased consumption which means that there is no real environmental improvement in the end.

As well as there is weak and strong sustainability, there is also weak and strong ecological modernisation, with strong ecological modernisation being more biased towards ecological and institutional thinking and weak ecological modernisation being rather technocratic and economist (Revell 2005:346).

### **Discourse analysis**

The theory behind discourse analysis has its roots in the concept of discourse, coined by French philosopher Michel Foucault. The word discourse derives from the French word for conversation, uttering, speech or talk. In a more general meaning discourse is used to describe a unit of expressions, statements and concepts held together. There are many different discourses and our words and thoughts are determined of the discourse within which we are currently situated in. As the discourse determines how to experience reality we are also trapped within it ([www.ne.se](http://www.ne.se)).

Another way to explain it is that "Discourse is seen as the flow of text and speech through time" (Jäger 1993: 6 in Wodak 2002:9). Within a discourse, only certain things are allowed to be said. A discourse is a reduction of possibilities. It is both allowing and limiting

and even if there are borders, these are quite flexible. A discourse is only fixed for a certain time because there is an ever ongoing struggle about what the structure should be like. Discourse has become a very popular expression and is widely used, not only to describe just discourses but also ideologies (Börjesson 2003:180).

The analysis of a spoken or written text is called discourse analysis. Discourse analysis exists in various types where the most well-known are critical discourse analysis and discourse psychology. To analyse a discourse is not to make any attempt of discovering the “truth” that is hidden behind speech or act, but to analyse exactly what is expressed, to find messages and structures. The work consists of finding patterns and to distinguish power structures (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:28). This is also the aim of this paper – to find ideas, ideals and patterns in the policy documents and discern how these are changing.

## **Method**

This thesis is an attempt to illuminate the current discourse on environment and energy by studying Swedish development cooperation. The methods used in this study are both theoretical and empirical and include interviews, comparative text studies, and literature studies. The text analysis is performed from a discourse analytical approach, but is not controlled by strict theoretical boundaries.

## **Qualitative method**

Within humanistic studies, qualitative methods usually are advantageous before quantitative ditto. Many concepts and theories are not fixated and there is always much space for interpretations. This implies that research will always be somewhat biased, and it is important to keep this in mind and not presume that the researcher is exchangeable and that the study can be performed again and again with the same results. This study is mainly based on qualitative research, but contains a few quantitative moments, such as the counting of keywords in the two energy policies.

There are many advantages of qualitative research for this study. By comparing the two policy documents with each other and counting keywords and phrases I am trying to map the discourse or rhetoric and place it in the time and context within they are written.

The risk with an analysis like the one that will follow is that I inevitably will not be able to be objective. The year 2005 is contemporary to me, whereas 1996 already is pastime.

Consequently, it will be much easier to contextualise the newest version and see it in its social and political surroundings, while this is much more difficult with the 1996 document. How was the political climate? Which congresses were held, what was the environmental discourse like at that time? All that is important to take into consideration while making comparative analyses, especially as discourse analysis emphasises context and always regards a text within its framework. On the other hand, it can be easier to get an overview of and a distance to the past, since the selection process of sorting out the never-ending flow of information has already been done. Furthermore, by being and acting in a context, and dwelling in a certain time, it is always difficult to distance oneself from that very situation in order to observe and analyse an event because one is always influenced by the surroundings. The person doing a discourse analysis is always bound to one discourse or another, often the very discourse that is to be analysed (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:56). As a human ecologist, I am part of the environmental discourse, but not too deeply involved in the ecological modernisation to perform a critical analysis. Consequently I make no attempt to search for a “truth” outside the discourse but will try to explore parts of the ecological modernisation discourse.

### **Interviews**

As will be obvious further on, two interviews were performed. The first one (Kjell Larsson, energy specialist at IF, Sida), that was planned, was semi-structured and the second (Anne-Charlotte Malm, head of IF, Sida) was improvised (see appendix 1 for supporting interview questions). Since the informants are present in this paper in the capacity of their professional functions and Sida representatives, the interviews are not anonymous. The interviews are not suited for discourse analyses to the same extent as are the texts since the informants are not completely representative for the organisation. One of the informants stated that environmental issues are not his field, why it would be unreasonable to use his words to explain what Sida says on these matters. Semi-structured interviews consist of prepared questions that function as support. Thus the conversation is not strictly bound to them but there is much space for an open talk between the interviewer and the informant.

Since the second interview was improvised, and the informant was somewhat short on time, less emphasis was laid on the prepared questions and the informant could talk freely on the subjects that felt most important to her.

### **A discourse analytical approach**

Although there are different types of discourse analyses I make no attempt to choose sides between discourse theory, critical discourse analysis or discourse psychology in this text but try to apply the most useful tools for a comparative analysis. These are mainly found in discourse theory and in Maarten Hajers use of the concepts *story-line* and *discourse coalition*.

In Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffes discourse theory, the term *nodal points* is used to describe a sign or a concept around which others are organised to achieve meaning and significance. Nodal points are what organise the discourse. *Discursive elements* are signs whose meanings are not yet determined (Laclau & Mouffe 1985 in Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:33f, 57). This implies that a word or concept can function as well as a nodal point as an element. Sustainable development is such a concept. It is central in the environmental discourse, but it has not achieved a fixed meaning.

Hajer defines story-line as “the discursive cement that keeps a discourse-coalition together” (Hajer 1997:65). Story-lines are the narratives, historical references or clichés that unite the different groups or actors in a discourse coalition.

The comparative analysis of the two energy policies will be performed stepwise. I will present my first impression on each document; evaluate similarities and differences in design and performance; compare the contents and meaning of each text; and focus on central keywords and key phrases that are counted and compared. Furthermore I will try to find what ideological tendencies there are; how deeply Sida has embraced the principles of ecological modernisation and how this is expressed in the documents. According to Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, it should be possible to map how discourses are realised by making a detailed text analysis with certain theoretical tools (2000:87).

# History and presence of Swedish development cooperation

This chapter briefly explains the background and philosophy of development aid and gives a short overview over the history of development aid in Sweden.

## Poverty and development

The whole concept of development and development aid rests on the idea of poverty. What is poverty, who is poor, and last but not least, who decides who is poor and needs to be helped towards development? This is what Sida writes about poverty on the organisation's web page:

A person who is hungry, insecure and powerless is poor. People who cannot go to the doctor when they are sick, cannot send their children to school, or do not feel secure in their homes and at work are poor.

