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Practice to the Goals
of Sustainable
Development***

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to focus and further develop the issue of “environmental policy integration” as an essential element of governance for sustainable development. Emphasis is placed on the “governmental” aspect of sectoral integration, relying primarily on a traditional model of the “executive branch” as an administrative instrument for legislative policy implementation. After first stipulating an understanding of “sustainable development goals”, the paper then develops the concept of sectoral policy integration by first looking at the “mandate” for the “environmental” or “ecological” element of sustainable development. This is followed by a brief overview of conceptual work on the concept, which leads into a two-dimensional approach whereby “environmental policy integration” (EPI) is divided into its “horizontal” (HEPI) and “vertical” (VEPI) components. The paper then goes on to look at recent studies of governance for sustainable development in an attempt to highlight institutional and procedural criteria for more integrated policy-making.

THE GOALS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Within an OECD context, the policy challenges of “sustainable development” have been formulated as a need for a better balance between the “ecological, social and economic” aspects of welfare provision. The “key concepts” of sustainable development are viewed in terms of capital substitution between man-made, natural, human and social capital (OECD 2001a: 6), and the “highlighted policy elements” are identified as: “long-term planning horizons, pricing, the delivery of public goods, cost-effectiveness, environmental effectiveness, policy integration, precaution, international co-operation, and transparency and accountability” (OECD 2001a: 8).

Relating these distinctions to the problem of governance, we can say that an initial understanding of the goal of sustainable development is to achieve greater environmental effectiveness through cost-effective policy integration, and that this can be realized by employing differing combinations of the other policy elements. Given further, however, that “environmental effectiveness” is a very general idea, we can stipulate the goal more closely by identifying the idea with what the OECD identifies as a “key challenge” of sustainable development: the “de-coupling” of environmental pressures from economic growth:

The interaction between economic growth and the natural environment that supports it lies at the core of sustainable development. Economic growth contributes to higher levels of human well being, and provides the resources to address a range of environmental objectives. However, economic growth can also lead to excessive degradation of environmental and natural resources – when incentives to their use are inappropriate and external effects are not internalised. Historically, economic growth has meant transforming much of societies’ stocks of natural resources into other forms of capital. Today, maintaining functioning ecosystems that can support economic and social development is recognised as crucial for development to last, especially when no substitutes are available. (OECD 2001a: 9)

With de-coupling as the key challenge of sustainable development, and policy integration as a designated tool for meeting the challenge, the specific task for adapting government practice to sustainable development becomes a better, more operational, understanding of how policy integration can contribute to de-coupling.

As this approach implies a delimitation of sustainable development in favour of the interaction between environment and economics – with relatively little focus on the social element – it is important to make the choice explicit. While there can be no doubt that sustainable development stipulates an interdependency and balance between environmental, economic *and* social factors, this does not mean that it is necessary to treat all three aspects equally in an attempt at conceptual clarification and operational improvement. To the contrary, many of the assessments of cross-sectoral policy integration for sustainable development indicate that an insistence on “all or nothing” usually ends up with the latter. Here, as in so many other areas of normative politics, a purist insistence on trying to achieve the idealized goal can prove an enemy of progressive knowledge and change.

I will here argue, therefore: (1) that the general “environmental” or “ecological” element of sustainable development is the most fundamental aspect – the one without which the concept loses its distinctness; (2) that the notion of “de-coupling” implies a necessary interdependency between environment and economics; and (3) that aspects of social welfare and equity can be held in abeyance at the present stage of conceptual-operational discourse. So as to make these priorities clear – as well as lay the groundwork for a more nuanced

discussion of the integration problematic – we can stipulate a “three-component” understanding of sustainable development goals, with “de-coupling” primarily a question of “integrating” the first two components (Box 1).

BOX 1: BASIC GOAL COMPONENTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The environmental component:

Consisting of three major aspects (phases) of normative environmental politics:

- nature conservation
- environmental protection
- ecological balance

The economic component:

Consisting of the key elements of the Brundtland/UNCED goal of a “qualitatively” different mode of (“sustainable”) economic development:

- eco-efficiency
- sustainable consumption

The social (equity) component:

Consisting of four equitable distributions of individual life chances to satisfy objectively defined “basic needs”:

- national social equity
- national generational equity
- global social equity
- global generational equity

The general orientation of the OECD towards sustainable development rests on a posited relationship between modes of “over” and “under” development on the one hand, and modes of “degradation of environmental and natural resources” on the other. The pursuit of sustainable development goals thus far, however, has proved that the postulated causality of this relationship is extremely difficult to “enforce” politically. We need only mention the extensive efforts of the International Panel on Climate Change in trying to achieve a consensus on the causes and effects of greenhouse gasses to make the point. Discussions as to the validity of the panel’s findings still continue at the margins of scientific discourse; and politicians continue to play traditional party-political “games” with climate policy, despite the enormous resources that have gone into the documentation and dissemination of the causal framework.

The case for pursuing sustainable development (“de-coupling”) through a better integration of environmental considerations in sectoral policies requires, therefore, stronger political support than that which can be derived from the posited causal relationship alone. While the latter can be said to reflect the “realist” school of ethical thinking, in which scientific data and arguments are mobilized to create moral pressure for change, there is also the possibility of mobilizing arguments from the so-called “consensual” school of ethics (Lafferty 1996). Indeed, one could argue that the pursuit of sustainable development in democratic regimes requires that *primary* consideration be given to consensual ethics.

Or, to state this in another way, the first task of adapting government to sustainable development is to clarify and propagate the democratic “mandate” for goal-directed change. In the present case, we need not repeat the general commitment of all OECD countries to the goals adopted at the Rio Earth Summit; or the clear commitment of the European Union

and its member states to the recently updated SD goals of the Gothenburg meeting of the European Council. What is of clear interest, however, is a stipulation of the more specific commitments to sectoral policy integration: not only for the sake of political-ethical legitimacy, but also to document the core ideas underlying both the goal of “de-coupling” and the means sectoral integration.

The Brundtland Report

First we can look at three statements from Chapter 12 of the Brundtland Report (most appropriately entitled: “Towards Common Action: Proposals for Institutional and Legal Change”). It should be remembered in this connection, that the Brundtland Report (WCED 1987, *Our Common Future*) is the definitive source for the understanding of sustainable development underlying both the Rio Accords and the follow-up process monitored by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD).