What Sida further states is that being poor does not solely mean being moneyless, but also having little or no power or influence, being without rights and being forced to take underpaid or dangerous jobs to support the family. Being poor is different depending on the country. Even if poverty is difficult to measure in absolute terms, Sida refers to people living on less than one dollar a day as extremely poor ([www.sida.se/poverty](http://www.sida.se/poverty)).

Poverty is a difficult and delicate question. Labelling people as poor can be seen as patronising and as an attempt to westernise and control different cultures. On the other hand, to not recognise people as poor can be seen as ignorant and unwilling to offer others the same standards of living that we are enjoying in the North. Jan Nederveen Pieterse quotes Vandana Shiva in the following:

Culturally perceived poverty need not be real material poverty: subsistence economies which serve basic needs through self-provisioning are not poor in the sense of being deprived. Yet the ideology of development declares them so because they don't participate overwhelmingly in the market economy, and do not consume commodities provided for and distributed through the market...(Shiva 1988:10 in Nederveen Pieterse 2001:100).

It is always difficult to decide how much one should interfere with other cultures. I wonder where the line is drawn between “offering an entrance to modernity” and “forcing modernity upon a people”.

Poverty reduction is widely seen as something positive and necessary, and there is an attempt to eradicate absolute poverty – malnutrition, illiteracy and infant mortality. Wolfgang Sachs, though, warns for the use of this terminology. He writes that “The trouble with these definitions is that they reduce the living reality of hundreds of millions of people to an animalistic description” (Sachs 1999:10). Similar to Vandana Shiva, Sachs further argues that poverty has become stereotyped and that little attention is paid to the different types of poverty.

Even if poverty is a debated word with different meanings it is still essential for the whole concept of development and underdevelopment. There are many theories on this issue and the word *development* has both enthusiastic and critical users and gets different meanings according to the speaker. The notion of the third world and developing countries was first introduced after the Second World War. Before this, many of these countries were still colonised or simply not known well enough yet to be defined or categorised. Development is strongly connected with globalisation and modernisation, and institutions like the United Nations help creating a feeling of global unity. But development aid cannot be seen as a purely altruistic gesture – there has always been an interest in the “first world” to secure development in the “third world” (Preston 1996:234f).

Development economist Serge Latouche critically reduces development to being a “*Westernisation of the world*” (Latouche 1993:160). The so-called developed countries are forcing their models of standards of living upon the rest of the planet. His view is rather pessimistic and he compares the spreading of modernity to a big game where everybody is invited but has to compete on completely unequal premises. He further argues that development aid has never been proven genuinely successful, but rather harmful in different cases. This view is evidently not shared by the development agencies, NGO’s and charity workers of the world, but there is an awareness that aid can have other than positive consequences. There might also be hope to learn from the past. Development cooperation certainly is not the same as it was, say, 30 years ago, and ideas and policies are continuously revised.

## **Development aid in Sweden – a short overview**

Sida, *Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency*, was formed in 1965 to administer the Swedish government aid. Later another group of development authorities was formed, but in 1995 all the groups joined to build the new Sida ([www.ne.se](http://www.ne.se)). The government has decided that 1% of Sweden's GDP should be devoted to development aid, but this is not always the case in practice. Aid should mainly be conveyed to the countries in most need, and not to countries with governments that do not respect the human rights. Development aid policy has changed throughout the years. In the earlier years, the giving country had big influence on the projects and many projects were mainly decided by the giver. In the 1970's, the ideology was changed and the aid was now rather on the recipient's terms ([ibid.](#)). Today, Sweden cooperates with 120 countries, and the country receiving most aid is at present Tanzania. This is what Sida writes about its work: "The overall goal of Swedish development cooperation is to contribute to making it possible for poor people to improve their living conditions."

Development aid is not always unproblematic and has often been criticised for forcing the recipient country into interdependency amongst other things. Due to this kind of critique, there is now a tendency to use the word cooperation rather than aid (Andersson & Hedin 2001:77-78). Today, 60 % of the Swedish development cooperation is channelled through Sida:

The overall objective of development cooperation is to help create conditions that will enable the poor to improve their lives. The six previous sub-goals are to impact on all development cooperation under the global development policy. The entire focus will be on the fight against poverty ([www.sweden.gov.se](http://www.sweden.gov.se)).

In 2000, the United Nations declared the so-called Millennium Development Goals:

The eight Millennium Development Goals<sup>7</sup> (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions ([www.un.org/millenniumgoals/](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/)).

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<sup>7</sup> The goals are: 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2. Achieve universal primary education; 3. Promote gender equality and empower women; 4. Reduce child mortality; 5. Improve maternal health; 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7. Ensure environmental sustainability; and 8. Develop a global partnership for development ([www.un.org/millenniumgoals/](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/)).

The Millennium Development Goals are increasingly implemented in the policies of different organisations. Even Sida writes about them in the 2005 energy policy. The whole document is permeated by the ideas of the MDG: the title includes *poverty reduction* and the back of the cover says:

Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, measuring (absolute) poverty is a difficult thing to define, especially in order to avoid being patronising. But whereas development aid used to be based upon the building of things there is now a trend towards technical assistance and reform before the building of infrastructure is initiated. The reinforcement of the energy sector within a country is mainly seen as a private investment issue. Within developing countries, the banks share a common fear of taking risks for the initiation of large infrastructure projects. What organisations like Sida do is to take part of the risks involved with the performance of large projects so that the investors can take local loans instead of taking international loans in dollar, which is far more expensive (Malm interview 2006-04-05).

The energy policy from 1996 indicated that the environment was important, but it might have been a passing trend. This is not to say that the environment is ignored at present, but the focus has returned to traditional, steadfast developing goals with poverty alleviation as main purpose. Like Anne-Charlotte Malm stated: “The message is that it is energy for poverty reduction, and not energy for environment” (Malm interview 2006-04-05). The focus of the energy policy lies on development and not on environmental protection.

# Energy sources

This chapter functions as a background for the reader to easier grasp the analysis of the energy policies. I will here present the World Energy Assessment, an institution that has strong influence on the attitude towards energy in its different forms, and give an introduction to some of the energy sources that the world is currently using. Finally, I briefly treat the role of electricity in development aid.

## World Energy Assessment

The World Energy Assessment (WEA) is a collaboration between the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the World Energy Council. The introduction to the 2004 update of the overview says that

The World Energy Assessment provides analytical background and scientific information for decision makers at all levels. It describes energy's fundamental relationship to sustainable development and analyses how energy can serve as an instrument to reach that goal (Goldemberg & Johansson 2004: 14).