Approaches to environmental policy can be broadly characterized in two ways. One, characterized as the “standard agenda”, reflects an approach to environmental policy, laws, and institutions that focuses on environmental effects. The second reflects an approach concentrating on the policies that are the sources of those effects. These two approaches represent distinctively different ways of looking both at the issues and at the institutions to manage them. (WCED 1987: 310)

The ability to choose policy paths that are sustainable requires that the ecological dimensions of policy be considered at the same time as the economic, trade, energy, agricultural, industrial, and other dimensions – on the same agendas and in the same national and international institutions. That is the chief institutional challenge of the 1990s. (WCED 1987: 313)

Sustainable development objectives should be incorporated in the terms of reference of those cabinet and legislative committees dealing with national economic policy and planning as well as those dealing with key sectoral and international policies. As an extension of this the major central economic and sectoral agencies of governments should now be made directly responsible and fully accountable for ensuring that their policies, programmes, and budgets support development that is ecologically as well as economically sustainable. (WCED 1987: 314)

Agenda 21

Second, we can list a series of “objectives” from Chapter 8 of *Agenda 21*: “Integrating Environment and Development in Decision-Making”. The statements chosen are from the two most relevant sub-sections of the chapter: (A) Integrating environment and development at the policy, planning and management levels, and (D) Establishing systems for integrated environmental and economic accounting. Though the general ideas here are well known in an OECD context, it is worthwhile to have them spelled out in detail. (The sequence has been altered to reflect the logic of constitutional governance.):

Governments, in cooperation, where appropriate, with international organizations, should adopt a strategy for sustainable development based on, inter alia, the implementation of decisions taken at the [Rio] Conference, particularly in respect of Agenda 21. This strategy should build upon and harmonize the various sectoral economic, social and environmental policies and plans that are operating in the country. (Para. 8.7)

[To adopt] a domestically formulated policy framework that reflects a long-term perspective and cross-sectoral approach as the basis for decisions, taking account of the linkages between and within the various political, economic, social and environmental issues involved in the development process. (Para 8.4.b)

[To improve] the use of data and information at all stages of planning and management, making systematic and simultaneous use of social, economic, developmental, ecological and environmental data: analysis should stress interactions and synergisms; a broad range of analytical methods should be encouraged so as to provide various points of view. (Para 8.5.a)

[To develop] systems for monitoring and [evaluating] progress towards achieving sustainable development by adopting indicators that measure changes across economic, social and environmental dimensions. (Para 8.6)

[To adopt] comprehensive analytical procedures for prior and simultaneous assessment of the impacts of decisions, including the impacts within and among the economic, social and environmental spheres. These procedures should extend beyond the project level to policies and programmes, [and] analysis should include an assessment of costs, benefits and risks. (Para8.5.b)

To expand existing systems of national economic accounts in order to integrate environment and social dimensions in the accounting framework, including at least satellite systems of accounts for natural resources. The resulting systems of integrated environmental and economic accounting (IEEA) to be established in all member States at the earliest date, and should be seen as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, traditional national accounting practices for the foreseeable future. IEEA would be designed to play an integral part in the national development decision-making process. National accounting agencies should work in close collaboration with national environmental statistics as well as the geographic and natural resource departments. (Para 8.42)

[To monitor and evaluate] the development process systematically and [conduct] regular reviews of the state of human resources development, economic and social conditions and trends and the state of the environment and natural resources. This could be complemented by annual environment and development reviews, with a view to assessing sustainable development achievements by the various sectors and departments of governments. (Para 8.4.d)

[To ensure] transparency of, and accountability for, the environmental implications of economic and sectoral policies. (Para 8.4.e)

The European Union

Finally, there is the very specific recognition of the sectoral-integration challenge within the European Union. Here it should be sufficient to mention only three aspects of the current work in this area.

First, there is Article 6 of the Treaty of the European Community, which explicitly states that:

Environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Community policies and activities referred to Article 3 [listing the full range of Community activities] in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.

Second, there is the entire “Cardiff Process”. Initiated by the Luxembourg European Council in December 1997, and elevated to a full-scale EU programme at the Council meeting in Cardiff, June 1998, the goal here is that “all relevant Council configurations” are to develop “their own strategies for integrating environment and sustainable development into their respective policy areas”. Originally directed towards three key sectors and their respective directorates – Transportation, Energy and Agriculture – the mandate has later been expanded to include: Development Aid, the Internal Market, Industry and Enterprise, General Affairs, Economics and Finance, and Fisheries.

We will return to the more substantive aspects of the process later, but here it is relevant to cite the conclusion of one of the more recent evaluation reports. Having reviewed the “level of legal and political commitment” supporting the initiative, the report concludes that:

In summary . . . the Cardiff Process can be characterised as binding and committing. Legally, the binding nature is rather weak, but the political commitment is strong. There was a clearly expressed will at the start, which was reinforced at various levels throughout the whole process. Of significant importance are the various self-commitments of the Council configurations to further refine or revise the strategies, and the work packages delegated to the European Commission or specific working groups.” (Kraemer 2001: 33)

Finally, we can mention the most recent endorsement in the form of the high-profile EU “Strategy for Sustainable Development”. Authored directly by the office of the President of the

EU Commission, and presented to the European Council in Gothenburg in June 2001, the strategy states that:

The process of integration of environmental concerns in sectoral policies, launched by the European Council in Cardiff, must continue and provide an environmental input to the EU Sustainable Development strategy, similar to that given for the economic and social dimensions by the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines and the Employment Guidelines. The sectoral environmental integration strategies should be consistent with the specific objectives of EU Sustainable Development strategy. (CEC 2001: 14).

This combination of general goals and more specific objectives can be seen as a set of minimal “external” standards for adapting “government practice” to sustainable development (i.e. standards formulated and adopted in political bodies “external” to the nation state). The importance of these standards is that they establish the democratic-political legitimacy of the policy-integration task; a legitimacy which our recent comparative analysis of SD implementation in 9 OECD countries and the European Union indicates is vitally necessary if sectoral integration is to be taken seriously and pursued effectively within the realm of “normal” national politics (Lafferty and Meadowcroft 2000).

Despite this relatively specific focus and broad-based support, however, the notion of policy integration for sustainable development has not been adequately developed conceptually, nor has it been the subject of comprehensive scientific analysis. As recently summarized in the *Manual of Environmental Policy* (IEEP 2001):

Despite a progressive commitment to environmental integration, relatively little attention has been given to defining the concept. There is a confusing variety of methods for taking more account of environmental factors in the development of sectoral policies.