The World Energy Assessment is a good example of the ecological modernisation process that is permeating the current environmental discourse. The formerly conflicting interests of the environmental movement and the economic interests are to be joined: "Part IV identifies key strategies and policies for globally achieving both economic growth and sustainable development" (WEA 2004:67). The matters that are primarily discussed are access to affordable commercial energy services and sustainable development in relation to this. Despite the admittance that current energy systems are not sustainable, the writers of the volume have a generally positive view of the future and seem to have much faith in the modernisation of technology in order to achieve the goal of sustainable energy services. Again, like in the Sida policies, competitiveness in energy markets is encouraged in order to reduce the costs for the end-users. Energy is crucial to human survival, hence it is true that "energy can serve as a powerful tool for sustainable development" (Goldemberg & Johansson 2004:13). But reforming the energy sector alone will not be sufficient. It is not only the choice of energy source that is decisive for the sustainability of the future, but also the design of the society and its mechanisms.

Sida's energy policies concord with the WEA to a large extent. The rhetoric is similar and they have much faith in institutions, technology modernisation and market reforms. A large establishment like the UNDP has, not least through the WEA, the power to influence the current environmental discourse, especially the view on energy. Even if development institutions like Sida are not aware of it they are part of the same discourse and consequently also influenced by what other, superior institutions determine.

The World Bank, the institution that offers loans and to some extent grants to third world countries also claim to have poverty reduction as an overarching goal and promote “sound commercial principles and preservation of the environment” ([www.worldbank.com/energy](http://www.worldbank.com/energy)). Sida follows the guidelines of the World Bank to some extent in how to carry out development cooperation, but as Kjell Larsson at Sida stated: “Organisations like the World Bank are very influential and have backup from many countries but their strategies are maybe not always working” (interview 2006-04-05).

### **Energy use in developing countries**

It can be a little difficult to measure energy use in developing countries. In the industrialised part of the world, a common tool is to measure per capita energy use. It fairly monitors energy consumption per person, as the living standard is rather well distributed all over the population; most people have access to and can afford electricity. Often the same principle is used for energy consumption analysis in developing countries, but the outcome may be misleading. In most of these low-income countries, there are huge class disparities, which implies that there is a small, wealthy minority that follows the same energy consumption patterns as the richer part of the world while the majority relies on non-commercial traditional energy sources like unventilated stoves or open fires. These disproportions are not reflected when the consumption is spread all over per capita energy use, not least since the use of non-commercial energy sources is even more difficult to measure. The use of traditional biomass fuels is connected with various problems; traditionally, women and children are responsible for the collection of firewood which is a time-consuming activity that prevents them from education and money-rendering activities. Furthermore, there is often lack of control over the areas where firewood is collected and the more marginalised the poor people are, the harder it is to find reliable commons with sufficient wood for everybody which leads to environmental degradation as a consequence (Goldemberg & Johansson 2004: 26, 34). Since primary energy consumption has been growing with 1.5 % per year, total energy use will double between

2000 and 2040. This is a major threat to the environment and much effort needs to be put in the optimisation of energy and the development of renewable energy sources. The efficiency with which energy is produced, delivered, and used needs to be improved (ibid.). This will however not be enough to secure the well-being of our planet. There is always a risk with efficiency rendering, namely that our demands will increase with the same amount that we optimise the energy efficiency. Since there is a tendency in human nature to always long for more, efficiency rendering should be combined with other reforms, for example the changing of current consumption patterns.

### **Fossil fuels**

Fossil fuels (oil, coal, natural gas) are widely used all over the world today and represent nearly 80% of the total (Goldemberg & Johansson 2004:26). Starting with coal in 18<sup>th</sup> century England, the use of fossil fuels has spread to almost every known part of the world. It was first used to replace wood, due to wood scarcity during the industrial revolution, and when the first oil springs were discovered, this new, cheap energy was soon to be in everyone's home in one way or another (Debeir et.al.1991:94, 233 f).

Today it is stated that the use of fossil fuels is augmenting the contents of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and thereby increasing the greenhouse effect which can be the reason to increased mean temperature, the raise of sea level and the reduction of the polar ices ([www.ne.se](http://www.ne.se)). The use of fossil fuels in “under-developed” countries is often connected with even more serious consequences than in the more “developed” parts of the world. There are fewer opportunities for cleaning the emissions, and protective gear is not always used. Often the solutions need to be as cheap as possible, which means that not all the security prerequisites are being met. Even if there is a need for a fast introduction of energy, one should carefully study the risks of negative consequences, both direct and indirect, of the use of fossil fuels. Nonetheless fossil fuels are increasingly used but the fuel is often imported, hence expensive. Since developing countries are not obliged to mitigate their CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions it must be tempting to extend the use of fossil fuels.

Of all energy sources, oil is the most important, close followed by natural gas and coal. When it comes to electricity production, the combustion of coal generates five times more electricity than do petroleum products (Goldemberg & Johansson 2004). What still makes oil so special is that it is crucial for our living such as it is today, especially for the transport sector, but that its occurrence is very unequally distributed throughout the world and

surrounded with complex social and environmental problems both connected with its extraction and its use. As Pernilla Ouis puts it: “Oil is simply the blood of the industrialized world” (2002:124). The environmental impacts caused by the use of oil are multifaceted, and often severe. Areas around oil springs are subject to harsh environmental strains in the form of oil leakages, fires, construction of large refineries and their residues. The combustion of crude oil and petroleum products in cars, different engines, and for heat and electricity generation causes high levels of carbon dioxide emissions which contribute to the amplifying of the green house effect. Oil transports in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have also had impact on sensitive ecosystems, mainly because of serious accidents with oil tankers at sea and the (illegal) cleaning of tanks in the deep sea. These kinds of accidents decreased after the 1980’s, when the oil tankers became safer, but smaller accidents still occur from time to time. Last, but not least, products that derive from oil, such as different plastic goods, have a very long decomposing time and the burning of these materials often emit hazardous substances (Mc Neill 2003:331 ff).

The social impacts of oil use are more complex and more difficult to detect and measure than are the environmental. Social impacts, like unequal distribution and wars, also lead to environmental impacts in the long term. Rather few countries have domestic oil extraction and many contemporary political conflicts are related to the control of oil springs. Even in countries that do not need to import oil but have domestic oil exploration there is no guarantee that energy demands are met equally throughout the population. Rather, there tend to be huge differences between city and countryside and between rich and poor. Often foreign companies control and profit from the oil and the yields do not every part of the population.

### **Nuclear power**

Nuclear power today stands for approximately 7 % of the total amount of energy that we are currently using (Goldemberg & Johansson 2004:26). In development countries the number is much lower. Due to lack of adequate alternatives for safe long-term storage and management of waste-products it is not considered safe from an environmental perspective, according to Sida (Sida 1996:7). In the 1996 energy policy, nuclear power is presented as an energy source, but not as an alternative to other, more conventional sources like fossil fuels and hydropower. In the policy document from 2005 nuclear power is not even mentioned, which makes me draw the conclusion that it is not seen as an alternative to neither fossil fuels nor

renewable energy sources. Sida does not support any nuclear power projects within the organisation's development program today.

### **Renewable energy**

Renewable energy is energy that comes directly or indirectly from the sun or heat from deep within the earth. It is energy that cannot be depleted but is replenished constantly (IEA 2002 in Mallon 2006:43). Under the umbrella term renewable energy different energy sources are collected: hydropower, bio-fuels, geothermal energy, bio gas, sun, and wind power. Of these hydropower is the most significant and still many (development) countries have unexploited potentials (Sida 1996). But, like Mallon states, "it cannot be taken for granted that it [large-scale hydropower] is environmentally sustainable" (Mallon 2006:110). Since large-scale hydropower projects have had serious environmental and social consequences a World Commission of Dams (WCD) was established. The WCD do not exist anymore but their standards are still followed by many. They were replaced by the UNEP<sup>8</sup> in Nairobi that have now taken over the project and work with the spreading of information and carry out workshops around these matters on how to act in different countries (Malm interview 2006-04-05). Despite this, Sida today has a very positive attitude towards the implementation of hydropower in developing countries: "Sida supports *sustainable* hydropower development since hydropower is an important energy source and has considerable development potential in many developing countries" (Sida 2005:7, my italics). *Sustainable* here hints that there have been problems with the consequences of large-scale hydropower before, but that there is a wish for improvement. What follows in the text is the awareness that the environmental impacts "can be considerable" but that Sida "as far as possible" follows the WCD's recommendations (ibid.). "As far as possible" seems to be a popular phrase in environmental rhetoric and to some extent grants an exemption towards the restrictions that are to favour nature, the environment or culture and people. In this case, it seems as if the benefits from a possible hydropower construction would overshadow the sacrifices. There is a considerable energy demand in the countries that are cooperating with Sida, and hydropower is seen as a reasonable alternative, or complement, to other energy sources.

The most important benefits from renewable energy sources are exactly the fact that they are renewable and cannot be depleted as can sources like oil or coal. Furthermore, from most renewables, there are no emissions and no waste. The emissions from biomass

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations Environment Programme

combustion do not add up to a net increase of carbon dioxide and suchlike in the atmosphere<sup>9</sup>. In general, there are many benefits from renewable energy sources, not only environmental, but also social. They are not necessarily large-scaled and part of the common grid, but are useful in remote and therefore low prioritised areas where grid extension often is expensive. If renewables are to be competitive with fossil fuels they need to be cheap and efficient. Within the category of *new renewables*<sup>10</sup> biomass has a great potential in rural areas. With better technology and distribution biomass can be used in cleaner, more efficient manners which can improve the situation for the people who would rely on this energy source anyway.

What is not taken into account is that the results of electricity use has consequences in itself. Mining for construction material etc. is for example not calculated. Amazingly, in the energy policy from 1996 (p. 6) some negative aspects of renewable energy are presented, namely the possible consequences of large-scale hydropower, which implies that an underlying critical thinking is expressed. There is however a net environmental benefit from the use of renewable energy sources compared to fossil fuels why renewables are good alternatives.

### **The role of electricity in development aid programmes**

Today it would be hard to imagine a modern world without electricity. Like the World Energy Assessment states, “Access to affordable energy services is fundamental to human activities, development, and economic growth” (Goldemberg & Johansson 2004:11). Electricity and liquid fuels open up possibilities for people to secure income, improve health and get better education. More and more is based upon reliable access to electricity, not least in this era of electronic communication in an increasingly globalised world. At the same time, there are still more than two billion people who do not have access to modern energy services (ibid:34).

In the energy division of development aid programmes there seems to have been a shift of focus. The former goal of “electricity for everybody” has stepped aside and today, electricity is not necessarily the main issue. Instead modern energy, in the form of fuels such as LPG<sup>11</sup>, has acquired a central position in the development discussion. The most important concern is not electricity but the right to modern fuels which can provide a better indoor

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<sup>9</sup> During its lifetime a plant absorbs the same amount of carbon dioxide as it emits when it is burned.

<sup>10</sup> New renewables are: modern biomass energy, geothermal heat and electricity, small hydropower, low-temperature solar heat, wind electricity, solar electricity, and marine energy (Goldemberg & Johansson 2004:48-49).

<sup>11</sup> Liquefied Petroleum Gas

environment. By studying policy documents it is clear that today electrification is still vital, but not the most important issue.

The Swedish Development Cooperation Agency works according to certain principles. Whenever a village or community is going to be granted electricity, there always needs to be an economic purpose for the electrification. Electricity is not provided just for the sake of it or to involve the poor in the modern world by introducing TV and light but always requires a “higher purpose” in the form of economic development. Development aid is only performed if there is a chance for the people in question to develop economically, by selling a product or suchlike. The preferred situation is to electrify a village that already is involved in some sort of economic activity that would be markedly helped by electricity (Larsson interview 2006-04-05).

The World Energy Assessment has summed up the connections between energy and the fulfilment of the UN Millennium Development Goals. The list is long, and I will not repeat it here. In this long list, modern energy has much space. Electricity is not seen as a universal solution, but as being part of modern energy that can appear in many different forms. Even though, electricity is still of high importance, especially in health centres, both for equipment and for informational purposes; for light (for work after the daylight hours), and for pumped clean water that is crucial to a healthy living. The benefits of electricity are many, and are often indirect, for example that “Street lighting improves women’s safety”<sup>12</sup> or “Post-harvest losses are reduced through better preservation (for example, drying and smoking) and chilling/freezing<sup>13</sup>” (Goldemberg & Johansson 2004:80).

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<sup>12</sup> Referring to goal no 3: Gender equality and women’s empowerment

<sup>13</sup> Referring to goal no 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

# Analysis of the energy policies

An energy policy functions as a guideline and as support for the people involved in Sida projects. More specific rules and standards are presented in so-called *Country Strategies*, which are certain plans for every country involved in development cooperation. After the termination of a project it is always thoroughly evaluated in order to improve following projects. At least since the early 70's, many energy policies, about one every ten years, have been created at Sida throughout the years (Larsson interview 2006-04-05). The most recent policy was published in December 2005 to replace the former policy, from 1996. There are many notable differences between these two policies, and in this chapter I will introduce and describe the two documents. This is followed by a comparative analysis of the two documents, where appearances as well as contents are taken into consideration, since not only the contents but also the design and the tone differ noticeably between the two documents. It seems as if the intended reader is two completely different persons. Consequently, I have treated not only the text, but also the form and looks. The text analysis has taken a discourse analytical approach.