This situation possibly reflects the fact that the concept implies a relatively strong revision of the traditional hierarchy of policy objectives, where environmental goals and values historically have tended to be ranked below issues of national security, economics and finance, labour relations, education and welfare. This indicates an apparent failure of the discussion to appreciate the extent to which the concept forms part of a broader political process; a process that provides for a revision of the traditional hierarchy of policy objectives, with the portrayal of environmental objectives as central, if not principal. A conceptual clarification of this point emerges as a central prerequisite for further empirical work on sectoral integration.

The next two sections are devoted, therefore, to: first, developing a more systematic framework for presenting and analysing relevant integration dimensions; and, second, elaborating on the meaning of the framework by relating it to results of recent studies of the governance-through-integration challenge.

THE CONCEPT OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY INTEGRATION (EPI)

The integration of environmental concerns into other policy areas has been diversely referred to as “environmental integration”, “environmental policy integration”, “sectoral integration”, or simply “integrating the environment into..., etc.” In this paper we follow Lenschow (1997, 1999) and use the term “environmental policy integration” – EPI . The way in which EPI differs from the other terms depends on how each is defined and understood. For the purposes of this paper we will take EPI to be understood as a term that for all intents and purposes covers the other environmental integration-related concepts.

One disadvantage with EPI is that it may be taken to signify an environmental policy objective that is more limited than the broader agenda for “sustainable development”. As pointed out, however, EPI will here be used as an operational “shorthand” for the environmental or ecological “core” of the sustainable development idea. Where necessary, we will differentiate between the sub-tasks and goals of sustainable development as outlined in Box 1.

As indicated, despite the emphasis on EPI in the development of European environmental policy, most of the conceptual treatments are relatively “diffuse”.¹ For example, Lenschow (1999) discusses environmental policy integration briefly in the introductory section to her work on the EU’s common agricultural (CAP) and structural funds, outlining (with reference to Hey, 1996) different strategies for policy integration. Yet these strategies are linked to differing conceptions of EPI, with some representing no more than traditional, “first generation”, environmental policies (points 1 and 2 in Box 1) (Lenschow, 1999: 92). Hence, a discussion of strategy here masks an unresolved differentiation of concepts, leaving us with little more than a stipulation of the idea of environmental policy integration itself. At a much earlier date, Underdal (1980) discussed policy integration in general, but had relatively little to say on environmental policy. (As we will show below, however, his analysis is vital to a further clarification of the environmental aspect of the concept.)

Liberatore (1997) has provided what is probably the most frequently cited text on the question, but her usage of “integration” covers a number of features of environmental policymaking which are less useful in delineating the type of “value-added” conceptual differentiation referred to above. She discusses, for example, integration with respect to issues, sectors, organization, space and time, distributive elements and instruments, without drawing out the specific implications of the “issues-and-sectors” aspect. Integration across space and time, for example, relates to matters of intergenerational justice and international cooperation that preclude a more precise operational understanding of the environmental/ecological dimension.

Ute Collier’s work on EPI serves as a more valuable point of departure in this regards, since she is one of the very few who have addressed the nature of the concept distinct from its application in everyday policy discourses. She offers a three-point definition of the objectives of environmental policy integration (Collier, 1994: 36) as follows:

¹ This section builds largely on Lafferty and Hovden (2001), which also includes a more comprehensive overview of the conceptual literature.

- to achieve sustainable development and prevent environmental damage
- to remove contradictions between policies as well as within policies
- to realise mutual benefits and the goal of making policies mutually supportive

These three points serve as a useful “preface” to a more precise formulation.

Sustainable development and/or environmental degradation: Collier’s formulation is in line with general policy guidelines in the OECD and EU, where the integration problematic is formulated as a question of preventing environmental degradation *as an integral part of the pursuit of sustainable development*. As argued above, this is an integral part of the sustainable development agenda – but does not immediately contribute to conceptual clarification. Objectives such as the “polluter-pays-principle” or the “precautionary principle” both point, for example, towards the realisation of broad environmental objectives (such as sustainable development), but this does not tell us much about what these principles entail in terms of policy integration. An understanding of the latter requires more specific criteria for when EPI is in force.

Contradiction between and within policies: This point is effectively a question of policy coordination (or “coherence”), which is a valuable aspect of the discussion, but which, again, contributes little on its own to a clarification of the unique feature of EPI. As Collier herself point out, all good policymaking would involve a high level of policy coordination. Yet, she does not elaborate on the consequences of this, namely that if we are trying to say something about the essence of the principle of EPI (i.e., what enables us to distinguish it out from environmental policymaking in general), then policy-coordination or the removal of contradictions between policies as such is not very helpful. EPI is, of course, about policy coordination in that it entails an adjustment of non-environmental policy to a better achieve of environmental objectives, but the essential point is to portray the process in a way that captures the essence of environmental priorities. This requires a specific *type* of policy coordination that is to be operationalised in demonstrable intra-sectoral terms.

Mutual benefits and interactions: This point is perhaps the most problematic in Collier’s (and many other’s) treatment. It concerns the realisation of mutual benefits. Two points should be noted: First, it is again quite clear that anyone seeking to pursue *any* policy objective would seek to point out benefits not only for the “home” sector, but also for other sectors, as this would be a central element of a successful policy. In other words, what is being described is once again a feature of any good policymaking strategy. While this may be a useful aspect of EPI as well, it does not point towards a distinct purpose for EPI.

Second, while it is clear that there are many “win-win” cases where mutual benefits can be realised, it is equally clear that the idea that this is the *dominant* feature of environmental policymaking is contestable to say the least. This is something that Collier recognises explicitly, yet the implications of this recognition are not drawn out – and it is an implication that permeates much of the practical discourse on EPI. Difficulties encountered with the operationalisation of sustainable development in Western Europe *could*, for example, be the result of policymakers’ inability to see and realise mutual benefits. And if this were the case, a better and more enlightened view of all policy sectors would clearly be an important aspect of the solution. An equally plausible and highly relevant case can be made, however, to the effect that there are numerous very real conflicts of interests with respect to many

environmental issues.² Indeed, in a recent study, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has outlined a list of potential conflicts of objectives that may emerge as a result of attempts at increased EPI, and it seems clear that these types of conflict cannot be "assumed away" (SEPA, 1999: 41-48). A primary focus on the search for "mutual benefits" may, in other words, draw attention away from the fact that environmental policy often affects certain interests in a negative manner, and in ways that are clearly not susceptible to easy mitigation.³ In this light, the attempt to identify EPI with (primarily) a search for mutual benefits serves only to underplay numerous vital challenges inherent in the integration ("de-coupling") objective.