## Policy from 1996

The title of the 1996 policy document on energy is called *Policy for Sida's Assistance to a Sustainable Energy Sector*. Its format is ordinary A4, printed on thick, but ordinary paper and there are no pictures on the front cover but a light green, stylized part of the Sida logotype. Apart from this light green, there are no colours but black and white (see appendix 2 for the PDF version, which lacks the green though.)

What characterises the document is that it is historical, retrospective, describing, explaining, investigating and accounting for different subjects. Amongst other things it explains some of the possible negative effects of hydropower.

The contents of the policy are presented like in a report or paper in the following way:

1. Introduction
2. Aims and premises
3. Perspectives and principles
4. Prioritized areas
5. Guidelines for investments in energy facilities
6. Relations with other actors

The text is very ambitious in its performance. One can almost get the impression that the authors suddenly became aware of the environmental problems and wanted to implement them in their documents. The texts are very detailed and are often rather investigative for being in a policy. Instead of just presenting their ideas and norms in short, certain matters are explained and problemized. For example, there is a longer passage on the Climate Convention with detailed goals, illustrated with the extents of CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions in numbers. Furthermore, focus lies heavily on renewable resources and to stress certain matters numerical data are often used.

For example, the chapter named *Perspective and Principles* is rather detailed on what principles Sida should follow when it comes to the implementation of energy investments and projects. The rhetoric hints that this is an environmentally-friendly organisation that puts nature's and the poor people's needs first and that there is a constant strive for transition to renewable energy sources (1996:8). Interestingly, there is an awareness that the transition to energy sources with "environmental advantages" alone is not enough, but that all (environmental and social) side-effects should be taken into consideration when new energy sources are implemented (ibid:9). In this context Sida also mentions that the improvement of coal technologies, for example, reduces carbon dioxide emissions, but do not eliminate them, which implies that the transition to this type of technology risks a delay in the conversion to sustainable energy sources. This line of argument is very environmentally conscious for being in a policy whose main goal is not environmental protection. Even though the ideas of ecological modernisation are present, and to some extent visible in the document, the policy is characterised (or at least gives the impression of being so) by environmentalism. The wish for contact and discussions with Swedish as well as local environmental organisations in cooperating countries further indicates so as does the desire to let local populations participate in decision-making in order to achieve sustainable development.

The word "sustainable" appears frequently and it is used as a prefix for several words; development, energy systems, energy sources, principles, and management of biomass. This indicates the popularity and usability of the word.

Apart from "sustainable development", repeatedly used expressions are "polluter-pays-principle", "precautionary principle", "nature's limits" and "environmentally-sound". It is notable that neither of the words "modern energy", "gender", "equality", "women" or "children" is mentioned.

## **Policy from 2005**

In 2004 a *Regulation on policies and methods in development cooperation-process within Sida* was worked out, which presented certain rules on how a policy document should be designed. Amongst other things it is stated that a policy should not be much longer than five pages (the energy policy from 1996 is 15 pages long, whereas the 2005 version has seven pages) and it should be strongly associated with the overall goal, poverty reduction (Regulation on policies and methods in development cooperation-process within Sida 2004). Since the regulation on policies was carried out not earlier than in 2004, only the newest energy policy could be affected by it, which may explain some of the differences between the two policy documents analysed here.

The 2005 policy with the title *Sustainable Energy Services for Poverty Reduction* differs markedly from the 1996 version. It is roughly 75% of the size of an A4-paper and the front cover is glossy with a four-coloured stylized picture of a water drop, a sun, a plant and a person (see appendix 3). The first expression one gets is that it is a document designed by professionals. The date is written on the inside of the cover, instead of on the front, and the whole appearance is rather like a brochure than a report. It is a very catchy print, popular, even populist. One can see that this document has been made by professionals and it is attractive, short, and easy to read. This paper is about half the length of the former, characterized by a better overview, and has central phrases in the margins to highlight some of the meanings in the text.

The contents of the 2005 document are the following:

- Sida and the energy sector
- Energy's role in poverty reduction
- Reforming energy institutions
- Developing sustainable energy systems

This document is looking into the future rather than backwards. New for this policy is that women and children are noticed. The overall rhetoric of today includes a gender perspective, which seems to have been observed and implemented by the writers of this document. Especially when writing about “modern energy” and the negative consequences of the use of firewood, women and children are mentioned because these are the ones mostly affected by this. By being responsible of gathering firewood, there is little time for children to attend school and do homework and for women to get higher education in order to have an income

of their own. With the introduction of modern energy, less time is spent on these tasks, and with the additional advantages of electricity, the daylight hours can be extended and used for personal development.

Poverty reduction is a central term in this energy policy. The United Nations Millennium development goals have had a strong influence, both directly and indirectly, on this document. Directly because even the title says "...for poverty reduction" and that they are mentioned on page 2, and indirectly because the government has adopted the Millennium Development Goals wherefore Sida must follow these principles. Interestingly, there is no explicit Millennium goal on the importance of increased access to energy services even though this might be a prerequisite to achieve some of the other goals (Goldemberg & Johansson 2004). Nevertheless the MDG's are acknowledged in the policy document and since access to energy is important for all eight goals in one way or another, there is a discrete insinuation that this policy document can contribute to achieve them.

In this document, the word "sustainable" is used various times - Sida talks about sustainable energy services, sustainable hydropower, sustainable poverty reduction, sustainable use of the environment and sustainable solutions, but the phrase "sustainable development" never appears explicitly.

Since this document is very brief compared to the older policy, much information could be excluded. This makes it somewhat more difficult to understand exactly what is expressed on different matters and what has been purposely excluded.