In sum, while Collier's definition clearly places the principle of EPI in a fruitful and very relevant policy context, the approach comes up short in providing a more precise analytical concept.

Probing this particular issue further, we can turn to one of the earliest treatments of the policy integration problematic: Arild Underdal's article on marine policy from 1980. Even though Underdal deals with policy integration in general, and not with environmental policy integration per se, his approach clearly stipulates what makes an integrated policy different from other forms of policymaking.

For a policy to be "integrated", three criteria need to be satisfied: *comprehensiveness*, *aggregation*, and *consistency* (Underdal, 1980: 159). "Comprehensiveness" refers to a breadth of time, space, actors and issues; "aggregation" to the evaluation of policy from an "overall" perspective, (i.e. *not* merely from the perspective of a particular actor or issue area); and "consistency" implies that the different components of an integrated (i.e. aggregated and comprehensive) policy are in accord with each other. The latter requirement applies across different departments and different levels of governance.

Underdal then defines an integrated policy as one where: "all significant consequences of policy decisions are recognised as decision premises, where policy options are evaluated on the basis of their effects on some aggregate measure of utility, and where the different policy elements are in accord with each other" (Underdal, 1980: 162).

Translating the basic logic of this formulation into terms of direct relevance for EPI, we can say that environmental policy integration implies:

- the incorporation of environmental objectives into all stages of policymaking in non-environmental policy sectors, with a specific recognition of this goal as a guiding principle for the planning and execution of policy;
- accompanied by an attempt to aggregate presumed environmental consequences into an overall evaluation of policy, and a commitment to minimise contradictions between environmental and sectoral policies by giving priority to the former over the latter.

As indicated, the definition has two dimensions. The first dimension is the actual definition of the integration principle: it incorporates a combination of the general statement put forth by Collier (1994) with the more specified definition of Underdal (1980). It refers to the general

² As the Brundtland report recognises: "The search for common interests would be less difficult if all development and environment problems had solutions that would leave everyone better off. This is seldom the case, and there are usually winners and losers" (WCED, 1987: 48)

³ The European uproar about petrol prices in September 2000 is a good example in this respect: European consumers protested at the price of petrol, a price made up significantly of environmental taxes. European consumers here pay for environmental protection (integrating the environmental costs of emissions into the price of petrol) through higher petrol prices, and it is difficult here to see any undiscovered "mutual benefit", except in the very the long term. There is no undiscovered good, most reasonably enlightened European citizen will know that this policy has a long term benefit, yet it has a definite cost in the short term.

category of “environmental objectives”, which could be sustainable development or any other desired environmental policy discourse. Further, it specifies what the integration principle actually implies in terms of policymaking; namely that the environmental objectives need to be part of the fundamental premises for policymaking at all stages. It specifies, thereby, initial criteria for claiming that a specific policy is environmentally integrated.

The second part of the definition may at first sight appear superfluous, since the initial integration principle should be quite clear. It is here, however, that we face the crucial issue in defining EPI: the *relative importance* of sectoral and environmental objectives. Most discussions of EPI assume either that the environmental and non-environmental objectives should be balanced, or that any conflicts between the objectives can be resolved to the satisfaction of all affected interests. Yet looking at the broader context and history of the integration discussion, it is quite clear that this assumption cannot be maintained. We would argue that the whole point of EPI is, at the very least, to avoid situations where environmental objectives becoming subsidiary, and – in the broader purview of sustainable development – to ensure that they become principal or overarching societal objectives. This is arguably *the* essential difference between “environmental policy integration” and “policy integration” conceived more generally, and requires, therefore, further elaboration.

Integration as a question of priorities

In her work on the integration of environmental concerns in energy policies in Europe, Collier (1994) sets out a framework for integration where environmental, energy-centred and economic concerns are presented as three sides of a triangle. Policy integration is placed in the middle of the triangle, where the three objectives are viewed as balanced (Collier, 1994: 254). The issue in question here is the extent to which this representation describes EPI, since there is no sense in which environmental policy objectives are given priority in the policy process. The difference between the two approaches is significant. Given a conflict of specific policy objectives, “policy integration” in Collier’s sense is neutral as to which type of policy prevails in the integration process. Whereas policy integration is portrayed by Collier as the balanced pursuit of all three objectives, policy integration *for sustainable development* consists (in the view presented here) of the integration of environmental concerns *into* other sectoral policies. Whereas the former implies either a neutral balance or an ultimate priority for the given sectoral policy, the latter indicates an underlying priority for the environmental aspect. Collier does discuss an “environment-centred” approach to policymaking, where environmental objectives are given priority, but this is only given a qualified endorsement, leaving the vital question of ultimate priorities open.

And this would seem to be a general characteristic of the EPI-related literature. Integration is viewed as well and good in a very general sense, but the issue of ultimate priorities in the give-and-take of intra-governmental politics, is not confronted. Liberatore (1997), for example, in her much cited discussion of EPI, never really discusses the value hierarchy that, in the present view, logical lies at the heart of *environmental* policy integration. She indicates, of course, that environmental objectives need to be placed in a more influential position in sectoral policies in general, but this is hardly surprising in light of the focus given to the lack of *any* integration in both EU- and UNCED-related decision-making.

Assuming the point to be both crucial and controversial, it can be elaborated in two respects. First, the entire shift in environmental policy discourse over the last couple of decades concerns the prioritisation of environmental policy vis à vis other policy sectors. The

fundamental premise of keynote documents such as the Brundtland Report, Agenda 21, the successive EAP's and strategy documents of the EU, as well as numerous more recent "national strategies for sustainable development" – is that environmental policy must be moved from periphery to centre in regional, national and local decision-making.

Second, this shift must be seen as not just a matter of bringing environmental objectives into the policymaking process in non-environmental sectors in a "balanced" way, but as involving an increasing recognition and acceptance of the fact that the challenge of sustainable development involves the prospect of irreversible damage to life-support systems. This implies that there will be at least *some* environmental/ecological objectives which simply cannot be "balanced" with political goals that challenge the basis for such life-systems. In short, an understanding of the entire historical discourse leading up to, and succeeding, the WCED and UNCED processes, indicates that environmental concerns must – as a general rule – be seen as principal.⁴

So as to illustrate the type of prioritisation in question, let us turn briefly to the current policy "trump" of Western democracies: economic policy. Every policy sector, on every level, needs to take economic factors into consideration in the planning of policy (budgeting), the execution of policy (following budgets), and internal and external evaluation (accounts and auditing). Thus, the objectives of economic policy (e.g. balance of payments, providing for growth, checking inflation, keeping down interest rates, ensuring full employment etc.) are implicitly or explicitly infused in virtually every other policy sector that does not have an explicit responsibility for the economic objectives. This clearly illustrates how the objectives of a given policy sector, in this case under the tutelage of ministries of finance, can influence – and in most cases dominate – policymaking in other sectors that have no explicit responsibility for the "external" objectives.

Drawing a parallel to environmental policy, one can envisage an environmental objective – curbing CO₂ emissions for example – whereby non-environmental sectors would be similarly monitored for compliance with the overriding norm. This would apply to both each individual sector and cumulatively across sectors. There would be a clear stipulation of CO₂ emission targets; a systematic monitoring of sectoral activity to ensure CO₂ emissions did not exceed targets; evaluation procedures to compare actual emissions with the targets; and external auditing to make sure that no-one fiddled with the numbers. Clearly, we are a long way away from such a situation, but the basic notion of EPI is clearly formulated to bring policymaking closer to such an ideal typical situation, and it is this expectation that is given specific expression in the second part of our definition.

Given another major premise of the same discourse, however – that policy priorities should be decided "democratically" – this cannot be taken to mean that environmental objectives must *in every case* override other societal objectives. The caveat *primarily* must, therefore, be included in the definition to open for the very real possibility that other policy objectives will, at times, be deemed more important than environmental concerns. In the words of the Brundtland Report: "every ecosystem everywhere cannot be preserved intact" (WCED, 1987: 44). It is important, therefore, not to define the issue out of such quandaries. The ultimate "trade-off" of EPI is that between existing democratic norms and procedures on the one hand, and the goals and operational necessities of sustainable development on the other. A "strong presupposition" in favour of environmental concerns vis à vis other sectoral

⁴ One of the clearest formulations of this point in an academic context is the argument of Herman Daly (1992) to the effect that issues of "scale" must be given priority over issues of both "allocation" and "distribution".

concerns, cannot be converted to an “extra-democratic” mandate, but it *can* be strengthened. Just how this principle of *prima inter pares* for environmental/ecological concerns can be applied in practice remains one of the most significant challenges of governance for sustainable development. Fortunately – as we will see below – this is a challenge that is being increasingly addressed in various governing contexts worldwide.

Having established a baseline conceptual position on EPI – one that hopefully distinguishes the “value-added” nature of the concept better than alternative approaches – the next task is to translate the logic of the position into more analytically operational terms.

The Dimensions of Environmental Policy Integration

As a basic differentiation for a more concise and operational understanding of the policy-integration challenge, we can distinguish between the *horizontal* and *vertical* dimensions of EPI. The implicit “topography” for these dimensions is the Western model of cabinet governance, with administrative responsibility for societal “sectors” divided among designated departments and ministries. The prototype of the model is the type of democratic national system that emerged in Europe and North America during the 18th and 19th centuries, and which is common today, with numerous variations, in all OECD countries. The same basic division of responsibilities is also found at regional and local levels of democratic governance. We mention this at the outset since the term “sectoral integration” is often used in the literature to denote *both* political-administrative sectors of government, and the actual sectors of society governments are trying to affect. The emphasis here is on the *integration of policymaking as a feature of governmental steering according to differentiated sectoral responsibility*. We are thus focusing primarily on the *institutions, processes and policies* of governments; less on the actual consequences of governance in the sectors themselves.

Vertical environmental policy integration – VEPI – indicates the extent to which a particular governmental sector has taken on board and implemented environmental objectives as central in the portfolio of objectives that the sector continuously pursues. VEPI involves the degree to which a sector has been “greened”; the extent to which it has merged environmental objectives with its characteristic sectoral objectives to form an environmentally prudent decision-making premise in its work. This “greening” does not presuppose an overarching primacy for environmental goals at the cabinet level. Each sector is left free to develop its own understanding of the concept and its implications. The dimension focuses on the degree of EPI *within* the steering domain of the individual department or ministry. This *may* lead to significant EPI in the sector itself, dependent on the level of ministerial commitment and the ability of sectoral officials to balance internally derived environmental priorities with external demands for “normal” sectoral policy outputs, *and* to discover, employ or foster effective means of governance.⁵

As an initial indication of what VEPI entails, we can mention the following general model of operational mechanisms:⁶

⁵ We do not take up the issue of policy instruments here, but have differentiated within the ProSus project between a broad range of governance modes: *rules* (restrictions, guidelines, sanctions, redistribution of rights and advantages, institutionalisation); *economic incentives* (taxes, surcharges, fees, subsidies, other market incentives); *norms* (ideology, “value campaigns”, alternative scenarios); *arguments* (information campaigns, “best-cases”, consensus conferences); *feelings and emotions* (advertising and symbolic communications); and *cooperation* (covenants, charters, voluntary agreements, negotiations, “cooperative management regimes”).

⁶ The list reflects general models of policy implementation (see, for example, Sabatier 1999; Parsons 1995; and Hill 1997); as well as more recent publications on the specific issue (OECD 2001a: Ch. 3, and OECD 2001b: Ch. 4;

- An initial mapping and specification of sectoral activity which identifies major environmental/ecological impacts associated with key actors and processes – including the governmental unit itself (A “report”)
- Establishment of a system of dialogue and consultation with designated principle actors and citizens (A “forum”)
- Formulation of a sectoral strategy for change, with basic principles, goals, targets and timetables (A “strategy”)
- Formulation of a sectoral action plan, with a matching of prioritized goals and target-related policies with designated responsible actors (An “action plan”)
- Integration of the action plan with the sectoral budget and allocations (A “green budget”)
- Development of a strategy-based system for monitoring impacts, implementation processes, and target results, including specified cycles for monitoring reports and revisions of the sectoral strategy and action plan (A “monitoring programme”)

These mechanisms can be viewed as a baseline checklist for VEPI, with the expectation that each can be operationalised and assessed by means of more detailed indicators. They serve to identify basic standards for whether or not a given sector has taken on board the challenge of environmentalist integration. The key initiative in this regard is *the combination of sectoral strategy and action plan*. As indicated, however, both of these elements will be of limited importance if the overall effort fails to properly assess and identify the key environmental challenges for the sector, or if it fails to stipulate realistic targets, benchmarks and measures for objective assessment of implementation results. The possibility of pursuing change without the formal structure of a strategic plan is, of course, possible, but such “ad-hoc” approaches are notoriously “fragile” in the daily workings of sectoral departments where they must compete on an on-going basis with the dominant interests of more traditional sectoral policymaking.