### **Analysis of the two energy policies**

Anne-Charlotte Malm, head of Division for Infrastructure and Financing (IF), Sida, and responsible for the making of the newest energy policy, explains the divergences of the two documents in a few words – "the energy policy had to be revised because it was old". During the nine years that have passed between the making of the older and the newer energy policy, the world has changed as well as the perspectives of Sida have changed. The main difference is that the newer policy focuses on "reform of institutions instead of building infrastructure" (Malm interview 2006-04-05). To me, the most striking difference is the appearance of the documents – in the newest version, much more effort is put on the design and it signals ambition and extroversion, whereas the previous rather indicates introversion and authority. But even when it comes to the text, notable differences catch the eye of the beholder already at a first glance. The titles differ markedly and indicate that considerable revisions have been

done. The title of the latest document contains the phrase “poverty reduction”, which immediately hints that the Millennium Development Goals have been taken into consideration at the making of the policy. According to the homepage of the Swedish government,

A coherent and concerted policy aimed at equitable and sustainable development in the world is one of Sweden's contributions towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, with the overall goal of halving world poverty by 2015 ([www.sweden.gov.se](http://www.sweden.gov.se)).

This to some extent explains why the 2005 policy differs so much from the 1996 version. Not only the layout, the contents and the rhetoric differs, but the overall goal has somewhat changed. Albeit the 1996 policy is introduced with the words that “The overall aim of Swedish development cooperation is to improve the living standards of the poorest groups of people” it does not show as explicitly as the 2005 edition what Sida stands for, and the phrase is not included. The choice of words in the newest policy clearly shows the link between the Millennium Development Goals, the Swedish government and the governmental organisation Sida. Even if “improve the living standards of the poorest groups of people” probably means the same as “poverty reduction”, the latter is already part of a concept and is a recognisable phrase, easy to connect with the Millennium Development Goals.

### *Words and concepts*

As already mentioned, sustainable development is a concept that functions as a nodal point within the environmental discourse. It has now become a well-known, established concept that determines the status and meaning of other words in the talk about the environment. Sustainable development is also the story-line that unites the former environmental discourse with market principles in the discourse-coalition ecological modernisation. Nevertheless, it is not a fixed moment with an undisputable meaning, why it also has the character of being a discursive element.

Since sustainable development is not mentioned at all in the 2005 energy policy, it cannot be considered a nodal point in the text. This does not mean that it is excluded from the current environmental discourse - the frequent use of the word sustainable throughout the document indicates that the ideas of sustainable development are indirectly omnipresent. As a result of the coining of sustainable development and the numerous meetings on its theme “sustainable” achieved a certain status and can now be used separately as it still carries with it

the principles of sustainable development. As soon as sustainable development was an established concept (even though it still takes on different meanings depending on the user) the word sustainable turned out to be a useful prefix before any word that could need to improve its environmental image, as in “sustainable energy systems”.

The language and the words used in the text differ markedly in the two policy documents. What characterises the 1996 document in relation to the newest policy is the frequent use of many well-known words and expression from the environment rhetoric from the 1990’s. The polluter-pays-principle, the precautionary principle, and environmentally-sound are all expressions that appear in the older document but not once in the newer. The choice of words has changed and been revised and new words and expressions have replaced them. What is difficult is to see which of the newer ones that are the most important and how long they will be up to date as they are part of an ongoing ever-changing discourse. A careful suggestion is that words like “modern energy”, “sustainable energy systems” and “capacity development” are increasingly achieving popularity, if not elsewhere, then at least at Sida. In order to achieve this information one has to step out of the discourse, which is always difficult for a researcher who is part of the discourse he or she wants to study.

The overall impression is that the 1996 document focuses more on the environment and on renewable resources, whereas the 2005 document puts health and development issues first. This can be illustrated with the fact that the word “environmentally-sound” appears more than three times in the 1996 version, whereas it is not mentioned at all in the document from 2005. The latter, on the other hand, talks about “modern energy” in eight places – and that expression is not even introduced in the 1996 version.

“Modern energy” basically means fossil fuels, preferably “clean” ones like smokeless coal, LPG<sup>14</sup>, kerosene or natural gas (World Energy Council 2006). The word “modern energy” is not (yet) included in the big dictionaries, but is frequently used by the World Bank, the UNDP, Sida and other organisations that cope with development and energy, and thus an important part of today’s energy discourse. “Modern energy” has of course not replaced “environmentally-sound”, as they are completely different words describing different phenomena. Still, the exclusion of the word environmentally-sound and introduction of modern energy bears evidence of a change towards a development-biased view rather than an environmental perspective. This is not to say that the new policy lacks an environmental dimension, but the emphasis is different than before. A word that must have been excluded from the environment rhetoric before the making of the 1996 energy policy is *solidarity*,

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<sup>14</sup> Liquefied Petroleum Gas

which was frequently used in the 1970's. It is not mentioned once in the two above mentioned documents. Instead there are other words that have taken a central place, as has been described above.

#### *The manifestation of ecological modernisation in the documents*

There is a visible trend within the environmental discourse. At the first global environmental conference in 1972 in Stockholm, economy, environment and society were seen as three separate fields. Twenty years later, in Rio de Janeiro, the three fields were acknowledged as interrelated and it was argued that in order to improve one of the fields, the others imply could not be ignored. Finally, at the latest conference, Johannesburg 2002, environment, economy and society are practically seen as a whole, which can be seen as advantageous, but at the same time involves a risk for details to disappear. Within the discourse of sustainable development, environment is becoming more and more overshadowed by other topics, whereas development increasingly is granted more and more space.

Ecological modernisation is visible in the energy policies in various ways. In the 1996 document an attempt to is made to join the goals of a “healthy economic development” and “care for the environment”. Moreover, development and environmental issues are seen as “parts of a greater whole; respect must be shown for the constraints to development set by nature” (1996:2).

In both documents, market mechanisms are seen as something to strive towards in order to finance the required investments for an energy modernisation. Anne-Charlotte Malm describes this ambition roughly being a necessity. She says that the governments of the receiving countries are scarce on economic resources and would rather prioritise health care and education. Development cooperation can only provide economic assistance to a small extent. The main part of the money must for that reason come from private investors (Malm interview 2006-04-05).

#### *The view of energy sources in the policies*

In the 1996 policy, there seems to have been a strong wish to exclude fossil fuels from the development aid. Instead, focus lies heavily on renewable sources such as hydropower, biomass-fuels, and solar energy. Even so, the negative aspects of large-scale hydro-power projects are presented to a larger extent than in the latest policy. Fossil fuels are not

completely eliminated from the arena, however. The policy says that “Investment support for continued or increased use of fossil fuels such as coal and oil can be given *in exceptional cases*” (1996:14 my italics).