Finally, it is important to stress at this point that the term “vertical” is here used in a *functional, intra-departmental* sense, and not in the sense of a vertical *constitutional* division of powers. The vertical axis of VEPI signifies administrative responsibility “up and down” within the arena of ministerial sectoral responsibility. The imagery is one of public authorities influencing and interacting with sector-specific actors, both individual citizens and collective/“corporate” actors of differing intent and purpose. We stress this because, as previously mentioned, other perspectives on environmental policy integration exist where the “vertical” dimension is related to the integration of environmental concerns into the work of local and regional authorities. This usually takes the form of coordinating policy across different *legal domains*, a discourse which includes the debate on “subsidiarity”, and for which we have specific reservations as to the use of “vertical integration”.⁷

The advantage of this differentiation becomes clearer when we consider the second dimension of EPI: *horizontal environmental policy integration* (HEPI). This is the extent to which a central authority has developed a comprehensive cross-sectoral strategy for EPI.

Wilkinson 1998; IEEP 2001, Ch. 4; EEA 2001, Ch. 4; Lafferty and Meadowcroft 2000); and detailed assessments and project reports (Hertin et al. 2001, Fergusson et al. 2001, and Kraemer 2001).

⁷ There are two reasons for this: (1) There are clear advantages in separating the issue of *policy integration* from the issue of *policy responsibility*. (2) There are several *dis*-advantages in attaching a “vertical” connotation to what is legally a question of the allocation of powers *among domains*, and operationally a question of coordinating policy responsibility *across domains*. The vertical analogy here serves (in a European context at any rate) to reinforce a questionable, and unnecessary, imagery of “top-down steering”.

This “central authority” can be the government (cabinet) itself; or it could be a particular body or commission which has been entrusted with an overarching responsibility for sustainable development; or an inter-ministerial body assigned to handle what are considered to be important overarching issues (such as the EU Commission’s “Prodi-Group” for sustainable development strategy).

In its most essentialist form, HEPI involves the question of the *relative authority* to be associated with environmental/ecological concerns in determining the overall policymaking goals and procedures of the responsible political-administrative unit. If “Who gets what, where, when and how?” is the essence of a political system, the relevant understanding for HEPI is to substitute “environmental interests” for “who”, and to insist on at least equal treatment for the environment vis à vis other competing interests. This entails, of course, the negotiation of conflicts between environmental objectives and other societal objectives; between different sectors pursuing alternative environmental objectives; and between the alternative possible consequences of specific environmental initiatives (that is, environmental “dilemmas”, where the consequences of one “solution” create new and different environmental problems in another direction – treated by economists as “rebound effects”).

Also forming part of the horizontal dimension is the central authority’s communication to the sectors of a more detailed understanding of what the central authority aims to achieve by EPI, and the implications this should have for sectoral policy. Assigning the environment either a privileged place or a place among equals at the sectoral policy table can be communicated through a wide diversity of legal-administrative mechanisms, and the effects on the actual degree of HEPI, both within and across sectors, will vary considerably according to the measures chosen. The “medium” will, in many cases, be the “message”. Assessing the degree of HEPI is thus a question of assessing both the basic mandate for environmental privilege – when and where it is to be regarded as “trump” – as well as the detailed specifics for realising the mandate in and through the workings of public administration.

An initial list of appropriate mechanisms for HEPI would include:

- Constitutional provisions for the special status of environmental/sustainable-development rights and goals
- A long-term sustainable development strategy for the domain (including timetables and targets), with a clear political mandate and backing by the chief executive authority
- The designation of a specific governing body entrusted with the overall coordination, implementation and supervision of the integration process
- Clear communication as to sectoral responsibility for achieving overarching goals
- Designation of sectoral responsibility for achieving sectoral goals through the use of VEPI mechanisms
- Periodical reporting of progress with respect to targets at both the central and sectoral levels
- Specific mechanisms or bodies for resolving conflicts of interest between environmental and other societal objectives

As with the vertical indicators, these should, again, be considered “baseline” requirements for achieving (and assessing) horizontal, cross-sectoral integration of environmental/ecological goals. Other mechanisms will emerge as the discourse on EPI achieves greater prominence among both researchers and practitioners, and as more focused and intensive

empirical studies are carried out. In the following section, we will present a brief overview of existing empirical results within the two-dimensional framework.

RECENT CASE STUDIES IN THE LIGHT OF HEPI-VEPI

The COMPSUS project

The COMPSUS project headed by Lafferty and Meadowcroft (2000) represents the first attempt to analyse the implementation of sustainable development within a comparative, cross-national research design. The question of sectoral integration was treated under several separate analytical categories, and is too comprehensive to be treated in detail here.⁸ Box 2 provides a summary conclusion from the study, and we will here highlight other features of greatest relevance for the two-dimensional mechanisms listed above.

With respect to intra-ministerial integration there is evidence that the processes has been more formal than substantive, and that environmental concerns continue routinely to be over-ridden by development interests. In some jurisdictions "integration" has been almost entirely at the level of rhetoric -- in Japan, for example, production oriented ministries and plans operate in parallel with organisations and plans centred on environmental sensitivity; and in the European Union the environment has remained essentially marginal to key spending programmes such as the Common Agricultural Policy and the Structural Funds. Even where the intra-ministerial integrative ideal has been more thoroughly pursued -- as in Norway or Canada -- the quality of the departmental engagement with environmental concerns or the broader sustainable development agenda is typically weak. With respect to the more complex issue of sectoral integration, similar sorts of criticisms could be made. In most areas of social decision making the environment remains an "additional" consideration. True, it is now often understood as a necessary consideration (rather than as merely an optional one); but it cannot be said that environmental impacts are being factored in to sectoral processes from the outset.

*Implementing Sustainable Development:
Strategies and Initiatives in High Consumption Societies*
William M. Lafferty and James Meadowcroft (2000)

With respect to HEPI, the study indicates that the national sustainable development strategy (SDS) is extremely important, since its existence indicates a political commitment to the crucial role that the UNCED process has assigned EPI in the national policymaking context. Thus the existence and nature of an SDS gives a strong indication of how a government relates to EPI in the overall decision-making context.

Further, an SDS is bound to discuss matters related to economic and social development, as these are integral aspects of sustainable development. While this is not, in and of itself,

⁸ COMPSUS is an acronym for "The Comparative Analysis of the Implementation of Sustainable Development in High-Consumption Societies". The countries studied were Sweden, Norway, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada, the United States of America, Australia and Japan. There was also a separate chapter on the European Union. On the question of sectoral integration, the reader is referred particularly to Lafferty and Meadowcroft, 2000: Chapter 12, Tables 12.4 and 12.5, and Chapter 13, pages 427-437.

crucial for EPI, it does increase the likelihood that a deliberate and purposive process of weighing various societal objectives up against each other will be carried out. A judicial balancing of environmental objectives against other societal *and* environmental objectives is a crucial aspect of the horizontal dimension of environmental policy integration. It entails an open acknowledgement of the strong potential for conflicts of interest if the demanding goals of sustainable development are to be taken seriously; at the same time that it provides a central platform and arena for attempts to transcend such conflicts. As the Swedish experience with integration efforts has shown (SEPA, 1999), there is no lack of examples of conflicting environmental objectives. The vital question for EPI, however, is whether or not such conflicts have a political forum and policymaking process where conflicting interests and demands can be weighed against democratically derived guidelines and principles.

Equally important is the existence of a specific central authority: an identifiable and responsible institution to oversee and administer the process of strategic integration. This is a basic *realpolitik* aspect of the horizontal dimension, in that a separate sectoral environmental authority will rarely, if ever, have the authority necessary to intrude environmental objectives into the decision-making premises of other sectoral authorities. The "ranking" of ministries and departments is a notoriously imprecise exercise. The COMPSUS study indicates, however, that it is extremely unlikely that a ministry of environment will, with any degree of consistency, win through when faced with opposition from, for example, ministries of finance, industry, transport, energy or agriculture – all crucial sectors for overall environmental performance. The logic of decision-making in a sustainable development value frame requires, in other words, that the responsibility for promoting and overseeing environmental objectives be anchored in an overarching authority structure. This can be directly integrated into or placed under the responsibility of the chief executive (as was originally intended in Norway after the Brundtland Report); or placed in an appropriately authorised planning agency (as in Holland during the most enthusiastic phases of NEPP); or located within the domain of the legislature (as with the unique Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development in Canada); or placed outside of the political process in the form of a last-resort judicial organ.

As a most general conclusion, Lafferty and Meadowcroft indicate that it is very rare to see both dimensions of EPI operational at the same time, despite the fact that all 10 of the domains covered by the study have endorsed sustainable development through the Rio accords. Broadly speaking, vertical integration (VEPI) is clearly the dimension that is most actively pursued and, in selected instances, variously achieved. Consequential examples of horizontal integration (HEPI) are much more difficult to document. This is hardly surprising given the fact that VEPI involves less inter-departmental conflict, and decidedly less change in the overall allocation of sectoral winners and losers. The issue raised by the two-dimensional approach, however, is whether vertical integration is sufficient in itself to achieve the general ambitions of policy integration within the sustainable development discourse. The position taken here is that it clearly is not.

In the brief period since the publication of the COMPSUS study, there have appeared a number of very relevant new studies. Highly focused case studies of "governance for sustainable development" have been commissioned by the OECD (Germany, Jänicke et al. 2001; the United Kingdom, Medhurst 2001; and Canada, Boudier 2001); the "Cardiff Process" of the European Community has been independently assessed and politically reported (Fergusson et al. 2001, Kraemer 2001, MoE 2001); and small-scale analyses of sectoral integration in Norway and Denmark have been conducted (Knutzen 2001, Statskonsult 2001,

Torjussen 2001, Lafferty and Hovden 2001). In the following, we will focus only on the lessons to be learned from the updated OECD national case studies. This is mainly for reasons of space and direct relevance. While the lessons to be drawn from the other two approaches are clearly relevant for the integration problematic, the first (Cardiff) presents materials at a supra-national level, and the second (Norway and Denmark) are more limited studies of specific national sectors. Since the purpose of the paper is to develop more general criteria for governance for sustainable development, it is best at this stage to draw lessons from the dominant mode of national constitutional governance.

Updated OECD case studies

At present three of the OECD-commissioned case studies of “governance for sustainable development” are available at the OECD website. These studies are highly focused attempts to bring out the particular nature of the governance-for-sustainable-development problematic, and are thus complementary to the COMPSUS studies of the same countries. The studies will be given broader treatment elsewhere within the OECD review process, so emphasis here will only be placed on a very schematic overview of selected implications for sectoral integration.

- At a most general level, it is interesting to note that all three studies treat the integration question with differing approaches and illustrative content. The terms “horizontal” and “vertical” are used in the presentations, but in a non-systematic way. There is also a general tendency to duplicate the Liberatore (1997) approach by associating a very broad spectrum of issues, instruments and mechanisms with policy and sectoral “integration”.
- There is a general trend to portray the integration challenge as one of integrating environmental concerns *into* sectoral policy; and of either “reconciling”, “coordinating” or “making coherent” sectoral and environmental concerns. In most cases, these challenges are associated with either VEPI processes or with HEPI viewed as better communication and coordination. There is, in general, very little attention accorded to the question of priorities, “trumps” or zero-sum confrontations.
- There is present in all three studies an underlying ambiguity as to whether the integration challenge consists mainly of: (1) the “greening” of governmental practice; (2) the documentation and planned amelioration of the negative environmental impacts of governmental practice; or (3) the broader issue of assessing and changing the negative environmental/ecological consequences of the major non-governmental sectoral driving forces and processes (including “de-coupling”). Clearly, the decision as to where one sets the integration “threshold” across this spectrum will have decisive implications for how the threshold challenge is approached and operationalised.
- All three studies document an extensive range of institutional and procedural mechanisms for sustainable development governance, some of which are explicitly designed to achieve greater policy integration, and some of which can contribute to integration without being designed to do so. Even though most of these mechanisms are related to the VEPI, and not the HEPI, dimension, they provide an extensive catalogue of *goal-specific* mechanisms and instruments for governing for sustainable development. In this respect, the studies provide further evidence of the *distinct nature* of the SD agenda, as well as the *seriousness* with which the agenda is being addressed in these countries.
- A close reading of the studies indicates, however, that the mechanisms in question function very differently across the three national systems. By all indications – and in this respect the studies confirm the general findings of the COMPSUS project – the pursuit of sectoral integration has been most consequential in Canada; less consequential in Germany; and least consequential the United Kingdom. Given the fact that all three states appear to have taken the SD challenge very seriously on a rhetorical level, this means that further focused analyses of

the key differences in performance should provide vital insights into the factors underlying the variance.