In the 2005 policy, the opinion is different. One has realised that if the giving country (Sweden) cannot supply its energy from renewable resources, then how can it demand the receiving country to do so? The idea seems to be that fossil fuels are the entrance to the use of modern energy (like electricity from hydropower f. ex.) and because poverty reduction and development are the main goals, the use of fossil fuels cannot be completely excluded from the scene. The policy states that “Fossil fuels will continue to play a significant role in meeting the world’s energy needs”. There is a wish for efficiency improvement in those cases where fossil fuels are already in use, but where this was seen as a potential risk for delaying the implementation of renewable energy sources in the energy policy of 1996, this document rather focuses on the admittance to use fossil fuels where other alternatives are rejected (2005:6).

The rhetoric is rather about “modern energy” than fossil fuels or electricity in the newest policy. Though modern energy in practice means fossil fuels and electricity, it sounds better to use the word modern energy because it somehow bears within it a promise of a bright(-er) future. The use of modern energy is promoted because one wants the poor to avoid the burning of wood and charcoal, not least to improve the indoor environment and the health of women and children. This will to make these improvements and to change the pattern of living of the affected people in the receiving countries is also an expression of the (implicit?) will to modernise and make other cultures more similar to the western world. The transition from traditional fuels to modern fuels also involves new expenses both for the families and for the environment: firewood is usually collected on commons and modern fuels, are usually not renewable, thus not suitable for the environment.

Although Sida today is more permissive about the use of fossil fuels, this does not mean that there are huge investments on big coal power plants. The idea is to integrate the use of both fossil fuels and renewables and make them complement each other. In Tanzania, much of the electricity comes from hydro-power, but during draught, when the water-levels are low, fossil natural gas from off the coast is used instead (Larsson interview 2006-04-05).

Fossil fuels are not the only energy source discussed in the energy policies. The document from 1996 presents a list of different energy sources and their respective environmental impact. Renewable energy covers the main part of the two pages and even though they are considered preferable, possible environmental impact is taken into account.

This is what the 2005 policy says about renewable energy: “Sida gives priority to support for increased utilisation of renewable energy sources. At first priority, whenever possible, long-term sustainable solutions will be considered” (2005:6). Since the newer policy is considerably shorter than the older it would be wrong to compare the amount of words spent on the issue of renewables. Hydropower is separately mentioned throughout the document and its potentials as well as its possible risks are mentioned. Nevertheless, there was a clearer interest for renewable energy sources in the 1996 policy.

When it comes to nuclear power, Sida has not changed its view during the time between the makings of the two most recent policies – they do not support this kind of energy.

### *Ideological tendencies and the future*

Today, ecological modernisation is present almost everywhere. Every institution or company with self-respect needs to have some kind of environmental guidelines or policy. It does not always seem to be so important what is actually written in it, or what action is being taken, but the main idea is to have a document ready if somebody was there to ask about it. To actually have an environmental policy is part of the ecological modernisation. In the case of Sida, the energy policy has a more specific function than that, because energy is intimately connected with the environment. What is interesting, however, is that Sida’s main goal is development aid, not environmental protection, but that still much effort is put into the making of policy documents concerning the environment. In this case, there is something even more interesting: the document from 1996 has a clear “green” view with focus on renewable energy and environmental protection, but the design of the policy appears to be mainly for internal use and the centre of attention lies on the contents rather than the appearance. Nine years later the focus is less on environmental protection and more on poverty reduction, but the design of the policy document is much more sophisticated, and also meant for an external reader. From a cynical view, the result seems to be that the appearance is more important than the contents.

Compared to earlier energy politics, these two policies tend to more firmly embrace ecological modernisation. As ecological modernisation is rather rooted in the ideology of development rather than ecology despite its name, it must be easier for policy-makers to act within its principles. Environmental matters are important on the paper, but in practice, there seems to be no need to overdo environmental activities.

Comparing the two policies further enforces the notion that there is a trend towards development and modernisation rather than care for nature. Since Sida is a development agency, this should not seem too strange – the name implies that focus lies on development issues before environmental ones. The difference is that while it was possible to distinguish a deeper environmental concern in the 1996 policy, the document from 2005 implemented environmental matters in a more general manner. Environmental matters are built-in and do not appear as certain issues to be treated separately. This is a common trend today. Close to all institutions have environmental policies and the whole concept is becoming rather watered-down.

There is a visible difference both between these policies and the past (the 1970's) and a difference between the two policies internally. The conclusions that I can draw from these documents is that there is a trend where environmental issues are being more and more integrated in other issues, which leads to an ever more watered-down concept and there is a risk that environmental concerns are being lost in their own rhetoric. The more they are discussed, the less substantial they will become. On the other hand, the alternative of simply excluding environmental matters from policies would be inconsiderable. I believe it *is* very positive that companies and institutions all seem to worry about the environment, so what is important today is to not lose this opportunity for a change towards a better society but to work for a consolidation of the meaning of concepts like sustainable development in order to avoid a situation where all the nice words have turned into empty rhetoric. Since there now is a common language in the shape of ecological modernisation and sustainable development, this opportunity to communicate should not be lost, but be seized and used in ways that are favourable for nature and the environment and, subsequently, for humanity.

### **Where is the power?**

Sida is a governmental organisation, which means that it is subordinated to the ruling government, at present the social democrats. Even though the same government has been in charge when both the old and the new policy have been created, the politics have changed. This change might be explained with the increasingly hegemonic status of ecological modernisation.

The emphasis in the energy policies seems to have moved from the environment to health and social issues. Is this part of the shift in the overall rhetoric in today's (Swedish) development aid and view of sustainable development? As sustainable development includes

both the conservation of the environment and the protection of people's health and the improvement of living standards for the poor, it leaves a lot of space to shift the focus of what it means without having to change words. Sustainable development can mean one thing one year and something rather different the next.

### **Swedish profits**

In the directions of how Sida's work should be accomplished, it is expressed that the aid should be "independent". Independent implies that the development cooperation not is to be seen as a strategic market research and a way for Swedish companies to force their labour and competence upon the receiving country. This also theoretically means that any company from throughout the world could come into consideration when a new project is initiated. If there is competence and technology within the receiving country, these should be involved first, not least to follow the goal to make the receiving country independent and economically growing. If not, then Sida will try to use Swedish competence despite the above idea that development cooperation is to be independent. There are two strong sides pulling at different ends of the Swedish developing agency – the goal that all help should be independent, and the Swedish trade and industry that always works for the best of Sweden – that is, to always promote Swedish firms wherever possible. The idea seems to be that if there are any foreign (i.e. from another than the receiving country) companies involved they should at least be Swedish.

To evade contradictions, Sida hence tries to work within sectors where Sweden already has a developed technology and competent firms ready to take on new projects abroad. These sectors are for example infrastructure; energy and electricity amongst other things (Larsson interview 2006-04-05). In the energy policy from 1996 is written that "Sida shall identify and, in appropriate ways, support technology areas where there are mutual benefits for Swedish interests and cooperating countries' need for environmentally-sound energy systems" (1996: 15). This is not explicitly mentioned in the 2005 policy.

## Concluding discussion

Energy politics seem to follow the environmental discourse. The more environmental issues become integrated in the work of institutions, companies and politics, the less substantial they become. The green movement managed to interest authorities for environmental questions, but the price was a watered-down concept. My conclusion is that sustainable development has become a key-phrase in the environmental discourse that today is hegemonised by ecological modernisation. Everybody has heard of sustainable development and every enterprise with self-respect says that their company is sustainable in one way or another. It has a certain positive ring to it and it is easy to define it after your own purpose as the meaning of it is ever changing, vague and open. The case with the ecological modernisation idea is different. It is the discourse in which we are moving and acting. Since it is a discourse we are trapped within its rules and frames and it is hard to perceive that we are doing so. We are all acting within its concepts and frames, but rather without knowing it. Ecological modernisation is the frame and sustainable development is how it is carried out in practice, even though there is no real congruence in the meaning of the phrase. Nowadays the expression “sustainable development” is not necessarily used in its entirety, (if general conclusions can be drawn from Sida’s latest energy policy) but the word “sustainable” is extremely popular. A general wish for eternity can be traced here. But the repeated use of a word whose meaning is only vaguely defined can also be dangerous.

An interesting point on policies is made by Karl Mallon. He states that “a policy framework may fall victim to a civic backlash if it has sustainability as one of its key motivations but is seen to be exploited for outcomes that are non-sustainable or result in a net loss for the environment” (Mallon 2006:49). It may lead to large social and political problems. This is worth thinking of when considering the mix of renewable energy sources and fossil fuels. Maybe it is not adequate to label a policy “Sustainable energy services” like the latest Sida energy policy if non-renewable energy sources are promoted to a large extent. It is always easy to label something “sustainable” without considering the consequences. It is understandable that the inclusion of the word “sustainable” can increase the credibility and popularity of a document, but unless there is much certainty of the fulfilment of the policy it is always a risk to use such words. On the other hand, who is actually controlling that the principles are being followed? And what is the real meaning of sustainable in these days? In the above quotation, Mallon refers to large hydroelectric projects that are risky because of the impacts of flooding and river-flow disruption.

Even if development cooperation is one of the central themes of this text, the aims of this thesis are not to argue pro or contra development aid or cooperation, but to examine how the energy view is in a development agency. Nevertheless, the results of development cooperation are interesting in themselves. Development cooperation is often seen as a generous gesture or a dutiful act from the rich to the poor. What I find particularly fascinating is that there is no real proof that development aid is actually helping. The “third-world” countries that have managed to rise and develop economically in the last ten years have not done so by receiving aid, but rather from being competitive on the global market and offering services that are needed or wished for. Kjell Larsson at IF, Sida, commented that even if Africa has been target for development cooperation ever since the aid projects started decades ago, this is still where most of the effort needs to be put (Larsson interview 2006-04-05). This could be a warning signal for the whole concept of development aid. Is aid the cure or is there something else that should be changed? If the strongest uprising countries are those who best fit into the market system, is the best recipe then to force the market upon the ones that cannot handle it if there are still countries that might never be able to do so? On the other hand, Jan Nederveen Pieterse has a point: “less market participation does not necessarily imply more social participation” (2001:101).

In a recent article Kenneth Hermele (2006) discusses the dichotomy of two, as he writes, equally good things: equity and global sustainability. He argues that the current strive for economic growth in the developing parts of the world cannot be combined with sustainability - we can only have one of the two. The reason for this rather gloomy message is that equity for developing countries is defined in terms of economic development with carbon dioxide emissions and environmental degradation as its primary consequences. Sustainability demands that the North will mitigate its environmental strain to such levels that the ecosystems will survive, but Hermele does not believe in this since the USA refuse to participate in the Kyoto protocol and developing countries are not obliged to any emission reduction. He also doubts that the North will limit their lifestyles to an extent that the rest of the world can share the common resources in order to achieve justice. It seems as if Hermele’s message rather is that we can have neither of the two goods if we do not radically change our way of living.

Development cooperation can be seen as an attempt to achieve equity but it is subordinated the same sustainability demands as other businesses which is why for example Sida tries to combine exactly what Hermele considers incompatible, namely justice and sustainability. On the other hand, what could be traced in this thesis was that the objective of

Swedish development cooperation leans more towards equity, in the form of poverty reduction, rather than towards environmental protection, which can be seen as an insight that these two goals are difficult to combine. There are however still sustainability goals, but due to the weakening of the word “sustainability” they risk to become subordinated. In general there are oppositions between the protection of the environment and poverty reduction, principally because poverty reduction is deeply linked with economic development, which today leads to environmental degradation. Wolfgang Sachs has also seen the connection between justice and development and notices that the Rio declaration pronounces the right to development before the need for environmental protection. He states that “the essence of sustainability is found in a particular relationship between people and people rather than between people and nature” (Sachs 1999:159f).

Many see the environment as a new source for economic development. It is true that there will be work opportunities and new fields for companies to act within and it is also important that the work that needs to be done is carried out by somebody. There is however a risk with this thinking. The idea that environmental depletion creates work may not be long-term “sustainable”. There are also similarities between the environmental field of work and development cooperation. Nederveen Pieterse comments on the way that poverty for some has come to be a resource for others, i.e. the people performing development aid. Poverty alleviation truly *is* a delicate question, especially when it is to be combined with environmental protection.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Supporting interview questions

How do you define development?

In what way do you think that is positive?

How does Sweden profit from development aid?

Are you acquainted with the environmental Kuznetz-curve?

What does sustainable development mean to Sida?

Why has Sida produced a new energy policy?

How often do you do that?

How well was the latest policy followed?

Is there any practical plan of action?

Within this policy, focus lies heavily on a competitive energy market. Why is that?

What is Sida's opinion on economic development contra sustainable development?

Can both be possible?

The policy says that fossil fuels will still play an important role for developing countries in the future. What will happen if oil prices suddenly rise?

Could it be cheaper with renewable energy sources?

How is Sida's attitude towards large-scale dam-projects?

During the 2004 workshop prior to the making of the latest policy the question was raised who stands behind the strong wish to electrify the third world. Was there ever an answer?



Policy for

# Sida's Assistance to a Sustainable Energy Sector

April 1996



Department for Infrastructure and  
Economic Cooperation, INEC



POLICY

# Sustainable Energy Services

FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