At a more immediate level, we can derive further vital insights into the governance challenge by briefly highlighting key features of the three systems with respect to the VEPI-HEPI differentiation. It should be noted in this regard that the three case studies in question clearly provide the most detailed information yet produced on the particular challenge of governance for sustainable development; and that this applies particularly to the issue of sectoral integration.

- *The United Kingdom*: In the United Kingdom the approach to integration is mainly part of an overall attempt to improve general policy coherence and more effective, cost-benefit-oriented governance. The SD mandate and agenda within this process is relatively diffuse, lacking strong HEPI underpinnings of any type. Though some institutional changes have been effected – most prominently, an “advisory commission” on SD; a “Green Ministers” committee; a designated SD “unit” within the environment ministry; and an Environmental Audit Committee – these do not seem to have a strong enough mandate for effective change. The more general “Performance and Innovation Unit”, “Better Regulation Unit”, and initiative for “joining up government”, all involve significant aspects of sectoral-integration thinking – but none of these are specifically focused on SD. It would also appear that there is very little in force for an effective VEPI. The Green Ministers’ initiative seems to be focused largely on the first task mentioned above: the “greening” of governmental practice. There is very little mention of sectoral strategies or action plans, though a certain degree of monitoring is indicated through the use of 15 “headline indicators”.
- *Germany*: The German case provides evidence of stronger procedures for VEPI. This is clearly a result of several decades of front-running “end-of-pipe” approaches in German environmental policy. Of particular interest here are: strong pieces of legislation which combine benchmark indicators, target groups, specific policy instruments and monitoring procedures for key sectoral challenges (such as the innovative “Renewable Energy Act”); the use of “Green Books” outlining all of the relevant international obligations for each sector of ministerial responsibility; and the development of a “German Environmental Index” (the DUX), which is based on a relative scoring system that constantly indicates how far (or “short”) sectors have come in contributing to overall goal achievement. There is also in place a Conference of Environment Ministers (UMK), which is designed to coordinate strategy and policy across the different levels of government, and which clearly contributes to heightened VEPI awareness at the federal level. With respect to HEPI, the German potential would seem to be just that: a potential that is only now coming into effect. Also here there is a “Green Minister” initiative, but, in contrast with the UK initiative, this effort is more of a “Green Cabinet” (consisting of 10 Secretaries of State and chaired by the Head of the Chancellor’s Office), which is to work in close conjunction with a new Council for Sustainable Development. Though as yet unrealized, the potential for strong and substantive HEPI is thus in place.
- *Canada*: The Canadian case study clearly documents institutions and procedures which point towards a strong combination of both VEPI and HEPI. The basis for this impression lies in an integrated strategy which brings together statutory, institutional and administrative provisions. Among the *many* institutional bodies in place, the most important are: the long-standing National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE: with its very indicative title); the Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD); the Treasury Board Secretariat (with key functions in regard to sectoral strategies for SD); and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA). These institutions interact through a system of coordinated functional diversity, in which the CESD plays an increasingly crucial role. Their operations rest on several specific legislative acts, and are thus, for the most part, statutory based. This has crucial importance for both their legitimacy and functionality. The fact, for example, that 28 governmental units (ministries, agencies and other bodies), have already prepared second-generational sectoral plans for sustainable development; and that the CESD has, for the past six years, monitored these strategies, and handled a large number of “petitions” on sustainable development problems from private citizens and groups – is all covered by legal prescription, and subject to judiciary process. In addition – and parallel to these processes – the NRTEE has mobilized key economic and environmental actors to

provide continuous input to governance in the form of specific projects and tasks, and these have been increasingly taken into consideration in planning and budgetary procedures. Even though much of VEPI is still relatively “internal” (with an emphasis on the “greening” of governmental practice), the iterative effects of the highly publicized CESD auditing procedures, and of the more managerial CEAA assessment procedures, points towards clear learning effects and measurable achievements. Similarly with HEPI, the actual achievement of strong horizontal steering is not yet documented, but the fact that the government itself has recognized the problem and established a new “Leaders’ Forum on Sustainable Development” to improve the overall coordination of the sectoral strategies and action plans.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the present paper has been to focus and clarify the issue of environmental policy integration as one of several key mechanisms for adapting government practice to sustainable development goals. After first stipulating a relevant understanding of sustainable development goals (whereby emphasis is placed on the connection between socioeconomic driving forces and environmental/ecological impacts, with a general goal of “de-coupling” the latter from the former), the first task was to clarify the nature and importance of the mandate for sectoral integration. This is viewed as a crucial task in this area, since political legitimacy and an active, on-going commitment to integration goals are vital prerequisites for more effective SD governance.

The second major task of the paper was to clarify and further develop the concept of “environmental policy integration” itself. This was shown to be necessary because of considerable confusion in the academic and practical literature as to just what “integration” in this context consists of. Having drawn out the difficulties in question, the paper then applies arguments from key contributions to the academic discourse to construct a more consistent – and hopefully more applicable – understanding of the problem. Designating the goal as one of “environmental (ecological) policy integration” (EPI), the concept is differentiated as to its “horizontal” (HEPI) and “vertical” (VEPI) dimensions. This allows for both independent analyses of functional integration *within* governmentally designated sectors, as well as functional *and* political integration across and among sectors. It also allows for a more nuanced classification of cases with respect to strong and weak performance along both dimensions; as well as overall rankings of cases with respect to combined HEPI-VEPI “scores”.

Finally the paper attempts to illustrate the usefulness of the two-dimensional approach by presenting basic “checklists” of VEPI and HEPI mechanisms, and then further illustrates the approach in terms of the actual use of such mechanisms in selected OECD countries. Some major conclusions from this exercise are that: (1) all countries studied have taken the pursuit of sustainable development goals seriously in their national political strategies; but that (2) there is considerable differentiation across countries as to *how* serious the goals are taken; so that (3) the variance in question provides a fruitful empirical basis for a more systematic analysis of explanatory factors. Looking more specifically at the three most advanced cases of documented SP implementation thus far – the United Kingdom, Germany and Canada – the paper finds clear institutional and procedural differences across the three, with interesting lessons for both VEPI and HEPI in each. Canada emerges, however, as a clear “paradigm” for this aspect of SD governance – a status which also seems to hold for this aspect of governance vis à vis the other countries of the COMPSUS study (Lafferty and Meadowcroft 2000).

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